A New Examination of Confucius' Rectification of Names

Cao Feng (曹峰)
Professor of Philosophy, Renmin University, China
caofeng@mail.tsinghua.edu.cn
Translated by Brook Hefright

Abstract

Confucius' explanation of the "rectification of names" is not necessarily related to the theories of "social status" and "names and actuality." The reason scholars have interpreted the rectification of names in the *Analects* in so many different ways is, to a large degree, due to assumptions about Confucius' thinking by his successors, and based on the views on rectification of names among later generations. In the course of the development of thinking about names, scholars have augmented Confucius' own explanation, gradually fleshing it out from an empty shell into a substantial edifice. The original meaning may have been very simple: Confucius did not wish to establish a standard system of names. Rather, he was simply the first person in history to realize the importance of language in politics. As a politician, Confucius noticed and foresaw the influence that the indeterminacy, ambiguity, and arbitrariness of names could have on politics. He discerned the political consequences when language could not accurately express meaning or when there was no way for people to accurately perceive it. He also recognized how names, as a way of clarifying right and wrong and establishing norms, could have a great effect on a society's politics. Although Confucius noted that disunity in speech could lead to disunity in politics, he did not propose a solution.

Introduction

The following passage occurs in the chapter "Zi Lu" 子路 in the *Analects:*[1]

> Zi Lu said: "The monarch of the state of Wei wants you to govern the country, what is the first thing you plan on doing?" Confucius said: "First it is necessary to rectify the names." Zi Lu said: "Is that really what has to be done? You are being too pedantic, aren't you now? How will you rectify these names?" Confucius said: "Zhong You, you are too unrefined. A gentleman, faced with a matter that he does not understand, takes a skeptical attitude. If names are not correct, one cannot speak smoothly and reasonably, and if one cannot speak smoothly and reasonably, affairs cannot be managed successfully. If affairs cannot be managed successfully, rites and music will not be conducted. If rites and music are not conducted, punishments will not be suitable. And if punishments are not suitable, the common people will not know what to do. So, when the gentleman uses names, it is necessary to be able to speak so that people understand. If one can say it, one can definitely do it. A gentleman should not be careless with words."[2]

Since this is the earliest known discussion of the rectification of names [*zhengming* 正名], nearly all subsequent discussions, regardless from what perspective, cite it. Yet exactly what kind of names did Confucius 孔子 [551-479 BCE] wish to rectify? Since ancient times, this simple question has inspired many answers, but no consensus view or uniform conclusion has emerged to this day.

---

1 Passages from the *Analects* come from Cheng Shude 程樹德, *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋 [*Collected Interpretations of the Analects*] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1990).

2 子路曰：衛君待子而為政，子將奚先？子曰：必也正名乎。子路曰：有是哉，子之迂也。奚其正？子曰：野哉，由也。君子於其所不知，蓋闕如也。名不正則言不順，言不順則事不成，事不成則禮樂不興，禮樂不興則刑罰不中，刑罰不中則民無所措手足。故君子可言也，言之必可行也，君子於其言，無所苟而已矣 (*Analects* 13:3).

Previous Interpretations of Confucius' Rectification of Names

I first summarize the main threads of interpretation.

1. Rectification of names is simply rectification of characters [*zi* 字]—that is, "name" means "character," and the rectification of names simply means standardizing the writing system. This interpretation can be traced back to Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 [127-200] commentary on "Zi Lu": "Rectifying names means rectifying characters. What people in ancient times called names are today called characters."[3] Historically, however, very few scholars took this position until the Qing dynasty [1644-1911], when textual critics once again raised the issue that in the past the ancients called writing and characters "names." "Confucius' explanation that 'it is necessary to rectify names' generally means that the form, sound, and meaning of characters must be fixed before people can use them to speak and act."[4]

This interpretation focused on the fact that, at that time, in various countries, "languages have different sounds, and writing has different forms"[5]—that is, on the kinds of problems caused by differences in languages and writing systems. Although this explanation is understandable, it did not explain why this problem occurred to Confucius only after he arrived in the state of Wei. At present, very few scholars continue to hold this view in its entirety.

2. Rectification of names is simply the rectification of politics [*zheng* 政]. Zhu Xi 朱熹 [1130-1200] takes this position in his *Collected Annotations of the Analects* [*Lunyu jizhu* 論語集註]:

> At that time in the ancestral temple Duke Chu of Wei did not acknowledge his father as his father, but rather acknowledged his grandfather as his father, throwing the correspondence between names and actuality into disorder. That is why Confucius wanted to first rectify the names.[6]

Duke Chu of Wei 魏楚公 was opposed politically to his father Kuai Kui 蒯瞶, and in their ancestral shrine he "did not acknowledge his father as his father"

---

3 正名，謂正書字也。古者曰名，今謂之字 (Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 890).

4 孔子曰：必也正名，蓋必形、聲、義三者正，而後可言可行也 (Jiang Yuan 江沅, "Shuowen jiezi zhu houxu 說文解字注後敘," in *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注, ed. Duan Yucai 段玉裁 [Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 1981], 788-789).

5 言語異聲，文字異形.

6 是時楚公不父其父而禰其祖，名實紊矣，故孔子以正名為先 (Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1983], 142).

and passed him over to recognize only his grandfather, Duke Ling of Wei 衛靈公. Zhu Xi's important contribution was to provide a historical background for Confucius' rectification of names, explaining why it occurred to him only after he arrived in Wei. Zhu Xi related the rectification of names to the "social status" [*mingfen* 名分] and "names and actuality" [*mingshi* 名實] perspective that had arisen in Wei regarding the correct relationship between monarch and minister, and father and son. As the discussion below makes clear, this was not actually Zhu Xi's discovery. From early on, other scholars had made the same point. Zhu Xi clarified it, however, and from that time on, rectification of names was no longer mainly a question of language and politics but, rather, became a purely political question.

After scholars influenced by Zhu Xi came to view Confucius' rectification of names from the perspectives of social status and names and actuality, with respect to the correct relationship between monarch and minister, father and son, passages from the *Analects*, *Zuo zhuan* [左傳], and other works were collected and cited somewhat overzealously as evidence for this view. The most famous and most commonly cited example is the following from the *Analects*:

Duke Jing of Qi asked Confucius how to govern a state. Confucius said:

> A monarch must be a monarch, a minister must be a minister, a father must be a father, and a son must be a son." Duke Jing said: "Oh, well said! If a monarch is not a monarch, a minister is not a minister, a father is not a father, a son is not a son, even if there is grain, will I still be able to get some to eat?[7]

This passage has long been considered the best source for Confucius' view of the rectification of names. According to this interpretation, names are an ethical and moral standard and a behavioral norm that everyone—whether monarchs or ministers, fathers or sons—must respect based on his status. If names and actuality diverge and no longer correspond, the political order will descend into chaos.

In the *Analects*, the phrase "rectification of names" occurs only once. Although the passage indicates that rectification of names focuses on society and politics, some questions remain.

First, why was it necessary to rectify names in the first place? The original text offers no explanation, but based on interpretations by Zhu Xi and others we know it is because social status had become confused—that is, it had

---

7   齊景公問政於孔子，孔子對曰：君君，臣臣，父父，子子。公曰：善哉。信如 君不君，臣不臣，父不父，子不子，雖有粟，吾得而食諸？(*Analects* 12:11).

become common at that time that "a monarch is not a monarch, a minister is not a minister, a father is not a father, and a son is not a son." This interpretation established a definite referent for Confucius' "names": what needed rectifying was the system of identity and authority that had fallen into chaos.

Second, how should names be rectified and how should words be brought into line? In other words, what was the standard for rectification of names? The original text is vague, but based on interpretations by Zhu Xi and others, we understand that the guide for rectification was the system of rites and propriety with its concept of patriarchal hierarchy.

Third, was it really a rectification of names or was it perhaps instead a "rectification of actuality"? Based on interpretations by Zhu Xi and others, we know that rectification of names really means using names to rectify actuality, not forcing names to correspond with reality. Therefore, rather than rectification of names, it might be better to say "rectification of actuality."

Answering these three questions would substantiate Confucius' theory of the rectification of names and give it a systematic form. At present, many scholars are working along these lines, and the majority of annotated volumes of the *Analects*, as well as most histories of philosophy and logic, relate the rectification of names to social status and the correspondence between names and actuality. For example, Hu Shi's 胡適 [1891-1962] *An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy* [*Zhongguo zhexue shi dagang* 中國哲學史大綱] takes as its point of departure Zheng Xuan's explanation, assuming that "names" refer to "simply all names and words" and that "rectification of names and rectification of terms [*zheng ci* 正辭] are the same thing."[8] In his subsequent discussion of Confucius' rectification of names, however, he prefers to relate it to standards for distinguishing right from wrong and true from false, connecting it with the social status system of monarch-minister and father-son.[9]

Feng Youlan's 馮友蘭 [1895-1990] perspective also falls under this category. According to him, "Confucius thought carelessness [in speech] would 'throw the world into chaos and overturn righteousness'; he thought it would be better for the Son of Heaven [the king or emperor] to be the Son of Heaven, senior officials to be senior officials, minor officials to be minor officials, and the common people to be the common people—that is, to make reality correspond fully to its names. . . . Confucius believed that sometimes names were not

---

8 See Hu Shi 胡適, "Kong zi 孔子 [Confucius]," in *Zhongguo zhexue shi dagang* 中國哲學史大綱 [*An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*] (Beijing: Dongfang Press, 1996).

9 Ibid.

correct, but in chaos; he wished by means of rectification of names to correct the errors of the times."[10]

3. Confucius's "rectification of names" was a precursor to Chinese studies in logic. The most important issue that logic discusses is the relationship between names and actuality. This is the perspective of researchers of the history of logic. They have partially assimilated the first and second points of view discussed above and have developed them further according to the concepts and methods of Western logic.

For example, Wen Gongyi 溫公頤 [1904-1996] states that names are concepts [*gainian* 概念], and words are evaluations [*panduan* 判斷]. According to this point of view, Confucius already possessed a theory of concepts, evaluations, and inference [*tuili* 推理].[11] Sun Zhongyuan 孫中原 [b. 1938] states that "Confucius' so-called 'names rectification' was mainly to restore the identity between names and actuality; if names and actuality correspond, then language, concepts, and what those concepts signify are all identical."[12]

Historians of logic do not reject the relationship between names and language [*yuyan* 語言] but, rather, promote it to the level of concept. They have assimilated the interpretation that names and actuality were confused and believe that what Confucius called "names" has a clear referent. Therefore, the essence of Confucius' rectification of names is the idea that names and reality correspond. Furthermore, based on the aspect of Confucius' rectification of names in which names are to rectify actuality, they read his thinking on names as characteristic of an idealism that runs contrary to the primary status of material matter [*wuzhi* 物質] and the secondary status of thought [*siwei* 思維]. This line of thinking is the mainstream position to this day, even if in some works that call for abandoning the fetters of the Western framework of logic and for interpreting thinking on "names" and "disputing" [*bian* 辯] according to Chinese historical practice, there is still not much of a change.

For example, Cui Qingtian 崔清田 [b. 1936], states in his work on logic, *Mingxue yu bianxue* 名學與辯學:

---

10   撥亂世而反之正. Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, *Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中國哲學史 [*A History of Chinese Philosophy*] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1931), 59-60.

11   See Wen Gongyi 溫公頤, *Xianqin luoji shi* 先秦邏輯史 [*A History of Logic in the Pre-Qin Times*] (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1983).

12   Sun Zhongyuan 孫中原, "Xian Qin juan 先秦卷," in *Zhongguo luoji shi* 中國邏輯史 [*A History of Logic in China*] (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 1987), 27.

Although the rectification of names that Confucius advocated had as its fundamental goal the rectification of politics, and as its basic issue the monarch-minister, father-son political hierarchy in the slave-owning, patriarchal system, his advocacy initiated the first discussion of the problem of the rectification of names in early Qin logic and had extensive and far-reaching influence on both the content of its thought and the direction of its development. In the theoretical system of Chinese logic, it holds a decisive position.

First, in terms of the content of his thought, Confucius's doctrine of the rectification of names involves the most fundamental problem of logic—the relationship between names and actuality. Confucius considered this relationship primary; if there was a contradiction between changeable entities and permanent names, one should not stipulate a new name but, rather, deny the objective facts of change through social development and respect the status expressed by the permanent name, which expressed the order of ranks in the slave-owning class.

Second, Confucius introduced reflection on the relationship between names and actuality to sociopolitical life, causing a clear tendency for early Qin thinking on logic to view social reality in light of social hierarchy and distinctions in status.

Third, Confucius' rectification of names focused on the core subject of logic and laid the basis for diverse developments of the subject in the early Qin Dynasty . . . its basic subject matter included the meanings and requirements of names, the relationship between a name and its referent, as well as why the referent was primary and methods and norms for "rectifying names."[13]

As this perspective would have it, the theory of the relationship between name and actuality came first for Confucius; only later was the rectification of names introduced to the sociopolitical arena. Moreover, Confucius' doctrine of the rectification of names foreshadowed subsequent developments in logic. All the different interpretations can be traced back to it. The *Analects* has only one passage on the rectification of names. That these few short, unelaborated sentences have given rise to such a complicated, profound theory is truly cause for amazement.

---

13   Cui Qingtian 崔清田, *Mingxue yu bianxue* 名學與辯學 (Taiyuan: Shanxi Education Press, 1997), 44-45.

"Names" in the *Analects* and Historical References to Confucius' Rectification of Names

There is no reason to doubt that complicated and profound hermeneutics of Confucius' rectification of names evolved gradually over history. At its most basic level, it is the crystallization of traditional Chinese thought. In the modern period, it has been cloaked in an additional layer of Western philosophy, to the point that it has become distorted nearly beyond all recognition. In order to recover the original historical form of the theory of the rectification of names, we must peel away the accretions of subsequent ages. That is the aim of the present work.

First, it is necessary to survey the uses of "names" in the *Analects*. The phrase "rectification of names" occurs only once. The character for names [*ming* 名] occurs eight times. In addition to the three occurrences in the passage on the rectification of names itself, the other five occurrences are as follows:

(1)   Confucius said: "If a gentleman abandons his benevolence and integrity, how will he make his name?"[14]

(2)   Confucius said: "Ah, this kind of monarch, Yao, is truly great! Heaven is the highest and greatest, only Yao could imitate the height and greatness of heaven. His benevolence is so vast the common people do not know how to name him in praise."[15]

(3)   On the path called "achievement" people say: "Ah, Confucius is truly great!" His learning is erudite, one cannot praise his name based on any one aspect of his knowledge."[16]

(4)   Confucius says: "Not having made one's name until death is regrettable for a gentleman."[17]

(5)   Confucius says: "Why don't students study the *Book of Songs*? . . . They could learn more names of animals and plants."[18]

In (1), (3) and (4), "names" refers to reputation [*mingsheng* 名聲] or renown [*mingwang* 名望]. In (2), it is used as a verb meaning "describe" or "characterize." The meaning in (5) is the designation for an object. In none

---

14   子曰：君子去仁，惡乎成名 (*Analects* 4:5).

15   子曰：大哉。堯之為君也。巍巍乎，唯天為大，唯堯則之。蕩蕩乎，民無能名焉 (*Analects* 8:19).

16   達巷黨人曰：大哉。孔子。博學而無所成名 (*Analects* 9:2).

17   子曰：君子疾沒世而名不稱焉 (*Analects* 15:20).

18   子曰：小子，何莫學夫詩？…多識於鳥獸草木之名 (*Analects* 17:9).

of these occurrences does "names" have any connection to the rectification of names.

"Names" in the rectification of names is in opposition to "words." Moreover, names and words are mutually related to "affairs" (as in human affairs), to rites and music, and to punishment. The final exhortation in the original passage is still about one's speech alone, specifically "A gentleman should not be careless with his words."[19] So even though Zheng Xuan argues that "names" means characters, and Ma Rong 馬融 [79-166] argues that it refers to "the names of the hundred things." In fact, because names are in opposition to words in their widest sense, "names" means language, and the rectification of names describes the relationship between language and politics. Given that names in rectification of names are in opposition to words, we should also analyze the occurrence of "words" in the *Analects*. I develop this point in more detail below.

It is interesting that the phrase "rectification of names," which has had such a great influence on subsequent generations, entered history in the form of a lone example in the *Analects* and only began to be cited much later. Neither *Mencius* 孟子 nor *Xunzi* 荀子 has any references to it either. Although Mencius uses the phrase "names and actuality," occurrences of "names" all refer to reputation, and uses of "actuality" all refer to advantage. In *Mencius*, there is a passage: "words that have no actuality are not clear,"[20] but we cannot simply speculate that this means "words" without real content to which it refers. The main topic in Mencius' writing is ethical intention. This has no connection to the political doctrine of names and actuality connected to the system of social status, which developed later. Nor does it have any connection to the logical theory of names and actuality related to epistemology.

Xunzi has a chapter dedicated to the rectification of names. It concentrates on the relationship between names and actuality, on the one hand, and politics, on the other. However, Xunzi makes no reference to Confucius' rectification of names. In fact, in Xunzi's lifetime "rectification of names" was a very popular phrase, and the theory of names and actuality was already an important topic. It occurs frequently in works of the School of Names [*mingjia* 名家], the Legalist School [*fajia* 法家], and Daoist [*daojia* 道家] thought—although in each case the meaning is different and the differences are very great.[21] This was the background for Xunzi's discussion on the rectification of names. His

---

19   君子於其言無所苟而已矣 (*Analects* 13:3).

20   言無實不詳 (*Mencius*, Book IV, part B).

21   For further details, see Cao Feng, "Zuowei yizhong zhengzhi sixiang de 'xingming' lun, 'zhengming' lun, 'mingshi' lun 作為一種政治思想的'形名'論、'正名'論、'名實'

goal in writing the chapter "Rectification of Names" was to critique and deride the people who were disputing about names.[22] In *Xunzi*, there is another discussion of the passage "a monarch must be a monarch, a minister must be a minister," from the chapter "Wang Zhi":

> The ethical relationship between monarch and minister, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, from the beginning to the end, from the end to the beginning, is as principled as the division of heaven and earth, and is as enduring as the myriad generations. This is called the great foundation.... A monarch must be a monarch, a minister must be a minister, a father must be a father, a son must be a son, an elder brother must be an elder brother, and a younger brother must be a younger brother. The principle is the same.[23]

This formulation is in line with the fundamentals of Xunzi's thought, in particular his idea of "distinctions" [*fen* 分], but it is worth noting that Xunzi did not apply this thinking to the rectification of names. Although they were both exponents of the Confucian school, Mencius does not mention the rectification of names and Xunzi discusses it in a context separate from the discussion of monarchs being monarchs and ministers being ministers. Of course, there must be a reason for this, and the reason will become clear in the discussion below.

Based on extant works, scholars began referring to Confucius' rectification of names only during the Han dynasty [202 BCE-220 CE]. Dong Zhongshu's 董仲舒 [179-104 BCE] *Chunqiu fanlu* [春秋繁露] contains the first exegesis to "if names are not correct then speech will not be smooth." He argues, "Looking at the meaning of Confucius' statement, the meaning is that it is very difficult to become good."[24] Dong stresses that, for people to become good, the

---

論 [The Theories of 'Forms and Names,' 'Rectification of Names,' and 'Names and Reality' as a Kind of Political Thought]," *Shehui Kexue* 社會科學 12 (2015).

22   Cao Feng, "*Xunzi* 'Zhengming pian' xinlun 〈荀子‧正名〉篇新論 [A New Discussion of 'Rectification of Names' in *Xunzi*].," in *Ru lin* 儒林, ed. Pang Pu 庞朴, vol. 4 (Jinan: Shandong University Press, 2008), includes a detailed discussion.

23   君臣，父子，兄弟，夫婦，始則終，終則始，與天地同理，與萬世同久，夫是之謂大本。......君君，臣臣，父父，子子，兄兄，弟弟，一也 (Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 [*Collected Annotations on Xunzi*] [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1981], 104).

24   觀孔子言此之意，以為善甚難当 (Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, "Shi Xing 實性," in *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露, annot. Ling Shu 淩曙, vol. 10 [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1975], 374).

ruler must set an example: "The names that the sages determined are used by people of the world as a norm";[25] "If their names are not correct, they will not be accepted by the people."[26] Therefore, "a sage must not be careless with his words."[27]

To summarize the discussion of the rectification of names in this passage from *Chunqiu fanlu*, the key point is that names and words here are the names and words of sages. Dong Zhongshu based his discussion on the relationship between the monarch and the people, and pointed out that, historically, the names and words of sages were important in helping the common people become good. This is why sages must constantly correct their names and words.

The following passage also comes from the chapter "Yu ying" in *Chunqiu fanlu*:

> In the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the first year is called the "origin year." The meaning is to value beginnings. Knowing the meaning of the origin year in which a dynasty was established is something that monarchs value, but common people scorn. Therefore governance starts with the rectification of names. Once names are rectified, five generations can flourish, after five generations, it will be apparent whether they were good or bad. It can be said that [Confucius] found out the true meaning in this, it was not something that Zi Lu could see.[28]

Even though Dong Zhongshu does not mention Confucius by name, the phrase "it was not something that Zi Lu could see" [非子路之所能見] clearly refers to Zi Lu in the *Analects*, and "rectification of names" is a direct reference to Confucius' rectification of names. This passage claims that the correct or incorrect use of a term is of great import for the political system. This theme of rectifying righteous status by rectifying language use is expressed most forcefully in the three commentaries of *Chunqiu* [春秋], particularly *Guliang* [穀梁] and *Gongyang* [公羊]. Using these commentaries as a bridge, Dong Zhongshu directs Confucius' rectification of names in the direction of righteous status.

---

25   聖人之所名，天下以為正 (ibid.).
26   其名不正，故不受也 (ibid., 376).
27   聖人於言，無所苟而已矣 (ibid.).
28   謂一元者，大始也。知元年志者，大人之所重，小人之所輕。是故治國之端在正名。名之正興五世。五傳之外，美惡乃形。可謂得其真矣。非子路之所能見 (Dong, "Yu ying 玉英," in *Chunqiu fanlu*, 3:73).

Volume 5 of *Hanshi waizhuan* [韓詩外傳] recounts a story about Confucius and concludes with passages from the *Analects* and the *Book of Songs* [*Shijing* 詩經]. Nearly the same content appears in *Xin xu* [新序]:

> Confucius was sitting with Ji Sun, and the manager of Ji Sun's household sent a message saying: "The monarch is sending people to borrow horses, should we lend them to him?" Confucius said: "When we hear that the monarch is asking his subject for things, we call it 'taking,' we do not call it 'borrowing.'" Ji Sun understood what Confucius meant, and told his manager: "From today on, when the monarch sends people for things, just say that he is 'taking,' do not say that he is 'borrowing.'" Confucius's correction of the word "borrow" determined the status of monarch and minister. In the *Analects* it says: "The first thing one has to do is rectify 'names'." In the *Book of Songs* it says: "The monarch does not speak carelessly."[29]

Based on the contrast between the words "borrow" and "take," it is possible to clarify the relationship between monarch and minister. The author believes Confucius wanted to use the rectification of names—that is, the rectification of terms—to regularize the distinction between the monarch and his ministers. As in *Chunqiu fanlu*, this appears to be the earliest extant reference that relates "rectification of names" to the system of social hierarchy and rank. The explanation that the rectification of names means "rectification of the system of social status" can be traced back to these references. Put another way, this clarification must take the writing of people during the Han dynasty as its starting point; in the Han dynasty, the rectification of names was still a concept without fixed meaning.

In response to those who would argue that all the passages quoted above relate rectification of names directly to political thought, the next passage, also from *Hanshi waizhuan* (volume 6) presents a counterexample. Although it also cites "Zi lu," the background of thought and the development of the topic are completely different from the previous passages:

---

29   孔子侍坐於季孫，季孫之宰通曰：君使人假馬，其與之乎。孔子曰：吾聞君取於臣謂之取，不曰假。季孫悟，告宰通，曰：今以往，君有取謂之取，無曰假。孔子曰正假馬之言，而君臣之義定矣。《論語》曰：必也正名乎。《詩》曰：君子無易由言 (Liu Xiang 劉向, "Za shi di wu 雜事第五," in *Xinxu xiangzhu* 新序詳注 [*Detailed Annotations of Xin Xu*], annot. Zhao Zhongyi 趙仲邑 [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1997], 162).

With respect to disputation throughout the world, the best is divided into three grades, there are also five types of good disputation, but disputation that uses words is the lowest grade. Disputation is used to distinguish different kinds of objects, and renders them harmless to one another. It lists different points of view and renders them no longer incompatible. It expresses personal intentions and publicizes the content that it discusses, in order to make people understand and not to make people confused. So the person who is victorious in debate cannot forfeit his standpoint, the person who loses gains the reason he was seeking—this is the thing about disputation that is worthy of appreciation. If people use obscure words, they end up far away from the main topic of the dispute. If they use too many rhetorical flourishes, they end up departing from the center of the dispute. If they repeatedly use analogies, they end up changing the essence of the dispute, drawing people away from the main topic of the dispute; this makes it so that people cannot grasp the meaning. Although this kind of disputation is advantageous to the disputer himself, disaster comes from this. . . . In the *Analects* it says, "A gentleman is not careless with his words." In the *Book of Songs* it says: "One does not speak rashly; one does not speak carelessly."[30]

The reader can see immediately that the passage is commenting on thought about the disputation of names that was popular during the Warring States Period [475-221 BCE] and is completely unrelated to the system of social hierarchy and rank. While praising the disputers' practices of "distinguishing different kinds of objects" [別殊類] and "listing different points of view" [序異端], the author also criticizes disputers: "if they use too many rhetorical flourishes, they end up departing from the center of the dispute. If they repeatedly use analogies, they end up changing the essence of the dispute" [繁文以相假，飾辭以相悖，數譬以相移]. These are faults that "make it so that [people] cannot grasp the meaning" [使不得反其意].

   This is similar to the critiques of the School of Names in *Xunzi*, *Han feizi*, and *Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* [*Lu shi chun qiu* 呂氏春秋], as well as

---

30   天下之辯，有三至五勝，而辭置下。辯者，別殊類，使不相害，序異端，使不相悖，輸公通意，揚其所謂，使人預知焉，不務相迷也。是以辯〔勝〕者不失所守，不勝者得其所求，故辯可觀也。夫繁文以相假，飾辭以相悖，數譬以相移，外人之身使不得反其意，則論便然後害生也。...《論語》曰：君子於其言，無所苟而已矣。《詩》曰：無易由言，無曰苟矣 (Han Ying 韓嬰, *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳, annot. Zhou Tingcai 周廷寀 [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1985], 6: 76-77).

Sima Tan's 司馬談 [d. 110 BCE] critique of the School of Names in his essay "Lun liujia yaozhi [論六家要旨]." Sima Tan also cites the *Analects* and the *Book of Songs*. The only difference is that he invokes the language of sages as supporting evidence. In reality, the activities of the School of Names also relied on the methods of analysis and inference. It was just that the direction of their activities was "a gentleman should not be careless with his words" [君子於其言，無所苟而已矣]. Like *Yin wenzi* [尹文子] and *Mo Bian zhu xu* [墨辯注序], scholars who sympathized with the School of Names could certainly borrow Confucius' language to serve their own points of view as well. This is the case with the passage in the *Analects*: since its original meaning was quite vague and indeterminate, it could be invoked by subsequent scholars with completely different points of view.

Next, a passage from *Yin Wenzi* says:

> The highest *Dao* has no name and no form, but objects that have form must be expressed by names, and names are used to determine the forms of objects. It is precisely because whether the form of an object is determined or not is decided by names, errors cannot appear in names. Therefore Confucius says, "One must rectify names, if names are not definite, then speech will not be smooth."[31]

In this passage, the statement "the highest *Dao* has no name and no form, but objects that have form must be expressed by names" [大道無形，稱器有名] reveals a Daoist understanding of names. The passage also shows the influence of the School of Names, otherwise a statement like "objects that have form must have names, but things that have names need not have form" [有形者必有名，有名者未必有形] would not be possible—that is, the author is aware of the mutual distinction between common [*gongxiang* 共相] names and individual [*gebie* 個別] names. But in *Yin Wenzi* the reference to Confucius' rectification of names does not have any special meaning. The author is merely invoking the words of a famous figure in support of his doctrine. Because this is an isolated passage, there is no further explanation.

To determine when Confucius' rectification of names became associated with the School of Names, and therefore became a formal harbinger of the

---

31   大道无形，称器有名。名也者，正形者也。形正由名，则名不可差。故仲尼云：必也正名乎，名不正则言不顺也 (Yin Wen 尹文, "Dadao shang 大道上" in *Yin Wenzi* 尹文子 [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1991], 1).

study of logic, one must go back to Ban Gu's 班固 [32-92] *Book of Han* [*Han shu* 漢書]:

> This school, the School of Names, probably originated among the officials in charge of rites. In ancient times status and rank were divided among grades, and etiquette differed based on rank and situation as well. Confucius said: "First one has to determine names; if names are not correct, when one speaks it will not be smooth and reasonable, if speech is not smooth and reasonable, affairs cannot be accomplished successfully." This is the area of expertise of the School of Names. And those people, who dally in the techniques of disputation will say ordinary things in confusing ways and distort true reason until it is scattered and smashed.[32]

This passage reveals a Confucian point of view: it greatly syncretizes and revises the older thinking on names, and it links the School of Names and the officials in charge of rites to Confucius. Because Ban Gu could not overlook the once-elaborate thinking of the School of Names but also wanted to use Confucian political thought to systematize and reform it, he located its true origin and development in the officials in charge of rites and in Confucius.

From this point forward, Confucius and the School of Names were linked. When scholars research the School of Names today, they must first address Confucius' rectification of names; this is, in fact, a direct result of Ban Gu's influence. It is worth noting that the first scholar to define the School of Names was Sima Tan. Although his definition in "Lun liujia yaozhi" greatly influenced subsequent scholars, he does not mention Confucius' rectification of names. On the one hand, this reflects Sima Tan's Daoist perspective; on the other, it indicates that Confucius' rectification of names originally had no relationship with the School of Names.

"Classics [Jingjizhi 經籍志]" in the *Book of Sui* [*Sui shu* 隋書] follows the statement in "Treatise on Literature [Yiwenzhi 藝文志]" in the *Book of Han*, but it is more expansive and creative. Politically, it discusses more clearly the relationship between Confucius' rectification of names and the concepts of social status and names and actuality:

---

32   名家者流，蓋出於禮官。古者名位不同，禮亦異數。孔子曰：必也正名乎。名不正，則言不順，言不順，則事不成。此其所長也。及警者為之，則苛鈎鈲析亂而已 (Ban Gu 班固, "Yiwenzhi 藝文志 [Treatise on Literature]," in *Han shu* 漢書 [*Book of Han*] [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1962], 30: 1737).

Names are used to determine all kinds of objects, to arrange the order of seniors and juniors, to clearly distinguish the social hierarchy and ranks. If every object can make name and actuality correspond, then things will not be too improper. In *Chunqiu zhuan* it says: "In ancient times the place of names was different, and the system of etiquette was different." Confucius said: "If names are not correct, when one speaks it will not be smooth and reasonable; and if speech is not smooth and reasonable, then affairs cannot be accomplished successfully." In the chapter "Zong bo" in the *Zhou guan* when it says: "The rite of receiving orders that is used for the nine grades of officials is used to determine the ranks of different positions within the state, and to distinguish the different kinds of names for objects," it is certainly talking about this matter. But when an obstinate stickler takes to this matter, he makes it very complicated and convoluted, he clings to an analysis of language and loses the overall principle.[33]

During the Jin dynasty [265–420], Lu Sheng 魯勝 [dates unknown] stated in his *Mo Bian zhu xu*:

Names are used to distinguish similarity and difference, to clarify right and wrong, this gives access to righteousness and justice, and the principles for governing the state. Confucius said: "First, it is necessary to determine names, if names are not determined, when one speaks it will not be smooth and reasonable."[34]

Even though Lu Sheng is discussing the purely speculative writings of Mo Bian 墨辯, he still wants to draw a connection to Confucius' rectification of names. The passage makes clear that, during this time period, the meaning of rectification of names was broad enough to encompass anything connected with names.

---

33   名者，所以正百物，敘尊卑，列貴賤。各控名而責實，無相僭濫者也。《春秋傳》曰：古者名位不同，節文異數。孔子曰：名不正則言不順，言不順則事不成。《周官·宗伯》：以九儀之命，正邦國之位，辯其名物之類。是也。拘者為之，則苟察繳繞，滯於析辭而失大體 (Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌, "Jingjisan 經籍三 [Classics Part Three]," in *Sui shu* 隋書 [*Book of Sui*], ed. Wei Zheng 魏徵et al. [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1973], 34: 1004).

34   名者，所以別同異，明是非，道義之門，政化之準繩也。孔子曰："必也正名乎。名不正，則事不成" (Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al., "Yinyi zhuan 隱逸傳," in *Jin shu* 晉書 [*Book of Jin*] [Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1974], 94: 2433).

During the Six Dynasties Period [222-589], Huang Kan 皇侃 [448-545] in his *Lunyu yishu* [論語義疏] interpreted the rectification of names as follows:

> Confucius answered: "If there is something that needs to be done first, it is to determine the name for every kind of object. The reason one needs to first determine names is because the times are chaotic and the rites are not correct, speech is not unified, objects have lost their original appellations, and so if one is going to govern a state one first needs to determine names." And so in the latter half of the *Analects* it says, "The wife of the monarch, the sovereign calls her *furen*" are examples of determining names. Names are used to express the essence of objects; the essence of objects must correspond to their names. If there is a mistake in the name and it is not accurate, then problems will appear in language, and it will be impossible to express the precise meaning.[35]

In the following passage, Huang Kan cites the *Analects*:

> The monarch calls his wife *furen*, but she calls herself *xiao tong*. The people inside the country call her *jun furen*, in foreign countries people call her *gua xiao jun*. Foreigners also call her *jun furen*.[36]

Huang Kan's perspective is similar, for example, to *Hanshi waizhuan*, volume 5, quoted above. His discussion of names and actuality is not unrelated to the theory of names and actuality prevalent around the Six Dynasties Period. The history of the interpretations of the rectification of names reveals that it was only in the Six Dynasties Period that scholars completely and definitively related rectification of names to the theories of "names and actuality" and "social status" within political thought.

Because the meaning of Confucius' rectification of names was so broad, and the development and change in his thinking was so complicated, the concept links Confucius with the later School of Names, the Legalist school,

---

35 孔子答曰：若必先行，正百物之名也。所以先須正名者，為時昏禮亂，言語翻雜，名物失其本號，故為政必以正名為先也。所以下卷云，邦君之妻，君稱之曰夫人之屬，是正名之類也。且夫名以召實，實以應名。名若倒錯不正，即言語紕僻，不得順序也。The present work quotes Huang Kan 皇侃, *Lunyu yishu* 論語義疏, Huai De Tang 懷德堂 edition, coll. Takeuchi Yoshio 武内義雄 (Tokyo: Koubundou, 1923).

36 邦君之妻，君稱之曰夫人，夫人自稱曰小童。邦人稱之曰君夫人，稱諸異邦曰寡小君。異邦人稱之，亦曰君夫人 (*Analects* 16:14).

the Confucian school, Daoist thought, and other schools that were originally antithetical to one another. This should not raise doubts about its validity. There are, of course, scholars who doubt the validity of the passage, such as the Japanese scholar Tsuda Sōkichi [1873-1961], who suggests, "The chapter 'Zi lu' in the *Analects* states 'it is necessary to rectify names'; but are these really Confucius' words? I am skeptical,"[37] and "It must be said, this statement of Confucius' was manufactured by Confucians after they related rectification of names to politics; perhaps it has some connection with Xunzi's thinking."[38] Tsuda even suspects that subsequent scholars falsely attributed the statement to Confucius and smuggled it into the *Analects*.

When Western scholars first began translating the *Analects*, they interpreted it in light of the contrast between names and actuality. Arthur Waley translated the phrase *ming bu zheng* 名不正 as "what is said does not concord with what is meant," while James Legge translated the same phrase as "Language is not in accordance with the truth of things." Later, Western scholars discovered that this passage in the *Analects* does not contain an actuality identical to "words" and that the passage could be fully interpreted only with the aid of a great deal of additional commentary. Therefore, subsequent translators grew increasingly cautious. Benjamin Schwartz translated the passage above as "one's words will not be in accord [with one's actions]." (words in square brackets added by the author). David Hall and Roger Ames translated it as "what is said is not attuned." J. P. Reding translated it as "discourse is incoherent." Liu Dianjue translated it as "what is said does not sound reasonable." Angus Graham translated it as "saying is out of accord."[39] They increasingly cast off the clear-cut interpretation of correspondence between "names" and "reality" and instead gave the reader vague, suggestive clues.

In summary, the present author is driven to the following conclusion: even if this passage really existed in the *Analects* and was not an addition by subsequent scholars, it did not originally have a clear meaning, and the various, more clear-cut meanings were added by later generations.

---

37   See Tsuda Sōkichi 津田左右吉, "Sophist and *Ming Jia* Thought 辯者及び名家の思想," in *Daoist Thought and Its Development* 道家の思想と其の展開 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1939), chap. 3, sec. 4.

38   See Tsuda Sōkichi, "The Creation Process of the Analects 論語のできたみちすぢ," in *Analects and Confucius' Thought* 論語と孔子の思想 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1946), sec. 4.

39   For all of these translations, see the discussion in Carine Defoort, *The Pheasant Cap Master (He Guan Zi): A Rhetorical Reading* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), chap. 8; all quotations are taken from the reference bibliography at the end of the book.

Is Confucius' Rectification of Names the Same as the Concepts of Names and Actuality and Social Status?

The influence of Wang Dianji's 汪奠基 [1900-1979] *A History of Logical Thought in China* [*Zhongguo luoji sixiang shi* 中國邏輯思想史] on the study of logic in China was enormous. In this book he points out:

> Confucius's thinking on rectification of names actually includes two aspects: one is the "correct descriptive name" concept of names and actuality, and the other is the "correct social status" meaning of the ethical norm. The so-called correct descriptive name is mainly part of the objective historical observation of nature, society, and ordinary objects. The so-called correct social status, however, is part of the subjective question of practical rules in the realm of political ethics. The former wants to achieve knowledge of "determining facts" related to logical subjects, such as establishing designations, distinguishing similarity and difference, clarifying right and wrong, disputing true and false, etc. The latter, by contrast, puts into practice questions of "determining value" based on feudal political ethics, such as determining personal status, managing social order, and imposing orderly governance, as well as clarifying social hierarchy, distinguishing good and evil, etc. Confucius' theory of the rectification of names astutely synthesizes these two questions—that is, it unifies the relationship between designations and facts with the ordering of social status.[40]

The history of interpretations of Confucius' rectification of names is really a portrait of the history of the development of ancient Chinese thought and of recent research on logical thought. In the present author's view, the passage from Wang Dianji quoted above succinctly summarizes the central topic of studies on the gradual historical development of interpretations of Confucius' rectification of names. The meaning of Confucius' rectification of names can be separated into two threads. One thread concerns names and actuality, an aspect of what Wang calls "determining facts." The other concerns social status, an aspect of what Wang calls "determining value."

Unfortunately, judging from the history of interpretations of the rectification of names in section 2 of the present work, "determining facts" and "determining value" have not been clearly distinguished. Names and actuality are

---

40   Wang Dianji 汪奠基, *Zhongguo luoji sixiang shi* 中國邏輯思想史 [*A History of Logical Thought in China*] (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1979), 124.

also part of "determining value." The reason that Wang wants to place the two aspects in opposition is to emphasize the role played by names and actuality in "determining facts." This is, in fact, related to the great impact that Western logic had on China in the twentieth century. The importance that Wang attaches to "determining value" is welcome, since most writing on the history of logic only focuses on "determining facts" and neglects the other important facet of ancient Chinese thinking on names.

Regardless of whether "determining value" or "determining facts" is more important, the consensus is that Confucius' rectification of names refers to the concepts of names and actuality and social status. But is that really true? Based on the exposition in the previous two sections, one must raise the following objections.

First, let us leave aside the meaning of the three occurrences of "names" in the passage in the *Analects* on rectification of names. The remaining occurrences have no relationship to names and actuality or social status. Therefore, should one be so quick to relate these occurrences to the theories of names and actuality or personal status? One might bend the theory of words and actions in the *Analects* to fit the theory of names and actuality, but in reality the latter cannot be derived from the former.

Second, Mencius and other scholars who came after Confucius engage in no discussion of profound and important thinking of this kind. Is it not unusual that "Zheng ming 正名" in *Xunzi* 荀子 makes no mention of it?

Third, references to Confucius' rectification of names—whether in the context of personal status or of names and actuality—appear quite late, many after the Han dynasty. How can this be explained?

Fourth, determining facts and determining values are two different threads in intellectual history. Is it really probable that Confucius' rectification of names recognized these two threads at the same time?

The conclusion is quite simple: The reason scholars have given every kind of interpretation to the rectification of names passage in the *Analects* is largely due to assumptions about Confucius among his successors and based on the views among later generations on rectification of names; alternatively, in the course of the development of thinking about names, scholars have augmented Confucius' own explanation of the rectification of names, gradually fleshing it out from an empty shell into a substantial edifice.

In epistemology, names and actuality are placed in opposition, and the theory of the rectification of names became an important topic that played an important role in the rise of the School of Names. Afterward, a derivative of the Confucian school, the Legalist school, and the Daoist school transplanted

these concepts to the political sphere. The theory of names and actuality and the explanation of rectification of names flourished the most in the late Warring States Period, when *Gongsun longzi* [公孫龍子] and *Mo Bian* disputed from the perspective of language and epistemology and *Xunzi* disputed from the perspective of the integration of language and politics, while *Guanzi* 管子, *Han Feizi*, *Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*, *Yin Wenzi*, and the Mawangdui silk edition of *Huangdi sijing* [黃帝四經] mainly discuss names and actuality and the rectification of names from the perspective of politics. It was only during this period that the rectification of names truly became linked with names and actuality. The theory of names and actuality was used both by those who wished to determine facts and by those who wished to determine values, but the status of the two groups was not equal, with the former often being criticized or rejected by the latter.

In the same way, it was only in the mid- to late Warring States Period that the theory of social status epitomized by the passage "a monarch must be a monarch, a minister must be a minister, a father must be a father, and a son must be a son" became a popular topic, following the centralization of monarchical power and the strengthening of the division of labor and system of ranks in society. The theory of social status is an important topic in *Xunzi, Guanzi, Han Feizi, Mr. Lü's Spring and Autumn, Shizi* 屍子, *Yin Wenzi*, the Mawangdui silk edition of *Huangdi sijing*, and other works. In addition, it is a prevalent theme in the three commentaries of the *Chunqiu*, in particular the *Gongyang* commentary. *Da dai liji* [大戴禮記] and the *Classic of Rites* [*Liji* 禮記] invoke Confucius in many discussions to emphasize social status. It is important to note, however, that even in these late-appearing discussions attributed to Confucius, social status is still not formally related to the rectification of names.

It is because discussion on names in the Warring States Period and from the Qin through the Han dynasties developed along the two paths of names and actuality and social status that people afterward had no choice but to fit Confucius into one of these two perspectives. But this retroactive interpretation could not happen all at once. At first, scholars simply used Confucius' name to raise the profile of their own academic doctrine. Only later was the trend reversed, as scholars began to assume that these doctrines were Confucius' own words and meaning, and only then could scholars make the kind of statements that appear in the *Book of Han* and the *Book of Sui*. Conversely, Mencius and other scholars who came after Confucius did not yet relate Confucius' rectification of names to names, actuality, and social status. When Xunzi mentions these theories, he did not seem to realize that he was presenting the quintessence of Confucius. Only after the Han dynasty,

particularly during the political rule of Confucianism, when Confucius' sayings were elevated to the equal of the *Book of Songs* and *Book of History* [*Shang shu* 尚書], was Confucius' rectification of names cited as the words of a sage. It was, however, merely cited—it was not further elucidated.

Conclusion

If Confucius' theory of the rectification of names is not related to the theories of names and actuality or social status, what then does it mean? How did Confucius understand the problem he was addressing? An examination of the meaning of the text as a whole raises two main points. First, names have a direct impact on politics—that is, on rites and music and on punishment. Second, the counterpart of names is words and action, but mainly words. His conclusion: "A gentleman should not be careless with his words."[41] In addition, even when he is addressing the ruler of Wei, he advises: "wait until you govern a state."[42] Confucius' rectification of names reflects concrete political problems from the perspective of the ruler; it is not a piece of philosophical reflection. It is also not, as Ma Rong and other scholars suggest, "rectifying the names of the hundred things" because it has no direct relationship at all to the concrete designations of objects.

The original meaning of Confucius' rectification of names may, then, be quite simple. Confucius did not mean to establish a concrete, normative system of "names"; rather, Confucius was simply the first person in history to realize or remark upon the importance of language in politics. As a politician, he noticed and foresaw the impact that the indeterminacy, ambiguity, and arbitrariness of names would have on politics. Confucius recognized the political consequences of language's not accurately expressing meaning or not being accurately received by people. He realized the great role that names, as a means of distinguishing right and wrong and establishing norms, could play in society and politics.

Confucius also discusses rites and music and punishment in this passage. As everyone knows, these were norms that were applied separately to noblemen and commoners. Rectification of names, however, is outside both of these norms. It follows that the names that Confucius wants to rectify may constitute a norm of language use—relatively uniform and stable—that helps the monarch rule. Confucius' rectification of names only hints at this aspiration,

---

41   君子於其言，無所苟而已矣 (*Analects* 13:3).
42   待子而為政 (ibid.).

however; the norm for and object of rectification of names remain unclear. The only means of ensuring the rectification of names remains the gentleman's "not being careless with his words" [於其言無所苟]—that is, the rectification of names depends on the gentleman's spontaneous ethical realization, not any external norm.

As in the original passage from the *Analects*, "When the gentleman uses names, it is necessary to be able to speak so that people understand. If one can say it, one can definitely do it,"[43] in the *Analects* words are often in opposition to action. Although the *Analects* does stress the mutual complementarity of names and actions, at its core it seems to be oriented more toward action. For example, there is the exhortation to be "diligent in affairs, prudent in speech";[44] "Act first, then speak";[45] "A gentleman should seem slow-witted in speech and nimble in action";[46] "At the same time as listening to someone speak, observe his actions";[47] and "The gentleman would be ashamed if his words were better than his deeds."[48]

The *Analects* also directly emphasizes the determinacy of words and action. For example, "In ancient times people did not speak rashly because they would be ashamed if they personally did not live up to what they said";[49] "One's speech must be trustworthy and one must follow through in action";[50] "speech is loyal and sincere, action is generous and conscientious";[51] and "speech conforms to the law, action is subject to consideration."[52]

This orientation toward action reflects Confucius' attempt—through restrictions on individual moral behavior, through not being careless with one's words, and through general reticence in action—to avoid the relentless changeability, indeterminacy, and arbitrariness of words and minimize negative political consequences. The doctrine of words and action found throughout the *Analects* is in fact identical to the doctrine of the rectification of names in the chapter "Zi lu." In analyzing Confucius' rectification of names, the starting point should not be theories of names and actuality and social status, for

---

43   君子名之必可言也，言之必可行也 (*Analects* 13:3).

44   敏於事而慎於言 (*Analects* 1:14).

45   先行其言而後從之 (*Analects* 2:13).

46   君子欲訥於言，而敏於行 (*Analects* 4:24).

47   聽其言而觀其行 (*Analects* 5:10).

48   君子恥其言而過其行 (*Analects* 14:27).

49   古者言之不出，恥躬之不逮也 (*Analects* 4:22).

50   言必信，行必果 (*Analects* 13:20).

51   言忠信，行篤敬 (*Analects* 15:6).

52   言中倫，行中慮 (*Analects* 18:8).

which the *Analects* itself provides no evidence but, rather, the doctrine of words and action.

The greatest contribution of Confucius' rectification of names to the history of thinking on names in ancient China was not that it initiated imagined theories of names and actuality and social status but that Confucius recognized that the indeterminacy and arbitrariness of names necessarily had an impact on politics. Confucius' statement on the rectification of names is not a concrete political tactic but merely a sensitivity to politics. The goal of the present work is to emphasize that this sensitivity to politics is also sensitivity to language.

Works Cited

Ban Gu 班固. *Han shu* 漢書 [*Book of Han*], vol. 30. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1962.

Cao Feng 曹峰. "Xunzi 'Zhengming pian' xinlun 〈荀子·正名〉篇新論 [A New Discussion of 'Rectification of Names' in *Xunzi*]." In *Ru lin* 儒林, ed. Pang Pu 庞朴, vol. 4. Jinan: Shandong University Press, 2008.

———. "Zuowei yizhong zhengzhi sixiang de 'xingming' lun, 'Zhengming' lun, 'Mingshi' lun 作為一種政治思想的 '形名' 論、 '正名' 論、 '名實' 論 [The Theories of 'Forms and Names', 'Rectification of Names', and 'Names and Reality' as a Kind of Political Thought]." *Shehui Kexue* 社會科學 12 (2015): 109-120.

Cheng Shude 程樹德. *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋 [*Collected Interpretations of the Analects*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1990.

Cui Qingtian 崔清田. *Mingxue yu bianxue* 名學與辯學. Taiyuan: Shanxi Education Press, 1997.

Defoort, Carine 戴卡琳. *The Pheasant Cap Master* He Guan Zi*: A Rhetorical Reading*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997.

Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒. *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露. Annot. Ling Shu 淩曙, vol. 10. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1975.

Duan Yucai 段玉裁. *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注. Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 1981.

Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al. *Jin shu* 晉書 [*Book of Jin*], vol. 94. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1974.

Feng Youlan 馮友蘭. *Zhongguo zhexue shi* 中國哲學史 [*A History of Chinese Philosophy*]. Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1931.

Han Ying 韓嬰. *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳. Annot. Zhou Tingcai 周廷寀, vol. 6. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1985.

Hu Shi 胡適. *Zhongguo zhexue shi dagang* 中國哲學史大綱 [*An Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy*]. Beijing: Eastern, 1996.

Huang Kan 皇侃. *Lunyu yishu* 論語義疏, Huai De Tang 懷德堂 edition. Comp. Takeuchi Yoshio 武內義雄. Tokyo: Koubundou, 1923.

Liu Xiang 劉向. *Xinxu xiangzhu* 新序詳注 [*Detailed Annotations of Xin Xu*]. Annot. Zhao Zhongyi 趙仲邑. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1997.

Sun Zhongyuan 孫中原. *Zhongguo luoji shi* 中國邏輯史 [*A History of Logic in China*]. Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 1987.

Tsuda Sōkichi 津田左右吉. *Daoist Thought and Its Development* 道家の思想と其の展開. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1939.

———. *Analects and Confucius' Thought* 論語と孔子の思想. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1946.

Wang Dianji 汪奠基. *Zhongguo luoji sixiang shi* 中國邏輯思想史 [*A History of Logical Thought in China*]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1979.

Wang Xianqian 王先謙. *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 [*Collected Annotations on Xunzi*]. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1981.

Wei Zheng 魏徵. *Sui shu* 隋書 [*Book of Sui*], vol. 34. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1973.

Wen Gongyi 溫公頤. *Xianqin luoji shi* 先秦邏輯史 [*A History of Logic in the Pre-Qin Times*]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1983.

Yin Wen 尹文. *Yin Wenzi* 尹文子. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1991.

Zhu Xi 朱熹. *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注. Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore, 1987.