



From Jane's Weibo article column: It is simple to be healthy and happy

## 浅谈《史记·论六家要旨》对现代生活的启发（六）

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Talking about the Inspiration of "Historical Records. On the Essentials of Six Schools" to Modern Life

### 正名求实的名家

#### Chapter 6 School of Names (Logicism)

##### Logicians who seek accurate definitions and discernment

名家学派也叫做名辩之学，就是现代人说的逻辑论辩的意思，在印度叫做因明学。战国时期，西方哲学也分为两派，一派是知识论，就是只注重学问上的论证；另外一派叫做经验论，就是说，光凭知识来论证是不够的，必须要有实证才行。名家的学者们知识丰富，能够纯熟地运用语言作为辩证的工具，对于语言文字的掌握非常精湛，思维敏锐，有极高的逻辑思维能力和智慧。

The School of Names, also known as the study of names and arguments, is akin to what modern people refer to as logical debate. In India, it is called Nyaya. During the Warring States period, Western philosophy also split into two schools. One was epistemology, which focused solely on theoretical argumentation, and the other was empiricism, which argued that knowledge alone was insufficient and required empirical evidence. Scholars of the School of Names were well-versed in knowledge and skillfully used language as a tool for argumentation. They had a profound mastery of language and writing, sharp thinking, and exceptional logical reasoning abilities and wisdom.

跟据《汉书》的记载，名家学派最早可以追溯到上古的礼官。从法律开始成文开始，社会上就已经出现了类似律师一类人，他们根据法律条文进行辩护，因此称他们为“辩者”。墨家也有类似这样的人，叫做“墨辩”。名家又分为“合同异派”和“离坚白派”，代表人物有惠施，公孙龙，邓析，宋鉏，尹文等等。

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According to records in the "Book of Han," the School of Names can be traced back to the ancient ritual officials. From the time laws began to be codified, society saw the emergence of people similar to lawyers, who defended cases based on legal texts, thus they were called "debaters." The Mohist school also had similar figures known as "Mohist debaters." The School of Names further divided into two factions: the "School of Harmonizing Differences" and the "School of Separating Hardness and Whiteness." Prominent figures included Hui Shi, Gongsun Long, Deng Xi, Song Xing, and Yin Wen, among others.

我们继续读太史公对名家的评论：

Let's continue reading Tai Shigong's commentary on the School of Names:

**名家使人俭而善失真；然其正名实，不可不察也。**

**The School of Names makes people frugal but prone to losing the truth (constrains people within debates, which often leads to a loss of the true essence of reality); however, their pursuit of accurate definitions and truth cannot be ignored.**

名家学派让人约束（在知识的逻辑辩论里），往往就会偏失了真理的真实含义；但名家注重正名求实，就是查证名称和概念的真实性，这是我们现实生活中不可以不查验清楚的事情。

（前面讲到墨家的时候，也有一个“俭”字，墨家的俭是俭朴的意思。这里名家的“俭”，意思就不一样了。根据说文解字，“俭”的意思是：俭，约也。约者、缠束也。）

The School of Names constrains people (within the logical debate of knowledge), which often leads to a deviation from the true meaning of truth. However, the School of Names emphasizes the pursuit of accurate definitions and reality—verifying the authenticity of names and concepts. This is something we cannot afford to neglect in our daily lives.

(Previously, when discussing the Mohist school, the word "frugal 俭" was used to mean simplicity. Here, the "frugality" of the School of Names has a different meaning. According to "Shuowen Jiezi," 'frugality' means constraint and binding.)

**名家苛察缴绕，使人不得反其意，专决于名而失人情，故曰“使人俭而善失真”。若夫控名责实，参伍不失，此不可不察也。**

**The School of Names is meticulous and complex in its scrutiny, causing people to become fixated on definitions and lose sight of human considerations, hence the phrase "makes people frugal but prone to losing the truth." However, their emphasis on aligning names with reality and not deviating from this principle is something that cannot be overlooked.**

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名家的学者们在知识逻辑上严格细致地考察推敲纠缠，反而让自己不能明白真理的真意。过于专注在知识的逻辑辩论上，却失去了人天性中的实际内容（“性者，天之就也；情者，性之质也”——《荀子·正名》），所以说名家是“使人俭而善失真”，学的知识越多，在知识逻辑上面去寻找真理，反而会被知识困住了，越来越迷茫。但是，名家的优点和精要之处，是“控名责实”，就是需要考察证实名称和概念的真实性，“参伍”是易经上面的词，代表卦的第三爻和第五爻，就是从内到外都要搞清楚，每一个方面都要核实，这是不可不认真考察的。

Scholars of the School of Names rigorously and meticulously examine and entangle themselves in the logic of knowledge, which can lead to a misunderstanding of the true meaning of truth. Their excessive focus on logical debate in knowledge often causes them to lose touch with the practical aspects of human nature ("Nature is the alignment with Heaven/universe; Emotion is the essence of Nature" — *Xunzi: Rectifying Names*). This is why it is said that the School of Names "makes people frugal but prone to losing the truth." As they delve deeper into knowledge and logic, they may become increasingly trapped and confused.

However, the strength and essence of the School of Names lie in their principle of "aligning names with reality." This means carefully examining and verifying the authenticity of names and concepts. The term "参伍" refers to the third and fifth lines of the I Ching hexagrams, indicating that every aspect must be thoroughly understood and verified, both internally and externally. This meticulous approach to verification is something that should not be overlooked.

太史公在这里很明确地提出来，如果只在名称和概念上进行逻辑辩论，就可能迷失了真理，这是名家学者的问题。这里的“真理”是悟道和得道的意思，诸子百家都是在以不同的方法追寻悟道和真理。中国古文的文字，经常都有一字多意的情况，用在不同的句子里，就有不同的意思。我们现代人可以理解成咬文嚼字的意思。这个咬文嚼字的问题，从古至今都是一个话题。字面上的逻辑讲得再多，还是不能悟道，明白生命和宇宙的真理。老子在《道德经》里说：“为学日益，为道日损，损而又损，以至无为，无为而无不为。”，在学习知识上，就要每天勤奋多学，多多益善；但是知识越多，烦恼越多，凡是搞思想，搞逻辑，搞哲学的人，很多都是越研究越糊涂，最后就迷失了。所以，老子说，要想“为道”，真正懂得宇宙包罗万象的真理，就需要做减法了，把学会的知识全部丢掉，返回清净心，清净到什么都没有的时候，才能什么真理都明白了。

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Tai Shigong here clearly points out that focusing solely on logical debates about names and concepts can lead to a loss of truth, which is a problem with scholars of the School of Names. In this context, "truth" refers to the understanding and realization of the Way (Dao) and the ultimate truth. All the various schools of thought in Chinese philosophy seek the realization of the Way and truth through different methods.

Chinese classical texts often feature words with multiple meanings, and their interpretation can vary depending on the context. This phenomenon can be seen as similar to the modern practice of "quibbling over words." The issue of quibbling over words has been a topic of discussion from ancient times to the present. No matter how much one delves into the literal logic, it cannot lead to the realization of the Way or understanding the truths of life and the universe.

Laozi, in the *Tao Te Ching*, says: "To study the Way is to add daily; to follow the Way is to subtract daily, reducing and reducing until one reaches effortless action, and through effortless action, all things are accomplished." In terms of acquiring knowledge, it is beneficial to be diligent and learn as much as possible; however, the more knowledge one accumulates, the more troubles and confusions arise. Many who engage in thought, logic, and philosophy end up more confused and ultimately lost. Therefore, Laozi suggests that to truly understand the Way and the all-encompassing truth of the universe, one must practice subtraction—shedding all acquired knowledge and returning to a state of purity. When the mind is completely clear and free of all attachments, one can then understand the true nature of all truths.

老子的这一段话非常难懂，我们可以借用佛经来进一步理解，佛经里有一个词叫做“世智辩聪”，是指人世间的学问和智慧，不同于般若智慧。佛说：“我法妙难思”。真理和般若智慧，没有办法用世间的智慧去理解，也没有办法用语言和文字解释清楚，说得再多也没有用。只能意会，不能言传。方法不对，走叉了道路，说得理论越多，越与实际情况不符合，越走越远。历史上有很多头等聪明的人，都不能悟道，就是这个问题。就是“所知障”，被自己的知识和学问困住了。禅宗佛法里有一句话：“依文解字，三世佛冤；离经一字，允为魔说。”就是说，如果按照经典里的文字，咬文嚼字，就很容易理解错误，就是曲解了过去，现在，将来的所有的佛的教导；如果讲出来的道理，与经书里的内容稍有偏差，哪怕只差一个字，就不是佛说的，而是魔说的。所以，如果只注重文字逻辑的辩论，走得过头了，就会出偏差，与真理相违背。

Laozi's statement is indeed complex, and we can further understand it by drawing from Buddhist scriptures. In Buddhism, there is a term called "worldly wisdom and cleverness" which refers to the knowledge and intelligence of the secular world, distinct

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from prajna (wisdom). The Buddha said, “The Dharma is subtle and difficult to fathom.” The truth and prajna wisdom cannot be grasped through worldly intelligence or fully explained through language and text; no amount of verbal explanation will suffice. It must be intuitively understood rather than articulated.

If one’s methods are incorrect, they deviate from the true path. The more theoretical discourse there is, the more it may conflict with practical reality, leading one further astray. Historically, many highly intelligent individuals have failed to attain enlightenment due to this issue—being trapped by their own knowledge and learning.

In Zen Buddhism, there is a saying: “To interpret the text word by word is to mislead the three ages of Buddhas; to deviate from the text by even one word is to speak as a demon.” This means that strictly adhering to the literal text of the scriptures can lead to misunderstandings and distortions of all teachings of the Buddha across past, present, and future. Even a slight deviation from the scriptures, down to a single word, is considered not the Buddha’s teaching but the devil’s. Thus, if one focuses excessively on textual logic and debate, it can lead to errors and divergence from the truth.

我们可以在《庄子》里找到庄子和惠施的精彩对话片段，进一步理解名家是怎么回事。惠施是战国时期宋国人，就是惠子，他是名家的辩论高手，他与庄子是好朋友，经常一起辩论，惠施死后，庄子很难过，说：“自夫子之死也，吾无以为质矣，吾无与言之矣！”在这里可以引用一段庄子对惠施的评论：

We can find a fascinating dialogue between Zhuangzi(莊子 369 - 286 BC ) and Hui Shi (惠施 370-310 BC) in the *Zhuangzi* that further elucidates the nature of the School of Names. Hui Shi, a resident of the State of Song during the Warring States period, was an expert in debate within the School of Names and was a close friend of Zhuangzi. They often engaged in debates together. After Hui Shi's death, Zhuangzi was deeply saddened and remarked, “Since the death of the Master, I have no one to exchange ideas with, no one to converse with!”

Here, we can quote a passage from Zhuangzi’s commentary on Hui Shi:

**“惠施多方，其书五车，其道舛驳，其言也不中。”**

Zhuangzi said,

**“Hui Shi was highly knowledgeable, with enough writings to fill five carts. Hui Shi used complex logical debates to elucidate the truth, but his elaborate arguments and words could not clarify the truth.”**

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庄子说，惠施的学问大得很，加起来用五辆马车都装不完，惠施用繁杂的逻辑辩论来阐述真理，他这样逻辑辩论的言辞并不能把真理讲清楚。

In this statement, Zhuangzi acknowledges Hui Shi's vast scholarship and extensive writings but critiques the effectiveness of his logical debates. Despite the depth of his knowledge and the complexity of his arguments, Zhuangzi implies that Hui Shi's approach failed to truly convey or clarify the essence of the truth. This reflects Zhuangzi's view that overly intricate logical reasoning may obscure rather than reveal deeper truths.

**“惠施以此为大观于天下而晓辩者，天下之辩者相与乐之。辩者以此与惠施相应，终身无穷。”**

Zhuangzi continued:

**“Hui Shi regarded this as a grand view of the world and a mastery of debate. Those who enjoyed debating found great pleasure in his methods. Debaters, like Hui Shi, could spend their entire lives endlessly engaging in such debates.”**

庄子接着说，惠施是通晓逻辑辩论的人，他用这样逻辑辩论的方法来论证天下的真理。天下喜欢辩论的人也对这种方法乐此不疲，喜欢辩论的人跟惠施一样，一辈子都辩论不完。

In this passage, Zhuangzi acknowledges Hui Shi's expertise in logical debate and how he used this method to address the truths of the world. He notes that people who enjoy debating are particularly drawn to Hui Shi's approach, finding it endlessly engaging. Zhuangzi suggests that for those devoted to debate, like Hui Shi, the process can become a lifelong pursuit, indicating both the depth and the potential futility of such endless intellectual exercises.

现代的学术界和科学界也有这样的问题，研究得越来越多，越来越杂，不能返本溯源，最后迷失了方向。比如，科学界已经有一个共识，就是认为，我们这个宇宙的起源是一个大爆炸，然后我们的宇宙是在不断的膨胀。那么，膨胀到什么时候？然后会怎么样？大爆炸之前，又是什么？这样的论题，是人类一直在讨论的，终极一生都说不完。这样最终还是不能找到根本的真理。爱因斯坦研究量子力学，物质分到不可分的时候，物质是哪里来的，爱因斯坦就迷失了，又回归宗教了，推给上帝了。这些都是因为思维被名称和现象所套住了。不光是学者和文人会被名相套住，我们普通人也是一样，就是我们平时说的“一叶障目”，我们都有自己的主观和看法，从小到大受到

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的教育和成长环境，就造就了自己的观点。一旦抓住一个观点或者看法，就有可能一辈子都改不过来了，然后越陷越深，不能看清楚事实的真相。

In modern academia and the scientific community, similar issues arise: as research becomes more extensive and complex, it can stray further from foundational principles, ultimately leading to confusion. For instance, there is a consensus in the scientific community that the origin of our universe is the Big Bang, and that the universe is continuously expanding. However, questions about the ultimate fate of this expansion and the nature of the universe before the Big Bang remain unresolved. Such topics are subjects of ongoing debate and may never be fully answered, leaving fundamental truths elusive.

Even Einstein, who delved into quantum mechanics and the nature of matter at its most fundamental level, found himself grappling with the origins of matter and ultimately turned to religious explanations, attributing the mysteries to a higher power. This illustrates how even the most profound thinkers can become trapped by names and phenomena.

This issue extends beyond scholars and intellectuals; it affects everyone. People often become entrenched in their subjective views and opinions shaped by their education and upbringing. Once an individual adopts a particular perspective or viewpoint, it can be very difficult to change, leading to a deeper entrenchment and a diminished ability to see the true nature of reality. This phenomenon is akin to the saying "a leaf obstructing the view," where personal biases and preconceptions obscure one's ability to perceive the actual facts.

名家的精要之处是“正名实”，就是“控名责实”，要核实和考察名称和概念的真实性。为什么太史公要强调名家的“控名责实”？

The essence of the School of Names lies in "rectifying names and reality," or "aligning names with reality," which involves verifying and examining the authenticity of names and concepts. Why does Sima Qian's father emphasize the School of Names' focus on "aligning names with reality"?

名家的学者们，讲究科学的逻辑思维，以事实为依据，一丝不苟地做学问。古人讲究考据，任何事物的辩论，都要有根有据，不能凭空捏造，这是古人的逻辑，跟我们现代科学和逻辑学讲求实证是一个意思。我们的祖先是讲究科学实证的，从天文，历法，地理，数学各种知识和学问，都讲究科学实证。例如，《周易》一书，彻底脱下

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了宗教的外衣，只是现代人读不懂，反而又把古圣先贤的智慧穿上了宗教的外衣。

《论语》里有：“子不语怪力乱神”。孔子不讨论怪力乱神的事情。孔子还说：“敬鬼神而远之”。这是圣人讲的警告的话，也是人类历史哲学的真理。一个时代衰落的时候，就会充满了怪力乱神的人和事情。如果仔细学习古圣先贤的智慧，就会明白都是讲的大科学，对于我们现代人来说，有很多可以研究学习的地方。

Scholars of the School of Names were meticulous in their logical reasoning, relying on facts and rigorously pursuing knowledge. Ancient scholars emphasized textual evidence and rigorous debate; any argument had to be well-supported and could not be fabricated out of thin air. This approach aligns with the modern principles of scientific and logical verification. Our ancestors valued empirical evidence in their studies, whether in astronomy, calendar systems, geography, or mathematics.

For instance, the *I Ching* (Yijing) was stripped of its religious connotations in ancient times, but modern readers often misinterpret it, imbuing it with religious significance. Similarly, in the *Analects* of Confucius, it is stated, “The Master did not discuss strange phenomena, forces, or spirits.” Confucius avoided discussing supernatural matters and advised, “Respect the spirits and gods but keep them at a distance.” This serves as a caution and a philosophical truth in human history. When a society is in decline, it often becomes preoccupied with supernatural and irrational matters.

Studying the wisdom of ancient sages reveals that it fundamentally addresses large-scale scientific and logical principles. For modern readers, there is much to learn and explore from these ancient teachings, which continue to offer valuable insights into the pursuit of knowledge and understanding.

我们继续从历史和《史记·孝武本纪》里去理解太史公这一段的意思。从秦始皇到汉武帝的时代，充满了各种招摇撞骗的假方士，就是我们现代人说的江湖骗子，或者叫做文化骗子。因为邹衍的阴阳五行的道术非常难学，他们学不通阴阳家的学术，所以那个时候一般的方士都是假方士，都在假借神仙的名义讨生活，欺骗帝王和社会上的人。汉武帝跟秦始皇一样，要想求长生不老，就非常相信这些假方士。司马迁是参加过汉武帝的封禅大典的，《史记·孝武本纪》结尾有这样一段话：“太史公曰：余从巡祭天地诸神名山川而封禅焉。入寿宫侍祠神语，究观方士祠官之言，于是退而论次自古以来用事于鬼神者，具见其表里。后有君子，得以览焉。至若俎豆圭币之详，献酬之礼，则有司存焉。”这一段总结，是太史公的感慨，看了当时这些仪式，就知道自古以来迷信鬼神之说和行骗的人是怎么回事了。



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To further understand Sima Qian's commentary, we can explore the historical context provided in the *Records of the Grand Historian (Shiji)*, particularly in the "Annals of Emperor Wu of Han" (*Xiaowu Benji*). During the transition from the Qin Dynasty to the Han Dynasty, there was an abundance of charlatans and swindlers, akin to what we might call cultural or mystical con artists today. These individuals exploited the belief in immortality and mystical practices for personal gain.

During the Han Dynasty, particularly under Emperor Wu of Han (Han Wudi), there was a strong fascination with seeking immortality, which led to a proliferation of fraudulent practitioners posing as experts in the esoteric arts, such as the teachings of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements. Since these esoteric arts were complex and difficult to master, many of these so-called practitioners were frauds, deceiving emperors and the general public by pretending to possess divine or mystical powers.

Sima Qian, who participated in the grand rituals of Emperor Wu, reflects on this period in his historical work. At the end of the "Annals of Emperor Wu of Han," Sima Qian writes:

"Grand Historian said: I participated in the ceremonies of the heavens, the earth, and the mountains and rivers, and observed the rituals. I entered the Longevity Palace to attend the sacrificial rites and listened to the words of the diviners and officials. Thus, I reflect on the practices of venerating spirits and gods throughout history and present both the superficial and deeper aspects of such practices. Future gentlemen can review these records. As for the details of the offerings, such as food and wine, and the etiquette of presenting and receiving gifts, these are preserved by the relevant officials."

In this summary, Sima Qian expresses his observations and reflections on the practices of his time. He indicates that through witnessing these ceremonies, he has gained insight into the longstanding history of superstition and fraud related to spirits and divine entities. By documenting these observations, he provides a record for future generations to understand how such superstitions and deceptions have persisted throughout history.

我们现代社会，同样有各种各样的“假方士”和骗局，各行各业都有。我们可以把他们叫做“现代假方士”。现代人喜欢追名人，追明星，衣食住行都喜欢追名牌。但是，经济上的庞氏骗局，往往是一些名人或者所谓的商业精英搞出来的，只要挂一个名号，就好行骗。在物品方面，名不符实的例子也很多，现今世界上的假货多不胜数，鱼龙混杂，让人们真假难辨。

In modern society, we encounter various forms of "fake practitioners" and scams across all industries. We might refer to these as "modern-day charlatans." People today often

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chase after celebrities and brand names, and their consumption habits are heavily influenced by the allure of famous brands.

In the economic realm, Ponzi schemes and financial frauds are frequently orchestrated by celebrities or so-called business elites. By attaching a prestigious name or title, they deceive people more easily. In the realm of goods and products, there are also numerous examples of counterfeit items. The modern world is rife with fake products, and distinguishing between genuine and counterfeit has become increasingly challenging.

并不是 2000 多年前的汉武帝才迷信鬼神，我们现代人也要反省一下，自己有没有“怪力乱神”的想法。不论是相信宗教，还是相信属相，星座，风水师，营养师，或者各种专家和科学家，不论是什么行业，执迷地相信一种东西却搞不清楚是怎么回事，就是一种迷信。

It is not only Emperor Han Wudi from over 2,000 years ago who was caught up in superstitions about spirits and deities; we modern people also need to reflect on whether we hold any "superstitious" beliefs ourselves. Whether it's in the realm of religion, astrology, feng shui, nutritionists, or various experts and scientists, clinging obsessively to one belief or source of authority without fully understanding it constitutes a form of superstition.

什么时候能够让泡沫破灭，回归真实的生活？我们现在读《史记》，真是需要感谢太史公在 2000 多年前就指出“控名责实”的重要性。用现代人流行的语言讲，就是需要“打假”，凡事需要正名求实，摆事实，讲道理。在做人做事方面，需要我们从自己做起，实事求是，不能言过其实，不能吹牛乱说话。

When will we see the bubble burst and return to a more authentic way of living? As we read the *Records of the Grand Historian*, we must appreciate Sima Qian's emphasis on the importance of "aligning names with reality" more than 2,000 years ago. In contemporary terms, this translates to the need for "counterfeiting" efforts—ensuring accuracy and authenticity in all things, presenting facts, and reasoning correctly.

In our personal and professional lives, we should start with ourselves, adhering to a pragmatic approach. We must avoid exaggeration, boastfulness, and misleading statements. Seeking truth and maintaining integrity is essential for both our actions and words.