Education for the Whole Person in a Modern East Asian Context: “Caring-About the World” as a Form of Self-Love

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Abstract

Purpose: The essay attempts to explore a possibility to conceive the idea of education for the whole person as a way of recovering the old spirit of liberal education or Bildung, yet in a new language.

Design/Approach/Methods: The essay largely consists of two parts. The first part touches upon and diagnoses the current problems with educational culture in modern Korea where youths suffer their divided soul, by employing Rousseau’s notions of two different kinds of self-love, *amour-de-soi* and *amour-propre*. The second part addresses how the pursuit of the whole person as being wholehearted can be a healthy form of self-love mediated by love of the world or other persons.

Findings: The idea of education for the whole person may turn out to be an unfeasible ideal, in the modern condition. Yet, being a whole person as wholehearted can be taken as a regulative ideal that guides our practice in teaching and learning, stimulating us to make an effort to be so despite our knowledge that it is out of reach.
Originality/Value: The essay shows how the idea of education for the whole person can be newly interpreted in modern East Asian context, which can resonate with current problems with education culture in the West as well as around the globe for the age of measurement.

Keywords
East Asian education, self-love, whole person education

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Introduction: Contextualizing the discourse on “education for the whole person”

What seems educationally noteworthy about the way in which the essay “Educating Whole Human Beings” (2019) coauthored by Wortham and others frames and addresses the recently arising movements of “education for the whole person” in various veins is twofold. First, it describes a host of movements, which are responsive to the cultural malaise in contemporary Western society, as an educational project that attempts to “expand the goal of education to include individual flourishing beyond subject matter knowledge and vocational skills” (Wortham et al., 2019, p. 20). As a matter of fact, going beyond the acquisition of subject matter knowledge and vocational skills was traditionally the very idea of education per se, whose spirit had well been formulated in the Western tradition of so-called “liberal education” or “education as self-formation (Bildung).” But this idea has become unfamiliar in the culture of modern schooling where education is taken for granted purely as a means to economic and political utilities. So we may say that the essay above contextualizes the project of “education for the whole person” in the light of a possible recovery of the old language of liberal or humanistic education in a new rhetoric. Second, the essay attempts to formulate the overarching idea of “education for the whole person” in a culturally sensitive and theoretically open-minded manner. For it explicitly states which approach to pursue among the 12 approaches it introduced depends upon the kind of contexts to which we belong. It indicates that the idea of education for the whole person can be developed in different modes and directions with different, possibly incompatible, philosophical assumptions about human nature, human growth, or learning, while sharing some intersecting, if not overarching, educational concerns and concepts among them.

These two possible interpretations of the essay already invite me to engage in conversation on the topic by making me reference my own cultural resources as a Korean scholar. We East Asians have our own resources from tradition about the idea of education for the whole person that goes beyond the acquisition of subject matter knowledge and vocational skills. Let me quote from a classical Confucian text, Classic of Rites, from as early as about B.C. 500. In the chapter on education, it says:
The gentleman says, “A great personality does not necessarily fit one for any particular office. A great character does not necessarily qualify one for any particular service. Great honesty does not necessarily make a man keep his word. Great regard for time does not necessarily make one punctual.” To know these four things is to know the really fundamental things in life. In offering sacrifices to the river gods, the ancient kings always began with worshipping the gods of the rivers before worshipping the gods of the sea. A distinction was made between the source and the outlet and to know this distinction is to know how to attend to the essentials. (Confucius, 1938, pp. 250–251)

There are two points I want to draw out from the above message in reference to the idea of education for a whole person. First, being a (whole) person of great character is one thing, and being a successful or competent person for a certain office is another thing. Second, it is essential to know that the former is the very source of the latter, just as the river gods is that of the gods of the sea. These two points may be considered foundational to the Confucian ethics of education according to which “learning for oneself” is always regarded as prior to “learning for others.” Learning for oneself here means learning to cultivate one’s heart-mind (心) for being wholehearted, which is expected to be pursued for its own sake, whereas learning for others is learning for the service of others, which is considered the contingent consequence of the former. This classical formulation of an East Asian version of liberal education is hard to conceive for today’s education even in Korean society, supposedly the most Confucian society among the East Asian countries.

However, I still want to test out this idea to see if the Confucian cultivation of the heart-mind for wholeheartedness can be a valid virtue for today’s education in Korea, although the term “wholeheartedness” needs to be reformulated, given a dominant modern view of the mind which is supposed to be self-critical, separate from the body and heart. What sort of virtue could the wholeheartedness be to our modern sensibility? We can say that wholeheartedness can be a virtue if ambivalence or dividedness is considered a disease of the mind; our mind may be said to be healthy as long as it is wholehearted. Here being wholehearted can mean to have a will that is undivided. The wholehearted persons are fully settled as to what they want and what they care about. With regard to any conflict of dispositions and inclinations within themselves, they do not have doubts or reservations as to where they stand. This sense of wholeheartedness, even if it is not that easy to achieve for us moderns, is what enables us to feel at home with ourselves since we feel now sure of, or confident about, ourselves in our attitude toward ourselves or who we are.

Then, what prevents our youngsters from being wholehearted in the modern time? Why is it so hard for them to settle as to what they want or what they care about? There have been two traditional diagnoses. First, many Korean educators often say that it is because youngsters today are so selfish that they care only about the satisfaction of their own desires, neglecting duties to others; in their view, it leaves them split and dissatisfied with themselves since it is almost
impossible that they fulfill all of their desires. Second, other Koreans would say that the obstacle to the youngsters being wholehearted derives from the instrumental nature of the way they pursue things; they seek things not for their own sake but for other purposes the things lead them into. For example, they study hard only to obtain good scores or enter good colleges. Here the act of pursuit (studying) is likely to be external to who and how they are; the activity does not affect or constitute what they may think to be important to them. This means that the instrumental manner of their pursuit would alienate them from who and how they are. It constantly leaves them out of touch, or not being at one, with themselves.

These old diagnoses used to appeal to us, but I find them ill-directed. First, to seek one’s own desires does not necessarily lead them to be split or dissatisfied with themselves; rather it can make their pursuit dynamic, vital, and even creative since it is motivated by them. And to seek things for instrumental reasons appears unavoidable to us, at least to a certain extent, who live in a highly organized technological society of modernity; it has become part of our life condition. Thus, to sweepingly demonize as morally corrupt the pursuit of one’s own desires or the pursuit of desires for instrumental reasons, as many of East Asian educationalists tend to do, does not help us much in envisioning future education.

Then, what is it exactly that prevents our youngsters from being wholehearted? My hypothetical answer, which comes from the insight I gained from Frankfurt’s words in *The Reasons of Love* (2004), is that they are divided in themselves because they don’t know what desires they are to pursue and how to pursue them. In other words, they do not know what and how to care about in such a way as to make them happy and free. In Frankfurt’s words, they don’t know how to take themselves seriously and how to love themselves genuinely (2004, pp. 10–11). These wordings may sound too common-sensical or too old-fashioned to some ears, but to me they sound refreshingly powerful by reminding me of the Confucian spirit of learning for oneself introduced earlier. According to Frankfurt, if I know what is good for me to desire as important to myself, and how to desire it, it will give me a sense of direction in my life since it will lead me to be willingly committed to it in a more consistent, wholehearted, and caring manner. And this commitment itself is what constitutes the meaning of my life. What is at stake here is the (spiritual) nature of one’s relation to oneself as a form of self-love.

Therefore, in this essay, I will explore what it means for us to be wholehearted in terms of self-love as an educative form of self-relation, and why this form of wholeheartedness is important in (post-)modern education. In doing so, I want to contribute to developing a conceptually plausible account of selfhood (self-relation) on which any new education for the whole person is supposed to be based. But, before embarking on this task, I will describe a problematic educational phenomenon in Korea as a context to which my idea in this article is designed to respond, especially in terms of Rousseau’s concept of two kinds of self-love. This
will specifically show why we need to go beyond education for well-being. Lastly, I draw upon Frankfurt’s account of self-love as promising conceptual resources for the project of education for the whole person.

**Divided souls between two kinds of self-love: In the Korean context of education**

Korea is well-known for its high ranking in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) international competition for the academic achievement of K–12 students (Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation, 2016; OECD, 2014, 2018). Korean parents are also famous for enthusiasm for their children’s education. But behind this triumphant success story of the nation, there was a huge cultural drive that has accelerated the dehumanization process among Korean youth to the extent that even elementary school students were said to have a strong impulse to commit suicide due to their poor academic achievement (National Statistics Office of Korea [NSOK], 2018). It leads us to rethink of our aspiration to “education for well-being.” What does it mean for us to live well? How different is a successful life from a fulfilling or happy life? On the other hand, is not a fulfilling life often regarded as an unhappy life, even if being meaningful? This ambivalence with the term “well-being” asks us to go beyond it and seek a new educational ideal. Let me be more specific about this claim with the Korean case.

There may be various forms of dehumanization and various ways to identify and diagnose the source of the dehumanization with Korean students described here (NSOK, 2018). In this essay, I am concerned with a specific form of dehumanization and its diagnosis which have to do with Korean youths in particular who are exposed to a long period of extreme competitiveness in their school lives. Even successful university students I encounter on campus often confess that they feel lost about their lives; they don’t know what to do with their lives. It is not that they suffer lack of ambitions and aspirations that are worth pursuing for their lives. There may be plenty of them. They know this and even know what those worthwhile purposes are. But the problem is that they are not just theirs, but their parents’ or the society’s. This means that they don’t find themselves particularly happy in pursuing those ambitions because they feel forced to pursue them not out of their passion but out of their fear of being left behind or not being accepted by society. Even the students who are very good at competition don’t find themselves happy about being in that position. A bigger worry is that even if they have courage to refuse the meaningless competitions they happen to be driven into, they say they don’t know what else they should do. They ask back to us, “Can you tell me how I can find my passion for life? How do I know if that is what I want when I find it?” It looks that the long exposure to a series of competitions set up by society has made them completely lose a sense of connection with themselves. In Frankfurt’s words, they don’t know how “to take themselves seriously” (2004, p. 18).
Although there can be many factors behind this phenomenon, I boldly attribute to it one factor, namely, Korea’s uniquely collective culture where human relationship is still morally charged in one’s subconsciousness in accordance with conventional norms. The Korean youths under this collective culture tend to view themselves as appropriate or inappropriate, worth being accepted or not, depending upon how well they succeed in living up to what others expect them to do, whether it may be their parents or society at large. This culture used to have its own virtue and integrity when it was placed in a traditional order of social setting where everybody had their place in society to be born with and to live in. But when it is placed in the modern world where competition among equals for one’s social station becomes the universal rule of the game, that is, winning or losing is a matter of high stakes for one’s social station, it creates educationally a very problematic phenomenon. In the old days, living up to others’ expectations was a way of being virtuous for one’s own social station, but in modern days, it turns out to be a way of alienating oneself. The more we try to live up to societal expectations, that is, to win in the competition, the further we are out of touch with ourselves. But we cannot stop trying to live up to them, for failing to do so makes us feel ourselves not worth living. This is why failure sometimes leads youth into suicidal acts. Thus, whether successful or not in living up to societal expectations, Korean youngsters all look like unhappy souls surrounded by the hostile world. How has this happened?

I find one way of making sense of this phenomenon with Korean youths in Rousseau’s analysis of the modern man called “bourgeois” with his notion of “amour-propre.” Rousseau is considered to be at the source of the tradition that replaces virtue and vice as the causes of a man being good or bad, happy or miserable, with such pairs of opposites as sincere/insincere, authentic/inauthentic, inner-directed/other-directed, real self/alienated self (Bloom, 1979, p. 4). This means that the old notion of the good life where virtue is pursued for one’s happiness is replaced by the new notion of good life where authenticity is pursued for one’s happiness (Taylor, 1991, p. 27). Rousseau’s notion of authenticity is explained in relation to two kinds of self-love, amour-propre and amour-de-soi. And the misery of the modern bourgeois is said to derive from a division between these two kinds of self-love within them, division within a man’s soul that results from their bodily and spiritual dependence on another man. This is a division that ruptures one’s original unity or wholeness or peace of mind, and the educational ideal of authenticity is directed to the very recovery of this unity or wholeness.

Then, what are these two kinds of self-love, amour-de-soi and amour-propre, described by Rousseau? Amour-de-soi is a self-love in an absolute sense; I love myself just because it is me, myself. This is a kind of self-love that is perfectly natural and healthy, and does no harm to others. It is an utterly benign psychic force which seeks one’s self-preservation and well-being, but has no interest in outstripping or hurting others, as often shown in the way a little baby loves herself or in the way a savage in primitive society loves himself. It can even be developed into an actively
benevolent force as the source of our conscience and compassion, as we are growing up, allowing us to see the same vulnerability in others as common to us (Bloom, 1979, p. 19; Neuhouser, 2008, pp. 176–177). On the other hand, *amour-propre* is a self-love in a relative sense; I love myself because I am better than others on something. This is a kind of self-love on the basis of comparison with others; I deserve being loved more for those merits. This can be potentially harmful not only to others but also to oneself because it is primarily interested in winning others for self-preservation (Bloom, 1979, p. 11). Hence it inevitably leads us into conflicts among men, by forcing us to use one another as means to our own ends. It defines one’s self-interest and self-preservation in terms of others. This selfish kind of self-love is the very source of human problems, our misery and unhappiness. But, according to Rousseau, we moderns cannot avoid it. *Amour-propre* is a uniquely modern phenomenon because of our modernist desire for universal equality which is the very condition of our comparison with others; we want to view ourselves as equal to others, which tends to trigger us in turn to compare ourselves with others with a wish to see ourselves worth being loved for being better than others from an objective perspective. This is a newly created desire in self-conscious modern man, which in itself can be said to be admirable since it can be grown into a sense of self-pride by motivating one to excel at something. But it can also remain merely a source of misery in the form of vanity if it leads us only to seek others’ recognition for our worthiness.

This account of two kinds of self-love allows us to see the nature of unhappiness Korean youths suffer that was described earlier; they suffer from their *amour-propre* or, more precisely, a self-dividedness caused by their strong *amour-propre* which was developed from early in their life by constant exposure to high competitions or comparison with others. In other words, competition causes *amour-propre*, that is, a relative self-love, in them, which is the very source of their misery. Then, how does Korean youths’ strongly developed *amour-propre* lead them into self-alienation as a form of dehumanization, that is, not knowing what they want from their life and viewing it only in terms of others? Now let me introduce more of Rousseau’s account in *Emile*.

Tears are usually a baby’s language and naturally express her physical discomfort, asking for help from adults. The parent responds by satisfying a real need of the baby (Bloom, 1979, p. 10). At some point, however, the child is likely to recognize that her tears have the effect of making things serve her through the intermediary of adults. Once the world responds to her wishes by means of the adults, her will can make things move to satisfy the desires of adults. At this point, the baby loses interest in providing herself with things she was originally interested in. Her inner motive to become strong enough to get for herself the things, which others now provide for her, is transformed into a desire to control the instrument which provides her with those things (Bloom, 1979, pp. 11–15). Her primary concern with her physical needs or things in the world is transformed into a passion to control the will of adults. Her tears become commands and frequently no
longer are related to her real needs but only to testing her power over adults. She cannot stop it from raining by crying but can make adults change their mind. She becomes aware of will. She knows that wills, as opposed to necessity, are subject to command. Suddenly her relation to things or the world is transformed into her moral relation to the adults. She quickly learns that for her life control over man is more useful than adaptation to things. Thus, the disposition of the adults toward her replaces her bodily needs and interest in things as her primary concern; she tries to please adults to make them her allies that serve her will. She seeks for power over men rather than for the use of things; she becomes a skillful psychologist who is able to manipulate others.

When we foresee the possibility of changing others’ wills, we start to justify our blame and hence anger for others; nature does not have intentions and man does. Anger is caused by others’ intentional wrong. Thus, our natural and healthy self-love and self-esteem gives way to a self-love relative to other men’s opinions of ourselves. We can esteem ourselves only if others esteem us. And we make an impossible demand that others should care for us more than they care for themselves. This is the picture of the doubling or dividing of self-love in a modern man, according to Rousseau. It is one of the few distinctively human phenomena from which flow anger, pride, vanity, resentment, revenge, jealousy, competition, and so on, all those passions that make us unhappy as the source of human problems (Bloom, 1979, p. 11).

Thus, according to Rousseau, once *amour-propre* is awakened within us as children, we do not respond to our natural needs anymore but to our desires which have been shaped by our relation with adults. We become subject to unnatural desires that are unnecessarily created by the illusion based on the relationship with adults. If we have power over them, our desire would be easily fulfilled. If not, we would remain miserable. This is how self-alienation takes place and is further developed. Thus, according to Rousseau, to avoid this psychological catastrophe on the part of modern man, the child must always do what she wants to do, while being protected from societal interference, such as competition, at least until she grows up to a certain age. She should also want only what is necessary to her or what is achievable within her own power. This means she needs to learn how to adapt herself to things of necessity, which is what a genuine human strength means, in Rousseau’s view. But this seems to describe a kind of educational condition that is exactly opposite to the condition in which most of Korean youth are raised.

It is not exaggeration to say that most of Korean youngsters’ lives are shaped by exams, evaluations, and others’ opinions of them; their lives are constantly ranked by them. Yet I don’t think that we, living in modern society, can be completely free from competition. I also think that competition per se is not necessarily bad to us or human civilization. It could lead us into individual excellences, which can in turn be a source of good self-pride. The problem with the Korean case rather lies in its institutional condition where competitions are not a matter of
individual choice but that of the entire life condition. What is worse, the Korean parents are overzealous with their children’s education, too willing to accommodate their children’s tears. Children are learning very early on in their lives that their control over adults is more useful than adaptation to things. By this process, society at large, parents in particular, determines the structure of children’s desire, which has not much to do with their primary bodily or spiritual needs. What should be noted here is that there are two senses in which our children depend upon others. First, they depend upon others in the sense that they need to manipulate them to fulfill their desire. Second, more importantly, they also depend upon others in the sense that their desires are not theirs, but others’, meaning they have internalized others’ gaze upon themselves and tend to objectify themselves in terms of others’ desires. Thus, if they find themselves failing to live up to others’ expectations, it is not others but they themselves who would blame them for the failure or who cannot bear the failure. This is why so many frustrated Korean youngsters tend to kill themselves. They perceive their lives as not worth living; they cannot bear their existence. We can see here that Korean youngsters alienate themselves to the extent that their natural self-love for self-preservation, that is, their _amour-de-soi_, is fully wiped out from within, leading into a complete self-denial.

I pointed earlier to the collective culture in Korea as part of what is to be blamed for the Korean youth’s psychological suffering. It is because the collective culture as a premodern remnant emphasizes and celebrates the harmony of relationship in a group, which, I think, tends to contribute to the formation of _amour-propre_ within children very early in their lives, especially when it is combined with the modern culture of competition. It means that in the Confucian Korean culture, children’s attunement to adults’ expectation, which is part of the psychological mechanism for corruption in Rousseau’s account, tends to be regarded as virtue, rather than sowing the seed of corruption. The dominance of this cultural sentiment in child-rearing tends to make the psychological phenomenon of Korean youths described by Rousseau invisible to us, the phenomenon of how adults’ dispositions toward the child replace her bodily needs and interests in things as her primary concern.

How can we relieve this dehumanization process from Korean youths, then? How can we help them recover their _amour-de-soi_, absolute sense of self-love? I think it can be relieved if the Korean youths can recover their intrinsic interest in things as well as in themselves, which can keep them authentic by being in touch with themselves. However, Rousseau’s notion of authenticity, that is, being in touch with oneself or inner voice within oneself, is often rightly suspected for its (too) romantic concept of “nature” or “selfhood” by postmodernist thinkers. The full recovery of the wholeness in our relation to oneself may not be a plausible educational aim anymore. The dividedness between _amour-de-soi_ and _amour-propre_ would not disappear but always remain there, to a certain extent, in the selfhood of the Korean youths today. Then what
can be our alternative? I think that one alternative may be found if we can conceive self-love as *amour-de-soi* in a new way, that is, an idea of self-love in a self-reflective and self-critical mode. This is the topic to turn to next.

**Self-love as caring-about oneself in relation to love of the world**

This essay attempts to find a way of responding to the phenomenon, unique to Korea or East Asia in particular, with a hope to resonate with some of the prevalent problems around the globe. In this second part, I will propose that the discourse on “wholeness” or “purposiveness” in education may be better addressed if it can be formulated in terms of the question of how to (trans)form selfhood or self-relation. The latter may have to do with such ethical questions of “Who am I?” or “How should I live?” which are closely connected to our concern with *what to care about* in conducting our life since *caring-about* is indispensably foundational as an activity that connects and binds us to ourselves as a basic structure of individual specificity of one’s personal life. I think this formulation can lead educators to refocus themselves to cultivate a kind of knowledge orientation that is related to the shaping of each student’s preferences and to the guidance of their conduct, telling them what they need to know about *what* and *how* they should value. This means that what young people need to know from schools is not just objective knowledge of subject matter but *how* to care about it, or not just what they want or desire, but what they regard as important to themselves. This is a kind of self-knowledge in an evaluative mode, that is, various nonmoral modes of normativity that bear upon the conduct of life in the sense that it gives an order to the desires for them to pursue in their conduct. To make this formulation conceptually sound, I will try to clarify what it means for us to care about ourselves in the form of self-love by following Frankfurt’s analysis in detail.

What does it mean for us to care about ourselves or to take ourselves seriously, according to Frankfurt? By criticizing those who treat “self-love” merely negatively and distinguishing “self-love” from “self-indulgence” which tends to be motivated predominantly by *an interest in satisfying* our own inclinations and desires rather than by care for *what is genuinely important* to ourselves (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 78), Frankfurt defines self-love as the same as “care about oneself.” What is so helpful about Frankfurt’s definition of self-love in *The Reasons of Love* (2004) for our purpose is that he attempts to conceptually construct what it means for us to love ourselves without bringing in philosophically arcane and technical terms on a topic that is notoriously questionable to be dealt with philosophically. He tries to do it especially by characterizing self-love as being aligned with love of others, whether others may be persons or things. This conceptual association of self-love with love of others in terms of their similarities and dissimilarities is very useful and crucial to his attempt as well as to our purpose. Thus, following Frankfurt, we may say that our self-love is conceptually (or even ontologically) connected to our love of anything at all in this
world in the sense that our self-love can be made intelligible only when it is mediated by our love of others. Let me show how this is the case.

According to Frankfurt (2004, pp. 79–80), there are four conceptually necessary features as the nature of one’s love for another person, as shown best in parents’ love for their children. First, one’s love for a person is a disinterested or selfless concern for the well-being of the person who is loved (or the thing that is loved). Second, it is a special kind of concern that is personal in its nature, being focused on the person who is loved as a concrete individual; this means that the person who is loved is loved for herself as such or for the way she is, not as an instance of a type. She is considered irreplaceable by the one who loves her. Thirdly, the lover takes the interest of the beloved as her own. It means that the lover identifies with her beloved or the well-being of her beloved. Fourthly, the love for another person is normally not a matter of choice or decision, but determined by the conditions that are out of the lover’s control; it is usually given with involuntary attraction to it, no matter how painful it may be.

What is noted about these four features of love for another person is that they are all evaluative in the sense that they involve the questions of whether or how much the beloved person is important to me, or how much I will be committed to or stand behind, or who and how I am. In other words, they are all about the quality of the relationship between the beloved person (or thing) and myself. In this sense, we can say that the process of asking what or who I will care about is not a cognitive or epistemological process, nor a volitional process, but is a practical, deliberative, or existential process. For it is the process in which a new relationship between the beloved person or thing and the actor is being formed and developed. We can even say that to love someone or to care about a thing is a process that makes us being not good, but meaningful through our investment of ourselves toward the beloved’s existence. Yet, it could be at the same time a process that makes us disappointed with ourselves since we cannot always be fully committed to the person or the thing we love. In short, the process of one’s love for another person or a thing is the very process of who and how I am becoming either in the form of self-formation or self-discovery.

After enumerating the four conceptual features of love for another person, Frankfurt tries to apply all of them to the idea of self-love to come up with what self-love is. And then he claims that the latter is not that different from the former (2004, p. 82). In fact, he says that self-love is the purest form of love for others since there is no discrepancy between the interests of the self-lover and the interests of the person to whom one’s self-love is devoted. In self-love, according to Frankfurt, again as shown in parents’ love for their children, one’s devotion is not primarily motivated by any extraneous ambition; we value our own interest or good for its own sake, just as parents value their children’s good for its own sake. And in self-love, “the interests, like the true interests of anyone, are governed and defined by what one loves” (2004, p. 85); it is what a person
loves that determines what is important to her. Thus, it is obvious that a person’s self-love is simply *disinterested* concern for whatever it is that the person loves. And we can say that someone who loves herself displays and demonstrates that love just by loving what she loves. What we should notice here is that there must be something else that a person loves, something that cannot be identified as herself in order for there to be anything at all to which his self-love is actually devoted; our self-love is always *mediated* by what we love. In this sense, we can say that self-love is primarily derivative from or constructed out of the love that people have for things that are not identical with themselves. Or more accurately, self-love is manifested only by love for persons or things other than oneself. This is why it is often said that *how* one loves another person or thing reflects how she loves herself. Here we witness a full circle’s being made in which self-love and love for others support each other.

However, according to Frankfurt (2004, p. 87), given the fact that it is possible that a person may love himself even though he does not actually love anything else, as in the case when a person believes that he loves something when in fact he does not love at all, all we can say is that the most basic form of self-love consists of nothing more than *one’s desire* to love. For Frankfurt, self-love is at its core a desire to love. It means that self-love consists of a person’s *desire* to have goals that he must accept as his own and to which he is devoted for their own sake rather than merely for their instrumental values. In other words, in Frankfurt’s view, a person who loves herself is someone who *wants* to have a goal *as her own* for her life that she is willing to pursue *for its own sake* since it is important to her.

But, why does anyone love herself in this way? Why is loving so important to us? It may be because the desire to love makes one’s life meaningful; self-love in this sense may be said to be one’s existential desire to make sense of one’s existence in life. Thus, Frankfurt says that loving something as a form of self-love, that is, to care about something for its own sake, so as to make it important to us, provides us with aims and ambitions, thereby making it possible for us to formulate courses of action that are not entirely pointless (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 92). It enables us to conceive activities that are meaningful in the sense that they have some purpose, and thereby the act of loving something itself endows us with happiness and meaning. If this is the case, the meaning of life can be said not what is to be discovered but to be created and endowed by our act of loving.

Therefore, we can say now that, even if a person does not know what she loves and does not know what her true interests are, she may still demonstrate that she loves herself by making a determined effort to understand what is fundamentally important to herself in an attempt to become clear about what she loves and what that love requires (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 88). We can call this self-love a desire to *be wholehearted*, not to be fragmented: self-love as an attempt to find and decide on which impulses within herself she wants to stand behind as what she loves to pursue for its own sake. The wholehearted person is fully settled as to what she wants and what she cares about. But it does
not mean that the person is merely being single-minded. The degree to which a person’s heart-mind is whole or pure is not a function of how many things the person wills, but how the things are willed (Frankfurt, 2004, p. 96). What matters here is the quality of one’s will or its integrity. In conclusion, in Frankfurt’s view, self-love consists in the purity of one’s wholehearted will (2004, p. 95).

Why is this ideal of self-love so important? Why is this desirable or admirable from the educational perspective? I think that this ideal has its role in constituting both the structure of one’s volitional rationality and the mode of freedom that this structure of the will ensures; without it, our lives are susceptible of behavioral ineffectiveness and irrationality in our practical conduct. Thus, it can minimize suffering from unnatural desires in our young students that have unnecessarily been shaped by society or the parents. Self-love also seems important because it is the same as being satisfied with ourselves, according to Frankfurt (2004, p. 97). This self-satisfaction is not the same as self-complacency nor is it the feeling that we have accomplished something valuable; it is the condition where we willingly accept and acknowledge who we are as we are. Thus, it can help young students be equipped with independent minds in relation to the world to the extent that they desire only what is achievable within their own power and with their effort. It may not make their lives good but meaningful in the sense that they can make their lives in that way good for them to live; what is at stake is their subjective relation to themselves.

Education for wholeheartedness is not directed to setting up normative purposes of the life for young students, but to motivating them to examine and seek what they are to care about in their lives. Here our educational focus should not be placed on what students are to care about but on how their acts of caring create the value of what they care about. The value of something they care about is self-generated by the very actions of theirs. The very acts of their pursuit create some significance and meaning for their lives, which in turn makes them happy. In this sense, we can say that being able to care about something or to love something for its own sake is the source and the ground of their practical rationality. Thus, our task as teachers in education for wholeheartedness does not lie in how to set up the ultimate purpose for students and to make them achieve it, but in how to motivate them to have the purpose of their lives in the first place. The latter will get them involved in building up themselves a subjective relationship with what they care about, whether it may be a person, a thing, or an idea.

**Conclusion: Roles of teaching in education for the whole person**

It is mentioned in the introduction that education for the whole person is directed to expanding “the goal of education to include individual flourishing beyond subject matter knowledge and vocational skills.” I think that Frankfurt’s concept of self-love helps us clarify what the “beyond” here could mean. Let me conclude this article by briefly touching upon the pedagogical implications of
his concept of self-love, especially on the relation between “individual flourishing” and “subject matter knowledge and vocational skills” in education for the whole person.

First, Frankfurt’s claim that one’s self-love is to be mediated by one’s love of the world that is not identical with oneself can be read to imply that education for “individual flourishing” is better accommodated by the mediation of “subject matter and vocational skills” that young students are supposed to acquire from schools. More strongly put, students’ individual flourishing can be best cultivated when they are motivated to love subject matter or vocational skills.

However, second, the goal of education for the whole person is still supposed to go “beyond subject matter and vocational skills.” This seems to ask teachers to do something more or special in delivering the subject matter or vocational skills to young students in order to teach them to love the subject matter and vocational skills. They are asked to humanize subject matter or vocational skills in such a way that students will be emotionally attached, or subjectively connected, to them for themselves. This may mean that teachers are supposed to mediate subject matter or vocational skills through which young students are led into an imagined world of possibility that they have never encountered before, yet cannot help being drawn to and loving. This may be the world that can signal to young people that there should be something more to what they pursue in their lives for social success and social reward: its existential significance to their lives. How can teachers play this role exactly, then?

Biesta (2016) gives us some insight in this regard. He holds that teachers in their classroom teaching should do more than just facilitate students’ learning of subject matter; they need to be able to have something new to say or something new to bring from outside students (their ability or potentials) as a form of transcendence (2016, p. 56). For Biesta, “teaching is about presenting students with something that is neither derivable from nor validated by what students already know” (2016, p. 50), but with something that the students can take as enigma which is beyond their cognition and comprehension. By making a distinction between objective truth of and subjective truth of subject matter as the difference between a set of propositions that we assert to be true and a truth we have managed to give a place in our existence or between what is true and what matters, Biesta holds that a teacher needs to show to her students how she relates what she knows to her own life: becoming an exemplar in showing her subjective truth of subject matter. Hopmann (2007, pp. 115–116) calls this as a distinction between “matter” and “meaning” or contents and teachers’ meaning of them, which is critical to teaching for the educational purpose of Bildung. This means that, in dealing with given contents, teachers need to be able to provide “educative substance” that opens up the world that students can directly meet. Biesta holds in a post-humanistic spirit that this would grant the teacher an educational authority as “a weak existential power, a power that relies on her interactions and encounters” with the world, as opposed to “a strong metaphysical power” which tell students what is right or wrong (2016, p. 53).
Given this insight about teachers’ role, education for the whole person can be easily aligned with the German idea of Bildung or the idea of liberal education in the West, even if it may demand the further development of the latter in a post-modern spirit. Interestingly enough, the description of teachers’ role above also resonates with a Confucian ideal of teachers depicted in the ancient text of Classic of Rites. It is said:

Therefore in his teaching, the superior man (teacher) guides his students but does not pull them along; he urges them to go forward and does not suppress them; he opens the way, but does not take them to the place. Guiding without pulling makes the process of learning gentle; urging without suppressing makes the process of learning easy; and opening the way without leading the students to the place makes them think for themselves. Now if the process of learning is made gentle and easy and the students are encouraged to think for themselves, we may call the man a good teacher. (Confucius, 1938, p. 247)

There are many phrases and points to be unpacked in the passage above to make what they say about the role of a good teacher clearer to us. But we can sense from the words themselves that there are plenty of cultural resources in East Asia for us to make use of in re-envisioning and formulating the idea of education for the whole person today in combination with Western tradition of liberal education and its (post-)modern reinterpretation of the tradition. All seems to depend upon our courage and wisdom to re-live the words with modern sensibility in our everyday practice of teaching to motivate the young generations to love the world in their own ways.

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