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AGENCY AND PRACTICAL REASONING IN THE *ANALECTS* AND THE *MENCIUS*

What are the early Chinese philosophers' concepts and theories of action or agency? This is a very difficult question, and some of the difficulties have to do with the fact that, unlike Aristotle, early Chinese philosophers do not theorize about action or agency in a direct and systematic manner. For instance, none of them has provided an account of voluntary action, decision, deliberation, and wish, as Aristotle does in book 3 of the *Nichomachean Ethics* (see Liao Shenbai's article in this issue).

The central aim of this article is to propose that there are at least two ways to answer the question of action or agency in early Chinese philosophy. The first can be called the "practical reasoning" approach, which is based on the assumption that we can get a good sense of one's notion of action or agency if we know how one deliberates and reasons about what one ought to do. In other words, there seems to be an intimate connection between agency and practical reasoning. The second can be called the "motivation" approach, which is based on the assumption that we can get a good sense of one's notion of action or agency if we know how one thinks what the motivations (or sources) of virtuous action ought to be.

In this article, I argue for three theses; the first two theses are based on the practical reasoning approach, although I focus on only one aspect of practical reasoning, namely, how Confucius and Mencius give justifications of their normative claims about virtuous actions or policies, and the third thesis is based on the motivation approach. The first thesis is that in the *Analects* and the *Mencius*, we can find what I call the "pragmatic" mode of rational justification for their normative claims. The second thesis is that the "rationality" in the pragmatic mode of rational justification in the *Analects* and the *Mencius* is instrumental and prudential rationality. The third thesis is that, even though Confucius and Mencius have an instrumentalist concept of rational agency when they reason with others, they do not identify this

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rational agency as the source of virtuous actions; rather, virtuous actions must be spontaneous expressions of deep dispositions such as compassions and empathy for the loved ones. They must flow from "somewhere deeper" in an agent than the discursively rational part of the self.[1] In other words, moral agency (the source of virtuous action) is not rational agency (the source of discursive normativity). I call this Mencius's "dualism of moral and rational agency."

The article is divided into two parts; I argue for the first and second theses in part I, and the third thesis in part II.

I. Pragmatic Mode of Rational Justification

In this part of the article, I first analyze the modes of rational justification in the *Analects* and the *Mencius* and argue that Confucius and Mencius primarily use the pragmatic mode. I then argue that the rationality of this mode of justification is instrumental rationality.

1. Theoretical versus Pragmatic Modes of Rational Justification

How does Confucius justify his normative claim that one ought to do virtuous actions or one ought to become virtuous? Would he appeal to an unassailable metaphysical theory, as Aristotle would do (according to certain interpretations of Aristotle)? Alasdair MacIntyre, although not primarily a scholar of Chinese philosophy, has written some of the most insightful articles on the style and structure of Confucian ethical theory. He is the first to note that in sharp contrast to Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, Confucius and the Confucian philosophers do not justify their normative claims about virtue by appealing to rational metaphysical theories; their normative claims about virtue are generally not represented as "conclusions of arguments whose first premise is of the form 'Since the end and the best is such-and-such . . . '"[2]

What MacIntyre describes here is what might be called the "theoretical" mode of rational justification, which is to justify a normative claim by deriving it as a conclusion of an argument whose premises are propositions of metaphysical theories. I believe the theoretical mode can be found not only in Aristotle and Aquinas, but also in many other philosophers, both in the West and in China.

However, we can find another mode of justification in early Chinese philosophy, which I call the "pragmatic" mode of justification.[3] This mode of reasoning can also be characterized as the "primacy of the practical" mode, to borrow a term from Christine Korsgaard. In the pragmatic mode, to justify a normative ethical claim

X to an interlocutor, one only needs to prove two things: first, the interlocutor is committed to solving a practical problem; second, *X* is the best or only solution to the problem. The fact that *X* is the best or only solution gives *X* its normative force.[4]

If we take seriously the historical fact that the early Chinese philosophers are often political advisers to rulers in turbulent times, we should see that it has indeed a strong impact on how they justify their ethical-political claims. Indeed, they see justification primarily as a practical matter, and their justifications often start "not from a premise but from a plight," to use Korsgaard's expressions.[5] When they talk to a ruler and argue for a Confucian ethical-political action or policy, they usually argue for two things: first, the ruler ought to commit to solving certain practical problems, which they identify as fundamental and important; second, the Confucian policy is the best or only solution to the practical problems they identify.

Korsgaard does not say why the fact that an ethical-political action is the best or only solution to a practical problem gives it normative force, or what the nature of its normativity is. One advantage of studying Chinese ethical thought is that, as we shall see in the next section, it is easy to show that the pragmatic mode of justification is actually one variation of instrumental reasoning, and its normative force is the same as the normative force of instrumental rationality.

2. The Structure of Pragmatic Mode of Rational Justification

Now let us use an example from the *Analects* to demonstrate the structure of the pragmatic mode of justification. It is important to get a clear sense of its structure because it can be argued that it is the most prevailing mode of practical reasoning in the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, as well as other early Chinese texts.

One of the main Confucian normative claims is that a good ruler ought to practice "virtue politics" (*de zheng* 德政),[6] "benevolent politics" (*ren zheng* 仁政), or "politics that is sensitive to the suffering of others" (*bu ren ren zhi zheng* 不忍人之政). By these terms, the Confucians mean an ideal way of governing, which demands that an ideal society ought to have just and benevolent policies such as fair distribution of external goods, as well as policies that take care of the weak, the poor, the elderly, and the orphans.[7] It also demands that the ruler ought to win the allegiance and trust of the people not through laws or coercion, but through virtuous actions.[8]

How do Confucians justify their virtue politics to a ruler? First, the Confucians identify a certain practical problem, to which they convince the ruler he ought to commit himself. For the Confucians, a fundamental practical problem is the following: "What must a ruler do

in order to win the allegiance and trust of the people?" Second, the Confucians must convince the ruler that the best or only solution to this practical problem is to practice Confucian virtue politics. In order for this argument to work, it is necessary that the interlocutor (the ruler) is committed to the practical problem. This condition is sometimes met by the fact that the ruler is the one that brings up the problem, as we can see in *Analects*,[9] in which the question raised to Confucius by Duke Ai, the ruler of Lu, Confucius's home state, is exactly such a practical problem: Duke Ai asked Confucius, "What must I do to win the allegiance of the people (min fu 民服)?"[10]

The following is Confucius's answer to Duke Ai:

> If you raise the straight and set them above the crooked, you will win the allegiance of the people. If you raise the crooked and set them above the straight, you will not win the allegiance of the people.[11]

Here Confucius seems to be saying that the policy of raising the straight and setting them above the crooked is both a sufficient and necessary means to win the allegiance of the people. However, if we put this passage in the context of the *Analects* as a whole, we should see that Confucius does not necessarily take the policy as a sufficient means. We can assume that Confucius also expects Duke Ai to do all the other components of the Confucian virtue politics, which Confucius articulates elsewhere.[12] In general, although Confucius sometimes seems to speak of a certain policy as a *sufficient* means to solve a practical problem, it is clear that this is only a rhetorical device to achieve his goal of persuading the ruler to adopt the policy, which is obviously only a *necessary* means. One could easily imagine a contemporary example, such as when a political adviser talking to a politician: "If we adopt this policy, we will win the election; if we don't, we'll lose the election." The adviser here obviously assumes that the politician must also do all the other actions necessary to win the election. In other words, the adviser is not saying that to adopt the policy is *sufficient* in winning the election; it is only a necessary means.

We may translate what is going on in 1.29 in terms of Korsgaard's "primacy of the practical" mode of rational justification, which would be the following syllogism:

1. Duke Ai is committed to the practical problem of how to win the allegiance of the people.
2. A necessary part of the solution to the problem is to raise the straight and set them above the crooked.
3. Therefore, Duke Ai ought to raise the straight and set them above the crooked.

As I mentioned earlier, Korsgaard does not give an account of why the fact that a policy is the solution to a practical problem gives the policy normative force for the person who is committed to the problem. We now may have an answer to that question, if we reformulate the reasoning in 2.19 as follows:

1. Duke Ai wants to achieve the end of winning the allegiance of the people.
2. A necessary means to that end is to raise the straight and set them above the crooked.
3. Therefore, it is rational for Duke Ai to (or Duke Ai ought to) raise the straight and set them above the crooked.

Now it is easy to see that the "primacy of the practical" mode of justification is really the same as an instrumental mode of justification.[13] Its normative force is the same as the normative force of instrumental rationality; the modal term "ought to" in the conclusion of the pragmatic mode of justification is the same kind of "ought to" in the hypothetical imperative that a rational agent ought to take a necessary means to the end that one desires.[14]

Let us use E to refer to the end of winning the allegiance of the people, and M to a necessary means, which is to raise the straight and set them above the crooked. Now, it is very interesting to see that Confucius never explicitly states the conclusion to Duke Ai, "You ought to practice M." Instead, Confucius just offers the following pattern:

(P) M is a necessary means to achieve E.

Why is Confucius doing this? The only explanation seems to be that Confucius must have assumed that if Duke Ai is committed to the problem, which implies that he wants to pursue the end E, he must be committed to taking the necessary means to the end, which is M. In other words, Confucius assumes that Duke Ai is a rational agent, and this is why all Confucius needs to do is to show Duke Ai that it is indeed the case that M is a necessary means to E. I call statements like P "pattern-statements."

In fact, pattern-statements are the most representative type of statements in early Chinese texts such as the *Analects* and the *Mencius*. Many of the pattern-statements in the Confucian texts are about the pattern regarding the connection between the ruler's virtuous actions and their effects. For instance, both Confucius and Mencius spend a lot of time articulating the pattern that, when a ruler does virtuous and benevolent actions, it will have transformative power over the people.[15]

An interesting phenomenon is that early Confucians often use patterns in nature as a model to make sense of the patterns they have

observed in society. For example, when Confucius rejects a ruler's idea of solving political problems by killing those who do not follow the Way, Confucius says, "The *junzi's* 君子 virtue is like wind; the virtue of the common people is like grass. Let the wind sweep over the grass, and the grass necessarily bends."[16]

I believe we can now finally understand the following passage in the *Analects*: The Master said, "There is nothing I can do with a man who is not constantly saying, 'What should I do? What should I do?'"[17] Imagine a ruler who does not care about any practical problem, nor does he care about how to achieve certain goals. It would be of no use for Confucius to say to him: "You ought to practice such-and-such, because it is the solution to your problem (or the means to the end you pursue)." In fact, as we can see in 15.16, Confucius does state explicitly that there is nothing he could do to a person who is not committed to any practical problem.

3. The Concept of Instrumental Rationality in the Analects *and the* Mencius

We have seen that when the Confucian philosophers justify their normative claims to rulers they often use instrumental mode of justification. In this section I show this instrumentalist account is indeed Confucius's and Mencius's own conception of their practice.

Let me start with the following passage from the *Analects*:

> Zigong asked how to practice benevolence. The Master said, "A craftman who wishes to do his work well must first sharpen his tools (*qi* 器). You should, therefore, seek the patronage of the most virtuous ministers and befriend those gentlemen who cultivate benevolence in the state where you happen to be residing."[18]

Note that Confucius is using the model of an instrument or tool to talk about why Zigong should do the things that constitute the steps to the end he's pursuing. What Confucius says in the following passage is even more revealing: "Who could leave a house without using the door? Why, then, could people not follow the Way (*dao* 道)?"[19]

This passage has two sentences. The first sentence seems to be saying that no one can leave a house without using the door, which means that, to put in our technical terms, "using the door" is a necessary means to leave a house. Obviously, Confucius does not have a technical term for "instrumentally irrational"; therefore, instead of saying that someone *A* is "instrumentally irrational," Confucius would say that *A*'s action is just like "leaving a house without using the door." In other words, Confucius is using a concrete paradigm case of

instrumental irrationality to express the abstract concept; the lack of technical terminology is not the lack of the concept itself.[20]

The second sentence in 6.17 should be understood in the context of the main pattern-statement in the *Analects*, which is that the Confucian ethical outlook is a necessary means to achieve an ideal society and ideal self. Confucius seems to be saying here that if one wants to achieve an ideal society yet does not follow the way (*dao*) that necessarily leads to its realization, he is just like the person who wants to "leave a house without using the door."

Similarly, Mencius does not have a technical term for either "rational" or "irrational." When he advises the King Xuan of Qi, who wishes to rule over the Central Kingdom, yet at the same time does not practice benevolent politics, instead of saying that the King's action is "instrumentally irrational," Mencius says that his action is just like "looking for fish by climbing a tree" (*yuan mu er qiu yu* 緣木而求魚), as Mencius believes that, only by practicing benevolent politics (*ren zheng*), can the King realize his goal.[21] A comprehensive survey of the *Mencius* as a whole shows that even though Mencius does not have technical terms for "instrumental irrational," he always uses paradigm cases of instrumental irrationality to convey the idea.[22]

II. Dualism of Rational and Moral Agency

Adopting the practical reasoning approach to understand Confucian philosophers' concept of agency, we have shown that Confucius and Mencius have an instrumentalist concept of rational justification, as well as a concept of discursive rational agency. We now turn to the other approach, namely the motivation approach, which is based on the assumption that we can get a good sense of one's notion of moral agency by looking at one's account of the motivations of virtuous actions. In what follows, I use examples from the *Mencius* to demonstrate this point.[23]

1. *Two Misreadings of Mencius's Instrumental Mode of Justification*

One of the largest groups of passages in the *Mencius* consists of Mencius's instrumental mode of justification for "benevolent politics" (*ren zheng*) or "politics that is sensitive to the suffering of others" (*bu ren ren zhi zheng*). Sometimes, Mencius's argument consists in just a pattern-statement that benevolent politics is a necessary means to the end of winning the Empire (*tian xia* 天下). In other times, after having given a pattern-statement, Mencius would explicitly state that it is

rational for one to practice benevolent politics (or that it is irrational for one not to practice benevolent politics). Here are some representative passages:

> There might have been cases of a cruel (*bu ren* 不仁) man gaining possession of a state, but it has never happened that such a man gained possession of the Empire.[24]

> The Three Dynasties won the Empire because of benevolence (*ren* 仁) and lost because of cruelty (*bu ren*). This is true of the rise and fall, survival and collapse, of states as well. An Emperor cannot keep the Empire within the Four Seas unless he is benevolent; a feudal lord cannot preserve the altars to the gods of earth and grain unless he is benevolent; a Minister or a Counselor cannot preserve his ancestral temple unless he is benevolent; a junzi or a commoner cannot preserve his four limbs unless he is benevolent. *Now if one dislikes death yet revel in cruelty, he is just like someone who drinks alcohol beyond his capacity while he dislikes drunkenness* (emphasis added).[25]

> Confucius said, "Against benevolence there can be no superiority in numbers. If the ruler of a state is drawn to benevolence, he will be matchless in the Empire." *Now to desire to be matchless in the Empire by any means other than benevolence is just like holding something hot while forswearing to cool one's hand with water* (emphasis added).[26]

In the last two passages, we see two more examples of Mencius using concrete paradigm cases of instrumentally irrational actions to convey the general idea of instrumental rationality. We may reformulate Mencius's argument in the following syllogism:

1. One desires to win the Empire.
2. A necessary means to the end of winning the Empire is to practice benevolent politics.
3. Therefore, it is rational for one to practice benevolent politics (or it is irrational for one not to practice benevolent politics).

What Mencius is doing here is to give a justification of benevolent politics. In his argument, he relies on the pattern that the virtue of benevolence, as a matter of empirical fact, systematically brings about good consequences. However, it is important to note that Mencius is not giving a *definition* of the virtue of benevolence *in terms* of its consequence.

There are at least two possible ways to misread Mencius's argument, and they need to be taken seriously because they correspond to two influential theories of virtue and action in contemporary Western philosophy. The first possible misreading is to read Mencius as trying to define virtue in terms of its consequence. This corresponds to what Julia Driver calls the "evaluational externalist" definition of virtue,

which is to define a virtue as a character trait that "produces more good (in the actual world) than not systematically."[27]

This reading can be easily ruled out if we realize that Mencius defines virtuous actions not in terms of factors *external* to the agent such as the consequence, but rather in terms of factors *internal* to the agent such as his deep dispositions of empathy and compassion.[28] Even though Mencius might be said to have a consequentialist *justification* for the virtue of benevolence, he does not *define* the virtue of benevolence in terms of its consequence, as Driver does. Driver says that the rationale behind her externalist definition of virtue is that she wants to preserve "the connection between the agent and the world," and that "what happens matters to morality, and externalist preserves this intuition."[29] I think that Confucius and Mencius share Driver's intuition, but they believe the right way to preserve the connection between the agent and the world is to look for systematic patterns of the external connections between virtuous actions (which are internally defined) and their consequences. This empirical approach allows them to discover the pattern that, if a virtuous ruler's actions flow spontaneously from his empathy and compassion for the people, the people will "submit happily and sincerely from the bottom of their heart."[30] It seems plausible to regard the relation between virtue and its effect in the external world as empirical rather than conceptual; the fact that virtue might *systematically* produce good consequences does not imply that their relation must be conceptual.[31]

The second possible way to misread Mencius is to claim that, as Mencius believes that the reason to practice benevolent actions is the desire to win the Empire (plus the belief that benevolent actions are necessary means to win the Empire), he must also take the desire to win the Empire to be the *cause* of benevolent actions. In other words, one might conclude that the benevolent actions must also be caused (motivated) by the desire to win the Empire. This reading corresponds to a Davidsonian causal theory of action, which claims that the reason of an action is also the cause of the action.

This reading can be easily ruled out when we realize that Mencius's justification of his normative claim that it is rational to do virtuous actions actually implies that virtuous actions should not be caused by any desire to achieve any end; rather they ought to flow spontaneously from one's deep dispositions, such as empathy and compassion for the people. This is because Mencius's argument is based on the pattern that, as a matter of empirical fact, it is *only* when virtuous actions are the spontaneous expressions of empathy that they have transforming power to win the hearts and minds of the people:

> It is through losing the people that Jie and Zhou [two tyrants] have lost the Empire, and it is through losing the hearts and minds of the people that they have lost the people. There is a way to win the Empire; winning the people, and you will win the Empire. There is a way to win the people; winning their hearts and minds, and you will win the people.[32]

This is why Mencius rejects using force or violence:[33]

> When one uses force to win people's allegiance (*yi li fu ren* 以力服人), one does not win people's heart and mind (*xin fu* 心服); they submit to your force because they are not strong enough. When one uses the transforming influence of one's virtue to win people's allegiance, people will submit happily and sincerely from the bottom of their hearts. An example of this is the submission of the seventy disciples to Confucius.[34]

In other words, if one desires to win the Empire, what one needs to do is to let one's empathy and compassion take over, which is the motivating source of one's moral actions. The moral agency must be differentiated from the rational agency; I call this Mencius's dualism of rational and moral agency (or dualism of justification and motivation).

2. Dualism of Rational and Moral Agency

How does this dualism work? Assume that Mencius advises a ruler that it is rational for him to conduct a virtuous action. Mencius's justification is that, when one's action flows from one's empathy and compassion for the people, one necessarily wins the allegiance and trust of the people. In other words, Mencius's justification actually requires that the motivating source of the ruler's action must not be anything but his empathy for the people. Having been convinced by this justification, the ruler must let his action be guided by his empathy for the people; his benevolent actions must happen naturally, as an expression of *xing* 性 (nature).

In this case, the justification and the motivation are differentiated, that is, the justification is a rational one, whereas the motivation is a moral one. I call this idea Mencius's "dualism of justification and motivation." To make better sense of it, let us imagine what would happen if the ruler's motivation is the same as the justification. That is to say, let us imagine that the ruler's moral agency is identical with his rational agency—namely, the ruler's virtuous action is motivated by his desire to win the Empire. According to Mencius, such a purposive action would not have the kind of transforming power that an expressive action motivated by empathy has.

Therefore, despite the air of paradox, it makes perfect sense to say that *only* when a ruler's action is not motivated by his desire to win

the Empire, can this very desire be fulfilled. To put it in more general terms, *only* when one does a virtuous action for its own sake, can this virtuous action has the desired effect and consequence.

Another way to understand this point is to say that, only when virtue is sought for its own sake can virtue have transforming power. We may call this the "dialectic of virtue and power."[35] We find Mencius making exactly this point in the following passage:

> If one does good things to people for the sake of winning their allegiance (*yi shan fu ren* 以善服人), one can never win their allegiance. Only when one does good things to people for the sake of their welfare (*yi shan yang ren* 以善養人), can one win the allegiance of all under Heaven. It has never been the case that one can become a true King of the world without winning the heart-mind (*xin fu* 心服) of all the people in the world.[36]

It can be argued that the dialectic dualist structure of rational and moral agency (or the dialectic of power and virtue) is at work almost everywhere in the *Mencius*, as well as in other early Chinese texts such as the *Analects*, *Xunzi*, and *Daodejing*. But this will have to be a topic for another occasion.

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Endnotes

1. The phrase "somewhere deeper" is from Bernard Williams. He argues that the notion of moral sincerity involves "some element of passivity, some sense in which moral impulses prompt us, and courses of action are impressed on us," and that "we see a man's genuine convictions as coming from somewhere deeper in him than" his rational part of the self. See Bernard Williams, "Morality and Emotions," in *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 227.
2. Alasdair MacIntyre, "Once More on Confucian and Aristotelian Conceptions of the Virtues," in *Chinese Philosophy in an Era of Globalization*, ed. Robin R. Wang (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 160; see also MacIntyre, "Questions for Confucians," in *Confucian Ethics*, eds. Kwong-loi Shun and David Wong (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 203–18, and MacIntyre, "Incommen-

surability, Truth, and the Conversation between Confucians and Aristotelians about the Virtues," in *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives*, ed. Eliot Deutsch (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 104–22.

3. It must be acknowledged that we can find both the theoretical and pragmatic modes of justification among early Chinese philosophers; they tend to use the theoretical mode in philosophical debates with their peers, and they are more likely to use the pragmatic mode in their interactions with rulers.

4. Christine Korsgaard, "Rawls and Kant: On the Primacy of the Practical," in the *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress*, ed. Hoke Robinson (Memphis: Marquette University Press, 1995), 1165–73.

5. Ibid., 1168.

6. Although the term "*de zheng*" is not being used by early Confucians, Confucius does use the phrase "*wei zheng yi de* 為政以德," which means "relying on virtue to do politics" or "the rule of virtue" (*Analects*, 2.1).

7. *Analects*, 6.4, 16.1; *Mencius*, 1A4, 1A7, 1B5.

8. *Analects*, 2.1, 2.19–20, 12.7, 12.17–19, 13.4, 13.6, 12.18, and 14.41; *Mencius*, 1A5, 1B14, 2A3, 2B1, 3A2, 4A7, 4A12–13, 4A20, 7A12–14, and 7B3–4.

9. *Analects*, 2.19.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid. The translations of passages from the *Analects* and the *Mencius* in this article are D. C. Lau's and Simon Leys's, with my modifications.

12. *Analects*, 2.1, 2.19–20, 12.7, 12.17–19, 13.4, 13.6, 12.18, and 14.41.

13. Here I do not consider the subtle difference between Korsgaard's formulation of the "primacy of the practical" mode of justification, which uses the phrase "the best or only means," and our formulation, which uses the phrase "a necessary means."

14. One interesting question we might ask is whether Confucius would still say that one ought to do *x* if *x* is a means that is necessary to the end one desires, even though *x* is improper (violating the rituals, for example). It seems that Confucius would say that the improper means would never even appear as options for a *junzi's* deliberation. I thank Professor Chung-ying Cheng for urging me to address this question.

15. *Analects*, 12.18, 13.6, 12.17, 14.41, and 13.4; *Mencius*, 1A5; 7B3, 7B4, 4A7, 4A13, 4a12, 2A3, 1B14, and 2B1.

16. *Analects*, 12.19; see also *Mencius*, 3A2.

17. *Analects*, 15.16.

18. Ibid., 15.10.

19. Ibid., 6.17.

20. I have argued elsewhere that, in general, the Confucians often try to transmit a tradition (or a practice) through concrete paradigms, rather than abstract theories or rules. See Yang Xiao, "How Confucius Does Things with Words: Two Paradigms of Hermeneutic Practice in the *Analects* and Its Exegeses," *Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 2 (2007): 497–532.

21. *Mencius*, 1A7. A more literal translation is "climbing a tree in order to find fish." Lau's translation does not translate the character "er 而," which means "in order to" here.

22. Ibid., 2A4, 4A3, 4A7, 5B7. Similarly, it can be shown that Mencius uses concrete paradigm cases of prudentially irrational actions to make claims that a ruler is "prudentially irrational" if he does not practice benevolent politics. He also claims that someone who has no prudential rationality will never be persuaded by any reasoning or discourse, and there is no use talking to him (*yu yan* 與言) (*Mencius* 4A8). I cannot give my arguments here, but examples can be found in *Mencius* 1A7, 6A14, 4A8, 4A9, 6A18, and 7B32.

23. Although I focus on only Mencius in this section, we can find similar ideas in the *Analects*. For example, see *Analects*, 2.10, 17.21, 13.18, 19.14, and 19.17.

24. *Mencius*, 7B13.

25. Ibid., 4A3.

26. Ibid., 4A7.

27. Julia Driver, *Uneasy Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xiv–v, 82.

28. *Mencius*, 4B19, 7B32, 6A16, 3A5, 7B33, 7A30, 7A21, 4B16, 7A16, and 4B18.

29. Driver, *Uneasy Virtue*, 70.

30. *Mencius*, 2A3.
31. It seems that almost all the early Chinese philosophers accept this assumption about the external (empirical) connection between virtue and its consequence or effect. For example, when Laozi critiques Confucianism, one of the strategies he uses is to show that the Confucian pattern-statements about the connection between Confucian virtues and their effects are empirically false.
32. *Mencius*, 4A9.
33. I have argued elsewhere that to coerce people through physical violence was a common practice in Mencius's time, and this practice was later theorized by the legalist thinkers such as Shang Yang and Han Feizi. See Yang Xiao, "When Moral Psychology Meets Political Philosophy: Expressivism in the *Mencius*," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 5, no. 2 (2006): 257–71.
34. *Mencius*, 2A3; see also 7A12–14.
35. I believe that what David Nivison calls the "paradox of virtue," which he finds in the pre-Qin thinkers, is roughly what I call the dialectic of virtue and power. See David Nivison, "The Paradox of 'Virtue,'" in *The Ways of Confucianism*, ed. Bryan Van Norden (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), 31–43. Philip J. Ivanhoe has also argued that this is not really a paradox at all, and that is to say it is a paradox tends to mislead; see "The Paradox of *Wuwei*?" *The Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 34, no. 2 (2007): 277–87.
36. *Mencius*, 4B16.