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Wang Chong's Thoughts on Argumentation

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Abstract: As an outstanding thinker in the Eastern Han Dynasty of China, Wang Chong wrote many books during his lifetime, but all of them were lost except Lunheng. The purport of Lunheng is to reveal and criticize all kinds of "Xuwang (an ancient Chinese word, with the similar meaning of falsehood, fallacy, etc.)" in the society at that time. In our opinion, the ideological support behind Lunheng is Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation.

Keywords: Argumentation, Lunheng, Wang Chong, Xuwang

1. Introduction

Wang Chong (27 AD-c. 97 AD) was a philosopher in the Eastern Han Dynasty of China, and he was also an outstanding thinker, educator and forerunner of thoughts on argumentation in early China. Wang Chong was diligent and eager to learn during his childhood, and after growing up, he entered the official career. However, influenced by his upright and forthright upbringing, he was repeatedly frustrated and even dismissed from his position as an official in the royal court, leaving himself in a state of poverty. The times were destined that Wang Chong would be a tragic and insignificant role in political circles. However, it was precisely because of his frustrated and unsuccessful experience in official career that Wang Chong was braver and determined to carry the banner of criticism, and wrote such a great book as Lunheng, which left valuable ideological materials for later generations.

In the pre-Qin period (before 221 BC), some well-known philosophers and thinkers, such as Confucius and Mencius, had discussed many ideas related to argumentation in the communication and development of their schools. However, during the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC), the Legalist thoughts, as the official philosophy, constrained the development of various theories such as Ming-Bian (i.e, ancient Chinese logic) both politically and ideologically. By the time of the Western Han Dynasty (202 BC-8 AD), the ruling class adopted Dong Zhongshu's proposal that worshiped Confucianism only, in order to maintain their dominant position. The development of the Confucian school represented by Dong Zhongshu was unprecedented, but this development also caused people to start to exaggerate the theological and superstitious elements of Confucianism. Moreover, the proliferation of such superstitions also led to

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misunderstandings about the truth of certain things and statements. It was under the rule of this extreme ideology in these two periods that the development of Chinese logic and argumentation thoughts fell into a low tide. However, in the early Eastern Han Dynasty, the emergence of Wang Chong and his *Lunheng* brought hope to the development of the sluggish logic and argumentation thoughts. Wang Chong criticized many of the claims he heard and considered to be “Xuwang (an ancient Chinese word, with the similar meaning of falsehood, fallacy, the unfounded, the fabricated, or the invented, etc.)” in *Lunheng*. Because of this, when evaluating the purpose of writing the *Lunheng*, he said, “the *Lunheng*, though which has about one hundred chapters, can be summed up in one sentence: ‘Ji Xuwang’”(Yiwen, chapter in Vol. 20 of *Lunheng*). (Note: All the chapters cited in this paper are from the *Lunheng*, in the following passages only the title of the chapter is marked behind the quotations.) That is to say, the main idea and main content of the book is to refute the false statements and misunderstandings. And those false discourse and statements, in essence, are kinds of fallacies. (During that period, for example, Confucianism was further mythologized and Confucius was touted as a sage and a man of god. At that time, many Confucian scholars in the society “believed that what the sages said are always right”, which was a typical fallacy of “appeal to authority” from the perspective of contemporary argumentation research.) Then we can learn from *Lunheng* that when Wang Chong criticized various kinds of “Xuwang” in the society, he consciously used the method of argumentation as a tool to identify and analyze different fallacies, and formed his unique thoughts on argumentation.

Wang Chong wrote many books in his life, among which *Lunheng* is the main work of Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation, with a total of 84 chapters in 30 volumes¹. The book is called the *Lunheng* because, according to Wang Chong, it is about weighing the right and wrong of claims and establishing criteria for judging the truth and falsity of statements or propositions. Although from a philosophical point of view, the thought expressed in *Lunheng* is Wang Chong's criticism of idealism such as divination and superstition, he used many reasonable approaches of argumentation in the process of criticism. No matter from the thoughts on argumentation, or from the thoughts of “Tuilei (i.e., reasoning by analogy)” and criticism of fallacies, *Lunheng* clearly shows the richness of the ideas on argumentation it contains. It can be said that *Lunheng* is a treasure handed down in the history of ancient Chinese thoughts on argumentation.

The following contents of this paper are divided into three parts. The first part is to introduce the current studies about Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation in China, which is mainly an overview of the content of Wang Chong's “logic of arguments”² in the early research on the history of Chinese logic. There are many researches and dissertations on Wang Chong in China and even in other countries, but so far there is little research on his thoughts on argumentation. Therefore, this part is mostly the product of the discussions about and explorations into his ideas on argumentation by modern Chinese scholars from the perspective of logic (especially traditional logic), including his thoughts on definition, requirements and approaches of argumentation. The second part is based on the first part, which is the summary of the predecessors, to further understand and expand Wang Chong's argumentation thoughts through the relevant concepts of argumentation theory in different dimensions, and the core motivation of this expanded content is the “practical” part of his thoughts on argumentation. The last part is a conclusion and some further considerations on the relevant topic.

¹ According to historical records, there should be more than one hundred chapters, but some of them were lost later.

² Some Chinese scholars introduce this term to express certain study on argumentation, see section 2 for details.

2. A survey of Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation in the perspective of traditional logic

In the early studies of the history of ancient Chinese logic, taking Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation as an example, many Chinese scholars tend to call the related contents by a joint term—"Wang Chong's logic of argument." One of the reasons is that influenced by the translation of early Chinese logic scholars, the other reason is that some of the scholars have accepted the vague and general usage of "logic of..."to mean "...theory." As a starting point, we will have a brief overview of some current known research contents about Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation in the perspective of logic of argument.

Wang Chong said that his book Lunheng "is neither about 'Zuo (creation)', nor about 'Shu (explanation of others' opinions)', but about 'Lun (exposition and argumentation)'" (Duizuo). "Lun" contains both "Li" (the literal translation is similar to "establish/construct", here refers to "present an argument") and "Po" (As above is similar to "break/destroy", here refers to "refute/rebut"). The former (Li) is similar to the logical proof, and is what he calls "Zheng Zhenshi (judging or determining the truth of an argument)" (Dingxian), while the latter (Po), like the logical refutation, is what he calls "Ji Xuwang (refuting or rebutting a fallacy)" (Yiwen). Since some Chinese scholars think "Li" and "Po" are two basic concepts in traditional logic, they summarize the ideas on argumentation in Lunheng as "logic of argument". In addition, Wang Chong also said, "Lunheng is written for weighing the right and wrong of statements and establish standards for judging the truth of statements. According to the above content, some scholars put forward that "Lunheng is a book about determining the standards whether some arguments and topics are true or false, and the whole book systematically expounds the argumentation", including the following contents.

2.1. The definition of argumentation

In Lunheng, Wang Chong wrote:

Argumentation is used to distinguish right from wrong. (Ziji)

If someone's claim about something is contrary to the facts and can't produce evidences to prove it, no one will believe it, no matter how many nice words he/she said repeatedly. (Zhishi)

There must be reasonable and unreasonable in a lawsuit, and there must be right and wrong in an argumentation. The part that is wrong and unreasonable loses, and the part that is right and reasonable wins. (Wushi)

To sum up the above sentences, we can get following conclusions: Argumentation is a thinking process of debating or arguing about the truth of a thesis or proposition; if a thesis or proposition violates the truth of the facts and cannot be proved by evidences, it cannot be convincing; only if a thesis or proposition is true and the way of the argument is right ("reasonable"), can it be established ("win"). It is not difficult to see that Wang Chong's definition of argumentation is of the embryonic form of the definition in traditional logic, and also takes into account the truth of a

thesis or proposition, laying a foreshadowing for the following contents of the requirements of argumentation.

2.2. The requirements of argumentation

Wang Chong proposed to distinguish right from wrong by argumentation, nevertheless, how to use the approaches of argumentation? And what principles should be followed in the process of argumentation in order to achieve the purpose of distinguishing right from wrong, true from false?

Wang Chong put forward the following requirements in his Lunheng:

Yin Xiaoyan & Li Zhengyan (To test and verify with factual effects, in other words, to prove by valid arguments.)

Wang Chong put forward the following points in the chapter of Bozang in Lunheng:

There is nothing can make things clearer than “Xiaoyan”, and there is no more definite argument than evidence. Even if there are fundamental reasons for empty words, people will still not be convinced.

“Xiaoyan” in the above passage means valid arguments. In Wang Chong’s view, a thesis or proposition can be proved effective only by “Xiaoyan” (valid arguments); otherwise, no one will be convinced even if the thesis or proposition itself makes sense.

Then how does that work? Wang Chong wrote,

Think with your mind when making an argument, test it with facts (evidences), and the exaggerated and false things will be verified immediately. (Duizuo)

“Think with your mind” here is actually a thinking activity of reasoning, and “test it with facts (evidences)” is a kind of proof rule in logic, that is, the arguments must be true. In Wang Chong's view, an argumentation can only be recognized and accepted by others through “Xiaoyan”, however, it requires not only definite argument(s), but also that the argument(s) should be in line with the actual situation.

Wang Chong further put forward the viewpoint of “Zhengyan.” In his opinion, “Xiaoyan” is not only the premise of “Zhengyan,” but also the inference basis of “Zhengyan.” If we want to prove a thesis, we not only need to “Yin Xiaoyan,” that is to say, to find out the arguments (premises) to verify the proof, but also need to “Li Zhengyan,” that is, to establish or construct an argumentation process from the premise to the conclusion and clearly prove the argumentation. This requirement is one of the core elements of Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation, and is reflected in various argumentation contents in Lunheng.

Lun Guishi and Shi Shangran (The thesis or topic must be correct and the arguments must be true.)

Wang Chong pointed out that a good argumentation not only needs to “test it with facts”, but also needs to match what it “proves” with the reality. He wrote in the chapter of Ziji: “The

main point of the issue under discussion lies in the correct content rather than the fancy words. The basis for discussing things should also be true to reality rather than to cater to others (false reasons).”

From what Wang Chong stated, we can conclude that it requires us to make the topics or theses correct and the arguments true and reliable in an argumentation.

Then how to ensure that the topics are correct and the arguments are true and reliable? Wang Chong insisted that for “Yan” (i.e., “what we say”), we should “repeatedly analyze what it expresses”, and for “Xing” (i.e., “what we do”), we should “carefully examine its reasons or grounds.” As for an argumentation concerning “Yan” and “Xing,” only by repeatedly and carefully analyzing and examining what the topic or thesis is and the origin and basis of the arguments can we ensure that the topics are correct and the arguments are true and reliable. In order to do this, Wang Chong made the following requirements: 1), there needs to be a “good heart.” Here the “good heart” is amount to the “good mind” today, since ancient Chinese think the “heart” is the organ of human thinking. In this sense, to have a “good heart” just means to be able to think correctly. So Wang Chong added, “a good heart can distinguish right from wrong” (Dingxian). Besides, it is necessary to be “clear-headed and not confused by the preferences of ordinary people” (Chaoqi). This shows that if a person has the right mind (here also can be understood as rational thinking consciousness), he/she will not be confused by the common falsehood, nor will he/she “only obey the wishes of the public”, but he/should take a critical view to explore the problem in the right way of thinking. Such above expressions by Wang Chong not only present a “truth-seeking and pragmatic” requirement and attitude to argumentation, but also criticize and avoid some types of fallacies that we have summed up in modern times, such as “argumentum ad populum (Latin for ‘appeal to the people’).” 2) Wang Chong mentioned that it is also necessary to prevent “modifying your appearance in order to be similar to others” and “modifying your words in order to cater to others.” That is to say, it is not possible to make analogies with the superficial similarity of things, or to make specious arguments with some plausible words. Otherwise, as Wang Chong wrote,

If you modify your appearance too much to be similar to others, you will lose your original appearance; if you modify your words too much in order to cater to others, you will lose the content of your thoughts. (Ziji)

We should neither achieve the imitation of appearance simply by seeking the similarity of things, nor should we make plausible discourses just to cater to the opinions of others. The content of “clear-headed and not confused by the preferences of ordinary people” mentioned above is actually somewhat similar to what Wang Chong emphasizes here, the difference is that the former is a direct explanation and more emphasis on the argumentative practice in daily life, while the latter is an indirect explanation and more emphasis on the argumentative expression of the written language.

Yan Kexiao & Zhi Kedu (The topic and its main purpose should be understandable.)

Wang Chong mentioned in the chapter of Ziji that some people thought the contents of his articles were too simple and superficial, not as elegant and profound as the scriptures written by ancient sages. For this, Wang Chong responded,

When you speak, you must speak clearly. When you write an article, you must write it in a way of making it easily understood.

The reason why sages make people feel elegant is because they can both make people understand what they say (that is, “Yan Kexiao” in his words) and get the main purpose of what they express (that is, “Zhi Kedu” in his words). Only by meeting these two requirements can a speech or an article make the audience feel that it is “as if the blind could see again and the deaf could hear the voice.”

So far it can be inferred from the above that Wang Chong's ideas on the requirements for argumentation are relatively comprehensive. These requirements almost involve most of the rules concerning proofs in the traditional logic, which include: (1) The thesis or topic must be correct (“Lun Guishi”) ; (2) its main purpose must be clear (“Zhi Kedu”) ; (3) The argumentation must be proved by arguments (“Yin Xiaoyan”) ; (4) the arguments must be true (“Shi Shangran”) , which cannot be contrary to the facts or the objective truth; and, (5) To be able to prove the topics logically from the arguments (“Li Zhengyan”) , one must not commit such fallacies as “only obeying the wishes of the public”, “using the fancy but hollow words”, “reasoning by forced analogy”, “emphasizing on rhetoric”, and “just taking a name”, and so on.

2.3 The approaches of argumentation

Wang Chong proposed some approaches of argumentation in Lunheng:

1. Citing specific matters to prove the content of the argumentation.

“Citing specific matters to prove the content of the argumentation”(Ziran) in the approach of argumentation is to use facts as evidences to argue, which is also what Wang Chong called “testing and verifying with (actual) things”(Lunsi).

Wang Chong said that “we must rely on our ears and eyes to determine the truth of things”(Shizhi). He affirmed that the perceptual knowledge is the basis of cognition, so he believed that the facts obtained by observation, experiments and other methods are reliable for “Xiaoyan (valid arguments).” For a topic, he often begins by asking “how to find the evidences” and “how to determine and prove the truth of the argument(s).” Then he would list some of the “things” or “facts” he got as examples and make inferences, so as to summarize a general conclusion to prove the truth or falsity of a topical proposition. This approach of argumentation, in terms of the way in which its conclusion is drawn, obviously belongs to the inductive method. Taking the chapter of Leixu in Lunheng as an example, the argument that “Thunder and lightning is a kind of fire” is introduced as follows:

- 1) If you look at the body of a man who has been hit by thunder and died, you will find that if thunder and lightning hit him on the head, his hair and beard would be burned, and if thunder and lightning hit him on the body, the skin would be burned, and the smell of fire would be found near his body. That's one of the proofs.
- 2) Taoist experimentalists hold that a stone heated by a thunder-clap, becomes red. If it be thrown into a well, the stone being burning hot and the water in the well cold, an explosion ensues with a loud detonation like thunder. This is the second proof.
- 3) When somebody suffers from a cold, the cold fluid enters his stomach. The stomach being as a rule warm within, the warmth and the cold struggle together, and the exploding air gives

a thunder-like sound. This is the third proof.

4) In a thunder-storm brilliant lightning appears every now and then like the glares of big fires. This is the fourth proof.

5) When the lightning strikes, it often burns man's houses and buildings, or grass and trees. This is the fifth proof.

Except for the second proof, all the other (four) proofs can be directly observed or felt by the senses, while the second proof is a result of the experiment. From the above “five proofs”, a general conclusion that “thunder and lightning is a kind of fire” can be drawn. This method is an induction by Simple Enumeration. In this chapter, Wang Chong not only proves that “thunder and lightning is a kind of fire”, but also proves that “thunder and lightning is caused by extremely strong ‘Yang-qi’³ impacting ‘Yin-qi’⁴.” He wrote,

In fact thunder is nothing else than the exploding solar fluid. How do we know? ---In the first month the Yang-qi begins to be roused, consequently we have the first thunder during the first month. In the fifth month Yang-qi is at its cynosure, therefore at that time thunder rapidly follows upon thunder. In autumn and winter Yang-qi declines, therefore thunder ceases during these seasons. In the midst of summer the sun reigns supreme, but the Yin-qi endeavors to get the upper hand. In this dispute of the Yang and the Yin fluids it comes to frictions, and these frictions lead to explosions and shooting, which are destructive.

The sentence pattern “...therefore...” Wang Chong used in the above passage shows that he has a deposition to explore the causal relationship between the phenomena and his argumentation method is based on the causality.

2. Other approaches

While affirming that “we must rely on our ears and eyes to determine the truth of matters”, Wang Chong emphasized that “we should not only rely on our eyes and ears to judge what is right and wrong, but also rely on our inner thinking.” Therefore, in the approaches of argumentation, he put forward “citing specific matters to prove the argumentation”, but also emphasized on “verifying by analogy” and that “a comparative study of various things can confirm which view is correct”. As for the understanding of “comparative study”, many scholars classify it as “Tuilei”⁵. “Tuilei,” with more extensive meaning and more flexible usage, is roughly equivalent to what we now call the “reasoning by classes.” It not only refers to analogical reasoning, but also refers to various methods including deductive reasoning, reductio ad absurdum (reduction to absurdity), dilemma reasoning and so on. Here is just one example to illustrate it. For example, Wang Chong argued that “there are no ghosts or gods in sacrificial rites” and that “it is useless to remove them (ghosts or gods)” in the chapter of Jiechu. He wrote:

What do ghosts and gods want to do in people's house?

If they are meant to hurt people, they will be hidden when the sacrificial rites of removing ghosts

³ The proper noun of traditional Chinese medicine, here is an ancient Chinese word, which means vitality or warm air(energy).

⁴ It is also an ancient Chinese word here, which is opposite to “Yang-qi” and means cold air(energy).

⁵ It is a kind of inference/reasoning that depends on category in ancient China.

is carried out, and when the rites are over, they will return to where they were before. If they don't want to hurt people, there's no harm in just living in people's homes. In terms of reasoning methods, here includes at least two kinds: reductio ad absurdum and dilemma reasoning.

First of all, Wang Chong assumes that there are ghosts and gods, and they have thoughts. From this proposition, he puts forward a question, which leads to the idea that ghosts and gods may or may not be harmful to people. According to the idea that “the mind of ghosts and gods cannot be inferred”, that is, it is a kind of unknown, invisible and insensible, thus refuting the previous proposition of “there are ghosts and gods ,and they have thoughts”, and then draw the conclusion that “it is useless to remove them (ghosts or gods)”. This method of reasoning is very similar to reductio ad absurdum: starting with a proposition, first assume it is true and then make inferences, finally draw an absurd conclusion and use this conclusion to refute the previously assumed proposition. The reasoning process can be formally expressed as:

$$p \rightarrow (q \wedge \neg q)$$
$$\therefore \neg p$$

Secondly, from the two hypothetical propositions: If the ghosts and gods are meant to harm people, they will be hidden when the sacrificial rites of removing ghosts is carried out...the sacrificial rites of removing them are meaningless. If they don't want to harm people...the sacrificial rites of removing them are meaningless.

Plus the disjunctive proposition:

Ghosts and gods either have thoughts that can hurt people (but they can't be found or perceived, so people can't know whether the rites of removing ghosts is useful), or they don't have thoughts that hurt people. And a form of reasoning similar to the “simple constructive dilemma” is formed. The reasoning process can be formally expressed as:

$$p \rightarrow q$$
$$r \rightarrow q$$
$$p \vee r$$
$$\therefore q$$

The reductio ad absurdum described in the above reasoning and its case content are also indirect argumentation in terms of argumentation methods. Wang Chong's argumentation method in Lunheng is mostly direct argumentation, but indirect argumentation is also used occasionally, and sometimes the two argumentation methods are even used in combination.

3. The research expansion of Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation:

3.1 From the perspective of Pragma-Dialectics

Since argumentation scholars in contemporary China still make a distinction between argument and argumentation when discussing argumentative research, especially in the translation and interpretation of the foreign literature concerned, and argument is generally understood as a narrow sense of argumentation, that is, the traditional, abstract argument with a “premise -

conclusion” structure. Therefore, it is not difficult to see from the above chapter that the previous researches about Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation are mostly defined and understood from the perspective of narrow argument. However, the revival and development of contemporary argumentation research is exactly due to the paradigm shift from the traditional “premise - conclusion” structure and abstract propositional sequential argumentation to the dynamic and active argumentation interpretation in the practical context. It is the theoretical starting point of contemporary argumentative research to understand the concept of argumentation by returning to argumentation practice and even daily discourse. In other words, the development process of argumentation theory is also a process that “argument” breaks through the narrow logical meaning and returns to the extensive argumentation practice so as to reconnect with or even be equivalent to the meaning of “argumentation”. In fact, when I reconsidered the content of Wang Chong's thoughts from the perspective of contemporary theoretical research on argumentation, based on the core contents of Wang Chong's argumentation thoughts mentioned above, which are “emphasis on facts” and “emphasis on evidence”, it is not difficult to find that it is feasible to take these thoughts as a bridge to make narrow argumentation lead to broader argumentation, and as a driving force for the development of his argumentation thoughts and even his whole theoretical system of argumentation.

Taking the definition of argumentation in section 2.1 as an example, the understanding and definition of those parts are very similar to the relevant understanding and definition of the proof rules in traditional logic (the argument is reasonable; the argument must be able to deduce the thesis correctly, etc.). However, from the perspective of contemporary argumentation research, we can easily see the features of “interactivity (for example, from the second point there is a consideration of the other party's feedback or even a kind of refutation.)”, “sociality (it involves cases such as lawsuits, disputes, etc.)” and “purpose (argumentation is used to distinguish right from wrong(fallacy))” contained in Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation from those three dimensions concerning the definition, and those features also belong to the necessary features of the argumentation definition in the contemporary argumentation research.

Similarly, taking the requirements about the argumentation in section 2.2 as an example, Wang Chong discussed the contents of “Yin Xiaoyan” and “Li Zhengyan” in response to the Confucian advocate of “lavish burial” and the Mohist idea about “the belief that when people die, they become ghosts and sentient, and can turn into the image of living people to do harm to other living people”, he argued for his standpoint that he believes that “the dead have no consciousness” and “lavish burial has no benefits”: Wang Chong wrote,

The Mohist claim is to advocate ghosts. They believe that when people die, they become ghosts and still have consciousness, and they can become the image of living people to do harm to people. Therefore, they cite examples such as “Du Bo becoming a ghost”⁶ as an evidence to prove that there are ghosts in the world. (Bozang)

But the examples they cite are actually only heard from people's rumors.

The confucianists did not believe that (referring to the Mohist viewpoint). They believed that the dead had no consciousness and could not become ghosts, yet they prepared all

⁶ It is rumored that King Xuan in the Zhou Dynasty killed his senior official Du Bo, who was not guilty of any crime. Then in the third year King Xuan went hunting in the wild, Du Bo appeared and shot King Xuan with a red bow and arrow.

kinds of things when they helped others with funeral services and sacrifices.... (Ibid.)

The backing for this viewpoint is that: “no one in history has been resurrected because of sacrifice”, “people have never ‘seen’ a ghost in the true sense (of the word).” These two views, together with the previous discussion on “facts”, became the reasons for Wang Chong's argumentation.

In the process of this argumentation, Wang Chong also took the possibility of a rebuttal into account, such as:

If the dead are conscious, then it would be wrong to abandon the dead and forget their ancestors (this refers to the reason that the Confucian advocated the lavish burial is because people are afraid to forget the kindness of the predecessors and commit the crime of unfilial behavior) is wrong. (Ibid.)

Regarding this point of view, Wang Chong said:

...There is no final conclusion as to the truth about life and death. In fact, the situation of the dead is unknown, and it exists in a different world from the living. The real situation of the dead is elusive and difficult to be understood deeply. The truth between the consciousness and the unconsciousness of the dead cannot be ascertained, then it is impossible to ascertain whether people will become ghosts after death. Although knowledgeable people are erudite and informed, they also cannot understand such things clearly. (Ibid.)

It can be seen that he has also considered the limited scope of the conclusions or at least two limited contents, that is, “so far (no one has actually ‘seen’ a ghost)” and “in the case that people still do not know the real situation of the dead.”

The in-depth analysis and observation of the above argumentation will make us easily associate with some contents of Toulmin's model of argumentation. In the chapter discussing the requirements of “Yin Xiaoyan, Li Zhengyan” and citing the above examples, Wang Chong also explained that:

If you don't concentrate and think deeply when you're arguing, but judge what is right or wrong only on the basis of superficial phenomena, or on the basis of what you see and hear from the outside rather than what you analyze and judge from the inside, then you will argue based on false phenomena, and if you believe in the false phenomena, you will take the facts as wrong. So the judgment of right and wrong can not only rely on the eyes and ears but must also be through the inner thinking. The Mohist point of view was not arrived at by thinking hard, but only by the superficial phenomena of things, and they only believed what they heard, so that even though the Xiaoyan (validity of their argument) was very remarkable, it was still deviated from the truth. (Ibid.)

Then we can make a deeper understanding and analysis of the content of Wang Chong's “Yin Xiaoyan”, “Li Zhengyan” by combining it with Toulmin's model of argumentation, and it can be said that “Xiaoyan” corresponds to the “Datum / Data” in Toulmin's model, and “Zhengyan” corresponds to the “Backing / B.” The combination enables us to have a deeper understanding of

the true meanings about “Xiaoyan” and “Zhengyan,” and at the same time, it enables us to better grasp the relationship structure between them.

While understanding and expanding Wang Chong's content about “Xiaoyan” and “Zhengyan” through Toulmin's model of argumentation, this way also brings new problems to be studied for the content of Wang's discourse. That is to say, Wang Chong repeatedly emphasized in the previous discussion that, “the judgment of right and wrong can not only rely on the eyes and ears and must be through the inner thinking ...The Mohist point of view was not arrived at by thinking hard, but only by the superficial phenomena of things...so that... it was still deviated from the truth...” and so on. So, what exactly needs to be thought through inner thinking here? And how to promote the progress of the argument through inner thinking? These are the new problems that need to be studied and dealt with. The perspectives and understandings of previous scholars who regarded them as “the thinking activities of reasoning” are obviously quite narrow at present. Although the concept of Backing in Toulmin's model of argumentation seems to enable people to have a better understanding of the question of “what”, but it still can't well handle and answer the above questions about “how to ...” well, especially when considering the actual argumentation in daily life. Then here will introduce other related concepts in the argumentation theory to understand and deal with the problem, that is, the concepts of “standpoint at issue” and “unexpressed elements” in the Pragma-Dialectical theory of argumentation proposed by van Eemeren et al.formulated that:

If in argumentative discourse it is not clear exactly which standpoint is at issue, there is no way of telling whether the argumentation that is advanced can lead to a resolution of the difference of opinion that is discussed. In such a case, it is not only impossible to determine whether the argumentation does indeed provide enough support for the standpoint but even whether it is relevant at all. Identifying the standpoints discussed is therefore the first task in analyzing argumentative discourse, and identifying means for tracing standpoints constitutes a central problem area in argumentation theory. The problems concerned can be dealt with only if it is first clear what exactly is meant by a standpoint. (van Eemeren et al., 2014, p. 13)

The expression in this passage is very similar to Wang Chong's previous description of “inner thinking.” The difference is that Wang Chong does not clearly state “what” cannot be judged without “inner thinking”. The issue is very clear in this paragraph, that is, “the difference of opinion that is discussed”, or “standpoint at issue / clear standpoint at issue.” So it seems that taking such concepts and understanding into Wang Chong's original discourse can not only respond his later claims about others' rebuttals, but also broaden the content and scope of his argumentation. It can also provide the purpose for the actual argumentation in daily life, and further provide targeted help for the consideration of argumentation methods.

The consideration of argumentation methods is actually the reflection on the question of “how to...” mentioned above, which can be understood and solved through the relevant concept of “unexpressed elements.” Van Eemeren et al. note:

It might be difficult to tell how argumentative discourse should resolve a difference of opinion if certain elements that have remained implicit in the discourse are not taken into account. This applies to standpoints and starting points that are left implicit but especially to “unexpressed premises” in the argumentation that is advanced. When these implicit

elements are overlooked, a proper evaluation of the argumentation may be impossible.” (Ibid., p. 17)

In terms of argumentation expression, the omitted unexpressed elements are often the premises expressing axioms, common sense, assumptions and so on. Only by identifying the implicit elements in the argument can the argumentation analysts make proper analysis and evaluation. Therefore, it can be concluded that the key to understanding and solving the “how to...” problem is to identify and grasp all kinds of implicit elements in the argument. Therefore, the unexpressed elements that need to be considered are connected with the content of “Zhengyan” that Wang Chong chose to further consider instead of being satisfied with “Xiaoyan,” and the reasons and significance of his thoughts about the content are also answered.

In addition, some of the following contents of “Lun Guishi and Shi Shangran” can also be understood by Van Eemeren's concept of “strategic maneuvering.” For example, Wang Chong comments:

If you modify your appearance too much to be similar to others, you will lose your original appearance; if you modify your words too much in order to cater to others, you will lose the content of your thoughts. (Ziji)

The point of view here is very similar to the concept about “keeping a balance between aiming for effectiveness and maintaining reasonableness” (Ibid.), that is, one cannot just pursue effectiveness or pay too much attention to rhetoric. It also includes the contents of the previous definition, such as:

There must be reasonable and unreasonable in a lawsuit, and there must be right and wrong in an argumentation. The part that is wrong and unreasonable loses, and the part that is right and reasonable wins. (Wushi)

Although the above content seems to be discussing rational content here, Wang Chong actually said in the following text:

It is possible for some people to win(the argument) by being good at eloquence, good at debate, and clear and fluent in speech; others may fail due to stuttering, incoherent language and inability to express words. (Ibid.)

The viewpoint mentioned here seem to take into account rhetorical means of persuasion and effectiveness dimension for the actual argumentation in daily life. Finally, Wang added,

Arguing and litigate with your tongue is like fighting with sword or halberd. With a sharp sword or a long-handled halberd, coupled with strong hands and quick feet, you will surely win; with a blunt sword or a short halberd, coupled with weak hands and slow feet, you will surely fail. (Ibid.)

In China, the scene of heated argument is often compared to “Chun Qiang She Jian⁷.” Therefore, the tongue is compared to the weapons, and the aforementioned eloquence, good at debate, etc.

⁷ A Chinese idiom about using the lips as a gun and the tongue as a sword. It describes a heated argument with sharp words.

are like sharp weapons. However, the key to “win” depends not only on the sharpness of the weapons, but also on the “fundamental factor” that can be matched, that is, the reasonable requirements for the body. In other words, if the body is not in good shape and unable to use the corresponding weapons, then no matter how lethal the weapon is, it is still not certain to win. Therefore, Wang Chong's discussion here can be understood as not only his attitude to balance the effectiveness and the reasonableness simultaneously, but also such reflections as follows: In the process of argumentation, we not only need to deal with the balance between reasonableness and effectiveness in our argumentative discourse, but also need to explore and analyze the corresponding problems of the argumentative opponents to help us be better prepared and use the corresponding argumentative strategies to make the opponents accept our views.

3.2. Understanding and reflection on the “Truth Requirement”

It is not difficult to see from the above examples that Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation and the contents of them can be “relevant and interactive” with some research contents in the modern theoretical system of argumentation. At the same time, they also prove that it is very feasible to develop a new understanding and expansion Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation and their contents from the perspective of modern argumentation theory. On the other hand, can Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation and the contents have a new understanding and helpful significance to some problems in the current argumentation research field? The authors believe that the answer to this question is yes.

Taking the content of “truth requirement” in Ralph Johnson's theory of argument as an example, for many early scholars of informal logic, the acceptability requirement often served as a replacement for truth requirement. The reason for this is, on the one hand, the cognition of the correlation between the truth requirement and formal logic, on the other hand, due to the “intimate relationship” between the acceptability requirement and the actual persuasion, and the possible conflict between the truth requirement and acceptability requirement. Since the 1990s, Johnson began to reflect on this alternative problem, and then concluded that for a good argument, “the acceptability requirement is too weak in many cases,” and ultimately requires the truth requirement to be reapplied in argument evaluation. Of course, in the process of this transformation, many scholars began to question the concept and its existence of the truth requirement because of the differences between the requirement of truth and acceptability:

As one moves away from science and towards a different sphere of reasoning – the practical sphere of human decision-making, the areas of morals, ethics, politics and everyday human affairs – that doctrine (the requirement about truth) does begin to seem questionable...it (argumentation in these areas) becomes clear that the premises need not be true in order for the argument to be a good one. (Johnson 1996, p. 89)

And previously, Johnson (1991) frankly states,

I am not inclined to reject both acceptability and acceptance as the proper criteria to impose on premises in respect of their connection to the dialectical context (wider world). On the other hand... I am not yet willing to go back to “truth” as a requirement, which leads to the following intriguing question: Is there an “X” such that it is a “weaker” standard than truth but “stronger” than acceptance? (Ibid., p. 264)

Then the main issue to be considered here should be the definition of the degree of the true standard, that is, “what degree of the truth can be considered acceptable if the premise meets?” Of course, this is considered from the objective perspective of argumentation. If it is from the perspective of doubter, or it can also be said that people's main contradiction is actually the necessity of judging the truth requirement based on their own understanding and definition of the concept of the truth, which is actually of too much emphasis on the subjectivity and application of argumentation.

In fact, it is necessary to bring the concepts of acceptability requirement and the truth requirement into Wang Chong's concepts of “Xiaoyan” and “Zhengyan” respectively for understanding and analysis. Because, even though Wang Chong has repeatedly emphasized that, “Even if there are fundamental reasons for false words, people will still not be convinced” (Bozang).

But from the previous discussion:

The Mohist point of view was not arrived at by thinking hard, but only by the superficial phenomena of things, they only believed what they heard, so that even though the Xiaoyan(validity of their argument) was very remarkable, it was still deviated from the truth. (Ibid.)

It is not difficult to see from the above passage that in reality there are still people who choose to believe in the discourse of “remarkable Xiaoyan,” and “remarkable Xiaoyan” can also be interpreted as a discourse that emphasizes acceptability or acceptance. However, the reason why Wang Chong criticized the Mohist opinion was that the Mohist viewpoint only had the “remarkable Xiaoyan,” but lacked the “Zhengyan” to sufficiently prove the authenticity of the content. Therefore, Wang Chong said that the viewpoint was “deviated from the truth”, and that “this is also the reason why the Mohist viewpoint could not be spread.”

In *Manifest Rationality*, written by Johnson, there is an expression similar to Wang Chong's thought here: “I want to hold open the possibility that even if his arguments were effective and persuasive, they are not good arguments” (Johnson 2000, p. 189). Correspondingly, if the concept of “Zhengyan” is matched with the truth requirement, the relationship between the criteria of truth and acceptability can be better understood. In fact, after about two thousand years, Wang Chong's argument for proving “no ghosts” is still practical nowadays. Therefore, the contents and viewpoints discussed by Wang Chong not only illustrate the necessity of “Zhengyan” for a good argument, but also reflect and explain the significance of the existence of the truth requirement.

In our opinion, the relationship between the criteria of truth and acceptability should not be the relationship of degree as proposed earlier, nor should they exist as something that separates the two ends of the degree. Taking the research content of Wang Chong's “Yin Xiaoyan and Li Zhengyan” as an example, as the understanding of the two concepts, we can see that they are not completely equivalent, whether from the perspective of traditional logic or from the perspective of modern argumentation study, and that “Zhengyan” is obviously a concept that acts on “Xiaoyan.”

Therefore, in view of the above understanding and analysis, we believe that the truth requirement can actually be used as the restrictive criteria or scope of the acceptability requirement, and it is the tool imposed on the acceptability requirement to “pull back” or restrict the argumentation content in the argumentation activities of partial-subjectivity as much as

possible into the objective and real scope. The theoretical content presented here is similar to the concept about “keeping a balance between aiming for effectiveness and maintaining reasonableness” proposed by Van Emmeren et al. The reason is that this coincidence-like common contents belong to the “argumentative predicament” that is generally present in the argumentative behavior, at the same time, these contents are also the considerations of balance between rationality and sensibility that people are bound to face in practical argumentation.

In addition, as we all know that Johnson’s motivation for reintroducing the truth requirement is closely related to his concern that the acceptability requirement reduce to the audience-oriented acceptance requirement. The introduction of truth requirement is actually Johnson's attempt to draw a clear line between the logic and rhetoric brought by the RSA-triangle. In fact, we can also understand the motivation, significance and balance of boundary issues of Johnson’s insistence on preserving truth requirement by comparing Wang Chong's motivation to write the Lunheng. As for the writing motivation and purpose of writing the Lunheng, Wang Chong made a clear exposition in the chapter of Duizuo:

The writing of Lunheng stems from the fact that the records of many books have been inaccurate, and the false words are better than the real words. Therefore, if the words of Xuwang (see above) are not be abolished, the specious articles will not be suppressed; if there are too many specious articles, the essays that seek truth from facts will not be accepted. So Lunheng is used to weigh right and wrong of speech, and establish the criterion for judging the authenticity...The false is more conspicuous than the real, the truth is confused by the false, people do not understand, the right and wrong are indistinguishable, (just like) the purple and vermilion are mixed together, and the tiles and gems are mixed together. How can my heart bear it...hope to awaken those deluded minds to know the difference between false and true. If the distinction between the real and the false is established, the false and specious articles will be destroyed; if the false and specious articles are destroyed, the enlightenment of purity and sincerity will grow day by day...Now Lunheng is aimed at the secular books, examines and distinguishes their authenticity...the purpose in chapters of “Jiuxu and Sanzeng” is to make ordinary people strive to seek truth from facts.

To sum up, Wang Chong believed that the criterion for testing all knowledge of the false and true should not be the words said or written by the so-called sages, but the “Xiaoyan” of the objective facts, that is, the authenticity evidence of the objective things or phenomena themselves serve as the criterion of judgment. It can also be seen from Lunheng that Wang Chong always took the objective truth as his criterion for evaluating arguments in his argumentation. Although the “objective truth” here contains the limitations of Wang Chong's cognitive scope and historical background, his motivation for pursuing objective truth also comes from the historical background in which false and real are reversed each other at that time. In this context, Wang Chong worried that the society has been maintaining the state of “the false is more conspicuous than the real, the truth is confused by the false, people do not understand, the right and wrong are indistinguishable...” Therefore, he wanted to destroy “Xuwang” and could not help writing the book Lunheng. And He wanted to use it to “weigh right and wrong of speech, and establish the criterion for judging the authenticity”, “explain the doubts...make the latter see the difference between right and wrong”, and ultimately make (people in) the whole society can “seek truth from facts.” It has to be said that Wang Chong's attitude to emphasizing the objective truth and

worrying about people being confused by the excessive specious articles is in some ways very similar to Johnson's insistence on retaining the truth requirement associated with the way of logic and his worry about "dropping the truth requirement and introducing the acceptability requirement, informal logicians have so I believe been persuaded by rhetorical values and concerns."

From the present point of view, although the above-mentioned contents described by Wang Chong cannot directly solve or deal with Johnson's concerns about the relevance between RSA-triangle criteria and the area of logic, after all, Wang Chong at that time did not have the cognition of the concept of the "logic" in the west. But when we are looking for the commonalities between Wang Chong's and Johnson's thoughts, it is possible to make people understand the worries of Wang Chong and Johnson and the purpose and significance of their work for this by re-examining the reasons for Johnson's reservation and defense of "truth requirement" in combination with Wang Chong's era background and known historical lessons. Furthermore, it can help us to better understand the purpose and significance of Johnson's later introduction of the fundamental idea of "manifest rationality" in his theory of argument. Since the discussion of this paper focuses on the introduction or "referral" of the classical and possible contents of Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation, the further research contents on the relationship between Wang's thoughts and Johnson's thoughts about "manifest rationality" will not intend to be described in this paper.

4. Conclusion

The available literature shows that most scholars' interpretation of Wang Chong's argumentation thoughts is still the concept of narrow argumentation, that is, it is still only based on the concept of argument composed of topics, evidences, and methods of argument in the traditional logical perspective, and it is used to reconstruct, analyze and evaluate a series of argumentation contents in Wang Chong's Lunheng. However, with the rise of contemporary informal logic and argumentation theories, the understanding of argumentation has gradually changed from a productive and structural way to a procedural and pragmatic way. Therefore, on the basis of a brief overview of some previous research contents about Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation, this paper attempts to further understand, analyze and expand the contents of Wang Chong's argumentation thoughts through the intersection of different dimensions of argumentation theories researches and his thoughts on argumentation, and attempts to further understand and reflect on the problems and development connotation in contemporary researches of argumentation theories through Wang Chong's concepts and thoughts on argumentation.

Since this seems to be the "first show" of Wang Chong's argumentation thoughts and their basic contents in the international argumentation conference, it is undeniable that the focus of this paper is still only a tentative introduction (from ancient Chinese to modern Chinese and then to English...) or exploratory development research of some concepts in Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation. In addition, due to the limited ability, the contents of this paper may be a little insufficient to fully show more researches about Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation, including: The analysis and comparison between Wang Chong's argumentation criteria and the argumentation criteria in other argumentation theories, the specific analysis and understanding of the concept of "truth" in Lunheng (a supplement to the content described in the end of section 3.2), and the research contents on fallacies, etc. This is a very regrettable thing and we can only hope that the above contents will be further (more) presented in the subsequent researches and papers.

Finally, we would like to point out that in today's society, with the development of science and technology, the functions of various communication tools are constantly evolving, and people can obtain a large amount of information through different channels every day, among which there is no lack of various forms of fallacy. Taking the current epidemic of COVID-19 as an example, every day people can receive a lot of false information or statements made for some improper benefits or simply to cause panic, so “How should we balance our sensibility and rationality in the face of the crisis of the epidemic and the madness of the crowd?” At this time, the ability to extract and discriminate information and the thinking pattern of critical thinking are the tools we need to face various discourse problems. As for the way to use these tools, we can also find the answer from the research of Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation. At the same time, it also constitutes the practical significance of studying Wang Chong's thoughts on argumentation.

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