

# Dr. Bryan Van Norden on “Rectification of Names” 萬百安博士談「正名」

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On September 13, 2022, Dharma Realm Buddhist University hosted a zoom lecture by Professor Bryan Van Norden, Chair in Philosophy at Vassar College and Chair Professor in the School of Philosophy at Wuhan University. He is author, editor, or translator of ten books on Chinese and comparative philosophy. DRBU’s BA curriculum uses his Readings in *Classical Chinese Philosophy* and his introductory Classical Chinese textbook, *Classical Chinese for Everyone*, which features selections from *the Analects*. Dr. Van Norden mentioned that he taught his kids when they were in grade school a little bit of classical Chinese including *the Analects*.

In his talk, “How NOT to rectify names: Confucius on the Philosophy of Language,” Dr. Van Norden examined the dramatic setting of the passage in the *Analects* in which

Confucius visited the state of Wei when it was in a political crisis. He was asked what the first step should be in resolving the crisis, and gave the surprising answer: “It would, of course, be the rectification of names” (*Analects* 13.3). The lesson of the passage is that if you have the title of a ruler, a minister, a father, a son, you should live up to that title.

Using passages from the *Analects* and modern examples, Dr. Van Norden explained the concept of “rectification of names” as both “reforming naming practices to be appropriate for the objects named” and “reforming the objects to be appropriate for the names



2022年9月13日，法界佛教大學（法大）舉辦了由美國漢學家萬百安教授主持的視訊講座。萬百安博士是美國紐約州瓦薩學院哲學講座教授、武漢大學哲學學院講座教授。由萬百安教授擔任作者、編輯、或翻譯的中國和比較哲學書籍，共有十本。法大的大學部課程使用他的《中國古典哲學讀本》、和他的中國古文入門教科書《給每個人的文言文》，其中精選了《論語》章節。萬百安博士提到，他自己的孩子就讀小學和中學時，他曾經教他們一些中國古文，包括《論語》在內。

在他的演講「何以正名？孔夫子的語言

used of them.” He argued that “rectification of names” was not a widespread functional concept throughout *the Analects* during the pre-Qin era.

Dr. Van Norden demonstrated how 20<sup>th</sup> century Chinese intellectuals such as Hu Shi and Feng Youlan reinterpreted the Chinese classics through a Western philosophical lens in order to present Chinese philosophy as modern and comparable to Western thought. In the process, certain concepts such as “rectification of names” were taken out of context and given new meanings and significance. Dr. Van Norden’s point was not to deny the importance of “rectification of names” within the Confucian tradition, but to show how presuppositions about a text “can be either enabling or disabling in the project of achieving genuine understanding.”

Dr. Van Norden also recommended three English translations of *the Analects*: 1) Canadian-American sinologist Edward Slingerland whose translation includes texts and selections from traditional Chinese commentaries on *the Analects*. 2) English sinologist Arthur Whaley’s translation is also a very elegant translation. It was originally published in the 1930s. 3) James Legge of the 19<sup>th</sup> century whose translation is a little old-fashioned but often follows the interpretation of Zhuxi 朱熹, widely considered to be the orthodox interpretation and Legge’s translation includes the Chinese text and can be found online.

In the lively Q and A session that followed his talk, Dr. Van Norden skillfully answered a wide range of questions from the audience. Students from the BA program shared that a key takeaway from the talk was the importance of identifying the assumptions we bring to a text and learning how to adjust those assumptions as new ideas are revealed to us from close reading. The talk was conducted in English with simultaneous Chinese translation. Over one hundred and fifty attendees were present. A video recording of Dr. Van Norden’s lecture and Q and A session is available in the “Archive of Past Events” on the DRBU Symposium webpage: <https://www.drbu.edu/symposium>. ❀

哲學」中，萬百安博士探討了《論語》第十三篇第三章的戲劇化背景，當時孔子到了衛國，恰逢衛國處於政治危機中。被問及要先從哪一步做起以解決危機時，孔子的答覆令人驚訝：「必須先正（君臣、父子的）名分。」孔子這段話所要教導的道理就是：君主須盡君道，臣下須盡臣道，父者盡父道，為子則盡子道。

萬百安博士引用《論語》中的章節和現代例子，將「正名」的概念解釋為「改革命名的做法，以適合所命名的對象」和「改造對象，以適合所使用的名稱」。他認為「正名」在先秦時期的《論語》中並不是一個廣泛使用的概念。

萬百安博士又談到胡適和馮友蘭等20世紀中國知識分子，如何通過西方哲學的視角重新詮釋中國經典，以呈現中國哲學與西方思想相對照的現代哲學。在此過程中，「正名」等概念被斷章取義，賦予了新的內涵和意義。萬百安博士的觀點並不是要否認儒家傳統中「正名」的重要性，而是要說明對文字內容的預設如何「在實現真正理解的過程中，可能是有利的，也可能是不利的」。

萬百安博士也推薦了三本《論語》英譯本：1)加拿大裔美籍漢學家森舸瀾的譯本，包括《論語》正文，以及傳統的各家注釋精選。2)英格蘭漢學家亞瑟·偉利的英譯，文字也很典雅，於1930年代出版。3)19世紀蘇格蘭傳教士理雅各的譯本，現在看來他的英文比較老式，但理雅各採用朱熹的註解——公認的正統註解。理雅各的譯本附有中文原文，網上即可找到。

在演講結束後的熱烈問答環節，萬百安博士巧妙地回答了聽眾提出的各種問題。大學部的學生分享說，這次演講的一個重要收穫是：確定我們對文字內容的假設，並學習如何在通過仔細閱讀向我們揭示新想法時，調整這些假設的重要性。這次的講座以英文進行，並配有中文同聲傳譯。超過150名與會者出席了會議。萬百安博士這場演講和問答視頻，在法大講座網頁的檔案中可看到：

<https://www.drbu.edu/symposium>。❀