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## **DRAFT**

### **Abstract**

Offering an ethical foundation for the concept of global citizenship education, this paper draws upon the ideas of neo-Confucian thinker Wang Yangming. Focussing on UNESCO's goal to help learners acquire a sense of belonging to a broader community and humanity, this paper elucidates Wang's concept of innate knowledge (*liangzhi*). The article explains how Wang posits a shared humanity that is premised on moral knowledge inherent in all human beings. He further argues for the extension of innate knowledge by eliminating our selfish tendencies and manifestations that alienate us from other people. Two major implications for global citizenship arising from Wang's ideas are highlighted. First, Wang's notion of innate knowledge, by affirming human dignity, equality and potential, underpins and constitutes the vision of shared humanity in global citizenship. Secondly, Wang's recommended pedagogical approaches promote global citizenship by foregrounding the moral cultivation of learners.

### **Keywords:**

global citizenship education; innate knowledge; neo-Confucianism; UNESCO; Wang Yangming

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### **Introduction**

Global citizenship education (hereinafter GCE), catalysed by the sustained publicity and initiatives from the United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), has garnered substantial attention worldwide. In the midst of an array of new and ongoing (inter)national programmes and partnerships across all levels to advance GCE, one area remains under-developed: the theoretical underpinnings for the concept and practice of GCE. Commenting on this point, Bamber, Lewin and White (2018) posit that there is currently "only cursory analysis of the theoretical foundations" for GCE (p. 206). Scholars have noted that the term GCE remains vague, evolving and contested, a 'fuzzy catch-all phrase' (Mannion *et al.*, 2011, p. 1) that means different things to different people at different times. Accompanying the ambiguity and fluidity of GCE are multiple and competing theories, typologies and ideologies on global citizenship and GCE (Andreotti, 2006; Dill, 2013; Evans *et al.*, 2009; Gaudelli, 2009; Marshall, 1992; Oxley & Morris, 2013; Veugelers, 2011). It is noteworthy that the majority of the existing scholarly works, thinkers and resources for GCE originate from and are situated within Anglophone histories, traditions and settings. Reviewing the current literature, Misiaszek and Misiaszek (2016) conclude that the existing conceptions for GCE are "framed within Western tenets of citizenship" (p. 18). Even the notion of citizenship itself stems from the Greek-Roman settings and is closely associated with liberal democracy that plays up an individual's civil, political and social rights (Choo, 2015; Held *et al.*, 1999; Heater, 2004; Marshall, 1992; Pocock, 1995; Turner, 1993).

What is comparatively under-explored in the extant research on GCE are non-Western sources that offer potential ethical basis, justification, insights and directions for GCE. Addressing this research gap, this article presents an ethical foundation for GCE that is derived from ancient Chinese philosophy. Specifically, this paper sketches the ideas of neo-Confucian thinker Wang Yangming (1472–1529) who was an eminent scholar and philosopher from the Ming dynasty. The philosophy of Wang Yangming has been selected for two main reasons. First, among the Confucian thinkers, Wang stands out for his emphasis on the interconnections between humans, as this paper shall elaborate later. To be sure, Confucius and his followers such as Mencius have also advocated the ideal of shared humanity through concepts such as ‘ren’ (benevolence or humaneness) and innate moral goodness (for details, see Author, XXXX). However, they did not explicitly argue for a vision of global citizenship that is premised on innate knowledge inherent in all human beings like Wang. Secondly, although other historical writers such as Appiah (2006) and Nussbaum (2017) have also made the same connection as Wang, the extant literature on global citizenship has paid relatively limited attention to Eastern philosophical ideas. Hence it is opportune and significant to present a Confucian perspective on the topic with a focus on the thought of Wang.

Given the plurality and controversy over the definitions and interpretations of GCE coupled with space constraints, this paper is unable to discuss and critique all the definitions of GCE in the extant literature. The paper shall instead focus on the concept of GCE as forwarded by UNESCO. The reason for the focus on UNESCO’s formulation is that its understanding of GCE is arguably the most widely-disseminated and accepted conception in the contemporary world. Yet this conception, as this paper shall argue later, lacks a clearly articulated moral underpinnings for global citizenship. It is therefore salient to examine this notion and propose an ethical foundation for GCE. This essay is structured as follows: an introduction to UNESCO’s conception of GCE, Wang Yangming’s concept of innate knowledge, and major implications for GCE.

## **UNESCO’s Conception of GCE**

According to UNESCO (2015), global citizenship refers to

a sense of belonging to a broader community and humanity. It emphasises political, economic, social and cultural interdependency and interconnectedness, between the local, the national and the global (p. 14).

It is evident that UNESCO’s construal of GCE is congruent with a cosmopolitan orientation. Such an orientation shows up shared humanity and universal moral obligations rather than human differences such as ethnicity, religion and state citizenship are emphasised (Brown & Held, 2010). Following the definition of global citizenship, GCE seeks to “empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies” (UNESCO, 2019a, para 1). To achieve the above objective, GCE aims to instill in learners three core conceptual dimensions: cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural (UNESCO, 2015). First, the cognitive dimension underlines the acquisition of essential knowledge and critical thinking of issues and mutually dependent relationships between nations and peoples at the local, national, regional and international levels (UNESCO, 2015). Students should acquire “deep knowledge of global issues and universal values such as justice, equality, dignity and respect” (UNESCO, 2016, p. 3). Secondly, the socio-emotional dimension centres on the importance of possessing a “sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, empathy, solidarity and respect for differences and diversity” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 15). Thirdly, the behavioural dimension pertains to the

effective and responsible actions across levels that work towards a more harmonious and sustainable world.

UNESCO (2019c) explains that its approach to GCE is holistic, transformative, contextualised and value based. It is holistic in the sense that it integrates the learning content and outcomes, teaching methods and the learning environment in formal, non-formal and informal learning settings; transformative by aiming to transform both the learners and society; contextualised by adjusting to cultural and local conditions, and value based by advocating “universally shared values such as non-discrimination, equality, respect and dialogue” (UNESCO, 2019c, para 2). The end product is for learners to recognise how “we fit into and interact with the world around us and develop intrapersonal and interpersonal skills” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 22). In addition, both cognitive and non-cognitive skills and behavioural capacities are underscored by UNESCO (2016). Besides cognitive abilities such as critical and creative thinking, learners also need non-cognitive skills such as empathy and communicative capabilities to relate to people of diverse cultures. Complementing the cognitive and non-cognitive skills are behavioural capacities that comprise actions that are collaborative, responsible and gearing towards collective good (UNESCO, 2013). It can be observed that GCE as envisaged by UNESCO encompasses not just the global competency that covers the aptitudes for GCE but also the global consciousness that includes values and dispositions such as empathy and cultural sensitivity (Boix-Mansilla & Gardner, 2007; Dill, 2013).

A fundamental challenge for CGE is the necessity of an ethical foundation for individuals to be imbued with a sense of belonging to a broader community and humanity. There is no cogent elucidation in the documents of UNESCO on the theoretical underpinnings for GCE in terms of what “a sense of belonging to a broader community and humanity” means and how it can be achieved. To further understand UNESCO’s problematic interpretation of GCE, it is important to locate GCE within the organisation’s broad agenda of championing Education for Sustainability Development (herein after ESD). According to UNESCO (2019a), GCE is closely linked to ESD as the former supports UNESCO’s mission to advance sustainable development under the *Education 2030 Agenda and Framework for Action*. In particular, GCE is guided by UNESCO’s Target 4.7 of the *Sustainable Development Goals* that aspires for all countries to “ensure that all learners are provided with the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, *global citizenship* and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development” (UNESCO, 2019a, para 4, italics added). UNESCO (2007) asserts that “ESD goes beyond teaching about the knowledge and skills associated with understanding the environment, society, and economics; it aims to foster respect and understanding for the *values and perspectives* necessary for nurturing sustainable livelihoods, as well as *build capacity to enable people to act upon these understandings*” (p. 11, italics added). But the specific “values and perspectives” to be inculcated and the means to build the capacity to motivate people to act ethically are not spelt out by UNESCO.

The same critique applies to the ‘normative competency’ and ‘critical thinking competency’ which are among the core competencies recommended by UNESCO for ESD. The former denotes “the abilities to understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie one’s actions; and to negotiate sustainability values, principles, goals, and targets, in the context of conflicts of interests and trade-offs, uncertain knowledge and contradictions” (UNESCO, 2017, p. 10). The latter refers to “the ability to question norms, practices and opinions; to reflect on one’s own values, perceptions and actions; and to take a position in the sustainability discourse” (UNESCO, 2017, p. 10). But the ‘norms and values’ presupposed in

the normative and critical thinking competencies are unfortunately not spelt out and explicated. A related point is that it is unclear how these norms and values can be developed in students. Furthermore, UNESCO (2019c) states that ESD empowers learners to engage in “responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity” (para 1). But there is little explanation of what qualifies as ‘responsible actions’ and how learners can be motivated to work towards such actions. Describing the crisis of citizenship as “an ontological problem”, Carson (2006) maintains that “it is a crisis of meaning and a crisis of belonging” (p. 29) that could benefit from drawing upon wisdom traditions. This paper answers the question of *what a sense of belonging to a broader community and humanity means and how learners can acquire it* from the perspective of one such wisdom tradition: neo-Confucian thought as represented by Wang Yangming. Wang’s philosophy has been selected as his ideas (and neo-Confucianism in general) have much to say about the inter-connectedness and interdependence of human beings as well as their moral feelings and obligations to fellow human beings. Although many of Wang’s ideas are relevant to GCE, space constraints means that this paper could only focus on one core concept of Wang: innate knowledge which is expounded in the next segment.

### **Wang Yangming’s Notion of Innate Knowledge**

Wang’s concept of innate knowledge is located within and tethered to his metaphysical picture of shared humanity. Wang teaches, “Heaven earth and the myriad creatures have always been of one body with human beings” (translated by Ivanhoe, 2009, p. 115). He asks rhetorically: “Is there any suffering or bitterness of the great masses that is not disease or pain in my own body?” (translated by Chan, 1963a, p. 166). In line with a neo-Confucian worldview, Wang believes that everything, including human beings and myriad things, is composed of ‘li’ (principle or coherence) that is bestowed by Heaven. The oneness that human beings share with all things is not physical but metaphysical: it is premised on the “common stock of principles, which link us and lead us to care, in varying ways and degrees, about the world” (Ivanhoe, 2009, p. 114). The shared humanity reflects one’s innate knowledge that is characterised by the cardinal virtue of humaneness (de Bary & Bloom, 1999). The oneness Wang advocates is “a felt state of metaphysical unity in which one’s sense of self is not so much lost than expanded” (Tien, 2012, p. 55).

But if human beings are indeed connected to one another in the above way, why do most people not experience and exhibit this sense of togetherness with other human beings? According to Wang, the reason is that these people have yet to extend their ‘liangzhi’ (innate knowledge). As explained by him,

If gentlemen [exemplary persons] of the world merely devote their effort to extending their *liangzhi* [innate knowledge], they will naturally share with all a universal sense of right and wrong, share their likes and dislikes, *regard other people as their own persons, regard the people of other countries as their own family*, and look upon Heaven, Earth, and all things as one body (translated by Chan, 1963a, p. 166, italics added).

Innate knowledge (*liangzhi*, literally ‘good knowledge’) has also been glossed, among others, as moral knowledge, pure knowing, primordial awareness and intuitive moral faculty (Angle, 2009; Ching, 1972; de Bary & Bloom, 1999; Cocks, 2017; Huang, 2017; Ivanhoe, 2018; Tu, 1985). Innate knowledge is so-named as it refers to the in-born sense of right and wrong and natural capacity for knowing and doing the good. Wang explains:

The sense of right and wrong requires no deliberation to know, nor does it depend on learning to function. This is why it is called innate knowledge. It is my nature endowed by Heaven, the original substance of my mind, naturally intelligent, shining, clear, and understanding (translated by Chan, 1963b, p. 665).

Wang likens innate knowledge to a mirror that reflects accurately the “spontaneous responsiveness and lack of personal point of view”, thereby enabling a person to react naturally “to any moral situation in a seamless process of perceiving, understanding, judging, willing, and action” (Ivanhoe, 2018, p. 15). Innate knowledge, to put it otherwise, is the in-born moral agency in human beings that predispose everyone to make ethical judgements and act ethically (Chang, 2016).

Wang posits that innate knowledge is originally pure and devoid of selfish desires. But it is unavoidably beclouded by impure ‘qi’ (vital energy) that manifests itself in the form of material desires and self-centredness. The consequence is human beings forgetting and undermining their oneness with and empathy for all things. Ivanhoe (2009) points out, “Selfish desires take root in and consolidate the less-than-pure material aspects of the self – those parts of the self that lead us to see ourselves as separate and isolated from the world” (p. 106). Wang maintains that we should not allow our innate knowledge which is bright, spiritual and conscious to become “obscured and dissipated, and even degenerates into perversion and falsehood, thus losing the correctness of its original substance” (translated by Ching, 1972, p. 79). Instead, we should extend one’s innate knowledge (*zhi liangzhi*). In other words, human beings need to “extend merely their naturally endowed knowledge of the good” (translated by Ching, 1972, p. 121). This means to fully develop one’s nature to the utmost so that one is united with heaven and earth and all things. To put it another way, extending one’s innate knowledge is learning to be human and “knowing thyself” (Tu, 1985, p. 32). Wang holds that “if the person’s nature and endowments were somewhat obscured, he would no longer be human” (p. 21). We therefore need to cultivate our commitment by removing our selfish desires and bringing to light our originally good nature (Yao, 2013). Cautioning against hurting others with one’s words and actions, Wang asserts, “What men do to me, that I do not wish, I do not do to them” (translated by Ching, 1972, p. 15). He adds, “In idle moments, one must search out and discover each and every selfish thought for sex, wealth, fame, and the rest” (translated by Ivanhoe, 1990, p. 102). The extension of one’s innate knowledge, in short, is the key to the attainment of a sense of belonging to a broader community and humanity. Such a person experiences a deep and palpable connection with fellow human beings that directs one to demonstrate empathy and care towards others (Ivanhoe, 2009, p. 114).

To achieve the extension of innate knowledge, Wang maintains that it is insufficient to simply “being proficient in letters, to being eloquent in speech, and to obtaining knowledge outside of one’s self through incidental deeds of righteousness” (translated by Ching, 1972, p. 60). Rather, what is needed is “directing the whip towards the inner self” by extending one’s innate knowledge (translated by Ching, 1972, p. 6). Wang avers that without focussing on the moral cultivation of one’s innate knowledge, “such things which we usually call learning and inquiry, reflection and making distinctions, will only tend to increase his pride and conscious error, so that while he considers himself to be becoming more intelligent and superior, he fails to realise that he is sinking into the depths of hatred and jealousy” (translated by Ching, 1972, p. 28). The process of extending innate knowledge, according to Wang, is analogous to discovering the clean mirror that is covered by dust or the sun that is blocked by clouds (Chan, 1963b).

As for the pedagogical approaches for the extension of innate knowledge, Wang recommends an educational programme that fosters “filiality, brotherly respect, loyalty,

faithfulness, ritual decorum, rightness, integrity, and the sense of shame” in the learners (translated by Chan, 1963a, p. 182). Rather than a standardised and text-based curriculum, teaching and learning should be geared towards stimulating and engaging the learner so that “they will be happy and cheerful at heart, and then nothing can check their development” (translated by Chan, 1963a, p. 183). Wang further proposes the activities of singing to rouse one’s will, the practice of etiquette to make one’s demeanour dignified and reading to broaden one’s intellectual horizon (Chan, 1963a). Throughout the learning journey, students should rectify their thoughts (*gewu*) by being watchful over of their thinking process and responses to events and encounters in daily life.

## **Implications for GCED**

It is timely to return to the question that was asked earlier: *what does “a sense of belonging to a broader community and humanity” mean and how can learners acquire it?* Two major implications for GCE can be drawn from Wang’s concept of innate knowledge. First, Wang’s notion of innate knowledge, by affirming human dignity, equality and potential, underpins and constitutes the vision of shared humanity in global citizenship. Our shared humanity, as envisioned by Wang, is predicated on and displayed by our “regard[ing] other people as their own persons, regard[ing] the people of other countries as their own family” and feeling the “suffering or bitterness of the great masses” in our own bodies (translated by Chan, 1963a, p. 166). Wang’s idea of oneness echoes UNESCO’s (2015) cosmopolitan message of human interdependency and interconnectedness that contributes towards building “more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies” (UNESCO, 2019a, para 1). His metaphysical position of cosmic unity and universal love provides a moral basis for GCE beyond utilitarian concerns and superficial outcomes. Significantly, Wang’s ideas and their implications for GCE are aligned with a humanistic orientation that rejects neo-liberal ideologies and presuppositions. A number of researchers have drawn attention to neoliberal influences on GCE (e.g. Alviar-Martin & Baidon, 2016; Cho & Mosselson, 2018; Gardner-McTaggart, 2016; Gaudelli, 2009; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2008; Myers, 2016; Palmer, 2018; Sant et al., 2018; Shultz, 2007). From a neo-liberal perspective, a global citizen is one who is equipped with the requisite marketable knowledge and skills to compete and thrive in a globalised and capitalist economy (Shultz, 2007). A humanistic orientation, in contrast, shows up “an awareness of other perspectives, a vision of oneself as part of a global community of humanity as a whole, and a moral consciences to act for the good of the world” (Dill, 2013, p. 2). Wang’s concept of innate knowledge eschews human utility maximisation by promoting a holistic, human-centred view that upholds human worth, overall well-being and interdependence (Angle, 2009; Keir, 2017; Tucker, 1991).

The second implication arising from Wang’s philosophy for GCE is that his recommended educational programme and pedagogical approaches brings to the fore the moral cultivation of learners. Despite UNESCO’s stated goal for students to understand, reflect and construct their own values, what remains overlooked is the moral development of individual students. As discussed earlier, the central task for Wang is the extension of innate knowledge by identifying and eliminating one’s selfish desires and embracing the shared humanity. Wang is clear that what is needed is the replacement of selfish desires with empathy and care to fellow humans. Tu (1985) observes that morality, for Wang, is “a state of conscious knowing (directionality of the mind)” as well as “a process of conscientious acting (transforming effect of the heart)” (p. 31). What is emphasised by Wang are not just the global competencies in terms of aptitudes but more importantly the global consciousness that includes dispositions

such as empathy. The overall outcome is the inculcation of both normative competency and critical competency that empower the learner to understand, reflect, question and (re)construct the norms and values that underlie one's actions (UNESCO, 2017). Calling Wang's approach to moral cultivation the 'discovery model', Ivanhoe (2018) explains that it is an individually-focused and therapeutic process that strives to regain (rather than gain) what is originally the case. The discovery model advances moral cultivation by "strengthening one's faith in the unerring ability of pure knowing [innate knowledge] and developing an alert awareness of one's inner thoughts and feelings; one was to constantly monitor one's moral psychological state to root out self-centeredness so that pure knowing [innate knowledge] could function unobstructed and guide one to all and only proper behaviour" (Ivanhoe, 2018, p. 16).

Wang's cosmopolitan worldview is holistic in the sense that it stresses what is "shared and common to all more" and not what is "unique and different in each individual" (De Bary & Bloom, 1999, p. 857). But his recommended pedagogies are learner-centred and differentiated. Wang's educational outlook is therefore in tandem with the objective of UNESCO (2007) to shift from mere teaching about the knowledge and skills to the values, perspectives and actions necessary for GCE. Given that self-cultivation is a long-drawn process that varies from person to person, Wang propagates a customised approach in educating the learners. Wang compares the task of self-cultivation to planting a tree where sufficient nourishing and caring are needed for the tree to progress from root to trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits (Ivanhoe, 1990). The development of innate knowledge enables each individual to accurately understand "what is morally relevant about a situation, what actions are necessary to bring about or further harmony within the situation, and the very performance of the actions that bring resolution" (Cocks, 2017, p. 342). Ivanhoe (1990) give details on the customised strategy from teachers:

The deluded student needed a teacher, a teacher who could distinguish between good and bad, lead the student to recognise the response of pure knowing [innate knowledge], and identify when the student is being misled by selfish desires. In this capacity the teacher is like a coach, helping the student utilise the gifts he has in order to realise a goal he desires (p. 103).

The amount of external help rendered by the teacher would depend, among other factors, on the areas of selfishness experienced by each student and the extent of delusion. Wang's emphasis on effective teaching as part of the intended result of self-cultivation reflects the overall orientation of neo-Confucianism. Ivanhoe (2009) posits that a morally worthy person, from a neo-Confucian standpoint, it is "part of the very idea of being a sage that one would effectively lead others to the Way" (p. 103).

An example of an application of Wang's pedagogical recommendations that pivot on moral cultivation is the *National Education for Sustainability K-12 Student Learning Standards* proposed by the U.S. Partnership for Education for Sustainability (2008). The EfS Standard 3 states that students need to "understand and can describe their vision of a world that is sustainable, along with the primary changes that would need to be made by individuals, local communities, and countries in order to achieve this" (Venkataraman, 2009, p. 10). The instructional objective for learners to work towards a sustainable world is in tandem with Wang's call for human beings to achieve universal harmony through collective moral efforts. Applying Wang's notion of innate knowledge and educational programme, a teacher should design and enact courses, programmes and activities that stimulate and engage the learner to critically reflect on the state of their own innate knowledge, their values and ideal world. In line with Wang's educational thought, a student-centred pedagogy may include, depending on



the learner's profile, interests and needs, hands-on activities such as volunteer work in a developing country, singing of songs that prompts critical reflections on humanity, and collaborative projects such as inter-religious dialogues. Regardless of the specific activity given to the student, the teacher should ensure that the student's cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural dimensions are enhanced (UNESCO, 2015). Doing so will help the learner to progressively learn, internalise and demonstrate their extended innate knowledge; they will then acquire a sense of belonging with the broader community and humanity through their knowledge, critical thinking, moral development, inter-personal relationships and effective and responsible actions at the local, regional and global levels.

## Conclusion

A persistent challenge for GCE is “to create whole communities, where humans are not dominating nature, but rather recognise their profound dependence on the larger community of life” (Tucker, 2012, p. 1). Responding to a paucity of explicit theoretical underpinnings for GCE, Wang's concept of innate knowledge provides an ethical basis and motivation where learners espouse, work towards and realise human interconnectedness and sustainable development. This paper has sketched a humanistic foundation for GCE that revolves around UNESCO's goal to help learners acquire a sense of belonging to a broader community and humanity. This paper has elucidated Wang Yangming's concept of innate knowledge (*liangzhi*) and idea of shared humanity that is premised on innate knowledge. But innate knowledge has been beclouded by selfish desires that separate us from other people and nature. It is therefore essential to extend our innate knowledge by eliminating the egoistic tendencies and manifestations through self-cultivation. In terms of implications for global citizenship, Wang's notion of innate knowledge, by affirming human dignity, equality and potential, underpins and constitutes the vision of shared humanity in global citizenship. Furthermore, Wang's recommended pedagogical approaches promote global citizenship by foregrounding the moral cultivation of learners.

Wang's educational thought entails that it is not enough for educators to merely introduce an additional programme on GCE into the existing school curriculum. Rather, a ‘whole system re-design’ is required where educators and other stakeholders review and revamp the foundations of the schooling system, teaching, learning and assessment (Lotz-Sisitka, Wals, Kronlid & McGarry, 2015; Sterling, 2004). Wang's implications for GCE is humanistic as they provide a ‘relationalistic’ focus on citizenship that provides the ethical justification and motivation for learners to become more fully human and humane. His philosophy is not *about* ethical knowledge: it *is* ethical knowledge in action where human beings are predisposed to and act morally in daily life as global citizens (Ivanhoe, 2009).

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