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ANTONIO CUA'S CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF CONFUCIAN ETHICS

Antonio Cua's work represents strongly the conceptual analysis approach to today's study of Chinese philosophy, in particular that of Confucian ethics. In many of his publications, he has dealt with Confucian ethical key concepts, such as humanity (*ren*) (仁), rightness (*yi*) (義), ritual or propriety (*li*) (禮), shame (*chi*) (恥), paradigmatic individual (*junzi*) (君子), etc., in Confucian ethics and he always approaches them in a way to put them under philosophical explication. Cua understands "explication" as "an activity aiming at the elucidation of notions and distinctions within the context of philosophical problems."¹ As I see it, this philosophical method is not an isolated invention of Antonio Cua as a modern Chinese scholar. In fact, it has its historical background long before the impact of analytical philosophy in China. My reading of the history of Chinese philosophy is therefore quite different from the stereotyped presumption that China does not have an analytic tradition, or that it emphasizes intuitive thought and does not conceive philosophy as an exercise in conceptual analysis, and thereby it is different from Western philosophy, where, in Kant's terms, philosophical knowledge is the "knowledge gained by reason from concepts,"² or, in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, philosophy is the "discipline that consists in creating concepts."³

I. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS IN CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

It is true that Chinese philosophers in the past have preferred using metaphors rather than concepts, narratives rather than argumentations. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they have never used concepts or argumentations at all. For me, there has been, implicitly or explicitly, a tradition of conceptual analysis in Chinese philosophy. Even if the use of metaphors and narratives has been prevailing in

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Chinese philosophical discourses, these have not been deprived of concepts and argumentations. Not to mention that in the pre-Qin era, in “the period of philosophers,”⁴ as Feng Youlan called it, Chinese philosophers started to pay attention to the definition and analysis of concepts, and proposed their philosophical ideas by way of argumentation. Mencius and Xunzi were well-known philosophical figures that quite often used concepts and argumentations in their philosophical writings and discourses.

It was probably under the influence of Buddhism from India that Chinese philosophy became more focused on concept and argumentation in the form of logic. Indian logic used by Madhyamicka and Yogacara introduced into China should have promoted Chinese intellectuals’ capacity of logical reasoning and conceptual analysis. As to the focus on analyzing concepts, for example, in the *Fanyi Mingyiji* (《翻譯名義集》) (A Collection of Meanings of Translated Terms),⁵ a dictionary of Buddhist terms edited by Fayun (法雲) (1088–1158), there we find Buddhist philosophical concepts not only translated into equivalent Chinese terms but also explained and analyzed as to their meanings.

Among the Neo-Confucians, Chen Chun (陳淳) (1153–1217) edited *Beixi Ziyi* (《北溪字義》) (Meanings of Words Explained by Beixi),⁶ which explained the meanings of all concepts used by Song dynasty Neo-Confucianism, especially those of Zhu Xi (朱熹) (1130–1200), Two Chen Brothers, and Zhang Zai (1020–77). One weakness in Chen Chun’s approach was that he did not distinguish between basic concepts and secondary concepts, and that no criteria of choice were offered explicitly by him to make distinction among concepts. Much later, in Qing dynasty, philosophical work such as Dai Zhen’s (戴震) (1723–77) *Mengzi Ziyi Shuzheng* (《孟子字義疏證》) (Commentary and Explanation to the Meanings of Terms Used by Mencius)⁷ analyzed, in a way that was properly of Dai Zhen’s originality, concepts such as nature (*xing*) (性), talent (*cai*) (才), way (*dao*) (道), humanity (*ren*) (仁), righteousness (*yi*) (義), propriety (*li*) (禮), wisdom (*zhi*) (智), sincerity (*cheng*) (誠), etc., similarly without offering any criteria of choice, though the analysis of Dai Zhen were much more sophisticated.

Among contemporary Confucian philosophers, Chen Daqi (陳大齊) (1887–1983) continued this approach of conceptual analysis in doing Confucian studies. In his *Kongzi Xueshuo* (《孔子學說》) (Doctrines of Confucius),⁸ Chen explored the fundamental concepts in Confucian philosophy. Based on four criteria such as founding character, conceptual leadership, majority in use, and conceptual comprehensibility, he chose the concepts of the way (*dao*), virtue (*de*) (德), humanity (*ren*), rightness (*yi*), and ritual (*li*) as the most fundamental

core concepts, and their related concepts such as knowledge (*zhi*) (知), discourse (*yan*) (言), and mind/heart (*xin*) (心), and a list of major Confucian virtues and their relation with ideal personality as secondary concepts. Chen used conceptual analysis, based on psychological and logical arguments, to establish what he calls “core concepts” and their logical attributes without referring to metaphysical presuppositions or other meta-readings based on grand narratives.

Chen Daqi was a very significant figure among contemporary Chinese Confucians. His logical and ethical approaches to Confucianism differed from Mou Zongsan’s and Tang Junyi’s transcendental and ontological approaches. As a scholar in psychology and logic, he conducted a serious and profound research program in Confucian basic concepts, ethical argumentation, and virtue ethics, in the domains of which he could be considered as the pioneer. As Antonio Cua puts it well: “The pioneering study of the conceptual aspects of Confucian ethics has been Chen Daqi’s *Doctrines of Confucius* (*Kongzi Xueshuo*).”⁹ Antonio Cua himself has received influences from Chen Daqi and he quite often quotes from Chen Daqi’s works, including *Kongzi Xueshuo*, *Xunzi Xueshuo* (《荀子學說》) (*Doctrines of Xunzi*),¹⁰ *Mingli Luncong* (《名理論叢》) (*Anthology of Logic and Argumentation*),¹¹ *Mengzi Mingli Sixiang Jiqi Bianshuo Shikuang* (《孟子名理思想及其辯說實況》) (*Mencius’s Ethical Thought and the Real Procedure of His Argumentation*),¹² *Pingfan De Daodeguan* (《平凡的道德觀》) (*An Ordinary Vision of Morality*),¹³ etc. In this sense, Antonio Cua could be considered as the contemporary representative of conceptual analysis inherited from Chen Daqi’s legacy.

In short, Chen Cun’s *Beixi Ziyi* focused on Neo-Confucian concepts, in particular those of Zhu Xi; Dai Zhen’s *Mengzi Ziyi Shuzheng* was intended as an original explication of Mencius’ concepts; Chen Daqi’s *Kongzi Xueshuo* focused on core concepts and secondary concepts used by Confucius. Antonio Cua’s conceptual analysis, following their steps and thinking under their inspiration, especially that of Chen Daqi, is most successful in his conceptual analysis of Confucian ethics and Xunzi’s philosophy.

II. ANTONIO CUA’S CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS IN CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

Like Xunzi, his most preferred philosopher of all classical Confucians, Cua’s conceptual analysis emerges from a pragmatic concern of human conflict situation. We will come back to this in the next section. As I see it, Cua would take logical argumentation and virtues of the moral agent as crucial for turning from conflict to harmony. Cua

believes, on the one hand, that appealing to the rational validity of logical reasoning could help solving problems of conflict, and, on the other hand, the combination of rational argumentation and virtuous personality could coordinate people in conflict and in turning conflict into harmony. Therefore, instead of staying on the purely logical and therefore abstract level of concept, Cua attempts to concretize concepts, not by metaphors and narratives as usually did Chinese philosophers in the past, but rather by appealing to the use of concepts and logical reasoning by virtuous moral agents in the process of argumentation and guiding actions.

Here we should make the distinction between “concept used by moral agent” and “concept used in philosophical discourses.” Although a moral agent might use concepts as constituting guidelines for his moral action, it is not necessarily the case that all moral agents argue and put forward philosophical discourses; on the other hand, not all philosophers putting forward philosophical discourse necessarily a moral person. For Cua this distinction seems to be negligible because Confucian ethical discourses are usually proposed by paradigmatic individual who are virtuous persons and in the meanwhile philosophers. This implies that ethical discourse should be self-referring, in the sense that he/she who proposes an ethical claim about a moral value and/or norm should be willing/able to implement them by his own action. In other words, ethical discourse and claim are not proposed to impose, even only by way of concept, on others or as norm applied only to others. On the contrary, he who proposes an ethical discourse and claim should be willing/able to implement them in his/her own behavior leading to the formation of his own moral character.

On the level of philosophical discourse, Cua defines conceptual analysis as an activity of explication. He says,

I regard explication as an activity aiming at the elucidation of notions and distinctions within the context of philosophical problems. As a philosophical activity, it is more than a descriptive enterprise, for to explicate a thesis is to engage in a rethinking of the problem to which the thesis may be regarded as an adequate solution.¹⁴

For Cua, explication is to be operated only on texts, not on actions or events: Explication is a philosophical reconstruction of textual materials.¹⁵ What a scholar finds in a text are concepts and their meaning: “... a philosophical interpreter attempts to understand the significance of the concepts apart from, though not independent of, the original linguistic intentions of the author.”¹⁶

On the level of praxis, ethical concepts are to be put into practice and therefore are not purely logical concepts. They are pragmatic concept in the sense that they are connected to the character forma-

tion of the moral agent. Because of its pragmatic connection with the character of a moral agent, ethical concept as concept is different from purely logical and abstract concept. When taken into practical situation such as the ethical one, ethical rules become paradigmatic, not in the sense of the logically or mathematically universalizable, but rather in the sense of attestation and interpretive imitation of an idealized model or paradigm of personality. Cua says,

The key notion that underlies our discussion of the factors in Confucian argumentation is the concept of paradigmatic ruling as distinct from that of universalizable ruling. A ruling in its concrete occurrence is a particular circumstance. But it may function as a paradigm for future judgment and conduct. Even if intended as a paradigm, it still remains a particular ruling that presents a sort of criterion-claim which may be defeated or contested by other agents.¹⁷

We should point out here that, as an analytic philosopher, Cua's work is focused more on the level of philosophical discourse rather than on personality and praxis. We do not see his analysis of a particular personality or practical life of a particular sage or *junzi* like Confucius or others whom he calls "paradigmatic individuals." This is to say that his labor of explication is spent on texts rather than on persons. And, when operating on philosophical texts, in particular ethical texts, his work of explication makes the effort to clarify concepts as implied in any philosophical problems before their final solutions:

The significance of the explication would seem to lie not only in linguistic explanation but also in the manner in which philosophically important problems acquire a conceptual locus before an attempt is made at their final solutions.¹⁸

Among all Chinese philosophical texts, the *Analects* of Confucius and Xunzi's texts are the most favorable of Cua's explication. For example, in his "Reflection on Methodology in Chinese Philosophy," he takes the *Analects* of Confucius as an example and the locus of analyzing Confucian ethics. His method of explication proceeds like this:

- (a) A preliminary collection of all remarks or passages in which certain key concepts frequently occur. It is supposed that each set of concept-occurrences may point to important relations to other key concepts (e.g., *ren* and *li*).
- (b) Then, proceed to a classification of these remarks for each concept in a logical order of generality;
- (c) A more general classification of the remarks that relate two or more concepts.
- (d) If this task is successful, we may then attempt a categorization or an introduction of a schema for relating the concepts within a conceptual map. The schema may be regarded as ways of relating the classificatory distinction used in (b) and (c).

- (e) A reconstructive account of the concepts and analogical elucidations may be made from themes in Western philosophy, and, more importantly,
- (f) An evaluation of the concepts in terms of their philosophical importance and pragmatic relevance to moral problems.¹⁹

In other words, Cua's method of conceptual analysis consists in first identifying key concepts and sentences or remarks in which key concepts appear; then, he makes progression from lower level of generality to higher level of generality of concepts; then, builds up the logical relation between or among key concepts; then, constructs a network of key concepts; then, compares these concepts to those in Western philosophy; finally, he evaluates philosophically these concepts in their theoretical and pragmatic power in solving ethical problems.

III. CUA'S INTERPRETATION OF *JUNZI* AND *LI*

The pragmatic context in which Antonio Cua's effort of philosophizing emerges is the contrasting situation of conflict versus harmony in the world. Because of their different approaches to reality, interests, and world views, human relations of various kind have the potency of going either down to conflict, ranging from intellectual antagonism in various kinds of debate to physical conflict resulting in war and violence, or up to harmony ranging from mutual agreement to harmonious union. How to deal with the world in conflict so that the force of things goes from the side of conflict to the side of harmony becomes a very urgent problem. On the intellectual level, Antonio Cua would accept logical argumentation, mutual understanding, and virtues of moral agents as solutions to turn from conflict situation to harmony. Antonio believes in the combination of both rational argumentation based on logical structure and the character formation of virtuous persons. On the practical level, Cua would take the combination of *li* serving as the cultural grammar of human behavior, and *junzi* as the paradigmatic individual who plays the role as ideal agent in rendering meaningful the cultural grammar of *li*.

According to Cua, Confucius himself is well aware that human beings are prompt to conflict or altercation concerning what they view as legitimate claims, for example, land ownership, division of properties, or estates within the family. In dealing with conflict situations, subjectively speaking, noncontentiousness should be the subjective attitude of a *junzi* in face of possibly conflicts: "The *junzi* is conscious of his superiority (*jin*) (矜) without being contentious (*buzheng*) (不爭); and comes together with other gentlemen without forming

cliques (*budang*) (不黨).”²⁰ Objectively speaking, *li* or the ritual is the cultural rule or grammar that governs a *junzi*’s behaviors even in time of competition. As Confucius says:

The *junzi* does not engage in contention, except perhaps in archery. But when he enters the contest, he courteously makes a vow before he advances to take his place among the contestants; he does the same when he steps down after participating in the event; when he loses, he drinks his cup of forfeit. Thus in this single case of contention, he still shows himself as a *junzi*.²¹

It is Confucius who has laid both the right subjective attitude and the objective code of behavior to follow in dealing with conflict, yet it is Xunzi who has based this tendency to conflict on human basic motivational structure as consisting of feelings and desires. Xunzi even goes so far as to look the necessity of coping with desires in conflict as the origin of *li*:

What is the origin of ritual? I reply: Man is born with desires. If his desires are not satisfied for him, he cannot but seek some means to satisfy them himself. If there are no limits and degrees to his seeking, then he will inevitably fall to wrangling with other men. From wrangling comes disorder and from disorder comes exhaustion. The ancient kings hated such disorder, and therefore they established ritual principles in order to curb it, to train men’s desires and to provide for their satisfaction. They saw to it that desires did not overextend the means for their satisfaction, and material goods did not fall short of what was desired. Thus both desires and goods were looked after and satisfied. This is the origin of rites.²²

Xunzi himself would see the rational use of human capacity of *bian* (辨) to discern right from wrong and the right way to participate in the process of *bianshuo* (辨說) argumentation as the solution of conflict. So it seems that ethical argumentation with due quality of the moral agent in view of consensus is also a solution to the situation of conflict. Cua says,

This basic function of *li* thus directs our attention to the sort of situation that involves conflicts in man’s pursuit of the means or objects for the satisfaction of desires, or in familiar idiom, conflict of interest. Without regulation, such situations of conflict in human intercourses will result in mutual injury and destruction.²³

For Xunzi, the principle of *li* is *fen* (分), which means distinction, division, and apportion. Xunzi says,

Thus the *junzi* not only gets his desires nurtured, but also looks for distinctions. What is meant by distinction? I say it means the gradations of nobility or baseness, differences of the old and the young, and the poor or the rich, the insignificant or the valuable each has its own weight.²⁴

Here, as made clear by Xunzi, the principle of distinction includes hierarchical difference between social and economic statuses, ages, and various shades of values, each with its proper worth and weight.

Philosophically speaking, Cua is most concerned with the conceptual unity of *li* when the scope of *li* encompasses such diverse items as rites, ceremonies, good manners, and so on.²⁵ He tries to do this by analyzing *li* into three dimensions so as to show their internal and unifying connections.

By focusing on what I call the dimension of *li* and their interconnection, I hope to show a way of appreciating the unity of this plurisignification. Put another way, I attempt to present a partial cartography of *li* as comprising moral, aesthetic, and religious values.²⁶

Here is a snapshot of these three dimensions of *li* under Cua's analysis.

1. *The Moral Dimension of Li*

For Cua, the moral dimension of *li* relates to man's basic motivational structure, consisting of feelings and desires that need regulation, because of the tendency to conflict in man's pursuit of the means for the satisfaction of desires. Here, *li* exists for adjudicating the conflict of interests. On the negative level, human beings should submit their conduct to the governance of a set of regulative procedures in the situation of conflicts of interest with others in order to avoid conflict.

More importantly, on a positive level, *li*, as a set of regulative procedures, is a constitutive means for the attainment of the ideal of humanity, that is, *ren*. Here, *li* has the function of nourishing or transforming man's basic motivational structure by way of inculcation of a regard for moral virtues and the development of moral character. A *li* performance is here no longer a ritualized, routine behavior, but a display of moral virtues or virtues relevant to the occasion—it is a moral performance. Here it becomes a moral performance. I would point out that, Cua seems to say here that *li* is not virtue itself but a way of displaying virtues.²⁷ For me, "virtue" means both excellence of natural ability and harmonization of relations. *Li* could be both, and therefore it should be considered as a virtue, too.

2. *The Aesthetic Dimension of Li*

Li also has an aesthetic dimension, in the sense that it is also a sort of beautification of human's original nature so as to form a kind of

second-order emotions and desire.²⁸ Cua, as a good Confucian, takes *li* as beautiful in the cultural-aesthetic sense of a second expression of human feelings and desires, not in the ontological-aesthetic sense of revealing Being, as is in the case of Zhuangzi, for whom “the sage is he who traces back to the beauty of Heaven and earth to reach the principles of myriad things.”²⁹ For Confucians, when a human being becomes a morally good person, he/she has also become a beautiful person. The beauty of his moral character lies in the balance between his emotions and forms.³⁰ In the sense of moral beauty, there is a component of form in *li*, by which *li* performance is an elegant performance, accompanying with a feeling befitting the occasion and a joy or satisfaction experienced by the agent.

3. *The Religious Dimension of Li*

The etymology of *li* suggests its connection with the sense of divine revealing and sacrifices.³¹ In particular, *li* that is used at the moment of birth and death such as the rites of mourning and sacrifices has a profound expression of our attitude toward human life as a whole. Xunzi says, “Li has three roots: Heaven and earth are the root of life; the ancestors are the root of species; rulers and teachers are the root of good governance.”³² Both heaven and earth and ancestors are honored here with religious meaning. I would say that, with *li*, the past is worth of relived in our memory; the present is lived as meaningful; the future is worth of expectation. For Cua, with *li*, the secular is transformed into the sacred.³³ Xunzi has even exalted *li* to the horizon of Heaven and earth:

Through *li*, Heaven and earth join in harmony, the sun and moon shine, the four seasons proceed in order, the stars and constellations march, the rivers flow, and all things flourish; men’s like and dislike are regulated and their joys and hates made appropriate. . . . Through them the root and the branch are put in proper order; beginning and end are brought in concord; the most elegant forms embody all distinctions; the most penetrating insight explains all things.³⁴

For Cua, the moral, aesthetic, and religious dimensions of *li* are thus brought together, in Xunzi, in a vision of good human life. The moral values occupy their preeminent place in social and personal intercourse, the aesthetic values mark their pervasive quality, and the religious celebrates the grand unity or harmony of humanity and the natural order.³⁵

I should point out here that, the concept most basic to Cua’s understanding, which is also Xunzi’s understanding, of divers dimensions of *li*, whether moral, aesthetic, or religious, is that human desires are in

need of being regulated, transformed, and promoted by rules, beautifying forms and the totalizing dimension of human existence. For me, their concept of desire is a bit negative and passive in that they see human desire only as a potentially negative component of human nature tending toward conflict if allowed to develop spontaneously and therefore should be regulated by rules so as to be brought to order. While they see desires as needs to be satisfied, I see desire as the original dynamic generosity in human beings that goes beyond one's own limited self to many others (other things and/or other people).

The only way to fulfill this original generosity of desire is to develop its original project to realize the goodness for others in a creative way rather than to be constrained within one's self-enclosure. It is in this development of goodness in oneself by the detour of fulfilling the goodness in many others that one could attain excellence while achieving harmonious relationship with many others. Therefore, the target of developing virtue is not to contain, regulate, and constrain the desire as Xunzi and Cua think for maintaining order. For me, the end of desire is mutual enrichment by way of realizing the goodness of each other. It is the creative mutual enrichment rather than the self-satisfaction of each one and conflicts among many others. Virtue should be understood as both the excellence of one's natural good capacity and the harmonization of relationship with many others, not merely as following the rules imposed by social and moral norms. It is in developing the positivity of desire that *li* could obtain an aesthetic and religious meaning besides that of morality and ethics.

I am saying that, especially in dealing with desire, the approach of conceptual analysis is indeed in need of the approach of phenomenological analysis. Also, there is a need of distinguishing the desiring desire from the desired desire. For Cua, one stops to desire an object once one possesses it. For me, it is not necessarily so, because human desiring desire would go beyond and desires more once an object of desired desire is satisfied. An example of this is the capitalist who asks for more money even when he has already enough. We should not mistake the satisfaction of one's need as the self-enclosure of desired desire within itself, usually termed as "greedy." Human desiring desire could be mis-oriented by the environment, but it will never stop to desire further and open to many others. Also we have to notice the fact that the conflict created by the situation of satisfaction of needs presupposes the rarity of material resources, whereas that which is created by greedy is caused by the conflation of one's desired desire in self-enclosure without transforming it into higher forms of psychic dynamism or spiritual self-cultivation.

IV. PARADIGMATIC INDIVIDUAL AS THE IDEAL MODEL OF MORAL AGENT

Out from his reading of Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi, Cua has proposed the concept of “paradigmatic individual” as concrete exemplary embodiments of the Confucian ideal of *ren* or humanity.³⁶ Even if Confucian philosophers like Mencius, Xunzi, and many Song-Ming Confucians prefer to take the sage as the perfect paradigmatic individual, or, in Zhou Dunyi’s (周敦頤) terms, for them only sages establish the perfect model of human beings (*li ren ji*) (立人極),³⁷ Confucius himself would satisfy to be a *junzi*. Indeed, as Cua points out, Confucius uses extensively the notion of *junzi*, instead of moral principles, for explaining ethical virtues and instruction on their practical significance in human conduct. That is why he prefers to see Confucius’s conception of the *junzi* as an ideal character functioning as a paradigmatic standard for practically achievable morality.

In this light, Confucius’s ethical thought is best characterized as an ethics of *junzi* or paradigmatic individuals. For Cua, although Confucius believes that only a sage (*shengren*) (聖人) can envision and establish a harmonious social order, he does not regard the ideal of becoming a sage as practically attainable. That is why Confucius says that he cannot hope to meet a sage, but can only hope to meet a *junzi*.³⁸ Cua agrees with this view of Confucius, in saying that “Confucius did not uphold sagehood as a practical end for ordinary moral agents. He once said that he had no hope of meeting a sage, but would be quite content with meeting a *junzi*.”³⁹ We can therefore distinguish between the perfectly ideal paradigmatic individual, which for all Confucians is the sage, and the practically achievable paradigmatic individual, which for Confucius is the *junzi*. Following Confucius, Cua would take *junzi* as the practically achievable paradigmatic individual.

As cultural grammar, *li* does not exist by itself. It is an invention by some ideal moral agent(s) and to be implemented always by moral agents. This leads Cua to see moral agent practicing *li* also in the context of practical causality. This is something very particular in Cua’s concept of explication: He takes the reference to an agent or a historical fact as element of explanation, that this kind of agent-reference and historical appeal has “elucidative and evaluative uses.”⁴⁰ *Li*, which consists of appropriate rules of conduct, is supposed to be an invention of a wise and benevolent sage. Based on the analysis of Xunzi in the chapter *Xing Er* (性惡) (Human Nature Is Evil),⁴¹ Cua loves to tell a story of how *li* was invented by some one called Kong Zhiren (孔智仁) (The wise and benevolent Kong).⁴² This invention was made in response to the problem of conflict of indi-

vidual interest. After many reflections and thought experiments on the possibility of resolving this human predicament, Zhiren proposed the *li*, along with sanctions for violation. This proposal was widely accepted and put into practice, and, as a consequence, the *li* became customary rules of proper behavior.⁴³ Usually, instead of imagined story, historical facts are referred to in ethical arguments because of the fact that human history is the proper subject of ethical appraisal. Cua says,

Inherent in the use of historical characters for elucidating and demonstrating the applicability of an ethical thesis is the implicit claim that human history is the proper subject of ethical appraisal.⁴⁴

A *junzi* or a paradigmatic individual has a role of “model” to play, in moral education, by providing standards of aspiration or examples of competence to be attained, not in the sense of model for imitation, but in the sense of model for witnessing or concrete exemplification of the ideal moral values. A *junzi* is a concrete manifestation in the actual world of the moral ideals that human beings are longing for. Cua prefers to say that there is a dynamic sense of mimesis in it. In acting like a paradigmatic individual in a particular situation, the agent is trying to reenact, in Collinwood’s sense, the spirit in which he or she acts, and this involves imaginatively rethinking the concrete significance of moral concern in the present.⁴⁵ For me, if there is indeed a sense of mimesis, it is because *junzi* evokes in us also this intention to realize through our own actions the ideal moral values as exemplified in a paradigmatic individual.

V. CONFUCIAN KEY CONCEPT/SENTENCE VERSUS METAPHOR AND NARRATIVE

As well shown in previous sections, Cua’s conceptual analysis operates on key concepts as found in some key sentences of a philosopher’s text, such as the *Analects* or the *Xunzi*. I should say that this method of finding key concept in key sentences is very much Confucian in its nature, or, in other words, has its own Confucian tradition. It is not only based on Xunzi’s work, but could be traced back even to Confucius himself. For example, Confucius in his reading of past scriptures, such as the *Book of Odes*, uses the method of “appropriation of meaning by cutting or selecting sentences” (*duanzhang quyì* [斷章取義]),⁴⁶ or, to say it short, “featuring key sentences” in the process of textual selection and interpretation. For example, in the recently unearthed bamboo slips of *Confucius on the Book of Odes*, we find Confucius commenting on poems by highlighting a certain

key verses to represent the whole poem. For example, in fragment 6 we read,

[The *Qingmiao* (清廟) says,] “Great is the number of the officers, assiduous followers of the virtue of King Wen.” I pay my homage to this. The *Liewen* (烈文) says, “What is most powerful is being the Man.” “What is most distinguished is being virtuous.” “Ah, the former kings are not forgotten.” I am delighted by all these. [The *Haotian You Chengming* (昊天有成命) says,] “The Heaven made its determinate mandate, which our two sovereigns received.” They are indeed highly honored and powerful. The *Songs* . . .”⁴⁷

Here Confucius puts together a group of key verses of different poems in the *Songs* to emphasize the concept of “virtue” exemplified in the person of King Wen, whose virtues were seen as the surest assurance of the Mandate of Heaven bestowed on Him. The Confucian key concept of “virtue” is therefore drawn out from all these key verses (sentences) in the *Book of Odes* referring to King Wen as one of its textual sources.

The use of key concept/key sentence may lead to very creative interpretations and construction of concepts. But this process of interpretation leads both to conceptualization and metaphorization. For example, in the *Analects*, we read,

Zizhang asked about the exaltation of virtue and the resolution of perplexities. The Master said, “Make it your guiding principle to do your best to others and to be trustworthy in what you say, and move yourself to where rightness is, then you will be exalting virtue. When you love a man you want him to live and when you hate him you want him to die. If, wanting him to live, you also want him to die, is this not being perplexed.” [The *Odes* says] “If you did not do so for the sake of riches, you must have done so for the sake of difference.”⁴⁸

Here Confucius quoted from verse 3 of the *Woxing Zhi Yie* (我行之野) in the *Xiaoya* (小雅). The original verse sang about someone who changed his mind after a marriage was made, though not because the new wife was richer, but at least by the fact that she was a different woman. Confucius used here the term “difference” to explain the origin of doubt in respect to virtue, that is, if one changed one’s mind because of difference, one would be in quandary. Confucius recontextualized the verse by changing from a case of marriage to that of virtue. We have to keep in mind that here marriage relation served as a metaphor to virtue, in the sense that, just like one should not change one’s mind in marriage because of the new wife’s being rich or being different; in the case of virtue, one should not change one’s respect for virtue because of difference of occasions.

In fact, Confucius’ saying that, “All three hundred odes can be covered by one of their sentences, and that is, ‘Have no depraved

thoughts,” and from this the concept of “innocence” that wraps up all the *Book of Odes* in one key sentence and one key concept, is itself an exemplary case in which Confucius appropriated meaning of poems by creative selection and interpretation. Originally the verse, “Have no depraved thoughts” came from the poem entitled “*Stallions*” in the *Lu Songs* (魯頌), sung when someone was pasturing horses,⁴⁹ where the term “*si*” (思) was merely an auxiliary term, and the whole verse would say something like, “Ah, don’t go astray.” Yet Confucius used the term “*si*” to denote “thought” and read the whole verse as “thought without depravity.” Here Confucius takes the way of horses as metaphor of the way of human thoughts.

It is clear then, Confucius draws from key sentences not only key concepts, but also metaphors, and uses metaphors to illustrate concepts, inseparable one from the other. This is interesting for me because it touches upon the nature of Chinese philosophy. Although concepts and argumentations are quite used in Chinese philosophy and there is indeed a tradition of conceptual analysis in Chinese philosophy, most of the time Chinese philosophers use more often metaphors and narratives to express some philosophical ideas or concepts.

As I see it, Chinese philosophy, when grasping the Reality Itself in an enlightening insight by human speculative reason, tends to form a kind of Original Image-Ideas, something between a pure idea and an iconic/sonoric image, keeping thereby the holistic characteristic of the manifestation or the intuitive reception of Reality. This Idea-Image is seen as expressive and evocative of, though never exhausting thereby, the richness of Reality Itself and therefore enjoys merely the status of a metaphor. Chinese philosophers, by their function of speculative reason, grasp intuitively the Ultimate Reality and call it the *shangdi* (上帝), the *Taiji* (太極), the *dao*, *ren* (humaneness), *xin* (mind/heart), *cheng* (sincerity/true reality), *kong* (空) (emptiness), or *yixin* (一心) (One Mind), etc., all these are but metaphorical interpretations of the Ultimate Reality thus grasped.

In Chinese artistic creativity, by the imaginative function of reason and its poetic transformation, artists would render this Idea-Image into a sort of concrete iconic/sonoric image and thereby materialize it. In moral and ethical actions, the practical function of reason would bring the Idea-Image into the judgment of events and the intervention of one’s own action into the course of events and thereby takes responsibility. In its function of historical reason, the Ultimate Reality is to manifest through human actions that constitute events and events that constitute, by way of employment, stories. Stories bring us hope because somehow or other, the meaningfulness of existence is to be revealed or manifested through the telling of stories, although

always in a metaphorical way. Through stories of our own and those of multiple others, we might be getting closer to the Ultimate Reality.

In Western philosophy, as I see it, the pre-Socratic philosophers such as Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus, etc., still keep a very intimate relation with the original Ideas-Images, in relating, for example, the idea of Arché and Physis to water, to the unlimited, to air, to fire, etc. But the main stream of Western philosophy from Parmenides and Plato on consists in pushing the Idea-Image into pure ideas, and then, with intellectual definitions, conceptualizing it and relating one concept with other concepts in a logical way. Concepts are detached deliberately from images, things, and events, and are defined and related one to another logically in descriptive and argumentative sentences and discourses. By this detachment, concept and argumentation could help human mind to develop the critical function of his reason, in not limiting itself to the particularity of images, things, and events, by paying attention to the abstract universalizability of concepts and the rigor of their logical relation. Although the validity of concepts and argumentation might be absolutized so as to claim for universality and rational structure, per se, in fact, they can only allow us to see Reality and its structure in an abstract way. On the other hand, metaphors, mostly related to one another by poetic phrases and stories, are different from abstract concepts and well-structured argumentation yet still keep an intimate relation with images and events.

Our experience of manifestation of Reality is interpretable by metaphors, as the expression of the Idea-Image. Metaphors, expressing that which is manifested in the intuitive grasping, could be considered as already an interpretation, which consists in seeing or saying X as Y. We can say that metaphor and the story in which it appears possess an “As-structure” term first used by Heidegger to characterize “interpretation.”⁵⁰ In Chinese philosophy, the use of metaphor and narrative is to convey, through interpretation, the Idea-Image in trying to keep intact the totality of and to make easily understandable the experience of manifestation, though in recognizing the inadequacy of interpretation to manifestation. For example, the metaphors and parables used in the *Zhuangzi* communicate to us some experiences with and ideas of the reality through concrete images, fables, and stories.

A metaphor means “this” when talking of “that.” The reason why it could mean “this” by “that” is that there is an analogical relation between them. I would say that metaphor is better said to be constituted of an analogical relation between what is said and what is intended to say, to the extent that there is a contrasting tension between similarity and difference. By contrast I mean a relation which

implies not only similarity but also dissimilarity, not only difference but also complementarity, not only continuity but also discontinuity. Metaphorical discourse, in using this kind of tension, renders interpretation to the experience of manifestation and thereby transforms the process of human thinking by a contrasting relation between experience and reality. "Metaphor," not limited to the level of "expression," is to be found on the level of "sentence" or "work," and its reference is to be found in the As-World, or the world of meaning it constitutes. Metaphor uses one or several sentences with multiple or analogical meaning on both subjective and objective levels, and is therefore logically less exact, yet communicates more meaning, than descriptive or argumentative sentences, though we should not demand any function of verification or falsification from metaphors.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Although conceptual/argumentative approach is one of the Chinese ways of doing philosophy, and this is quite well evidenced by Antonio Cua's processors in Chinese history of philosophy and his success in applying this approach to the study of Confucian ethics, this approach should always be paralleled and combined with the metaphorical/narrative approach. As Cua's contribution to Chinese philosophy, his combination of concepts and logical reasoning with moral characters of moral agents, his combination of *li* as cultural grammar and *junzi* as paradigmatic individual, all these have shown us well his philosophical sensibility in not allowing ethical concepts to be purely logical and abstractly universals. Instead, Cua sees quite clearly the need to integrate concepts and moral agents that use them and the need to exemplify moral values by the personality of *junzi*. It belongs also to a philosophy of concrete universalizability that is capable of unifying both the conceptual/argumentative approach and the metaphorical/narrative approach.

Also, I have made it clear that we need a more creative understanding of human nature, to modify Cua's somehow structural and normative understanding of *li* and its role in regulating human nature. Philosophically speaking, a most decisive point here is the need of a positive understanding of human desire as the original energy going beyond oneself toward many others, since the desiring desire points always toward either other things or other people and therefore should be understood as a kind of original generosity in human nature rather than something negative to be put into constraint by regulations and norms. Antonio Cua, following the caution of Xunzi, bases his moral concept of *li* on the need of regulations and norms by the

tendency of human desire to conflicts of interest. Even when interpreting Mencius's theory of four sprouts instead of understanding them as human creative potentiality leading to goodness, Cua sees them as already normative. Although the four minds/feelings we have an original urge toward goodness and their fuller development into virtues, this does not mean that they are already normative.

This emphasis on the positive energy of desire will affect also our understanding of *li*. We should say that human reason is capable of developing different systems of logical structures susceptible of change and development in time, as dynamic and changing as they are. Even so is the *li* as cultural grammar, a kind of reasonable device by which many moral agents could coordinate each other into a world of optimal harmony, also always changing with time. *Li* changes because human existence and its meaningfulness changes. In the process of formation of meaningful existence, *li* renders the past worth of being retained in memory, the present worth of living with plenitude of sense, and the future worth of expectation and hope. From this perspective, we may understand that the meaning of the past is constituted by one's rootedness in Heaven and earth, one's ancestry, and foundational events in the individual and/or collective life. The meaning of the present moment is constituted of our ethical effort, good governance for harmonious order, and the plenitude and saturation of meaningfulness of life. The future is worth of expectation and hope because of the ideal values already exemplified by the model of paradigmatic individuals like *junzi* and sage who witness the concrete realization of ideals and that the world could always become better.

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ENDNOTES

1. Antonio S. Cua, *Human Nature, Ritual and History: Studies in Xunzi and Chinese Philosophy* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 4.
2. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, 2nd impression, with corrections (London: Macmillan, 1933), 577.
3. "Philosophie . . . est la discipline qui consiste a créer des concepts," in G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1991), 10.
4. Yulan Feng, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Derk Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 1:7–21.
5. Fayun, *Fanyi Mingyiji* (翻譯名義集) (*A Collection of Meanings of Translated Terms*) (Taipei: Jiankang Shuju, 1956).
6. Chen Chun (陳淳), *Beixi Ziyi* (北溪字義) (Taipei: Shijie Shuju, 1991).
7. Mengzi Ziyi Shuzheng (孟子字義疏證) (*Commentary and Explanation to the Meanings of Terms Used by Mencius*), in Daizhenji (戴震集) (*Collected Works of Dai Zhen*) (Taipei: Liren, 1980), 263–329.

8. Chen Daqi (陳大齊), *Kongzi Xueshuo* (孔子學說) (*Doctrines of Confucius*) (Taipei: Zhengzhong Shuju, 1964).
9. Antonio S. Cua, *Moral Vision and Tradition. Essays in Chinese Ethics* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 271–72.
10. Chen Daqi, *Xunzi Xueshuo* (荀子學說) (*Doctrines of Xunzi*) (Taipei: Chinese Culture University Press, 1954).
11. Chen Daqi, *Mingli Luncong* (名理論叢) (*Collected Essays on Logic*) (Taipei: Zhengzhong Shuju, 1957).
12. Chen Daqi, *Mengzi Mingli Sixiang Jiqi Bianshuo Shikuang* (孟子名理思想及其辯說實況) (*Mencius' Logical Thought and the Actual Process of His Argumentation*) (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1968).
13. Chen Daqi, *Pingfan De Daodeguan* (平凡的道德觀) (*An Ordinary Vision of Morality*) (Taipei: Zhong-hua, 1970).
14. Cua, *Human Nature, Ritual and History*, 4.
15. Ibid.
16. Antonio Cua, "Some Reflections on Methodology in Chinese Philosophy," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1971), 237.
17. Cua, *Moral Vision and Tradition*, 16.
18. Cua, "Some Reflections on Methodology," 242.
19. Ibid., 243–44.
20. D. C. Lau, trans. *Confucius: The Analects (Lunyu)* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2000), 155. The three pinyin and Chinese terms in the Chinese original text: *jìn* (矜), *buzheng* (不爭), and *budang* (不黨), are added back into the English translation by me. Here, *jìn* could be better translated as "dignified."
21. Hung-ming Ku, trans., *The Analects* (Taipei: Xinsheng Daily News, 1984), 10.
22. Xunzi, The *Xunzi*, in *Er Shi Er Zi* (二十二子) (*Collections of Twenty-Two Masters*) (Taipei: Prophet Press, 1976), 4:445; for English translation, see Burton Watson, *Hsun Tzu: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 89.
23. Cua, *Human Nature, Ritual and History*, 43–44.
24. Xunzi, The *Xunzi*, 446. My translation.
25. Cua, *Human Nature, Ritual and History*, 40.
26. Ibid., 41.
27. Cua disagrees with Homer Dubs's view that *li* is a comprehensive virtue including all other virtues, such as *ren* and *yi*. See Cua, *Human Nature, Ritual and History*, 17 and 110–13. Different from Cua, I myself would take *ren*, not *li*, as the comprehensive virtue, and I take *li* as a Confucian virtue.
28. Cua, *Human Nature, Ritual and History*, 49.
29. *Zhuangzi Jishi* (莊子集釋) (*Collected Commentaries of the Zhuangzi*), collected by Guo Qingfan, Reprint (Taipei: Guangwen, 1971), 188. My translation.
30. Cua, *Human Nature, Ritual and History*, 51.
31. The Chinese word for *li* (禮) is composed of two parts, the first part (示) gives us a sense of Heavenly revealing that manifests the good or bad omen of human destiny; the second part (豐) originally represents two cups used in the moment of libation during a sacrifice.
32. Xunzi, The *Xunzi*, 450. My translation.
33. Cua, *Human Nature, Ritual and History*, 59.
34. Xunzi, The *Xunzi*, 455–56 and Watson, *Hsun Tzu: Basic Writings*, 94.
35. Cua, *Human Nature, Ritual and History*, 60.
36. Cua, *Moral Vision and Tradition*, 148.
37. Zhou Dunyi, *Taiji Tushuo* (太極圖說) (*Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate*), in *Song Yuan Xuean* (宋元學案) (Taipei: Heluo Press, 1975), 108.
38. *Analects*, 7:26; Lau, *Confucius: The Analects*, 63.
39. Cua, *Moral Vision and Tradition*, 148.
40. Cua, *Human Nature, Ritual and History*, 87.
41. See Watson, *Hsun Tzu: Basic Writings*, 160.
42. This seeming story is told in Cua, *Moral Vision and Tradition*, 149, where the name was put as Kung Chih-jen, in Wade-Giles. Here I have adopted it as Kong Zhiren, in Chinese pinyin.

43. Cua, *Moral Vision and Tradition*, 149.
44. Cua, *Human Nature, Ritual and History*, 90.
45. *Ibid.*, 154–55.
46. It is true that, today, the Chinese phrase *duanzhang quyì* (斷章取義) has a negative and pejorative meaning, emphasizing an arrogant manner of appropriation and over-generalization of the meaning of a part for all of a text. However, in ancient China, as exemplified by the practice of Confucius, it was only a method of featuring key sentences or appropriating meaning by selecting key sentences.
47. Confucius, *Konzi Shilun* (孔子詩論) (*Confucius on the Book of Odes*), in *Shanghai Museum's Chu Bamboo Books of the Warring States*, ed. Ma Chenyuan (Shanghai: Shanghai Museum, 2001), 1:133.
48. *Analects*, 12.10; Lau, *Confucius: The Analects*, 113. My correction in bald of D. C. Lau's translating "novelty" into "difference," this being more faithful to the term "yì (異)" in the Chinese text.
49. The *Stallions* reads, "Fat and large are the stallions, on the plains of the far-distant borders. Of those stallions, fat and large, some are cream-colored; some, red and white; some, with white hairy legs; some, with fish eyes; All, stout carriage horses, Ah, how they are without depravity; He thinks of his horses, and thus serviceable are they." See James Legge, trans., *The She King*, in *The Chinese Classics* (Shanghai: Oxford University Press, 1935), IV:613.
50. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: SCM Press, 1962), 188–90.