Reasons for Teaching Critical Thinking: A Proposal in Confucian Ethics

Abstract

Critical thinking (CT) in Philippine basic education curriculum may be said to be clearly evident in the inclusion of "Trends, Networks and Critical Thinking in the 21st Century". The course is required in the senior high school HUMSS track. CT in Philippine education is likely based or patterned upon U.S.'s 'teaching for thinking' program. In Lipman's survey (2003), the program transitioned to 'teaching for critical thinking'. The Philippines was U.S. colony from 1898 to 1946. This historical and yet colonial reason for teaching CT appears mitigated by a seeming universal recognition of the necessity for teaching critical thinking in schools in every culture. Such recognition appears clear, for example, in Noddings (2016). Despite the existence of such reason, however, there appears a need to supplement it with ones other than from perspective of the west. The perspective referred to is that of Confucian ethics. Confucian ethics gives attention to good, sound reasoning (Lai 2006), which suggests an emphasis on CT. Given that, Confucian ethics likely promotes teaching of CT. The proposal here is that in the consideration of reasons or views for teaching CT in the country, a non-western point of view, that of Confucian ethics, be given a hearing.

Keywords: critical thinking (CT), teaching CT, Confucius (Kongzi 孔子), Confucian ethics

Introduction

Critical thinking (CT) in Philippine basic education curriculum may be said to be clearly evident in the inclusion of a course called "Trends, Networks and Critical Thinking in the 21st Century". The course is required in senior high school (in the academic track for Humanities and Social Sciences strand or HUMSS). One prerequisite of the subject is "Philosophy of the Human Person", which, as part of the core curriculum, is to be taken by every senior high school pupil.[1] A course on logic (either formal or informal) used to be a general education (GE) course in higher education. Education reform that started in 2018 has not included logic as GE course. Ethics, a philosophy course, has been retained as one of the GE courses. Although the logic course taught in colleges for many years was scholastic (i. e. Aristotelian-Thomistic), CT in Philippine education curriculum is likely based or patterned upon the U.S. 'teaching for thinking' program. In Matthew Lipman's survey (2003, p. 31), it is said that that program transitioned to 'teaching for *critical* thinking'. Lipman (whose dates are 1923 to 2010) writes:

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[1] See https://www.deped.gov.ph/k-to-12/about/k-to-12-basic-education-curriculum/academic-track/

> [Following the craze for teaching for thinking in the 1980s or so] Some educators perceived [that the problem is not that teachers and professors are not teaching for thinking]. But [that] the *quality* of such thinking was deficient. What was needed was not merely teaching for thinking, but teaching for *critical* thinking. [Emphases in the original]

The Philippines was U.S. colony from 1898 to 1946. This historical and yet colonial reason for teaching CT appears mitigated by a seeming universal recognition of the necessity for teaching critical thinking in schools in every culture.[2] Such recognition appears clear, for example, in Nel Noddings (2016, chapter 5).

Despite there being such reason, however, there appears a need to supplement it with ones other than from perspective of the west. The perspective referred to is that of Confucian ethics. Confucian ethics gives attention to good, sound reasoning (see Lai 2006, chapter 5), which suggests an emphasis on CT. The meaning of CT used here is one which comes from an informal logic approach to teaching CT by Richard Paul (1981; cf. 1990, chapter 8). Paul discusses the approach's 'strong sense', whose idea of CT is fundamentally the cultivation of a good level of 'Socratic' doubt in learners. In that the features of Confucian ethics or Confucian moral thinking point to need of sound and proper thinking in the process of moral deliberation, it seems clear that part of Confucian ethics is promotion of CT (and with that, the teaching of CT). The proposal here is that in the consideration of reasons or views for teaching CT in the country, a non-western viewpoint, that of Confucian ethics, be given a hearing.

The paper's main section has three parts. In part 1, I discuss the seeming universal recognition of the need to teach CT and some approaches to teaching it (and concomitantly the meaning of CT according to each approach). In part 2, I elaborate on Confucian ethics as skills-based ethic, since the proposal of what Confucian ethics is is that it is *skills*-based. And in part 3, I discuss the idea that Confucian moral thinking is one which promotes teaching of CT.

The Need to Teach CT

There is a seeming universal recognition of the necessity for teaching critical thinking in schools in every culture. In philosophy of education textbook for undergraduates (first edition published in 1995) of Nel Noddings (whose dates are 1929 to 2022), she implies this in saying that philosophers, philosophers of education, and educators have assigned importance to critical thinking. That they have means that CT must be necessary in the academe or that teaching it in schools is necessary. In the chapter, Noddings then states that, given there is no consensus among philosophers and educators concerning what CT is and concerning what approach to use to teach it, there are fundamental questions: *What is CT?* and *How do we teach it?*. That there are these questions means that if we are to teach CT, we have to know what CT is and what approach to take to teach it. In Noddings (2016, chapter 5), by considering the Common Core State Standards (in US education), she presents ideas about what CT is. She then proceeds to the approaches to the teaching of critical thinking (discussed

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[2] This historical and yet colonial reason for teaching CT may be even seen in the proposal of "education for freedom" for us Filipinos. This is on the assumption that education and CT are fundamentally connected. "Education for freedom" is proposal of Ruby Suazo (2022), who writes: "education for freedom should be the goal of education for Filipinos in the postcolonial time." (p. 10)

also in prior editions). The approaches also have with them ideas about what critical thinking is. Although it seems that the only pertinent point here is the point that at the outset of Noddings' chapter – the chapter on logic and critical thinking – there is value given to CT by philosophers and educators, the need to teach CT in every culture is also seen in considering a response or two to the question of how to teach CT. That is because the responses also convey their meanings of CT. Definition of CT is important in the consideration of whether CT ought to be taught in every society. In the following, I discuss the informal logic approach, which responds to the formal logic approach.[3]

The informal approach is *anti*-formal. It is anti-formal in the sense that the approach focuses on *process*, in particular on the process or the making of rational persons (of students). This is clear in Richard Paul (1981; cf. 1990, chapter 8). Paul (whose dates are 1937 to 2015) sees both formal and informal approaches as having the goal of effecting the rational person. He writes the following:

> I take it to be self-evident that virtually all teachers of critical thinking want their teaching to have a global "Socratic" effect, making some significant inroads into the everyday reasoning of the student, enhancing to some degree that healthy, practical, and skilled skepticism one naturally and rightly associates with the rational person. This necessarily encompasses, it seems to me, some experience in seriously questioning previously held beliefs and assumptions and in identifying contradictions and inconsistencies in personal and social life. (1981, p. 3)

It is clear to Paul that whether one teaches CT in the formal or the informal way is of consequence. Given that the goal is inculcation of good or healthy degree of skepticism in students, the use of the formal approach is warranted. It is undeniable that formal approaches also help in fostering that. But to Paul, it is the informal approach which does the best trick. This is because the informal approach uses the view of arguments are inseparable from the learner's real world concerns. It is in such view where learners really learn to "seriously question previously held beliefs and assumptions" and to "identify [tensions] in their personal and social life".

Paul (1981) distinguishes teaching CT in the "weak" sense from teaching it in the "strong" sense. The "weak" teaching of CT is part of what is called classical approaches. According to Jamie Carlin Watson, in the classical approaches, "critical thinkers attempt to interpret statements or arguments clearly and charitably, and then they apply the tools of formal and informal logic and science, while carefully attempting to avoid fallacious inferences….". "Informal logic and science" referred to by Watson here is the '(informal) fallacies approach'. Focus on both formal and informal fallacies is clear in Paul's description of the "weak" sense (1981, p. 3):

> The usual scenario runs something like this. One begins with some general pep-talk on the significance of critical thinking for personal and social life. In this pep-talk one

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[3] The formal logic approach is that approach which suggests "the teaching of logic as a means to CT" (Noddings, 1995, p. 78). The idea is that CT is developed by teaching the use of modern symbolic logic. For example, in the analysis of ordinary or everyday natural language reasoning or argument, sentential logic is used. Sentential (logic) analysis tries to figure out whether an everyday or academic argument is one that has *valid* or *invalid form*, which are clear (given two truth values and five logical operators).

is reminded of the large scale social problems created by prejudice, irrationality, and sophistic manipulation. Then one launches into a discussion of the difference between arguments and non-arguments and the reader is led to the notion that, without any further knowledge of the in's and out's of contextual or background considerations, he can learn to analyze and evaluate atomically the arguments he comes across (the "non-arguments" do not presumably need critical appraisal) by parsing them out into, and focusing on the relation between, "premises" and "conclusions". In examining that relationship the reader is encouraged to look for formal and/or informal fallacies, conceived as atomically determinable and correctable "mistakes". Irrationality in human reasoning is implied thereby to be reducible to complex combinations of atomic mistakes. One roots it out, presumably, by rooting out the atomic mistakes one-by-one.

Here, Paul criticizes the fallacies approach. In effect, he is saying that the "weak sense" is stuck to the task of determining whether arguments in a piece of reasoning have committed fallacies. More significantly, it is clear in Paul's words that the "weak" sense *de*-contextualizes arguments and that such move zeroes in on arguments to the neglect of other parts of the reasoning piece (which help provide or is context). Analysis in the "weak" sense of analysis of a paper, "God and the Good: Does Morality Need Religion?" (1964), written by philosopher Kai Nielsen (whose dates are 1929 to 2021), would start with identification of the premises and (intermediate and main) conclusions.[4] Argument map or diagram is commonly used to show this. An example or style of such map or diagram is as follows:

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[4] In the paper Nielsen argues for the view that independence of morality from God or religion is necessary. In the formal logic approach, it would be pointed out that Nielsen's argument concerns the logic of the statement "God is good" and that his argument, in a nutshell, is as follows: (Premise 1) "God is good" is either a synthetic claim or an analytic one; (Premise 2) If it is synthetic, then goodness (morality) is independent of God; (Premise 3) If it is analytic, then goodness (morality) is independent of God.; (Conclusion) Goodness (morality) must be independent of God. Or in (formal sentential logic) symbolization, using the following translation scheme, $S \equiv$ *"God is good" is a synthetic claim*; $A \equiv$ *"God is good" is an analytic claim*; $I \equiv$ *Goodness (morality) is independent of God*:

(Premise 1) $S \vee A$
(Premise 2) $S \supset I$
(Premise 3) $A \supset I$

(Conclusion) I

Nielsen mentions the possibility of the sentence 'God is good' to be neither synthetic nor analytic, but he relies only on the two alternatives. The argument is valid, because its logical form is valid. An argument with a valid logical form is one whose conclusion would have to be true if all its premises are true, or in truth-table terms, with a valid logical form there is no possible scenario (i. e. no row or line) in which the premises are true and the conclusion is false. Since there is no row of the logical form's truth table in which the premises are all true and the conclusion is false, the argument is valid. (Sections of this note are forthcoming in an ethics textbook.)
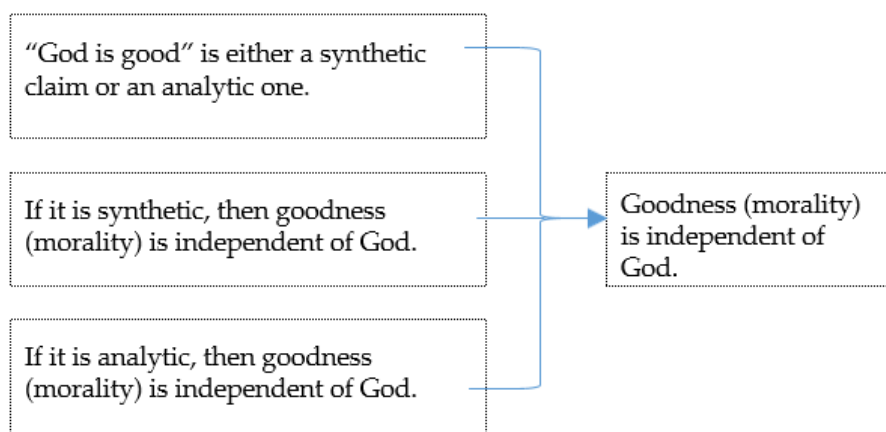
According to this diagram, the three reasons or premises are linked, i. e. they work together in establishing the conclusion. The next step is evaluation of the relation between premises and conclusion, in which the question is whether the latter follows necessarily from the former. The argument's fault might be that its logical form is not valid (formal fallacy) or that there is no connection at all whatsoever (because the premise is irrelevant), an example of informal fallacy.[5] This analysis, to Paul, is incomplete, in that context and background of the paper is not taken into consideration. The neglect of context and background in the analysis appears to be due to concentration on reasoning mistakes and on belief that rationality consists in infallibility in the sense of absence of any logical mistakes. To Paul, context and background of the entire piece of reasoning is everything. To him, it is everything because in his approach (i.e. the "strong" sense), arguments are not to be separated from the learner's real world concerns. Paul (1981, p. 3) expresses his alternative, the "strong sense", in the following words:

> In place of "atomic arguments" one focuses on argument networks (world views); in place of conceiving of arguments as susceptible of atomic evaluation one takes a more dialectical/dialogical approach (arguments need to be appraised in relation to counter-arguments, wherein one can make moves that are very difficult to defend or

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[5] It is to be supposed that the analysis would also worry about the argument's soundness, which, besides formal validity, deals with the truth of the premises. The question is if any or all the premises are false. Is any of the premises in Nielsen's argument true? Nielsen explains the idea of Premise 2 by pointing out first that 'God is good' would be a sentence whose truth would have to be 'discovered', given that it is not analytic or a truth of language. Next, understanding 'discovering' or knowing God to be good as having satisfactory reason for the belief that "God never falls short of perfection" (1964, p. 52), Nielsen presents a seemingly better reason which a believer would give. This reason is that God's nature is kindness as shown through God's deeds. But Nielsen notes that in saying that, one has appealed to a "logically independent moral criteria". That is to say that claiming that God is good is made not because of God, which accordingly means that goodness is independent of God (1964, pp. 51-53). Premise 3 is explained by Nielsen through pointing out first that 'God is good' is analytic not in the sense that 'good' is the definition of 'God', but in the sense that 'good' is *a* necessary condition of 'God'. He then points out that given that, "without … prior understanding of goodness we could not understand the sentence 'God is good'" (1964, pp. 53-56). In other words, for Nielsen, goodness would have to be independently understood, that is, that it does not depend on God. Given the assumption that the first premise is true, if any of the two other premises is false, Nielsen's argument is deemed unsound.

> ones that strengthen one's position). One is led to see that atomic arguments (traditional conception) are in fact a limited set of moves within a more complex set of actual or possible moves reflecting a variety of logically significant engagements in the world. In this "real" world, whether that of "ordinary" or "philosophical" discourse, argument exchanges are means by which contesting points of view are brought into rational conflict, and in which fundamental lines of reasoning are rarely "refuted" by an individual charge of "fallacy", however well supported. The charge of fallacy is a move; it is rarely logically compelling; it virtually never "refutes" a point of view. This approach I believe, squares much more closely with our own and the student's experience of argument exchanges.

Paul's concern is the learner's "experience of argument exchanges". To him, the 'weak' approach worries not on such experiences because its focus is on fallacies. His suggestion in the 'strong' approach is to remember that arguments are never isolates. Paul uses the term "argument networks" to express the idea. His view is that arguments need to be conceived of as 'real', by which he means in effect that philosophical arguments or real life arguments are interesting not because one's ideas or another's are challenged and refuted by knock-down counter-arguments. To Paul, learners have real-life personal and social concerns. The teaching of CT which focuses on "atomic arguments" discards these concerns in a significant way. It is on this basis that Paul focuses on context or background and says that the meaning of teaching "strong sense" CT is "to help the student to develop reasoning skills precisely in those areas where he is most likely to have egocentric and sociocentric biases." (1981, p. 6). The "egocentric and sociocentric biases" exist because the student has actual real-life personal and social concerns.

In regards to Nielsen's paper, it is clear that in the "strong" sense teaching of CT important questions will include: *What is the context of Nielsen's argument for the necessity of the independence of morality? It seems that the paper concerns the correctness of the view that morality or goodness depends on God (or religion) or divine command theory (DCT), but what are the counter-arguments for the necessity of the independence of morality view? The logic of Nielsen's argument is compelling, but isn't it that the point that morality depends on God is the idea that God determines morality or goodness, which means that I may have conception of good but I have it because of God or with God (not without God)? Is this a counter-argument to Nielsen's?*

The idea of CT in the informal (Richard Paul) approach is that CT is *thinking for oneself*, which is what Paul means by "a global 'Socratic' effect". CT, in other words, is possession of a healthy degree of skepticism, which is inculcated or fostered not by understanding arguments as "atoms" to be dissected but rather by understanding them as points for the learner to exercise and exhibit her rationality.

Given these two approaches, *formal* and *anti-formal*, perhaps what philosophers and educators mean by the value of CT and thus the teaching of it is now clear. People in any society deal with philosophical and real-life arguments or, to use Richard Paul's words, they have "experience of argument exchanges". Since that is fact, having critical thinking skills is imperative, which entails that teaching CT is imperative.

Confucian Moral Thinking as Skills-Based Ethic

Here, I discuss Confucius' ethics as skills-based ethics as proposed and discussed by Karyn Lai (b. 1964). Lai's proposal (2006, chapter 5) in a nutshell is that Confucian moral thinking emphasizes features of ethical decision-making which point to need of sound and proper thinking in the process. In that the features point to this need, it seems clear that part of Confucian ethics is promotion of CT (and with that, the teaching of CT). In Richard Paul's 'strong' sense of the informal approach, it is clear that the goal of having a good, healthy degree of skepticism or 'thinking for oneself' is the important element of the meaning of CT. (That the features of ethical decision-making in Confucian moral thinking relate to sound and proper thinking and therefore skepticism or 'thinking for oneself' will be elaborated on in the next section.)

Lai's proposal is explicated in *Learning from Chinese Philosophies* (2006), in the chapter titled "Confucianism as a Skills-Based Ethic". The features of ethical decision-making stressed in Confucian moral thinking are as follows:

> [i] skills of interpretation and creativity, [ii] sensitivity to morally significant factors, [iii] a broad knowledge and understanding of situations in life, [iv] a depth of experience including learning from the experiences of others, and [v] the fine balancing skills required in deliberation and judgment. (2006, p. 124)

Lai's proposal is based on the early Confucian texts' presentation of Confucius, Mencius or Mengzi 孟子 (c. 372-289 B.C.E.) and Xunzi 荀子 (c. 310-220 B.C.E.) as "committed, conscientious and skilful thinkers and deliberators" (2006, p. 116). To Lai, the *skills of interpretation and creativity* are derived from recognition of the uniqueness of situations at hand. The uniqueness of each situation and thus the need of such skills is clear in *Analects* 9.8. The passage is one which shows Confucius is "conscientiously committed to understanding the situation" (Lai, 2006, p. 121). In the passage, Confucius says that if he could give nothing in response to a peasant's question, he would not give up. In the passage, Confucius says: "I hammered at his problem from all sides, till I worked out something" (Leys, 1997, p. 40) Lai writes: "There is much attention given to how one might adequately understand a situation in order to respond to it. This calls for creativity in action. If each situation is unique, ethical deliberation must involve interpretation and understanding of the details of that situation and creativity in one's handling of that situation."

Lai also mentions *Analects* 7.8 not just to state Confucius' emphasis on understanding a situation and creativity but also to lead to (iii) *a broad knowledge and understanding of situations in life*, and (iv) *a depth of experience including learning from the experiences of others*. The following is found in *Analects* 7.8:

> I do not open the way for students who are not driven with eagerness; I do not supply a vocabulary for students who are not trying desperately to find the language for their ideas. If on showing students one corner they do not come back to me with the other three, I will not repeat myself. (Ames and Rosemont, 1998, p. 112 cited in Lai, 2006, p. 121)

Lai writes that the passage is about what Confucius "expects from the teaching and learning process": he "expects a significant degree of intellectual independence and initiative of his disciples" (2006, p. 121). Lai mentions that philosophical analyses of Confucian moral thinking

have the point that creativity is remarkable in the thinking. In particular, she mentions the work of David Hall and Roger Ames (1987), in which it is stated that creativity is key element in the making of *junzi*^{gentlemen; noble or paradigmatic persons} (君子). That creativity is an important element in the process implies that in Confucian thinking "[e]xposure to a wide variety of situations and a broad range of exemplars will increase one's repertoire and moral imagination" (2006, p. 121). Such exposure reflects features (iii) and (iv).

Sensitivity to morally significant factors is clear in *Mencius* 4A.17, among other passages in early Confucian texts. The passage is as follows:

> Chunyu Kun said, "Is it true that according to the rites [*li* 禮], men and women must not touch one another?"
> "That is what the rites prescribe," said Mencius.
> "If your sister-in-law were drowning, would you extend her your hand?"
> Mencius said, "A man who would not extend his hand to a drowning sister-in-law would be a wild beast. That men and women must not touch one another is ritual; extending one's hand to a drowning sister-in-law is balancing circumstances [*quan* 權]."
> Chunyu Kun said, "Today, the world is drowning. Why do you, Sir, not extend your hand to it?"
> "When the world is drowning, you extend the Dao to save it. When a sister-in-law is drowning you extend your hand – do you wish me to save the world with my hand?" (Eno, online)

Mencius's response to the second question highlights *quan*, which in turn highlights sensitivity to a morally significant factor. Proper or correct thinking on the matter, according to Mencius, would have the sensitivity that one's sister-in-law is family. That she is family means that she is very important to Mencius. Her being part of family is a morally significant factor to Mencius. And it must be noted that Mencius believes in 'extending affection' or 推 (*tui*^{extend;push}). The idea of *tui* is that *ren* (compassion) or *jianai*^{universal concern; impartiality} 兼愛 is extension of *ren* 仁 (kinship).[6]

The fine balancing skills required in deliberation and judgment is clear in Xunzi. Lai mentions a section in the *Xunzi*, in chapter 23 (*Xing e* 性惡, 'Human Nature is Evil'):

> Liking what is beneficial and desiring gain are people's inborn disposition and nature. Suppose there were brothers who had some property to divide, and that they followed the fondness for benefit and desire for gain in their inborn dispositions and nature. If they were to do so, then the brothers would conflict and contend with each other for it. However, let them be transformed by the proper form and good order of ritual and the standards of righteousness (禮義). If so, then they would even give it over to their countrymen. Thus, following along with inborn dispositions and nature, even brothers will struggle with each other. If transformed by ritual and the standards of

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[6] To Mencius, *ren*^{compassion} or *jianai* is extension and fruition of *ren*^{kinship}. Mozi 墨子 (flourished c. 430 BCE) disagrees on the point that *ren*^{kinship} leads to *ren*^{compassion}. In the *Mozi*, Chapter 39, 'Against Confucians', Mozi understands Confucian prescription of observance of grades or levels of respect or affection depending on relational proximity (for example) as meaning the impossibility of turning partiality to impartiality or universal affection. For Mozi, it is certainly false that *ren*^{kinship} necessarily leads to *ren*^{compassion}.

righteousness, then they will even give it over to their countrymen. (Ivanhoe & Van Norden 2001, p. 301)

This section has been interpreted as pointing out that Mencius's view of human nature as naturally good (*xing shan* 性善) is mistaken. According to such interpretation, Xunzi's example demonstrates that it is not true that compassion is a core part of our human nature. The section shows otherwise: if compassion is a core part of being human, then it would be the case that the brothers do not need the standards of *li* 禮 (ceremony/behavioral propriety) and *yi* 義 (rightness or appropriateness) to make them not quarrel over property dividing. Because the brothers do need those standards, it cannot be true that there is compassion in the core of our being. To the feature of moral deliberation of fine balancing skills, Xunzi's pointing out of the need for the standards of *li* and *yi* is key. Xunzi points out that *li* and *yi* would thwart the brothers' selfishness. That these standards do that means that it is in *li* that we find prescription for negotiating with one's kin and others (Lai, 2006, pp. 116-117). Such skill of negotiation is one important balancing skill.

An important note on Lai's proposal is that it is not a response to the question of whether there are important parallels between western ethical theories and Confucianism. Her proposal is consideration of the question of whether Confucianism might be like any of the existing theories in the western tradition. This is important to note because some scholars have drawn parallels between Confucius' ethics and ethical theories in the western tradition. That parallels exist between the tradition and theories in the west is unquestionable; Lai writes, "there doubtless will be" (2006, p. 115). The more interesting question is whether the tradition is anything like one of the existing theories in the western tradition. The question is more interesting because it is one which is tantamount to asking if any of the existing western theories is like Confucianism. The assumption is that Confucian ethics is an ethic of its own and it may be that some theory or other in the western tradition resembles Confucius's skills-based ethic. The ethic "incorporates elements of character, care, duty, obligation, and consideration of outcomes" (Lai 2006, p. 109), and Lai (2006, p. 124) notes that "none of [the] existing theories sufficiently captures the nature of Confucian ethics".

Confucian Moral Thinking and Teaching CT

As has been pointed out, in that the features of ethical decision-making in Confucian ethics point to need of sound and proper thinking, it seems clear that part of the ethics is promotion of CT and the teaching of CT. The features present the ethics to be about "the cultivation of reasoning skills and sensitivity in moral deliberation" (Lai 2006, p. 109). Lai (2006, pp. 109-110) writes the following:

> Taken together, we may describe these skills in terms of 'coordinative reasoning' a phrase used by Antonio Cua to describe a process of 'presenting and representing those features of the case which severally *cooperate* in favour of the conclusion … The reasons are like the legs of a chair, not the links of a chain' [1971: 207]. According to Cua, this kind of reasoning – as contrasted with argument processes that require a deductive chain of demonstrative reasoning – is distinctive not only in its methodology, but also in what it takes to constitute validity. Within the Confucian ethical tradition, validity in moral reasoning may include appeals to tradition and precedents, as well as consideration of contextual, personal and circumstantial factors.

In terms of connection of the ethics with analysis of arguments or reasoning in the approaches to teaching CT discussed in part 1 of this paper's main section, there exists such connection and it is clear. According to Lai's research and words in the quotation, in Confucian moral thinking validity or correctness in reasoning is important but it is not demonstrative. It is not demonstrative, in that such correctness is measured not by there being deduction, but by having proper basis (tradition and precedents, in particular) and having undergone a thinking through of context and individual factors.

For example, *Mencius* 4A.17, as Lai (2006, pp. 119-120) says, is one where we see "the exercise of practical wisdom which is arguably more important than mere rule-following". Setting aside Lai's evaluation about which of the kinds of reasoning is more important, rule-following is example of deductive reasoning in moral deliberation. An agent in rule-following would reason as follows: 'The rule or command is X. Therefore, I follow what is commanded in X.' In the *Mencius* passage 4A.17, the *li* mentioned is 'Men and women must not touch one another.' If Mencius agrees on rule-following, he would have responded with: 'If my sister-in-law were drowning, I would not help her. That's because I follow the *li*.' On the contrary, Mencius reasons in the following way: 'If my sister-in-law were drowning, the correct thing to do is to help her. That is because she being family is a personal morally significant factor. (Morally significant factors ought to be considered.)'

Examination of validity or correctness in reasoning (both demonstrative and non-demonstrative) relates to the meaning of CT as fundamentally about skepticism or 'thinking for oneself'. Despite criticism of the standard approach to CT, study of validity and soundness of arguments is important in the process of developing CT in learners. The criticism, mainly by John McPeck (1990, p. 21), is that the process of making critical thinkers, who "somehow think for themselves …[who] do not simply believe everything which they may hear or read", is one which cannot be achieved even initially by taking one or two CT courses. The process, according to McPeck, involves consideration of "forms of thought" (a term he borrows from philosopher of education Paul Hirst, whose dates are 1927 to 2020) or "relevant peculiarities", by which McPeck seems to mean that the skeptical mindset is *not* doubt or criticality in the ordinary or non-philosophical sense. Studying the nature of valid and sound (and invalid and unsound) arguments may not lead to at least starting points of 'thinking for oneself' but such somehow gives an idea to learners as to what are involved in people's reason-giving practices. For instance, if one can go beyond rule-following because there are better reasons, then this demonstrates a thinking about or question of whether rule-following is an all-or-nothing approach. That there is such question appears to show that the criticism of the use of studying soundness of arguments in demonstrating what independence of thought is as futile appears false.

Palpably, in Confucian ethics there is attention given to reasoning skills, specifically on good moral reasoning. Although the conception of validity is non-deductive, validity in Confucian moral thinking veers towards the practical. That it does so, though, does not mean that *thinking for oneself* is not clear in the ethics. It has been recognized that Confucius was rather like Socrates (469-399 B.C.E.), whose dictum of "Think for yourself" is practical as well in the ultimate. Herrlee Creel (1949, p. 1) has written that Confucius "carefully avoided laying down rules, because he believed that no creed formulated by another person can excuse any man from the duty of thinking for himself". According to this, Confucius was undogmatic. *Analects* 6.29 and 7.20, for example, likely attest to this. Although 6.29 is also in the *Zhongyong* 中庸, fifth century B.C.E. text, Edward Slingerland's (2006, p. 18) translation of the

passage hints the idea as does the passage's tone: "The Master said, 'Acquiring Virtue by applying the mean [中庸] – is this not best? And yet among the common people few are able to practice this virtue for long.'" That to Confucius the practice of Virtue (for long) is no longer common among people appears to mean that his purpose has not been imposition of Virtue. Passage 7.20 is as follows:

> The Master said: "For my part, I am not endowed with innate knowledge [z*hi* 知]. I am simply a man who loves the past [*gu* 古] and who is diligent in investigating it." (Leys, 1997, p. 31)

According to this, there is very close connection between knowledge (*zhi* 知) and antiquity (*gu* 古), and Confucius' concentration on antiquity implies that Confucius does not have doctrines (for imposition). The focus rather in Confucius and in Confucian ethics is on cultivation of reasoning skills and sensitivity, as already noted. Accordingly, it is my conclusion that given that there is an emphasis on reasoning or on CT in Confucian moral thinking, Confucian ethics likely promotes teaching of CT. The proposal here is that in the consideration of reasons or views for teaching CT in the country, a non-western perspective, that of the Confucians, be given a hearing.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have proposed that perspective from Confucian ethics or Confucianism be given consideration in the justification of teaching CT in the Philippines. The problem is that although there exists a seeming universal recognition of the necessity for teaching critical thinking in schools in every culture, a historical and yet colonial reason for teaching CT still stands. In this paper's main section, I have elaborated on the seeming general recognition of the need to teach CT, explained the meaning of Karyn Lai's proposal that skills-based ethic is what Confucian ethics is, and attempted to ground my proposal. It is my belief that perhaps a non-western perspective would provide a supplemental if not better reason for teaching CT.[7]

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