

**NAME AND ACTUALITY
IN
EARLY CHINESE THOUGHT**

名實

JOHN MAKEHAM

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SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture
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John Makeham



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Introduction

MING SHI 名實 ('name and object' or 'name and actuality') is a key polar concept in early Chinese thought. In this study I develop an interpretation of this polarity as it is employed in *Zhong lun* 中論, *Discourses That Hit the Mark*, the representative work of the late Eastern Han (25–220 C.E.) philosopher, Xu Gan 徐幹 (170–217). I develop this interpretation in the context of a tradition of *ming shi* discourse in early China.

Zhong lun is a collection of essays that are predominantly concerned with philosophical questions. As a whole, the text can be best described as an enquiry into the causes of political and social breakdown and the presentation of various ethical and political remedies. Much of Xu Gan's argumentation appeals to the authority of traditional Confucian ethics; indeed the work is classified under *ru jia* 儒家 in all bibliographical lists of the standard histories, except for that of *Song shi* 宋史, where it is listed among miscellaneous writers. Even though in some of the twenty-two *pian*¹ that comprise *Zhong lun* a range of influences may be discerned that derive from non-Confucian sources, for a Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) writing it is remarkably free of the overt eclecticism that characterizes many writings of that period. And, like Xun Yue's 荀悅 (148–209) *Shen jian* 申鑒, which also dates from the end of the Eastern Han period, Xu Gan's *Zhong lun* evidences a creative and polemical Confucian spirit that was continued in such post-Han writings as Wang Su's 王肅 (195–256) *Kong Cong Zi* 孔叢子 and Fu Xuan's 傅玄 (217–278) *Fu Zi* 傅子.²

Philosophically, the most fecund concept employed in *Zhong lun* is the 'name and actuality' polarity and my purpose in this study is to elucidate Xu Gan's concept of the name and actuality relationship in the context of its philosophical and socio-intellectual background. Xu Gan saw the name and actuality relationship to be of fundamental im-

portance because he believed that the correlation between name and actuality ultimately affected the harmonious integration of the realm of man with the rest of the cosmos of which man was a part. For Xu Gan, the bond between name and actuality was not something to be prescribed by convention or artificially determined by man because, just like the flowering of plants in spring or the regular cycle of the four seasons, it is part of the cosmic order. And if that bond is broken or artificially prescribed, the repercussions were seen to affect not only socio-political order, but even the moral order, leading him to address questions such as whether the practice of moral conduct was of any practical worth, and what bearing humane behaviour had on a man's longevity.

My purpose in presenting the philosophical and social background is to provide a more comprehensive context in which to understand Xu Gan's concept of the name and actuality relationship by seeing it in relief against the backdrop of a tradition of *ming shi* discourse, and also to identify some of the more immediate influences that prompted Xu Gan to discuss the name and actuality relationship. As Maurice Mandelbaum writes:

It is only when we view philosophic thought both in terms of its own tradition, and in terms of influences focussed upon it because of the circumstances of the philosopher's life and times, that we can see a particular philosopher's work in proper perspective: as a distinctive philosophic achievement which also belongs within the general intellectual history of the period.³

The study is comprised of eight chapters divided into four parts:

Part One: Chapter 1.

Part Two: Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Part Three: Chapters 6 and 7.

Part Four: Chapter 8.

Each part broadly addresses a particular question: What was Xu Gan's concept of the *ming shi* relationship?, How does it relate to earlier views of *ming shi*?, What background socio-intellectual factors prompted Xu Gan to discuss the *ming shi* relationship?, and What

bearing did his concept of the *ming shi* relationship have on other thinking in *Zhong lun*?

Part One. In this first part, comprising only one but the longest chapter of the study, I develop my interpretation of Xu Gan's concept of the proper relationship that should obtain between name and actuality. I stress that it is my interpretation because in writing *Zhong lun* it was certainly not Xu Gan's intention to set forth a systematic account of the body of beliefs and premises that informed his concept of the name and actuality relationship. My interpretation represents the fruits of an extended dialogue with the various essays of the *Zhong lun* text, essays in which the author's beliefs and premises all too often lie only partially revealed. My interpretation, necessarily subjective and contingent, makes no claims to finality, much less to some authority privileging me faithfully to reconstruct Xu Gan's authorial intentions. The worth of my interpretation should be judged in terms of its own inherent coherence and plausibility as informed by the scholarship of modern Sinology.

In chapter 1, I argue that Xu Gan understood *shi* to mean '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'. To distinguish this sense of *shi* from its other sense as 'particular object', I translate it as 'actuality'. I also argue that, as a corollary to this view, Xu Gan subscribed to a correlative theory of naming and that his correlative theory of naming is developed as a critique of nominalist theories of naming. This distinction is of central importance. By a correlative theory of naming I mean the view that there is a proper or correct correlation between a given name and a given actuality, determined, variously, by what has been ordained by 'Heaven' (*tian* 天) or by 'what is naturally so/so of itself' (*zi ran* 自然). I distinguish a correlative theory of naming from a nominalist theory of naming, the latter being the view that it is man who arbitrarily or conventionally determines which *ming* should be applied to which *shi*; that is, there is no proper or correct correlation between a given *ming* and a given *shi* other than what has been artificially determined by man.

I then proceed to show that, for Xu Gan, the proper relationship between names and actualities is one where there is accord between them such that names faithfully represent actualities and actualities give names their meaning and significance. When name and actuality are in accord they form a whole where each partner relies on the other

such that without names, actualities would not be manifest, and without actualities, there would be nothing to be manifest as names. I argue that the conceptual model which best represents this relationship is the substance-function (*ti yong* 體用) polarity. In the final section of this chapter, I examine the potency (*de* 德)—reputation relationship, the single most important name and actuality relationship discussed by Xu Gan in *Zhong lun*.

Part Two. The tradition of discourse that Xu Gan's discussion of *ming shi* belongs to is one that fostered the development of both nominalist and correlative theories of naming. This tradition is the subject of part Two, a group of background studies of nominalist and correlative views of the *ming shi* relationship in the classical period of Chinese philosophy—approximately 500 B.C.E. to 150 B.C.E. In studying this tradition of discourse, my purpose is threefold: (i) to provide a philosophical backdrop against which my interpretation of Xu Gan's concept of name and actuality is given depth and perspective, thereby enhancing its definition; (ii) to establish which aspects of this tradition of *ming shi* discourse influenced Xu Gan's thinking; and (iii) to determine the extent to which Xu Gan's concept of the name and actuality relationship is original or derivative.

During the classical period, discussion of *ming* and *shi* was common to all of the major schools of thought: the Confucians, the Legalists, the School of Names, the Daoists, and the Mohists, as well as 'schools' of syncretic thinkers who slot less comfortably into these categories. For most of this period, it was nominalist thinkers who developed the most detailed theories of naming and whose theories dominated philosophical discourse on the relationship between *ming* and *shi*. Confucian thinkers, in particular, subscribed to nominalist thinking. Yet despite being a Confucian thinker himself, Xu Gan was strongly critical of nominalist thought. This tension in his intellectual make-up animates his discussion of the *ming shi* relationship. His own theory of naming was developed, in part, as a critical response to nominalist thinking, the contemporary manifestations of which he found endemic in late Han society. He believed that social breakdown was correlatively linked to the breakdown of the proper relationship between name and actuality. His own theory of naming is a correlative theory of naming with philosophical antecedents traceable to late third century B.C.E. writings. Thus his thinking is stimulated negatively by nominalist theories of naming and positively by correlative theories of

naming. To explore his thinking without an understanding of this tradition of discourse would circumscribe our ability to interpret his theory of naming and its significance in this tradition of discourse.

Nevertheless, given that my purpose is not to write a proper history of the *ming shi* relationship and the evolution of nominalist and correlative theories of naming—a huge topic warranting a study in its own right⁴—of necessity, I have had to be selective in choosing which thinkers and which writings are most germane to my above stated aims. To some extent, the task of selection has been made easier because the only School of Names writing dealing specifically with the subject of *ming shi* is no longer extant—the essay entitled “Ming shi” 名實 in the received *Gongsun Long Zi* 公孫龍子 was forged sometime between 300 and 600 C.E.⁵ And despite Sima Tan’s 司馬談 (d. 110 B.C.E.) praise of this school for “correcting the relationship between names and objects,”⁶ School of Names writings are characterized by an extreme nominalism where ad hoc and circumscribed senses of words (*ming*), paradoxes, and specious logic are used for the purposes of entertainment and winning in disputation.⁷ For School of Names philosophers, it is *ming*, not *shi*, that are important; whether or not a name does, in fact, correlate with some object or state of affairs was not a primary consideration. Daoist writings present an even more extremist nominalism: the distinctions represented by *ming* are held to be determined on the basis of nothing more than arbitrary, subjective, relative, and conventional standards. Worse than this, *ming* actually perpetuate false dichotomies by creating the illusion that distinctions exist.⁸ Because the focus of these views on *ming* is extremist, in Part Two I have chosen to examine the writings of thinkers, both nominalist and correlative, whose views provide more insight into the notion of a name and actuality *relationship*.

Chapter 2 is an interpretation of Confucius’ *zheng ming* 正名 or ‘correction of names’ programme, the seminal statement in early Chinese thought of the socio-political role that *ming* are perceived to play. Confucius’ *zheng ming* programme is also the earliest example of a nominal prescriptivist philosophy in classical Chinese thought. I define nominal prescriptivism as the view that *ming* can and should be used to prescribe *shi*. Although Confucius does not employ the word *shi* in those passages that best exemplify his *zheng ming* thinking, it is evident (certainly to Xu Gan) that he did believe that *ming* did (or should) represent what later writers used the word *shi* to refer to:

entities and states of affairs. His concern with the normative and prescriptive function of *ming* was reiterated and refined in a number of later writings on *ming* and *shi*. In *Zhong lun*, however, Xu Gan denies that Confucius subscribed to a nominalist theory of naming, citing Confucius, instead, in support of his own correlative theory of naming.

Chapter 3 is a study of *ming* and *shi* in the Neo-Mohist summa and the *Xun Zi* 荀子 essay, “On the Correct Use of Names” (“Zheng ming” 正名). I argue that the word *shi* in these writings is to be understood as ‘particular object’ and, to distinguish it from its other meaning of ‘actuality’, I translate it as ‘object’. I also argue that these writings advance the view that *ming* could and should be used to prescribe *shi*, and that in both cases this view is premised on a nominalist theory of naming. The nominalist theories of naming that are found in these writings stand out as being the most fully developed in classical Chinese thought. They represent the antithesis of Xu Gan’s concept of the proper relationship that should obtain between *ming* and *shi*. It was on this pattern of thinking that he blamed the ills of late Han society. In order to avoid portraying Xun Qing as a nominalist, however, Xu Gan gives a very circumscribed account of Xun Qing’s views on *ming*.

Chapter 4 is a study of the Legalist administrative formula of ‘matching word and deed’ (*xing ming* 刑名). I argue that *xing ming* is a unique application, rich in nuance, of the *ming shi* concept to Legalist philosophy of statecraft. While *xing ming* is a further example of nominal prescriptivist thinking, its particular relevance to Xu Gan’s thought is Han Fei’s 韓非 (d. 233 B.C.E.) presentation of *xing* and *ming* in a substance-function relationship. In discussions of *ming shi* before Han Fei there is no evidence to suggest that *ming* and *shi* are amenable to a substance-function interpretation.

Chapter 5 is a study of what I identify to be the earliest examples of correlative theories of naming in early Chinese thought. The main writings studied are the “Xin shu shang” 心術上, “Xin shu xia” 心術下, and “Bai xin” 白心 *pian* of *Guan Zi* 管子, and the “Shen cha ming hao” 深察名號 *pian* of Dong Zhongshu’s 董仲舒 (c. 179–c. 104) *Chun qiu fan lu* 春秋繁露. I argue that in these writings, for the first time we find the word *shi* being used to mean ‘that by virtue of which an entity is what it is’ and that Xu Gan’s correlative theory of naming and his concept of *shi* share a great deal in common with the ideas adumbrated in these writings.

Part Three. The purpose of part three is to establish that, in particular, two aspects of Eastern Han socio-intellectual culture can be seen to have influenced Xu Gan's belief that when the conditions for accord between names and actualities do not prevail, the bond between names and actualities becomes dislocated, leaving actualities unable to be properly expressed and names being used to represent actualities which did not exist. Xu Gan sees this changed name-actuality relationship as a fundamental-peripheral (*ben mo* 本末) relationship.

It is my view that it was the socio-intellectual trends identified and discussed in this part, rather than the philosophical developments of the Eastern Han period, that most evidently and immediately influenced Xu Gan's discussion of the name and actuality relationship. After Dong Zhongshu and before Xu Gan, no Han thinker can be identified as having made anything more than a trivial contribution to the tradition of *ming shi* discourse. Take, for example, Wang Chong 王充 (27–c. 97) and Wang Fu 王符 (85–162), two philosophers whose writings did touch upon the relationship between *ming* and *shi*. Wang Chong's most extended treatment of the *ming shi* relationship is in two essays of his *Lun heng* 論衡, "Shi Zhi" 實知 and "Zhi shi" 知實. In these two essays his main thesis is that sages are not born with an innate knowledge of things, rather, all knowledge is empirical and is verifiable through proof. The question of the relationship between *ming* and *shi* is limited to two matters: (i) a repudiation of the view that sages have an innate knowledge of the names of things;⁹ and (ii) the claim that the names 'sage' (*sheng* 聖) and 'worthy' (*xian* 賢) are mutually interchangeable because their *shi* is the same. This contribution to discourse on the *ming shi* relationship is, at best, modest. Wang Fu's treatment of the *ming shi* relationship is somewhat different. He uses *ming* and *shi* to discuss reputation and actual worth, and the title of office and the actual performance of the duties of that office. In regards to this first matter, his concerns¹⁰ were later echoed by a number of critics of late Eastern Han society, including Xu Gan. As regards the second matter, his views reflect a resurgence in Legalist thinking in the latter half of the Eastern Han. Like Xu Gan, he was concerned with the breakdown between name and actuality; unlike Xu Gan, however, he does not develop this concern into an integrated system of ideas with the name and actuality relationship at its core.

And while one might be able to discern a growing disaccord between the Han Confucian ideal and the Confucian reality being reflected in the writings of a number of Eastern Han thinkers, it would

be anachronistic to regard discussion of this disaccord to be in any way implicitly reducible to a type of *ming shi* discourse. On the contrary, if anything, *ming shi* discourse, such as we find in *Zhong lun*, would be more correctly regarded as but *one manifestation* of a growing disaccord between the Han Confucian ideal and the Confucian reality in the Eastern Han.

Chapter 6 is a study of the bearing that the unbridled pursuit of reputation in Eastern Han society had on Xu Gan's understanding of what happens to the name and actuality relationship when name and actuality are seen to be in disaccord. I show how *ming jiao* 名教 encouraged men to pursue personal reputation so that they might secure office. One result of this was that the scholar gentry (*shi* 士) class came to attach undue importance to *ming* and less and less importance to *shi*.

Chapter 7 is a study of the bearing of Eastern Han classical scholarship on Xu Gan's understanding of what happens to the name and actuality relationship when name and actuality are seen to be in disaccord. I begin by describing the methodological characteristics of the two rival schools of classical scholarship in the Eastern Han, the Old Text School and the New Text School, and then proceed to investigate Xu Gan's objections to that methodology. I argue that classical scholarship in the Eastern Han was concerned more with the written word and glossing than it was with the elucidation of the teachings of the classical texts and, as with *ming jiao*, this development can be seen to have influenced Xu Gan's view that when the conditions for the proper relationship between name and actuality no longer prevail, name and actuality fall into a fundamental-peripheral relationship.

Part Four. In chapter 8, I examine what for Xu Gan were the cosmological-cum-ethical implications of name and actuality being in accord or disaccord. The rationale for dealing with this topic last of all is that it builds on an understanding of accord and disaccord developed in parts One and Three. Xu Gan's position on two major contemporary philosophical questions are examined: (i) the relationship between a man's practice of humaneness (*ren* 仁) and the length of his life; and (ii) the relationship between a man's moral nature (*xing* 性) and his innate ability (*cai* 才).

PART ONE

Xu Gan's Theory of Naming

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 internecine 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