

What Does It Mean to Be a Teacher?: How Confucius and Socrates Facilitate Contemporary
Classroom Discourse

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Abstract

This project investigates the complex and divergent role of the teacher in the contemporary context, in which teaching becomes a profession and a teacher's responsibilities are predetermined. By adopting a philosophical lens, I explore what it means to be a teacher by analyzing and comparing the two great teachers Confucius (Kong Fuzi or Kongzi) and Socrates. Although there has been no shortage of studies comparing and contrasting these two thinkers' pedagogy, little research examines the similarities and differences between their approaches in a specific context of contemporary education. By facilitating discourse among Confucius, Socrates, and contemporary teachers, I outline what a teacher means according to the two thinkers and which factors might impede present-day teachers from being Confucian and Socratic teachers. I will propose an integrated approach that can help bring the values of both Confucian and Socratic teachings to contemporary classrooms.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

What does it mean to be a teacher?
A monitor, a master, a psychologist
An instructor, an inspirer, an entertainer
The list could go on forever
There is no limitation of what a teacher is capable of
In a world that depends on them
Making it a better place
But what it means to be a teacher
Extending above and beyond the classroom
So what does it mean to be a teacher?
A simple question
A complex answer.

Teaching has transitioned from serving simple educational purposes to becoming a complex profession. Along with the transition came the changes in the role of a teacher, shifting from a knowledgeable master to a multifaceted instructor. Together with these changes, the question of what it means to be a teacher remains a riddle, thanks to a great variety of the roles they play across the world. Banda and Mutambo (2015) claimed that the meaning of teaching and the function of the teacher varied depending on socio-political contexts. For example, Hoyle (1969) saw the emergence of “a new set of variations on the teaching role” (p. 95), such as teachers as social workers, resulting from the great inspiration and influence of the Civil Rights Movement in the U. S. during the 1960s. Hoyle’s *The Role of the Teacher* was arguably perceived as the call for the redefinition of the teacher’s role for the first time (Surman, 2016). Given the spread of neoliberalism to educational policies and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this major research paper aims to inquire into what being a contemporary teacher means.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this investigation is to explore multiple versions of the definition of a teacher and how each contributes to the development of a larger society with a specific focus on

Confucius and Socrates. Helen Caldicott, an Australian physician and author, said: “Teachers, I believe, are the most responsible and important members of society because their professional efforts affect the fate of the earth” (as cited in McNeece, 2016, para. 1). Before I began this project, little had I believed in the power of a teacher in influencing “the fate of the earth” despite never doubting the importance of my profession. But the unpredictable outlook of the COVID-19 pandemic and how differently people react to its disruption to their lives compelled me to question the role that teachers and their teaching philosophy play in shaping and potentially changing those reactions. When facing the same threat, some people obey the stay-at-home order to limit the spread of the virus, while others take to the streets to fight for their rights and freedom. The question is: If the teacher is “a producer of citizenship, leadership, sharpened intelligence, and character without which society and civilization would quickly disappear and decay” (Holbeck, 1928, p. 473), what kind of citizens does society aim to produce and what would affect individuals’ beliefs and decisions towards achieving such a goal?

Day et al.’s (2006) response to the above question is the self-knowledge that teachers have of themselves, which influences their sense of purpose, beliefs, attitudes, motivation, and actions. Researchers demonstrate that the notion of teachers’ self-knowledge is personally and socially constructed by individuals’ experience in and interaction with their social, cultural, and institutional settings (Day et al., 2006; Olson & Einwohner, 2001). Although I agree with previous literature, I ponder the question of what can challenge teachers’ self-knowledge and force them to think of and reflect on their personal lives as well as their interactions with a larger environment to reconstruct the nature of their work. I believe that Lapan (1940) would suggest a teacher practice incorporating a philosophy of education as it “culminates in self-knowledge and in knowledge of the world within which man lives, including society” (p. 21). Therefore, by

examining the definition of a teacher using a philosophical lens, this project hopes to inspire contemporary teachers to become reflective of their profession while making an impact on individual lives and the one world within which we are living.

Approach and Importance of the Study

This study employs a conceptual methodology, reviewing works of literature done by various authors on this subject to explore the research question. Being defined as a “plane” of related concepts (Jabareen, 2009), I believe a conceptual approach is the best fit for broaching the definitional inquiry of my topic. The research begins with setting up a discourse about how the two most prominent teachers in classical times—Confucius and Socrates—define their role and the nature of teaching. Living around the same period and being outstanding thinkers, Confucius and Socrates have attracted massive attention from the academic world, evidenced by the influx of comparative studies with their philosophy as the central focus (Gorry, 2011; Li, 2012; Liu, 2013; Mahood, 1971; Murphy & Weber, 2010). Confucius and his system of ideas not only shaped the lives of a billion Chinese people and the thinking of a nation but also continues to play an influencing role in the teaching and learning tradition of Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC) countries, including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia, Korea, and Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2005). Similarly, Socrates is arguably regarded as “part of the air we breathe in Western culture” (Lear, 2006, p. 446). As a result, comparing and contrasting their philosophy is not immune from being interpreted as a cultural comparison between the East and the West. The world has witnessed the domination of Western (or European-American) philosophy and its position as superior to non-Western learning habits and mindset. Just as Van Norden (2017) suggests “greater pluralism can make philosophy richer and better approximate the truth” (p. 36), this project adopts a comparative approach and requires changing the

monolithic criteria when viewing different teaching methods. The message is to respect and keep diversity in globalization. However, despite leaving their footprints in the Eastern and Western traditions, Confucius and Socrates don't fully represent or embody their respective cultures. Hence, it is worth noting that despite adopting a comparative approach, this project focuses on the similarities and differences between the two philosophers rather than comparing the Eastern and the Western cultural values in general.

While there has been no shortage of comparative study of the two thinkers and their relevance to present education, little research has shown how differently each approach addresses the teaching dilemmas that contemporary teachers face. By initiating a discourse among Confucius, Socrates, and contemporary teachers, I hope this study offers important implications that benefit the current teaching practice and potentially help move our education forward. This thesis will argue that the Socratically integrated approach, in which Confucius' values bridge the gap in the Socratic method, is an ideal approach to that end.

Outline of the Remainder of the Document

Chapter 2 provides a foundational knowledge of Confucius' philosophy and perspective of the goal of teaching and the role of a teacher. Chapter 3 revisits how Socrates perceives education and exemplifies what being a teacher means, before comparing and contrasting to those of Confucius. Given the similarities and differences between their approaches, I argue that Confucian and Socratic methods are better understood in terms of a continuum rather than a dichotomy. Chapter 4 discusses multiple external pressures that challenge contemporary teachers to teach according to their values. I then connect the emphasis on economic values over human goodness in contemporary education to the status quo that Confucius and Socrates criticize in their times and claim that their approaches are still relevant. In Chapter 5, I analyze the

advantages and disadvantages of each method in handling contemporary issues and argue that we should position both methods as two ends on a continuum to determine their application values in a specific context. I will then demonstrate why we need one approach more than the other after reflecting on my teaching experience and weighing each approach's pros and cons. The final chapter includes a summary of my findings and concludes with implications for teachers and recommendations for the future direction of this topic.

CHAPTER TWO: A RETRIEVAL OF CONFUCIUS' PHILOSOPHY

In this chapter, I go back in time to when Confucius lived to investigate the historical context that influenced his philosophy and position of the role of teacher. According to Skinner (1969), to understand Confucius as a teacher and his teaching philosophy recorded by his disciples in *The Analects*, it is important to situate them in their historical context. Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.), China's most famous philosopher, was born in the age of political crisis as the civil war divided the country into regions fighting for power from 771–221 B.C.E. (Lee, 2010; Timeline, 2020; Tu, 2019). In such a time of chaos and violence, Confucius promoted a lifelong dream to revitalize the collapsed feudal ritual system that was once the key pillar in the prosperity and stability of the Western Zhou dynasty (1050 – 771 B.C.E.) (Tu, 2019). The fall of the feudal system brought an erosion of moral values, as people pursued power and self-interest rather than the common good. In an attempt to bring back the Western Zhou golden age, when rulers led their people with virtues and compassion, Confucius searched for ancient wisdom and a formula to keep society in solidarity. He soon discovered that rituals, social practices, and cultural customs acted as a glue to keep people together (Lee, 2010; Tan, 2021; Tu, 2019). Bearing all the ancestral rules and etiquette in mind, Confucius aimed to promote virtue both as a personal characteristic and a leadership trait as powerful tools to tackle social disorder and political instability (Tu, 2019). Towards that end, he first learned to act according to what the ancients said, and later passed his knowledge to his disciples with the hope of making the kingdom a better and more peaceful place. His words of wisdom were collected and recorded by his disciples in *The Analects*, a Chinese scripture analogous to the Bible. Confucius' teaching philosophy is the foundation of China's educational system and its impacts have extended to other countries in East Asia.

Therefore, to understand the role of East-Asian contemporary educators, one must understand Confucius—one of the greatest teachers and influential thinkers in the East. Because Confucius left none of his own writings behind, his real existence was challenged by Jensen (1998), who hypothesized that Confucius was more of “a mythical figure” (p. 156) than of a historical one. In response to Jensen’s claim, Van Norden (1999) suggested that Confucius was probably mythical in a sense that scholars get access to this historical figure only through later traditions and stories. However, Van Norden (1999) concurred with Brooks (1998) that *The Analects* was a reliable historical source of information and Confucius’ great influence on his native tradition was undeniable. Specifically, his influence on Chinese culture can be compared to the collective influence of Jesus and Socrates on the Western culture (Van Norden, 1999). His philosophy is centered around three Hs—humanity, harmony, and hierarchy—acting as the core values that reflect his beliefs in their importance in strengthening the state and moving ancient China towards a unified kingdom (Starr, 2012). By exploring each H and the role of the teacher according to Confucius (discussed below), I hope to remind contemporary educators of what values they should aim to cultivate and place at the heart of their teaching.

The Philosophy of Confucius

Humanity

One of the key principles of Confucius’ way of life, the value of humanity, receives much attention and emphasis in *The Analects*. He says: “a person who is not humane cannot remain for long either in hard or easy circumstances. A humane person feels at home in humaneness. A wise person [practices it because he] sees benefits in humaneness” (Confucius, 2014, chap. 4.2). As such, the first value in Confucius’ school of thought raises a fundamental question that every person inevitably encounters: “How do I live my life? What kind of a person do I want to be?”

(Li, 2012, p. 37). Despite acknowledging individual differences, the Chinese thinker has a clear idea of what it means to be a person and ways to achieve human excellence (Li, 2012). Confucius believed that promoting humane values through self-cultivating and practicing five virtues (benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, loyalty, and altruism) is instrumental in handling chaos and maintaining social order (Confucius, 2014; Starr, 2012). It is worth noting that these five virtues can be interpreted and translated quite differently due to the “archaic vocabulary and an oblique, elliptical grammar that often leaves referents ambiguous or unclear” presented in *The Analects* (Cheang, 2000, p. 564). Education is thus a ladder for one to achieve those virtues. As such, it can be inferred that virtue is knowledge, and can be acquired both through teaching and learning.

However, the acquisition of virtue would not be a success without the love of learning. Confucius perceives learning as a pleasure and gaining wisdom as a joy, and displays no interest in teaching those who fail to develop their thirst for knowledge. The questions are: How would Confucius deal with students who have little interest in learning? Would he give up on teaching them? What might be the implications of the love of learning mentioned by Confucius for teachers? I will address those questions in the following section, where I analyze the teaching role the Chinese thinker exemplifies. In short, the above virtues, coupled with one’s willing mind and heart, will propel one to become an educated human being who contributes to societal stabilization and development. That said, each virtue is a contextual concept, and as such the way Confucius instructed his disciples how to be benevolent, right, wise, loyal, and altruistic depended on their hierarchy in the community.

Hierarchy

The world of civil war and power struggles where Confucius lived set the stage for his aspiration and mission of bringing about social order—a panacea that he hoped would solve the

political chaos at that time. According to Timeline (2020), Confucius claimed that:

To put the world in order, we must put the nation in order. To put the nation in order, we must put the family in order. To put the family in order, we must cultivate our personal life. We must set our hearts right. (12:00)

The saying reflects the correlation between an individual and a grander system to which one belongs. For example, Sam is not merely Sam, a man is not only a person, but also a son, a husband, a father, and a professor. As such, the concept of hierarchy suggests people should be well-aware of their place in social relationships and behave accordingly (Starr, 2012).

In *Analects*, Confucius also highlighted the five fundamental human relationships: (1) ruler–subject, (2) parent–child, (3) husband–wife, (4) sibling, and (5) friendship. Li (2012) argued that familial relationships (defined by 2, 3, and 4), are the most crucial, implying that each family is regarded as a steppingstone to build up a community. As such, the stronger the family values, the healthier and better society (Murphy & Weber, 2010).

The above five relationships are managed by the ruling concept of filial piety, referring to how a child should treat their parents with ultimate respect. Tu (2019) expounded that filial piety was not a child’s unconditional submission to their parents in the role of superiors; rather, it demonstrated their reverence for their source of life. The practice of filial piety also governed other unequal relationships between rulers and their people for societal benefits. If people are required to respect the authoritative figures and their decisions, only those with virtues are given the right to rule the nation with their moral leadership (Timeline, 2020). This ideal dynamic is evident by Confucius’ words of wisdom “If you guide the people with ... punishment, they will try to stay out of trouble but will have no sense of shame. If you guide them with exemplary virtue ... they will know to reform themselves” (Confucius, 2014, chap. 2.3). After all,

Confucius stresses the importance of governing people by virtue rather than complex laws and regulations in helping them recognize their mistakes and wish to self-correct (Hall & Ames, 1987).

Confucius' hierarchy can be modelled with a pyramid; each family is a distinct stone, interconnected by traditions to form a robust foundation. The layers of bricks represent social order, reflecting the role of individuals and family units in a grander system such as a community, a state, and a kingdom. The apex is the emperor, who holds the ultimate power, and should first exemplify humane moral values, then lead their people in light of virtue in pursuit of a harmonious society and a peaceful world.

Influenced by Confucius' hierarchy, later Confucian philosophers, including Mengzi and Xunzi, however, hold divergent perspectives on the role of a leader. Mengzi uses the slogan "human nature is good" to label his views on human agency: every human is inclined to be virtuous and "even the most reprobate human is capable of performing at least some virtuous acts from virtuous motives" (Van Norden, 1992, p. 183). Therefore, similar to Confucius, Mengzi advocates the idea of having a virtuous leader as an exemplar, who is kind and caring to their followers (Rarick, 2008). The difference is: Confucius places more weight on individuals' respect to authority whereas Mengzi is concerned more about the ethical role of the rulers towards their subjects (Rarick, 2008). Xunzi offers a contrasting view on human agency and the role of a leader. Xunzi believes that "our innate feelings cannot be relied upon as the primary means for moral cultivation" (Van Norden, 1992, p. 183); hence, the evil exists in human nature. While emphasizing that learning can transform a bad human to a good one, Xunzi also acknowledges the great variation in the process of self-transformation and self-cultivation. As a result, while rituals are enough to enforce conduct for the noble-minded, harsh measures are

needed to handle immoral behaviour (Peng et al., 2008, p. 68). In this regard a ruler can be seen as a punisher.

Harmony

Witnessing his country devastated by conflicts and people suffering from grief, Confucius believed that the cause lay in the temptation of wealth and power (Tu, 2019). Therefore, he attempted to challenge the status quo, calling for justice and morality in place of self-indulgence, with the eventual purpose of creating harmony among social relationships. The Chinese philosopher encouraged people to look beyond the trappings of power to search for the inner beauty of human beings and the love of rightness, which would otherwise lead the world to disorder. Confucius clearly stated that “If in your action you think only of profit, then you will incur much unhappiness [with yourself and with the world]” (Confucius, 2014, chap. 4.12). To him, harmony is defined as a win-win approach to the way of living, encouraging people to put their self-interest aside for the sake of the common good.

The Confucian ideal of harmony is best illustrated with how it handles conflicts. If a child disagrees with their parents’ immoral behaviour, they should not lose their temper nor confront their parents with aggressive words. Rather, they are expected to remain calm and reverent when discussing the wrongdoings with them. By gently and gradually remonstrating with their parents, one could hopefully change their thoughts and make them realize their mistakes without damaging their ego (Confucius, 2014). Doing so not only maintains harmony in the family but also strengthens the other two values of humanity and hierarchy that Confucius emphasizes in his philosophy. A person with noble character uses wisdom and virtue instead of violence and power as weapons to resolve conflicts and stabilize society with no one getting hurt.

Humanity, Hierarchy, and Harmony are the key pillars that ground Confucianism—a system of ideas that shapes the lives of a billion people and the thinking of the world’s largest

nation despite its complicated relation with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Confucianism was banned by the CCP because Confucius' ideal of harmony and respect of social hierarchies clashed with Chinese politics characterized by internal struggle and conflict in the Mao Zedong's era (Gregor & Chang, 1979). Wu (2015) argued that the CCP in the early 2000s embraced and promoted Confucianism as a political tool to justify its authoritarianism and build a common Chinese identity. Confucius believed that the secret to living a peacefully worthwhile life is to develop people as humans of noble character through self-cultivation of virtue (Li, 2012; Seung, 2008). His golden rule "Do not impose on others what you do not desire for yourself" reflects his beliefs in the decisive role of sacrificing private gain in creating a harmonious society (Confucius, 2014, chap. 12.2).

The metaphor of family and the idea of filial piety were regarded as the essence of Confucius' theory. Since the Chinese sage perceived the community, the society, and the state as a family at large, he promoted a sense of belonging that glued people together. From this viewpoint, children and youths should express respect to their senior; in return, the superior should rule their people with virtue and compassion as if they put their people's well-being alongside their own (Hall & Ames, 1987). However, his ideas were abandoned in his times, when power dominated goodness (Chin, 2007; Tu, 2019). Eventually, after 14 years of failed attempts traveling between Chinese states to persuade different rulers to govern people according to morality, Confucius shifted his attention to passing his knowledge onto the younger generation, hoping that one day they would actualize his vision of a peaceful world through education (Timeline, 2020). Little did he know that his teaching legacy would have an enormous impact, not only on the role of Chinese teachers but also on what it meant to be a teacher in other East Asian countries.

Teaching According to Confucius

Teachers as Moral Models

In Confucius' eyes, the ultimate purpose of teaching was to produce as many educated people as possible and to develop an education that rested on merit rather than wealth (LaFleur, 2017). He would describe an educated person as a "gentleman": well-behaved, respectful, and self-aware of one's position in society, implying that human relationships spoke louder than literary education. As explained in the first H (Humanity), the Chinese sage viewed becoming a human and perfecting self in relation with others as the primary goal of learning. Zixia, one of Confucius' disciples, reinforced his viewpoint by saying that "if a person ... is able to serve his parents with the utmost effort and his lord with no self-interest, ... though he may say that he lacks learning, I would surely call him learned" (as cited in Confucius, 2014, chap. 1.7). Thus, the first lesson Confucian teachers must teach their students is to behave according to moral traditions; literature, mathematics, and other subjects are secondary. To that end, demonstrating themselves as exemplary humans is the first and foremost step.

Confucius would regard a teacher with virtue as a "North Star," the most easily found and brightest star in the northern sky, "standing in its place with all other stars revolving around it and paying court to it" (Confucius, 2014, chap. 2.1). Despite portraying teachers as superior to their students, Confucius did not support the use of punishment as a means to mold one's behaviour. However, it is monolithic to claim that Confucianism would go against punishments in general. Xunzi, a later Confucian philosopher, thought otherwise. Walker (2019) claimed that Xunzi influenced Han Feizi's Legalist views, which emphasized the need for harsh punishments to maintain social order. Given the limited space of this project, I will focus on Confucius' perspective on ruling by not punishing. Like the way rulers led their subjects with virtue, teachers should model behavioural traits and inspire their students to revere and emulate them. Li

(2012) synthesized the characteristics of model learners propagated by Confucius and came up with seven learning virtues: sincerity, diligence, endurance of hardship, perseverance, concentration, respect for teachers, and humility. However, one must show the willingness and curiosity to absorb all those learning qualities, as learning itself should be a pleasant and joyful journey (Confucius, 2014). Therefore, being passive recipients of knowledge was definitely not an ideal type of student in Confucius' eyes, although the second key role of Confucian teachers is a transmitter of wisdom. This kind of paradox will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Teachers as Transmitters and Instructors

Before pursuing teaching, Confucius was a learner himself who discovered that ancestral rules and etiquette were a source of information that could potentially solve his society's problems. Hence, he displayed his respect for the past, studied classical knowledge, and considered them a treasure for the young to inherit from the elder generation's practice and experience. Kwak (2016) argued that Confucius believed that learning traditional culture was a precondition for the effective cultivation of virtues. Reading classical texts stimulated students into thinking and reflecting on their own conduct and triggered their desire for moral learning (Kwak, 2016, p. 15). Hence, the role of teachers was to preserve and pass on ancients' words of wisdom to their students, as he once said: "I transmit but do not innovate. I love antiquity and have faith in it" (Confucius, 2014, chap. 7.1). By not letting his voice dominate the ancestors Confucius exemplified the humble and reverent attitudes towards antique knowledge, two learning virtues identified by Li (2012) in the above paragraph. Students, as a result, shall mirror and put those good traits into practice.

Though Confucius put more weight on the transmission of knowledge than the promotion of critical thinking, he did not consider his disciples empty containers who are receptive to information provided by their teachers (Confucius, 2014, chap. 2.12). Indeed, he claimed that "If

you learn but do not think, you will be dazed. If you think but do not learn, you will be in danger” (Confucius, 2014, chap. 2.15). It can be inferred that thinking is an integral part of learning; if one merely receives what is disseminated without reflecting, thinking, and asking questions, that person might end up taking nothing out of it as not every piece of information is transferrable. The importance of thinking was emphasized again in another example as following:

I will not give a person a boost or a start if he does not know the frustration [of trying to solve a difficult problem] or the frenzy one would get into trying [to put an idea] into words. After I have shown a student one corner of a square, if he does not come back with the other three, I will not repeat what I have done. (Confucius, 2014, chap. 7.8)

Put another way, the prerequisite knowledge fed by teachers coupled with personal insights gained through curiosity and reflection will make a learner a gentleman—an ideal educated human being, according to Confucius. I shall use the above example to revisit the questions of students’ activeness in learning raised earlier. It can be inferred from the above example that Confucius would not go on with the lesson if the student was passive. While this inference makes sense, I would like to offer an alternative explanation. Perhaps what Confucius wants to underscore is the importance of intrinsic motivation. Perhaps Confucius wants his students to engage in learning activities such as solving challenging problems for its inherent satisfaction rather than external stimulation, including rewards and punishments. The implication is that the teacher should provide time for students to wonder (reflect) and space for them to wander (think) so that the knowledge they acquire includes their personal thoughts and experience. However, another question arises: What would Confucius do if the student was still not intrinsically motivated by the interaction with the teacher? Maybe he would give them more time and space to develop their desire for learning. This approach, however, would be

problematic in contemporary classroom where some students are there just because their parents want them to be there. I will turn back to this point in Chapter 5.

Confucius not only delivered his wisdom to students but also offered them personalized solutions, even when asked the same question. Van Norden (2002) claimed that perhaps Confucius had no general guideline or mechanical system to which his disciples could refer to formulate correct actions in a specific context (p. 21). As a result, his disciples turned to their master for advice and Confucius would guide their way variously depending on their personal situation: “A gentleman, in his dealings with the world, is not predisposed to what he is for or against. He sides only with what is right” (Confucius, 2014, chap. 4.10). It can be interpreted that “what is right” is regarded as something contextual. For example, In *Analects* 11:22, he responded differently to the same concern raised by both his disciples Zilu and Ran You about whether they should take action upon something that needed to be addressed. In reply to Zilu, Confucius told him to be thoughtful of the fact that his father and older brother were still alive and thus held him back from his action. In contrast, the Chinese sage urged Ran You to go ahead immediately. Confucius later justified these different instructions by the vast difference between the two characters: Ran You got the green light since he was reluctant to upset those who can hurt his career, whereas Zilu was given the yellow light because he was hot-tempered and ready “to wrestle a tiger with his bare hands” (Confucius, /2014, chap. 11.22). It is believed that Confucius catered his answers according to his students’ situations to amplify their strengths and help them work on areas of improvement in pursuit of one’s self-perfecting purpose.

Additionally, from conversations with his disciples, it can be seen that Confucius instructed them what to do and how to behave according to what he deemed to be right and beneficial for them. His responses to their problems, therefore, are concrete and rigid by using

imperative sentences and rhetorical questions such as “Don’t decry what is already past” and “When your father and elder brother are still alive, how can you take action as soon as you hear something?” (Confucius, 2014, chap. 3.21, chap. 11.22). Because the role of Confucian teachers is instrumental in directing their students, they also must continue learning, fulfilling their third teaching function.

Teachers as Lifelong Learners

Despite thinking highly of classical wisdom, Confucius was able to adapt ideas gained from his context rather than act as a middleman between the past and the young generation (Timeline, 2020). His contribution to what already existed is evident in *Analects* 2:11, in which he explained what it meant to be a decent teacher: “A person is worthy of being a teacher if he is able to gain new insights from chewing over what he already knew.” Those texts can be interpreted as a mutual relationship between learning and teaching. To teach well, one must continue learning new events that might arise from re-teaching the same concept. To the same end, Ames and Hall (1987) pointed out that 學 (to learn) originated from 教 (to teach), which meant that both teachers and students can acquire new knowledge by teaching (Seung, 2008). In this regard, teachers are lifelong learners who continuously evolve what they think they know because knowledge is not a fixed object that remains unchanged over time.

The Confucian definition of a teacher is that they are both a master of wisdom and an authority figure whose work is to transmit their knowledge, shape their students’ behaviour, and provide them with tailored answers to their problems. To summarize, a Confucian teacher acts as a North Star that directs their students towards the ultimate goal of personal growth and societal stability in the light of virtue.

CHAPTER THREE: A RETRIEVAL OF SOCRATES' PHILOSOPHY AND A COMPARISON TO CONFUCIUS'

This chapter outlines the tenet of the Socratic approach to teaching and makes a comparison to the Confucian method. Socrates (469–399 B.C.E.), one of the greatest ancient Greek philosophers despite leaving no writings of his own for posterity. Hence, similar to Confucius, the sources of historical Socrates and their trustworthiness remain questionable (Graham & Barney, 2016). The portrait of Socrates is painted by many of his disciples but only the writings of Plato and Xenophon survive (Stone, 1989). While Xenophon's Socrates is claimed to be "platitudinous and banal" by Stone, Plato's Socrates is the primary account to which literary reader refer to learn about Socrates (Stone, 1989). Despite being suspected as a fiction, Plato's works do not misrepresent Socrates (Graham & Barney, 2016). That said, it is noteworthy to bear in mind the question of to what extent Plato's Socrates represents the complete and accurate picture of the Greek philosopher.

Among Plato's works on Socrates, Kraut (1992) claims that the early dialogues, including *Apology*, *Charmides*, *Crito*, *Euthyphro*, *Gorgias*, *Hippias Minor*, *Ion*, *Laches*, and *Protagoras*, were the most accurate reflection of historical Socrates. Specifically, there is no "shred of doubt in the ancient world about the historical authenticity of Plato's *Apology*" (Kraut, 2000, p. 13). The middle and late dialogues, however, reflect more Plato's philosophy and less that of Socrates (Kraut, 1992). On the same note, Socrates become more of a character in Plato's middle and late writings and less of a historical figure. Hence, it can be inferred that there is no one clear unified Socrates as he might change through his life and we mostly know him through Plato. Retrieving Socrates' philosophy, therefore, is no simple and easy task; there might be different versions of Socrates in different dialogues written by Plato. Nevertheless, Kraut (1992) argues that Plato inherits the tenet of the Socratic method—the art of questioning to examine one's beliefs. Thus,

it is convincing to me that Plato might also build his own philosophy upon that of his teacher and it is acceptable to understand Socrates as a thinker, a philosopher, and a teacher through Plato's masterpiece: *The Republic*. I acknowledge that there is a fine line between Socrates' philosophy and that of Plato that is not always visible to posterity. Given the connection between them and the influence Socrates has on Plato, I believe seeing Socrates through the lens of Plato is a right start. Perhaps portraying Socrates is like collecting multiple pieces of a puzzle in which Plato's sources account for not all but most of them. Within the scope of this project, I choose to focus on assembling pieces provided by Plato to draw a part of Socrates' portrait as a teacher rather than reaching the complete historical Socrates.

Born and raised by a stoneworker and a midwife, Socrates grew up in the poor trade communities of the Athenian open marketplace where he conducted conversations with people of all walks of life (Griffin, 2020a). His purpose of initiating dialogue with anyone, including those appealed by his question-and-answer method, is to test The Oracle of Delphi's answer of no one being wiser than him and to make others realize their ignorance and become wiser through their own curiosity and inquiry. Three essential relationships stood out from Socrates' way of life that I synthesized from literature: knowledge and ignorance, human values and virtue, and appearing and being (Brickhouse & Smith, 2000; Prior, 2019). I will first describe each and then contrast them with Confucius' school of thought below in turn in order to recommend an ideal approach that potentially helps move our education forward.

The Philosophy of Socrates

Knowledge and Ignorance

Socrates' goal was arguably believed to help people become wiser by informing them of their ignorance through dialogues (Brickhouse & Smith, 2000; Griffin, 2020a; Nails, 2018). His conversations began with his interlocutors providing background information on their situations,

followed by Socrates asking them questions until they were able to generalize their specific perspectives about an abstract concept. By doing so, he believed that they pursued wisdom, which allowed them to make difficult judgments, such as in the case of Euthyphro (Brickhouse & Smith, 2000). Socrates met Euthyphro at King Archon's court, where the latter was prepared to prosecute his father for the murder of a laborer. While Euthyphro's action of bringing his father to trial was deemed impious by his family and friends, Euthyphro held an opposite position. As a prosecutor, what it meant to be pious was to make one pay the price for their wrongdoings, regardless of who wrongdoers were to him. Euthyphro's ethical dilemma laid the ground for search of the meaning of piety, featuring the great emphasis Socrates places on definitions.

It was clear to Socrates that Euthyphro displayed a basic understanding of piety, which Brickhouse and Smith (2000) called "ordinary" propositional knowledge. However, Euthyphro seemed to struggle with Socrates' question of the nature of piety: "Is the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?", showing that Euthyphro was ignorant to some extent (Plato, Euthyphro, 10a). As the discourse continued, Socrates' curiosity was about more than what Euthyphro considered piety, but how and why he came up with such a definition. When the insights that Euthyphro gained from addressing the Greek philosopher's "how" and "why" questions deepened his understanding of the concept, Euthyphro's knowledge became wisdom. To Socrates, wisdom enabled one to "rely on it to make any very significant judgment on any very significant moral issue" (Brickhouse & Smith, 2000, p. 120).

Socrates' view on and approach to gaining wisdom appears to contrast Confucius', who believed that wisdom is a product of the absorption of classical knowledge and the reflection of individual experiences. In contrast, Socrates perceived wisdom as knowledge at its best, transforming those who possess it into critical thinkers through a series of "how" and "why"

questions. The Greek thinker starts with examining his interlocutors' particular questions before turning them into abstract concepts that enrich one's source of information and aid one in thinking about any other specific instance that might arise in the future. It can be inferred that the Socratic method requires both parties to speak up and contribute their ideas to the conversation because each answer acts as a key ingredient to formulate the follow-up question. Hence, the main features of the Socratic teaching method are the flat and confrontational elements (Kim, 2009). In contrast, the Chinese philosopher began the learning process by arming his disciples with foundational knowledge, then offered them customized answers according to what he believed to be true in their particular situations. In other words, the Confucian teaching approach highlights the high-power distance in the teacher-student relationship. While the Hierarchy positions a teacher higher than the student and creates a vertical and top-down pedagogy, Harmony influences a student's reluctance to express their opinions, confront, and ask questions to the teacher, which would signal disrespectful behavior otherwise (Kim, 2009). Apart from the distinction between both approaches, Kim's (2009) study infers that it is possible to incorporate the Socratic method into the curriculum of Korean law schools. There might be challenges for students in the short-term as they need to adapt to the new teaching approach which kind of clashes with Korean hierarchical culture. However, with the use of English as the main language of instruction and the increasing exposures to overseas education and culture, Korean students might benefit from and feel more comfortable with the Socratic method in the long run. In a broader sense, there is a possibility of using the Socratic method in other Asian educational contexts.

Opposed to Confucius' beliefs that ancients know best and that examining classical knowledge is a wasteful step, Socrates acknowledges that no one would know best-himself included, and questioning almost everything and everyone is the best way to wisdom. That said,

challenging just about everything does not necessarily mean showing no respect to the challenged subjects. When his old friend Chaerephon passed the Oracle's message about no one being wiser than him Socrates did not refute that pronouncement. Being puzzled by the Oracle's message, he searched for individuals who were wiser than himself in order to understand what the Oracle meant (Graham & Barney, 2016). Hence, although both Confucius and Socrates display respect to ancestral knowledge or the Oracle's answer, Socrates was far more inclined to question whereas Confucius was more deferential. While the records of the Zhou dynasty provide the textbooks on which the Chinese sage relied without attempting to challenge its applicability, the Greek philosopher sometimes is sympathetic to tradition and ancestors but always seeks to question them. In this sense, for Confucius the most crucial knowledge one must learn would be the ancient legacy, whereas for Socrates it would be one's own ignorance. As stated in *The Apology*, Socrates' self-defense, Socrates believes that one could only broaden their horizon of knowledge and eventually become wiser by first recognizing how ignorant one is:

I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know. (Plato, *Apology*, 21d)

In summary, Socrates defines learning as pursuing wisdom through the excavation of truth found primarily in the self and emerged from dialogues. That said, Socrates does not imply that truth would vary depending on each person; rather, "truth is neither prescribed by authority figures nor socially negotiated" (Tweed & Lehman, 2002, p. 91). Socrates' ideal of learning encourages individuals to inquire into every given information, not only for strengthening one's

argument but also for helping one to distinguish between what appears true and what is true, which I will discuss further in the coming sections.

Human Values and Virtue

Socrates, who devoted his philosophical career to the search for the meaning of life, puzzled himself and others with the question of what is valuable (Brickhouse & Smith, 2000). The examination of human values truly mattered because an “unexamined life is not worth living for men” (Plato, Apology, 38a). By conversing with people of diverse ages and classes, Socrates learned that some values needed to be cultivated while others deserved less attention. Specifically, when it came to his attention that “those who had the highest reputation” praised the power over excellence and “were nearly the most deficient,” indicated in his last speech before the execution, written by Plato as following:

Good Sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the greatest city with the greatest reputation for both wisdom and power; are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation, and honors as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul? (Plato, Apology, 22a & 29d-e)

Socrates placed greater weight on the excavation of truth and wisdom than the pursuit of wealth and power, which he deemed inferior because it “does not bring about excellence” (Socrates, Apology, 30b). Specifically, Socrates believes that the soul is separate from the body; that the soul is held accountable for investigating truth because it will be blinded if he examines things by means of his body, such as eyes and senses (Plato, Phaedo, 99e). Whereas, the body is held accountable for material things like wealth and therefore these men are mistaken; they should follow and care for their soul by giving more weight on developing virtues than looking for material things such as money desired by their body (Plato, Phaedo, 82c-d). Socrates’

perception of the danger of wealth and power aligned with Confucius' because, to them, those superficial values did nothing valuable for those who possessed them. What differs between the two philosophers was how they think about excellence or virtue, the human traits that are worth living by.

Unlike Confucius, who regarded virtue as knowledge, which is teachable, Socrates gave no concrete conclusion about the nature of virtue in his dialogue with Meno. As Socrates and Meno co-investigated what it meant to be virtuous, they found themselves between two hypotheses: virtue being knowledge and virtue being God-granted right opinion, which cannot be taught (Cooper, 2002). Despite no definition being made, many scholars claimed that the Greek thinker might believe that “virtue is always a good, its goodness resides in its casual power to produce something else that makes its possessor happy” and “guides us in using our other excellences beneficially” (Brickhouse & Smith, 2000; Griffin, 2020b). This viewpoint suggests that virtue associates with wisdom rather than “ordinary” propositional knowledge. As such, a quality that is virtuous or good depends on whether its possessor is wise or ignorant (Brickhouse & Smith, 2000). For example, loyalty is one of the five virtues promoted by Confucius, implying that it is a desired trait and perhaps always a good thing to have. Yet to Socrates, loyalty can be bad if one fails to use it to benefit the well-being of both the individual and the collective. In other words, a loyal person who is unable to justify their thoughts and actions wisely cannot be seen as a human with morality. In sum, although both philosophers value virtue, Confucius has a clear idea of what it constitutes with wisdom as a component. Socrates displays a contrary position in which wisdom is both a necessary and sufficient condition for the possession of other virtues, enabling its possessors to disentangle what is virtuous from what appears virtuous (Brickhouse & Smith, 2000; Gorry, 2011).

“Appearing” and “Being”

The relationship between “appearing” and “being” is indeed crafted and highlighted by Plato in *The Republic*, in which Socrates serves as the main interlocutor. It is tempting to be skeptical about whether Plato’s position on “appearing” and “being” would align with that of Socrates. Bearing in mind that it is Plato’s Socrates this paper is discussing and even Plato’s Socrates might change from one dialogue to another, I shall revisit early dialogues, including *Apology* and *Euthyphro* to investigate this question.

When approaching the poets to ask them to explain their own creation, they could not provide Socrates a satisfying explanation of the poems’ meaning. But the bystanders could, or at least they did a better job at unpacking the meaning of the poetry than the authors did (Plato, *Apology*, 22b-c). While this example illustrates Socrates’ view on knowledge and ignorance, it can be used to infer that perhaps according to Socrates, those poets merely “appear” to understand their writings instead of truly understanding them. On the similar note, by diving deeper into the definition of piety and forcing Euthyphro to ponder whether his action of prosecuting his father is considered piety, Socrates might push Euthyphro away from “appearing” to understand what the pious is. Hence, I would argue that Socrates would concur with Plato’s position on the importance of distinguishing “being” from “appearing.” Maybe Plato’s “simile of the cave” is an extension of Socrates’ implicit and unfinished idea of “appearing” and “being.”

In his conversation with Glaucon, Plato’s Socrates emphasized the instrumental role of philosophers in educating other people through the “simile of the cave.” That is, life is like being confined in a cave: human beings are like prisoners at birth who are unconscious of the outside world. As people are chained up in the cave and faced the wall in front of them, shadows of

various objects projected above the wall by the artificial light of a burning fire are the only things they can see. One of the prisoners is then suddenly released from the cave, dazzled by the natural light of the sun when they leave the cave, and unable to make out those objects whose shadows he once saw on the wall. As his eyesight recovers from the pain, he can observe the real world for the first time and feels the urge to sharing this knowledge with other prisoners.

Unfortunately, he fails to persuade others to walk out of the cave and becomes a source of laughter, since none of the others believes what the man says.

In this analogy, the cave is the city in which, despite everyone having a specific and fixed place, they are all forced to adopt a single and limited perspective represented by the shadows. Simply put, the shadows are what appear to be true but are mistakenly believed as the only truth by all citizens. The chains are their ignorance, used by authoritative figures such as politicians represented by the artificial light to control the masses. The freedman is the philosopher who successfully learns that there are greater truths beyond the cave and consequently moves further away from “appearing” and closer towards “being.” That movement can be interpreted as the process of transforming one’s ignorance into one’s wisdom; not only does one discover what is real and fake, but one also knows what is most logical and rational. However, such a transformation comes at a price, as the pain in his eyes is inevitable. The question is: would one rather be a happy simpleton and live a life of blissful ignorance of reality, or be a miserable intellectual who is enlightened to the true nature of the world but rejected by the rest of society?

As Mill (1863/2009) concluded:

It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. (p. 19)

I believe Socrates was not even stuck between two options as he would give no thought to the former, even if doing so meant risking his life—which he eventually did.

The simile of the cave carries various implications for both political and educational settings. In a political sense, philosophy has an important role to play in encouraging people to think, and establishing an ethical system based on rational thinking. As a result, individuals shall not abide by any manipulated standpoint without inquiring into the greater truths that are well hidden.

The lesson learned from Plato's cave analogy also reveals how Socrates views learning, though he never claims himself as a teacher. While Socrates in the early dialogues perceives pain as an unavoidable exercise one has to undertake to pursue knowledge (Mintz, 2010), the later version of Socrates described in Platonic middle dialogues, such as the *Republic*, recommends that learning can also be as fun as play even though it involves pain. As evidence, Socrates said: "Don't use force in training the children in the studies, but rather play" because "forced labors performed by the body don't make the body any worse, but no forced study abides in a soul." (Plato, *Republic*, 536e-537a). It seems that the later version of Socrates would be on the same page with Confucius regarding learning as joy at first glance. However, taking a closer look at the fun element they include in the learning process convinces me that they mention two slightly different meanings to the phrase "learning is fun." According to Confucius, the joy in learning is a natural component that comes along with the process of broadening one's mind (Confucius, 2014, chap. 1.1). Wouldn't it be fun to learn that the earth revolves around the sun? Wouldn't it be joyful to have your classmates accompany you during that process? Put simply, in Confucius' eyes, learning itself is a pleasure in nature. On a different note, the "fun" that Plato's Socrates sees as an important factor in learning is part of a pedagogical approach to engaging and

inspiring young children to study. It can be inferred that Plato's Socrates acknowledges that some children might not be eager to study if they feel like being forced to do so. Studying might not be naturally joyful for them and thus the teacher should make it a game so that they can learn through playing. How Plato's Socrates and Confucius view the fun in learning differently suggests that young children or those who are not willing to learn might benefit from a Socratic teaching pedagogy.

Putting the fun aside, both thinkers also show their positions on the pain in learning which I will discuss in the coming section. To sum up this part, the Platonic account tells us that the learning pain is not limited to the moment when one figures out their false beliefs, but is extended to the point where the becoming-wise person is renounced by the majority of ignorant people, those Socrates seeks to enlighten. Given that teaching and learning are not immune from pain, the questions of what kind of pain teachers should cultivate and how and when they should do it for the sake of their students arise. Should they liberate students from the chain one by one, motivate them to release themselves, or break the whole wall that blocks their worldviews for them? The answers to those questions can be found in the next part, in which I will describe the role of teachers according to Socrates, providing important insights that contemporary teachers should look back to move their education forward.

Teaching According to Socrates

Teachers as Pain Cultivator and Truth Examiners

Socrates perceived teaching as sparking a conversation through which learning happens, inferring that he factored into his interlocutors' diverse backgrounds and characters. Although the Socratic teaching approach might vary depending on diverse personalities, his ultimate objective of discovering the truth and searching for the meaning of life remains the same in every

dialogue (Grube & Cooper, 2002). As mentioned earlier, inflicting pain on his interlocutors by shedding light on their ignorance is a ladder to that end. And for those who prided themselves on the power they possessed and the wisdom they thought they had, including politicians and poets, discovering an unsatisfactory aspect of their intellect was deeply offensive (Mintz, 2010). That said, I would argue that upsetting the upper class was not Socrates' initial and deliberate intention when approaching them; rather, it was a consequence of his inquiry into the knowledge they believed they already acquired. Driven by curiosity, Socrates wondered if politicians were knowledgeable, but soon realized that they were not. He also pondered the understanding behind every line written by poets, but learned that "almost all the bystanders might have explained the poems better than their authors could" (Socrates, Apology, 22b). By proving to politicians and poets that they "say many fine things without any understanding of what they say," Socrates imposed educational pains on them and received their hostility in return (Plato, Apology, 21d). All of those hatreds were probably translated into the majority of votes for his death sentence years later. However, it is worth considering Stone's (1989) alternative explanation of why Socrates was executed by Athenian democracy. According to Stone (1989), what brought Socrates to trial was rooted his disdain for Athenian democracy and his enormous influence on his students' participation in anti-democratic movements. His students, who Stone (1989) referred to as "the type of rich young men prominent in the entourage of Socrates," played a leading role in three events associated with the Spartan enemy to threaten the democracy (p. 140). This explanation convinced me Socrates could make a great impact on his students and interlocutors, evidenced either by their hatred embodied in their votes or their action against democracy despite never accepting the title of a teacher for himself.

The role of the teacher that Socrates demonstrates when dealing with arrogant students is unusual in both his times and contemporary education. Bearing in mind that knowing what one

does not know is significant, a Socratic teacher would inquire into and bring to the surface the rationale underpinning one's argument through a series of "give-and-take" exchanges (Gorry, 2011). A typical exchange would start with Socrates giving his interlocutors a question (e.g., What is justice?) and take their answers as a point of departure for a deep and critical examination. During their dialogue, both Socrates and his interlocutors keep giving their opinions and taking that of the other as subjects of examination until his interlocutors make sense of what they know and do not know. Not only do those "give-and-take" exchanges stimulate one's thinking, but it also creates much-needed difficulties one has to embrace to maintain their quest for knowledge. Like how the sunlight can be too much for those whose eyes fully adapt to darkness, the struggle to glimpse the truth can overwhelm many ignorant yet arrogant people (Mintz, 2010). However, a Socratic teacher would not hesitate to shatter their students' worldviews and encourage them to recreate a wiser schema of reasoning, even if it means being disliked and turned down by them.

The first lesson of recognizing one's ignorance taught by Socratic teachers appears to contradict that of learning proper manners trained by Confucian teachers. Given that Confucius values harmony, his teaching philosophy aims at seeking harmonious relationships in any situation, and thus agitating others is not a part of his plan. Hence, a Confucian teacher would approach those politicians and poets differently. He would first attempt to correct their attitude because even if they had "the talents of the Duke of Zhou," if they are "arrogant and stingy," the rest of their qualities "aren't worth a glance" (Confucius, 2014, chap. 8.11). Those lines imply that if he fails to achieve this first mission, he would probably not waste his time fixing their false beliefs, and let them live with their ignorance for the rest of their lives instead. A Socratic teacher would take a riskier path because his love for wisdom and focus on rationality might far

outweigh his worries about what others think and react to his service to learning compelled by God.

Nevertheless, both Confucian and Socratic teachers share a mutual appreciation of educational pains. Despite regarding learning as a joy, Confucian teachers would encourage students to deepen their thinking by assigning challenging tasks through which their perseverance is put to the test. For example, Confucius once said: “Is it not a pleasure to learn and, when it is timely, to practice what you have learned?” (Confucius, 2014, chap. 1.1), indicating that learning a concept and utilizing it in daily practice is a pleasure. However, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, frustration may occur in the learning process which is deemed as fun, resulting from students’ thinking and determination to solve difficult tasks assigned by the teacher. Likewise, by asking systematic questions, Socratic teachers would expose students to their fixed and limited opinion, which involves uncomfortable feelings at first but might result in greater understanding (Gorry, 2011; Mintz, 2010). In this sense, I believe that both thinkers would agree that educational frustration and confusion are pedagogically productive. This said, pain cultivators and truth examiners merely reflect a small part of a bigger picture of a teacher’s roles portrayed by the Greek philosopher.

Teachers as Midwives

The popular metaphor used to describe the function of a Socratic teacher is the image of midwifery, introduced by Plato in *Theaetetus*. In this Platonic middle dialogue, Plato’s Socrates and young Theaetetus co-investigated the nature of knowledge. Three notions of knowledge are examined: knowledge as perception, knowledge as true belief, and knowledge as justified true belief; nevertheless, none of them was taken as a universal definition. Despite making no conclusion, Plato’s Socrates compared his service to teaching and learning as similar as a midwife’s job, indicating that students are already “pregnant” with knowledge and a teacher

supports that delivery when it is due. Specifically, Socrates' perspectives on teaching and midwifery have three main characteristics in common. Firstly, the fact that Socrates acknowledges that he is "barren of wisdom" and his mind "has never produced any idea that could be called clever" is similar to the possibility that a midwife is not pregnant when she is on duty (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 150c-d). Secondly, a midwife can recognize if a woman is pregnant or not, just as how Socrates can discover whether someone is knowledgeable or deficient through the art of questioning. Lastly, the labour pain that women suffer in the delivery of their baby and the educational pain students endure in pursuit of knowledge are very much alike. In short, the teachers' job is to "pull" knowledge out by asking the right questions, like how midwives "induce labour and relieve the pains" to either draw out a baby from a pregnant woman or "bring on a miscarriage" depending on "what seems best." (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 149d). The different decisions made by a midwife in a specific context associate with various attitudes Socrates displays in a particular conversation with each interlocutor. As opposed to an interrogative tone used to challenge arrogant people, Socrates employs an encouraging voice to support the advancement of knowledge of those who are humble and at risk of giving up.

It is imperative to highlight the distinction between Socratic maieutic and eristic. The former focuses on excavating truth and the purpose of questioning his interlocutors is to lead them to acknowledge their ignorance and encourage their desire to know, for example, what piety is (Benson, 1989). On the other hand, the latter is not concerned with truth, as the ultimate goal of eristic is to establish "only the consistency or inconsistency of what the interlocutor says, not the consistency or inconsistency of what the interlocutor believes" (Benson, 1989, p. 594). Put differently, eristic is an argumentative approach that seeks "victory in argument" rather than truth and knowledge (Kerferd, 1981, as cited in Nehamas, 1990, p. 6).

The midwifery function of a Socratic teacher leads him to become an encouraging interlocutor, evidenced in two dialogues: one is with Theaetetus, and the other is with a slave boy in *Meno*. Acknowledging that learning involves pain, Socrates sees the importance of encouragement in motivating his interlocutors to overcome the labour pain and continue delivering their knowledge. By encouraging and walking with his interlocutors on every step, Socrates ensures that they will not give up in the middle of the journey and get trapped in their ignorance. To show Meno that teaching is more about igniting the flame of learning that already resides in the self rather than transferring it from the outside, Socrates introduced the fundamentals of geometry to a slave boy through a series of questions. Socrates believes that the boy “always had it [knowledge], he would always have known. If he acquired it, he cannot have done so in his present life” (Plato, *Meno*, 85e). This theory of recollection inferred that souls existed long before they entered the human shape, survived death, and thus possessed “some capability and intelligence” (Plato, *Phaedo*, 70b & 95c-d). By setting that mindset from the start, Socrates began identifying the prerequisite knowledge the boy possessed (definition of a square) and built up his questions based on that. As he noticed that the boy appeared to struggle and might not want to “work it out,” he offered an alternative solution to keep the boy thinking (“show me from what line”) (Plato, *Meno*, 84a). Not only does this flexibility prove Socrates’ sensitivity to how individuals learn differently, but it also demonstrates the encouraging trait of a teacher he exemplifies.

Another proof that supports the metaphor of Socratic teachers as encouraging interlocutors is found in the conversation with Theaetetus. In response to Theaetetus’ almost unbearable “pains of labour” during their co-examining journey of defining knowledge, Socrates prescribed some painkillers in the form of motivating feedback to raise the young man’s spirit.

For example, Socrates praised Theaetetus' responses as "a substantial one," "an excellent answer!" and "well done, boy!" (Plato, Theaetetus, 151e). Following his acknowledgment of the small wins Theaetetus achieved, Socrates kept reminding the young man of his potential: "Don't ever say that it's beyond your ability. If God is willing, and if you find the courage, the ability will follow" (Plato, Theaetetus, 151d-e). Those lines evince Socratic teachers' willingness to walk with their students on every step, regardless of which challenge the future might hold for them.

The function of a teacher as a midwife modeled by Socrates demonstrates a sharp distinction with what it means to be a teacher to Confucius. Firstly, Socrates' emphasis on human ignorance, including himself, keep him from positioning a teacher as superior to his students, the hierarchical viewpoint promoted by Confucius. Therefore, the Socratic teaching style allows both teachers and students to share equal opportunities of participating in the conversation. Students, as a consequence, are no longer the oppressed; teachers, on the other hand, relinquish their power over students. However, it is worth noting that Socrates plays an active role in navigating his dialogue with each interlocutor by his questioning technique. His power does not lie in telling his interlocutors what to do; rather, the power of Socratic teaching reflects in his ability to critically question students' existing ethical knowledge and motivate them to develop a new relationship with such given ethical knowledge (Kwak, 2016, p. 11). Secondly, a Socratic teacher would mainly inquire into "what is," "how," and "why" questions with students to challenge their worldviews, cultivate their thinking, and have them seek answers themselves without being influenced by the rumors of the masses. In contrast, Confucius' purpose of asking rhetorical questions is to respond to his pupils' concerns and confusion with clear instructions about what their next moves should be in accordance with their roles in society,

evidenced in his conversations with Zilu and RanYou regarding their same question illustrated in Chapter 2.

Thirdly, their distinctive views on knowledge lead to their contrasting philosophies of teaching and learning. That is, Confucius regards “learning as building knowledge,” implying that knowledge can be acquired. Whereas Socrates, in Plato’s *Meno*, sees “learning as insight and discovery,” indicating that knowledge cannot be acquired but discovered instead (Gereluk et al., 2016). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the dialogue between Socrates and *Meno* is atypical compared to others. The object of the conversation in *Meno* is mathematics, which is at odds with other definitional inquiries. Given the scope of this paper, I will narrow Socrates’ view on knowledge down to what we see from *Meno*. As Gorry (2011) put it, a Socratic teacher “does not ‘impregnate’ the student, rather it is the student who becomes pregnant by other means and the teacher aids gestation, labour and birth” (p. 9). Lastly, although Confucian and Socratic teachers value thinking, its priority differs in each teaching approach. The Chinese sage stated that “Once I spent a whole day without eating and a whole night without sleeping, in order to think. It was no use. It would have been better to use that time to learn” (Confucius, 2014, chap. 2.15). This saying implies that in Confucian didactics, learning and thinking are two independent processes. Thinking happens through self-reflection after students reach a certain level of absorbing fed knowledge. Whereas the Greek thinker would believe that to learn, one must think critically first, and the central focus of teaching and learning is to cultivate and refine one’s thinking. Kwak (2016) claims that the educational purpose of critical thinking in Socratic teaching is to trigger students’ reflection, which, in turn, enabling them to recognize what they know and do not know. By leading students to realize their self-ignorance, Socrates ignites their curiosity and desire to know because one ideally longs to learn after one acknowledges how

ignorant one is. The critical self-examination then allows students to make clear the limitation in their present knowledge and invite them to see the possible existence of different perspectives. In other words, by encouraging students to unlearn their given knowledge through exposing them to their ignorance, Socrates help them learn their newly established relation to the earlier knowledge (Kwak, 2016).

Despite the vast difference in approaches to teaching and learning, both Confucius and Socrates exemplify what being a teacher means. Apart from being the two most prominent teachers in the history of education, they share other commonalities, which I believe are how education should be understood. Firstly, both approaches define the function of a teacher as a mentor to open a broad horizon of thought, knowledge, and skills for students to progress further into becoming educated citizens who contribute to the sustainability of their society. Though Confucius emphasized collectivism, it is misleading to claim that the Confucian method neglects personal development. Likewise, it is distorting to believe that a Socratic approach is individualistic and excludes societal improvement. Secondly, they both appear to strive for morality and wisdom rather than wealth and power. While Confucius placed great values on moral education by guiding his students' behaviors, the Socratic method of excavating truth reflects the highest human moral value (Gorry, 2011). Lastly, students' learning progress is their top priority. Without being regulated and influenced by various parties such as government, parents, and school boards, teachers, according to Confucius and Socrates, can teach according to their values to benefit both individuals and society.

The commonalities that the two thinkers share led me to believe that it is knowledge and morality for which education should thrive. Given this, I would argue that it is best to perceive both methods as two ends of a continuum instead of a rigid dichotomy. I believe that Kwak

(2016) and Van Norden (2017) would advocate the idea of tearing down barriers between these two learning traditions. As Van Norden (2017) puts it, we can find “the same values in the best philosophy of every era and every culture” (p. 159). Kwak’s (2016) comparison of learning ethics between Confucian and Socratic teachings also suggests that both methods diverge in the thinking manners which I mentioned earlier, which result in different kinds of human being each aims to develop. While the Confucian teaching prepares students to become good or virtuous, the Socratic approach equip them with intellectual and psychological elements to be good or virtuous. In other words, each teaching approach produces two different forms of humanness. Nevertheless, just as Socrates values tensions in the mind so that “individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal” (King, as cited in Van Norden, 2017, p. 158), it is feasible to appreciate the distinction between two teaching traditions and inherit them both (Kwak, 2016). Perhaps by making them compatible in educational settings, educators can create a convergent approach to develop a new kind of humanness (Kwak, 2016). Bearing the portrayal of teachers in their times in mind, the question of what it means to be a contemporary teacher remains.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MORAL DILEMMA OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

Nowadays, I would argue that teachers are not granted the complete license to exercise their roles defined by Confucius and Socrates. Teaching has become a profession that comes with a detailed job description in which teachers' responsibilities are well-crafted and pre-determined, which do not always align with Confucius' and Socrates' teaching vision. Despite still being the backbone of education, how much a teacher can deliver and the kinds of content they are given vary depending on their socio-political context. To put it differently, their decisions regarding student learning are no longer at their discretion but involve different groups such as policymakers and parents, along with the invention of mass schooling. This chapter outlines the issues surrounding contemporary education that enter into the equation of a teacher's roles and make it impossible to be a Confucian or Socratic teacher. Additionally, it also points out the main struggle teachers encounter remains similar to the social problem that Confucius and Socrates addressed in their times, which is the conflict between knowledge, morality, and wealth.

National Interest and Educational Policy

Schools function as social tools for the government to implement and reinforce its ideology. Thus, what it means to teach and what it means to be a teacher are subject to the national interest and its vision for education (Ball, 2003). Literature indicates that educational policy is not immune from industrial conceptions of productivity and market-driven force across the board, turning children into economic indicators and teachers into professional producers of those indicators (Ball, 2003; Rose, 2009; Smyth et al., 2000; Tan, 2021). Contemporary teachers also seem to carry more weight and responsibilities on their shoulders apart from teaching, which I will elaborate further below. The mantra of market-driven educational policy quantifies the quality of teaching and learning by promoting a culture of testing, causing a great deal of

pressure that teachers have to come to terms with on their journey of preparing a future generation armed with wisdom and morality.

Testing Culture

As schools become an instrument, the purpose of schooling is reduced to economic competitiveness, and the definition of human development and achievement is narrowed to a test score (Rose, 2009). Modern education has witnessed the rise of standardized testing as a numerical measure of teachers' and students' performance (Tan, 2021). However, Madaus and Russell (2010) stated that tests have long been employed as bureaucratic tools by policymakers over the centuries for various purposes rather than a mere measurement of how effectively teachers teach and how well students learn. The insights gained from testing can also inform policymakers what further steps need to be taken in pursuit of “lifting all students to world-class standards, increasing the nation’s productivity, and restoring global competitiveness” (Madaus & Russell, 2010, p. 21). Those ultimate goals of testing on national and global levels decide what is taught, how it is taught, and what being a teacher means.

On a national level, preparing students for conquering high-stakes exams, known as “teaching to the test,” secures first place in the checklist of a teacher’s responsibilities and dominates other teaching practices in many countries (Gunzenhauser, 2003; Madaus & Russell, 2010; Neill & Medina, 1989). The contents delivered and the teaching approaches are circumscribed to what is tested and how to master test-taking skills. In China, July attracts the enormous attention of almost every Chinese person because that is when the national entrance examination to university, termed *Gaokao*, takes place. *Gaokao* is not merely an exam adopted by the Chinese government to intervene in the quality of teaching and learning, but it is also a life-changing event for millions of people. Hamnett et al. (2019) stated that the China hierarchy

of universities and the importance of education lead to intense competition to get into the high-ranking universities. A success to be admitted to elite university such as Tsinghua in China is similar to a victory when one obtains a place at an Ivy League schools such as Harvard in the United States. Unsurprisingly, top universities in China have high standards of one's performance of Gaokao. Put differently, Gaokao provides the passport to elite schools and a promising future career (Hamnett et al., 2019). Conversely, a failure to pass Gaokao equals a closed-door to the future for students, a shame on parents, a stain on teachers' reputation, and a drop in a school's position in society (Yang, 2004; Zhao et al., 2015). Thus, not only does Gaokao determine the fate of a child, but it also shapes how Chinese educators define themselves and their teaching values. As teaching is reduced to training children to conquer tests by the "drill and kill" technique, a teacher is reduced to a drill sergeant whose job is to help as many students succeed in the Gaokao and secure a spot in universities as possible and take pride in doing so (Yang, 2004). That said, an accomplishment in fulfilling the role of a drill sergeant will probably come at the expense of the miraculous growth of intelligence, sensibility, and the discovery of the world, evidenced by the fact that many Chinese students struggle with a more autonomous learning environment in their undergraduate programs (Zhao et al., 2015).

The profound effect of high-stakes testing on teaching is not an exclusive product of transmission- and exam-oriented education in East Asian countries such as China. Despite embracing an inquiry-oriented teaching model, teachers in the U.S. are not immune from the wave of "teaching to the test" (Gunzenhauser, 2003). There has been no shortage of public and scientific discourse about the pros and cons of standardized exams in the U.S., especially after the birth of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which requires every state to develop assessments in mathematics and English language arts (Bowen, 2019; Rose, 2009). Proponents

of the high-stakes testing claim that tests define objectives and standards for teaching and learning, provide teachers and schools with statistical data about student performance and shift their attention to those who need additional help, and inform parents' choice of school (Madaus & Russell, 2010; Phelps, 2011). In contrast, its opponents voice their concerns over the lack of construct validity of curriculum, the superficial and inaccurate results that fail to reflect children's understanding of a concept, and "a vision of education that ... values most highly the measurement itself" (Gunzenhauser, 2003; Neill & Medina, 1989). Similar to China, teaching in many schools in the U. S. becomes "coaching for the test," crowding out real learning and real thinking (Neill & Medina, 1989). Nevertheless, how teachers in the States respond to the standardized tests is at odds with their Chinese counterparts. Teachers in Los Angeles are reported to come out on strike with the shortcomings of high-stakes testing as one of the primary reasons (Bowen, 2019). By doing so, they take on a new role as a protestor that is neither outlined in their job description nor welcomed by the government. By doing so, they probably model the way Socrates expressed his concerns over the priority of pursuing wealth and reputation rather than truth and wisdom from some individuals he conversed with in the trial court. Both Socrates and contemporary teachers as protestors are not afraid to voice up to demonstrate their beliefs of which values education should aim at: knowledge or students' understanding.

The high-stakes testing can cause a dilemma in which it might not differentiate students who *understand* from those who *seem* to understand if they all pass exams by drilling test-taking skills. I believe the true purpose of the teacher, which is present to some extent in Confucian and Socratic approaches, is to help the learner to fully understand a concept. The Confucian methodology would teach the student why behaviourally it should be done and the benefit to

society by doing so. Socrates uses dialogical questioning to make the learner realize that the chain inhibits understanding and that leaving the cave is the only way to pursue knowledge. Therefore, while Confucius would change the way testing is done so that it can reflect one's true understanding, Socrates would challenge the existence of testing and question why it is done the way it is. As I highlighted in Chapter 2, Confucius provides his disciples with a clear and action-oriented direction of what they should do after considering their personal contexts. He has a sense of which pathway is better for each disciple and direct them to that route. Similarly, he spent 14 years trying to convince different rulers around China to rule people with morality. Hence, I believe he would advocate the refinement in how to conduct testing for the sake of students' intellectual development. On the contrary, Socrates uses dialogues to make his interlocutors think critically and deeply about their beliefs instead of orienting their actions. He is more inclined to understand their underpinning assumptions than to change their opinions or behaviour. Thus, I argue that Socrates would do the same to the testing system; that is, he would inquire into why testing exists, what testing is for, and how testing is done.

On a global level, the health and quality of different educational systems are assessed by cross-national standardized tests such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) (Tan, 2021). The purpose of those large-scale assessments is to evaluate and compare students,' teachers,' and a nation's academic performance, which, in turn, spur competitiveness among educational policies. While PISA focuses on students' application of mathematical and scientific knowledge in solving real-life problems, TIMSS still concentrates on the traditional classroom contents (Schmidt, 2014). Apart from that minor difference, two standardized tests emphasize certain subjects, including mathematics and science, over arts and physical education, which are

sacrificed because of being less significant in economics (Katzner, 2003). The biased attention allocated to different subjects implies that perhaps, cranking out economic workers matters more than nurturing well-rounded children in contemporary education (Tan, 2021). Consequently, teachers act as economic producers and test-taking nurturers who ensure that the workforce of a country can take on the responsibilities of pursuing economic achievements. In sum, the testing culture can drive teachers away from “teaching for understanding,” challenging their teaching values, determining and controlling their to-teach list, and finally take an emotional and mental toll on them, which I will explain in the coming section.

Pressures of Performativity

Students’ achievement squeezed into test scores is just the most popular tool among a myriad of performative indicators employed by the government to regulate education quality, which Ball (2003) termed as “performativity”:

Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of “quality,” or “moments” of promotion or inspection. (p. 216)

This definition suggests that the complexity and multi-faceted nature of teaching, a social process, is simplified into a mathematical function, in which teachers’ workload as the input is not fully captured, but their productivity as the output is under constant judgment and supervision. As Ball (2003) and Katsuno (2016) put it, the performativity culture pressures teachers into re-shaping their professional identities. Teachers in the U.K. find themselves stuck between infusing creativity in their teaching pedagogy and ensuring the top-down requirements are met, causing a portion of them to leave their profession (Perryman & Calvert, 2020). Those

who stay have to trade off their integrity and cope with academic stress such as anxiety, uncertainty, and instability for the success of education policy (Ball, 2003; Povey et al., 2017; Troman, 2000).

The wave of performativity also exponentially spreads out across countries in the era of globalization, although its impacts vary according to social and political conditions. In China and Vietnam, the installation of quality assurance leads to the disparity in teachers' incentives and the promotion of superficial competitions (Lo et al., 2013; Mai, 2019). Both nations rate teachers and calculate their salaries based on their completion of the performative checklist, including how much of the national curriculum is delivered and how many honors students they can produce (Lo et al., 2013; Phan, 2020). The higher the rating, the greater the incentives and the more likely teachers get promoted and exposed to high-quality training programs. In other words, the performativity culture wipes out the learning and growing opportunities from those who do poorly on the empirical performance indicators, resulting in increasing competitiveness and widening competency gaps among teachers (Wang et al., 2014). I argue that this consequence would signal a permanently unequal process in which good teachers keep getting better while progressing teachers do not receive the high-quality support they deserve to keep up with their peers. Hence, I believe that this consequence clash with Confucius' and Socrates' beliefs that everyone who wants to learn deserves a learning opportunity. Confucius would teach anyone who is willing to learn (Confucius, 2014, chap. 7.7), whereas Socrates made himself visible and accessible in the public spaces and initiated dialogues with anyone, including those appealed by his question-and-answer method, regardless of their age, gender, occupation, or social class (Nails, 2018; Prior, 2019). Thus, they would concur with me that teachers of all levels should be granted access to high-quality training programs if they wish to.

Pressures of performativity also provoke some Vietnamese teachers' defense mechanisms, tempting them to manipulate students' grades to check off productivity targets and shield themselves from any interrogation that might arise at the end of each semester (Mai, 2019). Any sanction would potentially undermine their reputation and professional status, which is crucial in helping them attract students to their private tutoring business. As Vietnamese teachers' wages are relatively low compared to other occupations, earning extra income through hosting after-school classes can lighten their financial burden (Nguyen, 2020). In this regard I argue that the two choices Vietnamese teachers face are: (1) comply with the regulations by producing superficial academic outcomes despite the erosion of morality, (2) keep their heads up and resist changes that clash with their teaching beliefs despite being labeled unproductive workers and struggling with making their ends meet. Neither of the choices is easy to make, but I will focus on the path that Confucius and Socrates would suggest Vietnamese teachers do in the next chapter.

None of the above paths, unfortunately, are easy to take. Whatever choice teachers make will eventually change who they are personally and professionally. Katsuno (2016) argues that Japan's increased focus on the country's economic need for human resources associates with the intensification of teachers' work, which in turn steers them away from their self-image of committing to the whole development of children. In an attempt to avoid the overall collapse of their professional identities, teachers in Japan have to come to terms with the reality that a part of the conditions and consequences of their job is beyond their control (Hasegawa, 2008, as cited in Katsuno, 2016).

In a nutshell, what does it mean to be a teacher under the climate of performativity? A teacher would function as (1) a performative worker who strives for excellence and always

doubts whether doing so is the right thing; (2) a juggler, who juggles among their own judgments about goodness, student's needs, and the harness of performance with the impossible goal of fulfilling them all; (3) a trader, who realizes that prioritizing creativity and morality probably means sacrificing rewards and vice versa. However, top-down intervention and specified targets are not the only external forces teachers have to deal with, given the power of parenting in their children's education.

Parental Involvement

Since a parent is considered a child's first teacher, it is inevitable for them to stay involved in the decision-making process regarding their children's education. Parental involvement means the participation of parents in their children's learning process driven by the beliefs, attitudes, and practices they hold about education (Kim, 2020). There has been no shortage of debates over whether parents should determine how children are educated and how involved they should get (Gereluk et al., 2016). Advocates of parental involvement argue that intervening in children's learning is a parental right, pointing out that parents' understanding of and special bond with their children allow them to judge and decide what best benefits a child. On the other hand, arguments against parental rights indicate that students may not be exposed to diverse viewpoints and become critical thinkers due to their parents' inadequate knowledge and limited perspectives (Gereluk et al., 2016). Nevertheless, a great body of literature concurs with the positive correlation between parental involvement and students' academic achievements (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Epstein & Sanders, 2002; Kim, 2020).

In the context of contemporary education, which scores might speak the loudest, states, teachers, and parents appear to share the common ending goal of preparing children for academic success. However, just as there are multiple approaches to solve a math problem, conflicts

resulting from different interests and beliefs among state requirements, teachers' values, and parents' expectations might arise, build on another layer of pressures on teachers, and reconceptualize their role. Notably, parents may not be less powerful than the state in influencing what is taught and how it is taught. Overbearing parents, for example, can influence the kind of content a teacher delivers to a certain degree, especially when it comes to teaching controversial subjects. Bringing hot button topics into classroom discussions acts as a means of demonstrating democratic values in Canada. By exposing students to various thoughts and ideas, teachers help them develop their own justification to think independently. However, such privilege may not come into play if the controversial matters conflict with the beliefs held by parents. For instance, a teacher would be cautious to host a debate over abortion in a class with the majority of Catholic students. In 2012, Laurel Broten, the Ontario Minister of Education at that time, said in a press conference: "Taking away a woman's right to choose could arguably be considered one of the most misogynistic actions that one could take" (as cited in Kandra, 2012, para. 2). Her statement heated a debate over whether Catholic schools should be allowed to teach students that abortion was wrong according to their pro-life position, which irritated Catholic groups as a result (Boesveld, 2012). The Ontario government had to back down from that statement to resolve this conflict (Weatherbe, 2012). This event infers that teachers in Ontario will get themselves into trouble if they introduce a different perspective on abortion to their Catholic students, who are expected to be educated in accordance with the tenets of the Catholic faith by their parents. If they do, will they be exempted from any parents' complaints that might emerge? The answer is not so optimistic as raising controversial topics could lead to severe discipline in the workplace (Maxwell et al., 2018). Therefore, I would use the metaphor of "teacher as risk-taker" to

illustrate the struggle a teacher encounters when sacrificing their security for flourishing individual critical thinking.

Putting controversial matters aside, over-requirement in what school can equip children with could tear a teacher's spirit away in the Vietnamese context. In particular, Vietnamese teachers also juggle a wide array of responsibilities that the community places on their shoulders. Being colonized by China for a thousand years (Jamieson et al., 2021), Vietnamese educational values are permeated by Confucianism, evidenced by the motto “Tiên học lễ, hậu học văn” [First learn behaviour, then learn literature] being posted right at the main entrance of every school (Hays, 2014). The purpose of this Chinese-Vietnamese saying is to remind educators and students of the priority of moral behaviour over knowledge and literature. Therefore, being a noble profession does not shield a teacher from being blamed for any wrongdoings of a child both intellectually and morally. The immediate question that adults ask when a child misbehaves is: “Did your teacher teach you to do that?” (Bui, 2017). Hence, a teacher can be imagined as a juggler, relentlessly handling plenty of behind-the-scene tasks to meet parental expectations.

To summarize, multiple external pressures can push contemporary teachers away from their teaching values, so their teaching path is not what they might have expected. Nevertheless, the modern educational context driven by economic forces and the classical age in which wealth and power dominate virtues when Confucius and Socrates lived is not dissimilar. Thus, contemporary educators need to turn back to the past and to the wisdom of the two greatest teachers in order to revitalize the noble and meaningful role of teaching. The next chapter will argue that despite both Confucian and Socratic approaches still being relevant and valuable, the Socratic pedagogy has more weight than the other; however, Confucius can help expand Socratic wonders to a wider range of students.

CHAPTER FIVE: AN OLD BUT GOLD RETURN TO THE CLASSICS

The danger of performativity and testing culture is for teachers and students to perceive education merely as a ladder to economic and extrinsic rewards in life, failing to capture its role in students' moral and intellectual development (Tan & Wong, 2008). Imagine what the world would be like if we all were driven by material enjoyment and technological progress? Tan and Wong (2008) argue that while concentrating on enhancing a country's economic competitiveness is not wrong, making it as the main purpose of education can lead teachers and their students to perceive education merely as a ladder to extrinsic rewards in life. As a result, educators might overlook the role of education in students' moral and intellectual development, which, in turn, might leave us none happier or wiser in knowing how to live a good life. To both Confucius and Socrates, education is meant to cultivate virtues and pursue wisdom. While Confucius' goal of teaching is to produce "gentlemen," Socrates stresses the enrichment of one's soul over the need of one's body. Wisdom associated with the soul which will live on; whereas, wealth and material things connected to the body will be perishable. Hence, I would argue that educators need to return to the classics to save the world from future problems caused by morality and ignorance to be eroded. This chapter outlines how contrasting the two greatest teachers would address the similar moral dilemma that contemporary teachers face, analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, and suggests the implications carried from the differences in two methods.

Contemporary Teachers as Confucian Teachers

The central focus of Confucius' teaching philosophy is the cultivation of virtue, implying that a Confucian teacher must remain a model of good characters and nurture their students as virtuous citizens despite various outer factors. Put another way, "teaching for humanity" will replace "teaching for understanding" and "teaching to the test" as the primary goal of teachers'

jobs; character-building should be incorporated into the agenda of all classroom discourses.

What matters the most shifts from “How do I measure my students’ understanding of a concept and make sure they can survive the test?” to “How do I facilitate the process of self-cultivation and internal transformation?” Shim (2008) interprets Confucius’ words and argues that larger social transformation results from the transformation within oneself through character-building. Shim’s argument infers that unless the next generation of virtuous leaders who place greater values on educating a whole child rather than cranking out economic workers, the current climate of performativity will remain unchanged. Thus, despite still teaching under pressure, a Confucian teacher will find every possible way to infuse Confucian ideas into the existing lesson plans for the good of students and the eventual change in the purpose of education in the long run (Tan, 2021). Even if doing so means taking away their time from coaching their students for the test and risking them failing to achieve their Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which they will do regardless.

In short, Confucian teachers will acknowledge their KPIs from school leaders but continue to teach according to their values because the satisfaction of nurturing a human will far outweigh the fear of getting themselves hurt and the potential loss of their incentives. Just as how Confucius sees the domination of wealth and the erosion of morality in his times and wants to change that status quo, a Confucian teacher would not endorse the KPIs that might place greater value on testing than understanding and moral values. Perhaps if the students truly understand a concept, they can do well on the test and thus their teacher can achieve their KPIs. However, “teaching to the test” to merely complete the KPIs without caring about students’ moral and intellectual development is not a route chosen by a Confucian teacher. By doing so, they hope

the sacrifice of their private gain will contribute to the gradual and radical transformation in education without hurting social harmony.

“Teaching for understanding” will come second to “teaching for humanity” on Confucian teachers’ list of priorities. “Teaching for understanding,” according to Confucius, aims to provide learners with theoretical knowledge and guide them on how to connect what they acquire from textbooks with their lived experience. As Zhao (2013) puts it, a Confucian teacher expects students to examine “textual information in relation with reality” and use those insights to inform their action in a particular situation (p. 13). The integration of theory and practice that the Chinese philosopher stressed more than two thousand years ago has yet to be outdated. Modern education witnesses the growing attention of contextualizing instructions or situational learning as effective teaching methods (Silseth & Erstad, 2018, Zhao, 2013). To promote the linkage between theory and practice, a Confucian teacher will lead students’ learning by going through two stages: (1) transmitting the wisdom of elders and (2) encouraging self-reflection.

Despite being a primary step to the student learning process and a respectful attitude to the wisdom of teachers, the transmission of knowledge can hinder students’ tolerance of risk-taking. Risk-taking is defined as opportunities that allow students to step out of their comfort zone to try new things, perceive the same object from a different angle, make a prediction, and even fail without the fear of not being able to bounce back (Meng & Uhrmacher, 2017). Confucius’ ideal of hierarchy gives teachers a powerful voice in influencing their students’ thoughts and actions. As mentioned in the first chapter, Zilu and Ran You, Confucius’ disciples, turned to their master for instructions when encountering life issues rather than making their own decisions. During the conversation, Zilu and Ran You were asked neither to express their original thoughts nor suggest a different solution to their problems. The problems were Zilu’s

and Ran You's, but the answer was Confucius'. Meng and Uhrmacher (2017) point out that showing reverence to teachers and trusting that they know best might cause a dependence on teachers' knowledge in a classroom setting. This intellectual dependence will then challenge students to think for themselves, which is the important element individuals need in the present-day world (Shephard, 2020). Hence, holding students' hands, walking with them on every step, and directing them towards a pre-determined path deemed better for them will protect them from potential fiascos but might come at the expense of intellectual independence.

The second stage of self-reflection occurs after the internalization of teachers' wisdom. To Confucius, being introspective is a crucial part of developing one's understanding of a concept which enables one to reflect on their experience and leave their footprint in the knowledge acquired. While Kim (2003) claims that providing students opportunities to think reflectively demonstrates Confucius' awareness of the importance of critical thinking, Tan (2021) argues that the greater time one spends on introspection, the more likely one becomes inward-looking and uninterested in external affairs.

In summary, a Confucian teacher would respond to the external pressures in the contemporary context in accordance with 3Hs—Humanity, Harmony, and Hierarchy. As such, the order of their priority and consideration when making any educational decision is (1) breeding human goodness in individuals, (2) maintaining harmonious relationships with school leaders and parents by not challenging their requirements or perspectives, and (3) attaining their own needs and benefits. I would argue that this list of priorities is doable but requires an enormous amount of time to make an education driven by morality rather than market forces an accomplishment. In terms of teaching methodology, a Confucian approach that emphasizes the integration of theory and practice is still relevant nowadays. That said, the hierarchical

relationship between teachers and students might result in students' intellectual dependence on teachers' expertise and knowledge to solve their problems. Additionally, Confucius' willingness to teach anyone with a desire to learn implies that he might leave those who are not intrinsically motivated behind. Given the mentioned strengths and weaknesses of the Confucian way in an attempt to resolve the struggles that contemporary teachers face, I would conclude that this is not an ideal approach. In the next section, I will explore how differently Socrates would address the same problems of modern education.

Contemporary Teachers as Socratic Teachers

I can't as yet know myself as the inscription at Delphi enjoins; and so long as that ignorance remains it seems to me ridiculous to inquire into extraneous matters. So, saying goodbye to all that ... I direct my inquiries into myself, to discover whether I really am a more complex creature and more puffed up than the monster Typhon, or a simpler, gentler being whom heaven has blessed with a quiet, un-Typhonic nature. (Plato, Phaedrus, 229e-230a).

I believe the first piece of advice Socrates would give to contemporary teachers who struggle with balancing between external forces and internal teaching beliefs is to inquire into themselves. What does teaching and being a teacher mean? How do they define themselves as a teacher? What kind of citizens do they wish to nurture their students? Those definitional inquiries encourage teachers to think of what matters the most and what drives them to take the teaching path. If answers to these inquiries clash with their pre-determined KPIs, perhaps a Socratic teacher will challenge school leaders and policymakers on differentiating between what appears to be good and what is good for individuals and society, just as how Socrates challenges his interlocutors. Similarly, a Socratic teacher will inquire into parental expectations and beliefs and

have them dig out the distinction between what appears to benefit versus what benefits their children. Although there might be risks associated with doing so and no radical change anytime soon, perhaps having leaders and parents give a deep thought to what should be at the heart of educational policies and decisions is the first step towards any potential reform. This Socratic approach to external pressures marks a sharp contrast to Confucius'. Instead of submitting to top-down requirements, Socratic teachers will pose a challenge to the reasoning behind those KPIs, even if it means hurting others' egos and posing risks to themselves.

Despite the differences in response to external forces, Confucian and Socratic teachers will choose morality over financial well-being when facing the moral dilemma in the contemporary context. Confucius would teach anyone who brings him "a bundle of dried meat," the most modest gift that one can afford to offer their master on the first visit to show their willingness to learn (Confucius, /2014, chap. 7.7). On a similar note, Socrates' emphasis on knowledge over reputation and honor leads me to believe that financial struggles will not prevent a teaching from being and remaining a moral person. Thus, morality rather than economic gains should drive any educational decision one makes regardless of how unbearable the financial toll might seem.

Given Socrates' love for wisdom, I believe that he would concur with Confucius on the priority of "teaching for understanding" over "teaching to the test." Still, their approaches to "teaching for understanding" are dissimilar. Unlike Confucius, who begins with classical knowledge as a point of departure in his pedagogy, an interlocutor's idea is the subject of questions in Socratic teaching (Mintz, 2006). I will use an example in which both Confucius and Socrates "teach" the concept of filial piety to illustrate this distinction. The Chinese sage stresses the significance of being filial and advocates his disciple Zixia's beliefs of what it means to be

filial by a son being able to “serve his parents with the utmost effort” (Confucius, 2014, chap. 1.7). In other words, Confucius and Zixia’s discussion emerges from and centers around the notion of “filial piety” itself. For Socrates, in *Euthyphro*, Euthyphro’s moral dilemma serves as the foundation for the co-investigation of what the pious means. The dialogue starts with Socrates asking Euthyphro to define piety, yet it continues by Socrates examining the given answers and bringing to the surface the underlying assumptions behind those ideas, as indicated in Chapter 3. It is not simply reaching an answer but figuring how it is reasoned. The contrast between the two approaches reveals Confucius’ Achilles heel and Socrates’ solution to minimizing that weakness.

Taking elder knowledge as a tenet of teaching pedagogy without questioning is the biggest flaw in the Confucian approach. I shall revisit the cave analogy to illustrate this point; the question is: What if classical knowledge originates from the cave? Without reexamining the truth defined and inherited by the past, the teacher might end up getting themselves and the future generation they teach by telling through authoritarian conversations stuck in the cave. As a result, this Confucius’ Achilles heel can be utilized by people who intentionally build a cave to serve a specific purpose. For example, Chinese authoritative figures are arguably believed to take advantage of the Confucian ideal of Humanity, Hierarchy, and Harmony with the promotion of respect for rulers as an instrument to propagandize their vision of an authoritarian government. There has been a return to Confucianism after China’s President Xi Jinping made his speech about the importance of rehabilitating Confucius in achieving his “China Dream” in 2014 (Babones, 2017; Page, 2015). The purpose of employing Confucianism of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), however, is questionable. Wu (2015) argued that the CCP revitalized and used Confucianism as a political means to justify its authoritarianism and shape a common

Chinese identity. Put differently, it might be a tool for the CCP to channel its politically single-minded perspective to its citizens. In this regard, it would help the CCP build up a cave that chains people up with their ignorance and prevents them from recognizing other different viewpoints besides those of the CCP. Hence, if a teacher is unable to liberate themselves and students from the constraints of ignorance, will “teaching for understanding” be achieved as the emergence of real understanding is not guaranteed? In this sense, Socrates surpasses Confucius in his approach to “teaching for understanding” as no one would utilize a pedagogy that encourages people to question everything to manipulate their viewpoints.

The tenet of Socratic teaching, on the contrary, is free inquiry. Literature suggests that we can utilize Socratic teaching in conducting definitional inquiries and delivering a mathematical or scientific concept under the name of inquiry-based learning (Grob et al., 2017; Lam, 2011; Pedaste et al., 2015). So, how would a mathematical lesson taught following the Socratic method look like? Let’s look at the below example, in which I exhibit how students learn to compare two fractions sharing the same numerator with the assumption that they have already mastered the pre-requisite knowledge of the meaning of fractions.

Teacher: Which fraction do you think is bigger? $\frac{2}{3}$ or $\frac{2}{5}$?

Student: I think it is $\frac{2}{5}$.

Teacher: Why is $\frac{2}{5}$ bigger than $\frac{2}{3}$?

Student: It is because 5 is bigger than 3.

Teacher: Can you explain why 5 is bigger than 3?

Student (takes out her bag of chocolate bars): If I eat 5 bars of chocolate and you eat 3 bars of them, I eat more chocolates than you.

Teacher: Excellent answer! So, does it mean that you can apply those chocolate bars to show me that $\frac{2}{5}$ is bigger than $\frac{2}{3}$?

Student: Yes. I think so. Now I eat $\frac{2}{5}$ bar of chocolate and you eat $\frac{2}{3}$ bar of chocolate.

Teacher: Great! Can you point at the amount of chocolate we each consume this time?

Student (carefully splits one bar into 5 equal pieces and the other into 3 equal pieces, give 2 pieces of the former to herself and 2 pieces of the latter to the teacher): We both eat 2 pieces of the chocolate this time.

Teacher (points at the student's piece and hers): What does it mean? What do you see from our pieces?

Student: My piece is smaller than yours.

Teacher: Great observation! If we each eat 2 pieces, who eats more?

Student: I think you do because your piece is bigger than mine.

Teacher: Alright. Can you tell me which fraction is bigger now, $2/3$ or $2/5$?

Student: It is $2/3$.

The above example proves that a Socratic teacher can be an open-minded inquirer regardless of what subject they teach and whether or not they have a correct answer in mind. What they inquire into is students' thoughts and logical inference rather than right or wrong answers. By making students' reasoning the subject of the co-investigation, Socratic teachers engage students in their learning process and give them ownership of their knowledge. As Mintz (2006) puts it, "whether or not we accept the claim that Jordan and others have made that Socrates was an inquirer with no answers of his own, the subjects of Socrates' discussion always demanded deep probing and substantial engagement" (p. 481). Knowing the answer does not shield a teacher from having an inquiring mind and bringing up a generation of broad-minded inquirers and independent thinkers, which is a significant strength of the Socratic method. However, this approach also has several drawbacks associated with each distinct version of Socratic education in contemporary practice, which I will elaborate on below.

I will use Mintz's (2006) clarification of two different variants of Socrates' legacy in modern education. As such, "Socratic method" refers to the Socratic approach in law school; "Socratic teaching" refers to the Socratic approach in elementary, secondary, and high schools. The purpose of applying the Socratic method to teaching future lawyers is to strengthen their

ability to reason and arouse their critical thinking (Grondin, 2018). Law students are required to read cases provided by their professor and are expected to have their opinions about the materials before class. The professor then poses an open-ended question about the judicial reasoning in the case and “cold-call” a student to answer. The discourse follows up with the professor engaging that student in a series of questions to examine their ideas. During the process of cross-examination, counterexample, and refutation (Boghossian, 2012; Burns et al., 2016; Davies & Sinclair, 2014), the student realizes the flaws in their hypothesis and thus develops a stronger argument. Despite still being a dominating teaching practice in law schools, the Socratic method faces many criticisms regarding the intimidating learning environment it creates (Mintz, 2006). Fear of being cold-called and exposed to the shortcoming of their answers publicly is a common experience among law students (Grondin, 2018). Perhaps giving too much weight to rational thinking sometimes comes at the cost of emotional health. However, I argue that the sensitivity to questioning can be addressed if students are exposed to “Socratic teaching” at an early age so that the embarrassment is more bearable and embraceable.

The classroom setup for Socratic teaching is far from that of the Socratic method, in which the instructor and the student whose beliefs are under scrutiny steal the spotlight. In a Socratic teaching classroom, students sit in a circle and discuss their opinions of a topic by asking questions to their peers, constructively giving and respectfully responding to feedback (Strong, 1996). Mintz (2006) claims that in this version of the Socratic approach, students exemplify the Socratic role as truth examiners rather than the teacher. The teacher, as a result, acts as a midwife who creates and maintains a safe space to facilitate the student-led conversations. Ball and Brewer (2000) praise Socratic teaching because it demonstrates that “learning is facilitated by the absence of fear, risk, and judgment” (p. 3) and allows students to

“clarify positions and learn the language of civil disagreement” (p. 4). Strong’s (1996) study also proves the effectiveness of Socratic teaching by showing one’s improvement in critical thinking ability measured by test scores. However, Goldin et al. (2017) suggest that Socratic dialogue works wonders for only a fraction of the class population. So, who benefits from this approach and who falls behind their peers during the process of gaining wisdom?

Reflecting on my primary math teaching experience, I resonate with Goldin et al.’s (2017) findings that half of the participants who make the most of Socratic teaching have solid foundational knowledge. Specifically, they “already had the proper background to incorporate the new knowledge into their mental schemas” (Goldin et al., 2017, p. 9). Specifically, Goldin et al.’s (2017) study resembles Socrates’ dialogue with Meno to teach students that if we use a diagonal of a square (square one) as a side of a new square (square two), the area of square two will double the area of square one. After that, the students are given similar geometrical questions in which they have to transfer the insights gained from the Socratic dialogue to solving new problems. Only half of the students succeed in performing this task. Goldin et al. (2017) finds that those students understand the characteristics of geometrical shapes very well, which helps them identify the similarities of the example taught in the Socratic dialogue and the additional given problems. As a result, they know how to combine what they already know to the new knowledge to solve different types of questions. Put differently, background knowledge or underlying facts are fertilizers that help those students plant their opinions, which, in turn, become the starting point of a Socratic dialogue. Posing the question of “What is division?” at the beginning of the class can ignite students’ curiosity and direct their attention to the concept; nevertheless, the popular answer a math teacher receives might be the silence or “I don’t know.” This response is not bad one, but there might be nothing to examine at this stage. Perhaps giving

students a problem in which they have to distribute a number of candies equally would stimulate their thinking and allow them to have an initial idea of division before introducing its definition. Questioning can begin after that to test their understanding and examine their beliefs about division. Therefore, I would argue that providing students with factual information increases the effectiveness of Socratic teaching and expands its wonders to a greater class population rather than just a few.

The second reason behind the unequal effects of Socratic teaching among students lies in individual differences. Many teachers have expressed their concerns over the domination of vocal students and the quietness of reticent ones in classroom discourse (Faithful, 2013; Zach, 2014). As a result, I wonder to what extent unwilling-to-speak-up students will become the audience of others' journey of seeking truth and have their beliefs influenced by highly opinionated peers. And, to what extent can teachers preserve the Socratic teaching's essence of free inquiry and non-authoritarian conversations given that there will be students who receive what is fed to them regardless of being in a lecture or a discussion? That said, there has been no shortage of studies and sharing tips to boost students' level of engagement in Socratic dialogue, including building a connection among students and the teacher and teaching them questioning skills (Davenport, 2016; Wenning et al., 2006).

In summary, the educational advantages of Socratic teaching are: (1) teachers of diverse subjects can use it to deliver a concept and stimulate students' thinking in the form of inquiry-based learning, (2) it can help students reach real understanding and think critically because it does not aim to build any cave, (3) it can incorporate the "fun" into teachers' instructions to make learning like playing and thus motivate young students to study. The disadvantages include: (1) pain may occur, (2) it might not work equally for every student. However, these two

drawbacks can be addressed and minimized by exposing students to questioning at an early stage, building a safe space for questioning, and providing them with the foundational knowledge. Although each teaching pedagogy has its advantages and disadvantages, there are solutions to lessening weaknesses of Socratic teaching. Therefore, Socrates' love of wisdom is worth keeping alive and spreading its power to liberate as many people from their ignorance as possible.

Towards a Socratically Integrated Approach: Using Confucian Method to Facilitate Socratic Discourse in Contemporary Classroom

Although Confucians and Socratics endorse similar values of human goodness in educating children, I believe that they give different weight to them. The pictures of Confucius and Socrates as teachers that I portrayed in Chapters 2 and 3 are far more from being completely black or white. It is not that Confucian teachers do not value the pursuit of wisdom and the search for truth. They certainly do. But they also believe that seeking ways to live as a “gentleman” and in harmony with others is far more important than inquiring into the nature of everything and becoming wiser. It is not that Socratic teachers do not care for one's feelings at all. They do. It is rather that they believe, more than Confucian teachers do, that emotional discomfort can transform one into a critical and independent thinker. It is not that pain is the only thing that might occur in the Socratic pedagogy. Fun also exists. It is rather that Socratic and Confucian teachers view “fun” from different pedagogical standpoints. Given the strength of the Confucian approach is the weakness of the Socratic approach and vice versa, I believe that we should conceive of both methods in specific points on a continuum to determine their application values. That said, the flaws of Confucianism stem from using elder knowledge without questioning as textbooks can result in a situation in which people are born and trapped in the cave from one generation to another. In other words, the Confucian approach contradicts itself as

it is impossible to teach for real understanding in case the teacher teaches in the cave. For this reason, I would argue that the Socratic approach deserves more weight than that of Confucian in “teaching for understanding”; however, gaps in the Socratic approach can be narrowed by Confucianism to ensure its effectiveness benefits a wider range of students. I would recommend two areas of infusing Confucianism in a Socratic curriculum and teaching.

Firstly, Confucius can help Socratic teachers build a comfortable and respectful learning environment by teaching students the importance of manners in the first lesson. Desired learning behaviour includes delivering constructive feedback and taking peers’ comments seriously and respectfully. Shaping students’ behaviour from the start paves the way for the formation of a community of inquirers rested on collectivism. Secondly, as mentioned in the above section, equipping students with factual information plays an important role in initiating meaningful Socratic dialogue. The Confucian teacher’s role as a transmitter would bridge this gap. However, the ratio of transmitting background knowledge to inquiring and questioning one’s understanding should vary depending on subjects, topics, students’ diverse levels, and their preferred learning styles. For instance, time allocated to providing information should decrease as students’ level increases because secondary or high schoolers can think more abstractly than their elementary counterparts, according to Piaget’s theory of cognitive development. Another example in which a math teacher can give more time to inquiring is when a new lesson connects with the previous one, or both lessons belong to the same theme, such as understanding and comparing fractions. In summary, the Socratic approach when standing alone does not work for every student equally, and thus Confucianism will further improve it so that a larger population of students can escape from the cave.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This final chapter summarizes the major findings of the study that lay the groundwork for contemporary implications. Through the insights gained from analyzing the commonalities and differences between Confucius' and Socrates' philosophy of education, I hope to communicate their perspectives of the purpose of education and the definition of and approach to teaching to contemporary teachers. I conclude with recommendations for future studies and my position on the future direction of contemporary education.

Summary

Both Confucius and Socrates observe the destruction of virtues to clear the way for the rise of superficial values, such as wealth and power, in their times and wish to change that status quo through education. To the Chinese sage and the Greek thinker, a life that is worth living is the one that benefits the common good and the one that is examined. Their priorities and approaches to the same end, however, are contrasting. While Confucius places the highest emphasis on achieving and maintaining a harmonious society, Socrates perceives wisdom as the most valuable asset one should pursue despite also appreciating being a good citizen and a follower of the gods. The difference in their philosophy of education determines their perspectives of what being a teacher means. Chinese has a saying: "A teacher for one day is a father for a life," inferring that a Confucian teacher is also a child's parent. Therefore, the teacher-student relationship is also governed by the concept of "filial piety," implying that the student must show the utmost respect to their teachers whose words have the power of instructing them to disentangle right from wrong for the betterment of the community. By contrast, a Socratic teacher acts as a model of inquiry who shows curiosity about how one's schema of reasoning is developed and asks questions to challenge and improve it. The ultimate

goal is to stimulate one's thinking, give them the resource to build up their own understanding, and have them determine the line between what *is* right and what *seems* right. Regardless what kind of teachers they exemplify, I believe they both argue against the role of teachers as economic producers in the contemporary context.

Unfortunately, the strengths and weaknesses of each approach do not allow them to resolve contemporary issues completely. The key message that Confucius and Socrates want to deliver is to remind teachers of the true purpose of education, which is to cultivate virtues and pursue wisdom instead of chasing a successful career and becoming wealthy. Regardless what kind of dilemma one faces, it is the morality and wisdom that drive their decision-making process for the long-term sake of the student. However, the question whether one should be more Confucian or more Socratic can only be answered depending on a particular educational context.

Reflecting on my teaching experience and weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each method, I would argue that a teacher should lean towards Socratic teaching. The Confucian pedagogy's weakness has been more than offset by its strength, especially when it becomes an instrument for people to build their own cave. If the teaching purpose is to teach for understanding, teachers should always question to ensure they live outside the cave and teach their students to do the same. On the other hand, Socratic teaching's advantages outweigh its disadvantages. My "wow" teaching moments in which students discover a math formula and explain why and how they do that reinforce the power of teaching by making use of critical thinking to help students reach self-knowledge (Kwak, 2016). That is how wisdom emerges from the dialogue. Despite acknowledging that the Socratic method, just as other teaching pedagogy, might not work for every student equally, I believe we can take advantage of Confucianism's strength to expand the positive results of Socratic dialogue to a larger class population.

Confucianism's clearer message of Humanity can support Socratic teachers to create a stronger and more collaborative community of inquiries. The Confucian teacher's role as a transmitter allows young children or those who need more guidance to develop a certain level of background knowledge before practicing questioning. By doing so, Confucius can produce more Socrates for the world and leave no child behind in the process of pursuing wisdom.

Implications and Recommendations

This project was quite challenging as it pressured me to reflect on my professional and personal experience to reconceptualize the meaning of teaching. During my teaching career, never have I questioned the purpose of my teaching and given a thought to the impact I might make on my students beyond the classroom. Doing philosophy of education allows me to think about issues related to education not to come up with a fixed solution to each specific problem, but to transform myself into a reflective teacher who can move away from "mere opinion." (Gereluk et al., 2016, p. xxii). I hope this research can reach out to as many pre-and in-service teachers as possible and, by any means necessary, stimulate their brains, inspire them to have a deep thought about their roles, and inquire into why they are doing what they are doing.

Despite using Confucius and Socrates—two respective representatives of the Eastern and Western culture—this research by no means aims to compare the two cultures and evaluate which one should be superior (Van Norden, 2017). Nor does it draw the world's attention to Eastern values, criticize individualism associated with the Western cultural pattern, and thus initiate a cultural war. Instead, my study focuses on analyzing different perspectives of the role of the teacher and suggests several implications for contemporary practice as well as future research.

The similarities of the two approaches imply that teachers should aim to "teach for understanding" under any situation. However, the main dilemma is the testing component to me.

Back to the cave analogy: imagine that two right-angled triangles beside each other may cast the shadow of a square. The ultimate answer (shadow) is a square, which can be answered no matter whether one is standing inside or outside the cave. However, only the person outside the cave understands why the shadow is such. This example implies that standardized testing might not differentiate students who truly understand from those who appear to understand as well as “teaching for understanding” from “teaching to the test.” Therefore, testing should be done in a way that gauges understanding rather than regurgitating memory. Even if the teacher cannot change the testing system in the short term, they can still “teach for understanding” and favour "assessment for learning" over "assessment of learning" in the classroom practice so that both the teacher and the learner acknowledge that it is the progress, rather than the outcomes, that matters (William, 2011).

The distinctions between the two methods recommend the central focus of educational goals and the best practice to reach that end. Incorporating Confucianism into the Socratic curriculum as learning objectives through moral or character education is a stepping stone to recreate a united world. Nevertheless, I suggest that Humanity, Hierarchy, and Harmony should be translated into the contemporary language to fit in a broad array of contexts regardless of cultural differences. In particular, humanity reflects public goods; hierarchy supports civil obedience; harmony refers to respect for individual liberty without harming the other 2Hs. The teacher’s job, as a result, is to motivate the learner to acknowledge why appreciating the greater good and believing in the rule of laws have more weight than exercising individual rights.

It is worth noting that although I would like to incorporate Confucianism into Socratic teaching, the ideal pedagogy should resemble how Socrates uses dialogical questioning to shatter his interlocutors’ worldviews. I shall return to the cave simulation, which defines learning, to illustrate this point. Consider a situation where elders are born in a cave and perceive the

shadows cast by the flame. Would they pass that perception generationally if they never question and discover the true source of those shadows? Perhaps taking that knowledge as truth without challenging creates a context of thinking which is flawed from the onset. No level of self-reflection might get one to discard that perception because the original knowledge is flawed and one's self-reflection comes from one's experience in the cave. Hence, it matters for the teacher to practice questioning themselves so that they neither enjoy their existence in the cave nor bound the student in their own cave. Nevertheless, what matters more is before doing so they discuss the possibility of experiencing both fun and pain with the student, show them how to enjoy the learning games and embrace the uncomfortable aspect of their intellect at the same time, and explain to them how discomfort can create change.

Conclusion

Inspired by the philosophical questions posed in *Questioning the Classroom* by Gereluk et al. (2006), this project aims to question how the role of the teacher changes over time, and encourages contemporary teachers to question that themselves. Just as how Confucius takes elder knowledge as a tenet to build upon his teaching philosophy, I turn to the past to define the present and navigate the future. Despite appreciating the classical wisdom, I examine the pros and cons of each school of thought to determine their applicability in a specific situation, similar to how Socrates inquires into the nature of everything.

I acknowledge that my research has certain limitations. I am limited in providing a clear framework to guide a teacher to handle all the external pressures effectively and to which extent they should lean towards which approach. Perhaps deciding to be more Confucian or more Socratic depends on a specific context, culture, politics, subjects, students' grades, and their levels of understanding. Those ideas are areas that future studies can step in to complete a bigger picture of defining what it means to be a teacher. The question is simple, yet the answer is too

complex to derive within the limit of this project. That said, to conclude my research, I hope to prepare more citizens who use their wisdom to value the lives of others as much as themselves because that is what our world needs right now to heal itself from the global pandemic wiping out more than five million people so far (Worldometer, 2021). And because no one, regardless of how wise one is, wins alone.

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