A Shared Vision of Human Excellence: Confucian Spirituality and Arts Education

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Abstract

Spirituality encourages the individual to make sense of oneself within a wider framework of meaning and see oneself as part of some larger whole. This article discusses Confucian spirituality by focussing on the spiritual ideals of the \textit{dao} (Way) and \textit{he} (harmony). It is explained that the Way represents a shared vision of human excellence that is embodied in the guiding discourse inherited from one’s cultural predecessors. The Confucian Way covers all the manifestations of Zhou culture, including its knowledge base, values, beliefs, and practices that have been passed down through the generations. The Way is achieved through harmony where human beings find inner peace as well as co-exist with one another and their surroundings. Harmony encompasses an appreciation of beauty, joy and ethical values that are obtained through arts education. The essay further illustrates an application of Confucian spiritual ideals through music education in a school. A Confucian aim of learning, the article concludes, is one that fosters spiritual development and contests the performativity agenda and school culture.

Key words: arts education, Confucian spirituality, harmony, human excellence, music education

Introduction

Against a backdrop of global competition and international assessments, schools across the globe are increasingly circumscribed by a performativity agenda. As explained by Ball (2003), performativity “is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change - based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)” (p. 216). Performativity is premised on the belief that productivity, output, quality and value of individuals and organisations are measured by their performances. The priority placed on measurable results is supported by the mechanics of performativity such as League Tables, the appraisal meeting, the annual review, report writing, site visits, inspections and peer reviews. Consequently, educators “are no longer encouraged to have a rationale for practice, account of themselves in terms of a relationship to the meaningfulness of what they do, but are required to produce measurable and ‘improving’ outputs and performances, what is important is what works” (Ball, 2003, p. 222). Furthermore, schools are expected to organise themselves as a response to targets, indicators and evaluations under state regulation through
auditing, evaluation and review of systems, processes and outcomes in educational institutions etc.

Nestled within a performative culture, educators may be tempted to marginalise the non-measurable and less ‘useful’ aspects of learning that are nevertheless critical for the all-rounded development of their students. One such aspect is spiritual development. This article aims to highlight the importance of spiritual development and its educational implications from a Confucian perspective. Focussing on two classic Confucian texts, the Xueji (Record of Learning) and Lunyu (Analects), this article discusses a Confucian aim of learning that goes beyond the performativity agenda – one that seeks to achieve a shared vision human excellence. The first part of this article briefly introduces the concepts of spirituality and spiritual development. This is followed by a discussion of the Confucian spiritual ideals of dao (the Way) and he (harmony), and how they can be achieved through arts education. The last part of the essay further illustrates the promotion of Confucian spirituality through the arts using the example of music education.

Spirituality and Spiritual Development

Spirituality is essentially a distinctive capacity for the individual to make sense of oneself within a wider framework of meaning and see oneself as part of some larger whole (Minney, 1991; Author 1a, b; Author 1 & Colleague). It is “a function of appreciation or reflection upon ideals or goals which are both apt for positive moral evaluation and concerned with those aspects of human experience which attempt to reach beyond the mundane and the material towards what is transcendent and eternal” (Carr, 1995, p. 90). Examples of spiritual ideals are a sense of awe, feelings of transcendence, a search for meaning, peace and significance, self-awareness, self-knowledge, salvation and prayer.

It follows from our understanding of spirituality that spiritual development involves a process of reflection, attribution of meaning to experience, and a focus on a non-material dimension to life and intimations of an enduring reality (OFSTED, 1994). Such an approach has the advantage of transcending the fashionable utilitarian values, including the mechanics of performativity of the everyday (Minney, 1991). Spiritual development is closely related to moral development: research has shown that highly moral people are often recognised by religious or spiritual attributes, and their morality was determined by their spiritual experience and thought (Walker, Pitts, Hennig, & Matsuba, 1995; Walker & Pitts, 1998). Love and Talbot (1999) posit that spiritual development is not just an internal journey of seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness but also a means of continually transcending one’s interests and concerns by developing a greater connectedness to self and others through relationships and union with community. In other words, spiritual development creates the personal and communal space and time for human beings to reflect on issues such as the meaning of life, personal cultivation, manifestations of spirituality in life, responses to aspects of the natural and human world, and the collective domain. Though this process, spiritual development helps the individual derive personal destiny and direction, develop personal identity and ethical worldview, and build relationships with others (Author 1a).

Spirituality is featured prominently in Confucianism. Confucianism is not usually regarded as a religion in the sense of being a faith system that is governed by institutionalised organisations, dogmas, regulations, conversion, and membership. It is more accurately described as a cultural tradition that is complex, dynamic and evolving. Far from being an essentialised, monolithic, unchanging and unified belief system, Confucianism comprises many and even competing schools of thought, proponents and teachings. A helpful way to
understand Confucian culture, as suggested by Sun (2011), is to divide it into ‘broad’ and ‘narrow’ dimensions (Author 1c). Accordingly, the broad dimension of Confucianism refers to the summation of Confucian ideas and views that encompass both the material and spiritual products (Sun, 2011). A good illustration is the term Confucian Heritage Culture – describing East Asian countries such as China, Japan and South Korea – that emphasise and demonstrate the totality of Confucian beliefs and values such as filial piety, the value of education and communitarian behaviours. On the other hand, the narrow dimension of Confucian culture refers exclusively to the spiritual product of Confucian ideas and views, i.e., the philosophical ideas that are preserved in the Confucian canon, tested in China’s civil service exam, and propagated by Confucian scholars and teachers through the ages (ibid.). In both the broad and narrow dimensions of Confucian culture, spirituality is central in the sense of expecting human beings to go beyond everyday concerns to seek personal authenticity and situate oneself as part of some larger whole. This ‘larger whole’, from a Confucian perspective, is the call for human beings to be part of a community of Way-knowers by achieving and extending a shared vision of human excellence. The next part of the essay elaborates on key spiritual ideals in Confucianism by referring to two Confucian texts.

A Shared Vision of Human Excellence and Arts Education

Among the Confucian texts, two stand out for their pertinence to the topic of education. They are Xueji (Record of Learning) and Lunyu (Analects). The Xueji is one of the earliest educational texts in the world as it was believed to have been written either during the Warring States period (475-221 BCE) or the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE) (Gao, 2006). The Xueji is part of a longer Chinese text known as Liji (Book of Rites) which was one of the Five Classics (wujing) in ancient China. The Lunyu (Analects), on the other hand, was one of the Four Books (sishu) candidates needed to study for in the civil service exam in ancient China. The Analects contains the sayings and conduct of Confucius (Ames & Rosemont, 1998) that had been compiled by his followers over the years (for a detailed discussion of the contents of the Analects, see Author d). Although both the Xueji and the Analects expound on issues relating to teaching and learning across diverse educational and social settings, the context for the Xueji is formal education: the ‘school’ mentioned in the Xueji is likely to be the imperial academy for adult learners who were being prepared for political office (Author 1c).

A central spiritual ideal in Confucianism is dao (Way). Confucius exhorts all to “be firmly committed to love learning, hold fast to the good Way (dao) till death” (Analects 8.13). The aim of learning, according to Confucius, is to “learn in order to reach that Way” (Analects 19.7). That learning and the Way are intertwined is echoed in the Xueji that states, “A jade that is uncut will not become a vessel [for use]; [likewise] people who do not learn will not realise the Way” (Section II). Learning, like cutting a piece of jade, is a long-drawn process that will enable human beings to obtain the Way. The high regard for the Way and learning is highlighted in another verse, “When one respects the Way, then [the people] know how to respect learning” (Section XVII). The Way (dao) in Confucianism is the Way of heaven that embodies “a vision of human excellence” (Cua, 1989) and is manifested in the guiding discourse of the Zhou dynasty in ancient China (Hansen, 1989). In other words, the ‘Way’ covers all the manifestations of Zhou culture, including its knowledge base, values, beliefs, and practices that have been passed down through the generations. The Way or Confucian vision of human excellence is expressed in various forms such as traditional texts as well as the exemplary attitudes and conduct of sage-kings who lived before Confucius’ time. Explaining the meaning of the ‘way of the sage kings of old’, Wilson (1995) points out
that it “refers to a Golden Age in which the basic features of civilised human life were thought to have been discovered and instantiated in a perfect social, political, and ethical order” (p. 270). The ‘exemplary attitudes and conduct’ encompass qualities such as harmony (he), humanity or benevolence (ren), propriety or normative behaviours (li), rightness or appropriateness (yi) and filial piety (xiao) (for a more detailed discussion, see Author 1d). As space does not permit us to elaborate on each of the above Confucian ideals, we shall only focus on the concept of harmony (he) in the next section.

The Way or shared vision of human excellence is achieved through a spiritual ideal, he (harmony or harmonisation). The Analects states that harmony is “the most valuable” as it “made the Way of the Former Kings beautiful, [and was] a guiding standard in all things great and small” (1.12). It is through harmony that the sage-kings were able to establish their empire and rule virtuously in accordance with the Way. Harmony is achieved when human beings find inner peace as well as co-exist with one another and their surroundings in accordance with Confucian ideals. It is important to note that harmony does not entail homogeneity. As pointed out by Ames and Rosemont (1998), harmony is “the art of bringing together with mutual benefit and enhancement without losing their separate and particular identities” (p. 56, italics added). An analogy is a painting of a garden where each item in the painting, such as the flower, bird and river, is distinctive and captivating in itself, yet all the items are harmoniously combined to portray an overall impression of tranquillity and beauty. Through harmony, the self is broadened and deepened an ever-expanding circle of human relatedness (Tu, 1985). Persons of harmonious mentality, as Li (2006) puts it, “see things, and make judgments on these things, in relation, in context, not in isolation or separation” (p. 589).

The inter-dependence of human beings is captured in Hall and Ames (1987, 1998)’s idea of ‘focus-field’. According to them, a person is a ‘focus’ while family relations and sociopolitical orders are the ‘field’ or ‘sphere of influence’. Put otherwise, the field is the area within which an individual experiences and perceives social influences. It is important to draw attention to the symbiotic relationship between the focus and the field. Hall and Ames (1998) explain that the focal individual both constitutes the field and is constituted by the field. An example from the arts to illustrate the focus-field relationship is forum theatre where a scene, initially performed by actors, is changed by members of the audience (known as ‘spect-actors’) who voluntarily step forward to take the place of one of the actors and replay the scene. A spect-actor is therefore the ‘focus’ or the individual who is situated within and influenced by the ‘field’ which is the scene. By allowing the spect-actor to change the situation or outcome of the scene, the spect-actor is not just being influenced by the scene but actively influencing the scene as well.

Harmony includes comprehensively an appreciation of beauty, joy and ethical values that are experienced when one learns and appreciates the arts, whether it is fine or performing arts. The arts, as noted by Carr (1995), “have a key part to play in communicating or explicating the sense of a connection between the temporal and the eternal, the finite and the infinite, the material world and the world of the soul, in human affairs” (p. 95). The close link between the Confucian concept of harmony and music is highlighted by Li (2006):

Therefore, we may conclude that the original meaning of he as harmony comes from the rhythmic interplay of various sounds, either in nature or between human beings, that is musical to the human ear, and that the prototype of he is found in music. From the notion of he as the harmonious interplay of sounds, it is not difficult to see how this can be expanded, by analogous thinking, to mean harmony in other things and hence harmony in general (p. 584).
The Way or a shared vision of human excellence is promoted when the student, through learning and appreciating the arts, achieve internal harmony (joy within oneself) and external harmony (peace and collaboration with others) (Author 1d). First, inner harmony is acquired through the arts when the learners not only “experience joy, beauty, and wonder” but also “develop effective ways of expressing thoughts, knowledge, and feelings” (Upitis, 2011, p. i). Confucius, himself a zither player and music lover, stresses the harmonious state one enjoys from the arts. For example, he shares his own experience after listening to Shao music: “I had no idea that the joy of music could reach such heights” (Analects 7.14). The importance of internal harmony, as exemplified in joy, is also underscored in the Xueji: “Therefore an exemplary person learns [in this manner]: [such a person] accumulates [one’s learning], cultivates [oneself], finds rest [in what one has learnt], and takes the time to leisurely [enjoy what one has learnt]”. The educational goal is not simply the accumulation of knowledge but also the enjoyment of the learning process – it is to harmonise one’s emotions with one’s thinking. The integration of one’s feelings and thinking through finding joy in the arts is asserted by Dewey (1906/1977): “To feel the meaning of what one is doing, and to rejoice in that meaning: to unite in one concurrent fact the unfolding of the inner life and the ordered development of material conditions - that is art” (p. 292, cited in Upitis, 2011, p. 3).

Beyond internal harmony, learning and appreciating the arts also enable one to achieve external harmony through peace and collaboration with others. Confucius notes the relationship between the arts and ethics: “Be inspired by the Songs, take a stand through normative behaviours, and be complete with music” (Analects, 8.8). The ‘feelings’ inspired by the Songs (the ‘Songs’ are poems from the Book of Songs) and music direct one to ‘doing’ by ‘taking a stand’. To ‘take a stand’, in Confucian parlance, is to conduct oneself ethically in society by observing normative behaviours. Confucius elaborates on this point in the following passage:

Analects 17.9 The Master said, “Little ones, why do none of you study the Songs? The Songs can give you inspiration, observation skill, ability to live with others, and means to express grievances. The Songs enable you to serve your father at home and your lord in public. You will learn broadly about the names of birds, beasts, plants and trees.”

The above passage informs us that studying poetry helps one to conduct oneself ethically, whether it is looking and listening (‘inspiration’, ‘observation skills’, ‘learn broadly about the names of birds’ etc.), speaking (‘means to express grievances’), and moving (‘ability to live with others’, ‘serving your father at home’ etc.). The end result is the attainment of external harmony where one is able to co-exist peaceably and collaboratively with other members of society (‘ability to live with others’ etc.) and nature (‘learn broadly about the names of birds, beasts, plants and trees’).

The Xueji also stresses the importance of internal and external harmony in the passage below:

Section VIII [If a student] doe s not learn to play in tune, [one] cannot be accomplished in the stringed instruments; [if a student] does not learn the rhyme and rhythm of poetry, [one] cannot be accomplished in the Book of Odes; [if a student] does not learn the varieties of [ceremonial] clothes, [one] cannot be accomplished in the rituals; [if a student] is not interested [to learn] these arts, [one] cannot find joy in learning.

The ‘arts’ here refer to music (‘accomplished in the stringed instruments’), poetry (‘accomplished in the Book of Odes’) and rituals (‘accomplished in the rituals’). They are part of the ‘six arts’ (liuyi) in ancient China that consists of rituals, music, archery, charioteering, calligraphy or writing, and mathematics. The vision here is an all-rounded
education that celebrates and appreciates human excellence from all fields. Internal harmony is foregrounded in the passage’s reference to finding joy in learning. External harmony, on the other hand, is alluded to in the passage’s point about the need for a learner to master the basics in the arts (‘play in tune’, ‘learn the rhyme and rhythm of poetry’, ‘learn the varieties of [ceremonial] clothes’). We follow Legge (1885) to translate the word *caoman* as “to play in tune”; other translations include “playing his tunes” (Wong, 1976) and “regularly practise playing various stringed instruments” (Yang et al., 2012). The consensus among scholars regarding this passage is the importance of moral self-cultivation: one needs to put in sufficient individual effort to improve incrementally. The reference to “the stringed instruments” in the above passage is apt as it reminds us of a musician who does not play by oneself but is part of an orchestra. With reference to the Confucian notion of harmony as “the harmonious interplay of sounds” (Li, 2006, p. 584), we see here a strong communal aspect to arts in the Confucian tradition. As Fox (1997) succinctly puts it, a Confucian artist is one who “makes new through joining together” (p. 586). In other words, individuals are ‘joined together’ through experiencing the arts to collectively realise and extend a shared vision of human excellence. A good example of someone who manifests internal and external harmony through the arts is Confucius’ disciple, Zengxi. The Analects records Confucius praising Zengxi for playing his zither meditatively, thereby painting a picture of someone who is in tune with himself, people around him, and nature (11.26). By being “inspired by the Songs, taking a stand through normative behaviours, and being complete with music” (Analects, 8.8), Zengxi attains the Way harmoniously. Overall, the Confucian concepts of the Way and harmony are spiritual ideals that propel human beings to search for personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness and greater connectedness to self and others.

To illustrate how a shared vision of human excellence can be promoted through the arts, the next section focuses on an application of Confucian spiritual ideals through music education in a school. We shall discuss music education in two ways: music education for all students and music education in the school orchestra.

First, music education may be promoted to all students in a school so that a shared vision of human excellence can be conveyed to and experienced by them. This is achieved when both inner and external harmony are emphasised: the joy, beauty and wonder of music as well as the importance of cooperation through music. An example is for the teacher to teach the song ‘A Love Song to the World’ to children aged 3-7. Created by musicians Nimo Patel and Daniel Nahmod and described as a song with a “beautiful, heart-opening melody”, the song was inspired by the 21-Day Gratitude Challenge where over 11,000 participants from 118 countries congregated to give thanks (Living Values Education, 2015, p. 1). Focussing on the shared virtue of gratefulness, the song is “a celebration of our spirit and all that is a blessing in life” and “shines the light on all the small things that make up the beautiful fabric of our lives” (ibid.). By learning the song and appreciating its meaning, the aim is for children to not only enjoy the song (achieve inner harmony) but also join hands and hearts with other children in the world to experience and spread gratitude in their lives (achieve external harmony).

A shared vision of human excellence may also be propagated through more formal music education such as participation in a school orchestra. To illustrate this, this section traces the musical, aesthetic and spiritual growth of a fictitious 9th grader, Roberto, who joined his school orchestra as a beginning violinist under the guidance of his conductor, Ms Li. On the first day of class, Ms Li serenaded her students using her violin, winning her an enthusiastic round of applause. Smiling, Ms Li explained that being accomplished on the violin is no easy task. Amongst the many skills required, one has to play with good pitch, recalling the Xueji (Section VIII) passage cited earlier that “[i]f a student does not learn to play in tune, [one] cannot be accomplished in the stringed instruments.” In turn, playing with
good pitch necessitates excellent listening skills and solid technique that can be acquired only through rigorous daily practice. In Confucian terms, ethics and aesthetics are two sides of the same coin (Author 2; Gier, 2001). As noted earlier, the learning and appreciation of the arts enable one to ‘take a stand’ by internalising and demonstrating normative behaviours.

Over the next few weeks, Roberto dutifully attended all the training sessions. Although initially excited, he soon discovered that what looks easy for Ms Li was challenging for him. His sound was scratchy, his hands tired easily and it took strenuous effort for him to play every note in tune. Sensing discouragement, Ms Li reinforced the importance of finding joy even in hard work: as long as students were “reverentially committed to and constantly diligent in [learning]”, there would come a day where “[successful] cultivation (will) come’ (Xueji, Section IX, cited above). Ms Li also asked, “Do you want to listen to me play your favourite tunes, or do you want to play them yourself at our next concert?” “We want to play them ourselves,” the class chorused. Herein lies the unique strength of music education through the orchestra: while knowledge about performance can be acquired through transmission from the teacher, its ultimate aim of learning and joy lies in the students doing it themselves. This requires self-strengthening, internalisation and application of knowledge, all of which are crucial aspects of Confucian moral cultivation and spiritual development. The emphasis on ‘doing’ reminds us of Dewey’s assertion that art is essentially about feeling the meaning of what one is doing.

After months of foundational training, Roberto and his peers finally played with a rather good sense of pitch. Sensing that they were ready, Ms Li handed out a string orchestra score where the students were required to play in split parts, i.e., in harmony with other string players. While the foundational training centred on achieving a personal sense of pitch excellence akin to the attainment of “Confucian personalism” (de Bary, 1983), playing as an ensemble required Roberto and his peers to listen carefully to one another and work together to render a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. This brings to mind Hall and Ames (1987, 1998)’s idea of ‘focus-field’: Roberto was a ‘focus’ which constituted the ‘field’ of the violin section (Author 2). His ability to play in tune impacted the section as much as the other way round; he was inextricably linked to the larger “family” of violins. In turn, this “family” of violins was a ‘focus’ which constituted an even larger ‘field’ of the entire string orchestra; the pitch of the violin section impacted the other instruments as much as the converse. In other words, Roberto had to listen carefully and play in tune with the larger family of violins, which in turn needed to harmonise with other “families” of instruments (i.e., violas, cellos and basses) to form an even larger “family”: the “country” (guojia in Chinese, literally, “big family”).

The string ensemble, therefore, offers a model of education that bears striking parallels to the Confucian ideal of harmony: a communitarian framework that takes the interdependence of human beings as a point of departure. Just as a Confucian person is never a discrete or isolated individual, an orchestral student is always living in dynamic relationships with others. In working with others to achieve the dao of playing in tune, Roberto actively pursued a shared vision of human excellence. A year later, Roberto and his peers achieved such a unified sound that they were ready to play with the entire orchestra, which included not just strings but also woodwinds, brasses and percussion. Roberto’s musical (and ethical) training at that moment took on an added dimension: the need to harmonise with heterogeneous (i.e., non-string) instruments. In Confucian terms, “nations” (that is, individual families of instruments) now have to work together with other “nations” towards “world peace.”

Roberto’s musical experience through his school orchestral programme therefore fits hand in glove with the Confucian vision of excellence: a progression from personal self-cultivation to being in harmony with the family (i.e., all the violins), the country (i.e., all the...
strings), and all nations under Heaven (i.e., the full orchestra). Roberto’s growth is not merely musical, but also ethical and spiritual. Ms Li’s orchestral programme situates him as part of a larger whole and enables him to make sense of himself within a wider framework of meaning. In summary, the orchestra offers Roberto opportunities to experience the exercising of virtues in a socially complex environment, thereby transforming him through the process. It is education that is simultaneously aesthetic, ethical and spiritual.4

Conclusion

This article has elucidated a Confucian aim of learning as one that fosters spiritual development and contests the performativity agenda and school culture. Confucian spirituality underlines the primacy of attaining and propagating the Way or a shared vision of human excellence – an educational goal that is not always measurable, examinable and ‘useful’ in the performative sense. Believing in the perfectibility of human beings, Confucianism teaches the need and potential for human beings to realise and extend the Way on earth. Unlike some conceptions of spirituality that highlights a transcendental dimension to life, Confucian spirituality is grounded in the material world. Confucius emphasises the human world as the source of knowledge and reality, as noted by Hall and Ames (1987):

For Confucius, knowledge is grounded in the language, customs, and institutions that comprise culture. Culture is the given world. Thinking is cultural articulation that renders this givenness effective. There is no knowledge to be gained of a reality which precedes that of culture or transcends its determinations. The ‘world’ is always a human world (p. 67).

Admittedly, the Way as a shared vision of human excellence and guiding discourse may differ from society to society, and from time to time. The Confucian Way, with its specific reference to the Zhou dynasty in ancient China, may not be totally applicable to other communities and/or modern times. Even within Confucianism, its adherents and supporters do not always agree on what constitutes the Way and the forms it should take. It follows that the specific content of the Way and how the Way may be realised and extended, are to be decided by members of a community themselves. In the school context, educators and other stakeholders need to co-construct, interpret, negotiate and advance the exemplary ways of life inherited from their cultural predecessors. Whatever forms the Way takes, the end result should be a shared vision of human excellence for that society that empowers human beings to go beyond the mundane and utilitarian to a search for personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness and greater connectedness to self and others.

References

Author 1a
Author 1b
Author 1c
Author 1d
Author 1 & Colleague
Author 2


Notes

1 Although we have translated *Xueji* literally as ‘Record of Learning’, it should be pointed out that the ancient Chinese character for learning (*xue*) referred to both ‘learning’ (*xue*) and ‘teaching’ (*jiao*) (Yang, 2010). All the passages in the *Xueji* and *Analects* cited in this paper have been translated into English by the first author, unless otherwise stated. In our translation, we have taken into consideration the historical, cultural and philosophical contexts as well as the literary genre of both texts. We have also tried to preserve the original meaning and word pattern as much as possible. Any additions to the translation for the purpose of clarification are marked by square brackets.

2 Besides the *Book of Rites*, the other four classics are *Book of History*, *Book of Songs*, *Book of Changes*, and *Book of the Spring and Autumn Annals*.

3 Besides the *Analects*, the other three books are *Mencius*, *The Great Learning*, and *The Doctrine of the Mean*.

4 Drawing on the work of Ames (2003), we propose that the school orchestral programmes may be thought of as “meliorative aestheticism” (Author 2, p. 405): they provide a cultural and artistic framework whereby students and teachers better themselves, society and civilisation. In the example of Roberto performing in his school orchestra, he does not merely learn about nor talk about virtues; he has to do them in a community of shared meaning. Without hard work, he cannot learn to play in tune and become accomplished in his violin. Without listening, he cannot play in tune with others. Without give and take, he cannot balance and create harmony with other sections of the orchestra. All these are virtues required and nurtured by Roberto’s participation in Ms Li’s orchestra. Through learning and exercising virtues, Roberto acquires what MacIntyre (1981, pp. 175-178) terms “goods which are internal to the practice,” such as the ability to maintain good intonation with oneself and others, and awareness of the larger orchestral whole. Conversely, the lack of virtues prevents Roberto from acquiring any of these “internal goods” (see also, Eno, 1990, p. 207).