Article

Ming (Name) as the Bond of Individual and Community from the Perspective of Confucian Communitarianism

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Abstract: The relationship between the individual and the collective is one of the most important topics in Confucianism. Though this concept has been widely studied, *ming* 名 (meaning 'name'), one of its most crucial categories, has not yet been deeply explored within this theoretical domain. This article discusses four aspects of *ming* and their contributions to the relationship between the self and community. Firstly, Confucius' proposition of *zhengming* 正名 (rectifying names or the rectification of names) implies that language, especially that of rulers or gentlemen 君子 (*junzi*), has a considerable impact on both ethical and political practices. In this sense, *ming* as language establishes a relationship between rulers and the communities they govern. Secondly, in Confucius' use of *ming*, reputation also reflects the attributes of a collectivity. On one hand, reputation functions as a social evaluation system; on the other, it can also be used to shape social values. Both aspects of language and reputation can be found in Confucius' sayings, and are essentially determined by the sound attributes of *ming*. Thirdly, *ming* is interpreted to mean "role" in the later explanations and commentaries of *Analects* 13.3, which signifies that each individual has their own role in the community to which they belong. The position of a social individual is determined according to their relationship with others. Simultaneously, it is also the idea of "role" that brings a hierarchical order to family, state, clan, and "all under heaven". Finally, the relationship between *ming* and *yi* 義 (appropriateness) implies the correlation between a name and the subject to which it refers. For ethical or political participants, *yi* means that the name-bearer is bound to a series of demands regarding their behaviors and virtues, which can lead to a "thick" conception of the subject, that is, the role of a complex of virtues, duties, and even rights (albeit implicit). Although the meaning of *ming* was becoming more complicated and profound during the development of early Confucianism, it has always functioned as the bond between individual and community. In this regard, the Confucian theory of *ming* can contribute some insights toward the combination of Confucianism and communitarianism, and also toward the modernization of Confucianism.

Keywords: *ming* 名 (name); *zhengming* 正名 (rectifying names); individual; community; Confucian communitarianism

1. Introduction

In contrast with the idea of the individual, Confucianism traditionally values community. Family, clan, country, and even "all under heaven" 天下 (*tianxia*) collectively give meaning to those living by Confucianism. Studies that compare, or even combine, communitarianism with Confucianism or "Asian values" (de Bary 1998, pp. 10–12) are highly illuminating and provide Confucian intellectual resources for the discussion of political philosophy. Utilizing the most simple definition which states that "communitarianism is the idea that human identities are largely shaped by different kinds of constitutive communities (or social relations)" (Bell 2020), common ground can easily be found between Confucianism and communitarianism, such as regarding people as social beings, weighing the common good more than individual rights, and valuing the significance of community in education (Hu 2007, p. 476; S. Cao 2020, p. 117). At the same time, the differences between them have also been emphasized, such as the various understandings of "individual

rights", the various forms and scopes of community, the presence or absence of liberalism as its opposite, etc. (Wong 2004; Bell 2020). In these comparative studies, many Confucian concepts have been extensively discussed, such as "benevolence" 仁 (*ren*), "propriety" 禮 (*li*), and "filial piety" 孝 (*xiao*) (Rosemont 2015, pp. 115–36; Ames 2011, pp. 171–79). "Name" 名 (*ming*), however, as one of the crucial concepts of Confucianism, has not yet received the attention it deserves.[1] If there exists a Confucian version as the counterpart of communitarianism, it is thus inappropriate that its conceptual constellation does not contain "name". What insights can *ming* (name) offer from the perspective of Confucian communitarianism? In answer to this question, this paper will argue that *ming* could be best understood as the bond between individual and community. Since Confucius proposed the "rectification/correction of names" 正名 (*zhengming*), the Confucian conception of *ming* has evolved, and it has been given multiple meanings over the long history of Confucianism. It is the multiple aspects of *ming* that have enabled this Confucian concept to be deeply embedded in the relationship between self and community and to serve as a link between them.

Prior to formal discussion, three issues must be clarified. Firstly, when terms such as "individual" or "community" are used, it can generally be understood that they are the products of Western and modern discourse. In the Chinese language, especially in the Confucian tradition, a pair of categories that constitute such a relationship might be "self" 己 (*ji*) and "group" 群 (*qun*), which could be interpreted as the equivalence of "individual" and "community". The following saying of Confucius may be observed as an example: The Master once said, "One cannot be in the same herd with birds and beasts. If I am not with my fellow humans, with whom shall I associate?" 鳥獸不可與同群，吾非斯人之徒與而誰與 (*Analects* 18.6; Ni 2017, p. 413).[2] This is a saying that emphasizes the social attributes of human beings. Moreover, Confucius believed that self-cultivation is an activity that must rely on the self rather than on others. For example, "To be human-hearted is dependent on oneself. How can it be dependent on others?" 為仁由己，豈由人乎哉 (*Analects* 12.1; Ni 2017, p. 279). Additionally, Confucius states: "Exemplary persons place demand on themselves, whereas petty-minded persons place demand on others". 君子求诸己，小人求诸人 (*Analects* 15.21; Ni 2017, p. 363). Everyone, those people with moral aspirations, is inevitably dependent on the group for their own existence; meanwhile, every person has independence in what they want to do or be, especially in the field of moral cultivation, which sets the tone of Confucianism regarding the complex relationship between the collective and the self.

Secondly, whether *ming* has coherent importance in Confucianism also remains in question. As Carine Defoort claims, the modern discourse on *zhengming* was mostly established by Hu Shi 胡適, who believes there is a "rectification-of-names-ism" 正名主義 (*zhengmingzhuyi*) in Confucianism and comprehends *ming* in the field of logic (Defoort 2021a, pp. 616–17). H. C. Loy also mentions that "*Analects* 13.3 does not present Confucius as expounding a systematically formulated doctrine" (Loy 2020, p. 330). Viewed in this way, the idea that *ming* occupies a core position in Confucianism can be seen as the result of modern academic discourse, rather than of a coherent tradition. On the contrary, some scholars value the importance of *ming* in Confucianism, even claiming that *ming* should be the "base" of Chinese philosophy (Gou 2016, p. 4). As for Confucianism, *ming* was first mentioned by Confucius in his rough claim of *zhengming,* and was continuously enriched by other masters in various ways. Specifically, Xunzi developed Confucius' claim of *zhengming* by absorbing the resources of the School of *Ming* 名家 (*mingjia*), and Dong Zhongshu, who developed the Confucian idea of *ming* in accordance with the politics of the former Han dynasty and proposed the "deep examination of names and designations" 深察名號 (*shenchaminghao*) (Queen and Major 2016, p. 343).[3] It was also during the Han dynasty that the idea of "religion/teaching of names" 名教 (*mingjiao*) was formed, and it has continued for nearly 2000 years, even echoing into modern times.[4] In certain contexts, the term "*mingjiao*" has become synonymous with Confucianism. As such, it seems to be inappropriate to deny the importance of *ming* in Confucianism. Therefore, this article takes

a cautious approach to the coherent importance of *ming* but still affirms that *ming* has a place in the development of Confucianism. Meanwhile, considering the appropriate scope of the discussion in this article and the development of the Confucian idea of *ming*, this paper will cite the literature of the pre-Qin and former Han dynasties, specifically Confucius, Xunzi, and Dong Zhongshu. Some other important classics will also be occasionally cited. In a broad sense, the reason for adopting this scope is that the views of these three Confucians represent the basic Confucian theory of *ming*. Although the idea of *ming* survived in the form of *mingjiao* after the former Han dynasty, its theoretical development was limited.

Closely related to the above issue, the clarification of the meaning of *ming* is also a prerequisite for further discussion. In Chinese tradition, *ming* firstly means "name" or "appellation" referring to things or persons. However, based on the extensive pre-Qin literature and historical commentaries, *ming* was given various meanings, such as "word"/"graph" 名字 (*mingzi*), "language"/"speech" 名言 (*mingyan*), "reputation"/"fame" 名聲 (*mingsheng*), and "role"/"station" 名分 (*mingfen*), among others. Focusing on the aspect of "rectifying names," the multiple meanings of *ming* gave rise to various conflicting and even controversial interpretations (Gou 2016, pp. 32–61). For instance, if we hold the position that Confucius did not have a systematic theory of *zhengming*, we will be prevented from giving any philosophical interpretations and also be unable to accept that Confucius proposed the notion of *mingfen* (role) when he claimed that he would firstly rectify names if he was employed by a prince Wei (F. Cao 2017, pp. 112–13; Li 2019). This view possesses some reasonable aspects; however, there is a certain process of development of ideas from simple to complex, from crude to precise. In other words, even if it is admitted that the view's coherent narrative and considerable importance are products of modern discourse (Defoort 2021b, pp. 95–96), there is still no adequate reason to completely deny the value of *ming* in Confucianism. Originally, it might be inchoate, such as Confucius' proposal of *zhengming*, but it is constantly refined and deepened in the subsequent development, just as in the work of Xunzi and Dong Zhongshu. Since this article mainly discusses how *ming* is embedded in the relationship between individual and community, the various aspects of *ming* will be included insofar as they contribute to its theme.

2. *Ming* as Language: The Original Conception of *zhengming*

Explorations of Confucian *zhengming* always begin with the dialogue between Confucius and one of his favorite disciples Zilu. When Zilu asked: "If the Lord of Wei were to let you administer his government, what would be your priority?" The Master said in reply: "It must be to rectify names" (*Analects* 13.3, Ni 2017, p. 300). As discussed above, there are multiple possible interpretations of *zhengming*; indeed, even the definition of *ming* is still debated. Therefore, it is necessary to draw lessons from studies that investigate the original conception of Confucian *zhengming*. For example, C. Defoort noted that the phrase *zhengming* was only seen in *Analects* 13.3, and when modern scholars who mentioned *zhengming* quoted this dialogue, it was always in a selected and shortened form, sometimes mentioning only the phrase *zhengming*. Meanwhile, the belief that Confucianism has a "rectification-of-names-ism„" which was put forward by Hu Shi, should be supported by other texts. Nevertheless, the connection between these documents and *zhengming*—whether within or without *Analects*—requires further investigation (Defoort 2021a, pp. 620–25). What enlightenment could the complete quotation from *Analects* 13.3 present? If we exclude all subsequent explanations, what did Confucius wish to present when he discussed "rectifying names?" These questions should lead to the original conception of the Confucian proposal of *zhengming*.

Consider the complete dialogue between Confucius and Zilu: after Confucius answered Zilu with the words *zhengming*, Zilu considered that what the Master had said was "far off the mark." Confucius criticized Zilu as being "boorish" for speaking of what he did not understand, and explained: "If names are incorrect, speech cannot be smooth. If speech is not smooth, affairs cannot be accomplished. If affairs cannot be accomplished, ritual propriety and music will not flourish. If ritual propriety and music do not flourish,

verdicts and punishments will not hit the mark. If verdicts and punishments do not hit the mark, people will not know how to move their hands and feet. Hence, when the exemplary person uses a name, it surely can be spoken; and when spoken, it surely can be put into action. What the exemplary person requires about their words is that there is nothing careless in them" (*Analects* 13.3, Ni 2017, p. 301). It is typical chain reasoning that connects "political affairs," "ritual propriety and music," and "verdicts and punishments" with the correction of names in a coherent sequence. Simultaneously, the "correction of names" functions as the starting point. Thus, it also indicates the link between chain reasoning and the speech or words of "the exemplary person," which aims to remind rulers to be cautious in their speech. We should at least recognize that Confucius' idea on *ming* is directly connected to language, especially the rulers' speech, pointing out the susceptibility of language to politics (F. Cao 2017, p. 114). R. Ames has pointed out that this dialogue is about "the proper and effective use of language;" meanwhile, "the efficacy of what the exemplary person has to say not only influences the immediate community but also has a profound and lasting effect on the world broadly" (Ames 2011, pp. 100–2). In this sense, *ming* in Confucianism works as the influencing factor between an individual and their community, specifically between a ruler and their people.

Another example can be found in the *Gongyang Commentary* 公羊傳 of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋, a chronicle generally thought to be composed or edited by Confucius himself. According to the record of the third year of Duke Yin, Duke Xuan of Song said to Duke Mu: "I prefer you to my son Yuyi. You would make a better lord of our ancestral house than Yuyi. Therefore, you shall be duke." After the death of Duke Xuan, Duke Mu then exiled his own two sons, Duke Zhuang and the Prime Minister of the Left, in order to pass the throne to Yuyi, who was the son of Duke Xuan. However, after Yuyi succeeded to the throne, only a short time passed before Duke Zhuang assassinated Yuyi. The author of the *Gongyang Commentary* believed that "the disaster that befell the state of Song was set in motion by Duke Xuan" 宋之禍宣公為之也 (Miller 2015, p. 15).[5] In this story, the words of Duke Xuan were intended to have a strong influence on the political prospects of the state of Song. The carelessness of Duke Xuan's words led to chaos lasting for generations, which can be interpreted to be another demonstrated proof of the susceptibility of language to politics.

Does this reasoning mean that only monarchs who govern states must carefully monitor their speech? The answer to this should be negative. Another of Confucius' sayings may be used as an example. When a disciple of Confucius named Zizhang asked how to "pursue an official position" 干祿 (*ganlu*), the Master said: "Listen broadly, guard against what is dubious, and speak cautiously of other matters, then you will invite few pitfalls . . . When one's words give few occasions for pitfalls and one's conduct gives few occasions for regrets, an official position will naturally come" 多聞闕疑，慎言其餘，則寡尤 . . . . . . 言寡尤，行寡悔，祿在其中矣 (*Analects* 2.18; Ni 2017, p. 108) The way of being an official is strongly related to prudence in speech, which concerns not only the rulers who reside at the apex of power, but every other official as well. Just as the original meaning of "gentleman" 君子 (*junzi*) extends from politics to morality in later interpretations, such a sense of the significance of language could also extend to more general situations. In other words, each person's language has an impact on the people surrounding them, even on the public as a whole.

The crucial question requiring investigation here is: why does *ming* as language have such power to affect ethical and political practice, even to influence the stability of the political situation? It is easy to attribute this to a certain "belief that language possesses a magical power which has unfailing influence on affairs both human and natural" (Bao 1990, p. 198), which was also realized by Chad Hansen, who tried to reexamine the idea of "word magic" (Hansen 1992, pp. 26, 149). However, while Confucius' *zhengming* may also be understood in this context, Hansen did not determine why *ming* has such magic power, and instead attributed it to the difference in linguistic theories (such as the "mass nouns hypothesis") in Chinese language. In fact, the answer might be hidden in the word *ming* 名

itself, according to traditional dictionaries. In Chinese, "name" as a verb refers to the act of naming 命 (*ming*), which originally means the behavior of referring to the self or things. For example, Xu Shen (許慎, 58–147) defines *ming* as "referring to oneself" 名，自命也. He said: "the glyph of '*ming*' 名 is composed of 'mouth' 口 (*kou*) and 'night' 夕 (xi). 'Xi' means darkness. Because people cannot see each other in the darkness, it is necessary to refer to themselves by mouth". 從口夕。夕者，冥也。冥不相見，故以口自名 (Xu and Duan 1981, p. 119). As can be interpreted from Xu's statement, naming behavior originated from the demand for survival and thus the need for communication in darkness. The transformation from "nameless" to "name" also means the transition from the natural state of isolation between people and things, to a state of gradual intersection and communication within a community or society. Some scholars have proposed a hypothesis of the origin of names: " . . . people did not have names in ancient times. Since people have totem worship, they simply used totems to distinguish themselves in warfare and communication activities, which is the origin of public names. It is reasonable to speculate that private names originated from the act of people referring to themselves and personal totem superstitions". (Yu 2000, p. 47) It is the demands of interpersonal communication that contribute to the origination of *ming*. In other words, the generation of *ming* is equivalent to the generation of communication, which could be seen as the origin of "community" in a broad and abstract way. Returning to the major question of this section: Why does *ming* as language have such power to affect ethical and political practice? Perhaps *ming* is intrinsically more than a purely linguistic practice, but in fact has its own ethical and political influence. As F. Cao has claimed, "there are two clues and systems of the theory of *ming* in pre-Qin period: an epistemological one and a political one" (F. Cao 2017, p. 7). *Ming,* in early Chinese thought, especially in Confucianism, was an inextricable link between language and ethical and political practice. From the family level to the state level, *ming* as language first plays a role as an interpersonal medium. Then, it works as a tool to influence and even shape the community, which could be seen as the fundamental principle underpinning *zhengming* as a Confucian proposition.

From a communitarian perspective, the meaning of *ming* as language is much more ontological. Language-based communities, for example, are of particular importance to Daniel Bell. Following Charles Taylor's "expressive theory of language," Bell advocates that "we not only speak in particular languages, but more fundamentally become the persons we become because of the particular language community in which we grew up—language, above all else, shapes our distinctive ways of being in the world" (Bell 1993, pp. 158–59). This is easy to understand with respect to the Chinese language. For example, François Jullien once observed that Chinese thought does not give birth to the whole web of semantics that is based on "being" ("être" in French) and make it possible; this prevents, at the level of language (if one may call it thus), the emergence of a series of relations and oppositions, without which, indeed, we cannot imagine that "people can think, can have a thought" in this way (Jullien and Marchaisse 2000, p. 266).[6] The particularity of language greatly affects ways of thinking and being; that is the reason why Bell is concerned with the linguistic community in particular among the various communities of memory. By focusing on *ming* as language, specific cultural narratives, such as ruler and subject dynamics, father and son bonds 君臣父子, or the values of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom 仁義禮智 can evoke a particular identity and emotion that belongs only to the Chinese people. The expressions including these clusters of concepts could be found everywhere and at any time, though sometimes imperceptibly, which ontologically shapes Chinese society both in the past and the present.

3. *Ming* as Reputation: The Evaluation System Based on Names

In the glyph of *ming* 名, the meaning of "*kou*" 口 is also worthy of attention, that is, "kou" means sound 聲 (sheng) made by the mouth. Dong Zhongshu even interpreted the activity of "naming" 名 as the same phonetic word as "crying out" 鳴, which was "call[ing] out and penetrat[ing] Heaven's will" (*CQFL* 35.1; Queen and Major 2016, pp. 343–44).

Evidently, sound 聲 (*sheng*) as the media of *ming* also reflects the collective attribute. It is easy to associate this with another meaning of *ming*, namely "reputation" or "fame" 名聲 (*mingsheng*), because "fame entails hearing sound" (Geaney 2011, p. 134). It is also the meaning mentioned by Confucius in the *Analects*. The Master said, "Exemplary persons dislike having their names not properly established at the end of their life" 君子疾沒世而名不稱焉 (*Analects* 15.20; Ni 2017, p. 362). According to the common interpretation, this saying means that Confucius was worried that the "*junzi*" would not have a good reputation in the Dark Ages. In *Analects* 1.1, the Master said: "To be untroubled when not recognized by others, is this not being an exemplary person?" 人不知而不慍，不亦君子乎 (Ni 2017, p. 79). In 9.23, the Master also said, "If one remains unheard of at the age of forty or fifty, that person might as well not be worthy of awe" 四十、五十而無聞焉，斯亦不足畏也已 (Ni 2017, p. 241). Both of the above quotations aim to comfort those virtuous persons who are not known by others; however, this in turn proves that names, especially those of gentlemen, should be heard.

In contrast to *ming* as language, *mingsheng* (reputation) works as a system of evaluation among people. In this sense, a gentleman is especially concerned about his reputation. Pursuing a good name and keeping away from a negative reputation even becomes a lifelong career. Under the influence of Confucianism, there is even a tradition of "dying for the sanctity of the name" (Pines 2019, p. 169). In addition to the above quotations from *Analects*, many examples could be found in other literature. In the *Zuozhuan* 左傳, the famous idea named "three ways to be imperishable" 三不朽 has a very profound impact: "The highest of all is to establish virtue; next to that is to establish achievements; next to that is to establish words" 大上有立德，其次有立功，其次有立言 (*Zuozhuan Lord Xiang*, 24.1; Durrant et al. 2016, p. 1125).[7] No matter which way a gentleman chooses to pursue becoming "imperishable," what he wants to achieve by this is that his reputation will remain intact for as long as possible after his death. In this expression, "virtues," "achievements," and "words" could be regarded as the essence of fame; that is, reputation works as an evaluation of the conduct and virtues of name-bearers. It is also in this sense that the connection between fame and virtue is usually mentioned in pre-Qin texts. For example, such mentions include: "Have the virtue of gentleness, and achieve one's reputation" 有溫德以成其名譽 (*Guoyu* 15.10; Xu 2002, p. 449)[8] "The loss of virtue and the destruction of reputation will eventually lead to that person's expulsion or even death" 失德滅名，流走死亡 (*Guoyu* 21.2; Xu 2002, p.580); And "A good name is the vehicle of virtue" 夫令名，德之輿也 (*Zuozhuan* 24.2a; Durrant et al. 2016, p. 1127). In these examples, the relationship between fame and virtue is remarkable; however, it is not indubitable. In *Analects* 17.13, the Master defined a category of people as the "village worthy" 鄉愿 (*xiangyuan*), who are referred to as the "thieves of virtue" 德之賊 (Ni 2017, p. 398), even while their behavior is very close to that of people who possess one of the noble virtues, named "moderation" 中庸 (*zhongyong*). This confuses and sullies the fame of individuals, and is the primary reason why false or hollow names exist.

As an evaluation system, fame may also be used by rulers to govern a country. On one hand, a ruler with a good reputation has a direct influence on his state, because "a good name is the "vehicle of virtue," and "virtue is the foundation of domain and patrimony. Should one not strive to have a foundation and not let it be ruined?" 德，國家之基也。有基無壞，無亦是務乎 (*Zuozhuan* 24.2a; Durrant et al. 2016, p. 1127). Another example may be found in the *Guoyu* 國語: "When a ruler has a good name, his virtue will influence people who are far or near, and they will feel at ease regardless of their positions" 其有美名也，唯其施令德於遠近，而小大安之也 (*Guoyu* 17.5; Xu 2002, p. 495). Due to the belief that a ruler's virtue is the cornerstone of a state, as the "vehicle" of virtue, the good name of a ruler should be audible by the largest and most widespread number of people in order to expand and stabilize his reign (Geaney 2011, p. 134). On the other hand, reputation can be a tool utilized by rulers to controlling the power of giving names. Defoort named this a "network of names"—and thus the "network of evaluations"—which should be controlled by the ruler to maintain the bureaucracy (Defoort 1997, p. 207). "Posthumous titles" 諡號

may be examined, for instance. There is a chapter named *"the Explanation of Posthumous Titles"* 諡法解 in the *Lost Book of Zhou* 逸周書, which reads that "the posthumous name is the trace of behavior. The title is the expression of achievement … Hence, great achievements match great names, and tiny achievements match tiny names" 諡者。行之跡也。號者。功之表也 … … 是故大行受大名。細行受細名 (*Lost Book of Zhou* 54; Zhu 1912, p. 92).[9] Posthumous titles should be given by authority to kings, queens, dukes, generals, officials, and intellectuals of higher political status after their death, which is in accordance with the lifetimes of conduct, achievements, and virtues of the title-owners. By controlling the authority of distributing posthumous titles, every political participant is to some extent placed in the "network of evaluations".

As a system of evaluation, the significance of fame in relation to the community is also considerable. Sandel, for example, distinguished communities into different categories: instrumental, sentimental, and constitutive (Sandel 1998, p. 150). Of the three, the constitutive is the only category he emphasized. D. Bell further distinguished three kinds of "constitutive community," which include geographical, memorial, and psychological (Bell 1993, p. 185). That is to say, the constitutive meaning of communities is the real concern of communitarians because individuals' identities and values are shaped by this kind of community, which is perfectly in line with the claim of *ming* in Confucianism. In Chinese society, common categories of communities can all be attributed to constructive ones. Families and clans are typical natural communities, bonded by blood ties. States, furthermore, are regarded as communities that share the same structure with the family. Rulers of states, therefore, are always seen as the parents of the people, who, in turn, are the children of their rulers. However, none of this is based simply on given natural attributes, but rather, there are strong constructive factors among these kinds of communities. This is particularly evident in *ming* as reputation. "Filial sons" 孝子 or "loyal officials" 忠臣, for instance, as the highest evaluations of grown men, reflect both the attachment to and even identity with the community to which they belong, but also contain the values that Chinese society desires to promote. Furthermore, rulers can use reputation as a tool to shape values, and even to stabilize or control the state in order to lead people to pursue a greater goal, such as the well-being of the majority. In this sense, virtues in Confucianism, such as "filial piety," "loyalty," and "benevolence," are not abstract and universal values, but rather imply a definite political purpose. This is one of the reasons why Confucianism is called the "religion/education of names" 名教 (*mingjiao*).

4. *Ming* as Role: Seeking Order in Relationships

If *ming* as language or reputation represents the viewpoint of Confucian thought on *ming*, the meaning of *mingfen* 名分 should also be investigated carefully, as it is found in the sayings of Confucius. There is no phrase *mingfen* found in pre-Qin Confucian texts. However, the hidden clue can be found in the separate uses of *ming* 名 and *fen* 分. Generally speaking, *fen* means division, and the phrase *mingfen* means the divisions of roles or stations implied by *ming* (names). *Ming* as *fen* primarily means that everyone plays roles in multiple relationships, and secondarily it functions as the foundation of social and political orders. It is also the aspect of *fen* that embeds *ming* deeply into the relationship between individual and community.

Despite a lack of presence of the term *mingfen*, the meaning of *ming* as role can also be found in Confucius' sayings. With consideration to historical contexts, *Analects* 13.3 should be explained according to the history of the State of Wei. Kuaikui 蒯聵, the son of Duke Ling and the successor of the throne, plotted to assassinate Duke Ling's wife, Nanzi 南子, which led to his deportation. After the death of Duke Ling, Nanzi wanted her son, Ying 郢, to succeed to the throne, yet Ying was unwilling to inherit it. At that time, Zhe 輒, the son of Kuaikui, inherited the throne and refused his father's wish to return to his home country by claiming to have the appointment by his grandfather, Duke Ling. In this story, who should be the rightful successor to the throne? Is Zhe's action appropriate as the son of Kuaikui? Both questions have been mentioned in various comments focusing

on *zhengming*, which were divided on the question of who should legally ascend to the throne. However, aside from the above dispute, *zhengming* is simply about correcting the names of son and father, a king and his successor, specifically Kuaikui and Zhe in this historical context. If Kuaikui was the rightful successor of the State of Wei, he should have ascended to the throne. Zhe prevented his father from returning home, which was not as a son should do. As a father, Kuaikui failed to educate his son to be a filial person. All these aspects point to a text highly relevant to *zhengming*. When Duke Jing of Qi asked Confucius about governing, Confucius replied: "Let a ruler be a ruler, a minister be a minister, a father be a father, and a son be a son" 君君，臣臣，父父，子子(*Analects* 12.11; Ni 2017, p. 289). Although some scholars tend to weaken the connection between 13.3 and 12.11 (Defoort 2021b, pp. 121–22; Geaney 2018, pp. 216–17), it is not easy to distinguish them, because the historical meaning of *zhengming* should be explained as "rectifying the name of the rightful heir to the throne" 正世子之名 (Liu 1990, p. 517). In other words, if we take the historical context into consideration, 12.11 could be comprehended as the abstract and broad expression of 13.3, and it is the latter that illuminates the meaning of *ming* as role.

The further development of *fen* in Confucianism can be attributed to Xunzi. As he said: "Why can man form a society? I say it is due to the division of society into classes. How can social divisions be translated into behavior? I say it is because of humans' sense of appropriateness" 人何以能群？曰：分。分何以能行？曰：義 (Xunzi 9.16a; Knoblock 1988, p. 104).[10] The significance of *yi* (appropriateness) will be discussed below. Here we can clarify the relationship between "division" 分 (*fen*) and "group" 群(*qun*). The premise for people to gather and form a society is that each person has their own division, or to be specific, their "role". Conversely, if there is no *fen* in society, disputes and chaos are inevitable, which eventually lead to society falling apart. This is why Xunzi writes that "if a society is formed without social divisions, strife would result; if there is strife, disorder ensues; if there is disorder, fragmentation results; if there is fragmentation, weakness comes; if there is weakness, it is impossible to triumph over objects" 人生不能無群，群而無分則爭，爭則亂，亂則離，離則弱，弱則不能勝物。(Xunzi 9.16a; Knoblock 1988, p. 104). In other words, gathering and forming a society is an essential attribute of human beings, and role divisions are basic to any society. He cited a traditional saying that people who engage in various kinds of work—such as farmers, merchants, hundred craftsmen, etc.—stick in their divisions, and bureaucrats at all levels are committed to their duties, which is the basis of good governing (Xunzi 11.5b; Knoblock 1988, p. 158). In this way, Xunzi emphasizes the significance of "ritual propriety" and "law" because they work simultaneously to make divisions clear.

The above discussion of *fen* as role in Confucianism is helpful in understanding how *ming* functions as a link between individual and community. On one hand, persons who carry names are organized in a plurality of relationships and each plays their role. Specifically, a ruler is defined as a ruler when he manages ministers and people, and a father is respected as a father when he faces his son. From the perspective of communitarianism, it is in these relationships that self-identification can be formed. Here we may offer an analogy, that is, *fen* could be regarded as a Confucian version of "membership." Just as A. MacIntyre has mentioned, "Self has to find its moral identity in and through its membership in communities". (MacIntyre 2007, p. 221) In other words, self-identification is firstly the identification of membership in communities, which is also the effect of *fen* in early Confucianism. On the other hand, every society is bound by a plurality of individuals, and *fen* is also like "membership" in communitarianism that adheres everyone in a community together. M. Sandel believed that a "community describes not just what they have as fellow citizens but also what they are, not a relationship they choose but an attachment they discover, not merely an attribute but a constituent of their identity" (Sandel 1998, p. 150). This shows that the significance of community to individuals is intrinsic and essential. This view can be further proven by the insight of role ethics proposed by R. Ames and H. Rosemont. As they have claimed, there is no room for the abstract individual in Confucianism, only the role-bearing person. "Moreover, we do not 'play' these roles, as we

tend to speak to them, but rather live our roles, and when all of them have been specified, and their interrelationships made manifest" (Rosemont 2015, p. 93). It is these "roles" that "weave a unique pattern of personal identity, such that if some of my roles change, others will of necessity change also, literally making me a different person" (Rosemont and Ames 2016, p. 53). This special meaning of *ming* can also be shown by the idea of "dynamic appellation," which means that the same person can have various appellations due to changes in scene and relationship (Yu 1999, p. 274).

However, compared with "membership," it is worth noting that the Confucian idea of *fen* has a very distinct hierarchical attribute, one of the significant characteristics of Confucianism, which claims that people should be distinguished by high or low, noble or humble. Every name-bearing person, who is also a role-bearing person, is fixed in his/her relationships and given a hierarchical position in them. Rights, obligations, and even social benefits are distributed according to the hierarchical position that he/she occupies. It is not a normative system in line with modern values such as equality or democracy, and is even seen as an accomplice of authoritarianism. Nevertheless, if we take a positive view of this hierarchy based on "role" (*ming)*, it could be seen as the basis of social and political order. This is the reason why Xunzi claimed that the establishment of *fen* could stop disputes and chaos.

Moreover, the so-called "order" here is not the abstract and normative rule, but the code of conduct that varies from person to person. Despite the similarities of *ming*, persons who bear the same name often behave differently. Take lord 君 *(jun)* for instance. Every lord should observe the same norms and have approximately the same virtues. There is a chapter in Xunzi named "on the way of a Lord" 君道 *(jundao)*. By self-questioning and answering, Xunzi offers the way of a lord according to its name. "What is a 'lord'? I say that he is one who can assemble," which includes "providing a living for the people and caring for them, arranging and ordering men, providing clear principles for the orderly dispositions and constraining faults and in refining the people" (*Xunzi* 12.6; Knoblock 1988, pp. 181–82). 君者，何也？曰：能群也。能群也者，何也？曰：善生養人者也，善班治人者也，善顯設人者也，善藩飾人者也。Dong Zhongshu even summarized the five virtues of a lord, namely "origin, source, expediency, geniality, and the multitude" 元科、原科、權科、温科、群科 (*CQFL* 35.2; Queen and Major 2016, p. 346). This does not mean that everyone who is called "a lord" possesses these virtues or obeys these rules completely. Instead, a lord is free to choose which virtue or rule to invoke in dealing with political affairs. Rosemont defined role ethics as particularism. By using the analogy of language, he said, "Constraints on roles are very much like constraints on language. There are many ways to be a good friend or teacher, as we have noted, and it is through the unique way each of us lives these roles that we express our creativity" (Rosemont 2015, p. 104). Therefore, one lord will differ from other lords because of the different ways in which he treats people and how he ministers to and handles political affairs depending on various situations, even though they are all defined as "lord". This is the reason why Rosemont believed that role ethics is "highly particularistic, highly contextualized" (Rosemont 2015, p. 174), which can also be used to define the Confucian theory of *ming*. Firstly, it means emphasizing the significance of the particularity of situations and conditions in moral and political practice. Secondly, everyone follows the demand of *ming* and serves as part of an overall harmony, which is the Confucian equivalent of the "common good".

5. *Ming* and "Appropriateness": A "Thick" Conception of the Subject

Compared with communitarianism, Confucianism rarely addresses the issue of individual rights. This is likely because Confucianism does not have liberalism as its opposition. However, this does not mean that it has no comment on individual or personal rights. In fact, one of the reasons why Confucianism fits so well with communitarianism is that the two share attitudes toward individuals and rights. For example, communitarians oppose the "unencumbered self" (Sandel 1998, p. 90), while Confucianism asserts the importance of relationships and roles. While communitarians reject the liberals' claim of

the primacy of rights, Confucianism conceals "rights," along with duties and virtues, in a composite conception of the subject. The above claim on "particularism" refers to the creativity of the individual in ethical and political practice, which has already suggested the existence of the concept of a subject of ethical behavior in Confucianism. It might be considered that Confucianism advocates a "thick" conception of the subject. Here I want to use the "thick" conception and the "thin" conception to distinguish between the Confucian/communitarian view of the subject and the liberal one. The main difference between them is that the former accommodates more dimensions and factors in the concept of the subject, such as virtue, right and duty, while the latter takes only one single dimension of right. It could also be proven in the theory of *ming*, especially in the connection between *ming* and *yi* 義 (appropriateness). Here, "appropriateness" was chosen to translate *yi* 義. Because of the relationship with *ming*, *yi* first means that every name has its meaning, then that each name is consistent with the object it refers to. In this sense, "justice" or "righteousness," as the usual translations read, does not fit so well with the meaning of *yi* in this paper.

First of all, names having their reference objects and appropriateness can be regarded as the match between a name and its referent. For objects, it is the match between name and reality 名實 (*mingshi*).[11] In Xunzi's expression, "the way a True King institutes names [is as follows]. Because fixed names keep objects distinguished" 王者之制名，名定而實辨 (Xunzi 22.1c; Knoblock 1988, p. 128). On the question of how to use names to distinguish objects and to avoid confusion, Xunzi also clearly illuminated the way of "giving each different reality a different name" 使異實者莫不異名也，不可亂也 (Xunzi 22.2f; Knoblock 1988, p. 130). Name functions as the distinguisher of objects; at the same time, the essence of what makes the distinction possible is the match between a name and its objects. As the above-mentioned quotation states: "how can social divisions be translated into behavior? I say it is because of humans' sense of appropriateness". Wang Xianqian has noted that: "*fen* (division) and *yi* (appropriateness) are dependent on each other. *Yi* means adjudication and judgment" 言分義相須也。義，謂裁斷也 (Wang 1988, p. 194). Divisions first mean judging and separating things according to their nature. Then, they imply the match between names and the things to which they refer, which is what "appropriateness" means. This conception of *yi* is further developed in one of Dong Zhongshu's expressions. Dong, who inherited Xunzi's theory of *ming*, said, "[Each of] the myriad things comes into existence bearing a name. The sage names them in accordance with their appearance. However, [names] can be modified, in every case in accordance with righteous principles. Thus, one rectifies names so that the names are righteous" 萬物載名而生，聖人因其象而命之。然而可易也，皆有義從也，故正名以名義也 (*CQFL* 82 A.2; Queen and Major 2016, p. 615). Dong apparently attributed the combination of things with their natures to the sage. As he asserted, the relationship between things and names are not fixed at the outset; it is the sage that names things by their images. After that, if the names deviate from the objects to which they refer, the sages can still modify these names. The rationale behind the behavior of naming and renaming is appropriateness, which can also be understood as the match between names and things.

From things to human beings, appropriateness usually implies the duties and virtues belonging to the persons to whom the names refer. In the chapter named "deeply examine names and designations" 深察名號, Dong Zhongshu ties each person within a political structure to a name, and each naming activity implies certain demands on conduct and virtue. "Those who are designated 'Son of Heaven' should look upon Heaven as their father and serve Heaven by following the path of filial piety. Those designated 'Lords of the Land' should carefully oversee what has been granted to them by the Son of Heaven. Those designated as 'great men' should fortify their loyalty and trust, esteem propriety and righteousness, and cause their goodness to surpass the standards of the common man so that it is sufficient to transform them. A 'functionary' [means "one who] performs a function". The 'common people' [means] "eyes closed in sleep" 故號為天子者，宜視天如父，事天以孝道也。號為諸侯者，宜謹視所候奉之天子也。號為大夫者，宜厚其忠信，

敦其禮義，使善大於匹夫之義，足以化也。士者，事也；民者，瞑也 (*CQFL* 35.1; Queen and Major 2016, p. 344). Behaviors and virtues of persons are clearly stipulated by their names, which can be seen as an explicit and specific development of Confucius' saying in *Analects* 12.11.

In the relationship between *ming* and "appropriateness," it is easy to see that the name provides for the virtue and obligation of the person to which it refers, but does this mean that it has no connection to the concept of right? The answer should be negative. At first glance, it is difficult to reconcile Confucianism with the concept of right, because the former advocates a hierarchical and paternalistic system, while the latter implies the idea of equality (Chan 1999, p. 222). However, as T. Bai has stated, Confucianism has some so-called "positive rights," such as "the right people have to enough resources, food and means of livelihood, the right of people to an education regardless of economic status, the rights of people to be cared for when sick or elderly," etc. (Bai 2009, p. 90). These rights held by people are certainly implicit in the appellation of "min" 民 (min) because the "common people" means "eyes closed in sleep," which also means that they lack the capacity to judge and need guidance and nurturing by rulers, which can be seen as the social benefits to which people are entitled. Communitarians would probably agree with this point. M. Walzer has a very clear claim about this. As he has mentioned, "there has never been a political community that did not provide, or try to provide, or claim to provide, for the needs of its members as its members understood those needs. And there has never been a political community that did not engage its collective strength—its capacity to direct, regulate, pressure, and coerce—in this project" (Walzer 1983, p. 68). In other words, it has become an inescapable responsibility of any political community to defend the positive rights of the people.

The protection of the rights to which people are entitled means that the Confucian claim on "name" has something beyond the defense of hierarchy. Although in later developments of Confucianism, such as the "three cardinal guides" 三綱 (*sangang*) or the "religion of names" 名教 (*mingjiao*), there was more emphasis on the subordination of subordinates to superiors, such as son to father, wife to husband, and people to lord, and there are few checks and balances between them. However, such a relationship was at least two-way in early Confucianism. As a member of a community, everyone has different rights and obligations, and in certain circumstances, such rights can be denied. For example, when Duke Xuan of Qi asked Mencius about events such as Tang's banishment of Jie and King Wu's assault of Zhou, Mencius replied: "One who offends against humaneness is called a brigand; one who offends against rightness is called an outlaw. Someone who is a brigand, and an outlaw is called a mere fellow. I have heard of the punishment of the mere fellow Zhou but never of the slaying of a ruler". 賊仁者謂之賊，賊義者謂之殘，殘賊之人謂之一夫。聞誅一夫紂矣，未聞弒君也 (Mencius 1B8; Bloom 2009, pp. 21–22). Zhou, as a tyrannical monarch, was deprived of his rights, which is shown by the changing of his appellation from a ruler to "a mere fellow" 一夫.[12] As mentioned above, Dong Zhongshu, who claimed that the designation of lord has five meanings as virtues, made the further inference that if a lord does not possess these virtues, "he will not be complete in his lordship" 不全於君 (*CQFL* 35.2; Queen and Major 2016, p. 347). In these cases, *ming* functions as a tool relied upon by Confucian scholars who criticized and even denied the authority of rulers. If the name-bearing person violates the provisions of his name, he should be deprived of that name.

In short, the relationship between *ming* and *yi* implies that a name indicates certain requirements of conduct and virtue on the part of the object to which it refers and determines the rights this object should possess. It can be assumed that the appropriate relationship between a name and its referent means that *ming* works as a complex of virtues, obligations, and rights, which is the reason why it can be seen as containing a "thick" conception of the subject. In line with this idea, we could say that Confucianism does not advocate for the notion of an individual with rights, but rather the idea of a role-attached and relationship-based person.

6. Conclusions

As Charles Taylor has claimed, "One is a self only among other selves" (Taylor 1989, p. 35). Like communitarianism, Confucianism is explicitly opposed to the absolute individual or "unencumbered self" and instead advocates for the formation of self-identification within various social relationships (or communities). While the commonalities between these two doctrines have been discussed by some scholars, the meaning of *ming* (name) has not yet been fully explored. Therefore, this paper attempts to embed *ming* in the conceptual cluster of Confucian communitarianism and justifies this attempt by exploring how *ming* interacts with the relationship between individual and community, and how it reflects the similarities between Confucianism and communitarianism. To be specific, the main part of this paper is organized around the four aspects of *ming*, namely: language, reputation, role, and "appropriateness". Firstly, the interpretation of *ming* as language represents Confucius' original conception when he advocated for "*zhengming*." Since the speech of a ruler has a significant influence on politics, Confucius required rulers to be very cautious about their words. Furthermore, *ming*, according to its word origin and basic meaning, inherently contains the property of interpersonal interaction, which links the individual with the community. Secondly, *ming* as reputation is also a common meaning in *Analects*. As the evaluation system of individuals, *ming* plays an important role in shaping values and identity and is a crucial tool for rulers to use in the government of their subjects. If we consider "community" to be a group sharing the same values and self-identifications, then the effect of *ming* in the sense of reputation should be emphasized. Thirdly, the conception of *fen* (role) advocated by Xunzi can also be regarded as an aspect of the Confucian notion of *ming*. Like "membership" in communitarianism, it is the *fen* that integrates the plural into the *qun* (community). Meanwhile, it is also the *fen* that brings order to the community (despite the "side-effect" of defending hierarchy). Finally, *ming* as a reference to an object implies the match between *ming* and its referent, which is the meaning of *yi* (appropriateness). It leads to the claim of the "thick" concept of the subject. On one hand, *ming* contains the demand for the virtue and behavior of the person to whom it refers; on the other, *ming* also implies the assertion of rights, which could be deprived if he/she violates the requirements of his/her *ming*. Here it must be noted that, despite the lack of an explicit claim to rights, Confucianism implicitly affirms the concept of "positive rights," which is consistent with the communitarian view. Although these four aspects are sequential and sometimes interrelated, such that *ming* is even presented as *fen* (role) by later interpretations, there is no doubt that *ming* should be conceived of as the bond between individual and community.

Of course, as Bell has pointed out, whether East Asians influenced by Confucianism should look to communitarianism is a debatable question because of the substantial overlap existing between them. On the contrary, drawing from communitarianism as a useful supplement to Confucian values could be a valuable way to combine them (Bell 2020). Focusing on the Confucian theory of *ming*, the question might be which contributions *ming* can provide to this combination, and indeed to the modernization of Confucianism. In this sense, *ming* might well be a notion that preserves the Confucian tradition—including traditions like focusing on the common good and emphasizing the significance of virtues—while also better dovetailing with modern values and providing a "thick" and sound conception of the subject. Therefore, by analyzing the rich meaning of *ming* and how it is involved with the relationship between individual and community, this paper hopes to invite *ming* into the conceptual cluster of Confucian communitarianism. The significance of this work, compared with the enrichment of the discourse on communitarianism, focuses more on the modern transformation of Confucianism.

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Notes

1   For representative researches on the Confucian notion of *ming* and *zhengming*, see Feng (1947); Cheng (1977); Schwartz (1985); Hansen (1992); Makeham (1994); Ding (2008); Gou (2016); F. Cao (2017); Geaney (2018); Defoort (2021a), etc. These studies either reveal the significance of *ming* or *zhengming* in Confucian philosophy or explore the different meanings or aspects of *ming* from different perspectives, such as linguistic, logical, ethical, and political. They have partly touched upon the topic of this paper, however, the Confucian notion of *ming* has not been systematically examined from the perspective of comparative political philosophy. This is precisely the intention of this paper.

2   Translations of all citations from the *Analects* are adapted from (Ni 2017).

3   Translations of all citations from *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn (chunqiufanlu)* are adapted from (Queen and Major 2016).

4   For more discussion of modern criticism on *"mingjiao,"* especially in the field of literature, see (Jin 2019).

5   Translations of this citation from *Gongyang Commentary* is adapted from (Miller 2015).

6   The original is in French, and the translation is my own.

7   Translations of this citation from *Zuozhuan* is adapted from (Durrant et al. 2016).

8   Translations of *Guoyu* are my own.

9   Translation of *Lost Book of Zhou* is my own.

10   Translations of this citation from *Xunzi* is adapted from (Knoblock 1988).

11   For more discussions on the relationship between name and reality in Confucianism, see (Makeham 1994, pp. 44–47; Ding 2008, pp. 89–96).

12   Translations of this citation from *Mencius* is adapted from (Bloom 2009).

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