Argumentation (2025) 39:241–277
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-025-09657-0

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

A Morality-in-Speech Conception of Reasonableness Unveiled from Confucian Classics

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Accepted: 15 April 2025 / Published online: 14 June 2025
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Abstract

As a fundamental issue in the study of argumentation, the conception of reasonableness is still open to discuss under different contexts. This paper attempts to unveil the unique morality-in-speech notion of reasonableness embedded in the Confucian classics. It first exposes the relation between speech and morality conveyed in the two Confucian classics—*The Analects of Confucius* and *Mencius*, where speech and morality are supposed to be intertwined with each other in that one's speech reflects one's morality and that one with morality should keep away from artful or sophistical speech as well as immoral deeds. Mencius, reputed for his fondness of argumentation in his times—the Warring States period (c. 453 BC—221 BC) of ancient China, proclaimed that he was adept at words (*zhiyan*), that is, being good at identifying, analyzing, and evaluating words, especially the four types of sophistical words—*bici* (biased words), *yinci* (overblown words), *xieci* (deviant words), and *dunci* (evasive words). After the moral foundation of Mencius' argumentation is expounded, especially the normative dimension of Confucian morality—the Confucian virtue and deontic ethic of humaneness and righteousness, his argumentative discourse against those sophistical words is specifically reconstructed and analyzed by employing the pragma-dialectical model of critical discussion. By exclusively summarizing the argumentational strategies used all at the argumentation stages of the corresponding critical discussions, like slippery slope argument, argument by refutational analogy, and argument by dissociation, this paper elaborates in details how Mencius managed to integrate Confucian morality into his argumentation. It is concluded that Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness is associated both with an individual's self-cultivation and with benefiting a society, that "morality" in the morality-in-speech conception of reasonableness can be a universal term without a premodifier, and that this newly elaborated morality-in-speech conception of reasonableness is argumentation oriented, which distinguishes itself from the agent-based virtue argumentation theory and the (speech) act-based pragma-dialectical theory by incorporating an agent's morality into his speech acts. Under the morality-in-speech reasonableness conception, the general criterion for reasonableness is whether argumentative speech acts align with the commonly endorsed morality or virtues under

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cultural contexts. Accordingly the specific evaluation criteria for reasonableness and fallacies must also be morality-related, where the context-independent codes of conduct for critical discussion proposed in the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation can be resorted to as an important foundation in the future research.

Keywords Morality-in-speech reasonableness · Confucian classics · Humaneness · Righteousness · The pragma-dialectical theory · Critical discussion · Sophistical words

1 Introduction

The conception of reasonableness is a fundamental issue in the study of argumentation. By retrospecting to the logical, dialectical, and rhetorical dimensions of argumentation since Aristotle, and going through the diverse approaches to argumentation developed by modern argumentation theorists since the 1950s (van Eemeren et al. 1996), van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992, p. 6 footnote; 2004, pp. 127—131) distinguished the geometrical conception (logically oriented), the anthropological conception (rhetorically oriented), and the critical conception (dialectically oriented) of reasonableness in the study of argumentation.[1] Also as what van Eemeren (2018, p.184) pointed out, for the future prospects in the development of argumentation theory, the conceptions of reasonableness, especially the anthropological and critical ones, still need to take into account contextual differentiation. Such contextual differentiation is supposed to include morality into argumentation. The term "morality" is roughly defined in two broad senses—descriptively as certain codes of conduct accepted by an society, a group, or an individual, or normatively as a code of conduct endorsed by all rational people under certain conditions (Gert 2002). In this paper, the normative definition of morality is taken, as the Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness to be discussed in the following sections can be regarded as a universally endorsed code of conduct. "Morality" used in this paper is also interchangeable with "ethics", which includes virtue ethic, deontic ethic, and so on.

Since the term "virtue argumentation" was introduced (Aberdein 2007; Cohen 2007), the virtue argumentation theory has attracted enormous attention in argumentation studies, even causing the "Aretaic turn" in argumentation theory over the last decade (Aberdein and Cohen 2016). Specifically, this agent-based approach to argumentation focuses on the arguer's virtues, or argumentational / argumentative virtues[2] like courage, intellectual humility, open-mindedness, responsibility,

[1] van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004, p. 131) specified the third one as the critical rationalistic view of reasonableness, which functions as the philosophical foundation of the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation.

[2] At first Aberdein (2010) coined the term "argumentational virtues", in contrast with "argumentational vices" that are associated with fallacies in argument(ation) appraisal (Aberdein 2014a, 2016a), but since Cohen (2013) used the expression "argumentative virtues", VAT scholars mostly choose to use "argumentative virtues". No matter which expression is preferred, the focus on the arguer's virtues in the agent-based virtue approach to argumentation stays intact.

and reliability in argument(ation) (Aberdein 2010; Mohammed and Lewiński 2014; Gascón 2018; Clark 2025), as well as the corresponding impact upon argument construction and appraisal, such as *ad hominem* reasoning, *ad misericordiam* fallacy (Aberdein 2014a, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b, 2018; Breakey 2023). The introduction of the arguer's epistemic virtues into argumentation has also triggered a bit of reconsideration of the reasonableness conception in argumentation. Gascón (2024) declared that the pragma-dialectical critical-rationalistic view of reasonableness is absent with such virtue aspects as "intellectual empathy, intellectual honesty, faith in reason, or recognition of reliable authority" (p. 1325). Hence he suggested that virtue argumentation theory complement pragma-dialectics with its virtue perspective (2017, 2024) and even substitute a theory of argumentative virtue for the pragma-dialectical philosophical estate (2024, p. 1334). However, there exists an essential discrepancy between the reasonableness notions in the virtue argumentation theory and the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation, that is, the former being agent-based, while the latter (speech) act-based. Complementing one theory with another may sound tempting, but may be theoretically unrealistic, when one or both can stand on its own and form at least a self-justifying system. Nevertheless, there can be an interrelation between the agent-based and the (speech) act-based considerations under certain contextual considerations.

In this paper, a unique morality-in-speech conception of reasonableness under the early Confucian cultural contexts of ancient China will be unveiled by employing the pragma-dialectical model of critical discussion to reconstruct and analyze the argumentative Confucian classic *Mencius*. Section 2 will discuss the relation between speech and morality conveyed in the two most representative Confucian classics—*The Analects of Confucius* and *Mencius*, which record the top two Confucians—Confucius's and Mencius's words and thoughts respectively. As Mencius is exclusively renowned for his fondness of argumentation, in Sect. 3, his argumentation with Confucian morality will be discussed with three parts: expounding the moral foundation of Mencius's argumentation in Sect. 3.1, exemplifying what Mencius claimed as four types of sophistical words—*bici* (biased words), *yinci* (overblown words), *xieci* (deviant words), and *dunci* (evasive words) in Sect. 3.2, and elaborating in Sect. 3.3 with details how Mencius integrated Confucian morality into his argumentation by exploiting the refutational strategies against the sophistical words. Section 4 will clarify the key ideas expressed in the morality-in-speech notion of reasonableness, and a brief conclusion will be made in Sect. 5.

2 The Relation Between Speech and Morality in Confucian Classics

Confucian morality is a non-negligible part of Confucianism. Its core thoughts are the five constant virtues (shortened as 5Cs) or *Wuchang* in pinyin, namely, *ren* (humaneness), *yi* (righteousness), *li* (proper rite or propriety), *zhi* (intelligence), and *xin* (sincerity).[3] *The Analects of Confucius*, compiled by Confucius's disciples after

[3] Among the 5Cs, the first three were proposed by Confucius—the founder of Confucianism, while *zhi* was added by Mencius, a most influential follower of Confucius, and *xin* added by another great Confu-

his death, is the first Confucian classic that records mostly Confucius's and also his disciples' words. In *The Analects*, Confucius (551 BC—479 BC), the founder of Confucianism, talked about *ren* and *yi* as two isolated concepts, and focused mainly on *ren,* which functions as the moral reason and the foundation of Confucianism (Xu 2001, p. 62). Mencius (372 BC—289 BC), the great philosopher with a position only after Confucius in Confucianism, combined these two concepts as one—*renyi* (humaneness and righteousness), and further clarified the connotations of humaneness and righteousness in his work *Mencius*—another most influential Confucian classic.[4] Besides, Mencius talked about both humaneness and righteousness in the broad sense, in which humaneness covers *ren* and *zhi*, while righteousness contains *yi* and *li* in 5Cs (Yang 2017, pp. 135, 137). So, hereinafter "Confucian morality" is used to refer to humaneness and righteousness, or "Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness" will be used directly. As for what humaneness and righteousness refer to respectively, more elaborations will be made in the following sections.

As the renowned sages in the school of Confucianism, both Confucius and Mencius interpreted Confucian morality together with speech or making speeches. Section 2.1 summarizes Confucius's perception of artful words and humaneness in *The Analects*, and Sect. 2.2 discusses how Mencius followed and further developed Confucius's thoughts about the relation between speech and Confucian morality.

2.1 Artful Words and Humaneness in *The Analects*

Ren or humaneness,[5] the primary virtue in Confucian morality, was proposed and expounded by Confucius. It has even been interpreted as an ontological concept in Confucianism (Chen 2014). However, Confucius himself did not give a specific definition of humaneness, even though the word *ren* (humaneness) appears 109 times in 16 volumes out of the total 20 ones in *The Analects*. Instead, Confucius proposed that humaneness should function as a prerequisite of all other virtues like *yi* (righteousness) and *li* (propriety), advocated the importance of humaneness in both an individual's self-cultivation and the governance of a state, and even put forward as many as 15 ways of practicing or going against humaneness according to different situations of the questioners. For example, in "Chapter Four Neighborhood …" 4·2, Confucius encouraged people to cultivate humaneness and associate humaneness with their conducts.

Footnote 3 (continued)
cian Dong Zhongshu (179 BC—104 BC) in the Western Han dynasty, much later than Mencius and Confucius (Xiong and Yan 2019, p. 368).

[4] The most important Confucian classics are the Four Books and the Five Classics. The Four Books include *The Great Learning* (*Daxue*), *The Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*), *The Analects of Confucius* (*Lunyu*) and *Mencius* (*Meng Zi*). The Five Classics include *The Book of Poetry* (*Shi*), *The Book of Documents* (*Shu*), *The Book of Rites* (*Li*), *The Book of Changes* (*Yi*) and *The Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*).

[5] The translations of the five constant Confucian virtues are varied in different translation versions. For example, Wu (2015) translated *ren* (仁) as human goodness or moral perfection when it is used as a noun, but as benevolent or virtuous when used as an adjective. For the sake of conformity, in this paper, except for the direct quotations from Irene Bloom's (2009) translation of *Mencius*, humaneness will be used to refer to *ren* (仁) and righteousness to *yi* (义).

("Chapter Four Neighborhood …" 4·2 of *The Analects*)

> The Master said, "The virtueless cannot live for long either in poverty or in enjoyment. The virtuous devote their minds to benevolent conducts; the wise make the most of their benevolent conducts." (Wu 2015, p. 109)

In "Chapter Six Ran Yong …" 6·30, when Zigong, one of Confucius's outstanding disciples, who was reputed for being good at doing business, asked Confucius about whether a man with a heart of benefiting and aiding others can be said to possess humaneness, Confucius highly affirmed such humane deeds and clearly pointed out a way to practice humaneness, that is, putting oneself in others' place by helping and benefiting them. In "Chapter Twelve Yan Yuan …" 12·2, when Zhonggong, another disciple of Confucius, who would like to be an official, asked him about humaneness, Confucius replied that besides the other ways, not imposing upon others what you do not like is also a way to practice humaneness.

("Chapter Six Ran Yong ..." 6·30 of *The Analects*)

> Zigong said, "Let's suppose there is a man who extensively benefits the people and offers aid to all. What do you think of him? Can we say he is perfectly virtuous?"
>
> "How can he be just perfectly virtuous?" said the Master. "He surely can be called a sage! Even Yao and Shun[6] worried that he might not make it. Such is a perfectly virtuous man: while he strives to gain his footing in society, he should also help others to gain theirs; while he strives to seek his accomplishments, he should also help others to seek theirs. And in doing that, he puts himself in other people's place. Such is the way to moral perfection (*ren* 仁)." (Wu 2015, p. 178)

("Chapter Twelve Yan Yuan ..." 12·2 of *The Analects*)

> When Zhonggong asked about how to be up to benevolence (*ren* 仁), the Master said, "It should be that when you are out on business, behave sincerely as if receiving an important guest, that when you employ the people, act as if conducting a great sacrifice, that you should never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself, and that you will not beget enmity whether in your state or in your feudality." ... (Wu 2015, p. 297)

In *The Analects*, Confucius remarked quite a few times on the relation between artful words[7] and humaneness. For example, in "Chapter One To learn and …" 1·3, "Chapter Five Gongye Chang" 5·5 and 5·25, Confucius expressed his explicit dislikes of artful words, of eloquence in speech, and of flattering looks. He even treated them as a shame and put them against the primary Confucian virtue—humaneness.

[6] Yao and Shun were two virtuous monarchs in China's remote past (Wu 2015, p. 178). They were regarded as model kings by Confucians.

[7] In this paper, "artful words" and "sophistical words" are used interchangeably, with both referring to the undesirable words that go against Confucian morality.

("Chapter One To learn and …" 1·3 of *The Analects*)
The Master said, "Artful words and flattering countenance have little to do with human goodness." (Wu 2015, p. 54)

("Chapter Five Gongye Chang" 5·5 of *The Analects*)
Someone said, "Ran Yong is benevolent but not eloquent."
The Master said, "What's the use of eloquence? Dealing with people with a glib tongue often begets resentment. I don't know whether Yong is truly benevolent, but what's the use of eloquence?" (Wu 2015, p. 129)

("Chapter Five Gongye Chang" 5·25 of *The Analects*)
The Master said, "Artful words, flattering looks and excessive respect are things that Zuoqiu Ming considers a shame, and I consider them a shame too. ..." (Wu 2015, p. 149)

In "Chapter Fifteen Prince Ling of Wei" 15·27 and "Chapter Fourteen Yuan Xian asked …" 14·4, Confucius straightforwardly articulated that artful talks are harmful to one's virtue, and set the priority of virtue over words by a person.

("Chapter Fifteen Prince Ling of Wei" 15·27 of *The Analects*)
The Master said, "Artful talks ruin one's virtue. A lack of forbearance in small matters spoils a great plan." (Wu 2015, p. 410)

("Chapter Fourteen Yuan Xian asked ..." 14·4 of *The Analects*)
The Master said, "The virtuous people will surely have their famous sayings, but those who have their famous sayings are not necessarily virtuous. ..." (Wu 2015, p. 348)

Perceiving the non-humaneness embedded in artful words and even the harm that may be imposed upon one's virtue by uttering artful words, therefore, Confucius, in "Chapter One To learn …" 1·14, warned a man of virtue to be cautious with his words.

("Chapter One To learn and ..." 1·14 of *The Analects*)
The Master said, "A man of virtue does not seek to eat to his heart's content, or dwell in coziness. He is diligent in work and cautious in word. He keeps company with men of principle so as to rectify himself. Such a man may be said to love to learn." (Wu 2015, p. 62)

2.2 Speech and Humaneness and Righteousness in *Mencius*

Mencius (372 BC—289 BC), reputed as the Second Sage after Confucius, inherited and further developed Confucius's thoughts, including Confucius's ideas about speech and morality. Unlike Confucius's main concern about *ren* (humaneness), Mencius expanded Confucius's *ren* into a combined term of *renyi* (仁义, humaneness and righteousness), in which humaneness and righteousness are regarded as two parallel concepts. Mencius elaborated them in details in the work *Mencius,* where *ren* appears 160 times in all the seven books, and *yi* 109 times in six out of the seven books. According to Mencius, we human beings should treat humaneness as "the peaceful dwelling" to live in and righteousness as "the correct path" to

follow (Book 4A10 of *Mencius*). To better understand what humaneness and righteousness mean, Mencius illustrated in Book 2A6 one's feeling of pity and compassion as "the sprout of humaneness", and one's feeling of shame and aversion as "the sprout of righteousness", and even compared such sprouts to the inborn limbs of a human body, implying the inherence of humaneness and righteousness in human nature. In Book 7B31, Mencius further interpreted in an explicit manner the connotation of humaneness as "getting what one cannot bear to reach to what one can bear" and that of righteousness as "getting what one will not do to reach to what one will do". So, as for the relation between speech and morality, Mencius specified it as that between speech and humaneness and righteousness and put this relation under the historical contexts of his times.

Different from Confucius (551 BC—479 BC) living in the end of the Spring and Autumn period (c. 770 BC—476 BC), Mencius (372 BC—289 BC), born a hundred years later after Confucius, lived in the mid-Warring States period (c. 453BC—221 BC) of ancient China, when the whole society was in chaos with conquers and annexations between states. In the meantime, kings of the warring states were all eager to become stronger and stronger economically, politically as well as militarily, so they tried to attract and invite scholars and talents for their advice. As a result, academic communication was very active and even reached to the peak at that time, which is known as an era of "contention among a hundred schools of thought". Under such a contentious context, Mencius was compelled, as he claimed in Book 3B9 of the work *Mencius*, to argue for Confucianism and against the deviant views from the other schools of thought.

(Book 3B9 of *Mencius*)
Gongduzi said, "**Outsiders all say that the Master is fond of argument. I venture to ask why?**"
Mencius said, "**How should I be fond of argument? I am compelled to do it.** *A long time has passed since the world came into being, and periods of order have alternated with periods of chaos. ...*
If the ways of Yang and Mo are not stopped, and the way of Confucius is not made known, the people will be deceived by these deviant views, and the path of humaneness and rightness will be blocked. When the path of humaneness and rightness is blocked, animals are led to devour people, and people will be led to devour one another. I am fearful about this and defend the way of the former Sage by resisting Yang and Mo and banishing their licentious words. ...
As the Duke of Zhou[8] would have chastised those who denied fathers and rulers, I, too, want to correct people's minds, to stop deviant speech, to resist per-

[8] The Duke of Zhou (with dates of birth and death unknown), the younger brother of King Wu of Zhou, was a prominent statesman, strategist, thinker and educator in the late Shang dynasty and the eary Zhou dynasty. He was said to have composed together with King Wen of Zhou (1152 BC—1056 BC) the *Book of Changes* or *I Ching*, one of the five ancient Chinese classics (with the other four being *Book of Songs* or *Book of Odes*, *Book of Documents*, *Book of Rites*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals*) and have made proper rites and music, which formed the indispensable part of the etiquette culture of the Zhou dynasty. Due to his achievements, he was acknowledged by Confucius as one of the forerunners of Confucianism.

verse actions, to anish licentious words, and so to carry on the work of the three Sages.[9] In what way am I fond of argument? I am compelled to do it. Whoever can resist Yang and Mo[10] with words is a follower of the Sage." (Mencius 2009, pp. 68 - 71)

In Book 3B9, when answering the question raised by his disciple Gongduzi as to why Mencius was known as being fond of argument, Mencius elaborated on the reasons and purposes for his being compelled to argue, and in particular, associated "deviant speech" and "licentious words" with the blocking of the Confucian way of "humaneness and rightness (or righteousness)".

Also in Book 4A10, Mencius called the people who deny propriety and righteousness in their speech as those doing violence to themselves, and advised not to speak with those people nor interact with people who throw themselves away by rejecting humaneness and righteousness, hence connecting the virtues of propriety and righteousness with speech as well as one's self-cultivation.

(Book 4A10 of *Mencius*)
Mencius said, "With those who do violence to themselves, one cannot speak, nor can one interact with those who throw themselves away. To deny propriety and rightness in one's speech is what is called 'doing violence to oneself.' To say, 'I am unable to abide in humaneness or to follow rightness' is what is called 'throwing oneself away.' For human beings, humaneness is the peaceful dwelling, and rightness is the correct path. To abandon the peaceful dwelling and not abide in it and to reject the right road and not follow it - how lamentable!" (Mencius 2009, p. 79)

Besides remarks made about the relation between undesirable words and Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness, Mencius also talked about *shanyan* (good words) in Book 7A16, in which the Confucian way of humaneness and righteousness is embedded. "Good words" refers to words about humaneness and righteousness, which is not explicitly stated, but can be externalized according to other relevant chapters in the book of *Mencius* (Yan 2022).

(Book 7A16 of *Mencius*)
Mencius said, "When Shun was living deep in the mountains, dwelling together with trees and rocks and wandering together with deer and swine, the difference between him and the rustic people who dwelled deep in the mountains was quite small. But when he heard a single good word or observed a single good action, it was like a river in flood or a spring flowing forth - nothing could contain it." (Mencius 2009, p. 147)

[9] The three Sages refer to Da Yu, the Duke of Zhou, and Confucius (Wang Zhongjiang 2018, p. 459).

[10] Yang refers to Yang Zhu (395 BC—335 BC), a philosopher in the early Warring States period and the founder of the Yangzhu school of Taoism, while Mo refers to Micius, Mo Di or Mozi (c. 468 BC—376 BC), the founder of the school of Mohism, and a thinker, scientist, strategist, argumentation theorist in the Warring States period. According to Mencius, these two schools were the influential ones that advocated ideas quite different from the school of Confucianism and were thus most likely to endanger the spread of Confucian thoughts at that time.

Scholars have also conducted research on the relation of morality and speech in Confucian texts. For example, Zhang (2009) pinpointed that according to the Confucian views of speech, the value of speech does not just lie in transferring thoughts of a speaker, but also in displaying the speaker's virtue. In short, in articulating Confucian thoughts, both Confucius and Mencius put adhering to the Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness before one's speech, and even treat one's uttering artful and immoral words as a shame and an act of self-abandonment that makes no difference from the wild animals. Section 3 will show how in the spectacular era of "contention among a hundred schools of thought", Mencius managed to incorporate Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness into his argumentation by refuting against adverse thoughts and hence to defend for Confucianism.

3 Mencius's Argumentation with Confucian Morality

Mencius was a loyal follower and believer of Confucius. In Book 2A2 of *Mencius*, he belauded Confucius as one who "emerges from among his kind and rises to a higher level" and whom "since the beginning of human life, there has never been one greater than" (Mencius 2009, p. 32). Mencius even professed that in spite of other sages of antiquity like Bo Yi[11] and Yi Yin,[12] it was Confucius that he wanted to learn from. From Sect. 2.2 we have seen how Mencius learned to combine Confucian morality with speech or with making speeches in his remarks. In this section, we will further discuss how Mencius's alleged fondness of argumentation is morally founded under the particular context of the Warring States period (Sect. 3.1). Specifically, we will focus on how Mencius argumentatively defined the four types of sophistical words (Sect. 3.2) and refuted against those words deviating from Confucian morality (Sect. 3.3).

3.1 The Moral Foundation of Mencius's Argumentation

The work *Mencius* was compiled by Mencius himself, together with his two disciples Wan Zhang and Gongsun Chou in his late years. The whole work is composed of 260 chapters in 14 parts of 7 books. In Book 3B9 (that is, Chapter 9 in Part B of Book 3, already quoted in Sect. 2), Mencius claimed that he was obliged to argue for Confucius's "path of humaneness and righteousness" and against "the ways of Yang

[11] Bo Yi (with dates of birth and death unknown), a prince of the state of Guzhu and a great person of virtue, lived in the late Shang dynasty. He was said to have admonished King Wu of Zhou (?—c. 1043 BC) not to wage wars against King *Zhou* of Shang dynasty (reigning from 1075 BC—1046 BC, the last king of the Shang Dynasty) in the names of filial piety and humaneness. After the founding of the Zhou dynasty, he refused to eat crops produced in the new dynasty and starved himself to death. Since King Wu of Zhou, Bo Yi has been worshiped as one of the sages of antiquity.

[12] Yi Yin (?—1550 BC) was a great thinker, statesman, strategist, person of virtue, and also a founding father of the Shang dynasty (c. 1600 BC—1046 BC). Starting as a dowry male slave in the state of Shang, Yi Yin became outstanding gradually for his mastery of the art of statecraft and was empowered to govern the state of Shang by the then ruler Tang. Finally, he assisted Tang in conquering the Xia dynasty (c. 2070 BC—1600 BC) and founded the Shang dynasty. After the death of King Tang of Shang, Yi Yin assisted three more rulers of the Shang dynasty till his death in 1550 BC.

and Mo" by stopping deviant speech and banishing licentious words. This functions as Mencius's declaration for his morality-based argumentation.

Going through the whole 260 chapters of *Mencius*, we can see that nearly half of the chapters record Mencius's direct or indirect argumentative talks with others, while the rest seemingly monologic chapters can be seen as the background or support of his argumentation (Yan 2022). In this sense, we can say that argumentation is actually Mencius's most important way to interpret his thoughts (Zhang 2020).

Yan and Xiong (2020) elaborated Mencius's argumentative discourse from three dimensions, namely, Confucian moral metaphysics of human nature being good, the combination of Confucian virtue ethic—*ren* (humaneness) with Confucian deontic ethic—*yi* (righteousness), and Confucian practical ethic[13] of holding the mean that is based on principle and allows for expediency. The interrelation of these three dimensions is further expounded and argumentatively justified as the "one-body-with-two-sides" philosophical foundation of Mencius's argumentation (Yan 2022, pp. 37—74), in which the goodness inclination inherent in human nature plays the role of "the body", while humaneness and righteousness, together with holding to the mean based on principle and allowing for expediency, are "the two sides" extended from "the body". According to Mencius, humaneness and righteousness are the embodiments of the goodness inclination in human nature, and the principle that functions as the basis of holding the mean while allowing for expediency in practice refers exactly to the Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness (Ma 2000; Xu 2004). Therefore, the two sides in the moral foundation of Mencius's argumentation represent two dimensions respectively, that is, the normative dimension—Confucian virtue and deontic ethic of humaneness and righteousness, and the empirical dimension—Confucian practical ethic of holding the mean. Following the one-body-with-two-sides distinction, Yan (2022) divides Mencius's argumentation into three domains, that is, the philosophical argumentation about human nature, the political argumentation about humaneness and righteousness, and the practical argumentation about holding the mean.

Figure 1 shows the "one-body-with-two-sides" moral foundation of Mencius's argumentation. This moral orientation is reflected in Mencius's self-proclaimed adeptness at words (*zhiyan*). Section 3.2 will expound Mencius's *zhiyan* with examples, and Sect. 3.3 will summarize how Mencius refuted against those unwelcoming words.

3.2 Mencius's *Zhiyan* / Adeptness at Words

Book 2A2 of *Mencius* is a chapter with dialogues between Mencius and his disciple Gongsun Chou. In this chapter, when Gongsun Chou asked what Mencius excelled in, Mencius replied straightforwardly that he excelled in understanding words, and provided a detailed explanation for claiming so. In opposition to the "good words"

[13] Here the term "Confucian practical ethic" is coined to refer to the part of Confucian ethic that is originated from practical reason and practical wisdom of holding the mean based on principle and expediency in Confucianism.

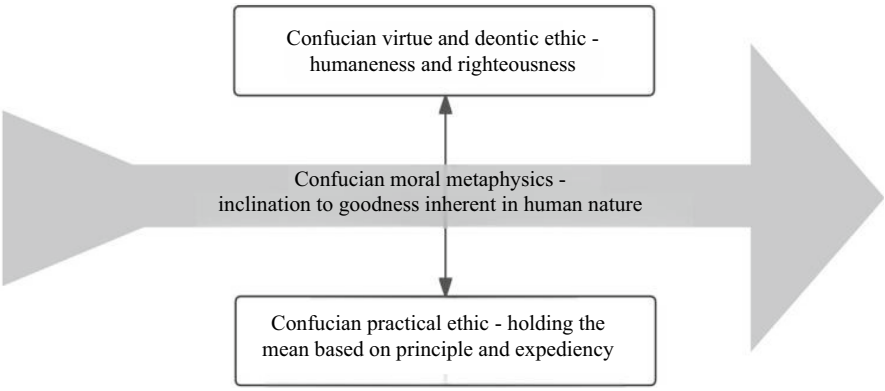


Fig. 1 The "one-body-with-two-sides" moral foundation of Mencius's argumentation

mentioned in Book 7A16 (quoted in Sect. 2), the words that Mencius claimed to be adept at are four types of sophistical words—*bici* (distorted or biased words), *yinci* (licentious or overblown words),[14] *xieci* (deviant words), and *dunci* (evasive words). What distinguishes one type of sophistical words from another lies in the respective focuses in their definitions, as is to be given below. Besides, what *zhi* in *zhiyan* (being adept at words) should be interpreted as being good at identifying, analyzing, and evaluating the said four types of sophistical words (Wang Zhimin 2018, p. 152). Besides knowing what these sophistical words are like, Mencius also claimed to know what is wrong with them respectively, that is, obscuration in distorted or biased words, error in overblown words, waywardness in deviant words, and desperation in evasive words.

> (Book 2A2 of *Mencius*).
> ... (Gongsun Chou asked,) "May I presume to ask you, Master, in what do you excel?"
> (Mencius said,) "I understand words. I am good at nourishing my vast, flowing *qi*." ...
> (Gongsun Chou asked,) "What is meant by 'understanding words'?"
> (Mencius said,) "From distorted words, one knows the obscuration; from licentious words, one knows the corruption; from deviant words, one knows the waywardness; from evasive words, one knows the desperation. What is born in the mind does damage to government, and what arises in government does damage to the conduct of affairs. If a sage were to arise again, he would certainly follow my words." ... (Mencius 2009, pp. 30-31)

Mencius explained the four types of sophistical words in Book 2A2, and denounced views made by scholars from the Yangzhu school of Taoism and the

[14] Although Irene Bloom (Mencius 2009, p. 31) translated *bici* as "distorted words" and *yinci* as "licentious words", for clearer understanding, "biased words" and "overblown words" are preferred respectively in the following elaborations.

school of Mohism as deviant speech and licentious words in Book 3B9 (quoted in Sect. 2). Those sophistical words and Mencius's refutation against them scatter all through the work *Mencius*, appearing in dialogues.

(1) *Bici*

Bici refers to words that focus merely on one side but neglect the other sides of a thing, thus causing bias or distortion towards things (Yang 2019, p. 76). Among the four types of sophistical words, *bici* is the most recorded type in the work *Mencius*. For example, in Book 1A1, the first chapter in *Mencius*, King Hui of Liang,[15] at the first sight of Mencius, inquired with his very first question about how to profit his state. According to what Mencius replied with, it is not hard to see that Mencius considered King Hui of Liang's mere concern about profit as biased words, for King Hui of Liang emphasized profit only but ignored the importance of humaneness and righteousness to his state.

(Book 1A1 of *Mencius*).
Mencius met with King Hui of Liang.
The king said, "**Venerable sir, you have not considered a thousand li too far to come. Surely you have some means to profit our state?**"
Mencius replied: "**Why must the king speak of profit? I have only [teachings concerning] humaneness and rightness**. If the king says, 'How can I profit my state?' the officers[16] will say, 'How can I profit my house[17]?' and the gentlemen[18] and the common people will say, 'How can I profit myself?' Those above and those below will compete with one another for profit, and the state will be imperiled. One who murders the ruler over a state of ten thousand chariots surely will be from a house of a thousand chariots; one who murders the ruler over a state of a thousand chariots surely will be from a house of a hundred chariots. A share of a thousand in ten thousand or a hundred in a thousand is hardly negligible; yet, when rightness is subordinated to profit the urge to lay claim to more becomes irresistible. It has never happened that one given to humaneness abandons his parents, nor that one given to rightness subordinates the interests of his lord. Let the king speak only of humaneness and rightness. What need has he to speak of profit?" (Mencius 2009, p. 1)

[15] King Hui of Liang (400 BC—319 BC) was also King Hui of the state of Wei (reigning from 370 to 319 BC). As in 361 BC King Hui of Wei moved its capital from Anyi to Daliang, he was called as King Hui of Liang ever since. In 344 BC, King Hui of Liang became the first vassel state ruler to proclaim himself as a king in the Warring States period (476 BC—221 BC) because the state of Wei was the most powerful one at that time. Mencius visited King Hui of Liang in about 320 BC, one year before King Hui of Liang died, when the state of Wei had turned from flourish to decadence.

[16] "The officers" (Mencius 2009, p. 1) is the translation of *Dafu* (大夫 the great officers) in *Mencius*. *Dafu* belongs to the third level of the nobility rank in the Zhou dynasty, with the first two levels being *Jun* (君 the ruler) and *Qing* (卿 chief ministers).

[17] Here Irene Bloom (Mencius 2009, p. 1) just literally translated the original Chinese expression "wo jia" as "my house", which is actually misleading. Following Footnote No. 16, "wo jia" actually refers to the fiefdom allotted to *Dafu*.

[18] "The gentlemen" is the translation of *shi* (士 scholars in the Warring States period) in *Mencius*. *Shi* belongs to the fourth level of the nobility rank in the Zhou dynasty, a level below *Dafu*.

Also in Book 3B9 of *Mencius* (as quoted in Sect. 2), where Mencius was alleged for being fond of argument, Mencius's detailed explanations for his being compelled to argue show that what outsiders said about his being fond of argument belongs to *bici*, as outsiders drew the conclusion only from Mencius's external argumentative words and deeds, but were unable to see the motives and intentions behind his words and deeds that were outspoken by Mencius in Book3B9, thus causing biased views over Mencius.

(2) *Yinci*

Yinci, the overblown words, refers to words that over-exaggerate things, and may even go beyond the Confucian moral restraints, thus causing excesses (Yang 2019, p. 76). In the work *Mencius*, over-exaggerating words can be heard from Mencius's disciples, like Gongsun Chou in Book 2A2 and Chen Dai in Book 3A1. Yet when the Confucian morals are involved, *yinci* appears mostly out of those with different thoughts from Confucianism, like Bai Gui in Book 6B11.

(Book 6B11 of *Mencius*).
Bai Kui[19] said, "**When it comes to water control, I am better than Yu**.[20]"
Mencius said, "**Sir, you are mistaken**. Yu's control of water followed the Way of water. Therefore, he channeled it into the four seas, whereas you, sir, channel it into neighboring states. When water overflows its course, it is called a deluge, and a deluge is a flood - something that a humane man detests. Sir, you are mistaken." (Mencius 2009, p. 141).

In Book 6B11, when Bai Gui overblew his achievements in water control and even boasted without shame by comparing his water control with Yu, the well-acknowledged ancient hero in controlling monstrous floods, Mencius pinpointed the very difference between his and Yu's water control. That is, Yu controlled water by following the Way of water and with considerations of humaneness, while Bai Gui controlled water within one state but meanwhile brought water disasters to people in neighboring states. So, obviously Mencius thought Bai Gui had gone too far away from the Confucian morality—humaneness in his water control, and thus implicitly treated Bai Gui's big talk as *yinci*, overblown words going beyond Confucian morality.

(3) *Xieci*

Xieci refers to words that are deviant from the right path. In the context of the work *Mencius*, what could be called by Mencius as a right path is definitely a path following the Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness, as is quoted in Book4A10, also mentioned in Sect. 2.2. Let us take Book 3B2 as an example.

(Book 3B2 of *Mencius*).

[19] According to pinyin of the two Chinese characters 白圭 in the original text, Bai Kui should be Bai Gui (with dates of birth and death unknown), once the prime minister of the kingdom of Wei in the Warring States period. He was said to have built embankments to control water.

[20] Yu, also addressed respectfully by later generations as Da Yu or Great Yu (c. 2200 BC—2100 BC), was one of the three legendary sage emperors in remote ages, whose most prominent and eulogized merit and achievement was his success in controlling the monstrous floods, demarcating the world in ancient times and establishing the Xia dynasty (c. 2070 BC—1600 BC).

> Jing Chun said, "**Truly, Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi[21] were great men, were they not? When they were angry, the lords would tremble in fear; when they dwelled in peace, the fires of conflict throughout the world were extinguished.**"
> Mencius said, "**How can they be considered great men?** Have you, sir, not studied the Book of Rituals[22]? When a man is capped, his father gives him orders. When a woman is married, her mother gives her orders, accompanying her to the door and cautioning her, 'You are going to your home. You must be reverent; you must be cautious. Do not disobey your husband.' To consider compliance to be correct is the way of women. One who dwells in the wide house of the world, occupies his proper place in the world, and carries out the great Way of the world: when he is able to realize his intentions, carries them out for the sake of the people of the world, and when he cannot realize them, practices the Way alone. He cannot be led astray by riches and honor, moved by poverty and privation, or deflected by power or force. This is what I call a great man." (Mencius 2009, p. 62).

In Book 3B2, Jing Chun, a follower in the School of Diplomacy, showed his admiration to the two representatives Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi from the same school and regarded them as great men (*Dazhangfu*) for their ability to influence the lords and even the stability of the world. Mencius denied Jing Chun's definition of great men immediately. He first compared political strategists like Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi in front of the lords to women merely showing obedience in front of their husbands. Then he mentioned "the great Way of the world" and offered his definition of "a great man"—one who "cannot be led astray by riches and honor, moved by poverty and privation, or deflected by power or force". Mencius's elaboration indicates that the path Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi followed was not the right one. Yet in order to understand what the metaphorical formulations like "dwells in the wide house of the world", "occupies his proper place in the world", and "carries out the great Way of the world" mean, we need to refer to other chapters in *Mencius*. For instance, Mencius remarked in Book 2A7 that "Humaneness is the honor conferred by Heaven and is a person's peaceful abode" (Mencius 2009, p. 36), in Book 4A10 that "humaneness is the peaceful dwelling, and rightness is the correct path" (Mencius 2009, p. 79), in Book 6A11 that "Humaneness is the human mind. Rightness is the human path" (Mencius 2009, p. 128), and in Book 7A33 that "In dwelling in humaneness and following the path of rightness the work of the great man is complete" (Mencius 2009, p. 152). In short, what Mencius meant is that only

[21] Jing Chun, Gongsun Yan, and Zhang Yi were all political strategists in the School of Diplomacy in the Warring States period. Gongsun Yan (with dates of birth and death unknown), a representative in the School of Diplomacy, was once assigned as prime minister by kings of five states to lead the vertical (north–south) alliance to fight against the kingdom of Qin in about 318 BC. Zhang Yi (?—309 BC), another representative in the School of Diplomacy, was twice assigned as prime minister in the kingdom of Qin to establish the horizontal (east–west) alliance to disrupt the vertical (north–south) alliance.

[22] *Book of Rituals*, or *Book of Rites*, is one of the five ancient Chinese classics. For the other four classics, refer to Footnote No. 4.

following the path of humaneness and righteousness can be called as carrying out "the great Way of the world". As a result, Jing Chun's admiring remarks towards Gongsun Chou and Zhang Yi's political influences over lords out of flattering and obedience rather than out of humaneness and righteousness were rebuked by Mencius as words deviant from the right path of humaneness and righteousness. Therefore, Jing Chun's words belong to *xieci*.

(4) *Dunci*

Dunci refers to evasive words that are spoken when one finds oneself devoid of all arguments (Yang 2019, p. 76). This kind of sophistical words appear mostly in dialogues between Mencius and King Xuan of Qi[23] in the work *Mencius*. Take Book 1B3 as an example.

(Book 1B3 of *Mencius*).
King Xuan of Qi asked, "*Is there a way of conducting relations with neighboring states?*".
Mencius replied, "*There is. But only one who is humane is able to serve a small state with a large one, as was the case when Tang*[24] *served Ge*[25] *and King Wen*[26] *served the Kun tribes.*[27] *Only the wise are able to serve a large state with a small one, as was the case when Tai Wang*[28] *served the Xunyu*[29] *and Goujian served Wu.*[30] *One who with a large state serves a small one delights in Heaven, while one who with a small state serves a large one is in awe of Heaven. Through delighting in Heaven one preserves all-under-Heaven, and through being in awe of Heaven one preserves his state. The ode*[31] *says,*
Being in awe of the majesty of Heaven, I thus preserve it."
The king said, *"How great are these words!* **But I have a failing. I am fond of valor.**"
Mencius replied, "Let the king not be fond of small valor. One who grasps his sword, stares menacingly, and says, 'How dare he confront me!' is displaying

[23] King Xuan of Qi (?—301 BC) was the fifth king of the kingdom of Qi in the Warring States period of ancient China, who was in reign from 320 to 301 BC. The state of Qi was one of the seven powerful states in the middle of the Warring States period. Among all the kings that Mencius visited, it was with King Xuan of Qi that Mencius had the most dialogues, which were recorded in 14 chapters in the work *Mencius*.

[24] King Tang of Shang dynasty (with dates of birth and death unknown) was the founder of the Shang dynasty (c. 1600 BC—1046 BC), following the perishing of the Xia dynasty established by Yu.

[25] Ge was a small neighboring state of Bo, where King Tang of Shang resided.

[26] King Wen of Zhou dynasty (1152 BC—1056 BC) was regarded as the founder of the Zhou dynasty (c. 1046 BC—256 BC) following the Shang dynasty built by Tang.

[27] The Kun tribes were located to the west in the early period of the Zhou dynasty.

[28] Tai Wang (with dates of birth and death unknown), the grandfather of King Wen of Zhou, was a virtuous leader of the Zhou tribe, and also the founding father of the Zhou dynasty for his foresight and sagacity.

[29] Xunyu was the northern minority who invaded the place where Tai Wang lived.

[30] Goujian (?—464 BC) was once the king of the state of Yue in the Spring and Autumn period. When the state of Yue was defeated by the state of Wu, Goujian endured humiliation and served the King of Wu for years, and finally made his revenge and conquered Wu.

[31] The ode refers to *Book of Odes* or *Book of Songs*, one of the five classics of ancient Chinese literature, and an anthology of ancient Chinese Poetry.

the valor of an ordinary man who is able to be the adversary of just one person. Let the king be greater than that. The ode says,
The king, his anger blazing,
Led forth and ordered his troops
To repel the march on Ju,[32]
To reclaim the blessings of Zhou,
To respond to all-under-Heaven.
This was the valor of King Wen. In one burst of anger King Wen brought peace to all the people in the world.
... Now Your Majesty should also, in one burst of anger, bring peace to all the people in the world. The people are only afraid that you are *not* fond of valor." (Mencius 2009, pp. 15-16)

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In Book 1B3, King Xuan of Qi inquired to Mencius about how to deal with the relations with neighboring states, and Mencius replied with examples of the humane rulers' and the wise rulers' doings respectively and quoted an ode from the then well-acknowledged *Book of Songs* to justify his words. King Xuan of Qi acknowledged the greatness of Mencius's words, but immediately found an excuse of his having the fondness of valor, indicating that he was incapable of doing what those humane and wise rulers had done. However, Mencius, who self-claimed to be able to identify words and was well-known for his fondness of argumentation, did prove himself to excel in argumentation. He made a conceptual distinction between small valor and big valor by giving more examples. Looking at Book 1B3 as a whole, we can see that in Mencius's view, King Xuan of Qi's excuse of incapability to deal with neighboring states because of his valor is a kind of *dunci*, evasive words lacking in arguments.

3.3 Mencius's Refutational Strategies Against Sophistical Words

In Sect. 3.2, we have illustrated Mencius's self-claimed adeptness at words in Book 2A2 of *Mencius*, especially with examples of the four types of sophistical words—*bici* (biased words), *yinci* (overblown words), *xieci* (deviant words), and *dunci* (evasive words). These words are refuted by Mencius as sophistical ones, as what these words explicitly or implicitly indicate falls short of the alleged Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness. As is claimed in Book 3B9, what Mencius wanted to do is correct people's minds by stopping deviant speech and banishing overblown words so as to "carry on the work of the three Sages" (Mencius 2009, p. 71). For this end, Mencius has employed refutational strategies in his argumentation against those biased, overblown, deviant, or evasive words. Yan and Xiong (2019) analyzed Mencius's refutational strategies in his argumentation against some sophistical words about human nature. Here, refutational strategies like argument with a slippery slope, argument by refutational analogy, and argument by dissociation are

[32] Ju was the name of a state.

to be elaborated in Mencius's argumentative discourse against sophistical words concerning other issues.

As the quoted Mencius's argumentative discourse aims to refute against others' sophistical words, which all appear at the confrontation stages of the corresponding critical discussions, the refutational strategies are also the argumentational strategies used at the argumentation stages of those critical discussions. As is mentioned in Sect. 2.2, Mencius lived in the Warring States period, an era of "contention among a hundred schools of thought", when scholars from different schools could contend for their academic and also social and political positions in an argumentative manner. Such contentions recorded in the work *Mencius* were conducted in the form of critical discussion, with either explicit interlocutors in dialogues or implicit target audiences in the seeming monologues, and were also aimed to resolve the differences of opinion through rational communication between the protagonist Mencius and his explicit or implicit antagonists, including Mencius's doubtful disciples, kings of the warring states, and scholars from schools of non-Confucianism. Therefore, to unveil how Mencius refuted against his interlocutors' sophistical words, the pragma-dialectical model of critical discussion with the four stages—the confrontation, opening, argumentation, and concluding stages is used to elucidate Mencius's argumentative discourse in the quoted chapters from the work *Mencius*. Different marks are also made according to the pragma-dialectians' way to differentiate the corresponding discourse to different stages, like words **in bold** to the confrontation stage, words *in italics* to the opening stage, words underlined to the argumentation stage, and words with dots to the concluding stage. Besides, as the to-be-analyzed chapters quoted from the work *Mencius* have appeared in Sect. 3.2, here we just refer to those quotes directly.

3.3.1 Argument with a Slippery Slope

In discerning the bias or distortion embedded in the first type of sophistical words *bici*, one of the refutational strategies that Mencius employed is argument with a slippery slope, as in Book 1A1 of *Mencius*.

Book 1A1 of *Mencius* records a conversation between Mencius and King Hui of Liang. The first sentence is italicized, indicating the opening stage, where the common starting points are set. That is, the facts were known between the two arguers Mencius and King Hui of Liang that Mencius was a scholar and person of virtue with some name recognition in that era and that rulers of states including King Hui of Liang were eager for advice from talents like Mencius.

On seeing Mencius, King Hui of Liang immediately posed the very question about what Mencius could bring to profit the state of Wei, while Mencius immediately replied back with the rhetorical question "Why must the king speak of profit?" and his adverse opinion about a king's concern with profit rather than with humaneness and righteousness. So, the words in bold indicate the difference of opinion between King Hui of Liang and Mencius, thus belonging to the confrontation stage in the critical discussion about the issue whether a king should merely speak of profit.

Mencius then kept on elaborating why a king should not do so with both positive and negative arguments, which are shown in the following argumentation structure (Fig. 2). So, the underlined parts in Book 1A1 all belong to the argumentation stage in this critical discussion, while the last two sentences belong to the concluding stage, showing Mencius's explicit view over the said issue—that King Hui of Liang should also speak of humaneness and righteousness instead of merely profiting his state.

It should be noted that we need to take a wholistic view in comprehending Mencius's words and ideas recorded in the work *Mencius*, for the seemingly loosely arranged chapters in *Mencius* are internally logically connected with philosophical connotations (Chen 2018, p. 9). So, looking at the work *Mencius* as a whole, we can see that what Mencius really advocated is the Confucian practical ethic of holding the mean based on principle and allowing for expediency, as is mentioned in Sect. 3.1. In the case of profit and humaneness and righteousness, Mencius did not deny King Hui of Liang's or anyone else's desire for profit. Instead what he really meant in Book 1A1 is to put pursuing for humaneness and righteousness before asking for profit, rather than vice versa (Yan 2022, pp. 159—161). As a result, to Mencius, King Hui of Liang's immediate request for profiting his state is *bici* (biased words), for his neglecting the Confucian virtue and deontic ethic of humaneness and righteousness as well as the Confucian practical ethic of holding the mean. King Hui of Liang's *bici* appears at the confrontation stage, the bold part in Book 1A1, as is shown in Sect. 3.2, and Mencius's argumentation against such *bici* is reconstructed as Fig. 2.

From Fig. 2, we can see that Mencius first used King Hui of Liang's asking for profiting his state as an unexpressed premise 1.(1a) in Fig. 2. Following this premise came the subsequent more and more undesirable consequences, from people at different levels below the king competing with one another for profit 1.(1a).1a, to the final ending of imperiling the whole state 1.(1a).1b. So sub-argument 1.(1a) with supports of 1.(1a).1a and 1.(1a).1b is a slippery slope argument. As Tindale (2007, pp. 187—188) elaborated, to judge whether a slippery slope argument is good or fallacious, we need to ask the three corresponding critical questions:

CQ 1: Is each of the causal steps plausible?

CQ 2: Could one stop and go back, or is the "slope" clearly slippery?

CQ 3: Is the alleged outcome really negative?

According to Fig. 2, in sub-argument 1.(1a), there are two layers of causal relations, with one being premises 1.(1a).1a and 1.(1a).1b to support 1.(1a), and another being two more sub-layers of causal relations, that is, 1.(1a).1a.1a and 1.(1a).1a.1b used to support 1.(1a).1a, and 1.(1a).1b.1a and 1.(1a).1b.1b to support 1.(1a).1b. So, for CQ1, we need to see whether all these causal relations are plausible. Since the plausibility of the first-layer causal relation depends on the soundness of the second-layer, we start to check the plausibility of the two sub-layer causal relations.

As for the first sub-layer causal relation between 1.(1a).1a.1a and 1.(1a).1a.1b and 1.(1a).1a in sub-argument 1.(1a), whether the great officers, the scholars, and the common people will follow the king's steps to merely ask for profiting themselves

regardless of humaneness and righteousness, we can resort back to relevant ideas first proposed by Confucius and then inherited by Mencius. In "Chapter Twelve Yan Yuan …" 12·19 of *The Analects*, Confucius said that "The moral influence of the superior is like the wind while the moral inclination of the inferior is like grass. When the wind blows, the grass will bend" (Wu 2015, p. 312). Also in Book 3A2 of *Mencius*, Mencius quoted Confucius's words and added that "What the one above loves, those below will care for still more deeply" (Mencius 2009, pp. 50—51). So, clearly both Confucius and Mencius have agreed that a king's moral inclination would influence people of all levels. Therefore, put under the context of Confucian morality, the first sub-layer causal relation in sub-argument 1.(1a) is plausible.

For the second sub-layer causal relation between 1.(1a).1b.1a and 1.(1a).1b.1b and 1.(1a).1b in sub-argument 1.(1a), that is, whether subordinating humaneness and righteousness to profit will eventually imperil the whole state, numerous examples in history can verify it. For example, in Book 1B8 of *Mencius*, the historical facts of King Tang's banishing King Jie and Duke Wu's assaulting King *Zhou* are mentioned. There King Jie, the last king of the Xia dynasty (c. 2070 BC—1600 BC), also a tyrannical and immoral ruler, was finally banished by his former subject Tang, who later founded the Shang dynasty (c. 1600 BC—1046 BC). Similarly, King *Zhou,* the last king of the Shang dynasty, also an immoral ruler, was overthrown by his former subject Duke Wu from the state of Zhou, who later founded the Zhou dynasty (1046 BC—256 BC).

Besides the positive answer to CQ1, for the slippery slope sub-argument 1.(1a), answers to CQ2 and CQ3 are also positive, as the slope from the first consequence 1.(1a).1a to the second and more serious consequence 1.(1a).1b is slippery, and the alleged ultimate outcome of imperiling the whole state is really negative. Therefore, sub-argument 1.(1a) is a good slippery slope argument.

In addition, in Fig. 2, to support the standpoint 1 "The king should first speak of humaneness and righteousness before merely asking for profiting his state", Mencius provided the coordinative premises 1.(1a) and 1.1b, where 1.(1a) is expressed in an affirmative sentence but with a negative meaning, and 1.1b expressed in a negative sentence but with a positive meaning. As a result, in supporting standpoint 1, Mencius also employed the strategy of argument with positive and negative considerations.

3.3.2 Argument by Refutational Analogy

In refuting against the sophistical words, like *yinci* (overblown words) in Book 6B11 and *xieci* (deviant words) in Book 3B2 of *Mencius* (already quoted in Sect. 3.2), Mencius has also exploited the strategy of argument by refutational analogy. To expose the argumentational strategies used in Book 6B11 and Book 3B2 of *Mencius*, we need to first reconstruct Mencius's argumentative discourse in them respectively, as has been done with Book 1A1 in Sect. 3.3.1.

In Book 6B11, the background knowledge about Bai Gui and Yu is unexpressed in *Mencius*, so the opening stage remains implicit. So, Book 6B11 straightforwardly poses the difference of opinion in the critical discussion between Bai Gui and

1 The king should first speak of humaneness and righteousness before merely asking for profiting his state.

1.(1a) (If the king merely asks for profiting his state, undesirable consequences may occur.)

1.(1a).1a The king's merely asking for profiting his state (regardless of humaneness and righteousness) will lead the others to merely compete for profit.

1.(1a).1a.1a The great officers will merely ask for profiting his fiefdom (regardless of humaneness and righteousness).

1.(1a).1a.1b The scholars and the common people will merely ask for profiting themselves (regardless of humaneness and righteousness).

1.(1a).1b With people at higher levels and at lower levels all competing with one another merely for profit (regardless of humaneness and righteousness), the whole state will be imperiled.

1.(1a).1b.1a When righteousness is subordinated to profit, the urge to lay claim to more becomes irresistible.

1.(1a).1b.1b Those at lower levels may even murder their rulers to claim for more profit.

1.1b One given to humaneness and righteousness will never abandon his parents nor subordinate the interests of his lord.

Fig. 2 Argumentation against *bici* in Book 1A1 of *Mencius*

Mencius about whether Bai Gui is better in water control than Yu straightforwardly (the confrontation stage). Mencius denied Bai Gui's self-praise, and then elaborated his denial by comparing Yu's water control with Bai Gui's water control (the argumentation stage). At the end of the conversation, Mencius reiterated his standpoint that Bai Gui was mistaken in feeling better than Yu in water control (the concluding stage). Mencius's argumentation against Bai Gui's remarks in Book 6B11 is reconstructed as Fig. 3.

In Fig. 3, Mencius put Bai Gui's and Yu's ways to control water in a bright contrast. The analogical key lies in whether people's lives are protected or endangered in controlling water. One of Mencius's most important thoughts is his people-oriented ideology. In Book 7B14, Mencius remarked directly that "The people are of greatest importance, the altars of the soil and grain are next, and the ruler is of least importance" (Mencius 2009, p. 159). Bai Gui controlled water in one state and did protect people's lives in that state, but his way to control water in that state was realized by channeling the water into the neighboring states. As a result, people's

2 Bai Gui's water control is far worse than Yu's (in terms of showing humaneness).

2.1a Yu's controlling water kept humaneness in mind by following the Way of water and channeling it into the four seas.

2.1b Bai Gui's controlling water discarded humaneness by channeling water into neighboring states.

(2.1a-2.1b)' (Humaneness should be embodied in conducting the state administration, like in controlling water.)

Fig. 3 Argumentation against *yinci* in Book 6B11 of *Mencius*

lives in the neighboring states were endangered instead. To Mencius, the lives of common people were equally precious, despite which state they lived in. Therefore, Mencius denounced Bai Gui bluntly that he was mistaken, not only because Bai Gui did not realize his discarding humaneness in water control, but also because he even considered his non-humane water control to be better than Yu's. So, here when Mencius managed to refute Bai Gui's words with an analogy, he held humaneness as his evaluation criterion again and classifed Bai Gui's words as overblown ones, that is, *yinci*, which appears at the confrontation stage of the critical discussion between Mencius and Bai Gui.

Book 3B2 of *Mencius* records a critical discussion between Jing Chun and Mencius about the topic of great men. The background information about Jing Chun, Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi remains implicit in the dialogue (See Footnote 21), functioning as the opening stage.

This dialogue starts with Jing Chun's claiming Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi to be great men, while Mencius refuted Jing Chun's view with a rhetorical question, which shows the difference of opinion between them, that is, whether Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi can be considered to be great men (the confrontation stage).

Following the first rhetorical question of denying Jing Chun's view, Mencius posed a second rhetorical question with the *Book of Rites*, and further quoted the proper rites for a man and a woman, especially the rite for a married woman, that is, showing mere compliance and obedience to her husband. Mencius's quoting the rite for a married woman implies that what Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi did in influencing the lords and even the world at that time is just like what a married woman did to her husband. After quoting the rite, Mencius went on to say positively what a great man with humaneness and righteousness should do – carrying out his intentions for the sake of the people when there is a chance, or otherwise practicing the Way of Confucianism alone, namely, practicing humaneness and righteousness (the argumentation stage). Such elaboration of what a great man would do also implies that what Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi did is just the opposite.

Finally, Mencius gave a specific definition of what he called as a great man, which again implicitly denied Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi as great men (the concluding stage). Mencius's argumentative discourse in Book 3B2 is reconstructed as Fig. 4.

3 Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi were not great men.

3.(1a) (Gongsun Yan's and Zhang Yi's way to influence the lords was not what great men would do.)

3.(1a).1a According to the *Book of Rites*, considering compliance to be correct is the way of women.

3.(1a).(1b) (Gongsun Yan's and Zhang Yi's way to influence the lords was just like women's showing compliance to their husbands.)

(3.(1a).1a-3.(1a).(1b))' (Considering compliance to be correct is not what great men do.)

3.(1b) (Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi, unlike great men, realized their intentions not for the sake of the people of the world.)

3.(1c) (Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi, unlike great men, were those to be led astray by riches and honor, moved by poverty and privation, and deflected by power or force.)

Fig. 4 Argumentation against *xieci* in Book 3B2 of *Mencius*

In Fig. 4, we can see that Mencius drew an implicit analogy between Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi's way to influence the lords and the way of women to show compliance to their husbands in *Book of Rites*. Such an analogy is employed to partially refute Jing Chun's view that Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi were great men. Besides the use of the refutational analogy in sub-argument 3.(1a), Mencius also elaborated positively what great men with humaneness and righteousness would do and would be like, thus forming another two refutations against Jing Chun, as premises 3.(1b) and 3.(1c) in Fig. 4. Here again Mencius set humaneness and righteousness as the evaluation criterion of whether one can be called as a great man or not. As Jing Chun made his remarks based on thoughts of the School of Diplomacy, in which he believed, according to Mencius, Jing Chun's speech went against the Confucian morality. Hence in managing to argue against Jing Chun with a refutational analogy, Mencius naturally classified Jing Chun's words as deviant ones, that is, *xieci*, appearing again at the confrontation stage of the critical discussion.

3.3.3 Argument by Dissociation

Used in argumentative discussions, dissociation is "an argumentative technique in which, in order to resolve a contradiction or incompatibility, a unitary concept expressed by a single term is split up into two new concepts unequally valued" (van Rees 2009, p. 9). In refuting against sophistical words, Mencius has also used the strategy of dissociation, like against *dunci* (evasive words) in Book 1B3 of *Mencius*.

Book 1B3 records a dialogue between King Xuan of Qi and Mencius, beginning with King Xuan of Qi's inquiry about how to conduct relations with neighboring states. To this question, Mencius gave a positive reply, list examples about how humane rulers of large states served small ones and how wise rulers of small states served large ones, elaborated their positive outcomes of either preserving all-under-heaven or preserving one's own state, and kept on quoting an ode from *Book of Songs* to further justify his remarks. King Xuan of Qi acknowledged the greatness of Mencius's words. This means that by now King Xuan of Qi and Mencius shared the common starting points about how humane and wise rulers should do (the opening stage).

However, immediately after King Xuan of Qi's agreement with Mencius's great remarks, he turned to confess his failing with fondness of valor, implying that he was incapable of doing under the guidance of those great words. King Xuan of Qi's confession here posed the difference of opinion between him and Mencius about the issue whether a king with fondness of valor could conduct relations with neighboring states with humaneness and wisdom (the confrontation stage).

Mencius, of course, would not stop here, as convincing state rulers of accepting his thoughts of kingcraft and humane governance was the primary objective of his travelling around from one state to another in the Warring States period (Xiong and Yan 2019, pp. 367—370; Yan 2022, pp. 99—132). So, Mencius split up the term "valor" into two new concepts—"small valor" and "great valor" by giving the example of an ordinary man's small valor, and quoting the ode about King Wen of the Zhou dynasty in *Book of Songs* as the example of great valor (the argumentation stage). The two examples show the very difference between small valor and great valor. That is, one with small valor can make him be "the adversary of just a single person", while one with great valor can make him confront the adversary of all the people in the world and hence bring benefit to all of them. In the case of the latter, according to Mencius's people-oriented ideology, a person with great valor is also one with humaneness.

At the end of the dialogue in Book 1B3, Mencius explicitly pointed out that if King Xuan of Qi could embrace great valor like King Wen of Zhou and bring peace to all the people in the world, his fondness of valor would not be a failing at all. Eventually Mencius responded to the previously posed issue with a positive but implicit standpoint that King Xuan of Qi could conduct relations with neighboring states with humaneness and wisdom despite his fondness of valor (the concluding stage). Mencius's argumentative discourse in Book 1B3 can be reconstructed as Fig. 5.

Figure 5 shows how Mencius refuted King Xuan of Qi's excuse of having a failing of valor fondness and thus being unable to conduct inter-state relations like what the ancient humane and wise rulers had done. Mencius's successful refutation relies upon his employment of the argumentational strategy of dissociation, by use of which the term "valor" in King Xuan of Qi's excuse was skillfully split up by Mencius into small valor and great valor. Mencius emphatically confirmed the specific role of great valor in King Xuan of Qi's fondness of a more generalized "valor", thus managing to expose where the desperation lies in King Xuan of Qi's evasive words, or *dunci*, appearing also at the confrontation stage of this round of critical discussion between King Xuan of Qi and Mencius.

(4) (King Xuan of Qi could conduct relations with neighboring states with humaneness and wisdom despite his fondness of valor.)

(4).1a King Xuan of Qi's fondness of great valor is not a failing at all.

(4).1a.(1a) (Different from small valor, a king's great valor can make him confront the adversary of all the people in the world and bring benefit to them.)

(4).1a.1b King Wen of Zhou's great valor helped him bring peace to all the people in the world in one burst of anger.

(4).(1b) (A person with great valor is one with humaneness.)

Fig 5 Argumentation against *dunci* in Book 1B3 of *Mencius*

Up to now, we can see that both Confucius and Mencius perceived that there exists an interrelation between speech and morality, as is elaborated in Sect. 2. Specifically, as for the founder and the advocator of Confucianism, both think that one's speech reflects the existence or non-existence of virtues like humaneness and righteousness in the speaker, that artful or sophistical talks may harm one's virtues, that a man of virtue should be cautious in speech, and that adverse speech without humaneness and righteousness embedded in should be corrected.

Such perception is especially embodied in the argumentative dialogues between Mencius and his interlocutors in the work *Mencius*. Those dialogues contain non-good words like *bici* (biased words), *yinci* (overblown words), *xieci* (deviant words), and *dunci* (evasive words), as Mencius named them. According to Mencius, the judging criterion for good words and non-good words is whether Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness is embedded in one's words and deeds. Mencius's argumentation for good words and against non-good words is also founded upon Confucian morality, in which Confucian moral metaphysics functions as "the body", and Confucian virtue and deontic ethic and practical ethic as "the two sides" attached to and extended from "the body", as is shown in Fig. 1 of Sect. 3.1.

Although in Book 3B9 of *Mencius*, Mencius denied his being fond of argument, which was alleged by outsiders in his time, he did have been trying to convince by means of argumentation the kings of the Warring States period like King Hui of Liang in Book 1A1 and King Xuan of Qi in Book 1B3, his disciples like Gongduzi in Book 3B9, and other interlocutors from different schools of thought like Jing Chun in Book3B2 and Bai Gui in Book 6B11, of discarding sophistical words (as is exemplified in Sect. 3.2) and accepting his own standpoints about practicing humaneness and righteousness. Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 reconstructed in Sect. 3.3 show how Mencius managed, on the basis of Confucian virtue ethic and practical ethic and by the skillful use of argumentational strategies like argument with a good slippery slope, argument by refutational analogy, and argument by dissociation, to conduct refutational argumentation in order to stop the said interlocutors' sophistical words. As Mencius has been playing the role of a protagonist to refute against others' sophistical words like *bici*, *yinci*, *xieci*, and *dunci*, in the exemplified

argumentation, those sophistical words all appear at the confrontation stages of the corresponding critical discussions.

4 The morality-In-Speech Notion of Reasonableness

From the relation between speech and Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness conveyed in the two Confucian classics—*The Analects of Confucius* and *Mencius,* which is explicated in Sect. 2, and the specific elaborations of how the Confucian morality is skillfully embedded in Mencius's argumentation against the four types of sophistical words in Sect. 3, we can extract a unique morality-in-speech notion of reasonableness for the current study of argumentation. To better understand this new variant of reasonableness conception, here are two aspects that need to be clarified.

4.1 Integration of Morality into Speech

As is illustrated in the previous sections, the morality-in-speech conception of reasonableness has been extracted from Confucian thoughts about speech and morality, especially about humaneness and righteousness, the virtue and deontic ethic advocated by Confucians.

Differing from the "argumentative virtues" as "standing dispositional character traits of arguers" (Aberdein and Cohen 2016, p. 340) in the virtue argumentation theory, which are thus concerned with how such epistemological virtues are related to argument construction and evaluation, Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness is more of a universal code of conduct to guide one's speech and deed, displaying not just an individual's self-cultivation with ethical virtues (humaneness) in practical deeds, but also one's obligation to shoulder social responsibilities for helping make a better world (righteousness). Besides, as is elaborated in Sect. 3.3, such morality is incorporated argumentatively into Mencius's—the protagonist's advice and expostulation to his interlocutors.

So, what is focused in the morality-in-speech notion of reasonableness here is not an arguer's morality or virtues, but how Confucian morality is integrated into speech in the dialectical manner and how such integration may put impact upon an individual's deeds and even the social development of a country, as is exhibited in Mencius's argumentation about rulers' practical governance. In short, the morality-in-speech conception of reasonableness is argumentation-based, which is not just (speech) act- nor agent-based, but an integration of an agent's morality into his argumentation, where the agent and his speech acts are interrelated.

4.2 Normativity of Confucian morality

As is claimed in the introduction of this paper, the Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness can be regarded as a universally endorsed code of conduct.

Such universality comes from the normativity of Confucian morality, which is derived from Mencius's argumentation about human nature. Mencius argues that apart from the physiological aspect, there exists a slight difference between human beings and birds and beasts, that the goodness inclination is inherent in human nature which differentiates human beings from birds and beasts, and that both humaneness and righteousness are embodiments of the inherent goodness inclination in human nature (Yan and Xiong 2019; Yan 2022, pp. 76—98).

The universality and normativity of Confucian morality can in turn make the unique reasonableness notion, which has been extracted originally from the Confucian classics, be represented as the general morality-in-speech notion of reasonableness, without the need to carry the modifier "Confucian" before the word "morality". In addition, under different cultural backgrounds, just like the Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness discussed in this paper, there may be other universally endorsed codes of conduct which may also be infused as an integral part into argumentation. In that case, "morality" itself in the morality-in-speech reasonableness conception can be understood as a universal term, thus without the need of a premodifier, either.

5 Conclusion

Based on the interrelation between speech and morality conveyed in the top two Confucian classics—*The Analects of Confucius* and *Mencius*, especially Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness, and by reconstructing Mencius's argumentative discourse and expounding specifically how Mencius refuted with argumentational strategies against what he claimed as the four types of sophistical words—*bici* (biased words), *yinci* (overblown words), *xieci* (deviant words), and *dunci* (evasive words) with the pragma-dialectical model of critical discussion as an analytical tool, this paper unveils a unique morality-in-speech conception of reasonableness in argumentation. It is noteworthy that Confucian morality of humaneness and righteousness is associated both with an individual's self-cultivation and with one's benefiting a society, that "morality" in the morality-in-speech conception of reasonableness can be a universal term without a premodifier, and that this newly elaborated morality-in-speech conception of reasonableness is argumentation oriented, which distinguishes itself from the agent-based virtue argumentation theory and the (speech) act-based pragma-dialectical theory by incorporating an agent's morality into his speech acts. Under the morality-in-speech reasonableness conception, the general criterion for reasonableness is whether argumentative speech acts align with the commonly endorsed morality or virtues under cultural contexts. Accordingly the specific evaluation criteria for reasonableness and fallacies must also be morality-related, where the context-independent codes of conduct for critical discussion proposed in the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation can be resorted to as an important foundation in the future research.

Appendix 1: Chinese-English Versions of Quotations from *The Analects of Confucius* and from *Mencius*

《论语》 “学而第一” (第3节) “Chapter One To learn and …” 1·3 of *The Analects.*
《论语》 “学而第一” (第14节) “Chapter One To learn and …” 1·14 of *The Analects.*
《论语》 “里仁第四” (第2节) “Chapter Four Neighborhood …”4·2 of *The Analects.*
《论语》 “公冶长第五”(第5节) “Chapter Five Gongye Chang” 5·5 of *The Analects.*
《论语》 “公冶长第五”(第25节) “Chapter Five Gongye Chang” 5·25 of *The Analects.*
《论语》 “雍也第六” (第30节) “Chapter Six Ran Yong …” 6·30 of *The Analects.*
《论语》 “颜渊第十二”(第2节) “Chapter Twelve Yan Yuan …” 12·2 of *The Analects.*
《论语》 “颜渊第十二”(第19节) “Chapter Twelve Yan Yuan …” 12·19 of *The Analects.*
《论语》 “宪问第十四”(第4节) “Chapter Fourteen Yuan Xian asked …” 14·4 of *The Analects.*
《论语》 “卫灵公第十五” (第27节) “Chapter Fifteen Prince Ling of Wei” 15·27 of *The Analects.*
《孟子》第一篇《梁惠王章句上》(第1章) Book 1A1 of *Mencius* (Chapter One, Part A of Book *King Hui of Liang*).
《孟子》第一篇《梁惠王章句下》(第3章) Book 1B3 of *Mencius* (Chapter Three, Part B of Book *King Hui of Liang*).
《孟子》第二篇《公孙丑章句上》(第2章) Book 2A2 of *Mencius* (Chapter Two, Part A of Book *Gongsun Chou*).
《孟子》第二篇《公孙丑章句上》(第6章) Book 2A6 of *Mencius* (Chapter Six, Part A of Book *Gongsun Chou*).
《孟子》第三篇《滕文公章句上》(第2章) Book 3A2 of Mencius (Chapter Two, Part A of Book *Duke Tengwen*).
《孟子》第三篇《滕文公章句下》(第2章) Book 3B2 of *Mencius* (Chapter Two, Part B of Book *Duke Tengwen*).
《孟子》第三篇《滕文公章句下》(第9章) Book 3B9 of *Mencius* (Chapter Nine, Part B of Book *Duke Tengwen*).
《孟子》第四篇《离娄章句上》(第10章) Book 4A10 of *Mencius* (Chapter Ten, Part A of Book *Lilou*).
《孟子》第六篇《告子章句下》(第11章) Book 6B11 of *Mencius* (Chapter Eleven, Part B of Book *Gaozi*).
《孟子》第七篇《尽心章句上》(第16章) Book 7A16 of *Mencius* (Chapter Sixteen, Part A of Book *Jinxin*).
《孟子》第七篇《尽心章句下》(第14章) Book 7B14 of *Mencius* (Chapter Fourteen, Part B of Book *Jinxin*).

《孟子》第七篇《尽心章句下》(第31章) Book 7B31 of *Mencius* (Chapter Thirty One, Part B of Book *Jinxin*).

- 《论语》 **"学而第一" (第3节)**

  子曰**: "**巧言令色**,** 鲜矣仁**!".**

- **"Chapter One To learn and …" 1·3 of The Analects.**

The Master said, "Artful words and flattering countenance have little to do with human goodness (*ren* 仁)." (Wu 2015, p. 54).

- 《论语》 **"学而第一" (第14节)**

  子曰: "君子食无求饱, 居无求安, 敏于事而慎于言, 就有道而正焉, 可谓好学而已。".

- **"Chapter One To learn and …" 1·14 of The Analects.**

The Master said, "A man of virtue does not seek to eat to his heart's content, or dwell in coziness. He is diligent in work and cautious in word. He keeps company with men of principle so as to rectify himself. Such a man may be said to love to learn." (Wu 2015, p. 62).

- 《论语》 **"里仁第四" (第2节)**

  子曰: "不仁者不可以久处约, 不可以长处乐。仁者安仁, 知者利仁。".

- **"Chapter Four Neighborhood …"4·2 of The Analects.**

The Master said, "The virtueless cannot live for long either in poverty or in enjoyment. The virtuous devote their minds to benevolent conducts; the wise make the most of their benevolent conducts." (Wu 2015, p. 109).

- 《论语》 **"公冶长第五"(第5节)**

  或曰: "雍也仁而不佞。"子曰: "焉用佞?御人以口给, 屡憎于人。不知其仁, 焉用佞?".

- **"Chapter Five Gongye Chang" 5·5 of The Analects.**

Someone said, "Ran Yong is benevolent but not eloquent."

The Master said, "What's the use of eloquence? Dealing with people with a glib tongue often begets resentment. I don't know whether Yong is truly benevolent, but what's the use of eloquence?" (Wu 2015, p. 129).

- 《论语》 **"公冶长第五"(第25节)**

  子曰: "巧言、令色、足恭, 左丘明耻之, 丘亦耻之。匿怨而友其人, 左丘明耻之, 丘亦耻之。".

- **"Chapter Five Gongye Chang" 5·25 of The Analects.**

The Master said, "Artful words, flattering looks and excessive respect are things that Zuoqiu Ming considers a shame, and I consider them a shame too. …" (Wu 2015, p. 149).

- 《论语》 **"雍也第六" (第30节)**

子贡曰: “如有博施于民而能济众, 何如?可谓仁乎?”子曰: “何事于仁? 必也圣乎!尧舜其犹病诸。夫仁者, 己欲立而立人, 己欲达而达人。能近取譬, 可谓仁之方也已。”.

• **“Chapter Six Ran Yong …” 6·30 of The Analects.**

Zigong said, “Let’s suppose there is a man who extensively benefits the people and offers aid to all. What do you think of him? Can we say he is perfectly virtuous?”.

“How can he be just perfectly virtuous?” said the Master. “He surely can be called a sage! Even Yao and Shun worried that he might not make it. Such is a perfectly virtuous man: while he strives to gain his footing in society, he should also help others to gain theirs; while he strives to seek his accomplishments, he should also help others to seek theirs. And in doing that, he puts himself in other people’s place. Such is the way to moral perfection.” (Wu 2015, p. 178).

• 《论语》 **“颜渊第十二”(第2节)**

仲弓问仁。子曰: “出门如见大宾, 使民如承大祭; 己所不欲, 勿施于人; 在邦无怨, 在家无怨。”…….

• **“Chapter Twelve Yan Yuan …” 12·2 of The Analects.**

When Zhonggong asked about how to be up to benevolence (*ren*仁), the Master said, “It should be that when you are out on business, behave sincerely as if receiving an important guest, that when you employ the people, act as if conducting a great sacrifice, that you should never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself, and that you will not beget enmity whether in your state or in your feudality.” … (Wu 2015, p. 297).

• 《论语》 **“颜渊第十二” (第19节)**

……孔子对曰: “……君子之德风, 小人之德草。草上之风, 必偃。”.

• **“Chapter Twelve Yan Yuan …” 12·19 of The Analects.**

… The Master said, “… The moral influence of the superior is like the wind while the moral inclination of the inferior is like grass. When the wind blows, the grass will bend.” (Wu 2015, p. 312).

• 《论语》 **“宪问第十四”(第4节)**

子曰: “有德者必有言, 有言者不必有德。仁者必有勇, 勇者不必有仁。”.

• **“Chapter Fourteen Yuan Xian asked …” 14·4 The Analects.**

The Master said, “The virtuous people will surely have their famous sayings, but those who have their famous sayings are not necessarily virtuous. …” (Wu 2015, p. 348).

• 《论语》 **“卫灵公第十五” (第27节)**

子曰: “巧言乱德。小不忍则乱大谋。”.

• **“Chapter Fifteen Prince Ling of Wei” 15·27 of The Analects**.

The Master said, “Artful talks ruin one’s virtue. A lack of forbearance in small matters spoils a great plan.” (Wu 2015, p. 410).

- 《孟子》第一篇《梁惠王章句上》(第**1**章)

  孟子见梁惠王。王曰: “叟!不远千里而来, 亦将有以利吾国乎?”.
  孟子对曰: “王!何必曰利?亦有仁义而已矣。王曰 ‘何以利吾国?’大夫曰: ‘何以利吾家?’士庶人曰: ‘何以利吾身?’上下交征利而国危矣。万乘之国, 弑其君者, 必千乘之家; 千乘之国, 弑其君者, 必百乘之家。万取千焉, 千取百焉, 不为不多矣。苟为后义而先利, 不夺不餍。未有仁而遗其亲者也, 未有义而后其君者也。王亦曰仁义而已矣, 何必曰利?”.

- **Book 1A1 of Mencius (Chapter One, Part A of Book King Hui of Liang)**

Mencius met with King Hui of Liang.

The king said, “**Venerable sir, you have not considered a thousand li too far to come. Surely you have some means to profit our state?**”.

Mencius replied: “**Why must the king speak of profit? I have only [teachings concerning] humaneness and rightness**. If the king says, ‘How can I profit my state?’ the officers will say, ‘How can I profit my house?’ and the gentlemen and the common people will say, ‘How can I profit myself?’ Those above and those below will compete with one another for profit, and the state will be imperiled. One who murders the ruler over a state of ten thousand chariots surely will be from a house of a thousand chariots; one who murders the ruler over a state of a thousand chariots surely will be from a house of a hundred chariots. A share of a thousand in ten thousand or a hundred in a thousand is hardly negligible; yet, when rightness is subordinated to profit the urge to lay claim to more becomes irresistible. It has never happened that one given to humaneness abandons his parents, nor that one given to rightness subordinates the interests of his lord. Let the king speak only of humaneness and rightness. What need has he to speak of profit?” (Mencius 2009, p. 1).

- 《孟子》第一篇《梁惠王章句下》(第**3**章)

  齐宣王问曰: “交邻国有道乎?”.
  孟子对曰: “有。惟仁者为能以大事小, 是故汤事葛, 文王事昆夷。惟智者为能以小事大, 故太王事獯鬻, 勾践事吴。以大事小者, 乐天者也; 以小事大者, 畏天者也。乐天者保天下, 畏天者保其国。《诗》云: ‘畏天之威, 于时保之。’”.
  王曰: “大哉言矣!寡人有疾, 寡人好勇。”.
  对曰: “王请无好小勇。夫抚剑疾视曰: ‘彼恶敢当我哉!’此匹夫之勇, 敌一人者也。王请大之!
  “《诗》云: ‘王赫斯怒, 爰整其旅, 以遏徂莒, 以笃周祜, 以对于天下。’此文王之勇也。文王一怒而安天下之民。.
  “《书》曰: ‘天降下民, 作之君, 作之师, 惟曰其助上帝宠之。四方有罪无罪惟我在, 天下曷敢有越厥志?’一人衡行于天下, 武王耻之。此武王之勇也。而武王亦一怒而安天下之民。今王亦一怒而安天下之民, 民惟恐王之不好勇也。”

- **Book 1B3 of Mencius (Chapter Three, Part B of Book King Hui of Liang)**

King Xuan of Qi asked, “*Is there a way of conducting relations with neighboring states?*”.

Mencius replied, "*There is. But only one who is humane is able to serve a small state with a large one, as was the case when Tang served Ge and King Wen served the Kun tribes. Only the wise are able to serve a large state with a small one, as was the case when Tai Wang served the Xunyu and Goujian served Wu. One who with a large state serves a small one delights in Heaven, while one who with a small state serves a large one is in awe of Heaven. Through delighting in Heaven one preserves all-under-Heaven, and through being in awe of Heaven one preserves his state. The ode says,*

Being in awe of the majesty of Heaven, I thus preserve it."

The king said, *"How great are these words!* **But I have a failing. I am fond of valor.**"

Mencius replied, "Let the king not be fond of small valor. One who grasps his sword, stares menacingly, and says, 'How dare he confront me!' is displaying the valor of an ordinary man who is able to be the adversary of just one person. Let the king be greater than that. The ode says,

> The king, his anger blazing,
> Led forth and ordered his troops.
> To repel the march on Ju,
> To reclaim the blessings of Zhou,
> To respond to all-under-Heaven.
> This was the valor of King Wen. In one burst of anger King Wen brought peace to all the people in the world.

… Now Your Majesty should also, in one burst of anger, bring peace to all the people in the world. The people are only afraid that you are *not* fond of valor." (Mencius 2009, pp. 15–16).

- 《孟子》第二篇《公孙丑章句上》(第**2**章)

  (公孙丑问曰:) "敢问夫子恶乎长?".
  (孟子) 曰: "我知言, 我善养吾浩然之气。".
  …….
  (公孙丑问曰:) "何谓知言?".
  (孟子) 曰: "诐辞知其所蔽, 淫辞知其所陷, 邪辞知其所离, 遁辞知其所穷。生于其心, 害于其政; 发于其政, 害于其事。圣人复起, 必从吾言矣。".

- **Book 2A2 of Mencius (Chapter Two, Part A of Book Gongsun Chou)**

….
(Gongsun Chou asked,) "May I presume to ask you, Master, in what do you excel?".
(Mencius said,) "I understand words. I am good at nourishing my vast, flowing *qi*."
….
(Gongsun Chou asked,) "What is meant by 'understanding words'?".

(Mencius said,) “From distorted words, one knows the obscuration; from licentious words, one knows the corruption; from deviant words, one knows the waywardness; from evasive words, one knows the desperation. What is born in the mind does damage to government, and what arises in government does damage to the conduct of affairs. If a sage were to arise again, he would certainly follow my words.” … (Mencius 2009, pp. 30–31).

- 《孟子》第二篇《公孙丑章句上》(第**6**章)

  孟子曰: “人皆有不忍人之心。先王有不忍人之心, 斯有不忍人之政矣。以不忍人之心, 行不忍人之政, 治天下可运之掌上。……恻隐之心, 仁之端也; 羞恶之心, 义之端也; 辞让之心, 礼之端也; 是非之心, 智之端也。人之有是四端也, 犹其有四体也。……”.

- **Book 2A6 of Mencius (Chapter Six, Part A of Book Gongsun Chou)**

Mencius said, “All human beings have a mind that cannot bear to see the sufferings of others. The ancient kings had such a commiserating mind and, accordingly, a commiserating government. Having a commiserating mind, and effecting a commiserating government, governing the world was like turning something around on the palm of the hand. ….

The mind’s feeling of pity and compassion is the sprout of humaneness [*ren* 仁]; the mind’s feeling of shame and aversion is the sprout of rightness [*yi* 義]; the mind’s feeling of modesty and compliance is the sprout of propriety [*li* 禮]; and the mind’s sense of right and wrong is the sprout of wisdom [*zhi* 智].

Human beings have these four sprouts just as they have four limbs….”(Mencius 2009, pp.35–36).

- 《孟子》第三篇《滕文公章句上》(第**2**章)

  孟子曰: “……上有好者, 下必有甚焉者矣。君子之德, 风也; 小人之德, 草也。草尚之风, 必偃。是在世子。”.

- **Book 3A2 of Mencius (Chapter Two, Part A of Book Duke Tengwen)**

… Mencius said, “… What the one above loves, those below will care for still more deeply. ‘The Virtue of the noble person is like the wind, and the Virtue of small people is like grass. When the wind blows over the grass, the grass must bend.’ Everything depends on the prince.” … (Mencius 2009, pp. 50—51).

- 《孟子》第三篇《滕文公章句下》(第**2**章)

  景春曰: “公孙衍、张仪岂不诚大丈夫哉?一怒而诸侯惧, 安居而天下熄。”.
  孟子曰: “是焉得为大丈夫乎?子未学礼乎?丈夫之冠也, 父命之; 女子之嫁也, 母命之, 往送之门, 戒之曰: ‘往之女家, 必敬必戒, 无违夫子!’以顺为正者, 妾妇之道也。居天下之广居, 立天下之正位, 行天下之大道。得志, 与民由之, 不得志, 独行其道。富贵不能淫, 贫贱不能移, 威武不能屈。此之谓大丈夫。”.

- **Book 3B2 of Mencius (Chapter Two, Part B of Book Duke Tengwen)**

Jing Chun said, "Truly, Gongsun Yan and Zhang Yi were great men, were they not? When they were angry, the lords would tremble in fear; when they dwelled in peace, the fires of conflict throughout the world were extinguished."

Mencius said, "How can they be considered great men? Have you, sir, not studied the Book of Rituals? When a man is capped, his father gives him orders. When a woman is married, her mother gives her orders, accompanying her to the door and cautioning her, 'You are going to your home. You must be reverent; you must be cautious. Do not disobey your husband.' To consider compliance to be correct is the way of women. One who dwells in the wide house of the world, occupies his proper place in the world, and carries out the great Way of the world: when he is able to realize his intentions, carries them out for the sake of the people of the world, and when he cannot realize them, practices the Way alone. He cannot be led astray by riches and honor, moved by poverty and privation, or deflected by power or force. This is what I call a great man." (Mencius 2009, p. 62).

- 《孟子》第三篇《公孙丑章句下》(第**9**章)

公都子曰: "外人皆称夫子好辩, 敢问何也?".
孟子曰: "予岂好辩哉?予不得已也。天下之生久矣, 一治一乱。……
杨墨之道不息, 孔子之道不著, 是邪说诬民, 充塞仁义也。仁义充塞, 则率兽食人, 人将相食。吾为此惧。闲先圣之道, 距杨墨, 放淫辞, 邪说者不得作。….
无父无君, 是周公所膺也。我亦欲正人心, 息邪说, 距诐行, 放淫辞, 以承三圣者; 岂好辩哉?予不得已也。能言距杨墨者, 圣人之徒也.

- **Book 3B9 of Mencius (Chapter Nine, Part B of Book Gongsun Chou)**

Gongduzi said, "**Outsiders all say that the Master is fond of argument. I venture to ask why?**".

Mencius said, "**How should I be fond of argument? I am compelled to do it.** *A long time has passed since the world came into being, and periods of order have alternated with periods of chaos. …*

If the ways of Yang and Mo are not stopped, and the way of Confucius is not made known, the people will be deceived by these deviant views, and the path of humaneness and rightness will be blocked. When the path of humaneness and rightness is blocked, animals are led to devour people, and people will be led to devour one another. I am fearful about this and defend the way of the former Sage by resisting Yang and Mo and banishing their licentious words. ….

As the Duke of Zhou would have chastised those who denied fathers and rulers, I, too, want to correct people's minds, to stop deviant speech, to resist perverse actions, to banish licentious words, and so to carry on the work of the three Sages. In what way am I fond of argument? I am compelled to do it. Whoever can resist Yang and Mo with words is a follower of the Sage." (Mencius 2009, pp. 68—71).

- 《孟子》第四篇《离娄章句上》(第**10**章)

孟子曰: “自暴者, 不可与有言也; 自弃者, 不可与有为也。言非礼义, 谓之自暴也; 吾身不能居仁由义, 谓之自弃也。仁, 人之安宅也; 义, 人之正路也。旷安宅而弗居, 舍正路而不由, 哀哉!”.

• **Book 4A10 of Mencius (Chapter Ten, Part A of Book Lilou)**

Mencius said, “With those who do violence to themselves, one cannot speak, nor can one interact with those who throw themselves away. To deny propriety and rightness in one’s speech is what is called ‘doing violence to oneself.’ To say, ‘I am unable to abide in humaneness or to follow rightness’ is what is called ‘throwing oneself away.’ For human beings, humaneness is the peaceful dwelling, and rightness is the correct path. To abandon the peaceful dwelling and not abide in it and to reject the right road and not follow it—how lamentable!” (Mencius 2009, p. 79).

• 《孟子》第六篇《告子章句下》**(第11章)**

白圭曰: “丹之治水也愈于禹。”.
孟子曰: “子过矣。禹之治水, 水之道也, 是故禹以四海为壑。今吾子以邻国为壑。水逆行谓之洚水——洚水者, 洪水也——仁人之所恶也。吾子过矣。”.

• **Book 6B11 of Mencius (Chapter Eleven, Part B of Book Gaozi)**

Bai Kui said, “**When it comes to water control, I am better than Yu**.”

Mencius said, “**Sir, you are mistaken**. Yu’s control of water followed the Way of water. Therefore, he channeled it into the four seas, whereas you, sir, channel it into neighboring states. When water overflows its course, it is called a deluge, and a deluge is a flood—something that a humane man detests. Sir, you are mistaken.” (Mencius 2009, p. 141).

• 《孟子》第七篇《尽心章句上》**(第16章)**

孟子曰: “舜之居深山之中, 与木石居, 与鹿豕游, 其所以异于深山之野人者几希; 及其闻一善言, 见一善行, 若决江河, 沛然莫之能御也。”.

• **Book 7A16 of Mencius (Chapter Sixteen, Part A of Book Jinxin)**

Mencius said, “When Shun was living deep in the mountains, dwelling together with trees and rocks and wandering together with deer and swine, the difference between him and the rustic people who dwelled deep in the mountains was quite small. But when he heard a single good good or observed a single good action, it was like a river in flood or a spring flowing forth—nothing could contain it.” (Mencius 2009, p. 147).

• 《孟子》第七篇《尽心章句下》**(第14章)**

孟子曰: “民为贵, 社稷次之, 君为轻。……”.

• **Book 7B14 of Mencius (Chapter Fourteen, Part B of Book Jinxin)**

Mencius said, “The people are of greatest importance, the altars of the soil and grain are next, and the ruler is of least importance. …” (Mencius 2009, p. 159).

- 《孟子》第七篇《尽心章句下》**(第31章)**

  孟子曰: “人皆有所不忍, 达之于其所忍, 仁也; 人皆有所不为, 达之于其所为, 义也。人能充无欲害人之心, 而仁不可胜用也; 人能充无穿逾之心, 而义不可胜用也; 人能充无受尔汝之实, 无所往而不为义也。士未可以言而言, 是以言餂之也; 可以言而不言, 是以不言餂之也, 是皆穿逾之类也。”.

- **Book 7B31 of Mencius (Chapter Thirty One, Part B of Book Jinxin)**

Mencius said, “All human beings have that which they cannot bear. Getting this attitude to reach to what they can bear is humaneness. All human beings have that which they will not do. Getting this attitude to reach to that which they will do is rightness. When human beings are able to bring to fulfillment the mind that desires not to harm others, their humaneness is inexhaustible, and when they are able to bring to fulfillment the mind that refuses to break through or to jump over a wall, their rightness is inexhaustible. If they can bring to fulfillment their reluctance to accept unsuitable modes of address,20 there will be no place in which they fail to manifest rightness. If a scholar speaks of something about which he was not to have spoken in order to gain some advantage by speaking, or if he fails to speak of something about which he might have spoken in order to gain some advantage from not speaking, this is in both cases like breaking through or jumping over the wall.” (Mencius 2009, p. 163).

Funding The study is supported and funded by China National Social Sciences Foundation Project “Logic in Mencius’s Speech and Argumentation” (Grant No. 23BZX023).

Declarations

Conflict of interest The author declares that there is no conflict of interest relating to the article “A Morality-in-Speech Notion of Reasonableness”.

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