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# Confucius and Virtue Argumentation Theory

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper aims to show that Confucius can be regarded as a virtue argumentation pioneer in ancient China. It demonstrates that Confucius has very similar views to Virtue Argumentation Theory (VAT) regarding the close connection between a speaker's virtue and her words, his notion of Junzi is akin to ideal arguer, and his teaching practice reveals a special attention to the audience's characters. Moreover, a Confucian argumentative virtue list is constructed and compared with Aberdein's argumentative virtue list.

**KEYWORDS:** Argumentative virtue, Confucius, Ideal arguer, Virtue argumentation theory

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Inspired by the works of contemporary virtue ethics and virtue epistemology, there has been a returning-to-virtue trend happened in argumentation studies, resulting in the recent development of Virtue Argumentation Theory (VAT). Virtue argumentation theorists highlight the importance of arguer in the analysis and evaluation of arguments, and stress that an argument's goodness or badness could be explained in terms of the arguer's characters. For example, according to one of its leading figures, Daniel Cohen, "an argument that is so good that in the end the arguers agree on how good the argument was, is that it must have some extraordinary arguers" (Cohen, 2013, p.478). In particular, virtue argumentation theorists have drawn heavily on resources in the field of virtue ethics, virtue epistemology and critical thinking, in order to specify the desirable characters of arguer that are relevant to explain the argument quality (see, for example, Aberdein 2010; Cohen 2005).

However, till now virtue argumentation theorists have focused only on digging in the Western virtue theories, without any attention paid to the non-Western philosophical traditions. In fact, the exploration of virtue is also an important concern

in Chinese philosophies, and there has been a long tradition of virtue studies in ancient China. For example, Confucianism, the most influential Chinese philosophy, contains a wealth of ideas on virtue. Recently, the Confucian virtue theory has already attracted considerable attention from contemporary scholars, and it is reported that the Confucian virtue ethics is indeed comparable to the virtue theory developed by Aristotle (Yu, 2013; Huang, 2018). Against this background, we believe that the discussions on argumentative virtues would also be enriched if we can turn to this Chinese tradition and those Confucian ideas on virtue. And this paper aims to make a start in this direction. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In section 2 we offer an overview of VAT scholars' main works on exploring argumentative virtues. In section 3 we argue that Confucius actually holds a similar position with VAT regarding the close connection between the speaker's virtues and words, and that Confucius has also strongly emphasized the importance of character in his teaching practices. In section 4, we further construct a Confuciusian argumentative virtue list, and then compare it with Aberdein's list. At last, section 5 is our conclusion.

## 2. THE ARGUER'S VIRTUES

VAT flourished at the beginning of this century, its leading pioneers are Daniel Cohen and Andrew Aberdein (Cohen 2005, 2007; Aberdein 2007, 2010). Virtue argumentation theorists hope to establish a link between the goodness of the argument and the virtues of the arguer, and to propose a new normativity for argumentation evaluation. As Cohen has made it clear, a logically good argument is not always a "fully satisfying argument" (2013, p.479); rather, "a good argument is one that has been conducted virtuously" (Cohen, 2007, p.8). In brief, a good argument is one in which the arguer argues virtuously; and an arguer is able to argue virtuously because of her excellent virtues.

In attempting to specify the virtues of the arguer, virtue argumentation theorists have drawn extensively on theoretical resources in the relevant fields like the virtue ethics, virtue epistemology and critical thinking. By reflecting on the "villainous" argumentative character of the "tragic heroes" in argumentation, Cohen (2005) proposes a concept of "ideal arguer" who is characterized by four basic argumentative virtues: *willingness to engage in argumentation, willingness to listen to others, willingness to modify one's own position, and willingness to question the obvious*.

Based on Cohen's work, Aberdein (2010) further adopts Aristotle's the Doctrine of the Mean to understand the arguer's virtue, unpacking it structurally as a moderation character that is always located between pairs of opposite vices. Moreover, by further borrowing the ideas from the rhetorical manual of Roman orator Quintilian and the critical thinking dispositions, Aberdein has also proposed a preliminary list of argumentative virtues (see in Table 1).

Table 1 A tentative typology of argumentational virtue
Willingness to engage in argumentation Being communicative Faith in reason Intellectual courage Sense of duty
Willingness to listen to others Intellectual empathy Insight into persons Insight into problems Insight into theories Fairmindedness Justice Fairness in evaluating the arguments of others  Open-mindedness in collecting and appraising evidence Recognition of reliable authority Recognition of salient facts  Sensitivity to detail
Willingness to modify one's own position Common sense Intellectual candour Intellectual humility Intellectual integrity Honour Responsibility Sincerity
Willingness to question the obvious Appropriate respect for public opinion Autonomy Intellectual perseverance Diligence Care  Thoroughness

As Aberdein (2010) points out, both Cohen's basic argumentative virtues and his own argumentative virtue list are mainly a mixture of virtues that are identified in the ethical sense and in the epistemic sense. In a slightly different manner, Gascón (2018) chooses to understand argumentative virtue only in terms of the epistemic virtues. In line with the distinction between responsibilist and reliabilist virtue epistemology, he argues that argumentative virtues can also be divided into those two types: the responsibilistic argumentative virtues that are associated with informal logical skills for argumentation, and the reliabilistic argumentative virtues that are character-

based qualities in need of being developed and demonstrated by the arguer.

In contrast, Stevens (2016) proposes to understand argumentative virtue by drawing on the virtue interpretation in universal ethics. In her view, a virtuous arguer needs to have both confrontational and cooperative virtues and plays the four roles of knight, attacker, teacher, and student respectively.

It is clear that the discussions on argumentative virtue so far are to some extent quite fruitful. Basically, different understandings and interpretations are proposed by making use of various resources in the virtue theory and by converting the relevant virtue item into an argumentative one. In view of this, we believe that a similar work could also be done by turning to the Confucian philosophy, and the result may contribute to our current understanding of argumentative virtues by bringing in some different perspective from a non-Western virtue tradition.

### 3. CONFUCIUS AS A VAT THEORIST

Confucius is a preeminent figure in ancient Chinese philosophy living in the pivotal Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. These epochs were marked by the impending collapse of the Zhou dynasty's ceremonial system, known as the Zhou Rites. In response to the profound social and political turmoil, Confucius elevated "virtue" to be the central and defining concept in his philosophical framework and developed a systematic moral theory. Confucius' philosophy is often regarded as remarkably akin to Aristotle's virtue theory, and their comparison has also been seen as a rich source of inspiration for the understanding and discussions of virtue in contemporary ethics (Yu, 2013). In this connection, if Aristotle can be easily taken as an early proponent of VAT (Aberdein, 2021), it may also be possible to find some important resources of VAT in Confucius' philosophical insights. In the subsequent sections, we will try to show that Confucius indeed holds some views that are fundamentally similar to VAT, so he can be regarded as a virtue argumentation theorist.

#### 3.1 *"A virtuous man must have said something of note; but someone who has said something of note is not necessarily a man of virtue"*

In *Analects* 14.4, Confucius addresses the relationship between an individual's virtue and the cogency of their discourse and speech, and there we can find that his position closely aligns with VAT. According to Confucius, virtuous individuals are likely to deliver convincing discourses and articulate their thoughts convincingly. However, Confucius also stresses, it's important to note that those who excel in persuasive discourses may not necessarily embody virtuous qualities. In VAT, it is also contended that a virtuous arguer will be expected to consistently present sound arguments, whereas an arguer lacking in virtue can only occasionally present a compelling argument (Gascón, 2015). Evidently, Confucius' above view closely mirrors VAT's fundamental point, for they have both emphasized a significant impact of an arguer's virtues on the quality of their arguments.

Within Confucius' philosophy, "virtue" specifically pertains to an individual's comprehension and embodiment of the divine "Way of Heaven". In its original essence, the virtue represents a form of acquisition. Through the transformative process of acquisition, the external principles of the Way of Heaven become internalized within the individual, manifesting as their virtues and embodying into their virtuous actions. Hence, within Confucius' framework, the very concept of "virtue" inherently demands congruence between an individual's inner virtuous character and their outward expressions through words and deeds. It is in this way that "words" serve as a direct manifestation of one's inner virtues, an inseparable connection is then established between a person's virtue and his/her words. Consequently, a virtuous person will consciously align their speech and actions with the principles of virtue, and their "good words" are a genuine reflection of their virtuous character. And this is why Confucius claims that "a virtuous man must have said something of note", indicating clearly his belief in a crucial and intrinsic alignment between virtue and words. For Confucius, this alignment could be taken as a fundamental clue to truly know a person, as he asserts, "without knowing the words of a man, it is impossible to know that man" (*Analects*, 20.3).

However, Confucius has also noticed, and become much concerned with, the perils associated with words divorcing from the constraints of virtue. Given that "words" are fundamentally constructions of the agent, there does exist a possibility that a morally compromised individual may have some "virtuous words" that are constructed by some specific motives or tactics, rather than by their good characters. In Confucius' own words, "*someone who has said something of note is not necessarily a man of virtue*". Nevertheless, unlike contemporary VAT scholars who prefer to explain this possibility as a mere "contingency", Confucius obviously worries about it more seriously, thus he provides a more profound analysis and gives it a negative judgment. In Confucius' view, words that show some power of language and persuasive abilities while devoid of virtuous intents are "fancy words" or "vain words". Confucius explicitly opposes the use of any such fancy or specious words, deeming them as a major threat to individual virtues and societal harmony. As he explains, "the fancy words with an insinuating appearance are seldom associated with true virtue" (*Analects*, 1.3), and "the specious words even confound virtue" (*Analects*, 15.27). Therefore, Confucius contends that we should feel a deep sense of shame in using those fancy or vain words, "the fancy words with an insinuating appearance [...] I am ashamed of them" (*Analects*, 5.25).

It seems clear that Confucius has emphasized a dynamic interplay between a person's virtue and his/her words. In his view, individual virtues, as being derived from the Way of Heaven, will not only be demonstrated in virtuous words and actions, but also need to be effectively transmitted among people through those virtuous words and actions, it is a course of "the establishment of virtue". In this connection, Confucius contends that "the *Junzi* (*the Confucian superior man or gentleman*) guides people by his words" (*Book of Rituals* 33), for he believes that the words possess the power of influencing and reshaping the other's virtuous character. And this is also why he is particularly vigilant about virtuous words crafted deliberately by individuals lacking in

virtue. He worries about the danger of their undermining the establishment of virtue, so he rejects them so strongly.

### 3.2 *The notion of Junzi as an ideal arguer*

Confucius develops the notion of *Junzi* to refer to those who have all the virtues and can always demonstrate them in their own words and actions. In other words, *Junzi* is indeed an ideal virtuous man who will also behave virtuously, including of course in his acts of speaking and arguing. So it can be seen that the Confucius' understanding of *Junzi* bears some resemblance to VAT's notion of the "ideal arguer". Moreover, Confucius also explains why there is a guarantee that *Junzi* can always have virtuous words and actions. First and foremost, the role of *Junzi* in Confucius' mind is closely resembled that of sage emperors like "Yao" "Shun" and "Yu", who are chosen with the "divine right of kings" and thus shoulder the responsibility of preaching the divine "Way of Heaven" to people. Therefore, *Junzi* must have all the virtues since they are the embodiment of the divine "Way of Heaven", and *Junzi* will also need to establish and convey all these virtues in society to all the other people through his own virtuous words and conducts.

Second, *Junzi* is a brilliant man of wide learning, thus his erudition can ensure that his conducts are consistently virtuous. According to Confucius, *Junzi* grows out of systematic learning, he needs to study diligently in many important domains and become knowledgeable especially in "literature, conduct, loyalty, and faith". As is stressed in the *Analects* (6.18), "when accomplishments and solid qualities are equally blended, we then have a man of virtue (*Junzi*)". In other words, a *Junzi* is always "willing to learn", in order to achieve a profound level of erudition and virtuous cultivation.

Third, *Junzi* will be very prudent in his speaking thus his words could always demonstrate his virtues. This entails a dual commitment. On the one hand, *Junzi* takes his own words very seriously, assuming the full responsibility for their content and credibility. As is recorded in the *Analects*, "*Junzi* is earnest in what he is doing, and careful in his speaking" (1.14), so "*Junzi* requires that in his own words there may be nothing incorrect" (13.3). Moreover, he will also refrain himself from making baseless and indiscriminate statements, "in regard to what he does not know, *Junzi* shows a cautious reserve" (*Analects*, 13.3). On the other hand, *Junzi* will try to know his audience and to choose carefully his way of expression. He knows well his own role in communication, ensuring that his speeches are compliant with relevant norms. For instance, *Junzi* refrains himself from speaking what is contrary to propriety (*Analects*, 12.1). He understands that "when a man may be spoken with, not to speak to him is to err in reference to the man; when a man may not be spoken with, to speak to him is to err in reference to our words", so *Junzi* will be a wise man who err neither in his judgment of individuals nor in his choice of words (*Analects*, 15.8).

### 3.3 *Teaching in accordance with the student's aptitude: attention to the audience's virtue*

Confucius is revered as the pioneer of the teaching profession in the Chinese cultural tradition. Notably, he provides an insightful perspective on the significance of tailoring his pedagogical approach to the character and abilities of his students, as exemplified by his method of teaching students in accordance with their aptitude. In *Analects* 11, there are two dialogues between Confucius and his students, which can serve as the first example of Confucius' pedagogical approach of teaching in accordance with the student's aptitude. In these dialogues, students Tsze-lu and Zhan Yu posed the same question to Confucius for instructions, yet received different responses. Tsze-lu, characterized by his impulsive and impatient nature, displayed a propensity for hasty actions without thorough contemplation. Conversely, Zhan Yu exhibited humility alongside indecisiveness. Both students inquired of Confucius, "Should one immediately act upon hearing a righteous idea?" Confucius' counsel to Tsze-lu was, "Refrain from immediate action, and ask advice from your elders", while to Zhan Yu, Confucius advised him to "Act immediately". The different responses are explained by Confucius' keen awareness of the distinct character traits exhibited by these two students, that is, he tailored his guidance to their individual personalities. Confucius recognizes very well the diverse character among his students and, consequently, provides different instructions for them. He aims to rectify their respective shortcomings and nurture their unique strengths, so he encourages Tsze-lu, being inclined towards impulsivity, to reflect before taking action, and he guides Zhan Yu, who demonstrated greater reserve, to act decisively.

Another typical example of Confucius' pedagogical approach is his teaching of "benevolence" (*Ren*). When different students inquire about the understanding of "benevolence", Confucius deliberately customizes his responses based on their unique character traits. For example, when Sze-ma Niu, known for his impatience and verbosity, asks about how to become a benevolent man, Confucius replies that "the benevolent speaks and acts prudently" (*Analects*, 3.12). However, when faced with another student, Yen Yuan, who already possessed a high level of virtue, Confucius established a more rigorous standard, advising him to "to subdue one's self and return to propriety, is perfect virtue" (*Analects*, 3.12). Subsequently, when Tsze-chang, deeply engaged in political affairs and aspiring to a government career, sought Confucius' guidance on benevolence, Confucius elaborated on it as "gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness", and explained to him that "the ability to practice these five principles universally throughout the world constitutes perfect virtue" (*Analects*, 17.6).

In a sense, Confucius' teaching methodology is also an agent-based approach, with a specific emphasis on the audience's character traits. In his teaching dialogues, Confucius primarily targeted a student audience, yet it's evident that they exhibited variations in cognitive levels, learning capabilities, and virtue qualities. Therefore, Confucius advocated an approach that tailored his own discourses and his ways of interaction to suit each student's distinctive traits. For example, when addressing students like Tsze-lu and Zhan Yu, he recognized the significance of providing personalized responses. Issuing the same directive to both, such as "Act immediately",



would not have been conducive to addressing Tsze-lu's impulsive nature. On the contrary, it might have exacerbated his inclination towards hastiness, potentially leading to unpredictable and adverse consequences.

Cohen has stressed that "the process of explicating the notion of fully satisfying arguments requires expanding the concept of arguers to include all of an argument's participants" (Cohen, 2013, p. 471). However, in current studies of VAT, there has been much less attention paid to the audience than to the arguer. The audience is frequently depicted as only a reference for interpreting the disposition of the arguer. For instance, among the pivotal argumentative virtues, "willingness to listen to others" demands simply that the arguer be attentive and receptive to the viewpoints and perspectives of the audience, while "caring" requires that the arguer to care and to help the audience (Aberdein, 2010). Nevertheless, in Confucius' pedagogical practice, there exists a more explicit concern regarding how the characters of the audience can significantly influence the arguer, and can determine what constitutes effective discourse and argumentation.

#### 4. A CONFUCIAN ARGUMENTATIVE VIRTUE LIST

In this section, we intend to formulate a Confucian virtue list for argumentation, drawing upon some specific virtues that are emphasized by Confucius. Although Confucius proposed the notion of "Junzi" to refer to those who can embody all the virtues in one person, he also places distinct emphasis on discussing various facets and different items of Junzi's virtues. These diverse items have been termed "particular virtues" by later scholars (Yu, 2013). Confucius' discussions on these particular virtues are scattered in many chapters in the *Analects*. Through a careful examination of these chapters, Yu (2013) has meticulously compiled a systematic list of Confucius' particular virtues (p. 252), as below:

1. benevolence (ren), wisdom, courage (*Analects*, 9.29, 14.28)
2. loyalty, trustworthiness in word (*Analects*, 1:4, 9:25, 12.10, 15.6)
3. respectfulness, reverence, generosity, appropriateness (*Analects*, 5.18)
4. cordiality, goodness, respectfulness, frugality, deferentiality (*Analects*, 1.10)
5. respectfulness, care, courage, uprightness (*Analects*, 8:2)
6. respectfulness, tolerance, trustworthiness in word, quickness, generosity (*Analects*, 17.6)
7. benevolence, wisdom, trustworthiness in word, forthrightness, courage, unbending strength (*Analects*, 17.8)

It is easy to see that certain virtues are recurrent across various chapters. Eliminating these repetitions, we derive the following table listing Confucius' specific virtues (Table 2). Additionally, we have included the Chinese terms and provided a succinct explanation of the fundamental meaning for each virtue.

Table 2 A List of Confucius' Particular Virtues			
	Special virtues	Chinese terms	Basic meanings
1	Benevolence (ren)	仁, ren	Caring, compassionate
2	Wisdom	知, zhi	Having good ideas and sound logic about things
3	Courage	勇, yong	Courage, daring, responsibility
4	Loyalty	忠, zhong	Sincerely, spare no effort to defend justice
5	Trustworthiness in word	信, xin	Honest, truthful, reliable
6	Respectfulness	恭, Gong	Modest and courteous, with respect or reverence
7	Reverence	敬, jing	Respect and esteem
8	Appropriateness	义, yi	Adapting appropriately, sticking to what is true
9	Cordiality	温, wen	Gentle character, not roughness
10	Goodness	良, liang	Good at heart, pure and warm, without evil intent
11	Care	慎, shen	Careful, prudent
12	Uprightness	直, zhi	Frank, straightforward, without beating around the bush
13	Tolerance	宽, kuan	Tolerant and generous, loyal and kind, broad and generous
14	Quickness	敏, min	Diligent and resourceful
15	Unbending strength	刚, gang	Strong-willed, unafraid of hardship and unyielding to the forces of evil
16	Generosity	惠, hui	Benefits to others
17	Frugality	俭, jian	Respectful, polite and self-respecting
18	Deferentiality	让, rang	Modest, polite, humble

However, in order to have a list of Confucian argumentative virtues, we will still need to find out whether Confucius has also assigned them a role in argumentative contexts, that is, whether they are pertinent to the arguer and the act of arguing. Luckily, we see that Confucius has grounded his understanding of virtues in ethical reasoning (Huang & Ren, 2021), establishing a practical foundation for his approach. A distinctive feature of this approach is the contextual relevance of each virtue. In different contexts, the same virtue could assume different connotations. As evidenced in the *Analects*, Confucius responded to inquiries about “benevolence” on thirteen occasions, and each time he deliberately situates benevolence in diverse contexts. For instance, he framed

it as “to subdue oneself and return to propriety” in a political context and as “do not do unto others what you would not have them do to you” in the context of interpersonal relationships. Thus, we regard a particular Confucian virtue to be argumentative when it can have a corresponding plausible explanation in a context that is pertinent to argumentation. Take, for instance, the virtue of “generosity” which generally means “bestowing benefits upon others”, when situated in an argumentative framework, can also encompass a willingness to aid other participants in attaining cognitive or intellectual advancement (or, in short, benefiting other argument participants). In this connection, the virtue of “generosity” can undoubtedly fosters mutual support and collaboration among arguers in constructing a robust argument, thus it makes sense to take it as a Confucian argumentative virtue. Using this methodology, we get the following Confucian argumentative virtue list (Table 3), in which it can be seen that eventually all the particular virtues can be located in an argumentative context, and can be reinterpreted into a relevant argumentative meaning. Moreover, in the fourth column of the table, we also try to connect it to the relevant items as specified in Aberdein’s list, in order to draw some comparison:

Table 3 A list of Confucius’ argumentative virtues				
	Special virtues	Chinese terms	Connotative account	Aberdein’s consistent virtue items
1	Benevolence	仁, ren	Caring, compassionate	Intellectual empathy, Care
2	Wisdom	知, zhi	Pursuing truth, believing in reason	Faith in reason · Common sense · Open-mindedness in collecting and appraising evidence
3	Courage	勇, yong	Courageous and responsible	Intellectual courage · Responsibility
4	Loyalty	忠, zhong	Sincerity, in defence of justice	Sincerity · Justice
5	Trustworthiness in word	信, xin	Honest, trustworthy and reliable	Intellectual candour · Sincerity
6	Respectfulness	恭, gong	Respect for others, humility	Intellectual humility · Honour
7	Reverence	敬, jing	Respect the opinions of others and follow the rules of interaction	Sincerity · Honour
8	Appropriateness	义 · yi	Adapt appropriately and stay on the right side of the fence	Autonomy, Intellectual perseverance, Fairness in evaluating the arguments of others · Appropriate respect for public opinion
9	Cordiality	温, wen	Not rude or bigoted	Intellectual courage · Willingness to listen to others · Common sense

10	Goodness	良, liang	Kind, without evil intent	Care, Fairness in evaluating the arguments of others ·
11	Care	慎, shen	Careful, prudent	Sensitivity to detail, Recognition of reliable authority, Recognition of salient facts, Insight into persons, Insight into problems, Intellectual integrity · Thoroughness
12	Uprightness	直, zhi	Sincere, frank and clearly expressed	Willingness to engage in argumentation · Being communicative, Intellectual integrity, Sincerity
13	Tolerance	宽, kuan	Tolerant, generous	Intellectual empathy · Care
14	Quickness	敏, min	Sensitive, resourceful	Insight into persons · Insight into problems · Insight into theories · Recognition of reliable authority · Recognition of salient facts
15	Unbending strength	刚, gang	Strong-willed, unafraid to stand up for the truth	Intellectual courage · Justice · Autonomy · Intellectual perseverance · Diligence
16	Generosity	惠, hui	Benefiting other argument participants	Care
17	Frugality	俭 · jian	Respect others' opinions as well as own	
18	Deferentiality	让 · rang	Modest, polite, humble	Willingness to modify one's own position · Intellectual humility

Clearly, the above list portrays the image of an ideal arguer in Confucius' virtue theory. This ideal arguer possesses the goodness to genuinely care for others, the courage to seek the truth, the sincerity to be trustworthy and dependable, the swiftness to acquire the necessary discernment between right and wrong, the kindness to assist fellow arguers, the diligence to pursue learning, and the adaptability to respond adeptly to various situations. Remarkably, almost all the Confucius' argumentative virtues (except *frugality*) can also have some corresponding elements in Aberdein's list, which indicates that the two lists may have a very similar understanding of the ideal arguer. However, it is also noticeable that none of the items in these two lists has a one-to-one correspondence, normally one item in a list will have two or three counterpart items in the other list. For example, the *intellectual courage* in the Aberdein's list can correlate with the Confucian items of *courage* (courageous and responsible), *appropriateness*

(stay on the right side of the fence) and *unbending strength* (strong-willed, unafraid to stand up for the truth). Such a special correlation may just indicate for us a crucial difference in these two argumentative virtue lists, that is, from the Confucius' perspective of virtue, *intellectual courage* is not a basic argumentative virtue, but a combination of three other virtues.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper aims to show that Confucius can be seen as a VAT theorist in ancient China. Confucius has a very similar position to VAT regarding the close connection between a virtuous speaker and a good argument. In particular, Confucius has developed a notion of Junzi as an ideal arguer, and emphasized a dynamic interplay between a speaker's virtue and his/her words. Meanwhile, Confucius is also a practitioner of VAT, for his teaching is genuinely in accordance with the student's aptitude, with a special attention paid to the audience's virtue characters. Moreover, based on Confucius' virtue theory, we have also constructed a Confucian argumentative virtue list, in which eighteen particular virtues are collected, interpreted and then compared with the items in Aberdein's argumentative virtue list. It is revealed that the two lists indeed share a similar image of ideal arguer, but they understand the basic argumentative virtues in different ways.

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