An Inquiry into Inquiry: (How) Can We Learn from Other Times and Places?

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Deciding on a topic for a presidential address provides one with a unique opportunity to consider how one's life has been spent, at least in its academic manifestations, and to see how, and indeed whether, one's past work fits together. Surveying my own opus, with work on creativity, critical thinking, argumentation, arts education, and theatre, I could be led to the conclusion that it has consisted in an eclectic collection of topics and issues, held together only by the fact of its authorship. Yet upon closer scrutiny, I do detect a theme that unifies this seemingly diverse collection of inquiries: the theme is that of inquiry itself. I have been exploring what it means to have good (well justified) ideas and practices, and how we come up with new and better ones.

One major focus of this inquiry has been a critical examination of prevalent ideas about creativity, conducted from an analytically-informed perspective. More recently I have come to wonder to what extent the view of creativity that has been the object of my scrutiny exists in other cultural contexts, or to what extent it is modern and/or Western. Thus my most recent work has involved an exploration of views about artistic creation in other cultural contexts (temporal as well as geographic), including the culture and arts of Bali and China, and the Italian Renaissance.

I will describe these inquiries in greater detail shortly, but I introduce them here in order to confess the persistent doubt which has been niggling just under the surface during the course of this inquiry: does this work have any philosophical import? I find the research absolutely fascinating. I am totally captivated by learning about the nature and origins of the subtle changes in artworks during the Renaissance, and by insights about Balinese art-making and its connection to religious views and social practices. But the analytically-trained philosopher within me will not be silent: she persists in asking whether this fascination is the manifestation of a closet historian of art or of ideas previously hidden within, and now erupting from the closet during a moment of philosophical mid-life crisis. The concern of my analytic philosopher self is whether this line of inquiry can have any relevance to us as philosophers. Is it purely a descriptive enterprise, or can it tell me anything about creativity that I could not find out through my traditional forms of inquiry? The issue that concerns me, then, has to do with the nature and juûƒification for the type of inquiry which I have undertaken. It is this inquiry into inquiry which is the focus for this address.

I was also prompted to address this issue by a comment made at a previous Philosophy of Education Society meeting during a discussion of education for autonomy. When a participant commented that in a traditional culture one learns musical performance through imitation and correction with no room for individual

choice, another member responded: "So what?" I gather that this meant something like "How is it relevant for those of us who believe (with good reasons) that autonomy is important to know that some folks somewhere do not practice education for autonomy?" Or, paraphrased in the context of my recent work: "Is it important for me (Sharon Bailin, analytically-trained philosopher of education, living in Canada in the early twenty-first century) to understand how the Balinese view artistic creation or how art and the conception of the artist changed in the Renaissance in order to hold better justified beliefs about art and creativity? It is, then, essentially this "So what?" question that I am taking up here.

CREATIVITY ACROSS CULTURES

In order to ground the issue which is the object of my concern, it will be helpful to describe in more detail my recent work on creativity across cultures. My previous work involved using the traditional tools of analytic philosophy to critically examine assumptions inherent in the prevailing view of creativity; for example, that creativity is a trait of individual persons and an expression of their inner being, that it centrally involves originality seen as radical discontinuity from past traditions, that it involves freedom from constraints both social and disciplinary. I have argued, instead, for a more contextual conception of creativity that views it in terms of significant achievement taking place within dynamic and evolving traditions.[1]

My more recent work focuses on how artistic creation is viewed in diverse cultural contexts, including early Renaissance Italy, Bali, and China. What I have found is that artistic creation is not understood in terms of the tenets of the prevailing view of creativity. During the early Renaissance, for example, artistic activity was not seen as individual self-expression, but rather as the making of functional artifacts; artists were viewed as craftsmen who acquired their skill through imitation and often created collectively, anonymously, and according to the specification of patrons; and the aim was not originality but increasingly the imitation of nature. Moreover, the striking innovations that took place in art during this period were based largely on the rediscovery and imitation of ancient Greek and Roman arts and were due, at least in part, to a variety of contextual influences.

Neither are the arts seen as a matter of individual self-expression nor deviation from tradition in Balinese culture. Rather, they constitute a communal activity tied to daily life, religious celebration, and ritual practices. The types of objects and practices which are deemed art in Western society and set apart from everyday life are completely integrated into Balinese life. Nor are artists seen as imaginative geniuses set apart from society. Rather, everyone engages in some form of art-making. The passing on of the tradition is central, and the arts are learned through apprenticeship, imitation, and correction.[2]

THE ISSUES

Should this knowledge about the practice of the arts and the conceptualization of artistic creation in other cultural contexts affect my views about creativity? If so, why and how? Addressing this question involves confronting two major issues. The first centers on the possibility of genuine learning across cultural frameworks. If

cultures are totally distinct and incommensurable, as is sometimes claimed, then this fact would pose a challenge to the possibility of learning from other cultures.[3] I shall call this the relativism challenge. The second centers on the epistemological value of looking at the beliefs and practices of other cultures. Even if learning is, in principle, a possibility, is there some epistemological benefit or even obligation to do so as a way to have better justified beliefs? I shall call this the epistemological value challenge.

THE RELATIVISM CHALLENGE

FRAMING THE ISSUE

One justification for studying other cultures is based on an acknowledgement of the diversity of cultures and on the moral requirement to recognize and respect these differences. Given that there is no culture-neutral standpoint from which the ideas from different cultures could be made mutually intelligible, nor any transcultural standards for evaluating the beliefs and practices of particular cultures,[4] there is a requirement to accept the legitimacy of all cultures' beliefs and practices alongside one's own.[5]

Another part of the rationale is that we "Westerns" might learn something from the beliefs and practices of other cultures. Many of these beliefs and practices have, in the past, not been considered worthy of acceptance because they did not meet traditional (that is, "Western") criteria of evaluation, but it is now argued that some of them are worthy of consideration, and that they should cause us to modify some of our own.

THE RELATIVIST DILEMMA

The two parts of the rationale described above are generally offered as mutually supporting reasons in favor of studying other cultures. These reasons are, however, incompatible. The first rationale posits a strong relativism, viewing cultures as self-contained, mutually exclusive entities, with no possibility for mutual comprehension, cross-cultural comparison, or transcultural evaluation. The second part of the rationale invokes the possibility of learning from another culture (in the normative sense of improving one's beliefs or practices), but this requires that we are able to interact rationally with the views of the other culture. This requirement implies some degree of mutual comprehension, and the possibility of comparison and rational evaluation. Clearly one cannot consistently hold both. If one holds the strong relativist position, one is forced into the conclusion that cross-cultural learning is an impossibility. Ironically, the relativistic position, which advocates the acceptance of all cultural views based on a respect for cultures, precludes the possibility that we can learn from other cultures.[6]

PROBLEMS WITH THE RELATIVIST VIEW

Fortunately for the prospects of cross-cultural learning, there are some serious problems with this relativist picture. To begin, strong arguments have been offered for the existence and unavoidability of transcultural criteria of evaluation, for example, Siegel's transcendental argument and Robertson's rebuttal of the necessity of a culture-neutral Archimedean point in order to ground universal judgments.[7] In

addition, the very idea of unintelligibility and incommensurability between cultures has been successfully challenged by Davidson and Putnam, among others, in their well-known critiques of the idea of a conceptual scheme and of untranslatability.[8] As these arguments are very familiar to this audience, I shall simply take them as read.

I shall focus, instead, on the problematic conception of culture which grounds the strong relativist position. The claim of incommensurability rests on a view of cultures as distinct, unified, self-contained, unchanging, and mutually exclusive. Numerous critics have, however, questioned the idea that cultures can even be identified as meaningful, discrete entities.[9] Rather, they contain a multiplicity of practices, are "internally riven by conflicting narratives," and are formed through dialogue with other cultures.[10] Benhabib summarizes thus: "cultures themselves, as well as societies, are not holistic but polyvocal, multilayered, decentred, and fractured systems of action and signification."[11]

Nor are cultures pure and unchanging. On the contrary, because of the ubiquity of human migration, trade, and war, "it is the rule, not the exception, that ideas and ways of doing things are propagated and transmitted, noticed and adapted," as Waldron points out.[12] This is true also of "Western" culture (insofar as it can be isolated and identified), constituted as it is by a variety of ideas, products, and practices from other cultures, including Semitic religions, Greek political ideas, a Hindu-Arabic number system, and languages originating in Asia. Even an apparently "traditional" culture such as the Balinese is not pure, its religion incorporates Hinduism, Buddhism, and indigenous practices, and its Gamelan music blends ideas and techniques from China, Southeast Asia, India, and Europe.

Nor is the distinction between one's own and other cultures clear-cut. To the extent that cultures are constituted by a mélange, we are all already a part of many cultures. What is more, given the multiculturality of most societies, the identification of what exactly one's own culture consists in is not easy, even apart from issues of class and gender, which further complicate the issue. Moreover, in the contemporary world, we are free, to a certain extent, to choose or compose our culture(s). Although we are already "thrown into" a cultural context and deliberate through a set of pre-existing beliefs, there is still necessarily some degree of choice and of "self-creation."

The preceding cases seem to demonstrate the ubiquity of cultural change and cross-cultural influence, but the question of whether any of these represent examples of learning from other cultures as opposed to ad hoc adoption or imposition still remains open. Learning requires the altering of beliefs on the basis of rational assessment and this requirement raises the issue of the origin and grounding of criteria of evaluation in the face of cultural difference.

Part of the answer lies in our previous discussion of the nature of cultures. If cultures are in fact fluid, interacting, and changing, then the likelihood seems great of overlaps, parallels, and commonalities among human experiences across diverse cultures. Recent scholarship has placed a great emphasis on cultural difference, and

justifiably so as past blindness to cultural difference has resulted in the marginalization of groups which did not meet the dominant norms of "Westernness." It is important to recognize, however, that there are also significant similarities and commonalities which may remain unnoticed if the sole emphasis is on difference.[13] One example of such similarities is captured in a striking manner in the following observation by Ronald Wright:

> When the Spaniards reached the American mainland in the early sixteenth century, the peoples of the western and eastern hemispheres had not met since their ancestors parted as Ice Age hunters running out of game….Amazingly, after all that time, each could recognize the other's institutions. When Cortes landed in Mexico he found roads, canals, cities, palaces, schools, law courts, markets, irrigation works, priests, temples, peasants, artisans, armies, astronomers, merchants, sports, theatre, art, music, and books.[14]

Such similarities may seem less surprising given the recognition that, despite important differences in context and meaning, all societies face common challenges (related to birth, death, disease, obtaining food, order, relationships, and education).[15] A culture's beliefs and practices can be seen, then, as

> solutions or purported solutions, which have been developed in one group over time and funded deeply by the distinctive experience of the members of the group, to problems and conflicts which we may possibly find ourselves sharing with others who have developed different (and rival) approaches funded by different experiences.[16]

Seen as different solutions to common, or at least overlapping, problems and challenges, it is likely that these beliefs and practices can be compared and evaluated by examining the structure of reasons and reasoning in which they are embedded. Although the reasoning may be unfamiliar in some respects, Waldron argues that it is "like ours" in the following way:

> it represents or claims to represent some repository of human wisdom as to the best way of doing things. As such it necessarily makes its reasoning available — though…not always easily or comfortably available — to understanding and assessment on the basis of what else there is in the world in the way of human wisdom and experience on questions such as those that the norms purport to address.[17]

One possible objection here is that historical changes in cultures have been a matter of power and of cultural imperialism rather than of rational choice. Cultural change has taken place historically through the imposition by the dominant culture of its values and practices, either through physical conquest or through economic domination. Thus it might be conceded that cultures can influence one another, but denied that one culture ever really learns from another.

That cultural imposition has been and continues to be a common phenomenon in world history must be admitted, and is to be deplored and resisted when it is encountered. The point I want to make here, however, is that this is not always the case, and is not necessarily the case. There are innumerable examples of ideas or practices which have been adopted because they seemed improvements on prevailing ideas and practices. One example is the adoption by European cultures of the Hindu-Arabic number system which, through its use of zero and place value, facilitated mathematical operations which were exceedingly difficult with Roman numerals.

The artistic history of Mexico provides many examples, both contemporary and historical, of artists who deliberately blended indigenous Mexican and European iconography, as well as combining traditional styles and techniques with those adopted and adapted from European art. These were not cases of uncritical acceptance by the artists of ideas and practices of the conquering culture, but rather, of their deliberate transformation for their own purposes, which included resistance and subversion. A case in point is the post conquest appropriation by Mexican indigenous artists of the techniques and styles of European painting, using, for example, the Italian tradition of grotesques to represent Aztec gods and worldview, the representation of which was forbidden by the Spanish; or using classical European imagery to create a continuity between their traditional representations and Christianity.[18]

The possibility of the rational adoption of beliefs and practices between cultures might also seem to be precluded by the apparent incompatibility of worldviews in which the beliefs and practices are embedded. If, however, cultures are not holistic and self-contained but rather fragmented, heterogeneous, and overlapping, then it does seem possible to incorporate insights and recognize the value of some aspects of cultural beliefs and practices without accepting the whole worldview. One would not, for example, have to accept the animistic religious assumptions or extreme conformity to tradition that characterize Balinese culture in order to see the value in viewing art and the artist as more integrated into life; the value of tradition as well as innovation; the value of collaborative, communal creation; or the possibility of many people being involved in artistic production.[19]

Such an adoption of elements of another culture's beliefs and practices may, however, have repercussions for the rest of one's belief system. Cross-cultural investigation is neither straightforward nor easy. It necessarily involves interpretation, and the act of interpretation is challenging in many respects. Meanings may not be readily apparent and it would be a mistake to assume total commensurability. Nussbaum describes in detail the types of errors which can be made in interpreting another culture. These include, on the one hand, the dangers of chauvinism, which involve describing other cultures in the terms of one's own, and evaluating them, insofar as they are different, as inferior. Here would be included the vice of Eurocentrism. On the other hand, there are the dangers of romanticism, which involve viewing other cultures as excessively alien and incomparable to one's own, and thus evaluating them as if they are completely untouched by the vices of one's own culture.[20] Nussbaum's enumeration of the errors that one might make in interpreting another culture demonstrates that the enterprise is difficult, but it also entails that there might be less erroneous and more accurate ways to understand to the extent that one is successful in avoiding these mistakes.

Interpretation, particularly of cultures that are very different from one's own, further requires some interpretive principle to facilitate the reconstruction of meaning, a principle construed by some theorists as the maxim of interpretive charity.[21] Nussbaum describes this requirement in terms of making some background assumptions about the rationality of the other. She goes on to say that, at least

in matters of ethics, "we should be prepared to find both contextual good sense and at least some present-day plausibility."[22]

Charles Taylor points out that when one confronts a culture that is very different from one's own, one cannot approach it with a closed view about what may be of value. "To approach, say, a raga with the presumption of value implicit in the well-tempered clavier would be forever to miss the point."[23] Instead, what is required is what Gadamer has called "a fusion of horizons" which involves a kind of dialogue or dialectic between the frameworks in question.[24] In the process, some of one's initial standards may be transformed. This is not, however, a matter of accepting contradictions nor of eschewing evaluation, but rather of learning "to move in a broader horizon." Each framework or horizon is necessarily always open to the possibility of critique and revision, as any committed fallibilist would agree, and it is the confrontation and dialogue between the two which precipitates the potential transformations.

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL VALUE CHALLENGE

The argument to this point addresses the first of the issues raised by cross-cultural study, and demonstrates, in response to the relativism challenge, that genuine learning is at least possible across cultural frameworks. This still leaves open the second issue, that of epistemological value. Even if learning is in principle a possibility, is there some epistemological benefit or even obligation to look at the beliefs and practices of other cultures in order to improve one's own?

This is the essence of the "So what?" question, and at its heart is the following objection: The fact that other groups or cultures may think differently about some idea or construe some phenomenon in a different manner from the accepted conception in my culture is of no epistemological relevance and provides, in itself, no reason for me to accept or adopt such conceptions or construals. What is relevant is that the views or practices meet certain critical criteria. So, for example, the fact that Chinese medicine has a long history and is practiced by a significant cultural group within the society provides, in itself, no justification for its inclusion in Western medical practice. Such justification can only be provided through evaluation by means of scientific methods. Similarly, although it is interesting that for the Balinese, art centrally involves the passing on of the tradition, individual self-expression is not prized, and Balinese dance is learned through imitation and correction, this knowledge provides no reason for me (in my Western context) to accept or adopt these practices if my beliefs with respect to artistic creation are well justified.

This argument is, I believe, correct, as far as it goes. It is surely true that the fact of others having different beliefs and practices is not in itself an argument against one's own or one's group's beliefs or practices. Nor does it, in itself, provide a reason for one to accept these beliefs and practices or to alter one's own. So the fact that a form of medicine is practiced by a certain cultural group does not, in itself, confer epistemic worth, nor does the fact that a group holds a certain view of artistic creation provide a reason for the adoption of its artistic practices.

I would argue, however, that there are ways in which *taking into consideration* such views and practices does have some epistemic benefit. I can suggest three: (1) testing theoretical or empirical claims, (2) challenging conceptions, and (3) providing alternatives.

Testing Theoretical or Empirical Claims

The practices of other cultural groups, both past and present, can be a "testing-ground" for our usual ideas about how the world works. With respect to the example of Chinese medicine, initial consideration seems to show that there is no empirical verification of its theoretical claims and so no need to seriously consider the whole belief system as a viable alternative to Western medicine, which has impressive epistemic credentials. If, however, there is some reasonable, prima facia evidence for the efficacy of some of its practices, this would demonstrate some incompleteness in our theories and there would ensue some epistemological obligation to subject these practices to rigorous testing. If they withstand the tests, then there would also be some obligation to try to explain the fact of their efficacy, and to adjust our explanatory framework to accommodate this, if necessary.

Challenging Conceptions

Generalizations regarding human practices must encompass the entire range of practices that may fall within their purview. The view that artistic creation requires creativity in the sense of being centrally concerned with the generation of novelty, would not, however, reflect the conception or practice of the arts in Balinese society nor in the Renaissance. One might respond that the generation of novelty is really at the heart of artistic creation, although people in some other cultural contexts may not (yet) appreciate this. What the latter really amount to, however, is the making of a claim about what artistic creation should be in the guise of describing what it is. Such a normative claim requires justification. If one insisted on maintaining the generation of novelty as central to artistic creation, then one would have to recognize that one's conception of artistic creativity applies only to contemporary Western art, and to maintain that the arts of these other cultures could not represent creative achievements. Alternatively one could alter one's conception of the nature of artistic creation. Looking at art phenomena cross-culturally can cause one to look critically at one's prevailing conceptions, revealing hidden and thus unexamined normative claims, and possibly supplying grounds for revision of those conceptions.

Providing Alternatives

Theorists of critical thinking generally agree that arriving at epistemically worthy beliefs involves more than an evaluation of the beliefs in isolation. The beliefs must also be shown to provide the best explanation or option in the given context. Thus, their merits must be demonstrated in the light of alternative possibilities.[25] Alternative possibilities may emanate from within one's own culture, but an important source of alternatives would be the beliefs and practices of other cultures.

Holding our beliefs and practices up against those of other cultures is a crucial aspect of evaluation, as it provides the basis for comparison. As Waldron points out, evaluation of aspects of one's culture is a comparative matter: "It is difficult to see how one can make these comparisons without the ability to take a role, defined by

a given culture, and compare it with what one might term loosely other ways of doing roughly the same sort of thing."[26] One crucial prerequisite of such critical inquiry is the awareness that there are other possibilities in situations where we had previously considered our own way "neutral, necessary and natural."[27] This recognition may, in turn, help one "to distinguish, within their own tradition, what is parochial from what may be commended as a norm for others, what is arbitrary and unjustified from that which may be justified by reasoned argument."[28]

EPISTEMOLOGICAL VIRTUE OR OBLIGATION?

One question which might be posed here is whether taking into consideration the beliefs and practices of other cultures is a supererogatory virtue, praiseworthy but not required, or whether there is some epistemic obligation to do so. It might be argued that there is no necessary connection between consideration of the beliefs and practices of other cultures and epistemic worthiness or between a failure to do so and epistemic defect.[29] There is, however, a similar lack of necessary connection between epistemic worthiness or defect and other epistemological norms, for example, assessing the credibility of sources or identifying fallacies in arguments. Nonetheless, evaluations that failed to pay attention to any of these would be considered faulty for that reason.[30] I would argue that evaluations which failed to seriously consider the alternatives offered by the beliefs and practices of other cultures are similarly defective.[31]

The fact that a cultural group has different beliefs and practices does not, in itself, provide a reason for one to accept these beliefs and practices; however, it does constitute a reason for looking at them more closely. This is particularly true for beliefs and practices concerning ways of life. If we view different cultures' beliefs and practices as alternative possible solutions to human problems, then I do think that there is some obligation to take them seriously as possible sources of learning despite initial apparent differences and incompatibilities. In this regard, Taylor recommends as a starting hypothesis with which to approach the study of other cultures, the presumption that "all human cultures that have animated whole societies over some considerable stretch of time have something important to say to all human beings."[32] It is, however, a starting presumption only — "the validity of the claim still has to be demonstrated concretely in the actual study of the culture."[33]

EXAMPLES

Let us return to the case of learning the arts in traditional societies which prompted this inquiry. In learning dance in Bali or drawing in China, students are taught through imitation and correction with little room for improvisation, invention, or choice. Such cases may strike those with a Western orientation to education as stifling the creativity of the students and inhibiting the development of their creative freedom. If we suspend our initial dismissal and give their beliefs and practices more serious consideration, however, we may come to see that there may be something to be learned.

A closer examination of Chinese culture will reveal that, although discipline and tradition are stressed in education, it is not the case that the Chinese do not care about innovation. It is, rather, a matter of emphasis and development. The Chinese

believe that mastery is necessary first in order to appreciate the essence of the artform, and that innovation can only come afterwards, whereas in Western cultures we tend to believe that exploration and divergence must be encouraged early and that mastery can come later.[34]

A parallel point can be made with respect to Balinese art and culture. Although there may initially appear to be no place for individual imagination or originality, nonetheless Balinese arts do incorporate some innovation and have had a history of change and development, although at a different rate and in a different manner than in contemporary Western arts.

The examination of such cases might illustrate, then, that there are elements of tradition and of innovation in both traditional and "Western" cultures, a fact which may not be obvious from a superficial look at either. We may come to realize that we do, in practice, value tradition as well as innovation in Western societies, that even the most radical of our innovations arises out of a tradition, and that the extreme emphasis on novelty is a contingent (and anomalous) feature of the present historical moment. We may come to notice that there is, in every society, a tradition/innovation continuum, and come to recognize the positive as well as the negative aspects of a greater emphasis on tradition (for example, the extremely high standards of artistic achievement in China; or the centrality of the arts to life in Bali). Such an understanding might lead us to recognize the tradeoffs we make in how we have come to locate ourselves on the continuum.

Another possibility that may present itself is that there may be more than one way to arrive at creative freedom. Perhaps one can eventually become independent through early strict initiation rather than or as well as through early choice. One may come to at least consider the possible wisdom in the Chinese idea that one needs mastery to be free. And one might come to see parallels in one's own culture, for example, in the learning of ballet or classical music performance where innovation and individual choice play a fairly limited role, and perhaps entertain the possibility that initiation and discipline may be effective ways to learn in other arts such as painting.

Such a cross-cultural examination may put into question many of the tenets of the prevailing Western view of creativity by offering models of cultures with rich, pervasive artistic traditions not grounded in assumptions of individual self-expression, freedom from constraints, or radical discontinuity. It may not alter one's commitment to the value of creative freedom or innovation, but it may lead to a much more complex conception of what that commitment entails.

Conclusion

An inquiry into the beliefs and practices of other cultures raises questions. It helps us to see our assumptions, to recognize the contingency of our beliefs and practices, to notice how they are embedded in larger networks of beliefs and social arrangements, and to see other possibilities. Even so, there is still the need to evaluate, to see how and whether aspects of other beliefs and practices are relevant to ours, to see to what extent our views are mutually compatible or whether there may

be more than one possibility, to compare them in accord with the standards of rational inquiry as well as with criteria related to our human goals and purposes, and with moral principles which we have good reason to believe are fundamental. In light of all this, there is still, ultimately, the need to make judgments about what to accept, about whether to alter any of our beliefs and practices — or not. But whatever we end up deciding, we come *to* the evaluative enterprise with a fuller and more complex repertoire of resources. And we come *from* the enterprise with a richer, subtler and more nuanced understanding; and with better justified beliefs.

1. Sharon Bailin, *Achieving Extraordinary Ends: An Essay on Creativity*. (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1994).

2. Sharon Bailin, "*Invenzione E Fantasia*: The (Re)Birth of Imagination in Renaissance Art," *Interchange* 36, no. 3 (2005); Sharon Bailin, "Imagination and Arts Education in Cultural Contexts," in *Imagination Past and Present*, ed. Kieran Egan (New York: Teachers College Press, forthcoming).

3. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

4. Ibid.

5. See, for example, David Theo Goldberg, "Introduction: Multicultural Conditions," in *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994): 1–41.

6. Taylor argues that acceptance without evaluation actually constitutes a lack of respect. Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Guttman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 25–73.

7. See Harvey Siegel, "Multiculturalism and the Possibility of Transcultural Educational Ideals." *Philosophy* 74 (1999): 395; Emily Robertson, "Reason and Education," in *Philosophy of Education Yearbook 1991*, eds. Margret Buchmann and Robert Floden (Normal, Ill.: Philosophy of Education Society, 1992): 168–180.

8. Donald Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in *Proceedings and Addresses of the APA 47 (*1974); Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

9. See, for example, Jeremy Waldron, "Minority Culture and the Cosmopolitan Alternative," in *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, ed. Will Kymlicka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): 93–119.

10. Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), ix.

11. Ibid., 25–26.

12. Jeremy Waldron, "What Is Cosmopolitan?" *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (2000): 232.

13. Appiah claims that the emphasis on cultural difference is to some extent a disciplinary artifact of anthropology. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

14. Ronald Wright, *A Short History of Progress* (Toronto: Ananci Press, 2004), 50–51.

15. See Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

16. Waldron, "Cosmopolitan," 243.

17. Ibid., 235.

18. Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind: The Intellectual Dynamics of Colonization and Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2002). Moreover, cultural change circulates in many directions. It is not only and always a matter of the adoption of the "culture of the victor."

19. Cf. Benhabib, *Claims,* 41. A cultural purist may argue that elements taken out of context are "violated and distorted", but as Waldron points out, "there is nothing normative about the purist's point of view." Waldron, "Cosmopolitan," 232.

20. Ibid., 126. Of note is the tendency to overemphasize differences between "Eastern" and "Western" cultures, for example, the extent to which "Eastern" cultures are based on non-rational traditions or antagonistic to freedom.

21. See also Putnam, *Reason,* 117.

22. Nussbaum, *Humanity*, 119. See Putnam, *Reason,* 117; David B Wong, "Three Kinds of Incommensurability," in *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation*, ed. Michael Krausz (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 146.

23. Taylor, "Politics," 67.

24. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit Und Methode* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1975), 289–290.

25. See for example, Robert Ennis, *Critical Thinking* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1996).

26. Waldron, "Minority," 109.

27. Nussbaum, *Humanity*, 32.

28. Ibid., 62. Finding "broader horizons" for making comparisons may prompt a re-description of our own culture's practices, thus enhancing self-understanding. See Charles Taylor, "Understanding and Ethnocentricity," in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 116 –133.

29. Cf. Siegel's argument in Harvey Siegel, "What Price Inclusion?" in *Philosophy of Education 1995*, ed. Alven Neiman (Urbana, Ill.: Philosophy of Education Society, 1995): 1–22.

30. Cf. my response to Siegel in Sharon Bailin, "Inclusion and Epistemology: The Price Is Right," in *Philosophy of Education 1995*, ed. Neiman, 23–26.

31. Just how seriously we take them will depend on specifics. In this it is not unlike other comparative evaluations, where the issue of which theories to consider as serious alternatives is a matter for further judgment.

32. Taylor, "Politics," 66.

33. Ibid., 67.

34. See Howard Gardner, *To Open Minds: Chinese Clues to the Dilemma of Contemporary Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).