Arguments from Translated Chinese Classics

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ABSTRACT: This paper presents a selection of commented argumentative passages from classical Chinese texts. The first section is devoted to the elements that characterize the argumentative situation: the contradiction between two points of view, the necessity of controversy, the choice of partner and the rules of dialogue. The second section focuses on argumentation schemes, analogy, a fortiori, opposites, pragmatic argumentation. This collection is the draft of an open album of commented Chinese passages, intended as a companion to the *Dictionary of Argumentation* (Plantin 2018).

KEYWORDS: a fortiori, ad hominem, analogy, argumentation in classical China, contradiction, controversy, empirical universals, opposites, pragmatic argument, rules for dialogues

1. ATTEMPT TO WORK WITH TRANSLATED CHINESE DATA

Some scholars of argumentation who are not specialists in Greek and Latin languages routinely access Greek and Latin literature through translated texts: why should, we not do the same with Chinese texts? The analogy may be risky: the Western concept of argumentation has been shaped by Latin and Greek cultures, which are foundational parts of Western culture, not by Chinese classics. Nonetheless, it's relatively easy to find passages from translated Chinese texts that correspond to what the Western tradition considers to be distinct argumentative facts, including the basic argumentation schemes. For example, *contradiction* and *dialogue* are defining features of the prototypical argumentative situations, and *a fortiori* is a recognizable form of argumentation.

Accordingly, this article is divided into two main parts. After some considerations on the question of an argumentative practice that is not based on a logical theory of argumentation, the first section is devoted to some elements that characterize the argumentative situation: the contradiction between two points of view, the necessity of controversy, the selection of a partner and the rules of dialogue. The second section focuses on argumentation schemes, analogy, a fortiori, opposites, pragmatic argument. These selected examples are the draft of an open album of Chinese data, intended as a companion to the *Dictionary of Argumentation* (Plantin 2022).

1.2 The question of translation

Some translations are epochal, such as William of Moerbeke's Latin translations of Aristotle:

> These versions are so faithful to Aristotle's text that they are authorities on the corrections of the Greek manuscripts, and they enabled Thomas Aquinas to become a supreme interpreter of Aristotle without knowing Greek.
> Allan Bloom, "Preface" to his translation of Plato's *Republic*, 1968, p. xi.

Without systematically aspiring to such heights, the interested reader can easily obtain reliable translations of many classical Chinese texts. The price to be paid is that, strictly speaking, this illiterate reader cannot study "argument in Chinese (classical texts)", "such and such an argument in the *Analects* of Confucius", but only "such and such an argument in such and such a translation in the *Analects* of Confucius". If necessary, the reference to "Eno's translation of the *Analects* of Confucius" can be abbreviated as: "*Analects$_{Eno}$*" with the translator's name in subscript.

In the case of major titles, several translations of the same text are available, which makes it possible to identify their differences and similarities, if necessary. In this case, one should consider that the different translations of the same passage express different readings, different ways of reasoning.

Sometimes, the translation(s) of the passages remain unclear or incompatible. In this case, comments can be left for a better future or for better readers. After all, this is also the case for texts in the analyst's own language and culture.

1.3 Empirical universals

This leads to the hypothesis of universals in argumentation theory. The degree of universality of an argumentative phenomenon is not determined by a priori considerations, but is an empirical fact that can be inferred by collecting data that 1) come from a variety of languages and cultures 2) can be clearly assigned to the same concept. For example, since occurrences of the a fortiori argument pattern can be found in Jewish culture, Arab- Muslim culture, Western culture, and Chinese culture (see infra), it can be inferred that a fortiori has a high degree of universality.

2. ARGUMENTATIVE   SITUATION

2.1 Argumentation practice without argumentation theory

This section is based on A. C. Graham's views on the Chinese way of argumentation, as presented in his *Disputers of the Tao. Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (1989). Speaking of the Moists, Graham writes (1989, p. 168):

> Although well aware of the difficulties of relating names to objects in the art of discourse, [the Moist] seems to see the lucid and self-evident relations between names as raising no theoretical problems. Chinese civilization never abstracted the forms in which we observe it reasoning in practice, as in this curiously familiar-sounding syllogism of Wang Ch'ung: Man is a thing: though honored as king or noble, by nature he is no different from other things. No thing does not die, how can man be immortal?[1]

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[1] Wang Chu'ng = Wang Chong, *Lun Heng* — *Philosophical Essays*, ch.24; trad. Forke V,I, 335f. (Note Graham). Wang Chong, 27 – c. 97 AD, "developed a rational, secular, naturalistic and mechanistic view of the world and man, and gave a materialistic explanation of the origin of the universe" (Wikipedia).

Wang Ch'ung uses a valid syllogism, that combines true propositions to arrive at a sound conclusion, "Humans are beings, no being is immortal, no human is immortal." In the unfriendly language of traditional logic, this reasoning is described as a syllogism of the fourth figure, said Galenic, and in the Camenes mode: "all H is B; no B is I; therefore no H is I."

Wang Ch'ung presents this incontrovertible conclusion as a so-called "rhetorical" question, which is a challenge to any opponent (Toulmin, 1958, p. 97); this introduces a dialectical movement within syllogistic reasoning.

Graham attributes to Mozi's disciples[2], "a sense of rigorous proof [combined with] a disregard for logical forms". (1989, p. 169). An analogy can be drawn from language and grammar. According to specialists, the ancient Chinese had no grammar[3]; *and* they certainly spoke excellent Chinese. By the same token, they did not develop a logic (an art of reasoning), *and* they argued very well. In other words, it is not necessary to have a clear view of what is a valid and sound argument, in order to master an effective practice of such arguments.

Let us admit that this conclusion can (a fortiori?) be generalized to non-syllogistic forms of argumentation: A theory of argumentation is not a prerequisite for an effective practice of argumentation. One can develop a clear idea and an effective critical argumentative practice without formalization, that is, without developing a a logical meta-language about the process of argumentation, and the correlative critical operations.

It follows that the teaching of argumentation can do without argumentation theory. Western-style theories of argumentation are not essential to the coherent articulation of ideas. Argumentation can be taught by showing and discussing paradigmatic examples of argument. Such examples can be paraphrased, denied, contradicted, generalized; their presuppositions and implications can be explored without ever leaving the level of natural discourse.

3.2 Contradiction

The principle of non-contradiction is at the root of reasoning. Everyday argumentation could be defined as a style of conversation in which the principle of coherence applies: If you hold incompatible things in different contexts, you owe the other participants an explanation; if you hold incompatible things in the same context, you make conversation impossible, we have to stop it

The following case appeals to the self-coherence of feelings (Leslie 1964):

> 12.10 Zizhang asked about […] discerning confusion. The Master said […] When one cherishes a person, one wishes him to live; when one hates a person, one wishes him to die – on the one hand cherishing and wishing him life, while on the other hating and wishing him death: that is confusion.

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[2] Mozi (c. 479 - c.392 B.C.), eponymous author of the work *Mozi*.

[3] "In ancient China, a few centuries before the Christian era, linguistic reflection had already begun to produce excellent results: we find important reflections on the nature of language, very elaborate dictionaries, systems of phonological description and dialectology. However, [...] the analysis of grammatical structures is practically absent. Apart from an enormous production of studies on individual words or groups of words, there is almost nothing on the organic description of language" (Casacchia, 1989, p. 431).

> *Truly, it is not a matter of riches, Indeed, it is simply about discernment. (Analects_{Eno}, 12)*

Like self-contradiction, interpersonal contradiction demands clarification. Disagreement stimulates intellectual activity. Confucius says that he prefers disagreement:

> *The Master said*, Hui is of no help to me. There is nothing in my words that fails to please him. (*Analects_{Eno}*, 11, 4)

But it is unpleasant for a teacher to be critically confronted with its own teaching:

> Zilu appointed Zigao to be the steward of Bi.
> *The Master said* "You are stealing another man's son!"
> *Zilu said*, "There are people there; there are altars of state there – why must one first read texts and only then be considered learned?"
> *The Master said*, "This is why I detest glib talkers!" (*Analects_{Eno}*, 11, 25)

> *Note Eno*: Zilu seems to be invoking lessons Confucius himself taught, much like the ideas in 1.6-7, to confound Confucius himself, which is the basis of Confucius's response.
> *Analects_{Eno}*, 1.7, Zixia said: If a person treats worthy people as worthy and so alters his expression, exerts all his effort when serving his parents, exhausts himself when serving his lord, and is trustworthy in keeping his word when in the company of friends, though others may say he is not yet learned, I would call him learned.

In this last passage (1,7), Confucius characterizes a learned person by his correct behavior toward worthy people, his parents, his lord, his friends, and seems to attach only secondary importance to reading texts. In 11, 25 Zilu - a very bold disciple of Confucius - reminds him of his former position.

2.3 Necessity of controversy

Disputation is central to the period of the *Hundred Schools of Thought,* which flourished during the periods known as the "Spring and Autumn" and the "Warring States," from the 779 to 221 BC.

The philosopher Mencius (Mengzi, 372-289 BC), a disciple of Confucius, justifies his practice of disputation as a necessity if one wants to preserve the truth in times of proliferation of systems of thought, which, according to Mengzi, endanger the true,

> *Gongduzi said*, Master, outsiders all say you are fond of disputation. What do you say to that?'
> *Mencius said*, How could it be that I am fond of disputation? I simply have no choice. The world has existed for a long time, now in order, now in chaos. In the time of Yao, the waters ran awry and flooded the central states; eels and dragons dwelt there and the people had no security. [...]
> But after the deaths of Yao and Shun the Dao of the sages declined and tyrants arose one after another. They leveled homes in order to create their pleasure ponds and the people had no place to rest. They took fields out of cultivation to create their pleasure parks and the people had no way to eat. And then there arose errant teachings and patterns of violent conduct. [...]

But no sage king has arisen [after Confucius]. The lords of the states act with abandon and gentlemen in retirement proclaim deviant doctrines. The words of Yang Zhu and Mo Di fill the world such that those who do not preach the doctrines of Yang Zhu preach those of Mozi. The maxim of the Yangists is '*Each for himself*,' a world of men without rulers; the maxim of the Mohists is '*universal love*,' a world of men without fathers. To know no father and no ruler – this is to be nothing but a beast! […] If the *dao*s of Yang and Mo don't cease and the Dao of Confucius is not clear to all, then deviant doctrines will deceive the people and humanity and righteousness will be blocked. To block out humanity and righteousness is to lead the beasts and devour the people, and the people will be led to eat one another.
This is why I am alarmed, and why I defend the Dao of the past sages and confront Yangists and Mohists, driving out depraved speech so that errant doctrines will no longer flourish. (*Mencius*$_{Eno}$ 3B.9)

In this passage, "disputation" is not used as a tool to find a common superior truth, but to eradicate the "bad doctrines" of the opponents.

2.4 Rules for selecting the dialogue partner

In the first chapter of his complete text, "*An exhortation to learning*", the philosopher Xunzi (3rd century BC) proposes the following rules of "discussion" (our numbering and presentation),

Donotansweronewho asksaboutsomething improper. (1)
Do not ask questions ofonewho speakson something improper. (2)
Do notlisten to one who tries to persuade you ofsomething improper. (3) Do
not debate with a person of combative demeanor. (4); cf (7))
Only if people approach you in the proper way should you receive them. If they do not
approach you in the proper way, then avoid them. (5)
And so, only if they follow ritual and are reverent should you discuss the methods of the Way
with them. (6)
Only if their speech is calm should you discuss the pattern of the Way with them. (7); cf. (4)
Only if their countenance is agreeable should you discuss the culmination of the Way with
them. (8)

To discuss these things with those unfit to discuss them is called being presumtuous. (10) Not
to discuss these things with those fit to discuss them is called being secretive. (11)
To discuss these things without first observing the person's manner and countenance is called
being blind. (12)
The gentleman is neither presumptuousnorsecretive norblind; he carefully acts according to the
other person's character. The *Odes* says: *The gentlemen are not indolent or haughty
/Rewarded by the Son of Heaven shall they be.* (*Xunzi*$_{Hutton}$, p. 6-7)

These recommendations are addressed to the *junzi*, the wise man who is already well along the Way of learning, and who is sollicited by a prospective student to admit him among his disciples. The candidate must pass an entrance interview. Principles (1)-(4) eliminate candidates on the basis of what they say (1-3); how they behave (4), (7);

especially, how they make contact (5); and, to top it all, a *je-ne-sais-quoi* in their "countenance", (8).

In classical Western culture, is *proper* what is said or done according to the fuzzy rules of decorum, basically, what is "controlled, calm and polite" (Cambridge, *decorum*), but not only formally: propriety involves prudence and decency. In classical Chinese culture, *propriety* in speech and behavior is defined by the rules of the ritual, *li*. Every human action is governed by *li*, that is, are becomes what we call a ceremony, including drinking alcohol, drinking tea, or meeting a Master.

Common Western systems of rules for argumentative dialogue do not mention such restrictions on discussants (Plantin 2022, *Rules*), with the exception of Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958), who also do not allow just any argument partner:

> There are beings with whom all contact may seem superfluous or undesirable; there are beings with whom we do not wish to speak; there are also some with whom we do not wish to argue, but are content to order. (1958, p. 20)

3. ARGUMENTATION   SCHEMES

3.1 Argument schemes and means of persuasion

Toulmin, Rieke, Janik distinguish nine forms of argumentation, «most frequently to be met with in practical situations" (1984, p. 147-155),

Analogy	Dilemma	Generalization
Classification	Sign	Opposites
Cause	Degree[4]	Authority

Levi (1992) considers that the essential rhetorical *means of persuasion* used in Chinese are metaphor — analogy — example — quoting an authority.

Quoting an authority comes with the argument from authority. Metaphor comes with the argument from analogy, which is common to both lists. Examples can be associated with a number of argumentative operations. Examples are associated with any law, according to the *type / occurrence* principle. *Generalizations* are based on one or more cases or examples. A *paradigmatic example* has the value of a general law. *Precedents* are memorable examples that function as rules. In addition, examples function as crucial cases that disprove a proposed law or *generalization* (*The N are blue - Yes, but that one is red*). As *anecdotes*, examples can have the most persuasive power in everyday argumentation; when they involve the speaker's credibility, they are conversationally untouchable, armored against rebuttal: any tentative refutation becomes a personal attack and ruins the conversation.

In what follows, we will suggest some passages from classical Chinese texts as instances of some of these argument schemes.

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[4] In the argument from degree, "The different properties of a given thing are presumed to vary in step with one another" (*id*., p. 155).

3.2 From category to name, to definition, to classification to syllogism

Objects are categorized, named and defined on the basis of their *common properties* (what brings them together?) and their *specific properties* (what distinguishes them from beings of other kinds?). **A** classification is a set of categories organized according to their degree of generality, increasing (down-top) or decreasing (top-down). The use of syllogism assumes that different objects have first been categorized and named, and then, grouped together in a systematic classification. Until the development of mathematics with its application to the experimental sciences and the emergence of formal logic, the theory of definition and classification served as an introduction to logical reasoning, i.e, scientific reasoning.

Categorization and the organization of categories into classifications characterize what Lévi-Strauss calls "the science of the concrete," a fundamental science shared by all human beings (1962], ch. 1), and the basis of ordinary argumentation.

The correct naming of things is the basis of Confucian teaching. Human beings have a tendency to misuse names, resulting in a misapprehension of the world and the destruction of all social organization. It follows that the first duty of a ruler is "to rectify names". A father who *does not act* as a father *is not* a father, and *should not be called* "father".

> Zilu said, «If the ruler of Wei were to entrust you with governance of his state, what would be your first priority?"
> The Master said, «Most certainly, it would be to rectify names." [*Analects$_{Eno}$*, 13.3)

> Duke Jing of Qi asked Confucius about governance. Confucius replied, «Let the ruler be ruler, ministers ministers, fathers fathers, sons sons." (*id*., 12.11)

> 6.25 The Master said, A gourd that is not a gourd – is it a gourd? Is it a gourd? (*id*., 6.25)

3.3 Analogy

The following passage may be taken as a paradigmatic case of analogy,
> The wise man who has charge of governing the empire should know the cause of disorder before he can put it in order. 2. Unless he knows its cause, he cannot regulate it.
> 3. It is similar to the problem of a physician who is attending a patient.
> 4. He has to know the cause of the ailment before he can cure it. 5. Unless he knows its cause, he cannot cure it.
> 6. How is the situation different for him who is to regulate disorder? 7. He too has to know the cause of the disorder before he can regulate it. 8. Unless he knows its cause, he cannot regulate it.
> 9. The wise man who has charge of governing the empire must, then, investigate the cause of disorder.
>
> *Mozi$_{MEI}$, Universal Love 4, I.*
> The passage is translated as one sole paragraph; our numbering and disposition.

The demonstration takes place in two stages, the first justifying the thesis and the second confirming that no one dares to answer it. No rebuttal is mentioned.

Positive argumentation

— *Claim:* (1) and (2) state the thesis

    (1)   To put the government in order = **O**

           To know the cause of the disorder = **C**

Proposition (1) expresses a necessary condition (NC):

    For **O** (to put the government in order), **C** (to know the cause of the disorder) is
    necessary

Which is noted: **O => C** (**O** requires, implies **C**).

(2) reformulates the thesis:

    (1) **C** is a NC of **O** = (2) non-**C** implies non-**O.**

— *Warrant*: Elucidation of the argumentation scheme, (3) announces that the thesis will be proved by
an argument by analogy. *Warrant*: "is similar to"; implicit *backing*: the traditional
assimilation of the "human body" to the "social body".

— *Argument*

Source domain: *Medicine*. (4) presents a fact (as) known and admitted by all.

The structure of the argument strictly follows the structure of the thesis by substituting *the doctor*
(*who repairs the human body*) for *the wise man* (*who seeks how to repair human society*).

The modes of sentence construction are identical. The presentation of the analogy as a
parallel case pushes the similarity to identity.

The search for a refutation

A test of the validity of the analogy follows in the form of a rhetorical question, (5),
interpreted as a challenge to a possible opponent, who is given the floor to show that the
analogy is invalid. Question (5) remaining unanswered, this maneuver concludes with an
argument from ignorance.

The argumentation repeats (reinforces, confirms) the essential element of the
argument, the claim: (6) and (7) repeat word for word (1) and (2). This introduces into the
reasoning an element of rhetorical persuasion (epikeirema) into the argumentation.

(8) repeats the thesis by replacing the expression "must know" (1) with "must
investigate", the first step on the way to knowledge. *To investigate* and *to know* must not be
understood in their contemporary sense. .

The same idea of argumentation scheme can be understood in two equivalent
ways.

- *In intension*, as an abstract, logico-semantic form expressing the essence of reasoning. The
scheme of the opposites and the a fortiori scheme are examples of such forms.

- *In extension*, as the potentially very large set of passages assembled on the basis of their
argumentative similarity; the set of arguments that can be paraphrased by the same formula; the set of
arguments that derive from the same phrasal pattern. A functional knowledge of arguments can
be based on paradigmatic examples.

Refuting analogy

Mencius$_{Lau}$ VI A 1:

Kao Tzu said, 'Human nature is like the *ch'i* willow. Dutifulness is like cups and bowls. To
make morality out of human nature is like making cups and bowls out of the willow'. 'Can
you', said Mencius, 'make cups and bowls by following the nature of the willow? Or must
you mutilate the willow before you can make it into cups and bowls? If you have to

mutilate the willow to make it into cups and bowls, must you then also mutilate a man to make him moral? Surely it will be these words of yours, men in the world will follow in bringing disaster upon morality.'

Kao Tzu focuses on the "final cause," the product, and stages the education process as the transformation of a raw material into an everyday object, or even a work of art. Mencius casts a different light on the process, by focusing on its "material cause," the willow wood. The same situation is linguistically framed in two different ways, i.e., the refutation is based on a semantic operation, an analogy seen as an equivalence (tree - human body), plus a syntactic permutation changing the focus:

$$1 - 2 - 3 \longrightarrow 3 - 2 - 1$$

The thesis focused on the product, while the refutation focuses on the substance or origin:

Subject = Product	predicate of transformation are	Substance, or Origin
[CUPS AND BOWLS]	made from	[the willow tree]
1	**2**	**3**
3	**2**	**1**
[The willow tree]	is mutilated into	[CUPS AND BOWLS]

3.4 A fortiori

Confucius, *The Analects Eno*. Bk 11, §12.

> Ji Lu asked about serving the spirits. The Master said, 'While you are yet not able to serve men, how could you be able to serve the spirits?'
> 'May I ask about death?'
> 'When you do not yet understand life, how could you understand death?'

The Master's answer assumes that "serving spirits" is a higher task, more difficult than "serving men". He observes that Ji Lu is not able to serve men, and concludes a fortiori, that Ji Lu is certainly not able to serve the spirits. The negative concusions are phrased as rhetorical questions denying Ji Lu's request.

Han Fei Tzi (c. 280 – 233 BC)[5] uses the same line of reasoning,

> Lady Li and the actor Shih "forced Shen-sheng to commit suicide in 656 BC", and "Hsi-ch'i (…) succeeded to the throne in 651 BC" (Burton Watson's note):
> Thus, the actor Shih aided Lady Li to bring about the death of Shen-sheng and to set Hsi-ch'i on the throne.[1] Now, if someone as close to the ruler as his own consort, […] still cannot be trusted, then obviously no one else is to be trusted either.
> *Han Fei Tzi*, "Precautions within the palace". Trans. B. Watson

Jewish tradition formulates the a fortiori rule as a rule of interpretation. In the Muslim tradition, examples of expressions requiring an a fortiori interpretation can be found in the

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[5] Han Fei Zi (c. 280 – 233 BC), "is often considered to be the greatest representative of 'Chinese Legalism'" (Wikipedia).

Qur'an. Taken together with the Chinese and the Western traditions, these observations provide a strong empirical basis for considering a fortiori as an argumentative universal. The a fortiori argumentation scheme is no different from the semantic rule corresponding to the gradation construction. Since the gradation system is a linguistic universal, the universality of the corresponding argumentation scheme can be safely assumed.

3.5 Opposites

> There are four things which, according to public opinion, must be avoided by all means. The first is to build an annex to a building on the west side, for such an annex is held to be inauspicious, and being so, is followed by a case of death. Owing to this apprehension, nobody in the world would dare to build facing the west. This prohibition dates from days of yore.
>
> In case an annex in the west be unpropitious, would a demolition there be a good augury? Or, if an annex in the west be inauspicious, would it be a lucky omen in the east? For if there be something inauspicious, there must also be something auspicious, as bad luck has good luck as its correlate.
>
> Wang Ch'ung [Forke][6], *Lun heng*. Bk 23 chap. 3; p. 793; p. 794.

The topos of the opposites can be used to prove or disprove a proposition. You want to test the truth of "A is B":
　if "not A is not B" is true, then A is B is true
　if "not A is not B" is false, then A is B is false.

(1) Root proposition, to be tested by the dialectical method: "*To build an annex to a building on the west side [must be avoided], for such an annex is held to be inauspicious.*" This statement has the following grammatical form,
　Subject (*to build a wing to the west*) + Predicate (*is held to be inauspicious*).
The subject is an infinitive clause, combining two characteristics of the the construction (What? - a building; Where? - to the west)
　C_1 action (*to build a wing*) + C_2 place of action (*to the west*).

Wang Chong uses two types of opposites,
- (Opposite of action C_1) - Since *demolish* is the opposite of *build*, and *unpropitious* is the opposite of *good augury*, the topos of opposites infers that "demolish (an annex in the west) is good augury".
　But this is not the case: no one believes this opposite proposition; therefore, no one should believe that the proposition to be tested is true.
- (Opposite of place C_2) - Similarly, since *east* is the opposite of *west,* the topos of opposites applied to the pair "east / west" infers that "(building an annex) in the east is good luck".
　But this is not the case; this opposite proposition is not believed to be true; therefore, no one should believe that the proposition to be tested is true.

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[6] Wang Ch'ung (27 – c. 97 AD) developed a rational, secular, naturalistic and mechanistic account of the world and of human being and gave a materialistic explanation of the origin of the universe. (Wikipedia)

The fact that negation and words oppositions are linguistic universals suggests that the corresponding reasoning scheme is a universal.

3.6 Pragmatic argument

The pragmatic argument corresponds to the topos ≠13 of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.

> Since in most human affairs the same thing is accompanied by some bad or good result, another topic consists in employing the consequence to ex- hort or dissuade, accuse or defend, praise or blame. (II, 23, Trans. J. H. Freese, pp 311).

The pragmatic argument, in its positive version, assumes that the action being defended is, if not entirely, at least quite positive, that it will make the world a better place, even if it has some minor negative side effects.

The following text is taken from the *Disputation on Salt and Iron*[7]. It is a debate between the Emperor's Grand Secretary and a group of Confucian philosophers. The debate takes place in the presence of the emperor. In the following passage, the Grand Secretary, carried away by his lyricism, affirms that it is possible to do good in the world without doing harm,

> *The Lord Grand Secretary*: […] The profits derived from the salt and iron monopolies serve to relieve the needs of the people in emergencies and to provide sufficient funds for the upkeep of military forces. These measures emphasize conservation and storing up in order to provide for times of scarcity and want. The beneficiaries are many; the State profits thereby and no harm is caused to the masses. Where are those hardships of the common people which cause you so much worry?

> *The Literati* —Profit, moreover, does not fall from Heaven, nor does it spring forth from the Earth; it is derived entirely from the people. To call it hundredfold is a mistake in judgment similar to that of the simpleton who wore his furcoat inside out while carrying wood, hoping to save the fur and not realizing that the hide was being ruined.
> Now, an abundant crop of prunes will cause a decline for the year immediately following; the new grain ripens. at the expense of the old. For Heaven and Earth do not become full at the same time: so much more is this the case with human activities! Profit in one place involves diminution elsewhere just as *yin* and *yang*[8] do not radiate at the same time and day and night alternate in length. (Huan K'uan Gale, *Yan Tie Lun. Discourse on Salt and Iron,* Chap. 7)

The Grand Secretary represents a modern spirit, that believes that good politics can improve the world. The literati are radically opposed to this view. They believe that it is impossible to bring good, benefit, to some without bringing evil, misery, to others in equal measure. The balance of positive and negative is zero sum. The gain of some is inseparable from the loss of others. According to this worldview, there is no global progress. The human world, like the natural world, operates on the principle of permanent equilibrium; good that occurs here is correlated with evil that occurs elsewhere.

Four arguments support this conclusion (our numbering); the summary (5) is supported by a theoretical principle (6) and by an empirical observation (7):

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[7] The *Yan Tie Lun* (*Discourses on Salt and Iron*), compiled by Huan K'uan, reports a debate held at the imperial court in 81 BCE, on state policy during the Han dynasty (Wikipedia).

(1) The Grand Secretary is ridiculed by an analogy with a simpleton: *To call [profit] hundredfold is a mistake in judgment similar to that of the simpleton who wore his furcoat inside out while carrying wood, hoping to save the fur and not realizing that the hide was being ruined.*
(2) The principle of equilibrium is illustrated or proved by two typical cases, taken from undisputable common knowledge connected with agriculture:
An abundant crop of prunes will cause a decline for the year immediately following.
(3) *The new grain ripens at the expense of the old.*
(4) These cases are not used as the basis of an induction (generalization). They are the local expression of a cosmic fact, the equilibrium principle: *For Heaven and Earth do not become full at the same time: so muh more is this the case with human activities!*
(5) Profit is just one more manifestation of this principle: *Profit in one place involves diminution elsewhere.*
(6) just as *yin* and *yang* do not radiate at the same time,
(7) and day and night alternate in length.

This conclusion destroys the very idea of pragmatic argumentation as flawed in its very conception.

The pragmatic argument uses the concept of *consequence*, which, in Western culture, is associated with causality; *cause* is used in (2) to characterize the relationship between the two legs of the cosmic equilibrium[8].

Unlike the a fortiori argument and the opposite argument, the pragmatic argument does not obey any linguistic principle. It is certainly a universal scheme of argumentation scheme, based not on linguistic mechanisms, but on anthropological reality.

4. CONCLUSION: A WELL-ESTABLISHED CLASSICAL ARGUMENTATIVE TRADITION

In the foregoing, we have confined ourselves to the simplest examples, and avoided introducing complex cases, where the translations may not be equivalent, such as Mengzi's refutation of the thesis that "it is life that is meant by nature", or the discussion of the paradoxes such as "white horses are not horses" (*Mengzi,* 6A 3; 6A 4).

The Chinese tradition of argument is comparable to the Western one in its social and intellectual positioning. One finds questions, heated debates, claims, arguments, refutations, inductions, analogies, examples, categorizations, syllogisms, evocations of positive or negative consequences, thought experiments, and more.

This does not mean that the argumentative tendency represents the totality of this tradition. In the Taoist philosopher Zhuangzi (4th century BCE), for example, we find a questioning of the very concepts that underlie argumentation, beginning with the principles of non-contradiction and inference. The argumentative tradition, as a basic intellectual tool, is neither exclusively Western, nor unique in the world.

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[8] A broader discussion would be needed here, to check whether the concept of *cause* is appropriate to describe this cosmic equilibrium, or whether we should look for a more culturally open concept.

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