

ONE

Xu Gan's Appropriation of the Name and Actuality Polarity

XUN GAN, cognomen Weichang 偉長, lived at a nodal point in the history of Chinese thought, when Han scholasticism had become ossified, and the creative and independent thought that was to characterize Wei-Jin thought was just emerging. His approach to scholarship and philosophy anticipated some important features of the Wei-Jin intellectual renaissance. He was born in Ju 據 Prefecture,¹ Beihai 北海 Kingdom, in 170.² We know little about the details of Xu Gan's life and even less about his family background. From the unsigned preface to *Zhong lun* we learn that he had a forebear by the name of Xu Ye 徐業 who had lived ten generations before Xu Gan. It is possible that this is the same Xu Ye recorded in *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 who had held the post of Western Sustainer (*you fu feng* 佑扶風),³ and who had been a major Confucian scholar during the early period of Guangwu's 光武 (r. 25–57) reign. The preface also states that for the past ten generations the Xu family had enjoyed a reputation for being virtuous and upright.⁴ Brief notes in *San Guo zhi* 三國志 and its commentary state that Xu Gan was appointed, but never served, as Magistrate (*zhang* 長) of Shang'ai 上艾 County,⁵ probably after taking part in Cao Cao's campaigns. He also held positions on the staff of the Minister of Works (*si kong* 司空) some time between 197 and 208, and as Literary Advisor to the General of the Gentlemen of the Household for All Purposes (*wu guan jiang* 五官將) after Cao Pi's appointment to that position in 211. As one of the 'seven masters of the *jian an* 建安 (196–220) period' he was most renowned for his composition of poetry (*fu* 賦) and discourses (*lun* 論).

Xu Gan lived his adult years in the prolonged period of interne-cine warfare following the coup d'état of 189 C.E. which marked the

demise of the Han order, in actuality if not in name, and the beginning of four hundred years of political division. The factors contributing to this demise had been written about by critics over most of the Eastern Han dynasty; and to the extent that *Zhong lun* may be described as a philosophical enquiry into the causes of political and social breakdown, it is part of the same critical tradition as Huan Tan's 桓譚 (43 B.C.E.–28 C.E.) *Xin lun* 新論, Wang Chong's 王充 (27–c. 97) *Lun heng* 論衡, Wang Fu's 王符 (c. 85–162) *Qian fu lun* 潛夫論, Cui Shi's 崔寔 (?–c. 170) *Zheng lun* 政論, and Zhongchang Tong's 仲長統 (180–220) *Chang yan* 昌言.

At different points in the dynasty's two-hundred-year history, various combinations of political, social, economic, and military factors contributed to this breakdown.⁶ Nevertheless, there are certain ideological factors that can be seen to have contributed to this breakdown right from the very beginning of the dynasty. Chi-yun Chen, for example, argues that the failure of Wang Mang's 王莽 (r. 9–25 C.E.) reformist Confucianism led to considerable doubt being cast “on the cluster of Confucian ideas about the Sage-ruler, the Mandate of Heaven, the Age of Universal Peace and Equality, and the unity of the socio-political, moral and cosmic orders,”⁷ which in turn fostered centrifugal trends that emphasised the cultivation of private rather than public virtue, personal rather than bureaucratic association, and social prestige rather than political power. Specifically, these trends were manifested in the rise of Old Text School Confucianism, a revival of interest in Legalist methods of statecraft, a renewed interest in man's “inner” realm, and a growth of new criteria for judging a man's moral worth.⁸ With these developments, scholar-gentry (*shi*)⁹ in the Eastern Han increasingly came to attach importance to private and partisan interests. In politics, this is evidenced by factionalism, localism, and the growth of powerful families; in scholarship, by the proliferation of schools of interpretation that became identified either with the orthodox New Text School or the rival Old Text School; in the realm of personal conduct, by the unprecedented pursuit of reputation; even in poetry, we find this trend reflected.¹⁰

Reflecting on how private and partisan interests had contributed to the disintegration of the Han order Xu Gan writes:

The dynasty had crumbled! Above there was no enlightened emperor and below no worthy feudal lords. Rulers did not

distinguish between what is the case and what is not, and subordinates did not differentiate between black and white. Gentlemen¹¹ were not selected by the village communities for recommendation, and examination of a man's conduct was not based on his achievements and experience.¹² Those with many supporters became the "worthy and talented," while those with few supporters became the "good-for-nothings."¹³ The allotment of titles was based on what is heard in unsubstantiated talk and the bestowal of emoluments was based on rumours from various parts of the country. When people saw that this is how things were done they became aware that wealth and position could be brought about by doing as the majority do, and that reputation was obtainable by deceit. Thereupon such people left their fathers and brothers, departed their villages, ceased cultivating the teachings of the former kings and the Six Arts¹⁴ and no longer practised virtuous behaviour. They discussed fashionable issues and formed intimate cliques. Frantic and frenzied, never stopping even for a day, they took it in turns to sing each other's praises, one reciprocating the other.

There were countless numbers of those who, like a piece of *tao wu* 樛杙 wood,¹⁵ blossomed into flower, or who presented themselves as emaciated and sickly commoners¹⁶ in order to deceive the ruler or confuse the ministers of state, or who usurped places [rightfully belonging to others] in the recommendation system, or who stole honour and favour. Those who succeeded regarded themselves as men of worth and so onwards they went. Those envious of them hastened one another on in pursuit. Everywhere it was the same—who could not avoid following suit?

During the reigns of Huan and Ling this was particularly so. At the level of the Three Excellencies, Grandees, Provincial Governors and Commandery Administrators, none gave their attention to state affairs, devoting themselves instead to their retainers.¹⁷ Officials thronged at the gates [of other officials] and blocked the roads [travelling to see other officials].¹⁸ They had no time to eat when hungry and no chance to rest when tired. Their swirling multitudes turned night into day. At the level of minor officials, town after

town of Prefects and Chiefs¹⁹ all praised one another for having obtained the right men and boasted of themselves so as to enlist the service of talented gentlemen of lower rank.²⁰

For Xu Gan, the unbridled pursuit of personal reputation was the single most important factor that had led to this situation. A man's reputation should properly correspond with his actual worth, the former being a mark and representation of the latter. In the Eastern Han, however, and particularly so in the second century, an ethos had evolved among the *shi* class which gave unprecedented status to the attainment of reputation, such that "the fame-seeker could earn himself a reputation (*ming*) without necessarily securing an actual achievement (*shi*),"²¹ thereby rupturing the bond or correlation that should obtain between names and actualities. This excessive emphasis on reputation led to men acquiring quite undeserved reputations, thus making a mockery of the notion that a man's reputation matched his actual worth.

Another related area where names were no longer perceived to match actualities was Han classical scholarship. Thus, in "Mastering Learning" 治學,²² Xu Gan laments that the "debased literati" preferred to devote themselves to matters of glossing and nomenclature (*ming wu* 名物) at the expense of the fundamental import or 'essential meaning' (*da yi* 大義) of the sage kings' teachings which Xu Gan considered to be the 'actuality' of the Confucian canon and that which gave the written word its meaning.

In the foregoing I have identified two of the more immediate social and intellectual issues of later Han times that inform Xu Gan's discussion of the name and actuality relationship. In chapters 6 and 7 I will discuss these background issues in considerably greater detail. My main purpose in introducing them at this stage is to make it clear from the outset that Xu Gan's discussion of *ming shi* was most immediately and recognizably a response to the peculiar social and intellectual problems that he saw as having contributed to the collapse of the Han order. In part, it is for this reason that his discussions of *ming shi* differ significantly to that of earlier thinkers. Nevertheless, in arguing for his particular conception of the proper relationship between *ming* and *shi*, he was all too conscious of how different it was from the classical Confucian view. Much of his discussion of *ming* and *shi* is as an attempt to overcome this incompatibility. This tension in his thought

stimulates much of philosophical interest in his writings on the *ming shi* relationship.

XU GAN'S CONCEPT OF ACTUALITY

One of the most important premises upon which Xu Gan formulated his concept of correlation between name and actuality is that names follow from actualities and not vice versa. This in itself is perhaps not so remarkable until one appreciates that Xu Gan seems to have been the first early Chinese thinker to have made this premise a lynchpin in his discussion of the name-actuality relationship:²³

A name is that which is used to name an actuality. When an actuality has been established, its name follows after it; it is not the case that a name is established and then its actuality follows after it. Thus if a long shape is established then it will be named 'long' and if a short shape is established then it will be named 'short'. It is not the case that the names 'long' and 'short' are first established and then the long and short shapes follow after them.²⁴

The obvious point that Xu Gan is making is that names are (or should be) dependent on actualities. The philosophical basis for this view is his concept of 'actuality' which I understand to be 'a state of development peculiar to an entity or state of affairs by virtue of which that entity or state of affairs is what it is'. In order to distinguish this use of *shi* from its common pre-Qin sense as 'particular object', I translate it as 'actuality'. Thus, in the above passage, *shi* should not be taken to mean some particular 'long shape' (*chang xing* 長形) but rather that by virtue of which a long shape is 'long'. The shape or form of an object serves to manifest the object's actuality, which, in this case, is its being 'long'. This understanding is based on an implicit *conceptual* distinction being made between an entity (*wu*) and its actuality. I stress that the distinction is conceptual rather than real because Xu Gan did not conceive of actualities existing independent of objects nor as substrata in which various qualities inhere. Rather, an object and its actuality are one; the object is the vessel in and through which its inherent actuality becomes manifest.

This understanding of *shi* is clearly related to its primary meaning of 'inner substantiality'. The *shi* graph is composed of a roof with

goods below.²⁵ The primary meaning of this 'full house' image is being 'full of', 'filled with', 'inner substantiality'.²⁶ This meaning is also implicit in the word *fu* 富, 'rich', 'wealth', which Xu Shen uses to gloss *shi*. He in turn glosses *fu* as *bei* 備, 'to be provided/endowed with'.²⁷ This meaning is again evident in the case of the word *ri* 日, 'sun', which Xu Shen glosses as *shi* 實, 'being filled in', as opposed to *yue* 月, 'moon', which he glosses as *que* 闕, 'lacking', 'diminished'.²⁸ He also uses *shi* to gloss the word *shi* 室, 'room', conveying the idea that a room is that which is filled.²⁹ The term *ding shi* 鼎實, which means 'the contents of a cauldron', is also a concrete employment of this meaning.³⁰ From this primary meaning arose the extended meanings of 'replete', 'complete', 'solidness', 'substantiality', 'filled out'. These meanings share the common sense of 'substantial manifestation'. *Shi*, meaning 'fruit', is derived from this sense of substantial manifestation. As we shall see in part Two, it is this extended sense of *shi* that is the basis for *shi* meaning 'particular object'.

The sense of 'that which is inherent in' in the primary meaning of *shi* is already evident in pre-Han literature where *shi* is used synonymously with *qing* 情, 'the genuine', 'how things are in themselves', or *zhi* 質, 'basic stuff', when contrasted with *xing* 形, 'external shape', or *mao* 貌 'visible features', or *wei* 偽 'false', 'artificial',³¹ or *wen* 文 'external pattern'.³² Graham even describes *qing* as a very close approximation of Aristotelian 'essence' in contexts where it is translatable as 'what X genuinely is'.³³ In a revised version of his 1967 paper, however, he does qualify this by saying, "The *ch'ing* of X is what X cannot lack if it is to be called 'X'; the difference from Aristotelian essence is that it relates to naming, not being."³⁴

My interpretation of Xu Gan's concept of *shi* as 'a state of development peculiar to an entity or state of affairs by virtue of which that entity or state of affairs is what it is', is an interpretation that is borne out most fully in the following passage:

Names are bonded to actualities just as plants are bonded to the seasons. In spring, plants blossom into flower, in summer, they are covered in leaves, in autumn their foliage withers and falls, and in winter they produce seeds. This is 'acausal self-integration' (*wu wei er zi cheng zhe* 無為而自成者). If a plant is forced, its natural tendency (*xing* 性) will be harmed. It is the same with names. Hence, false name

makers are all those who would seek to harm the natural tendency of a particular name.³⁵

The analogy employed in this passage can and, I believe, should be understood on two levels. On the first level, the focus is on different actualities having different names, while on the second level, the focus is on a single actuality and its correlating name. At the first level, Xu Gan is saying that when the appropriate conditions are in place, names will come into being and pair with their correlating actualities just as spontaneously as plants blossom, grow leaves, wither, or bear seeds. And just as a plant's bearing of seeds or shedding of leaves is the 'embodiment' or manifest expression of a particular season, so too are names the manifest expression of their correlating actualities. Thus, just like the seasons, when an entity's actuality changes, then, because of the bond between name and actuality, its correlating name will also change.

This view of the relationship between names and actualities is what I term a correlative theory of naming. As I will show in greater detail in part Two, a number of correlative theories of naming were already current in the Western Han. I define a correlative theory of naming as the view that there is a proper or correct correlation between a given name and a given actuality, determined, variously, by what is ordained by 'Heaven' (*tian*) or by what is 'naturally so/so of itself' (*zi ran*), and a nominalist theory of naming as the view that it is man who arbitrarily or conventionally determines which *ming* should be applied to which *shi*. The nominalist position takes for granted what is known as nominalism in Western philosophy: that all things that exist are particular entities. In both China and the West nominalist theories of naming maintain that objects which are like each other are referred to by the same name. The correlative position differs from that of the nominalist in that it draws a conceptual distinction between entities and actualities. Chinese correlative theories of naming, in turn, differ fundamentally from representative realist philosophies of the Western tradition in that they do not regard actualities as universals. Thus, whereas a classical Western realist theory of naming might maintain that a variety of objects can all be given the name 'red' because they partake of the universal 'redness' or because the universal 'redness' exists in those particulars, a Chinese correlative theory of naming would postulate nothing more than that each red entity is red by virtue

of its actuality and that it is by virtue of this actuality that it is called 'red'.

The role of *xing* ('spontaneous tendency of an organism throughout its lifespan'³⁶) in the above passage is particularly relevant to our understanding of Xu Gan's concept of *shi*. In their discussion of *xing*, Hall and Ames challenge the notion that *xing* is "an inborn nature, a predetermined potential that is actualized and completed," arguing instead that it is better understood as a "process in which nature is necessarily and irreducibly 'nature-in-context.' That is, a discussion of 'individual nature' that seeks to separate 'thing' from 'environment' is an abstraction."³⁷ On the first level of meaning, the above passage supports this interpretation, where the 'context' of a plant is the particular season in which it is growing, and its *xing* is its natural tendency to blossom in one season and shed leaves in another. Analogously, the 'natural tendency' of a name is to represent the 'context' of which it should be an inextricable part and from which it draws its meaning, that 'context' being its actuality.³⁸

At the heart of the second level of meaning is the notion of 'becoming whole'. On this more 'organismic' interpretation, the four stages, of flowering, growth of leaves, withering of leaves and flowers, and the bearing of seeds, are clearly all part of the unfolding of a spontaneous process that expresses its mature development in 'fruition'. Xu Gan's use of the word *cheng*, 'to become whole', further supports this interpretation. An actuality, accordingly, is that which, through a process of maturation, has become whole. In Xu Gan's analogy, that actuality is the consummation of the organic process undergone by the four seasons over a year. And, just as names manifest actualities, so too does the mature plant manifest the consummation of that process.

The concept of *cheng* may be thought to introduce the notion of a development towards a predetermined end or goal, particularly in the light of the plant metaphor. Ames has been reported as criticising the appropriateness of the organismic metaphor as a characterization of Chinese philosophy on the grounds that it:

- (1) entails a sense of wholeness that is typical of many Western cosmogonic traditions but which is absent in the self-generative cosmologies of pre-Qin China, (2) imparts a potentiality/actuality distinction that obviates the *sui generis* character and unduly restricts the creativity of the particular,

and, most importantly, (3) conjures up images of Aristotelian teleology and the notion of a steady and progressive advance toward a predetermined perfection.³⁹

Yet, as Graham writes in commenting on Hall and Ames' related thesis that "in the Chinese cosmos all things are interdependent, without transcendent⁴⁰ principles by which to explain them or a transcendent origin from which they derive," the concept of *cheng* (which Graham defines as the 'completion' of a thing's development) is to be understood as "the interdependent becoming integral rather than the realization of an end." The seasons and the plant, and name and actuality, may be seen to be two such interdependent pairs.⁴¹

Xu Gan sees names being bonded to actualities such that only the name appropriate to a given actuality should be employed. According to this type of thinking, a particular name is appropriate to an entity as a function of that name being a genuine expression of the actuality inherent in that entity. The reason that name Y correlates to actuality Y is because without actuality Y, name Y would not be meaningful. Thus, of the Six Arts, Xu Gan writes:

Hence being respectful, sincere, well-disciplined and yielding are the essence (*qing*) of the Arts, and centrality, harmony, balance and uprightness are its actuality (*shi*). A mere sufficiency of reverence and alertness is but an embellishment (*hua* 華) to the Arts and an awesome countenance at all times is but an adornment (*shi* 飾) to the Arts.⁴²

This example also serves to show that an actuality was not necessarily a simple, but could also be a composite of qualities. Nor does Xu Gan maintain the principle of 'one name, one actuality'; rather he accepts that some different actualities can have the same name just as some different names can have the same actuality:

There are cases when the name is the same but the actuality is different, and there are cases when the name is different but the actuality is the same.⁴³

An example of the latter is described in the following passage:

Even though the Ways pursued by worthy men follow different routes, they all return to a common source; and even though a multitude of considerations come into play, they all

arrive at a common destination. Some, "being confronted with danger, were willing to lay down their lives."⁴⁴ Some looked for the good and travelled far to find it.⁴⁵ Some let their hair down, madly singing.⁴⁶ Some were dismissed thrice from office yet still did not leave their home country.⁴⁷ Some refused calls to office, retiring instead to the mountains.⁴⁸ Some bore humiliation with equanimity and accepted humble positions.⁴⁹ As sages, can they be reproached? Oh, gentlemen of unqualified integrity, there is a common actuality (*shi*) which links all these matters; I urge you to examine it.⁵⁰

If, however, a false name were to be used to refer to some actuality—hence displacing the name genuinely appropriate to that actuality—it would harm the natural tendency of the 'genuine' name and so stifle the proper expression of the actuality correlating to the genuine name. (The effect being analogous to lengthening a duck's legs with stilts or trimming a crane's legs.⁵¹) Implicit in the term 'false names' (*wei cheng zhi ming* 偽成之名⁵²) is the sense of 'artificial', 'man-made', as opposed to those names that are 'real' because they are an expression of the 'actual' (*shi*). Only real names are able to have a genuine correlation with actualities and only real names are the fruit of 'acausal self-integration'. Is one then to infer that Xu Gan assumed a correlative theory of naming?

A CORRELATIVE THEORY OF NAMING

By the Han dynasty, Confucian thought had incorporated many ideas and concepts which had been derived eclectically from Daoist, Legalist, and Yin Yang centred philosophies. One of the influences that this borrowing had was to broaden and enrich the cosmological basis of Han Confucian thought. Changes in the cosmological component of Han Confucian thought are reflected in Han thought about language. Whereas a central tenet of pre-Han Confucian thought about language is that it is man who arbitrarily determines the names of things, by Han times a prevailing view came to be that names are not arbitrarily determined by man; rather, to borrow Miller's words, "every word, or name, was the word or name it was, for a reason: and that reason was a reflection of the cosmic order."⁵³ This 'cosmic order' was seen to be reflected in a special correlation that was held to obtain between names

and actualities. Thus Liu Xi 劉熙 (fl. 200), a contemporary of Xu Gan, writes in his preface to *Shi ming*:

In the correlation between name and actuality, there is in each instance, that which is right and proper.⁵⁴

Liu Xi's sound glosses, in fact, abound with examples of paronomastic glossing.⁵⁵ These glosses take the form of etymological puns based principally on the homophonic proximity of two or more words. In these popular etymologies, which are by no means unique to China, "the meaning of a particular word is disclosed by the perception of its likeness to another word or of its identity with that word, whereby its function as a name is revealed."⁵⁶ Dong Zhongshu's *Chun qiu fan lu* provides a good example of this:

If we make a thoroughgoing examination of the overall meaning of the appellation 'king' (**giwang/wang* 王⁵⁷), we find that it may be divided into five divisions: the august (**g'wāng/huang* 皇⁵⁸) division, the upright (**piwang/fang* 方⁵⁹) division, the all-encompassing (**k'iwang/kuang* 匡⁶⁰) division, the central (**g'wāng/huang* 黃⁶¹) division, and the orientation (**giwang/wang* 往⁶²) division. When these five divisions are united and referred to by one word, that word is 'king'. A king is august, upright, all encompassing, central, and the focus of orientation. Therefore if a king's intentions are not universal and⁶³ august, then his way cannot be correct and upright. If his way cannot be correct and upright, then his potency cannot be universally encompassing. If his potency cannot be universally encompassing then his goodness cannot assume a central position. If his goodness cannot assume a central position, then the four directions will be unable to orient themselves towards him. If the four directions are unable to orient themselves towards him, then as king, he will be incomplete.⁶⁴

In this passage, it is the paronomastic correlation between the key words august, upright, all encompassing, centre, and orientation which lends definition to the meaning of *wang*, 'king'. By showing that the correlation of certain words to certain actualities is part of the 'grand design' of the cosmological pattern, Dong Zhongshu is able to reinforce his argument that names are bonded to actualities in a relationship that manifests Heaven's intentions (*zhi*).

The philosophical basis of Chinese paronomastic glossing is correlative thinking where the correlation or bond between name and actuality is conceived as a type of "mysterious resonance."⁶⁵ As a corollary to this bond, if the correct name of some entity is not apprehended, then the actuality of that entity will not be correctly discerned. And if the appropriate name for an actuality is not employed, but rather a false one, Xu Gan saw the potential consequences leading to chaos (*luan* 亂) on a cosmic scale:

People only know about the good that names do and are ignorant of the bad that false names⁶⁶ do. It can be catastrophic!⁶⁷

Nowadays, is it only the 'village worthies'⁶⁸ who throw potency (*luan de* 亂德) into disorder by making false names? The myriad affairs are complex and interwoven; when 'aberrant numbers' (*bian shu* 變數) proliferate it is certain that the path leading to the disordering of potency has more than one starting-point.⁶⁹

The point that Xu Gan is making is that the use of false names had reached such proportions that it had a destabilizing effect on the rhythms and cycles of phenomena throughout the cosmos. This belief is part and parcel of a cosmology where there is "no rigid division between the heavens and their bodies, the earth and its creations, and man and his activities. Within this single cosmos, the happenings of any one of these realms, so far from being unconnected with those of the other two, bore a direct relationship with them."⁷⁰ By the Han dynasty it had virtually become a universal article of faith that all things in the cosmos were correlated with the binary numerical categories of *yin* and *yang*, and by extension, the Five Processes (*wu xing* 五行), the Eight Trigrams, and the Sixty-four Hexagrams.⁷¹ It was believed that if the natural succession of the *yin* and *yang* cosmological forces was disturbed, this in turn affected other numerical relationships by way of sympathetic magic. Chi-yun Chen notes that the term *shu* 數 "was interpreted by some scholars of the *I-Ching* as the principle of synchronicity which regulates the correspondence between conditions in the cosmos, in nature and among men."⁷² According to this cosmology, if man upsets any aspect of this interrelated system of correlations, anomalies both in the natural world and the world of man are bound to occur; and the greater the upset, the greater the scope for

anomalies. Xu Gan similarly maintains that if many people use false names and so destroy the proper accord that should exist between *ming* and *shi*, then changes to the numerical balance of *yin* and *yang* combinations will proliferate and chaos will ensue. 'Aberrant numbers' is the term Xu Gan uses for the process which leads to this state of affairs.⁷³

Another *Zhong lun* passage which supports the interpretation that Xu Gan did believe that the proper correlation between a given name and a given actuality is not determined by man is the following which, although attributed to Zi Si 子思, Xu Gan quotes approvingly:

Affairs name themselves, sounds call themselves, appearances express themselves, things place themselves and men determine their own office. All do this by themselves.⁷⁴

If left to function of their own accord, then as a matter of course (*ziran*) those names inherently appropriate to entities and states of affairs will be revealed, sounds will name themselves onomatopoeically, appearances will be self-manifesting, things will naturally be part of the 'world', and by carrying out some deed a man will display his real capabilities and so be delegated office.⁷⁵ A similar passage is found in *Huai Nan Zi*:

[The sage ruler] does not like or dislike things because they are beautiful or ugly, nor is he pleased or angered by punishments and rewards. He lets each name name itself and each category categorize itself. Affairs proceed from what is so of themselves with no interference from him personally.⁷⁶

According to some Chinese correlative theories of naming, genuine names—that is, names that are inherently appropriate to given actualities—just like actualities themselves, are 'discovered' by man but not determined by man. As a corollary, the names made by man are false names. Another view is that while there are names which, having been created by 'Heaven' (*tian*), are inherently appropriate to given actualities, nevertheless sages are endowed with the ability to apprehend an entity's actuality and on that basis select or coin the name appropriate to that actuality. Xu Gan's views on names and naming have features in common with both of these theories. In common with the first view, he presents names as having a special 'natural' bond with actualities such that only the name that is inherently

appropriate to a given actuality should be used with that actuality. (Nor is there any evidence that he makes an exception for the names of those actualities that are human constructed as opposed to those actualities which 'just are'.) In common with the second view, he would seem to have accepted that man can coin names, but for those names to be genuine they must have a 'right and proper' correlation with the actualities to which they refer. He certainly did not see it as his role to coin names. I presume that, for him, this is a task left to the sages. Thus, his understanding of the way that names should relate to actualities does assume a correlative theory of naming where name and actuality are two parts of a whole. The following section is an interpretation of how Xu Gan conceived this whole.

NAME AND ACTUALITY AS SUBSTANCE AND FUNCTION

Xu Gan's concept of the accord that should obtain between names and actualities is one where names truly present and manifest actualities and actualities give names their meaning and significance. The conceptual model which best characterizes this relationship is the substance-function (*ti yong*) polarity.⁷⁷ *Ti yong* is one of the primary conceptual models in traditional Chinese thought and has been invested with a variety of meanings. Fang Keli 方克立 suggests that two basic meanings can be abstracted from the various senses in which it has been employed: (1) the relationship between substance and its application, function or properties; (2) the relationship between essence and phenomenon, or between that which is fundamental to something and its expression.⁷⁸ Xu Gan's concept of accord between name and actuality is close to this second meaning.

Probably the earliest use of *ti yong* to represent a philosophical relationship is in Wang Bi's 王弼 (226–249) commentary to *Lao Zi* 38. Yet even if it was Wang Bi who first used *ti* and *yong* as a pair of terms (and even he did not use the two terms as a compound), there is little doubt that the relationship expressed by the terms was not first formulated by him. Indeed, there is much in Han and pre-Han thought that is amenable to a substance-function interpretation. Moreover, late Han thinkers had already employed similar terminology to *ti* and *yong* to express the same relationship that Wang Bi expressed with *ti* and *yong* (albeit without the same metaphysical application).⁷⁹ Thus in his preface to *Li ji* 禮記, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) writes:

Ritual is both substance (*ti* 體) and application (*lü* 履). Where it is integrated in one's heart, this is known as 'substance'; where it is practised and put into action, this is known as 'application'.⁸⁰

While neither *ti yong* nor *ti lü* is used in *Zhong lun*, nevertheless, Xu Gan's concept of the proper relationship that should exist between *ming* and *shi* is one which is consistent with the second sense of the *ti yong* polarity: the basis of something and its expression. It would, of course, be gratuitous to argue that, because Zheng Xuan was an older contemporary and a native of the same Kingdom as Xu Gan, therefore Xu Gan's thought may well have been influenced by Zheng Xuan's formulation of the *ti lü* polarity. It would not, however, be unreasonable to suggest that by the latter half of the Eastern Han the *ti yong* polarity had started to become consciously articulated as a philosophical paradigm. It is my interpretation that Xu Gan's discussion of the accord between name and actuality was one such articulation.

For Xu Gan, although name and actuality should always be in accord, it is only when the proper conditions are in place that this is possible. This is particularly evident in "Bestowing Emoluments and Titles":

Somebody once asked me, "In antiquity did gentlemen value titles and emoluments?"

I replied, "Yes."

"Then what do the books of the philosophers mean in stating that titles and emoluments are not honours and that riches and property are not wealth?"

I replied, "Living in times of chaos, they saw that it was small men who were wealthy and honoured, thus they said such things. In antiquity, however, it was not the same. In antiquity, the institution of titles and emoluments was such that titles were bestowed to give station to those who possessed potency and emoluments granted to foster those who had made meritorious achievements. If one's achievements were great, one's emolument would have been generous and if one's potency was extensive, one's title would have been venerable. Yet if one's achievements were modest, one's emolument would have been negligible and if one's potency was limited, one's title⁸¹ would have been humble.

“Accordingly, by observing a person’s title, one was able to distinguish that person’s potency, and by looking at a person’s emolument, one was able to know the size of a person’s achievements without having to ask. This was the reason why gentlemen of antiquity valued titles and emoluments. . . .

“Yet from those times onward,⁸² the teachings of kings Wen and Wu have deteriorated, the way of promotion and demotion is no longer employed, feudal lords overstep their position and grandees make their’s hereditary. People are not given titles on account of their potency, nor emoluments on account of their merit. There are cases where men steal whole states⁸³ and are honoured, and cases where they steal land and become rich. The treacherous and evil get what they want while the good and worthy have their ambitions frustrated.”⁸⁴

For Xu Gan, a man’s reputation should be the visible mark and representation of his actual worth: his potency and meritorious achievements. Only when the proper conditions prevail, however, do reputations perform this role. He appeals to the unquestionable authority of ‘lost’ antiquity to justify his claim that in antiquity there had been a correlation between title and potency, and also emoluments and merit. Titles and emoluments (*ming/yong*) serve to represent to the world that their holder is a man of potency and merit (*shi/ti*). The bestowing of titles and ranks is regulated by the social customs and ritual behaviour (*li* 禮) that are practised in a society that is well ordered and ruled by sage rulers. When these conditions are in place, then, as a natural consequence, accord between *ming* and *shi* is realized. Where this accord exists, then “by observing a person’s rank, one is able to distinguish that person’s potency, and by looking at a person’s emolument, one is able to know that person’s merit without having to ask.” When this accord exists names truly present actualities and actualities can be known for what they are. Thus Xu Gan writes:

That which Confucius valued was those names that truly name actualities. In so valuing names, he thereby valued actualities.⁸⁵

Xu Gan employs the example of Confucius’ attitude to reputation to highlight the importance that the gentleman attaches to name and

actuality being in accord. This is an important point as it illustrates how Xu Gan's discussion of *ming shi* was, in part, developed as an attempt to reinterpret classical Confucian views on *ming shi* as being compatible with his correlative theory of naming. It is basic to Xu Gan's position that *ming* should not be used with *shi* to which they did not apply and that they certainly should not be used to prescribe *shi*. He chose to argue his case with reference to *ming* in the sense of reputation, rather than *ming* in the more general sense of name or word (such as we find in Confucius' and Xun Qing's *zheng ming* thought), because Confucius' writings on *ming* in the sense of reputation are amenable to an interpretation that supports Xu Gan's thesis, whereas his *zheng ming* thinking is not. This will be discussed further in the chapter 2. To make his point, however, he has first to defend Confucius against the charge that the latter's attitude to reputation was ambivalent.

My interlocuter asked me saying, "On the one hand, Zhongni hated the prospect of dying without having established a reputation.⁸⁶ Yet, on the other hand, he despised false reputations. This being so, then how could such a position be upheld?"⁸⁷

If Confucius saw the securing of a reputable name as being of the utmost importance, was he thus unreasonably concerned with securing a reputation? This suspicion is rendered all the more plausible⁸⁸ by the following *Shi ji* passage which, in quoting *Analects* 15.19,⁸⁹ includes one final sentence that is nowhere else transmitted:⁹⁰

A gentleman has reason to be distressed if he ends his days without making a reputation for himself.⁹¹ *How will I appear to later ages?*⁹²

Was Confucius' desire for reputation like that of the fame-seeker criticised by Xu Gan because he was prepared to "earn himself a reputation without necessarily securing an actual achievement"?⁹³ Sima Qian, for example, seems to imply that it was in order to secure himself a posthumous reputation that Confucius undertook his work on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.⁹⁴ If Confucius had been motivated to undertake this work to secure a reputation, this would be cause to call his integrity into serious question.

Yet, on the other hand, both in the *Analects* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, Confucius criticises fame-seekers. Xu Gan cites and discusses the following examples:

In the past, Gongmeng [Zhi 公孟縻] of Wei was frequently brutish in his behaviour and so incurred the hatred of the people of Wei. Qi Bao 齊豹 killed him so as to become famous and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* recorded him as being a bandit. . . .⁹⁵

Someone asked me, "Qi Bao killed for the sake of earning a name for himself thus Zhongni detested him and classed him as a bandit. Is it possible that those who presently strive for fame might also have committed the crime of murder?"

I replied, "In the Spring and Autumn period there were many murderers⁹⁶ but if they did not steal they were not recorded.⁹⁷ In determining that which he finds commendable and that which he finds detestable, the sage must weigh-up what is significant and what is not, and calculate what is so in the majority of cases and what is the exception. Because fame-seekers cause truth and falsehood to appear as their opposites and right and wrong to change places, this influences the people. This is a great calamity for the state. A murderer harms but one person—how can he be compared with the fame-seeker? So why then should a murderer be recorded as a bandit? Xun Qing also said, 'Those who steal 'names' are more despicable than those who steal goods.'⁹⁸ The 'honest villagers' did not murder anyone either, yet Zhongni despised them. Why? Because they confounded potency."⁹⁹

Thus, on prima facie grounds at least, Confucius' attitude to the matter of securing a reputation is ambivalent. Yet Xu Gan is unequivocal in his defence of Confucius against this charge:

That which Zhongni valued was those 'names' that truly name actualities. In so valuing names, he thereby valued actualities.¹⁰⁰

Here Xu is arguing that Confucius only gave his respect and esteem to those names that had a correlating actuality. Thus, if a man enjoyed a

particular reputation but did not measure up to the actuality 'behind' that reputation, then this would be a matter inviting censure.

In the standard interpretation of the *Analects* 15.19 passage (quoted above), the word 稱 is read as *cheng* on the level tone (*ping sheng*) and taken to mean, 'to esteem, to commend, to hold in regard'. Xu Gan, however, unlike his interlocuter, seems to read 稱 as *chen* on the falling tone (*qu sheng*), meaning 'to match, to correlate with'.¹⁰¹ Following this alternative reading, the *Analects* passage translates as follows:

The gentleman is distressed at the prospect of dying and leaving behind him a name that does not match his actual qualities.

On this reading, Confucius' real concern was that a name should only be applied to its corresponding actuality, and naturally this could only be brought about after that actuality had been established.¹⁰²

So understood, another well-known sentence from the *Analects*, also quoted in the "Examining Falsity" *pian* of *Zhong lun*, is rendered more intelligible. This sentence occurs twice in the *Analects*, at 15.18, and with minor variation at 14.30.¹⁰³ Its occurrence at 15.18 is perhaps significant, preceding as it does the 15.19 passage that has been under discussion. 15.18 reads as follows:

The Master said, "The gentleman is distressed by his own lack of ability and not by the failure of others to appreciate him."¹⁰⁴

In a footnote to his translation of this passage, Arthur Waley comments on what he sees to be a contradiction between 15.18 and 5.19, saying, "As both sayings completely lack context, it would be a waste of time to try to reconcile the contradiction."¹⁰⁵ Following the interpretation that I have attributed to Xu Gan, however, the alleged contradiction is seen to be illusory, because it becomes apparent that Confucius was not unduly concerned with achieving a reputation at the expense of the actuality it represented. Only to the extent that posthumous reputation falsely represents an individual's actual accomplishments was Confucius concerned with reputation.

And as noted by Yang Shi 楊時 (1053–1135),¹⁰⁶ *Analects* 15.20 can also be seen to be the last in a group of three interrelated and consecutive passages. 15.20 reads as follows:

What the gentleman seeks, he seeks within himself; what the small man seeks, he seeks from others.¹⁰⁷

That which the small man seeks from others is reputation,¹⁰⁸ while it is the cultivation of potency that the gentleman seeks within himself. This is compatible with Xu Gan's view that 'seeking it within oneself and not from others' "is not a matter of strengthening oneself but rather is a matter of revealing the wealth that exists therein."¹⁰⁹ For Xu Gan, that inherent wealth is the gentleman's achieved 'actuality' and his reputation should be the visible mark of that actuality. When reputation does not match actual qualities, yet is used to represent those qualities, it is a case of names prescribing actualities that do not exist.

From the foregoing discussion it is evident that the significance or value of *ming* is not merely to 'register' or designate the existence of *shi*; moreover and importantly, *ming* plays the crucial and active role of making manifest, giving formal significance to that which lies unrecognized and hence incomplete. A man's reputation is a mark of his achievements and personal cultivation. As such it serves to let others know what sort of person he is. If he is a man of worth, yet does not have a worthy reputation, then he cannot act as a model for others to emulate and so his actuality cannot be fully realized. When names and actualities are in accord, however, their relationship is a *ti yong* relationship: 'internally', actualities sustain names by making them meaningful, and 'externally', names realize, give expression to, those actualities. Although actualities initiate the process ("When an actuality has been established, its name follows after it; it is not the case that a name is established and then its actuality follows after it"), it is names which bring it to fruition. In other words, the consummation of the whole is effected through actualities inherently supporting names (by virtue of the bond between them), and names expressing actualities.

For Xu Gan, the whole he considers to be of fundamental importance is that consummated when the gentleman commands a reputation that matches his potency. Potency is the gentleman's actuality. Xu Gan describes potency as "that by which one is led in accordance with the Way"¹¹⁰ and the gentleman as one whose potency is so full (*sheng* 盛) that it radiates outward, enabling him to act as a model for others and thereby exert a transforming influence throughout society.¹¹¹ Without *ming*, however, the full effect of charismatic potency remains circum-