

**Connecting Man and Nature:
Philosophical Meanings of Zhu Xi's Poetry**

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ABSTRACT

My thesis closely analyzes the *shi* poetry of the Song dynasty philosopher Zhu Xi (1130-1200). I look at its deep structure, especially the tensions embedded therein between literature and philosophy, and between his inner mind and the external world, manifested in ways different from what he taught in his philosophical works. Although his poetry itself is not considered to be aesthetically outstanding, I suggest that it is crucial to a better understanding of the evolution of Zhu's philosophical project on the relationship between humans and the natural world. Zhu Xi wanted to establish and defend a coherent and practical self-cultivation theory, which would enable people to recognize the *dao* through daily experiences. Nevertheless, in his poetry production, he was facing a long-entrenched influential poetic tradition with its emphasis on the outer world described by embellished words and spontaneous overflow of emotions, while leaving an open end for the meanings or less discriminatively appealing to the Daoist or Buddhist idea of *transcendence*, the logic of which fundamentally contradicts that of *daoxue* construction. This made it impossible to achieve the *dao* in a this-worldly fashion. The contradiction had to be reconciled by Zhu Xi in his poems, an issue that he actually wrestled with throughout his life. Consequently, the style of Zhu Xi's poetry was

differentiated from both that of other Neo-Confucians and indeed that of any other poets in Chinese history. In his poetic texts, the tension between the outer world, inner emotions and philosophical inclination is more intensified, and the exploration of the relationship between man and nature more focused and conscious. In this thesis, I present an aesthetic world of Zhu Xi beyond all his ambiguous philosophical discussions, unfavorable comments on poetry, and his profoundly contradictory attitudes towards versifying.

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INTRODUCTION

What I Mean by “Philosophical Meanings of Zhu Xi’s Poetry”

My thesis explores the *shi* poetry of Zhu Xi (1130-1200), the Song dynasty philosopher and poet whose thought and annotations on classical texts were extensively studied and received as the authoritative teaching for learners to become scholar-officials through imperial examinations over several centuries. Despite the longstanding stereotype that Neo-Confucians looked down on literary pursuits, Zhu Xi’s attitude towards poetry was in fact ambiguous, contradictory, and complicated. Even though he swore several times to quit writing and denied that he really was a poet, he left more than 1400 poems behind.¹ However, this aspect of Zhu’s career has largely been neglected in modern scholarship. My thesis is a comprehensive study of the philosophical meanings of Zhu Xi’s poetry, and it differs from the existing scholarship in a number of ways.

1. The Problem of Filling the Gaps

Modern scholarship on Zhu Xi has not paid enough attention to his poetry.² Twenty years ago, one of the leading Chinese authorities on Zhu Xi studies said that Zhu Xi’s

¹ As I will mention in Chapter 2, Zhu Xi also left 19 *ci* poetry. But this will not be covered by my thesis, because its small quantity does not contribute to the evolution of Zhu Xi’s poetic construction I am seeing here.

² According to Lin Qingzhang’s exhaustive compilation of book titles of research on Zhu Xi from 1900 to 1991, the number of research work about Zhu Xi all over the world amounts to about 2254 in the first 90 years of the 20th century, among which only 141 are about literature. See Lin (1992). On this basis, when we exclude the non-academic works that are in the form of appreciative remarks of his individual poems and simple compilations of his writings, we are left with no more than 40 pieces of research focusing on Zhu Xi’s literature during those 90 years.

“poems and *ci*, which number over a thousand and most vividly reflect his life stories, friends, trips, *daoxue* Neo-Confucian learning, and cultural mentality remain an uncultivated field.”³ Ten years ago, Mo Lifeng, renowned for his research on Tang and Song literature, pointed out in his book on Zhu Xi’s literature that “research on Zhu Xi’s literary works is inadequate.”⁴ At around the same time, a similar comment was made by Lin Jiarong that “research works on Zhu Xi’s theories have been numerous, but the discussions of his poetry are still few and far between.”⁵

Recognizing the inadequacy in academic attention paid to Zhu Xi’s literary works, Mo Lifeng and Lin Jiarong conducted comprehensive research on this front. While Mo tried to rehabilitate the overall literary identity of Zhu Xi, Lin focused on Zhu Xi’s poetry. There are also three English journal articles, written by Li Chi, Yang Zhiyi and Christina Han respectively, focusing on the subject of Zhu Xi’s poetry. In the pages that follow, by presenting and analyzing the respective problematics and general ideas of their pioneering works, I highlight problems that are overlooked by them but are worth further exploration.

In the second chapter of his book, Mo Lifeng devotes two sections to a general characterization of Zhu Xi’s poetry and one to discussing Zhu Xi’s lyric prose. Moreover,

See Mo (2000), 1 f. The picture is even more dramatic in the English world, where, with only a few exceptions, research on Zhu Xi’s poetry is not more than several translations of his single poems, with very brief comments at the most. See, e.g., Egan (1988), 213.

³ Shu (2003), 1122.

⁴ Mo (2000), 2.

⁵ Lin Jiarong (2000), 4.

his work also contains several chapters on Zhu Xi's literary theory, criticisms of previous literary works and writers as well as annotations of important literature of the past, namely *Collected Commentaries of the Odes* (*Shi ji zhuan* 詩集傳), *Collected Annotations of the Songs of Chu* (*Chu ci ji zhu* 楚辭集註), and *Examining the Divergences of Han's Writings* (*Han wen kao yi* 韓文考異). Covering the literary activities of Zhu Xi in a comprehensive manner, Mo Lifeng aims to show that Zhu Xi is really an excellent litterateur who is good at both producing fine literature himself and making literary criticism. He believes that this is an aspect of Zhu Xi that had virtually never been fully explored in either imperial times or modern scholarship. To further illustrate this inadequacy, Mo mentioned Shu Jingnan's biographical work of Zhu Xi.⁶ He believed that Shu's work is the most detailed biography of Zhu Xi so far, but even the multi-dimensional research approach adopted in the book fail to pay enough attention to the literary dimension of Zhu Xi.

Reading Zhu Xi's literary works through the lens of Zhu Xi's philosophy is deemed by Mo Lifeng to be one of the biggest problems of the existing scholarship on Zhu Xi's literary works. He particularly points out that the studies of Shen Meizi and Liu Zhongyu on the meanings and ideas contained in Zhu Xi's poetry are philosophical rather than literary studies of his poetry and prose.⁷ As for the monographs solely devoted to Zhu Xi's literary works, Mo suggests that only Zhang Jian's study on Zhu Xi's literary criticism

⁶ Shu (1992)

⁷ Shen (1988); Liu (1987).

gives a categorized and comprehensive introduction to the topic.⁸ Other than that, there was only Qian Mu who devoted chapters to Zhu Xi's literary works in his renowned monograph, *A New study of Master Zhu* (*Zhuzi xin xue'an* 朱子新學案).⁹ Despite these brief mentions (Zhang's book is actually more of a little brochure with 130 pages including almost exhaustive listings of every related quotation), none discusses Zhu Xi's literary production beyond his criticism and his philosophy. His poetry has been neglected.¹⁰

Indeed, compared with all these previous works that Mo Lifeng mentions, his study of Zhu Xi's literature is a pioneering work in terms of the number of facts related to the subject.¹¹ As mentioned above, it gives encyclopedic chapter outlines covering every aspect of Zhu Xi's literary achievement according to his categorization, endeavoring to weave together all the relevant details to construct a literary Zhu Xi. It is a valuable work in the sense that it gives a general introduction that was previously unavailable,

⁸ Zhang Jian (1969)

⁹ Qian (1986)

¹⁰ Mo (2000), 2.

¹¹ There is actually another monograph that Mo Lifeng should have paid attention to, which is entitled *Zhu Xi wenxue sixiang lun* 朱熹文學思想論 written by Wu Changgeng. This was published in 1994, six years earlier than Mo's work, but it is more comprehensive in terms of the topics covered, the standard that Mo used to distinguish his work from others. Furthermore, it traces some fundamental aesthetic thought within Zhu Xi's philosophical interpretation of *the Book of Change*, thus suggesting a more profound understanding of the person as an integral whole, rather than simply aiming to construct another identity of Zhu Xi out of mechanical discipline. That said, the general approach Wu Changgeng took is still homologous to that of Mo Lifeng, as they both work towards a categorized introduction to Zhu Xi's literary productions, literary criticism and literary theories, subjectively selecting evidence that fits the modern standard of fine literature, and overwhelmingly presenting the impression that Zhu Xi was wise and profound in all fields simply because of his great fame, with the supposition that a famous person should be deep and insightful in all aspects, to fit the name of a sage. This will be further analyzed in later discussions. Wu (1994).

bringing more attention to the fact that aside from his philosophical fame, Zhu Xi had his own literary views and achievements. But Mo's work also has a number of problems.

First, as Mo Lifeng states in both the introduction and conclusion of his book, the main reason that motivates his research is that it is an aspect of Zhu Xi that was never properly studied before. He thus asserts that his research is to present a fuller image of Zhu Xi.¹² This is not a sufficient reason because the inadequacy of the study may aptly prove its pointlessness, just as there is no one studying Zhu Xi's paintings. This problem is incisively illustrated by David Hall in explaining his principle of working on comparisons of Chinese and western cultures. "The mere presence of an idea or doctrine in a particular cultural matrix does not permit us to claim that the doctrine or idea is importantly present—that is, present in such a way that it significantly qualifies, defines, or otherwise shapes the culture."¹³ The mere presence of the fact that Zhu Xi produced large quantities of literary writings does not naturally guarantee the importance of the study of such writings. The problems with this study motivated simply by the need of filling the gaps in the field of Zhu Xi's literature are as follows. First, it inevitably becomes closer to a textbook or encyclopedia with mechanical categorizations of knowledge and facts without a consistent story line or central argument. For example, the work of Mo Lifeng consists of seven chapters in total. The first one introduces Zhu Xi's life and literary activities in general. The second one presents the facts of Zhu Xi's literary productions. The third chapter is on Zhu Xi's literary views, collecting all his

¹² Mo (2000), 11, 338.

¹³ Hall and Ames (1995), xv.

literary ideas together. The fourth one is about his literary criticism, compiling all his comments on previous writers and their works. The last three chapters are about Zhu Xi's three books of annotations mentioned above. The central concern of the entire work, if there is any, could only be the endeavor to recover the literary aspects of Zhu Xi's career.

A further problem of research of this kind is that the literary aspect of Zhu Xi's career, constructed under the concern of filling the gaps in the studies of a great person, can by no means be mediocre, because otherwise it becomes less important and less interesting. So an even more severe deficiency of this type of work is that it is subjective and biased to the extent that it is more akin to writings of the scholar's personal feelings of the research object by intentionally selecting evidence that supports the argument and disregards counter-examples. So it is actually far from being convincing and overarching. For example, Mo Lifeng's argument that "[Zhu Xi] is an important poet in the history of Song poetry" is based on two points: First, the subjects covered in Zhu Xi's poetry are much more diverse than those of other *lixue* thinkers. Second, the "literary achievement" of his poetry is much higher than that of the poetry of Shao Yong's 邵雍 (1011 - 1077) anthology. Mo thus classifies and presents Zhu Xi's poetry in four categories: poetry of patriotic aspirations, poetry sympathizing with the sufferings of the poor masses, poetry of his own feelings and intentions, and poetry of philosophical discussions (These subjects covered in Zhu Xi's poetry will be thoroughly contextualized in the second

chapter of this thesis). The aim is to show that Zhu Xi is really a productive poet.¹⁴ In each category, Mo Lifeng tries to prove Zhu Xi's superiority in writing by subjective selection and interpreting the poems to fit modern aesthetic ideals. For example, he interprets Zhu Xi's 'Four Poems Following the Rhythm of Ziyou Hearing of the Victory' ('Ci Ziyou wenjie yun sishou' 次子有聞捷韻四首) having "powerful grandeur, vigorous style, straightforward language and profound meaning" without marshalling any convincing evidence.¹⁵ It is not only that the situation of Zhu Xi's poetry production is modified by individual biases in this way, but the arguments he makes only to fit with modern judgments, thus drawing the discussion further away from its historical complexity.

Moreover, it is because of such intentional distinctions between Zhu Xi's identities as philosopher and litterateur, and the inclination to "fill in the gaps" in studying Zhu Xi as a social intellectual, that Zhu's own efforts to reconcile these discourses were largely neglected. For instance, in explaining Zhu Xi's contradictory vow to stop composing poetry when he continued to do so, which happened at least five times in different stages of Zhu Xi's life, Mo Lifeng simply held that Zhu Xi just could not help expressing his personal feelings or could not resist the temptation to play with poetic forms and skills. It is as if Zhu Xi had two different personalities and his poetry is purely about his spontaneous yet lofty sensations.¹⁶ The intermingling of the poet's intellect and persona

¹⁴ Mo (2000), 37-79.

¹⁵ Mo (2000), 43.

¹⁶ Mo (2000), 61.

in his writing was completely ignored. Therefore, the “complete image” of Zhu Xi that this type of scholarship strives to achieve is essentially dualistic: although Zhu Xi is a *lixue* philosopher in public, he is a great poet in private; while his *lixue* pursuit is serious and with strict cultivation steps, harm the artistic superiority of his literary creation in some cases, his literary achievement is, by and large, remarkable because of his superior aesthetic sensibility.¹⁷ This expressly violates the ultimate claims of Neo-Confucian thought that distinguished it from classical Confucianism. What Zhu Xi emphasized was essentially that through mastering and nourishing people’s heart-mind and the corresponding personal feelings through proper cultivation methods, people will come to realize their heavenly endowed moral nature and eventually think and behave in correspondence with the prevalent *dao* shared by all things in the world. This is distinctively known as an inward approach of learning to be a sage as opposed to the Confucianism of the classical period. (This will be discussed with more detail in Chapter One.) The Neo-Confucian approach of grounding the predominant heavenly principles deeply in people’s inner mind necessarily and particularly negates the aforementioned dualistic division of one’s persona. It therefore clearly would have been unthinkable, at least theoretically, for Zhu Xi to develop another private counter-identity. These simplifications and mechanistic types of analysis are what I endeavor to avoid in my thesis.

¹⁷ For example after an overview of Zhu Xi’s poetry, Mo Lifeng concludes: “He had an acute aesthetic sense, so he often chanted about natural scenery and saw it as purely aesthetic objects. But in the meantime he is certainly a *lixue* thinker, so it is inevitable that he produces some works to state his intentions and illustrate his ideas, which lacked aesthetic elements.” See Mo (2000), 75.

The year after Mo Lifeng published his book on Zhu Xi's literature in China, Lin Jiarong finished her doctorate thesis in Taiwan, specifically focusing on Zhu Xi's poetry. With the lack of communication between these two academic circles, Lin Jiarong basically followed the same logic as Mo Lifeng in surveying Zhu Xi's poetry. In filling the gaps in scholarship on Zhu Xi as a sensitive and responsive poet that is eclipsed by his great philosophical fame, Lin Jiarong proposes that "the poetry of Zhu Xi in the Southern Song is a piece of jade from heaven that is extremely valuable". Her reason for this argument is that in writing his poems, Zhu Xi seems to share the same interests as the famous Tang poets. For example, he loved to drift among mountains and rivers and was especially fond of alcohol (The story that Zhu Xi actually swore not to drink when he intended to abandon poetry will be discussed in subsequent chapters).¹⁸ What is different from previous works is that instead of doing an encyclopedic sketch of Zhu Xi's poetry, Lin specifically pays attention to the dilemma between the Confucian requirement of serving the country as a governmental official and Zhu Xi's personal preference for living a reclusive life. Lin believes that Zhu Xi's poetry reflects his preliminary learning of *daoxue* ideas from his masters and predecessors on the one hand, yet represents more of his disappointment in contemporary politics and his natural inclination to live in seclusion, visit mountains, contemplate and meditate on the other. Lin considers this reclusive facet of Zhu Xi as his real character that could be appreciated only through his poetry. This approach not only offers limited insight into Zhu Xi's philosophical thought, on which he spent most of his time and energy, but it

¹⁸ Lin Jiarong (2000), 1-4.

also begs the real question that should have been asked: what was the central dilemma in Zhu Xi's literary career, and what does the dilemma suggest?

2. The Problem of Traditional Readings of Zhu Xi's Poetry

Generally speaking, as I have mentioned above, there are two basic approaches to analyzing Zhu Xi's poetry: reading the poet and reading the philosophy, which I believe is largely influenced by the old reading tradition in which the poems were produced. These approaches have become problematic in modern scholarship.

In his reading of the Tang lyric, Steven Owen incisively points out that a common trait of traditional Chinese literature is that in most occasions, poets wrote, as readers read, under the assumptions that poems were nonfictional and the poets were telling historical truth rather than metaphorical truth. One of the examples he gave is that "in an occasional poem when there is a 'blossom-fragrance-stream' 芳泉, the reader understands a real stream filled with the scent of fallen blossoms rather than a metaphorical 'stream' of fragrance blowing through the air". Furthermore, people had faith that poems were mostly authentic presentations of historical experience. So "no one felt uncomfortable about constructing biographical chronologies from poems or about using poems as direct sources for cultural history", even though this may not necessarily represent actual historical experience.

As Owen further explained, the reading tradition in traditional China differs from the West in that in reading literary works, people presumed a different mode of linguistic inadequacy of the text as plain language. It started from a particular type of adequacy. He traces this back to what he believes to be a classic formulation in the 'Great Preface' to the *Odes*: "The poem [of the *Odes* or a poem in general] is that to which intention goes. In the mind it is intention; coming forth in language it is the Poem" 詩者志之所之也。在心為志，發言為詩. He argues that "this is not only a statement of perfectly adequate correlation between a pre-linguistic interior state and a poem, it also implies almost a transfer of substances in making the poem". Based on this and other early comments on literature, Owen builds up a model of adequacy suggesting the movement of the writer's intentions or emotions from the state of the world or age, through the poet, into the poem, and finally to the reader, which he believes is the organic process of manifestation in poetry. For the readers, reading should be "a backward movement to the 'source', following in reverse order the series of operations that produced the poem". Later, a complication of inadequacy arose in the relationship between the text and the combination of writer and world that produced the text, classically formulated by the expression in the 'Appended Explanation' of the *Book of Changes*: "Language does not exhaust concept [or 'what was meant']" 言不盡意. It was since then that "reading becomes a process of restoring fullness: the text is synecdoche for the world (not as substitution, but as diminishment and loss). It leads not to the 'other' meaning of metaphorical reading and the fictional text, but to the whole of which we see only a part in the text". To understand the poet and the world that produced the poem thus became

the goal of the reading process. This is why readers in the Chinese reading tradition generally considered poems as nonfictional and authentic and thereby pursued either biographical criticism and topical reference or sought to bring the full “meaning beyond words” 言外之意 back into the diminished realm of words.¹⁹

The same applies to the reading of Zhu Xi’s poetry. Instead of echoing some burning and inspiring issues of modern western literary theory, as Owen exemplifies in his article, whether or not texts are “really” about the world or the internal order of language, and what is the distinction between historical poet and persona, scholars have interpreted Zhu Xi’s poetry primarily in two ways. One is the more recent way mentioned above of rehabilitating the identity of Zhu Xi the poet, exemplified by the monographs of Mo Lifeng and Wu Chenggeng in Chinese, and journal articles of Li Chi and Yang Zhiyi in English.²⁰ The other is the more traditional way of reading through Zhu Xi’s philosophy because of his great fame as the architect of Neo-Confucian thought. This is because in restoring the fullness “beyond words” of Zhu Xi’s poetry, believed to be authentic expression of his historical experiences, people have sought for clues from his personal background, which for Zhu Xi, predominantly refers to his *lixue* teachings. In this case, while it should have been a historical restoration of the broader world in which the poet lived, the outcomes of this type of research are typically extended interpretations of the poet’s most renowned ideas.

¹⁹ See Owen (1979).

²⁰ Chi Li (1972), Yang (2012).

This could be observed in Christina Han’s study of the hermeneutics of Zhu Xi’s poem ‘In the mid-spring of the Jiachen year of the Chunxi reign (1185 AD), while leisurely dwelling in the study I playfully composed ten boat songs of Wuyi. I presented them to friends, and together we shared a laugh’ (‘Chunxi Jiachen zhongchun jingshe xianju xizuo Wuyi zhaoge shishou cheng zhu tongyou xiangyu yixiao’ 淳熙甲辰中春精舍閑居戲作武夷棹歌十首呈諸同遊相與一笑). Han finds that there was a salient shift in ways of interpreting this poem along with the development of the Neo-Confucian discourse. Initially, “the Southern Song Neo-Confucians considered the Nine Bends poem to be neither a ‘philosophical’ work nor a representative work of Neo-Confucian poetry” as it was not included in “the list of notable Neo-Confucian poetic works in the important Southern Song Neo-Confucian compilation *Xingli qunshu jujie* 性理羣書句解 (Notes and Explanations on the Books on Nature and Principle)”. It was in the Yuan dynasty, along with the overriding movement of canonizing Zhu Xi’s works, that the “Nine Bends poem” came to be seen to convey philosophical implications, a change exemplified by the interpretation of Chen Pu 陳普 (1244-1315). Chen was a Neo-Confucian scholar and adamant Song loyalist. According to Han’s introduction, Chen plainly laid out his vision of the poem in his remarks on the opening stanza: “Zhu Wengong’s Nine Bends, is simply a sequence of entering the Way. It was a carefully planned conception and was not just about the mountains and waters of Wuyi”. He interpreted the poem as a roadmap of Neo-Confucian cultivation—each of the nine bends represents a stage or level in the cultivation process. For instance, “the first bend describes the beginning of the learning

journey, and the second bend gives instructions about avoiding women and courageously advancing on the journey towards the Way”.²¹

According to Han, even though Chen’s interpretation seems far removed from what the words of the poem appear to tell us, it “did not seem to have raised dispute or debate among Neo-Confucians”. “In fact, his reading of the ‘Nine Bends poems’ was welcomed with great enthusiasm and was regarded as an ingenious work of scholarship”.²² In fact, this was not just the case in imperial times. It has actually been deeply ingrained in the reading tradition of classic Chinese poetry and still heavily influences modern scholars’ understanding both in Chinese and English academia. For example, in his categorized introduction of Zhu Xi’s landscape poetry, Wang Limin still follows the idea of Chen Pu, with meticulous effort to prove that why it is about Neo-Confucian learning and cultivation despite its content of touring the landscape.²³ Yang Zhiyi, in her English article on Zhu Xi’s poetry, also concludes that “in the ‘Boat Songs’, Zhu Xi reconstructed the boat tour along the Nine-Curve Stream to become a metaphorical and progressive exploration of ‘hidden marvels’—an utopia to be realized under the guidance of the Man of the Way”.²⁴

Moreover, this type of philosophical interpretation of Zhu Xi’s poetry is also prevalent in studies of his thought. For example, in his writing of Zhu Xi’s biography, in order to

²¹ Zhu and Chen (1924), 1-2.

²² Han (2013)

²³ Wang and Tao (2010)

²⁴ Yang (2012)

prove that Zhu Xi immersed himself in all sorts of non-Confucian ideas (including both philosophical and religious Daoism, Chan Buddhism, etc.) in his early years, Shu Jingnan quotes a number of poems with seemingly Daoist or Buddhist expressions to indicate Zhu Xi's commitment to these ideas. A similar interpretation is found in Julia Ching's work on the religious thought of Zhu Xi.²⁵ As I shall explain in the third chapter, this kind of reading bears a further level of complexity.

Besides, this far-fetched approach of searching for *lixue* meanings within the poetry largely ignored the historical and social context where the poetry was produced and the social functions Zhu Xi's poetry was supposed to fulfill. According to observations of Colin Hawes, among the collections of major Northern Song poets, a common situation is that they all have high proportion of poems addressed to friends and acquaintances. In most cases, instead of writing serious poetry that deals with issues of clear public importance or momentous personal crises, poets of that time actually tend to write large numbers of exchange poems and occasional verses. As Hawes argues, "beside the two most common genres in these collections: poems to see off a friend, and poems matching the rhymes of a friend's work, numerous other poetic exchanges appears [...] the list of social functions goes on and on."²⁶ Based on these investigations, he further argues, "Mid-Northern Song literati used poetry primarily as a means of circulating positive emotional energy",²⁷ and the Northern Song poets saw poetry as "a middle path

²⁵ Ching (2000)

²⁶ Hawes (2005), 2.

²⁷ Hawes (2005), 4.

between the need for private expression or emotional release, and the demands of living as responsible citizens in the wider society”.²⁸ Although it may not necessarily be the case with Zhu Xi’s poetry production and the approach taken in his book is largely different from mine, a historical and social awareness like this cannot be ignored.

Most importantly, the tendency to read Zhu Xi’s poetry as footnotes to his philosophy oversimplified, if not neglected, the more valuable problem contained in these materials—the interaction and tension between the two different discourses that appear to show two different identities of Zhu Xi, i.e. the philosopher and the poet. This is the question I aim to deal with in my thesis. More importantly, throughout the ages, it created the impression for people outside the *daoxue* tradition that Zhu Xi’s poetry was nothing more than the appropriation of poetic forms and rhymed verses for the dissemination of his teachings. In addition, as a *daoxue* philosopher whose literary views were supposed to be theoretically and necessarily subordinate to his overall *daoxue* enterprise of encouraging moral cultivation, Zhu Xi proposed that both the form and content of literary writing should give way to the learning of the *dao*. In other words, *wen* (literary writing) should be a tributary of the *dao*. It flows out from the *dao* and the intentions and feelings contained in it should comply with the requirement of the *dao* in order to be natural, appropriate and a reflection of the lofty *daoxue* achievement of the writers. Otherwise, writings such as belles-lettres and pieces with excessive feelings were meaningless and a distraction from *daoxue* cultivation. (This will be further

²⁸ Hawes (2005), 155.

examined in later discussions.) In fact, Zhu Xi's statements of literature were so negative that, according to Yang Zhiyi's reading of Benjamin A. Elman's work on the cultural history of civil examination, Zhu Xi once vehemently called for the complete abrogation of poetry and rhyme-prose from the civil examination.²⁹ The unfavorable modern impression of Zhu Xi's poetry production and the destructive comments Zhu Xi had on the nature of literary works have resulted in a total disregard of Zhu Xi's literary writings in the history of Chinese literature and the conventional modern wisdom that Zhu Xi's literary views exerted counteractive influence on the development of literature since his time.

For example, Zhu Xi's poems are not mentioned in either of the two leading Chinese historical textbooks on Chinese literature by You Guo'en and Yuan Xingpei³⁰ or in the *Columbia History of Chinese Literature* or the *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*.³¹ It is the same with other comprehensive surveys of Chinese literary works, such as the monographs of Burton Watson, Cai Zongqi, and even Yoshikawa Kōjirō who wrote specifically on Song poetry, yet with only brief mentions of a couple of Zhu Xi's writings.³² In contrast to his literary writings, Zhu Xi's views on literature are largely included in the narratives of literary ethos, but generally presented in a negative tone.

²⁹ Yang (2012), based on Elman (2001), 26.

³⁰ Yuan (2005); You (1963).

³¹ Mair (2001); Chang and Owen (2010).

³² Watson (1971); Cai (2008); Yoshikawa (1967).

Michael A. Fuller is probably one of the most authoritative and productive scholars in studying Zhu Xi's literary views. In his article on Zhu Xi's revision of the Song dynasty views of poetry, through detailed elaboration and comparison between Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127-1206) and Zhu Xi in terms of their respective literary views, and their ontological and epistemological concerns, Fuller argues that "Zhu Xi's understanding of the nature of the self and the stress he laid on principles of order beyond the flux of the phenomenal realm had redefined what role the aesthetic could play in the construction of meaning. *Daoxue*, in other words, had reshaped the very nature of poetry and the aesthetics". And this very success of *daoxue* "has so obscured the broader role of the aesthetic in Chinese literati culture before Zhu Xi as to make it almost impossible to see".³³ In a later article on the impact of *daoxue*, Fuller further suggests that the hermeneutic of the *daoxue* "for reading the canon left no room for extraneous crafting: all patterning (*wen*) of the text must arise spontaneously out of—and be integral to—the sage translation of understanding into representation. Nor was there any room for unresolved meanings, indeterminate implications left embodied in the images". And "the challenge that Zhu Xi presented to the next generation of writers was to confront the choice he offers: writing of high moral seriousness must find its form spontaneously and must subordinate literary features to the articulation of the Way, or writing is just a pastime".³⁴ What's more, Fuller also points out in his most recent book on Song poetry and the problem of literary history that "writing poetry tempts one to submit to the claims of the phenomenal realm, which for Zhu Xi are

³³ Fuller (2005).

³⁴ Fuller (2010).

illusory and reflect a failure of self-control and a misunderstanding of meaning”, and “later thinkers and writers had to confront Zhu Xi’s distrust of intuitions of meaning in the phenomenal realm”.³⁵

Despite the negative influence on literature Zhu Xi is thought to have had, all Fuller’s research of Zhu Xi’s poetics is based on his awareness of the complex relationship of poetics to a number of other social and intellectual areas of Song culture. He argued that “because poetry lies at the intersection of emotion, Nature, language, and the world, Zhu Xi’s judgments about poetic style are not just about style. They form part of the larger debate about knowledge, the self, and how we understand both the meaning of experience and the source of that meaning”.³⁶ This is also the general concern of my thesis. The difference between Fuller’s arguments and my own is that, by taking into consideration the large number of poems that Zhu Xi wrote, which not only essentially contradict his public poetic views and his philosophical teaching, but also present in great detail the long course of struggle in his mind, I present a different and more complicated picture. My approach involves the mutual influence between his philosophical thought and the dimension of his career as a poet, explaining the tension between the different discourses that underlie the contradictory appearances of Zhu Xi’s poetry. This approach offers us both a richer context in which to understand the formation of Zhu Xi’s philosophy and more insights into the philosophical nature of Song poetry.

³⁵ Fuller (2013), 348.

³⁶ Fuller (2005).

3. Research Methodology

My research of Zhu Xi's poetry focuses on the tension between his different attitudes towards different constituent elements of the poetry reflected in the texts. I see the texts as a freestanding research subject rather than as mere footnotes to either his life experience or his philosophy. But they do reveal the poet's attitudes, strategies, and uneasy compromise on different aspects involved in the process of writing poetry. This is not only a different genre simply involving more aspects of people's daily life, such as the encounter with the external world and personal emotions, as opposed to philosophical interpretations. It is also an entirely different social field with its own rules and traditions, contrary to what Zhu Xi aimed to establish for the society in which he lived.

For example, as we will see from close readings of his poetry, the way Zhu Xi presents the outer phenomenal world differs from time to time in his different life stages and under different circumstances. In his early years of composing poems, his writing is rough and clichéd, with frequently repeated images and stock scenes, as he seeks to disclose his spiritual pursuit of transcending the entanglement with the earthly world. In the meantime, the phenomenal world is embedded with emotive qualifiers, being subjective and negative, showing his generally pessimistic desire to abandon the world. Later, following the teachings of Li Tong 李侗 (1093-1163), Zhu Xi resolutely

abnegated all the descriptions of the outer world together with the ingrained personal emotions and the intellectual stance of seeking for transcendence replaced by the learning of the omniscient *dao* that is encompassing and exclusive of all other elements. According to Zhu Xi's philosophy and poetics, this is the ideal way to compose, but it not only conflicts with the mechanism of writing with which he was once familiar. It also confronts the challenge brought about by the social function of poetry, namely to exchange and circulate verse among certain groups, sometimes producing it spontaneously and orally. More importantly, from the *Book of Odes* to the *Songs of Chu* to the reclusive poems of the "seven sages of the bamboo grove"³⁷ and the bucolic style of Tao Qian 陶潛 (ca. 365-427) and Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433), poetry assumed the function of social and political critique, mostly by way of embellished descriptions of the experience of mountains and rivers and the expression of a keen desire to escape into nature, which was actually a vent of personal spleen. This aspect of poetry was especially attractive to Zhu Xi when he became involved in political struggles and adverse circumstances in his old age. The outer phenomenal world under his poetic brush thus changed in his later writing. So too did his corresponding emotions and thoughts because of the change in his mentality and strategy in reconciling and reshaping different rules and traditions into a logically coherent aesthetic exploration, along with his philosophical cultivation of the *dao*.

³⁷ Knight (2012), 41.

This painful wrestling with all the different rules and mechanisms under tension and incorporating poetry production into his *daoxue* enterprise are consistent with Zhu Xi's ambiguous attitude towards his own writings of poetry. From his own writing and his poetry, we know that Zhu Xi publicly swore not to write poems at least five times in different occasions throughout his life. However, the fact is that he never really stopped writing (more details to come in later chapters). This contradiction again manifests the internal discrepancy between his poetry, poetics and philosophy. When carefully examining Zhu Xi's phrasing and explanations of people's broadly defined aesthetic experience, including relevant notions of personal feelings (*qing* 情), human nature (*xing* 性) and heart-mind (*xin* 心), as well as related psychological states of pre-emission (*weifa* 未發), post-emission (*yifa* 已發), and the incipient moment (*ji* 幾), which will be dealt with in the first chapter, we would have expected that the dimension of aesthetics would have taken up an important position in Zhu Xi's theory of self-cultivation. But it is actually disregarded or left ambiguous within the theoretical framework, owing to the fundamental antinomy lying between literature and *lixue* learning, essentially two different philosophies of seeing the world and different understandings of the man-and-nature relationship. Instead, Zhu Xi is thought to have required people to pay more attention to the learning of classics and not to waste time on belles-lettres, for the reason that those "groundless expressions" 閑言語³⁸ do not

³⁸ In explaining the criticism of flashy writings made by Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107), Zhu Xi said "Yichuan [Cheng Yi] criticized the learning of [Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824)] as flashy because he was fond of literary writings. For example he composed poetry, to make many groundless expressions, which are all flashiness" 伊川謂其學華者，只謂愛作文章。如作詩說許多閑言語，皆是華也。 See Zhu (1986), vol.8.137, 3262.

bring any practical benefit to anything in reality and there is also the danger of having oneself overwhelmed by excessive emotions and desires.

In Zhu Xi's poetry, this one-directional linkage between his philosophy and poetics (including his poetic hermeneutics) unfolds into more diverse living experiences and multi-dimensional contradictions and problems, which also in turn shapes the formation of Zhu Xi's philosophy and gives us insight into what was left out in Zhu Xi's discussion of self-cultivation in connecting man and nature. This should not be neglected if we are to have better understanding of each related field. And this is what I mean by investigating the philosophical meanings of Zhu Xi's poetry: instead of considering poetry as an annotation to the historical experience of the poet or his philosophy, I start from the mechanism of the texts themselves, and rely on textual analysis of Zhu Xi's poetry writing throughout his life to study and compare the disclosed shift of attitudes and strategies in constructing a harmonious and virtuous relationship between humans and nature.

Specifically, I analyze the dynamics between what I call the three most basic elements constituting traditional Chinese poetry: outer objects/phenomenal world, personal feelings and intellectual thinking. For the sake of analysis, I divide Zhu Xi's poetry writing into three stages. First is the early stage that covers the period before Zhu Xi formally began to accept Neo-Confucian ideas. Second is the mature stage which is when he had committed himself to the learning of Neo-Confucianism, the establishment of his

own thought, and the spirited debates to defend what he believed to be the right way of cultivation. The third is the later stage, which is the period when he spent most of his retired life in reclusion, but under an increasingly harsh political environment. Despite the artistic problems in his poetry, his corpus is one of the most representative cases in exploring the man and nature philosophy up to his time. Both for the purpose of establishing a coherent and practical self-cultivation theory so that people could realize the *dao* through daily conduct and experience and for the purpose of fighting against excessively embellished and emotional poetic practices, and to oppose Daoist and Chan Buddhist philosophies, Zhu Xi needed to strike a balance between the outer world, inner feelings and philosophical thought in his poetry production. I argue that this is a task that Zhu Xi wrestled with throughout most of his life when he was entangled in the choice between writing or not writing and with the question of what a good poem should be like.

What needs more clarification is that in my close readings of Zhu Xi's poetry composed within the second and third stages, when Zhu Xi gained his prevalent identity as a serious *daoxue* follower and later as an established master, in order to better illustrate the philosophical consideration behind the shifts of poetic styles, I use the concepts of *weifā* (pre-emission) and *yifā* (post-emission) from his *daoxue* discourse in parallel with the analysis of the poet's intellectualized conclusions, the perception of the phenomenal world, and the expression of personal emotions. These concepts formed the key polarity in Zhu Xi's enterprise of connecting man and nature through moral self-cultivation and

were necessary in his effort to reframe the other philosophy of knowing and presenting the world. Based on Zhu Xi's extensive discussion of these concepts, I understand and use them in my analysis as both the dynamic movement of the heavenly principle within the natural world and correspondingly different aspects or states of the heavenly endowed human nature. According to Zhu Xi, the tranquil state of the mind of heaven, where the most superior principle of the existence of all things in the world is embedded, is ultimately virtuous but lies beyond the phenomenal world. It is thus difficult to see and apprehend. It is the substance of the *dao*, but it is still and hidden. It belongs to the realm of pre-emission, a term drawn from the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhong yong* 中庸).³⁹ The same applies to the rule of the human world. Since the basic supposition of the Confucian construction of societal rules is the identical core shared by man and nature, under the premise that man is one of the many types of creations of heaven and is equal to all other beings, human nature, as argued by Zhu Xi, is heavenly endowed, thereby being clear and bright in a tranquil state at the very beginning. It is the hidden substance of human heart-mind. This tranquil state of the human mind also belongs to the realm of pre-emission. As the creation of all things in the world is based on this substance, it involves the movement of this heavenly mind and its interpenetration with other types of creative elements such as the *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 (two basic cosmic elements with intrinsic polar separation, like tranquility and activity, weakness and strength). This entire process of movement, interpenetration and creation, what we see as the dynamic

³⁹ It says in the first chapter of *Zhong yong* that "The pre-emitted state of joy, anger, sorrow and pleasure is called the *mean*" 喜怒哀樂之未發，謂之中。Zhu (1983), 18. Also see 'Yifa weifa shuo' 已發未發說, in *Hui'an xiansheng Zhu Wengong wenji* 晦庵先生朱文公文集 vol.67, Zhu (2002), vol.23, 3266.

existence of the multifaceted phenomenal world, is the function of *dao*, which belongs to the realm of post-emission. Applied in the human world, the post-emitted realm belongs to the function of the human heart-mind, specifically referring to the diverse personal feelings triggered and therefore expressed from the heavenly-endowed human nature. This process is made clear by quoting Zhu Xi's explanation on the mind of heaven and earth at length:

The virtue of heaven and earth is to generate life [...] When the mind is tranquil and returns from movement, it is the pre-emitted substance; when the mind is active and unobstructed, then it is post-emitted and it is the function [of the pre-emission]. When the positive force returns, it is very small at the beginning as if it is still tranquil. But it is actually the incipient moment of movement, with the tendency of increasingly growing, from which everything originates. At the beginning of the movement of the mandate of heaven and the outset of the development of the nature, the mind of the heaven and earth that is constantly generating life could be seen. When it is tranquil and not emissive, even though its substance is everywhere, some of it cannot be seen.

天地以生生為德 [...] 但其靜而復，乃未發之體；動而通焉，則已發之用。一陽來復，其始生甚微，固若靜矣。然其實動之機，其勢日長，而萬物莫不資始焉。此天命流行之初，造化發育之始，天地生生不已之心於是而可見也。若其靜而未發，則此之心體雖無所不在，然卻有未發見處。⁴⁰

⁴⁰ 'Fu' 復, in Zhu (1986), vol.5.71, 1791-1792.

To talk about the pre-emission state and post-emission state is to say that the mind is emissive sometimes and not emissive at other times. When it encounters no event, it is not emissive; as soon as it stimulates something, it becomes emissive.

已發未發，只是說心有已發時，有未發時。方其未有事時，便是未發；纔有所感，便是已發。⁴¹

Pre-emission is the principle and post-emission is feelings. For example when it moves and generate the positive force, it is feeling.

未發便是理，已發便是情。如動而生陽，便是情。⁴²

The first quote explains the mechanism of pre-emission and post-emission within the cosmological construction of the virtue of heaven and earth. The second and third quotations refer to the application of this grand theory to the human world, where human heart-mind and feelings are posited accordingly. A good method for individuals to realize and restore the state of pre-emission so as to become compatible with the great *dao* and fulfill the task of learning to be a sage lies in the appropriate consideration of the connection between the pre-emission and the post-emission. This is because only the latter is manifested and notable and can provide clues to understanding the former. This not only involves a top-down theoretical construction, but also a more difficult

⁴¹ 'Zhong yong diyi zhang' 中庸第一章, in Zhu (1986), vol.4. 62, 1509.

⁴² 'Taiji tu' 太極圖, in Zhu (1986), vol.6.94, 2374.

bottom-up contemplation within the miscellaneous world, especially during the practice of writing poetry, where a number of challenges for the philosophy converge.

4. Publication History of Zhu Xi's Anthology and Poetry

According to the prefaces of different versions of Zhu Xi's complete collection and literary anthologies, as well as a number of devoted studies on the publication history of Zhu Xi's works, the earliest known and verified version of Zhu Xi's anthology was compiled in the Song dynasty between 1188 and 1192 during Zhu Xi's life time. Entitled the *Literary Collection of Master Hui'an*⁴³ 晦庵先生文集,⁴⁴ this version had its wooden blocks carved in Fujian, consisting of the 11-juan former collection (*qianji* 前集) and the 18-juan latter collection (*houji* 後集). Two volumes of poetry were included at the beginning of the collection and categorized by its formalistic styles into one for ancient style poetry and the other for regulated poetry. The consensus among modern scholars is that this was a pirated publication, produced without consent from Zhu Xi. But the record in the *Conversations* does show that one of Zhu Xi's disciples did mention that book to him without referring to any of Zhu Xi's comments. A copy of this version is now preserved at the National Palace Museum in Taipei. Despite the fact that this version is deemed to be unauthorized and therefore poor in quality and disordered in compilation, it is very likely to be one of the earliest publications against which other later

⁴³ This is the style name of Zhu Xi.

⁴⁴ I was not able to see any copy of this version myself. I follow the Chinese characters of the book title that both Zhu Jieren, Shu Jingnan, and Ma Dehong note, while there is also an article written by Guo Qi and Yin Bo who refer to it as 晦庵先生文集. See Zhu (2002), vol.20, 6; Shu (1992/1); Ma and Chen (2005); Guo and Yin (1997a).

publications were checked. This is because throughout history, none of the compilations of Zhu Xi's anthology and poetry was done by the author himself.⁴⁵

More comprehensive and exhaustive compilations of Zhu Xi's collections started from the third son of Zhu Xi, named Zhu Zai 朱在 (1169-1239), after his father's death. According to the title Zhu Zai used—*Literary Collection of Master Hui'an Zhu Wengong* 晦庵先生朱文公文集, the final completion of this book must have been later than 1209 when Zhu Xi was conferred the posthumous title of *wen*. This book contained 88 *juan* of Zhu Xi's work and became the official source for a variety of later versions known as the Min version (*minben* 閩本) by Ming scholars. Through half a century of continuous assembling, grouping and compiling by different editors, a more inclusive version of the *minben* collection was later expanded to 100 *juan* of the authorized collection (*zhengji* 正集), 11 *juan* of the sequel collection (*xuji* 續集), and 10 *juan* of additional collection (*bieji* 別集). At around the same time when Zhu Zai was compiling the collection or slightly later, people in Hangzhou also began to make wooden blocks of Zhu Xi's works, either based on the aforementioned pirated versions created before the ban on Zhu Xi's thought or probably with consulting of Zhu Zai's version. This is entitled the *Literary Collection of Master Hui'an*, the same as the earliest existing version. It also collected 100 *juan* of Zhu Xi's literary writings, without any other additional collections. This was later called the Zhe version (*zheben* 浙本). According to the study by Guo Qi, there are many differences between the two different versions. For example, the Zhe version is

⁴⁵ For a detailed discussion of the content, the quality and the publication situation of this version of Zhu Xi's collection, see Guo and Yin (1997a).

generally more detailed than the Min version. Whereas the Min version omits paragraphs of Zhu Xi's memorials and correspondences, the Zhe version tends to record them in great detail. Furthermore, the article sequences are sometimes different. One particular piece of work may appear in different volumes in these two versions. But overall they bear more similarities than differences. The works contained in both versions are exactly the same. The 'Examination of Discrepancies' ('Kaoyi' 考異) appended at the end of each collection is exactly the same. And somewhat surprisingly, the mistaken or missing characters are also almost the same. So the consensus among most scholars is that these two versions are very likely to be based on the same earlier version even though they did become different over the process of amendment and reproduction. The only thing is that it is now difficult to tell which one came first.

The two different versions evolved into a great many different editions of complete collection of Zhu Xi's work with various names and *juan* numbers after the Yuan dynasty. For example, there are the *Complete Literary Collection of Master Wengong Zhuzi* 文公先生朱子大全文集 of 23 *juan*, the *Literary Collection of Master Hui'an Zhu Wengong* of 100 *juan*, the *Complete Works of Zhuzi* 朱子大全 of 100 *juan* and so on. Most of these later editions are based on the Min version mentioned before. Among them the best one is the *Literary Collection of Master Hui'an Zhu Wengong* compiled by Zhang Dalun 張大輪 (fl. 1527-1532) and Hu Yue 胡岳 (fl. 1532), which contained 100 main *juan*, 11 sequel *juan* and 10 additional *juan*. This is also the original source version against which subsequent versions in the *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊 and the *Sibu beiyao* 四部備要 were checked.

There was also a Qing version compiled in the reign of Kangxi 康熙 (1654-1722),⁴⁶ which was later incorporated into the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 version compiled under the reign of Qianlong 乾隆 (1711-1799).⁴⁷ But according to Guo Qi, this version supplemented many missing characters in previous versions without convincing references, though it is similar to the Zhang Dalun version in terms of the article numbers and sequences.⁴⁸

The best modern editions of Zhu Xi's literary collection are *The Collected Works of Zhu Xi* (*Zhu Xi ji* 朱熹集) compiled and punctuated by Guo Qi,⁴⁹ and the literary collection (*juan* 20- 25) in the *Complete Collection of Master Zhu* (*Zhuzi quanshu* 朱子全書) edited by Zhu Jieren,⁵⁰ because they both integrated and discriminated from material among the different pre-modern versions, including the earliest existing one presently preserved in Taiwan.

In terms of poetry collections, it is recorded in Zhu Xi's anthologies that there are at least four collections compiled by Zhu Xi himself. One is given the name *The Pure Writings at Mu Zhai* (*Mu Zhai jinggao* 牧齋淨稿), comprising his poetry written from 1151 to 1155 when he stayed in his studio focusing on reading all sorts of books, before following Li Tong's teachings. According to Shu Jingnan, this was compiled in the year 1157, shortly

⁴⁶ He reigned officially from 5 February 1661 to 20 December 1722.

⁴⁷ He reigned officially from 11 October 1735 to 8 February 1796.

⁴⁸ For a fuller story of the publication history of Zhu Xi's literary collections, see Ma and Chen (2005); Yin and Guo (2004); Guo and Yin (1997b); Zhu (2002), vol.20, 6-8; Guo and Yin (1996), vol.1, 7-8; Guo and Yin (1996); Guo (2000), 41-42.

⁴⁹ Guo and Yin (1996)

⁵⁰ Zhu (2002)

before Zhu Xi's conversion to *daoxue* ideas.⁵¹ The second one is named *The Collection of Turn to Study After Having Been Vexed by Difficulties While Afraid of Hearing [More]* (*Kunxue kongwen bian* 困學恐聞編), with a preface written by Zhu Xi to explain what the title means. He stated that the purpose of compiling the collection is to provide people with the basic principle of study, which is to concentrate on solving the problems regarding the wellbeing of ordinary people and being reverent of things that are unknown. Zhu Xi believes that this could be of help in the cultivation of virtue.⁵² According to Shu Jingnan's study on the chronicle of Zhu Xi's life, Zhu Xi compiled this collection in the year 1164 when he was still at the beginning stage of his *daoxue* career. It collects poetry written since 1158 when he changed the name of his studio to 'Turn to Study After Having Been Vexed by Difficulties' ('kunxue' 困學).⁵³ At around the same time, it is very likely that Zhu Xi compiled another sub-collection within this prefaced one called *Quatrains for Teaching the Ignorant* (*Xun meng jueju* 訓蒙絕句), the authenticity of which has been questioned by scholars throughout the centuries. The general purpose of writing and editing these nearly 100 poems, if the historical records about the collection is true, was to make use of the rhymed and thus more memorable and influential poetic language for the dissemination of Zhu Xi's philosophy and teachings of cultivation.⁵⁴ More details of this collection will be further described in Chapter 4.

⁵¹ Shu (1992), 152.

⁵² 'Kunxue kongwen bian xu' 困學恐聞編序, in *Wenji* vol.75, Zhu (2002), vol. 24, 3617.

⁵³ Shu (2001), 339.

⁵⁴ Shu (2001), 315.

As I will explain later in greater detail, the general poetic style of the first collection is dramatically different from that of the second one and the collections that followed are even more different. In the last two months of the year 1167, three years after the compilation of his philosophizing verses, Zhu Xi anthologized two other thick poetry collections, named *Poetic Exchanges on Nanyue Mountain* (*Nanyue changchou* 南嶽唱酬) and *Miscellaneous Works While Returning East* (*Dong gui luan gao* 東歸亂稿), containing 149 and more than 200 poems respectively. These included not only the poems of Zhu Xi but also those of Zhang Shi and Zhu's disciples. However, according to the complete collections of Zhu Xi, Zhu's works constitute most of the collections. A fuller story of the creation and compilation of these two collections can be found in Zhang Shi's 'Preface for Poetic Exchanges on Nanyue Mountain' ('Nanyue changchou xu' 南嶽唱酬序), Zhu Xi's 'Notes After Touring the South Peak' ('Nanyue youshan houji' 南嶽遊山後記), and Zhu Xi's preface for his *Miscellaneous Works*.⁵⁵ More analysis of the poems will be conducted in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

The poems included in the aforementioned collections are mostly arranged chronologically by Zhu Xi himself. As for the rest of the poems, I mainly consult the chronology of Guo Qi⁵⁶ while checking it against Shu Jingnan's chronology of Zhu Xi's life events⁵⁷ and Chen Lai's chronology of Zhu Xi's correspondence.⁵⁸ In spite of Guo Qi's approach of analyzing Zhu Xi's poetry in the problematic reading tradition

⁵⁵ Zhang Shi (1999), vol.2.15, 762-764; *Wenji* 77, Zhu (2002), vol.24, 3704; 'Dong gui luan gao xu' 東歸亂稿序, *Wenji* 75, Zhu (2002), vol.24, 3627.

⁵⁶ Guo (2000)

⁵⁷ Shu (2001)

⁵⁸ Chen Lai (2007)

described above,⁵⁹ his determination of the sequential order of Zhu Xi's poems is reliable as it is based on the cross-referencing of not only different types of materials of Zhu Xi's, but also records and anthologies of other people that were related to Zhu Xi. In Guo's book, at the end of each poem, there is a special column explaining the evidence supporting his determination. While some of them are based on one of his earlier monographs of biographical criticism of Zhu Xi,⁶⁰ others are rather detailed and well-reasoned. For this reason, I have relied extensively on his chronology throughout this study.

⁵⁹ In the introduction of Guo's book, he speaks highly of Zhu Xi's poetry in terms of its artistic value (subjectively drawing them close to the modern standard), valuing them for providing biographical information, and as an aesthetic way of understanding more of Zhu Xi's philosophical notions. As an expert in textual examination, he only checks Zhu Xi's poetry for historical reference, which is not enough for an extensive understanding of the poetry. Hence while his analysis is problematic, his chronology is trustworthy. See Guo (2000), 1-43.

⁶⁰ Guo (1994)

CHAPTER ONE

Unifying Inner and Outer: Cultivation Theory and Aesthetics in Zhu Xi's Philosophy

Before analyzing Zhu Xi's poetry in detail, this chapter investigates the philosophical meanings of his poetry within his theory of cultivating the human heart-mind. By comparing the two major shifts in the development of Zhu Xi's thought, namely the two so-called "realizations of equilibrium and harmony" (*zhong he zhi wu* 中和之悟), it appears that all the adjustments in his thought were linked to the method of cultivation. While he considered cultivation methods, the problem of how to deal with personal sensations and the concomitant aesthetical space came to his attention. Different attitudes towards this problem caused Zhu Xi to critique Su Shi, which again helps to better understand Zhu Xi's incorporation of aesthetics into his cultivation theory and the function of poetry in his thought. For Zhu Xi, poetry is a concrete representation of the process of unifying people's inner heart-mind and rules of the outer world and human society, all of which are believed by the Neo-Confucians to share the same heavenly endowed moral principle. This process is mentioned as the philosophical agenda of "unifying inner and outer" (*he nei wai* 合内外), or in some cases, "unification of man and nature" (*tian ren he yi* 天人合一). (This will be further explained later.) Poetry is to help to realize the linkage between Neo-Confucian ideal being and actual experience.

Compared with earlier Confucian thought in the Han and Tang dynasties that emphasizes more on people's physical practice of ethical codes and social rules,¹ it is fair to say that the basis on which *daoxue* 道學 was generated and established from the Northern Song dynasty onward was the renewed emphasis on the individual inner spirit that had long been unstressed under the dominant discourse of the great Way (*tian dao* 天道). Mou Zongsan pointed out five reasons for why Neo-Confucianism was considered new. According to Mou, the first three are as follows:

“1. Kongzi [advocated] the practice of humanity and the understanding of heaven 踐仁知天, but he did not say that humanity and heaven are unified or one. But Song and Ming Confucians tended to think that the *intensional meaning* of humanity and that of heaven are integrated in the end, or are inherently one.

“2. Mengzi talked about exhausting the heart-mind, knowing the human nature and understanding heaven 盡心知性知天, among which heart-mind and human nature are one. But [he] did not clearly state that mind, human nature and heaven are one. Song and Ming Confucians commonly held that mind, human nature and heaven are one.

“3. *The Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhong yong* 中庸) says that ‘the mandate of heaven is human nature’ 天命之謂性, but it doesn't clearly indicate that the *intensional meaning*

¹ For a detailed discussion of the features of Han Confucianism and Confucians, see Chen (2003), 82-88.

of a person's nature mandated by heaven is exactly identical with the entity of the "ceaseless mandate of heaven" 天命不已. Neither does it say that the entity of this mandate becomes individual nature when internalized in individuals. Whereas Song and Ming Confucians clearly said that the heaven's Way and the mandate of human nature are one 天道性命通而為一".²

Mou's analysis makes it clear that the unification of the inner (the human heart-mind and human nature) and the outer (the heavenly mandate) has become a prominent proposition in late imperial Chinese philosophy. Thinkers of that time no longer thought mechanically and pragmatically about the imperative heavenly rules. Rather, they began to explore conceptions of the individual, looking for a way to have their heart-mind match the way of heaven. The concomitant method is what we previously mentioned as "unifying inner and outer" or "the learning of the unification of inner and outer" (*he nei wai zhi dao* 合內外之道). In Zhu Xi's discussions, the "inner" refers to the principle of human being, i.e. the heavenly endowed human nature, while the "outer" refers to the principle of the phenomenal world. These two principles are essentially the same, and the understanding/restoration of one should instantly result in the realization of the other. In Zhu Xi's own words: "Objects and I share the same principle. Once understanding that one, this one is realized. This is called the learning of the unification

² Mou Zongsan (1999), 19-20. The original discussions are in Chinese, but Mou particularly puts the English term "intensional meaning" in bracket after the Chinese expression 內容的意義. I understand this as reflecting Mou's emphasis on the philosophical implication and significance of the concepts mentioned in traditional Confucian texts in relation to the Neo-Confucian construction of the worldly order.

of inner and outer” 物我一理，纔明彼即曉此，此合內外之道也。³ According to Zhu Xi, it is only via this method of “learning by analogy therefore having the rest penetrated” 推類而通其餘⁴ that the practice of ethical codes could be deeply ingrained within people’s mind: “If you want to fulfill filial duty, you need to know the principle behind the practice of filial piety. The principle of how to appropriately support and feed and the principle of how to make [the parents] feel warm or cool should be exhausted before you can really do it. This cannot be obtained only by sticking to the single character *xiao*.” 如欲為孝，則當知所以為孝之道，如何而為奉養之宜，如何而為溫清之節，莫不窮究然後能之，非獨守夫孝之一字而可得也。⁵ And only in this case that “heaven and man, objects and I could be one” 天人物我為一，⁶ or in other words, the “unification of man and nature” could be realized.⁷

In order to reach this philosophically interpenetrating understanding of the principle of man and nature, there emerged a cultivation theory within Neo-Confucian thought to guide people’s daily practice for learning to be a sage. It provided a way of concrete daily practice for individuals. There was also a systematic theoretical discourse underling it, so that a method could be developed to help learners reach spiritual transcendence in

³ ‘Daxue huo wen’ 大學或問, in Zhu (2002), vol.6, 525.

⁴ ‘Daxue huo wen’ 大學或問, in Zhu (2002), vol.6, 525.

⁵ ‘Daxue huo wen’ 大學或問, in Zhu (2002), vol.6, 525.

⁶ ‘Daxue huo wen’ 大學或問, in Zhu (2002), vol.6, 530.

⁷ Zhu Xi used the expression *tian ren he yi* 天人合一 in his commentary on ‘Jie Nanshan’ 節南山 in the *Odes*. See Zhu (2007), 149. It is also mentioned and explained by Xie Liangzuo 謝良佐 (1050-1103) when commentating on poems of Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-1077). This is recorded in *Shangcai yulu* 上蔡語錄 compiled by Zhu Xi. See Zhu Jieren et al. (2010), vol.3, 6. For extended discussions on the historical evolution of the meanings of the notion *he* 合, see Guo (2000/03); Chenyang Li (2006).

mundane life. Song Neo-Confucians looked for a proper way of individuals' self-cultivation so that it both followed the way of heaven and fit the heart-mind of human beings. They believed that a worldly ethical order could only be reconstructed in this way. Nevertheless, this is such a grand, long-lasting and sophisticated project that even Zhu Xi, who arguably syncretized both the sociopolitical vision of classical Confucianism and the metaphysical sophistication of Buddhism and Daoism, was not able to claim accomplishment of this task. This is because in practice, their ideal vision of unification and interpenetration of the dual categories like subject and object, inner and outer, feelings and rationality, human desire and morality are not easy to achieve. And it becomes even more difficult when it involves an explanation of people's heart-mind that is subtle, mysterious, and sometimes beyond what words can express. In a rationalized theory that aims to be as much reasonable and practical as possible, people's perceptions and feelings were the biggest problems confronting Neo-Confucian thinkers when talking about cultivation. Zhu Xi's conviction that man and heaven must be unified and his efforts to address the conceptual challenges of that conviction formed the basis of his contribution to Neo-Confucian thought.

1. Aesthetic Meanings of Zhu Xi's Two Realizations of Equilibrium and Harmony

(*zhong he zhi wu* 中和之悟)

Zhu Xi's thought went through two major shifts, which were the two "realizations of equilibrium and harmony" in 1166 and 1169. These two shifts of his thought were also called "the awakening of the *bing xu* year (*bing xu zhi wu* 丙戌之悟)" and "the awakening of the *ji chou* year (*ji chou zhi wu* 己丑之悟)".⁸

The first shift in 1166 was because of Zhu Xi's doubts about the cultivation method that he learned from Li Tong 李侗 (1093-1163), that is, the appreciation of heavenly principle in quiet-sitting and contemplating on the heart-mind.⁹ Under the influence of other scholars like Zhang Shi 張栻(1133-1180) and Hu Hong 胡宏(1105-1161), Zhu Xi began to distinguish different characteristics between human heart-mind and human nature by claiming that "heart-mind is the post-emitted [heavenly principle], while human nature is the [heavenly principle in its] pre-emitted state" 心為已發, 性為未發.¹⁰ So essentially, Zhu Xi believed that as for the aspect of human beings in the unification of man and nature, there were two sub-aspects representing different states of the heavenly principle endowed in individuals. He further held that "from the time when people are babies to when they die, despite difference in talkativeness and activity, all their characteristics are generally post-emission. And what is pre-emission is not yet

⁸ More details regarding these two shifts, see Shu (1992), 233-272.

⁹ Zhu Xi quotes Li Tong's words in summarizing the essence of his thought in 'Biographical Sketch of Master Li Yanping' ('Yanping xiansheng Li gong xingzhuang' 延平先生李公行狀) that "The way of learning is not about saying much. It lies in quiet-sitting to get a clear mind, so to grasp the heavenly principle" 學問之道不在多言, 但嘿坐澄心, 體認天理. In *Wenji* vol.97, Zhu (2002), vol.25, 4518. Also in *Yanping dawen* 延平答問, in Zhu (2002), vol.13, 341.

¹⁰ 'Yu Hunan zhugong lun zhonghe diyi shu' 與湖南諸公論中和第一書, in *Wenji* vol.64, Zhu (2002), vol.23, 3130. Also in 'Yifa weifa shuo' 已發未發說, *Wenji* vol.67, Zhu (2002), vol.23, 3266.

emitted” 人自嬰兒以至老死，雖語默動靜之不同，然其大體莫非已發，特其未發者為未嘗發耳。¹¹ This means that people should observe and experience the incipient moment of their already expressed daily activities, and then try to find the origin where their moral mind exists. This was basically to find an equilibrium within the activity of daily life. However, Zhu Xi was still uncertain about this theory when thinking more about it and practicing it himself, so he further developed this theory. In his second shift in 1169, he claimed that “human nature is the pre-emitted while emotions are the post-emitted” 性為未發，情為已發¹² and “the heart-mind unites and controls human nature and emotions” 心統性情。¹³ So the individual self-cultivation was no longer about realizing the pre-emitted human nature from the post-emitted heart-mind, but about cultivating on the post-emitted personal emotions within people’s heart-mind, under a precautionary mindset. With an emphasis on personal emotions, the sub-categories of heart-mind and human nature were further divided into two different levels. This view thus also suggested that for the realization of the pre-emitted human nature and the concomitant unification of man and nature, people should combine both the cultivation of preserving reverence within heart-mind and the cultivation of extending knowledge by

¹¹ See the preface for the old theory of equilibrium and harmony, ‘Zhonghe jiushuo xu’ 中和舊說序, *Wenji* vol.75, Zhu (2002), vol.24, 3634.

¹² For example, Zhu Xi is noted in the *Conversations* to say, “Human nature refers to the pre-emitted [state of the heavenly principle], so we say that ‘Humanness is the principle of love’. Personal emotions are the post-emitted, so we say that ‘Love is the function of humanness’” 性者指其未發，故曰“仁者愛之理”。情即已發，故曰“愛者仁之用”。Zhu (1986), vol.2.20, 464.

¹³ Zhu Xi said: “In the old days, I read words of Wufeng who simply considers heart-mind and human nature as two opposing dimensions [of human beings]. There was no single mention of the character *qing*. Later I read from Hengqu that “the heart-mind unites and controls human nature and emotions”, then I realize that this is a great achievement. It is from there that I find the position for emotions, which complies with sayings of Mengzi.” 舊看五峰說，只將心對性說，一箇情字都無下落。後來看橫渠“心統性情”之說，乃知此話有大功，始尋得箇“情”字著落，與孟子說一般。Zhu (1986), vol.1.5, 91.

investigating the post-emitted phenomenal world and human emotions. According to Zhu Xi's explanation of this new realization in his 'First Letter to Discuss Equilibrium and Harmony with Masters in Hunan' ('Yu Hunan zhugong lun zhonghe diyi shu' 與湖南諸公論中和第一書), this is also how he understood the remarks of Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107): "Keeping reverence is necessary for preserving the mind and nourishing the nature, while the aim of investigating things is to extend knowledge" 涵養須用敬, 格物在致知.¹⁴

There are a large number of modern discussions on the implications of these two shifts, with some of them focusing on the perspective of cultivation theory.¹⁵ This is because the problems of pre-emission and post-emission that Zhu Xi was dealing with within these shifts are directly related to the concrete cultivation methods Neo-Confucians used, rather than the metaphysical principles of heaven. That is why Adler holds that "the critical turning point in the development of Zhu Xi's philosophy was his resolution of a problem that had occupied him from about 1158 to 1169, a problem that fundamentally concerned the methodology of self-cultivation but necessitated a philosophical solution."¹⁶ However, it is clear that at the very beginning of thinking about his second shift, Zhu Xi determined the problem in his previous statements in

¹⁴ *Wenji* vol.64, Zhu (2002), vol.23, 3131.

¹⁵ Chen Lai believes this change shows "Zhu Xi turned back to the standpoint of Li Tong who stressed nourishing the nature within stillness." See Chen Lai (2010), 183-210. There are also other scholarships talking about these two "realizations" in detail. See Angle (1998); Adler (2008).

¹⁶ Adler (2008)

1166 through logical reasoning rather than purely self-experience. Concerning the very origin of his second shift, Zhu Xi said:

“In the spring of the *jichou* year (1169), in the Qiandao reign (1165-1173), I was talking about this for my friend Cai Jitong. When we were discussing and debating, I suddenly became doubtful of this principle. [...] Master Cheng’s words were noted by his distinguished disciples, so it should not be as wrong as this. But if that is the reason why I believe in it, is not it that I misled myself [by my faith]?”

乾道己丑之春，為友人蔡季通言之，問辯之際，予忽自疑斯理也[...]子程子之言出其門人高弟之手，亦不應一切謬誤以至於此。然則予所以自信者，其無乃反自誤乎?¹⁷

What makes Zhu Xi doubtful here is not his immediate experience of practicing that method of cultivation, but his absolute faith to the words of Master Cheng and his disciples. And then soon after Zhu Xi came to the second change of his thought, he wrote a letter to Zhang Shi to explain the process of his reasoning:

Regarding the meaning of pre-emission and post-emission in *the Doctrine of the Mean*, previously I knew that these make up the operation of the heart-mind. Moreover, because Master Cheng said that heart-mind refers to post-emission, I realized that the heart-mind is post-emission while human nature is pre-emission.

¹⁷ ‘Zhonghe jiushuo xu’, *Wenji* vol.75, Zhu (2002), vol.24, 3634-3635.

However, when reading Master Cheng's books I find them inconsistent, then after contemplating again, I have realized not only that my previous account mislabeled the heart-mind and human nature, but also that my daily practice was completely ineffective. My error was not merely between the texts and their meaning. [...] [The moral nature] cannot be found before it is emitted and cannot easily be ordered after it is perceived. But if the daily practice of preserving reverence and nourishing nature is carried out and no selfish human desire disrupt it, then the pre-emitted will be a clear mirror or still water and the post-emitted will be completely regulated. This is the core task in everyday life. As for introspection in one's affairs and inference in one's encounters with things, this is the necessary foundation. And when observing one's own emitted feelings, one certainly can silently apprehend all that is prior to emission. That is why when answering Su Jiming, Master Cheng argued repeatedly and in extreme detail, but spoke of nothing more than reverence in the end. He said that 'preserving reverence without failure is how the mean is obtained'. He said 'reverence is the best way to enter the Way. No one extends his knowledge without reverence.' He also said that 'keeping reverence is necessary for preserving the mind and nourishing the nature, while the aim of investigating things is to extend knowledge.' All [these lines] are about this point. All along, in my discussions and thinking, I have simply considered the heart-mind as the post-emission, but in my daily efforts I have merely examined the incipient moment

[of emission] as the starting point from which to begin. So I have neglected the effort of preserving the mind and nourishing the nature.

《中庸》未發、已發之義，前此認得此心流行之體，又因“程子凡言心者皆指已發而言”，遂目心為已發、性為未發。然觀程子之書，多所不合，因復思之，乃知前日之說，非惟心、性之名命之不當，而日用工夫全無本領，蓋所失者不但文義之間而已。[...]然未發之前不可尋覓，已覺之後不容安排，但平日莊敬涵養之功至，而無人欲之私以亂之，則其未發也，鏡明水止，而其發也，無不中節矣。此是日用本領工夫。至於隨事省察，即物推明，亦必以是為本。而於已發之際觀之，則其具於未發之前者，固可默識。故程子之答蘇季明，反復論辯，極於詳密，而卒之不過以敬為言。又曰：“敬而無失，即所以中。”又曰：“入道莫如敬，未有致知而不在敬者。”又曰：“涵養須用敬，進學則在致知。”蓋為此也。向來講論思索，直以心為已發，而日用工夫，亦止以察識端倪為最初下手處，以故闕却平日涵養一段工夫。¹⁸

At first, Zhu Xi thought that the mistake of seeing the heart-mind as the post-emission and human nature as the pre-emission in his previous thought lay in mislabeling. Later, he began to stress the effort of “preserving reverence and nourishing nature” as a complement to the cultivation method of “examining the incipient moment [of emission]”. Moreover, this change in view was not merely derived from the reflection and summarization of his self-cultivation experience during the three years in between

¹⁸ ‘Yu Hunan zhugong lun zhonghe diyi shu’, in *Wenji* vol.64, Zhu (2002), vol.23, 3130-3131.

these two shifts. It also came from his own logical reasoning and further consideration of his predecessors' views. That is why Chen Lai has argued that from the first "realization of equilibrium and harmony", "Zhu Xi turned from practical cultivation of experience and appreciation (*ti ren* 體認) to theoretical mind nature philosophy."¹⁹ This argument is convincing in terms of Zhu Xi's construction of his theoretical system, but he never abandoned the cultivation theory that aims to unify the inner and the outer. On the contrary, this cultivation theory was deeply rooted in his philosophy.

That the evolution of his thought originates from reasoning rather than evidence manifests the inoperability of this cultivation theory. On the one hand, unifying the inner and outer aspects of human experience has always been a tricky problem in the history of philosophy. Apart from mystical religious experiences, it is difficult to say if it is possible to realize the interpenetration of an inherent nature and mundane external affairs. Moreover, classical Confucianism, evolving in the preceding Warring States era, had a strong tendency toward pragmatism and syncretism, with an urgent agenda of saving the Chinese world from destructive civil war. Hence it was underlain by an emphasis on a value system and a sense of mission. Therefore, Confucian thinkers had not wrestled with challenges like how the principles of the natural order, morally neutral facts, could be matched to the worldly ethics where human values are used to serve the cultural and political agenda. On the other hand, as we can see from Zhu Xi's

¹⁹ Chen Lai (2010), 193.

incorporation of personal emotions, the post-emitted, as one of the two constituents of heart-mind in the second shift, Zhu Xi had realized that if he did not properly explain personal emotions like joy, anger and sorrow in relation to the pre-emitted human nature within his philosophical agenda of unifying inner and outer principle, and that if he solely relied on either “sitting in stillness to experience the heavenly rules” or “examining daily affairs” as a cultivation method, he would never reach the unification, even in abstract terms. This is because, according to his logic, everything that can be experienced or observed must be the post-emitted, no matter what kind of incipient clues people try to discern. And the pre-emission can never be reached since it is not emitted and thus unknown. That is why Zhu Xi said “[The moral nature] cannot be found before it is emitted and cannot easily be ordered after it is perceived”. So Zhu Xi later believed that it is only through people’s internal preserving and nourishing and the concomitant realization of “the seven emotions function together, yet each is controlled by its respective governor” 七情迭用，各有攸主 that the seemingly faint and illusory heavenly principle can be ingrained in the human world, and that the “perfect state of equilibrium and harmony” 中和之妙 can be achieved.²⁰ So I argue that Zhu Xi’s two “realizations of equilibrium and harmony” bring human nature (*xing* 性) and personal emotions/feelings (*qing* 情), as practical and cultivating notions, into the core discourse of Chinese philosophy. Sensations thus attained ontological meanings.

²⁰ ‘Da Zhang Qinfu’ 答張欽夫, *Wenji* vol.32, Zhu (2002), vol.21, 1419.

Modern scholarship on sensation was first brought to people's attention by the German aesthetician Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762). In his monumental two-volume *Aesthetica*, he introduced "aesthetics" in the sense of the attainment of knowledge by means of the senses, which in the narrow sense, presents inherent "confusion" in the particular experience of beauty and is independent of reason but not its inferior.²¹ Zhu Guangqian interpreted this "aesthetics" as intuitive learning, thus distinguishing it from philosophies dealing with logic and epistemology.²² In Zhu Xi's theory of heart-mind, sensations mainly appear as personal feelings, i.e. the post-emitted joy, anger, sorrow and pleasure. These sensations not only relate to the four cues (*si duan* 四端: humanity, righteousness, propriety and wisdom) that are absolutely good, but they also relate to the seven emotions (joy, anger, worry, miss, grief, fear and shock) that are neither good nor bad. These feelings are fluctuating expressions of the heart-mind when stimulated by outer circumstances, which is also called "sensation and inspiration" (*gan xing* 感興) or just "inspiration" (*xing* 興) in traditional Chinese literary theory. It is particularly central to all three aspects of writing, representation and reading in the *Odes*.²³ So it was considered a crucial element of the unification of inner and outer among *daoxue* Confucians. Moreover, the incipient moments/clues of emission that Zhu Xi proposed to examine and recognize after the first shift of his thought also mainly referred to the subtle changes in these personal

²¹ Baumgarten (1961)

²² Zhu Guangqian (1996), 12.

²³ Michael A. Fuller has footnotes clearly explaining the possible translations of the term *xing* and its connection with Chinese poetic theory in history. See Fuller (2005), 311-355.

feelings. In this sense, *qing* 情 became important to bridge the gap between man and heaven, inner and outer.

It is because this bridge is so closely related to the human mind and its sensations of the outer world, that it naturally bears an aesthetical attribute. Therefore arts like poetry become an inevitable area that Neo-Confucians had to face and explain. Zhu Xi said in his preface to his commentary on the *Odes*:

That people are born quiescent is their Heavenly [-endowed] nature; that they respond to objects and become active is because of the desires of their nature. Once one has desires, one cannot be without longings. Once one has longings, one cannot be without speech. Since there is speech, when speech does not completely express it, it comes out in expressions, laments, chantings and sighs, the remanence of which must necessarily have a natural resonance and rhythm and cannot be cut short. This is how the *Odes* was produced.

人生而靜，天之性也；感於物而動，性之欲也。夫既有欲矣，則不能無思；既有思矣，則不能無言；既有言矣，則言之所不能盡，爾發於謠嗟詠歎之餘者，必有自然之音響節奏而不能已焉。此《詩》之所以作也。²⁴

²⁴ Zhu (2007), 1.

This shows that in Zhu Xi's view, poetry is originally and naturally the representation of incipient moments between objects and human nature. Moreover, it is the artistic expression of the expressed states of "responding to objects and becoming active". Hence, Zhu Xi's cultivation theory gradually entered into the area of aesthetics and the discussion of unifying inner and outer was narrowed down to the completion of the theory of the mind.

2. The Importance of Incipience (*ji* 幾) and Zhu Xi's Critique of Su Shi

The relation between human nature (*xing* 性) and personal feelings (*qing* 情) in the theory of the mind is a crucial component of Zhu Xi's philosophy. But it is not well explained. Questions Zhu Xi was unable to answer include: Since personal feelings sometimes can be overwhelmed by human desires, which are obviously bad, then how can it be that *qing* is the post-emission of the absolute moral human nature?²⁵ How can

²⁵ Discussions on *xing* and *qing*, human nature and personal feelings, among ancient Chinese thinkers had long been complicated. In materials dated as early as the middle Warring States period (prior to 300 B.C.), the Guodian *Xing zi ming chu* 性自命出, there are important lines about these key notions: Dao begins in *qing*, and *qing* arises from *xing*. 道始于情, 情生于性. *Xing* issues from *ming*. 性自命出. *Ming* descends from *tian*. 命自天降. Dirk Meyer convincingly explains that in this text, *dao* is a concept that transcends the phenomenal world and has the flavor of a true ethical code, nevertheless originates from the unshaped feelings of the individual. And these are in turn, part of human nature. In spite of the fact that all men start off with the same potential, they realize different degrees of moral cultivation. Meyer further holds that this is obviously a problem of the text: "if the primary supposition of the text is true and humankind shares a common humanity, then the implicit question is, how can it be that individuals realize different degrees of moral cultivation (or even lack it entirely)? This uncertainty is nowhere mentioned explicitly." See Meyer (2012), 131-174. If pushing this uncertainty of moral cultivation to its extreme, we might speculate that only people with a closer innate affinity for the good or those who are wiser would be able to reach the heavenly rules. So the course of moral cultivation is only for those virtuous people who can potentially be sages. Zhu Xi might have actually been aware of this problem. Therefore, different from previous thinkers, in dealing with the same problem, he reconstructed it from the opposite side and partly aimed to instantiate the

intellectual thought which is rational be incorporated into emotions?²⁶ This set of questions can be summed up into one: What is the gap between pre-emission and post-emission, human nature and personal feelings? Once this was resolved, *daoxue* Confucians would be able to bridge the gap accordingly, thus giving a more practicable method of cultivation. However, neither the Northern Song nor Southern Song *daoxue* Confucians had ever fixed this theoretical deficiency. Zhu Xi had also been wrestling with a proper solution to this philosophical problem, as well as a practical way of realizing the penetration of pre-emission and post-emission through the individual self-cultivation. His tentative ambiguous solutions to this problem are also reflected in his ambiguous attitude towards literary writings of Su Shi.

Ever since the Cheng brothers, Neo-Confucians had drawn on a key passage from the *Book of Documents* (*Shang shu* 尚書) to describe the relation between heavenly principle and human desires: “The human mind is precarious while the moral mind is subtle. Be discriminating, be undivided, that you may sincerely hold fast to the Mean.”

人心惟危，道心惟微，惟精惟一，允執闕中。²⁷ But these sixteen characters did not actually clarify the relationship between the moral mind and the human mind, or that

dao in everyday social activity, thus raising hopes that it could be more easily apprehended and be realized by everyone. He incorporated the Chan Buddhist theory of “moonlight shadows on tens of thousands of rivers (*yue yin wan chuan* 月印萬川)”, arguing that there is a common—heavenly endowed—principle (*li* 理) inherent in everything. He equated *xing* to principle and held that *xing* is the pre-emitted state of the heavenly principle, which is all good. *Qing* is the post-emission of *xing*. But still, he neglected or failed to address the question what is the principle for desires (*yu* 欲), which again, seems to present the difficulty of unifying inner and outer.

²⁶ More discussion about this, see Chen Lai (2010), 245-246.

²⁷ ‘Dayu mo’ 大禹謨, in Kong (1999a), 93; also in Zhu Jieren et al. (2010), vol.1, 27.

between human nature and personal feelings. Rather, they obscure the relation of these states and lead the theory further away from concrete daily practice.

In pre-Qin texts, the expression that is similar to these sixteen characters can be found in the *Xunzi* 荀子: “The *Scriptures of the Dao* say ‘the human mind can be precarious while the moral mind is subtle.’ The incipience between precariousness and subtlety can only be known by the enlightened gentleman.” 《道經》曰：“人心之危，道心之微。”危微之幾，惟明君子而後能知之。²⁸ The important notion here is incipience (*ji* 幾).²⁹ It has become crucial in Chinese philosophy since the *Appended Explanations* (*Xi ci* 繫辭) commentary to *the Book of Changes*. In the first section of this appendix, it says “it is thus that the sages are extremely profound and investigating incipience.” 聖人之所以極深而研幾也。³⁰ “Investigating incipience” is an important method Confucians applied to cultivate their characters. At first, incipience generally referred to a subtle and transient state between existence (*you* 有) and nonexistence (*wu* 無) at which point where things could be turned from existence to nonexistence and from nonexistence to existence. After the evolution of views on aesthetics in the Wei and Jin dynasties,

²⁸ ‘Jie bi’ 解蔽, in Beida Xunzi zhushi zhu 北大荀子註釋組 (1979), 350.

²⁹ What is worth noting is that *ji* could be referring to both subtlety (*wei* 微) and precariousness (*wei* 危). For example, in Zhu Xi’s commentary to the *Book of Changes* on the 63 trigram of the hexagram *Tun* 屯, he explained that “[...]facing the divinatory symbol of a deer getting trapped in woods by accident when being chased in hunting, men with noble characters should give it up when seeing the subtlety [of heavenly principle]” [...] 為逐鹿無虞，陷入林中之象。君子見幾，不如舍去。Zhu (2002), vol.1, 34. For another example, *Rectified Meanings of the Odes* (*Mao shi zhengyi* 毛詩正義) annotates *ji* to be “precarious” in the poem ‘Zhan ang’ 瞻印: “The divinity is going to spread a condemning net [disasters], to tell that [the situation] is becoming precarious.” 天之降罔，維其幾矣。Kong (1999b), 1262.

³⁰ In *Zhouyi benyi* 周易本義, Zhu (2002), vol.1, 132.

incipience also began to refer to changes in the subjects' internal world. "Investigating incipience" thus became the crux of the unification of heaven and men.³¹ With the Song Confucians, it further became one of the three essential conditions to become a sage: "That which is quiet and inactive is sincere. That which feels and then comprehends is divine. That which acts but without form, between existence and nonexistence, is called incipience. Sincerity that is pure becomes brilliant. Divinity that is responsive becomes marvelous. Incipience that is subtle becomes deep. That which is sincere, divine and incipient is called the Sage." 寂然不動者，誠也。感而遂通者，神也。動而未形，有無之間者，幾也。誠精故明，神應故妙，幾微故幽。誠、神、幾，曰聖人。³² This statement by Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073) formed the basis for the development of later *daoxue* Confucian interpretations of this notion of incipience and its relationship to sincerity. "Sincerity is inactive, while incipience can be both good and bad" 誠無為，幾善惡。³³ The substance is in stillness, but it can be changed into either good or bad. Here *ji* refers to the incipient moment that people's feelings are aroused, which is roughly similar to motivation. It was on the basis of this that Zhu Xi began to use *ji* as an important element in his philosophy.

Zhu Xi said: "The distinction between heavenly principle and human desire is delicate. That is why Master Zhou mainly talks about *ji*. But it has to be distinguished as early as possible, which is why Hengqu always talks about precautions." 天理人欲之分，只爭些

³¹ More discussion on this, see Liu Kangde (1993).

³² Zhou (2000), vol.4, 33.

³³ Zhou (2000), vol.2, 32.

子，故周先生只管說“幾”字；然辨之又不可不早，故橫渠每說“豫”字。³⁴ In Zhu Xi's view, the incipient moment that the human mind begins to express itself is of vital importance and the first thing to do is to prevent the expression from being misled by inappropriate desires. Moreover, Zhu Xi also argued that in order to reach the level of “not cheating yourself” 毋自欺, as described in *the Great Learning (Daxue 大學)*, people “should make their efforts right in the incipient and subtle area.” 正當於幾微毫釐處做工夫。³⁵ Once this “incipient and subtle area” is recognized through cultivation, one reaches the state Zhu Xi describes as “once knowing the incipience, one thereby attains harmony” 若知幾，則自中節³⁶ can be realized. This is also why in explaining the aforementioned expression in the *Changes*, “the sages are extremely profound and investigating incipience”, Zhu Xi said that “The reason that [the sages] are extremely profound is that they have reached the purest; The reason that they investigate incipience is that it changes tremendously” 所以極深者，至精也；所以研幾者，至變也。³⁷ Zhu Xi believes that *ji* is the significant moment when the imminent heavenly principle is beginning to emit or develop, and to investigate this incipient moment is one of the two fundamental defining features of the sage. In this sense, for Zhu Xi, *ji* is the condensed expression of the sixteen-character exhortation in the *Book of Documents*, as a transitional connection between heavenly principle and human desire, mind nature and personal feelings. From this point, other questions emerge: where does this *ji* come from? What is the

³⁴ Zhu (1986), vol.1.13, 224.

³⁵ Zhu (1986), vol.2.16, 337.

³⁶ Zhu (1986), vol.5.76, 1948.

³⁷ In *Zhouyi benyi 周易本義*, Zhu (2002), vol.1, 132.

expression of this *ji* and how does one locate it since it is so temporary, formless and even mysterious?

Zhu Xi didn't provide answers for these questions. For him, *ji* was simply a useful term in his cultivation theory. It is the pivot where ethical values like goodness and evil can be initially distinguished. Zhu Xi further said: "It is only when continuously sustaining the constant principle that *ji* can be seen and goodness and evil can be recognized." 惟是常存得實理在這裏，方始見得幾，方始識得善惡。³⁸ This shows that first and foremost, there must be a steady principle, which I understand as the substance, i.e. sincerity for Zhou Dunyi and human nature for Zhu Xi. Only with this as a principle or standard could people be able to judge what is good and what is bad. Zhu Xi also said: "That which is called *ji* is when you realize that you are about to be insincere or offensive, you stop it. This is knowing the *ji*." 所謂“幾”者，只才覺得近諂近瀆，便勿令如此，此便是“知幾”。³⁹ These claims are all similar to what *daoxue* Confucians referred to as "always keeping vigilant" 常常警覺，⁴⁰ but they are just mental activities of self-reminding and introspection, rather than descriptions of the attributes and concept of *ji* per se. Instead, considering the ultimate goal of realizing the moral mind that Confucians had long been pursuing, keeping vigilant in the area of *ji* is like a circular argument. In this sense, the so-called cultivation of the mind is like a process that people gradually, consciously or unconsciously, have the external and even compulsory injunction of being moral

³⁸ Zhu (1986), vol.4.59, 1411.

³⁹ Zhu (1986), vol.5.76, 1948.

⁴⁰ Zhu (1986), vol.1.9, 149.

ingrained in their heart-mind, rather than what was said to be extending the knowledge via experiencing and appreciating the principles of all things in the world. It seems that Zhu Xi has actually realized the risks of *ji* being too abstract, which is why he referred to “speaking of *ji* according to concrete affairs” “幾”就事上說, and argued that “*ji* relies on concrete affairs. It is half unexpressed and half expressed.” 幾在事，半微半顯.⁴¹ He mentioned here that *ji* is generated because of the stimulation of external affairs or objects, but he still didn’t give an appropriate illustration of this important bridge.

The notion of *ji* that had long been linked with subtlety (*wei* 微) and precariousness (*wei* 危) was not clearly elaborated, which might be part of the reason why the aforementioned sixteen-character exhortation had been regarded as conveying the sage’s principle for hundreds of years even during the time when scholars had started to investigate the real time of production and the authentic authorship of the *Old Text of the Book of Documents* since Wu Yu 吳棫 (ca. 1100-1154), and later Zhu Xi, in the Song dynasty.⁴² I argue that the cause is actually a simple fact: *ji*, as discussed in *daoxue* Confucians’ teachings, intentionally or unintentionally, was lacking a consideration of its aesthetical dimension. As a medium that connects inner and outer, human nature and personal feelings, it must allow a grand aesthetical space and have enough flexibility, thus being different from social and ethical judgments that are always with the value of either good or bad. In Song learning, Su Shi made a unique contribution on this aspect,

⁴¹ Zhu (1986), vol.5.75, 1922-1923.

⁴² Detailed discussion on the historical textual research of the *Book of Documents*, see Yang Xumin (2008).

leading to Zhu Xi's critique that grew out of his strong responsibility for the reconstruction of social ethics.

There are many scholarly works discussing Zhu Xi's disagreement with Su Shi.⁴³ What I find worth noting is that it is generally recognized that Zhu Xi's critique of Su Shi evolved from negative to affirmative,⁴⁴ which should be meaningful in investigating the fundamental differences between Zhu Xi and Su Shi. When criticizing Su Shi, Zhu Xi said in his *Conversations* that "the root of his defect" 本根病痛所以然處 is the disorder of his understanding of the relation between literary writings (*wen* 文) and Dao. "[For Su Shi], it is because of his production of literary writings that the principle gradually emerges, rather than understanding the principle before writing." 是因作文，卻漸漸說上道理來；不是先理會得道理了，方作文. Actually, Su Shi was trying to find an approach to bridge the gap between personal feelings and the moral nature with the help of literary production. This was what Zhu Xi found problematic. He critically commented on this approach of Su Shi: "his writing is always marvelous, but when one reaches [the boundary between feelings and nature], something is felt to be missing." 每常文字華妙，

⁴³ See for example, Fuller (2005); Bol (1992), Chapter 8, 254-299; Bol (1989); Su (2000); Leng (1996).

⁴⁴ According to Zhang Jin, Zhu Xi's attitude to Su Shi's work changed in 1176, evidenced by a verse that Zhu Xi wrote in his poem 'Wangduan Zhai Tingyu Xuan Chunxi San Nian' 汪端齋聽雨軒淳熙三年: "The Su brothers sigh that they have mostly been away from home for official posts. Now that we are [drinking] in front of wind, how can we not think of them" 蘇公感寓多遊宦，豈不臨風尚爾思". Zhang Jin (2008). This sentimental memorizing of Su Shi might not be enough to show that Zhu Xi's attitude towards Su Shi began to change in that year. It could be earlier than that. According to Su Pinxiao, Zhu Xi's attitude changed in 1170, which I think is more convincing. But the reason behind given by Su Pinxiao is that Su Shi's social influence diminished after 1170, so that Zhu Xi no longer considered him as a rival that might challenge his theory, which I cannot agree. Su (2000). I think it is the development of Zhu Xi's philosophy that changed his attitude. More details will be provided in later discussion.

包籠將去，到此不覺漏逗。⁴⁵ This is because Su's approach is against Zhu's description of the cultivation theory regarding incipience: At first, there should be a steady principle (*shi li* 實理), namely *dao* or moral nature, and then comes the *wen* which reflects the process that the author examines *ji* and expresses it in writing, so that “*wen* flows out from *dao*” 文從道中流出。⁴⁶ In short, Zhu Xi and Su Shi have different views on the mechanism of meaning generation of poetry. Su Shi believes that meanings come after concrete encounters with the phenomenal world and influenced by different personal emotions arosed at different times, while Zhu Xi insists more of a circular argument, which is that within individual encounters with the world, poetry should eventually generate meanings that better elaborate *dao*—*a priori* that should have already been in poets' minds before writing. To take it further, the fundamental difference between Zhu Xi and Su Shi lies in how to deal with *ji*.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Zhu (1986), vol.8.139, 3319.

⁴⁶ Zhu (1986), vol.8.139, 3305.

⁴⁷ Su Shi carefully analyzed the infeasibility of the approach of connecting moral nature and personal feelings via “examining and recognizing the incipience” 察識端倪 or the so called “investigating the incipience” 研幾 by the *Appended Explanations*. In his commentary to the *Book of Change* on the sentence “One *yin* and one *yang* is called the Dao. What succeeds it is the Good. What completes it is the Nature” 一陰一陽之謂道，繼之者善也，成之者性也， Su Shi writes: “*Yin* and *yang* mix and produce objects; *Dao* and objects connect and produce goodness. When objects are generated, *yin* and *yang* become hidden; when the goodness is set forth, the *dao* is no longer seen. Thus [the text] says, ‘What succeeds it is the Good. What completes it is Nature.’ [...] Goodness is what succeeds the *dao*, but one cannot point to it and call it the *dao*. [...] If one learns the *dao* by starting from what succeeds it, the *dao* is not complete.” 陰陽交而生物，道與物接而生善。物生而陰陽隱，善立而道不見矣。故曰繼之者善也，成之者性也[...]善者道之繼，而指以為道則不可[...]學道而自繼者始，則道不全。 In *Su Shi Yi Zhuan* 蘇氏易傳, vol.7, Su Xun et al. (2001), vol.1, 351. For the translation of the whole passage, see Fuller (2005). This shows that although Su Shi didn't deny the existence of goodness, nature or *dao*, he didn't believe that a systematic cultivation could make it attainable.

For Zhu Xi, although *ji* is mysterious and without a concrete form, it is “something that is simply there in spite of its subtlety” 雖是微，畢竟有件事。⁴⁸ And that which is called “being extremely profound and investigating the incipience” 極深而研幾 in the *Appended Explanations of the Book of Changes* for him further means that “it should be investigated thoroughly” 研摩到底, so as to “penetrate the human will” 開通人志。⁴⁹ The method of investigation is thinking (*si* 思). It is said in ‘Chengzi si zhen’ 程子四箴, most honored and recommended by Zhu Xi, that “the way that wise men to know *ji* is to think with sincerity” 哲人知幾，誠之於思。⁵⁰ As divine symbols and incipient moments of the principle that is about to be emitted, *ji* is everywhere in daily life, which means that followers of *daoxue* should think about it every now and then. This is basically Zhu Xi’s resolution after his first “realization” in 1166: since everything in the phenomenal world and daily life is what has already emitted, one can only seek for his moral nature in its active state (both mentally and physically), by examining the incipience of these activities. However, from Su Shi’s perspective, “thinking” itself was problematic, and what he advocated was a status of “thinking that is non-thinking”: “In the world, I am the one without thinking. I just express [feelings] when I encounter affairs, which gives me no time to think. I won’t reach it if I think when it is unexpressed, and I cannot catch it when I think after it is expressed. That is why for the rest of my life, I will be unaware of

⁴⁸ Zhu (1986), vol.5.75, 1922.

⁴⁹ Zhu (1986), vol.5.75, 1922. As to the notion will (*zhi* 志), Stephen C. Angle has a brief distinction of it from *yi* 意. He thinks that although they sometimes share the same English translation “will”, they have opposite implications. *Zhi* indicates a life-long commitment to the goal of ethical actions while *yi* is willing some particular thing to happen, trying to force a particular result. See Angle 1998, vol. 25:3. Also see Tang Junyi 1984.

⁵⁰ Zhu (1986), vol.2.24, 583.

my thoughts.” 餘天下之無思慮者也，遇事則發，不暇思也。未發而思之則未至，已發而思之則無及。以此終身，不知所思。⁵¹ In Su Shi's view, thought is meaningless within either post-emission or pre-emission. This is actually similar to Zhu Xi's conclusion after his second “realization” in the year 1169.

Su Shi said: “When there is thinking, it becomes depraved. Yet without thinking, one is merely soil or wood. How can make one think without being depraved and not think without being soil or wood? There must be a thinking that is non-thinking. The so-called thinking that is non-thinking is upright and serious, like facing the emperor or master, without a single moment of absent-mindedness, yet is fundamentally not thinking about something.” 凡有思皆邪也，而無思則土木也。孰能使有思而非邪，無思而非土木乎？蓋必有無思之思焉。夫無思之思，端正莊栗，如臨君師，未嘗一念放逸，然卒無所思。⁵²

It can be seen from this that Su Shi's “thinking that is non-thinking” almost belongs to an aesthetical category. It is a life experience generated by purely sensory intuition and an inspiration (*gan xing*) stimulated by external environment. As for Zhu Xi, the attainment of *a priori* moral nature he exclusively advocates requires not only a theoretical way to connect subjects and objects, human nature and personal feelings, but also a practical cultivation method, both of which, as discussed previously, are difficult to realize. However, Su Shi's statement of “thinking that is non-thinking” essentially bears some resemblance to the concept of “preserving the mind and nourishing the nature” (*han*

⁵¹ ‘Si tang ji’ 思堂記, in Su Xun et al. (2001), vol.14, 492.

⁵² ‘Xu yangsheng lun’ 續養生論. Su Shi (1986a), 563.

yang) that became especially emphasized by Zhu Xi after the second shift in his thought. They both generally imply a natural way of life and empathetically responding to things when encountering it. This is in accordance with Zhu's understanding of the ultimate way of knowing the mandate of heaven and the endless generation of all things in the world: "Generally, the more you seek for it, the less you could see, so one should withdraw from this course and experience it within daily affairs. Whenever one feels an object and he comprehends it, comes in contact with it and then realizes it. In this case one attains the wholistic completion and responds to things inexhaustibly. This is the incipient moment that the mandate of heaven is carried out, and things coming into being without end" 蓋愈求而愈不可見，於是退而驗之於日用之間，則凡感之而通，觸之而覺，蓋有渾然全體應物而不窮者。是乃天命流行，生生不已之機。⁵³ Compared with the aforementioned method of thoroughly investigating the incipient moment with thinking, vigilance and reverence, what Zhu Xi actually advocates here is an aesthetical exploration via sensory experiences of daily things, aiming to reach a superior spiritual state. And it seems that it is only in this way that the whole process of individual self-cultivation can be complete, and sagehood can be achieved. In terms of people's spiritual appreciation of the phenomenal world, this is not too much divergent from Su Shi's aesthetic approach of knowing the *dao*. From here, we can say that with aesthetic characteristics, Zhu Xi's method of *han yang* is essential to his cultivation theory.

⁵³ 'Yu Zhang Qinfu' 與張欽夫, *Wenji* vol.21.30, 1315.

In sum, the different ways of dealing with the key concept of incipience within the interpenetration of human and heaven caused the fundamental break between the cultivation practices of *daoxue* Confucianism and the mainstream literary trends of Song times. The different attitudes that Zhu Xi and Su Shi applied on the same issue resulted in their conflicting theories. As discussed above, there were deficiencies in *daoxue* Confucian notions of cultivation both theoretically and practically. Three centuries later, Wang Shouren 王守仁 (1472-1529)⁵⁴ perceived these deficiencies in his failure of “investigating the bamboo in the courtyard”,⁵⁵ promoting the great shift of mainstream intellectual history from the learning of principle (*lixue* 理學) to the learning of heart-mind (*xinxue* 心學). Sharp and analytical as Zhu Xi was, it is clear that he sensed this problem. Zhu Xi’s complicated attitude towards Su Shi actually indicates his tangled literary views. Although he criticized Su Shi’s literary writings as having “separated *wen* and *dao*” 文道二分, he never concealed his appreciation of Su’s writing style. In 1170, the second year after his second major shift of thought, he even compiled Su’s writings into the samples that he collected for his son to learn.⁵⁶ We can thus gain more understanding of the meaning of Zhu Xi’s poetry from his conceptions of incipience.

3. The Integration of Cultivation Theory and Aesthetic Experience

⁵⁴ Also known as Wang Yangming 王陽明

⁵⁵ Recorded in ‘Nian pu’ 年譜 vol.1, Wang Yangming (1992), vol.2.33, 1223.

⁵⁶ ‘Da Cai Jitong’ 答蔡季通, Zhu (2002), vol.22.44, 1992.

Because of the limited records, we cannot fully describe the change of Zhu Xi's attitude towards Su Shi. But according to Chen Lai's chronology of Zhu Xi's letters, most of his criticism of Su Shi was written between 1168 and 1170.⁵⁷ Considering the evolution of Zhu's views through his two "realizations of equilibrium and harmony," it would seem that Zhu's attitude towards Su ended up with partial agreement and adoption. This tendency runs parallel with Chen Lai's belief that "Zhu Xi turned back to the viewpoint of Li Tong who stressed nourishing the human nature within stillness"⁵⁸, which shows that in Zhu Xi's view, in order to comprehend the "wholistic completion" of the *dao*, the inspiration of aesthetic experience also requires the state of stillness. Zhu Xi said:

"The reason why contemporary people do nothing well is that they do not recognize it. Consider the case of writing poetry for example, everyone endeavors and struggles to do it well, but no one can really do it. [This is because] they do not recognize it, thus regarding what is good as bad and what is bad as good. The reason is that their minds are disturbed and are not still or unoccupied. Without being unoccupied and still, [the mind] cannot be clear, and without clarity, [the mind] cannot recognize things. If one is unoccupied and clear, then the good can be recognized. Among the many occupations, when a craftsman is extremely skillful in

⁵⁷ For example, 'To Answer Minister Wang' ('Da Wang Shangshu' 答汪尚書) (no.4) was written in 1168; 'To Answer Lü Bogong' ('Da Lü Bogong' 答呂伯恭) (no.5) was written in 1170; and 'To Answer Cai Jitong' ('Da Cai Jitong' 答蔡季通) (no.5) was also written in 1170. The attitudes towards Su Shi reflected in these letters are negative at some time but positive at others. See Chen Lai (2007), 515-585.

⁵⁸ See Chen Lai (2010), 205.

doing his work, he is unoccupied internally and clear on the principle. That is why he can be so skillful. How can one see this with disturbances in mind!"

今人所以事事做得不好者，緣不識之故。只如個詩，舉世之人盡命去奔做，只是無一個人做得成詩。他是不識，好底將做不好底，不好底將做好底。這個只是心裡鬧，不虛靜之故。不虛不靜故不明，不明故不識。若虛靜而明，便識好物事。雖百工技藝做得精者，也是他心虛理明，所以做得來精。心裡鬧，如何見得！⁵⁹

Contemporary scholars of literature see this as an indication that Zhu Xi was aware of the conditions for creating literary works. They tend to think that this shows that Zhu believes that both literary production and criticism must have a non-utilitarian attribution. It is only when a non-utilitarian mentality, being still and unoccupied, is obtained by the poet, that good poetry could be produced.⁶⁰ I think this aptly manifests the natural gap between stillness as an appreciation of heavenly principle and activity that takes initiative to think about the incipient moments according to compulsory ethical values. I think what Zhu Xi meant by stillness here refers not only to the author's precondition of creating artistic works, but also the crucial individual cultivation method, for knowing the *dao*, and therefore making all creations or behaviors of human beings embody the heavenly principle. For Zhu, the ideal state of preserving the mind and nourishing the nature was the integration of being unoccupied in mind and being clear on the principle. The first tranquil state excludes disturbances from the outer

⁵⁹ Zhu (1986), vol.8.140, 3333.

⁶⁰ See for example, Tong (2004), 62.

world, making the subjects' mind unoccupied yet concentrated, so that all senses are acute. This is beneficial for capturing changes of emotions, which is the requirement of aesthetics in the broad sense. The latter clear state requires an experience and appreciation of human nature in this unoccupied awareness, so as to reach clarity about principle. This is the essence of cultivation that the Daonan School of Yang Shi advocated, and also the central method that Zhu Xi learned from Li Tong.⁶¹

The requirement of the integration of the unoccupied mind and clarity about principle shows that after his second shift, Zhu Xi had put both the cultivation theory and aesthetic experience together and made them the basic requirements of learning to be a sage. The realization of this integration of philosophical cultivation and aesthetic exploration is an important development in Chinese thought, because it provides a practical breakthrough for the problem of unifying inner and outer which had been an enduring problem. However, Zhu did not go deeper into this problem, as he just inherited his predecessors' teachings of "Dao being the root whereas wen being the branch" (*dao ben wen zhi* 道本文枝) and continued to present his stance of Confucian orthodoxy. Yet the large amount of poetry, prose, and even paintings and calligraphy

⁶¹ In 1169 after the second realization, Zhu Xi wrote in his correspondence to his disciple Lin Zezhi: "Previously I heard that Master Li had the most detailed discussion about this [experiencing heavenly principle in stillness]. Later, because I began to see it differently, I didn't think about his views any more. Now I finally come to realize that he was such a profound person, so I regret that I didn't note down all his analysis." 舊聞李先生論此最詳，後來所見不同，隨不復致思。今乃知其為人深切，然恨不能盡記其曲折矣。'Da Lin Zezhi' 答林擇之, in Zhu (2002), vol.22.43, 1979. From here, we see Zhu Xi's regret for his failure to really understand the profound meaning of preserving the mind and nourishing the nature, as well as the method of experiencing and appreciating the heavenly principle within stillness taught by Li Tong. And it is clear that after his second realization, Zhu Xi's thought turned back to Li Tong in this regard.

that he created have actually exposed this inconsistency, or insufficiency between his theories and practices. I think there are two reasons why he was not able to develop his explanation of the relation of *wen* and *dao* much further than his predecessors.

The first reason comes from the pressure of tradition. The subordinate position of *wen* in the relation of *wen* and *dao* was one of the most important topics in the Cheng brothers' theory. (This will be further discussed in the next chapter.) It was so predominant that Zhu Xi had to be cautious if he wanted to criticize it while establishing his position for a wider acceptance. The second and more important reason comes from the essential difference between aesthetics and value judgments, which is also why Zhu Xi diverges fundamentally from Su Shi in understanding human nature. Both believed that human nature is in accordance with the heavenly *dao* and both put the stress on following the *dao* towards the integration of men and nature.⁶² However, Su asserted that human nature was without goodness or badness, being the origin (or in Freud's sense, id) of human beings. For example, he declared that: "For [a moral person who is like] Yao and Shun, there was nothing to be added. For [person as bad as] Jie and Zhou, there was nothing to be destroyed. This is called sincerity." 堯、舜之所以不能加，桀、紂之所以不能亡，是謂誠;⁶³ By contrast, Zhu Xi alleges that human nature is moral, and

⁶² For example, in *Su Shi's Commentary of the Change* (*Su shi yi zhuan* 蘇氏易傳), Su said: "Heaven, earth and human share the same principle. That human affairs sometimes cannot be similar with heaven and earth is because they are concealed by objects." 天地與人一理也，而人常不能與天地相似者，物有以蔽之也。Su Xun et al. (2001), 350-351. "Seeking for the principle of all things in the world, if one can obtain and appreciate it every time, it is called following [the principle]." 循萬物之理，無往而不自得，謂之“順”。Su Xun et al. (2001), 395.

⁶³ Su Xun et al. (2001),148.

there must be harmony in the end. From Su Shi's perspective, the integration of humans and heaven tends to be a natural state where heaven, earth and humans generate and evolve freely. This point of view is likely to fall into a kind of individualism and liberalism and is an argument that essentially leads to the impossibility of knowing human nature. For Zhu Xi, the moral nature is *a priori* and ascertained, so it is definitely accessible. Since he has been emphasizing a Confucian life that actively engages with the community, he can never be affirmative of this kind of individualism.

It appears that the integration of cultivation theory and aesthetic experience was just to incorporate an aesthetical approach into cultivation theory, because "preserving the mind and nourishing the nature" (*han yang*) was described as "an effort of cultivation" (*yi duan gong fu* 一段工夫) in the aforementioned statements of Zhu Xi.⁶⁴ But when taking a deeper look, it is clear that cultivation theory tends to rely on aesthetic experience. That is why Zhu Xi said: "As for introspection in one's affairs and inference in one's encounters with things, this is the necessary foundation. And when observing one's own emitted feelings, one certainly can silently apprehend all that is prior to emission" 至於隨事省察，即物推明，亦必以是為本。而於已發之際觀之，則其具於未發之前者固可默識。⁶⁵ Taking poetry production for example, the so-called "examining and observing with the flow of affairs" and "recognizing from the incipient moment of expression" are essentially the mechanism of sensation and inspiration (*gan xing*) in

⁶⁴ 'Yu Hunan zhugong lun zhonghe diyi shu', in *Wenji* vol.64, Zhu (2002), vol.23, 3130-3131.

⁶⁵ 'Yu Hunan zhugong lun zhonghe diyi shu', in *Wenji* vol.64, Zhu (2002), vol.23, 3130-3131.

Chinese literary theory. If one gets this inspiration and expresses it in literary works, then the readers can appreciate and thus get to know “what is prior to emission” through his words. It is in this way that cultivation theory was carefully translated into sensory terms in the realm of the literary enterprise. Within these sensational and aesthetic explorations, the pedagogic purpose of cultivating to make people understand the ethical rules was concealed. And more importantly, since these assumed aesthetic explorations are carried out on the basis of profound philosophical constructions, and without restrictions of actual literary genres, ideally they should be more effectively influential in people’s daily life.

In this sense we say that Zhu Xi’s poetry could be reflexive. On the one hand, he always tries to find the balance between *wen* and *dao*, so that *dao* can rely on this *wen* to be transmitted and in the meantime both the content and form of this *wen* will not be excessively dominant to hinder its presentation of *dao*. On the other hand, in his writings and contemplations on his sensory experiences on encountering the world, Zhu Xi consistently pays special attention to finding an appropriate way of getting close to inherent nature and principle of the world. This became a common characteristic of Song poetry: the application of sensory forms to express rational thinking, or in reverse, the insertion of philosophical discourse into literary writings predominated by sensory elements, as observed by a number of scholars of Song literature. (This will be further discussed in the next chapter.) However, when all these elements, i.e. outer objects, daily

affairs, personal feelings and the principle, are mechanically put together for pragmatic reasons, both the philosophical and sensory aspects became insufficient and problematic, because as discussed, the logics of aesthetic exploration and philosophical investigation are fundamentally different. In this sense, it is understandable that people nowadays use the standard of literariness from linguists' perspective to criticize deficiencies of Zhu Xi's poetry, which was indeed one important aspect that Zhu Xi found to be the drawback of Su Shi: "Ever since the emergence of the writings of the three Su (Su Zhe, Su Xun and Su Shi), scholars have sought after wordcraft" 自三蘇文出，學者始日趨於巧; "When it came to [Su] Dongpo, writings became completely unconstrained, obsessed with wordcraft." 到東坡文字便已馳騁，忒巧了.⁶⁶ Zhu Xi hoped that people's obsession with wordcraft could be compromised with the representation of the heavenly rules. But he also believed in the approach of aesthetic exploration presented by crafted words, because he fully agreed that the Confucian tradition of teaching through poetry, limited to notions of "tender, gentle, generosity and honesty" 溫柔敦厚⁶⁷ and "proper thinking" 思無邪,⁶⁸ did have its own pragmatic social values.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Zhu (1986), vol.8.139, 3307.

⁶⁷ As one of the most prominent pragmatic functions of the *Odes*, this first appears in the *Book of Rites (Li ji 禮記)* where Kongzi is noted to have said that "people being tender and gentle is the result of the teachings of the *Odes*" 溫柔、敦厚，詩教也。In 'Jing jie' 經解, Sun (1989), vol.3.48, 1254. After that, it is regarded not only the essential spirit of the *Odes*, but also the pragmatic goal that Kongzi aims to achieve on people in society through his assumed compilation of the *Odes*. Also see 'Shi xu bianshuo' 詩序辯說, in Zhu (2002), vol.1, 361.

⁶⁸ As noted in the *Analects*, Kongzi said: "The three hundred odes, in brief, are about proper thinking" 詩三百，一言以蔽之，曰"思無邪". In 'Wei zheng' 為政, Zhu (1983), 53.

⁶⁹ For example, in commentating on Kongzi's summarization of the main idea of the *Odes* to be with "proper thinking", Zhu Xi believed "As for words of the *Odes*, generally speaking, the moral ones could inspire people's moral mind, while the improper ones could discipline people's excessive desires. Its function comes down to no more than making people recognize the ultimate principle of human nature and emotions" 凡詩之言，善者可以感發人之善心，惡者可以懲創人之逸志，其用歸於使人得其情性之正而已。In 'Wei zheng' 為政, Zhu (1983), 53.

The method of investigating incipience (*yan ji* 研幾) in *daoxue* Confucian cultivation theory could only be made pragmatically effective through literary expression of aesthetic experience. Aesthetic appreciation could help people understand more of the dictum that “the human mind is precarious while moral mind is subtle” 人心惟危,道心惟微. That is why Zhu Xi insisted that the experience of nature should be represented in simple and natural expressions rather than applying difficult metaphors that could never be accurate.⁷⁰ With Zhu Xi’s contribution, the theory of the interpenetration of heaven and humans shifted from mainly relying on an external or even injunctive cultivation method into an adoption of aesthetic experience. Literature thus became an important device in Zhu Xi’s self-cultivation and the empathizing effect of literature also began to be recognized by Neo-Confucians. However, Zhu Xi’s awareness of the importance of poetry never matured to an explicit theory and thus remained an ambiguous turning point in the development of Neo-Confucian attitudes towards literature.

⁷⁰ For more discussion about this, see Fuller (2005).

CHAPTER TWO

The Many Faces of Zhu Xi's Poems

Although the main focus of most *daoxue*¹ Confucians in the Song dynasty was the cultivation of the mind, they considered the heavenly principle to be objective and attainable from the investigation of all things in the outer world. Apart from the aforementioned ultimate exploration and appreciation of the complete *dao*, for which Zhu Xi ambiguously appealed to an aesthetic experience within the mind, most of their daily cultivation is a pursuit of the principle from the outside rather than from within. As for literature, since it directly involves the entangled inner and outer relationship, and its emphasis of people's spiritual world is easily misled by undistinguished encounters with the outer world, as shown in Zhu Xi's critique of Su Shi, the general impression has been that *daoxue* Confucians regarded producing literature as a worthless activity for

¹ In this thesis, I deliberately use the label *daoxue* 道學 (the learning of *dao*) in its twelfth-century sense to refer to the Confucian tradition to which Zhu Xi believed the essence of his philosophy belonged. This was a major current of Song Confucianism. (The others being *xinxue* 新學, with Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086) as its representative, *shuxue* 蜀學, represented by Su Xun 蘇洵 (1009-1066), Su Zhe 蘇轍 (1039-1112) and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), etc. See Li Chunqing (2010).) In my thesis, I differentiate *daoxue* from *lixue* 理學 and *Neo-Confucianism*. These currents were generated in different time periods and had a different emphasis. As the latter development of *daoxue*, *lixue* was used primarily after *daoxue* was slandered as “fake theory” 偽學, and continued to be used in the Ming dynasty. It generally has broader meanings in terms of the period, since it sometimes can also refer to *daoxue*, and it is more widely used for the convenience of description especially in comprehensive surveys of intellectual history. It is in this sense that scholars normally use the term *Song Ming lixue* rather than *Song Ming daoxue*. Neo-Confucianism is a western conceptualization inspired by the comparison between Platonism and Neo-Platonism. It tends to be used from the perspective of modern researchers, referring to Song and Ming Confucianism as a whole, with an emphasis on *Cheng-Zhu lixue* (Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi's study of principle) and *Lu-Wang xinxue* (Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Shouren's study of the heart-mind). In this thesis, for the sake of convenience, when referring to these philosophers, I mainly call them *daoxue* Confucians or Neo-Confucians, unless contexts force me to be more precise. See also Tillman (1992). Wei (1989), 667 (for the entry on *daoxue*), 493 (for the entry on *lixue*), and 494 (for Neo-Confucianism).

literati, compared with other approaches of pursuing the *dao*, such as reading canonical teachings and reverently investigating daily things and affairs.

This impression resulted in the situation that when discussing literary theories of the Song dynasty, modern scholars tend to focus primarily on Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1073), the Jiangxi poetry school, and the *Canglang's Remarks on Poetry* (*Canglang shi hua* 滄浪詩話).² While most of the influential works on the history of imperial Chinese literature today have more or less the same focus, *daoxue* Confucians' literary views are covered only insufficiently. However, not only does this go against the fact that some *daoxue* Confucians, like Zhu Xi, were famous at the time for their good poetry, it also contradicts the reality of the development of Chinese literary theory. The mainstream literary views from the Song dynasty onwards may not necessarily be proposed by those critics that were socially marginalized, such as Yan Yu 嚴羽 (ca. 1195-1245), for whom there is not even a coherent biography. In fact, as *daoxue* (later called *lixue* after *daoxue* was banned) became the dominant current in the Song and Yuan dynasties, it also set the standard for Chinese literary theory. Poetry theories and criticism of the Neo-Confucian Ouyang Shoudao 歐陽守道 (1209-?) and his student Liu Chenweng 劉辰翁 (1233-1297) received great fame at their time and had a profound

² See, for instance, Li Zhuangying and Li Chunqing (2005); Zhang Shaokang (1999); Li Chunqing (2010). All of them have a whole chapter on the *Canglang shi hua* that was considered a poetic theory in opposite to Neo-Confucian literary views. For those scholars, aesthetics or poetics is more of a concept about innovative expressions and personal emotions, while Neo-Confucian literary theory is considered "ethics-based", so that mind-nature (more of moral cultivation in prevalent explanations) and emotion become two different attitudes that are incompatible in literature in contemporary discussions. See Li Zhuangying and Li Chunqing (2005), 249-257.

impact on Ming and Qing literary theories. However, this is mentioned only rarely in contemporary scholarship on Chinese literary theory. The reason for that may lie in the stereotype about Song *daoxue* Confucianism and a rigid definition of what literature is.

As to the question of “what literature is”, different times produce different answers. For most of the imperial era, literary theory synthesized the two definitions of “poetry expressing wills (*shi yan zhi* 詩言志)” and “poetry originating from personal feelings (*shi yuan qing* 詩緣情)”.³ In the Song discourse and literary criticism on *shi* poetry, in addition to the Neo-Confucian views that we need to investigate here, among the substantial remarks on poetry (*shihua* 詩話) that began to thrive in the Song dynasty,⁴ notions like *zhi* and *yi* 意 (intention) appear most frequently. For example the *Shanhu gou shihua* 珊瑚鈎詩話 argues “chanting about feelings and nature, while eventually expressing wills, this is called poetry” 吟詠情性，總合而言志謂之詩；⁵ *Suihan tang shihua* 歲寒堂詩話 proposes “chanting the objects is the technics [of making poetry], while expressing wills is the root” 詠物之為工，言志之為本；⁶ Su Shi is also recorded to have asserted that “[Just like people] cannot take the thing without money, [people]

³ The phrase *shi yan zhi* 詩言志 probably originates from the ‘Shun dian’ 舜典 of *Shang shu* 尚書, meaning that poetry is composed for expressing the poet’s will. Later, as mentioned in the Introduction, it developed into the classic formulation in the ‘Great Preface’ to the *Odes*: “poem is that to which intention goes. In the mind it is intention; coming forth in language it is the Poem”; while *shi yuan qing* 詩緣情 comes from the ‘Wenfu’ 文賦 of Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303): “poetry originates from personal feelings and is ornate in style” 詩緣情而綺靡, indicating that poetry is composed for personal sentiments that should be represented by flowery writing styles. These two had long been polarizing viewpoints in imperial Chinese literary theory. See Kong (1999a), 79; Xiao and Li (1986), vol.2.17, 766.

⁴ More discussion on the thriving of poetic remarks in the Song dynasty, see Bian Dongbo (2013).

⁵ He Wenhuan (1982), 476.

⁶ Ding Fubao (1983), 452.

cannot deal with affairs without intentions. This is the pivot of literary writing” 不得錢不可以取物，不得意不可以用事，此作文之要。⁷ All these examples suggest an overall poetic environment of stressing more of the discursive connotation of the work, rather than personal emotions and word craft.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, as a reaction against the politicized discourse system of the first 30 years of the People’s Republic, such as the Left-Wing literature and the Cultural Revolution rhetoric, contemporary Chinese scholars have established the modern tradition of avant-garde literature characterized by expressions of personal emotions and the resistance against a grand narrative. This new literary view changed the perceived value of literature, now stressing expressive theory,⁸ formalism⁹ and different kinds of experimental literature.¹⁰ Accepting or denying literature according to these concepts inevitably caused the obsolescence of many literary works and views that were considered incongruent. Neo-Confucian literary works and concepts are typical cases in point. It is also because of this influence that less illustrious figures like Yan Yu became regarded as representatives of the literary spirit—but this does not mean that this reflects the historical reality of Chinese literary theory.

⁷ Hong Mai (1936), 33.

⁸ Abrams (1953), 21-26.

⁹ The *Selected works of Russian Formalism* translated and edited by Fang Shan (Fang Shan (1989)) and the *Collected works of New Criticism* translated and edited by Zhao Yiheng (Zhao Yiheng (1988)) were widely influential in China during the 80s and 90s. Scholars, writers and artists were all greatly influenced by their views. Moreover, in the 80s, introductions, translations and transmissions of literary productions of western modernist authors of the 20th century were also very popular.

¹⁰ Wu Liang and Li Tuo (2008)

In this chapter, I argue that the stereotype that *daoxue* Confucians despise literature stems from the limitations of modern Chinese scholarship in dealing with traditional literature. When working with Zhu Xi's literature, the questions to ask are as follows: Did *daoxue* Confucians have a consistent concept of literature? What exactly were Zhu Xi's ideas about literature? Is there any kind of paradox, possibly relating to the Neo-Confucians themselves or the intellectual history, behind these concepts? It should be noted that the scope of the concept of "literature" changes over time, exemplified by the evolution from the dichotomy of *wen* 文 (writings in rhyme) and *bi* 筆 (writings without rhyme) 文筆之辨 to the diverse categorizations nowadays. It cannot be the objective of this dissertation to lay out an exhaustive account of the different kinds of Zhu Xi's literature. Instead, I shall use a limited number of his *shi* poems most representative of his literary works to discuss his attitude towards literature.

1. The Origin and Effect of the Stereotype

There is sufficient evidence that *daoxue* Confucians had a certain bias against literature. For example, "emphasizing *dao* and downplaying *wen*" 重道輕文 has been a typical view since the *daoxue* Confucian Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073):

Wen is for conveying *dao*. If a cart is decorated in its wheels and shafts but is not used by anyone, then it is merely decoration—what good would an empty cart be? Diction is a kind of artistry, while morality is the essence. When the essence is sincere, and the skillful person writes it, then what he wrote may be appreciated if it is beautiful and can be propagated if it is appreciated. When it comes to the good and wise person, he¹¹ can learn from it and reach the realm of sages, which is how teaching becomes possible. That is why it is said [by Confucius] that: ‘Without *wen*, words cannot go far.’ [...] Those who work not on morality but only on diction are just playing with skills. What a pity! It has long been a malady.

文，所以載道也。輪轅飾而人弗庸，徒飾也，況虛車乎？文辭，藝也；道德，實也。篤其實，而藝者書之，美則愛，愛則傳焉。賢者得以學而至之，是為教。故曰：‘言之無文，行之不遠’[.....]不知務道德，而第以文辭為能者，藝焉而已。噫！弊也久矣！¹²

Apart from this, authors of later times such as the Cheng brothers, Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-1077) and Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133-1180) entertained similar arguments that need not be discussed in further detail here. According to Zhou Dunyi, it was thus clear

¹¹ Although in imperial China, women normally did not have the right to accept education, they were educated through families. See Liu Naihe (1995). This means that it was possible that Chinese women in imperial times could also experience the moral connotation in words via family education. In this sense, what Zhou means by “the good and wise person” could also include women.

¹² Zhou (2000), 39.

that *wen* was understood as a general term referring to the organization of words that can have moral meanings. We cannot be certain that diction (*wen ci* 文辭) ever was what we call literature today.¹³

In Chinese, the character “*wen*” originally depicts natural stripes or artificial patterns. The *Explanations of Scripts and Elucidation of Characters* (*Shuo wen jie zi* 說文解字) suggests that “*wen* is like the visual impression of the interlacing of strokes and colors; it is used to represent this crisscross texture.” 文，錯畫也，象交文。¹⁴ For some time, *wenxue* 文學 was no more than just advanced word diction. But this emphasis on beauty and aesthetics has a long tradition of reverence in ancient China. Especially in religious Daoism, literary style even became transcendental and with the function of “opening up and creating all things in the world according to the movement [of the natural principle].” 隨運開度，普成天地之功。¹⁵ That is why Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 465-520) said: “the virtue of *wen* is enormous, why not see it as being born together with heaven and earth?” 文之為德也大矣，與天地並生者何哉？¹⁶ Martin Kern provides a detailed discussion about the development of *wen*, and its derivative *wenzhang* 文章 and *wenxue* 文學. He argues that beyond the universally applicable “criss-cross pattern,” *wen* did not predominantly

¹³ Martin Kern discusses meaning and usage of the term *wenci* in early imperial times. According to analysis of instances where this term appears in *the Thirteen Canonical Books* (*Shisan jing* 十三經), Kern thinks that *wenci*, which he translates as “patterned phrases”, “refers to the art of verbal expression--i.e., rhetoric in both senses of embellishment and persuasion from early times on, including both the oral and the written modes of expression.” See Kern (2001).

¹⁴ Xu Shen (2001), 513.

¹⁵ Zhang Junfang and Li Chengsheng (2003), 121. More discussions see Gong (2009), 147-153.

¹⁶ *Writing the Heart-mind, Carving the Dragon* (*Wen xin diao long* 文心雕龍), vol. *Yuan dao* 原道. See Liu Xie (1962), 1.

mean "writing" and "writings," "script" and "scriptures," and in particular the written composition as an emblem of civil achievement until Eastern Han times. As for *wenzhang*, according to its occurrence in *the Thirteen Canonical Books*, which were finally established in the Southern Song dynasty, "there is no instance where *wenzhang* can be reasonably interpreted in any sense as 'literature' or 'writings.'" Kern also argues that different from the meaning of literature that we understand today, *wenxue* is clearly related to textual learning in Warring States times, which "was the domain of the *ru* 儒 scholars and was regarded as their genuine learning (*rushu* 儒術, also *jingshu* 經術)". Kern further holds that the term was semantically stable throughout the Warring States and early imperial times.¹⁷

In the light of the ancient meaning of *wen*, it is clear that Zhou Dunyi was considering *wenci* just as literary style which, in its connotation, was narrower than what we call literature today. What Zhou Dunyi said about "*wen* conveying *dao*" was actually "writings are for conveying *dao*", rather than "literature is for conveying *dao*". Moreover, Zhou's argument was in fact directed at those who excessively worship the magic power of playing with characters¹⁸, rather than the literati who were excellent at expressing emotions in writing.

¹⁷ Kern (2001)

¹⁸ Since the Tang dynasty, the Chinese government set up a new subject called *Cifu* 辭賦 (rhymeprose or poetic essay) in the imperial examination, which caused a common phenomenon that large numbers of scholars were promoted to a higher rank because of literary fame. This had a negative influence on the overall ethos. The civilian worship of literary style interwove with religious issues like witchcraft, orison, mass organizations etc., forming an overwhelmingly common practice at that time. See Gong (2009), 263-270.

There are perhaps two characteristics that turn words into literature. First, literature pays attention to artistic values, transforming words in different ways via rhetoric like metaphor, irony, antinomy and ambiguity, to cause an effect of defamiliarization.¹⁹ The second feature is that literature should convey feelings²⁰ and lived experience²¹. I have these features in mind when I talk about “discursive connotation”, which means that literature goes beyond the superficial meaning of the words themselves; it is more profound and subject to the readers’ understanding and interpretation.²² In this sense, it is fair to say that the representative viewpoint of *daoxue* Confucians towards literature, namely “*wen* is for conveying *dao*”, requires connotations of *dao* beyond the literal meanings of a text. As a connotation, when *dao* is “carried by” *wen*, it can penetrate the readers’ minds. When reading this through the concepts of imperial Chinese literary theories, we can understand the Neo-Confucian statements that “*wen* is for conveying *dao*” as suggested by Zhou Dunyi, “composing *wen* is harmful to the *dao*”

¹⁹ Defamiliarization or *ostranenie* (остранение) is the artistic technique of forcing the audience to see common things in an unfamiliar or strange way, in order to enhance perception of the familiar. Shklovskij (1998).

²⁰ Like the British romanticism poet William Wordsworth said in the preface of his *Lyrical Ballads*: “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.” See Wordsworth and Coleridge (2005), 307.

²¹ Dilthey (1985), 251.

²² According to the argument of Tong Qingbing in one of the most authoritative textbooks of literary theory in mainland China, the essential characteristic of literature lies in “discursive connotation (*huayu yunjie* 話語蘊藉)”. The invention of this concept is based on his understandings that, on the one hand, literature is a kind of discourse in Michel Foucault’s sense that discourse is a concrete form of society that comes from the combination of language and parole, thus being more meaningful and complicated, and is a particular kind of parole that is entangled with social powers; on the other hand, the literary discourse is featured by connotation (*yunjie* 蘊藉), which, according to Tong’s analysis, is a frequent term that was seen as a crucial standard of criticism in imperial Chinese poetics, emphasizing that the language and meanings of literary productions should be deep, pregnant and remote. See Tong (2004), 68-76. Besides, the concept of “discursive connotation” bears some resemblance to the concept of “allegory” proposed by Zhang Longxi. Zhang (2005).

作文害道 as warned by Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107)²³ or “the *dao* is the root while *wen* is the branch” 道本文枝 as stated by Zhu Xi.²⁴ What these statements all have in common is that they warn against “harming the meaning by stressing artistic skills” 以辭害意.²⁵ It is in this sense that Cheng Yi said, “In general, when composing *wen*, if one does not concentrate one’s meaning, it will not be crafted, but if one concentrates one’s meaning [excessively], then the will is limited. Then how can [one’s writing] match the greatness of Heaven and Earth?” 凡為文，不專意則不工，若專意則志局於此，又安能與天地同其大也？²⁶

It should be clear from this discussion that the general misconception that *daoxue* Confucians despise literature comes from an inaccurate understanding of the concept of “literature”, which is derived from the inattention to the ancient context. What *daoxue* Confucians actually warned against was such writing that paid too much attention to artistic skill at the expense of content or essence. However, the question of *daoxue* Confucians’ attitudes towards literature still bears a deeper level of complexity. In terms of the feelings expressed through literature, they had special requirements.

Literary works express feelings so that the authors’ feelings can be transmitted to the receivers through literature. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this was called “*gan xing* 感興”

²³ *Surviving Works of the Two Chengs (Er Cheng yi shu 二程遺書)*, vol.2. Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao (2000), 290-291.

²⁴ Zhu (1986), vol.8.139, 3319.

²⁵ ‘Kua shi’ 誇飾, Liu Xie (1962), 608.

²⁶ *Er Cheng Yishu*, vol.28, in Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao (2000), 290-291.

(sensation and inspiration or aesthetic invigoration) in traditional Chinese literary theory.²⁷ Since literature has the function of *gan xing*, which stimulates one's disposition, *daoxue* Confucians were concerned that readers could be affected by the feelings expressed through literary texts to the extent that they might lose their focus on moral cultivation. As Shao Yong said:

Among recent poets, those who are poor and resentful always focus on expressing their indignant feelings, while poems written by those with high position and abundant wealth are always about bodily pleasure or leisure. Whether it is happiness or sadness that is expressed depends simply on the author's personal feelings of joy or anger; whether it is positive or negative comments on the times depends simply on their individual preferences of love or hate. Recent poems differ from ancient poems in that they do not organize words according to the righteousness of the world, so they tend to indulge in personal feelings and preferences. What a pity! The power of emotions in making people indulge is as great as that of drowning in water.

近世詩人，窮戚則職於怨懟，榮達則專於淫佚。身之休戚，發於喜怒；時之否泰，出於愛惡。殊不以天下大義而為言者，故其詩大率溺於情好也。噫！情之溺人也甚于水。²⁸

²⁷ The earliest discussion about this notion is from the Japanese Buddhists Kūkai 空海 (774-835) (*bian zhao jin gang* 遍照金剛). Kūkai (2006), 393.

²⁸ Shao Yong (2003), 4-5.

This comment suggests that at least some *daoxue* thinkers thought that literature could potentially have a demoralizing effect, assuming that meanings or the will could be harmed by emotions. At this point, the author took a sudden turn:

The old saying “water can bear a boat but it can also swallow it up” says that bearing or swallowing depends on the water, not on the people. To bear is beneficial and to swallow is harmful, and in this they relate to people, not to water. [...] If one can keep his mind clean and undisturbed even when facing the vicissitudes of life and death or honor and disgrace, then is this really different from seeing the wind, flower, snow and moon in the four seasons just as transient states that will not linger? Admittedly, if one can observe the object based on the object itself [rather than on the subject], then the person will be sad or sentimental neither for the object or subject. In that case both personal feelings and anxieties will be forgotten, and the only thing left is poetry.

古者所謂“水能載舟，亦能覆舟”，是覆載在水也，不在人也；載則為利，覆則為害，是利害在人也，不在水也[.....]雖死生榮辱轉戰于前，曾未入於胸中，則何異四時風花雪月一過乎眼也，誠為能以物觀物，而兩不相傷者焉。蓋其間情累都忘去爾，所未忘者，獨有詩在焉。²⁹

²⁹ Shao Yong (2003), 4-5.

That is to say, the key point of whether people give in to emotions lies in the nature of the emotion. If the subject can observe the object based on the object itself (*yi wu guan wu* 以物觀物) and forgets either personal feelings or anxieties, then what is left in the poem is beneficial for righteousness of the world. In other words, instead of making individuals lose their subjectivity, it is actually promoting it.³⁰ This is actually in consistent with what was discussed in Chapter 1: Zhu Xi's aesthetic approach of investigating the heavenly principle within individual's encounter with the outer world. The ideas of viewing the objects without bias and forgetting about personal emotions before writing poetry resemble Zhu Xi's cultivation and creation prerequisite of having the mind be still and unoccupied, which is in fact beneficial for capturing images, sentiments and thoughts.

However, it is true that neither of the two characteristics of literature (artistic values and emotions) is clearly distinguishable in *daoxue* Confucianism, which not only increases the difficulties of understanding the literary concepts of some Neo-Confucians, but also, more importantly, causes some contradictory statements. In order to gain a

³⁰ This is more clearly represented in Zhou Dunyi and the Cheng brothers. For example, in the *Er Cheng yishu*, it is said that "Poetry has the function of being inspiring. After I saw Maoshu 茂叔 [Zhou Dunyi] again, I came back singing of the moon and the wind, enjoying the feel that 'I am with Zeng Dian 曾點 (b. 541? BCE)'. " 詩可以興，某自再見茂叔後，吟風弄月以歸，有'吾與點也'之意。 See Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao (2000), 112. In fact, even though the feelings that are commonly expressed by these Neo-Confucian masters tend to conform to the Confucian thought of neutrality or moderation, it is undeniable that a considerable number of their poems meet high artistic standards and can be considered as masterpieces even according to modern tastes. Examples can be found in Zhou Dunyi's 'Explaining the Love of the Lotus' ('Ai lian shuo' 愛蓮說) and some of the Cheng brothers' poems like 'Written by Chance in a Spring Day' ('Chun ri ou cheng' 春日偶成) by Cheng Yi 程頤 and 'Autumn Day' ('Qiu ri' 秋日) by Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032-1085).

better understanding of these cases, I shall therefore take Zhu Xi as a representative example of the complex attitudes of Neo-Confucian thinkers towards poetry. I hope that this case study will help to generate a more nuanced account of historical reality.

2. The Tension between Zhu Xi's Poetic Views and Production

No matter how widely the above-mentioned stereotype is accepted or how much influence it has had, the fact is that Zhu Xi created at least 1400 *shi* poems and 19 *ci* 詞. These are what are left today with the author's identity verified.³¹ The great number illustrates the importance of poetry in Zhu Xi's life. I therefore claim that if we do not try to understand Zhu Xi from the integrated perspective of taking his poetry into account, his attitudes and that of other Neo-Confucian thinkers towards literature will never be fully understood. In this section, I will challenge the stereotype that “*daoxue* Confucians despise literature” by showing that Zhu Xi's production of poems was closely linked to the development of his philosophical thinking.

³¹ The exact number of Zhu Xi's poems available today is difficult to determine. In addition to the 1203 poems that are included in the ten volumes of *Collection of Literary Works by Zhu Wengong* (*Zhu Wengong wenji* 朱文公文集), there are still others recorded in his anthologies (*bieji* 別集), posthumous collections (*yiji* 遺集), and additional collections (*waiji* 外集), albeit with some overlap, in addition to the poems scattered in documents such as gazetteers of different regions and family pedigrees. From the materials that can be ascertained and according to the regular documents *Complete Works of Master Zhu* (*Zhuzi da quan* 朱子大全) and *Collection of Works by Zhu Xi* (*Zhu Xi ji* 朱熹集), it is safe to say that there are 1413 poems written by Zhu Xi that still exist today. I mainly focus on the core pieces, with occasional reference to the ones that used to be considered lost (*yi wen* 佚文) but have now been recovered and verified. See Lin Jiarong (2000), 5-8. As to the verification of poems, see Shu (1991).

2.1 The Relation between *Wen* and *Dao*: To Versify or not to Versify

In the Chinese tradition, the age of thirty (*er li zhi nian* 而立之年)³² is when a person should be considered independent both in terms of livelihood and maturity of thought. When Zhu Xi was thirty, he wrote a poem with the long title: '[I] just feel that composing too much harms [the learning of] Dao, [so I have decided] never to versify again. [This poem is about what I] realized when reading the chapter 'Making Thought Sincere' of *The Great Learning* in the last two days. So I wrote [this poem] to admonish myself when I got up in the morning of this winter solstice. This is because I have no alternative but to compose' 頃以多言害道絕不作詩兩日讀大學誠意章有感至日之朝起書此以自箴蓋不得已而有言。³³

This poem has not received much attention, but I argue that it should be valued as an "event".³⁴ The long title explained the reason for writing this poem in detail: around the age of thirty, Zhu Xi experienced a crucial period of departing from Chan Buddhism and turning to *daoxue* Confucianism. He officially became the student of Li Tong 李侗

³² The earliest reference to this would be a line from 'Wei zheng' 為政 in *The Analects of Confucius* (*Lun yu* 論語). See Zhu (1983), 54.

³³ Guo (2000), 165.

³⁴ See Chen Shaoming (2007). According to Chen, there are two kinds of "events" in intellectual history: the event that influenced the history of thought and the event that had an impact on ideological values. The latter should be understood as "basic materials that help to understand the life style, values, convictions and emotion orientation of the classical world." I think that Zhu Xi's poem *Never to Versify* belongs to the second kind of event in intellectual history. As far as I am aware of the existing literature in the field, only Wu Changgeng and Li Chi has noticed this poem, but they provided only a limited interpretation of it. See Wu (1994), 10. Chi Li (1972).

(1093-1163), and followed a Confucian ideal for his career.³⁵ His thought was at an important turning point at that time. In this poem, Zhu Xi stated his shamefulness for wasting time writing poetry and learning ideas that do not take him to the right spiritual realm, and so he decided to stop and return to the learning of *daoxue*. The reason for his determination of “never to versify” at this particular stage, especially after his complete negation of Chan Buddhist and Daoist philosophies, appears to be a simple one: there are inherent contradictions between the logics of writing poetry and pursuing the Confucian *dao*.

However, his regrets were expressed through predominantly Daoist terms, such as “*shenxin*” 神心 (the divine mind), “*xuanjian*” 玄鑒 (bright mirror), “*penglai*” 朋來 (the positive, active and strong forces gather together, suggesting auspiciousness), “*qunyin*” 群陰 (negative and dark things).³⁶ Besides, it is clear that his intention is expressed in the form of a poem, and his will of denying aesthetic feelings is carried by the aesthetic form of language. These are all manifestations of Zhu Xi’s own words in the title: “I have no alternative but to compose”, suggesting his ambivalent attitude towards poetry, as

³⁵ From 1148 when Zhu Xi took his first official post after the imperial examination to 1159 when he was 30 and formally took Li Tong 李侗 as his master, Zhu Xi had been learning Buddhism and Daoism for more than ten years. See Shu (2003), 81-121.

³⁶Guo Qi’s interpretation of this poem tends to follow the perspective of Neo-Confucianism or the connotations of the *Daxue* 大學, which is worth further discussion. Since Zhu Xi, at that time, was just a disciple of Neo-Confucianism, he was perhaps not able to fully understand and apply Neo-Confucian discourse. For example, the word *xuanjian* 玄鑒 actually originates from the Daoist classics---vol. *Xing pin* 行品 of *The Master Who Embraces Simplicity* (*Baopuzi* 抱樸子): *xuanjian you wei* 玄鑒幽微 (the bright mirror is deep and subtle). The quotation of this word by Zhu Xi here should comply with its original meanings, rather than what Guo Qi said “comparing people’s recognition of objects to a bright mirror’s reflection is a preferable usage by Neo-Confucians”, which is an over-interpretation. See Guo (2000), 166.

well as the relation between *wen* and *dao*, which long dominated his own poetry production.

This could also be shown in the following quote:

Hu Dan'an³⁷ wrote to the emperor to recommend ten poets, including Zhu Wengong³⁸. Wengong was unhappy about this, so he swore not to compose poems any more. However, he could not stop composing. He used to visit Mount Heng together with Zhang Xuangong³⁹. After writing and responding to over a hundred poems, he suddenly asked, 'it is possible for the two of us not to abandon our interests in writing poems'?

胡澹庵上章薦詩人十人，朱文公與焉。文公不樂，誓不復作詩。迄不能不作也。

嘗同張宣公遊南嶽，酬唱至百餘篇，忽矍然曰：‘吾二人得無荒於詩乎？’⁴⁰

This quotation illustrates that Zhu Xi enjoyed a great reputation as a poet. At the same time, however, he had a contradictory attitude towards it.

Zhu Xi's more entangled attitudes towards writing poetry are reflected in his Hunan trip in 1167. The trip to Mount Heng with Zhang Shi, when Zhu Xi was 38, marked the peak

³⁷ Style name of Hu Quan 胡銓 (1102-1180).

³⁸ Posthumous title of Zhu Xi.

³⁹ Posthumous title of Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133-1180).

⁴⁰ Luo (1983), 112.

of his poetry composition. During this period, Zhu Xi created more than 130 poems within just a couple of months.⁴¹ But for Zhu Xi it was not easy to compose these poems because of his ambivalent feeling towards poetry, as seen from his *Postscript for the Tour of Mount Heng* (*Nanyue youshan houji* 南嶽遊山後記):

After arriving in Zhuzhou on the *bingxu* day [22/11/1167], together with my disciples Bochong⁴² and Zezhi⁴³, I went back to the east while Jingfu⁴⁴ took the way west to go back to Changsha. In the past four days, from the *guiwei* day [19/11/1167] to the *bingxu* day, we travelled from Yuegong to Zhuzhou, covering a total distance of eighty *li*. All the scenery, the mountains, forests, open fields, wind and smoke, everything that I saw, was really poetic. But we had our previous agreement [not to versify again]! Moreover, since the date of parting with Jingfu was approaching, since what we talked about the other day was just a start and far from complete, we then had to think about and discuss it, so as to finish it. So we had no spare time to think about [whether or not we should write] poems. At dusk of the *bingxu* day, I advised all the others, saying “Poems were not created to be bad. The reason why good men resent them is that they are afraid of having them spread and cause harm. It is not poems themselves that are to blame initially. However, now that the date of parting is

⁴¹ See Shu (2001), 370-383.

⁴² Personal name of Fan Niande 范念德 (fl. 1167).

⁴³ Personal name of Lin Yongzhong 林用中 (fl. 1167).

⁴⁴ Personal name of Zhang Shi.

near, the complicated feelings cannot be expressed without poems. So the previous agreement, an agreement that went too far, should now be suspended." All the others responded, "Yes". After a while, Jingfu dedicated his poems to me, and the three of us all responded with our writings to express our feelings too. Then I went on to say, "Although the previous agreement went too far, we shall not forget the spirit of vigilance and introspection that underlies it. Why? Poems are created to express the will; therefore they should be composed with ease, grace, melancholy, but be gentle, mild and somewhat neutral. If [poetry] is spread unchecked, people will lose their will. A group of friends together has the benefit of supporting the virtue of benevolence. It will be beneficial for the proficiency of righteousness and the grasp of *li* as well as having all the actions conform to ethics and [Confucian] ideas. But even in this case, it is still possible to fall into decadence, how much more so far for those who leave the group and live alone, facing the infinite changes of things which tend to confuse what people see and hear and affect and move people's minds in the most subtle area. How can we resist it then? So although I said that the previous agreement with the spirit of vigilance and introspection went slightly too far, there still is something to it. If we continue from here, there will be almost no mistakes." Jingfu responded, "You have spoken well". He then noted down my words, so as not to forget. [...] Up to now I always take the notes out

and have a look in my spare time, regarding it as an admonishing inscription on dinner ware and canes.

丙戌至株洲，熹與伯崇、擇之取道東歸，而敬夫自此西還長沙矣。自癸未至丙戌凡四日，自岳宮至株洲凡百有八十里，其間山川林野風煙景物，視向來所見，無非詩者。而前日既有約矣！然亦念夫別日之迫，而前日所講蓋有開其端而未竟者，方且相與思繹討論，以畢其說，則其於詩，固有所不暇者焉。丙戌之暮，熹諭於眾曰：“詩之作，本非有不善也。而善人之所以深懲而痛絕之者，懼其流而生患耳。初亦豈有咎於詩哉！然而今遠別之期近在朝夕，非言則無以寫難喻之懷，然則前日一時矯枉過甚之約，今亦可以罷矣。”皆應曰：“諾”。既而，敬夫以詩贈吾，三人亦各答賦以見意。熹則又進而言曰：“前日之約已過矣，然其戒懼警省之意則不可忘也。何則？詩本言志，則宜其宣暢湮郁、優柔平中，而其流乃幾至於喪志。群居有輔仁之益，則宜其義精理得，動中倫慮，而猶或不免於流；況乎離群索居之後，事物之變無窮，幾微之間、毫忽之際，其可以營惑耳目、感移心意者，又將何以禦之哉？故前日戒懼警省之意，雖曰小過，然亦所當過也。由是而擴充之，庶幾乎其寡過矣。”敬夫曰：“子之言善”。其遂書之，以詔毋忘。[.....]自今暇日，時出而觀焉，其亦足以當盤盂幾杖之戒也!⁴⁵

This change of mind vividly illustrates Zhu Xi's mixed feelings towards poetry. What is worth more attention is that the reason for him to quit poetry writing was the need to be vigilant and introspective. His arguments about descending into decadence in a group

⁴⁵ *Wenji* 77, Zhu (2002), vol.24, 3704.

or when alone are basically derived from the concern that “a man with noble character should be self-restrained when alone” in the chapter ‘Cheng yi’ of *The Great Learning*.⁴⁶ So what he requested was that people should be alert to the inappropriate and unrestrained dissemination of poems, whereas those poems that are “with ease, grace, melancholy, and gentle, mild and somewhat neutral” are not to be despised. Hence, although they both cautioned against poetry composition, it seems from this passage that Zhu Xi had a more nuanced position towards poetry than Cheng Yi.⁴⁷ From Zhu Xi’s perspective, there is no problem with writing poems and expressing feelings that conform to the requirements of the *dao*. But since poetry writing cannot be separated from language and form, wordplay might well dominate to the extent that it controls personal feelings. In this sense, the activity of poetry composition can be potentially dangerous, especially when one “leaves the group and lives alone” and the subject’s mind is particularly weak without the support of others and tends to be “confused and moved”. It is clear that Zhu Xi had already recognized the dual characteristics of poetry, namely *wen* and *dao*. In contrast, for Cheng Yi, writing poems was more of a play with

⁴⁶ Zhu (1983), 7.

⁴⁷ Mo Lifeng claims that the reason why Zhu Xi was opposed to poetry is that “only when people indulge in poems (沉溺於詩) without restrictions, moral cultivation will be affected.” But he still sees no difference between Zhu Xi and Cheng Yi. Rather, he thinks that “Zhu Xi’s attitude to poems is much tenderer than Cheng Yi”. Actually I think that Zhu Xi’s attitude can by no means be tenderer than Cheng Yi’s. Zhu Xi was even more determined, as can be seen from his repeated vow not to compose any more. By contrast, Cheng Yi wrote poems as well, but he never swore not to write. Zhu Xi’s attitude is more contradictory and complicated than Cheng Yi’s, because the “indulgence in poems” that Zhu Xi was always worried about does not only refer to the focus on language skills, but more importantly to the inappropriate and unrestrained feelings that may be generated by the beautifully arranged language. It is unique for him to argue that language could affect subjects’ emotion. See Mo (2000), 38-39.

words. Zhu Xi understood poems in the sense of discursive connotation, which reached a deeper level than Cheng Yi and other Neo-Confucians before him.

Obviously, Zhu Xi's complicated stance towards poetry would influence his compositions. Re-assessing the general landscape of Zhu Xi's poems from the perspective of discursive connotation will be the premise of my categorization of the poetry in this chapter.

2.2 Stages of Zhu Xi's Poetry Composition

There are several ways in which Zhu Xi's poetry has been categorized. Most attempts have taken Zhu Xi's lifetime experience as the dividing points, mainly focusing on important events such as Zhu Xi accepting the post in Tong'an 同安, managing the city of Nankang 南康 and setting up the academy in Kaoting 考亭 in the city of Jianyang 建陽. (Details of these events will be described later on in this chapter.) Based on these parameters, Cai Houshi and Yang Guoxue divided Zhu Xi's poetry into three stages: the early stage (1148-1165, aged 19 to 35), the middle stage (1165-1194, from age 35 to 64) and the later period (1194-1200, aged 64 to 71).⁴⁸ Wu Changgeng classified the poetry into four stages: the stages of preparation (aged 19-27), climax (from 27 years old to 50), establishment (aged 50-53) and later years (53-71).⁴⁹ The advantage of organizing Zhu

⁴⁸ Cai Houshi (2003), 127-138; Yang Guoxue (2006), 153-188.

⁴⁹ Wu (1994), 4-10.

Xi's poetry production in this manner lies in the convenience of dealing with the facts and general feelings that were conveyed in his poems, but this is not my approach here.

As has been argued, there are intertextual links between Zhu Xi's poetry and his philosophy, which can only be shown when organizing Zhu Xi's poetry in diachronic stages. Guo Qi's clarification satisfies this requirement to some extent. According to the degree to which Zhu Xi understood and accepted *daoxue* learning, Guo divided Zhu Xi's poetry into two stages, which he called the former and the latter stage. He took a dividing line when Zhu Xi was 35 years old, and supplemented six periods of exceptional productivity.⁵⁰ I propose instead that his poetry should rather be divided into the following four stages: accepting *daoxue* learning (1148-1169, aged 19-39), pursuing a balance (1169-1177, aged 39-47), being people-oriented (1177-1189, aged 47-59) and expressing feelings (1189-1200, aged 59-71). These stages correspond to the development of Zhu Xi's philosophical system. They allow us to better understand the interaction between Zhu Xi's philosophy and his poetry.

First of all, Zhu Xi described himself at his early age, "There was nothing that I did not learn, including Chan Buddhism, Daoism, rituals and laws, *the Songs of Chu*, poems and military strategies and tactics, all of which have to be learnt" 無所不學，禪、道、文章、楚辭、詩、兵法，事事要學。⁵¹ This was when Zhu Xi started to compose poetry.⁵² His

⁵⁰ See Guo (2000), 2.

⁵¹ 'Zi lun weixue gongfu' 自論為學工夫, Zhu (1986), vol.7.104, 2620.

poems from this period reflect the process of his thoughts when he changed from being an active young man with high and dignified demeanor to a mid-aged man feeling depressed when he was in the post of Tong'an registrar for the first time, and then, later, when making friends with famous literati in Quanzhou 泉州 who influenced him and made him study Buddhist sutras and Daoist scriptures, and finally, turning to *daoxue* learning. There can be no doubt that his ideas during this period constituted the theoretical basis of the later establishment of his philosophical system, albeit some appeared as undercurrents or countercurrents, like Chan Buddhism. It is in this sense that I hold that Zhu Xi's poems of this period are meaningful to my research. From these poems, we can see the transition of his thoughts. For instance, after he passed the imperial exam successfully and became a *jinshi* 進士, he waited for an official post at home for nearly five years. When his youth, ambition and enthusiasm gradually faded, his mind-set changed, as captured in the poem, "Not to deplore the pressing years, but to regret [the loss of one's] fragrance and beauty; severe frost weighs down the grass, as I sit and fear [the passage of] time. My prime years will not come again. It is over and I will no longer have hope." 不恨歲月邁，但惜芳華姿。嚴霜萎百草，坐恐及茲時。盛年

⁵² Seen from the existing texts, Zhu Xi started writing poetry when he was nineteen years old. See Wu (1994), 3-4. On the other hand, it is recorded in the Qing scholar Wang Maohong's *Chronological Biography of Master Zhu* (*Zhuzi nianpu* 朱子年譜), in an introduction about Zhu's father Zhu Song, that Zhu Xi's fame of writing poetry was even spread to as far as Wuyuan (Jiangxi province) when he was just thirteen. See Shu (2003), 38-39. Since we now do not have any reliable text, I still consider the year of nineteen as the starting point of his production. But we can reasonably assume that his poetry before he was nineteen, if any, were more like exercises and tended to imitate the style of his father. This is shown in Zhu Song's *Wei Zhai Collection* (*Wei zhai ji* 韋齋集), which was leisurely, natural, plain and stressing remote and subtle realms.

無再至，已矣不復疑。⁵³ And when he was in the post of Tong'an registrar, he appeared to have suffered from feeling loneliness, as reflected in the verse, "Leave my hometown to take a post far away, without a single happy day. I cannot play even with an instrument in hand, sighing deeply as I face my death." 遠宦去鄉井，終日無一歡。援琴不能操，臨殤起長歎。⁵⁴ This mentality can be temporarily eased by the fun of touring mountains and rivers, as exemplified in the couplet "Turning back to appreciate the sunshine's beauty, and on the hirst, counting the chaotic peaks." 回頭自愛晚晴好，卻立灘頭數亂峰。⁵⁵ The same is true of his temporary delight upon hearing the news of victory over the Jin 金 army, like "the great virtue of Dongjing [because of the resurgence of Eastern Han] is comparable to the achievements of Emperor Gaozu [Liu Bang 劉邦 (256-195 BCE)].⁵⁶ We should tell the news to the old folks on the central plain [which had been occupied by the enemies]." 東京盛德符高祖，說與中原父老知。⁵⁷ These external excitements nonetheless never satisfied Zhu Xi's spiritual world. That was why he further immersed himself in Buddhism and Daoism at the time when he went to the capital Lin'an 臨安⁵⁸ for the selection exam (*quanshi* 銓試). This period of "seeing the mountains, I am thinking of my monk friends and I wash my hands to read the Daoist

⁵³ Guo (2000), 24.

⁵⁴ Guo (2000), 89.

⁵⁵ Guo (2000), 107.

⁵⁶ This should be understood as a metaphor. According to Guo Qi, Zhu Xi here compares the Southern Song's resurgence to the Eastern Han's resurgence after the Western Han, in his appreciation the great contribution of the victory. See Guo (2000), 192.

⁵⁷ Guo (2000), 190.

⁵⁸ Current Hangzhou in Zhejiang province.

Classics” 望山懷釋侶，盥手閱仙經⁵⁹ was recorded in the later poem collection *The Pure Writings at Mu Zhai* (*Mu zhai jing gao* 牧齋淨稿), compiled by Zhu Xi himself.

The period when Zhu Xi held the post of Tong’an registrar marks a turning point in his thought. Zhu Xi restructured the tax system and broke the land monopoly by landlords and bureaucrats in his jurisdiction— “when placed in the down to earth society of Tong’an, his Confucian realistic spirit of actively administering social affairs began to rise”.⁶⁰ He took Li Tong as his teacher, changed the name of his study from “Cultivation Room” (*muzhai* 牧齋) to “Turn to Study After Having Been Vexed by Difficulties” (*kunxue* 困學), and began the difficult transition from Chan Buddhism to *daoxue* learning: “In the past I longed for a settled mind for which I desperately explored, disregarding books and giving up learning to engage in a relentless pursuit. Now with nowhere to settle down, getting confused and stuck, I finally realize that I have previously wasted my short span of time [on the sundial]” 舊喜安心苦覓心，捐書絕學費追尋。困衡此日安無地，始覺從前枉寸陰。⁶¹

At the end of the stage of “accepting *daoxue* learning”, Zhu Xi began one of the most productive periods of his poetry production in his whole life, in between the famous academic dialogues between Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi (*Zhu Zhang hui jiang* 朱張會講) in 1167. During the four months in Mount Heng (*Nanyue* 南嶽) and on their way back, Zhu

⁵⁹ Guo (2000), 39.

⁶⁰ Shu (2003), 128.

⁶¹ Guo (2000), 172.

Xi created more than 130 poems and compiled two collections, called *Poetic Exchanges on Nanyue Mountain* (*Nanyue changchou ji* 南嶽唱酬集) and *Miscellaneous Works While Returning East* (*Donggui luangao* 東歸亂稿) respectively, which sufficiently presented the paradoxical problem of Zhu Xi's poetry production under the requirement of Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian thought in its early stage. Since then Zhu Xi's philosophical thought began to mature gradually. "The realization in 1169 fundamentally shaped the outlook of Zhu Xi's academic thought."⁶²

Second, the stage of "pursuing the balance" is a crucial period in which Zhu Xi's philosophy was established. At this stage, Zhu Xi lived in seclusion in places like Hanquan 寒泉 and Yungu 雲穀, as described in the poem, "Thirty autumns have passed like a moment since I chose to live at the foot of Mount Ping" 卜居屏山下，俯仰三十秋.⁶³ He devoted himself to ontology and cosmology, and accomplished more than ten scholarly works from 1172 to 1177.⁶⁴ Also, he debated with the Hu Xiang school via letters, gave lectures together with Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137-1181) and attended a

⁶² Chen (2010), 201.

⁶³ This is just a rhetorical exaggeration. Actually Zhu Xi lived in Hanquan Wu 寒泉塢 for no more than six years. See Guo (2000), 400.

⁶⁴ These works include *Essential Meanings of the Analects and the Book of Mencius* (*Lun Meng jingyi* 論孟精義), *Outline of the General Mirror for Aid in Government* (*Zi zhi tong jian gangmu* 資治通鑒綱目), *Records of Words and Deeds of Famous Officials in Eight Dynasties* (*Bachao mingchen yanxing lu* 八朝名臣言行錄), *Explanation of the Meaning of the Western Inscription* (*Ximing jieyi* 西銘解義), *An Explanation of the Chart of the Great Ultimate* (*Taiji tushuo jie* 太極圖說解), *Explanation of the Penetration of the Book of Changes* (*Tong shu jie* 通書解), *Additional Works of the Chengs* (*Chengshi wai shu* 程氏外書), *Records of the Origins of the Yi Luo School of the Cheng Brothers* (*Yi Luo yuanyuan lu* 伊洛淵源錄), *Reflections on Things at Hand* (*Jin si lu* 近思錄), *Collected Commentaries on the Analects and the Book of Mencius* (*Lun Meng jizhu* 論孟集注), *Questions and Answers on the Analects and the Book of Mencius* (*Lun Meng huo wen* 論孟或問), *Collected Annotations to the Book of Odes* (*Shi ji zhuan* 詩集傳), *Original Meaning of the Book of Changes* (*Zhou yi benyi* 周易本義). See Guo Qi (2000), 932.

great deal of other academic activities such as the famous Ehu Debate (*Ehu zhi hui* 鵝湖之會) with the Lu brothers in 1175. In between these activities, Zhu Xi occasionally put his feelings into verse: “Dwelling on the high hill distances me from worldly affairs. Reading profound theories, I am able to explore the remote and deep philosophical realm. All things move on diligently and continuously in principle without feeling tired, and are always in competition. Since the natural principle is like this, how can our lives become tranquil?” 高居遠塵雜，崇論探杳冥。亹亹玄運使，林林群動爭。天道固如此，吾生安得寧。⁶⁵ In just eight years, Zhu Xi revised his ideas many times, and in the meantime his philosophical system became more and more complete in the continuous debates. The Ehu Debate with the Lu Brothers was probably most important, resulting in the opposition of two different orientations of learning and cultivation in Zhu Xi’s mind, namely “honoring the virtuous nature” 尊德性 and “following the path of inquiry” 道問學. This further helped Zhu Xi to find the solution of “cultivating through reverence and recognition” 知敬雙修 and other methods. In the meantime, the voice of anti-*daoxue* was making a great clamor, which urged Zhu Xi to find a balance between reading and learning on the one hand and active participation in society for pursuing achievements and success on the other: “To know the pleasure [of Yan Hui 顏回 (521?-481 BCE) when he lived] in a humble lane in stressful conditions, one need only look where the bamboo scrolls are broken [as a result of one’s extremely diligent study]”

⁶⁵ One of the 12 poems in ‘Twelve Varied Poems in the Valley of Clouds’ (*Yungu zashi shier shou* 雲穀雜詩十二首), recorded in Guo (2000), 609.

欲知陋巷憂時樂，只向韋編絕處尋。⁶⁶ At the end of this stage, in the year 1175, Zhu Xi traveled to Baizhang Shan 百丈山 and climbed to the peak of Mount Lu together with Lü Zuqian. At that time, they wrote a large number of poems, which constituted another climax of his poetry composition.

During the stage of “pursuing the balance”, Zhu Xi’s attitude towards poems changed as his philosophy reached its mature phase. On the one hand, he was concerned about the contradiction between poetic language and the *dao*, “How limitless is the horizon of poetry, yet my heart’s desire for dao xue will not cease. How can I follow you gentlemen, strolling together with the wind and moon at the Wu altar” 詩篇眼界何終極，道學心期未遽央。安得追尋二三子，舞雩風月共徜徉。⁶⁷ On the other hand, Zhu Xi was rather moderate in his attitude toward the function of poetry because of his confidence in his own philosophy: “Having only a few contributions when analyzing and annotating *the Book of Songs*, but with great interests singing of the wind and the moon with feeling; singing leisurely I can link up past and present, this pleasure following that pleasure without end.” 析句分章功自少，吟風弄月興何長。從容詠歎無今古，此樂從茲樂未央。⁶⁸ Zhu Xi not only considered poetry as a kind of discursive connotation, but also brought this into practice in his poetry production. This makes the mutual interpretation between his poems and his philosophy possible. The end of “pursuing the balance” was symbolized by the accomplishment of his *Complied Notes on the Four Books* 四書集注 in

⁶⁶ Guo (2000), 587.

⁶⁷ Guo (2000), 534.

⁶⁸ Guo (2000), 627.

the year 1177, which was called “the first summing up of Zhu Xi’s life scholarship”.⁶⁹ From then on, Zhu Xi took a post in Nankang again and his philosophical system began to be “people-oriented”.

Third, at the time when Zhu Xi’s philosophical system was fundamentally complete, factional struggles in the imperial government became prevalent and relentless. Ministers from different political backgrounds repeatedly came to invite Zhu Xi to take important posts. Even Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137-1181) wrote to persuade him, “I received and comprehended the emperor’s expectations [...] to make the public to treat Confucians as their model, which would be a great benefit to this culture of ours.” 承領上意[.....]使世見儒者之效，於斯文非小補也。⁷⁰ Although Zhu Xi himself preferred to continue working on his philosophy in seclusion, due to the constant pressure from the government, he had to follow the order to go to Nankang and took the post of Magistrate (*zhijun* 知軍) there, and later the Supervisor (*tiju* 提舉) of eastern Zhejiang. The poet Wang Zhi 王質 (1135-1189) said: “Huian is almost fifty years old this year. Hui’an is not anxious about the anxiousness of the people” 晦庵今年登五十，晦庵不急蒼生急。⁷¹ During that time, Zhu Xi presented memorials to the emperor to ask for tax exemptions and relief for people in disasters and famine. He established the Bailu Dong 白鹿洞 academy, promoted an upbeat atmosphere among intellectuals, and wrote a large

⁶⁹ Shu (2003), 383.

⁷⁰ *Collection of Literary Works by Lü Donglai (Lü Donglai wenji 呂東萊文集)*, vol.3, in Lü (1985), 71.

⁷¹ Wang Zhi: *The Snow Mountain Collection (Xueshan ji 雪山集)*, vol.12. Quoted from the secondary source Shu (2003), 425.

amount of poems about his feelings of social affairs and people's suffering. For example, he wrote "It is already the second drought. Nothing can be harvested from the land. People are innocent and the emperor is deeply worried about it." 況復逢旱魃，農畝無餘收。赤子亦何辜，黃屋勞深憂。⁷² In these poems, Zhu Xi's "people-oriented" thought clearly came to the fore.

At the same time, Zhu Xi travelled to Jiangxi. He spent almost his entire free time climbing mountains and writing poems. He visited most places of great interest on Mount Lu and within two years he wrote more than a hundred poems. Moreover, he even tried to enlighten the literati and change the ingrained habits of the Jiangxi poetry style, as if he was the leader of the poetry circles.⁷³ We can say that Zhu Xi's poems of mountains and rivers at this stage constituted the peak of his poetry production. His poems at this time followed the style of being simple and natural that his father Zhu Song 朱松 admired,⁷⁴ while they were also influenced by his communications with Jiangxi poets such as Xin Qiji 辛棄疾 (1140-1207) and Lu You 陸遊 (1125-1210), thus containing the great pleasure of Neo-Confucian vitality. For example, "Looking up I admire the shade of the tree, while looking down I listen to the bounding cliff side spring. Nothing can compare to the delicate and pretty scene. As I wander at leisure, I may even

⁷² Guo (2000), 696.

⁷³ See Shu (2003), 471.

⁷⁴ See Mo (2001), 2.

forget my years.” 仰看喬木陰，俯聽橫飛泉。景物自清絕，優遊可忘年。⁷⁵ This kind of style was even more obviously present in poems like the “Nine Bend poems”, mentioned in the Introduction, written when Zhu Xi was relieved from the post of Supervisor (*tiju* 提舉) as he retired and settled on Mount Wuyi. Such a poem can also be considered as “people-oriented” as the Neo-Confucian ideal had two dimensions. On the one hand, it is the extroverted social concern, i.e. the reconstruction of rules and ethics of the earthly world and running the country in peace and stability. On the other hand, in terms of the cultivation of the inner mind, people were expected to reach the ultimate realm of being in harmony with the *dao*, and like the sages, appreciating “eagles flying and fishes jumping” 鳶飛魚躍, meaning enjoying the pleasure of fulfilling the great principle of nature. Most of Zhu Xi’s poems in this stage reflected these philosophical pursuits.

At the end of this stage, Zhu Xi carried out comprehensive debates with different academic schools during his time in Mount Wuyi. His opponents included Chen Liang 陳亮 (1143-1194) from the Yongkang 永康 school (their debates primarily took place in 1184 and 1185), the Lu Brothers from Jiangxi school (they were debating intensively from 1181 to 1189), Lü Zujian 呂祖儉 (?-1200) (the debate became most heated in 1185), Chen Gang 陳剛 (ca. 1200) (mostly in 1185), etc. He also had many debates about the calculations (*xiangshu* 象數) and divination problems in *the Changes* with

⁷⁵ *Jing Jie Memorial Hall* 靖節祠, See vol.2, *Shan Chuan* 山川, of *Gazetteer of the Prefecture of Jiujiang in the Jiajing Reign* 嘉靖九江府志, section *Dehua xian* 山川·德化縣. And it is also carved on the present tombstone of Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (ca. 365-427).

people like Cheng Jiong 程迥 (ca. 1173), Guo Yong 郭雍 (1101-1187) and Lin Li 林栗 (ca. 1122-1190) (mainly started in 1186). These debates caused his later political failure in the *Wushen Fengshi* 戊申封事 because they were so extensive and crucial that they eventually led to Zhu Xi's entanglement with factional struggles⁷⁶, while they also promoted the second culmination of his lifetime scholarship. According to the analysis of Shu Jingnan, Zhu Xi's positions were now "based on the *Taiji* 太極 theory of Zhou Dunyi and the prior-heaven theory of Shao Yong". This was represented by three things: the accomplishment of *The Original Meaning of the Book of Changes (Zhouyi benyi)*, his opposition to the old annotation of *the Book of Odes*, and his critique of Wang Anshi's construction of the ritual system and his studies on *The Four Books*.⁷⁷ Throughout the whole period of being "people-oriented", Zhu Xi's poems became increasingly mature and profound along with the development of his philosophy, thus reflecting a change of mind during this intellectual development.

Finally, the stage of "expressing feelings" is when Zhu Xi's life ended in seclusion and disturbance. Insisting on the principle of being "people-oriented", Zhu Xi got involved in administrative affairs again and took the post of the Magistrate of Zhangzhou 漳州, only to be defeated severely by the local officials. Soon after that, his eldest son Zhu Shu 朱塾 (1153-1191) passed away. He left his post and went back to Kaoting in sorrow, planning to live there for the rest of his life. However, his social aspirations often encouraged him

⁷⁶ Shu (2003), 610-656.

⁷⁷ Shu (2003), 776-823.

to write poems like, “I hope the emperor can follow the way of heaven, and make the determined decision as soon as possible to respond to the loyalty of his liegemen.” 我願君王法天造，早施雄斷答群心。⁷⁸ He then took the position of the Magistrate of Tanzhou 潭州 again at the age of 65, rolled out new policies in Changsha that lasted for only 100 days, and restored the Yuelu Academy 嶽麓書院 there. After that he went to Lin’an to serve as the tutor (*shijiang* 侍講) of the new emperor Zhao Kuo 趙擴 (Ningzong 寧宗 (1168-1224)). While traveling back and forth, Zhu Xi wrote several poems expressing his desire for the immortal Daoist realm on his way to Lin’an: “the old recluse’s pursuit of truth is not intentional, just as the Daoist’s refusal of guests is not intentional, [but comes from being natural and doing nothing (自然無為)]. Let us drink up this cup of fine wine at this festival, sighing transiently in forests for ancient and present.” 野老尋真渾有意，道人謝客亦何心。一樽底處酬佳節，俯仰山林慨古今。⁷⁹

Nevertheless, Zhu Xi was expelled from the imperial court after holding the post for just 49 days, with his political ideals collapsing. So he had to go back to Jianyang, feeling isolated and lost: “Coming back I was surprised by the astonishing words in books, thus I planned to explore the abstruseness in them. Yet I saw two old men sitting in front of each other and drinking, obtaining true meanings of the world in just that.” 歸來眩奇語，更欲窮窈窕。卻尋兩翁意，宴坐得觀照。⁸⁰ On the night when he stayed at Mount Wuyi on his way back, snow fell thick and fast. He then penned in a *ci* 詞 and asked his disciples to

⁷⁸ Guo (2000), 646.

⁷⁹ Quoted from Shu (2003), 960.

⁸⁰ Shu (1992), 933.

sing: “Spring will come, but there must be [harsh winter with] heavy snow filled the whole sky. [...] The central plain [that is now occupied by the Jin 金 army] must be [covered by snow with gleaming white, but] filled with the atmosphere of hope, with the magnificent mountains and rivers and the stalwart palace arches. When the prime minister [Zhao Ruyu 趙汝愚 (1140-1196), who belonged to the pro-war faction] reclaims our lost ground, the water in the Yellow River will become clear and reflecting.” 春色欲來，先散滿天風雪[.....]中原佳氣鬱蔥蔥，河山壯宮闕。丞相功成千載，映黃流清澈。⁸¹ After this poem which still carries a somewhat optimistic tone, Ningzong’s ban on *daoxue* (*qingyuan dangjin* 慶元黨禁) never expected by Zhu Xi took place. *Daoxue* was slandered as “fake learning (*wei xue* 偽學)” and as a “rebel faction (*ni dang* 逆黨)”. Zhu Xi was dismissed from his post, and his first student Cai Yuanding 蔡元定 (1135-1198) was banished and subsequently died in Daozhou 道州.⁸² Confronted with this serious blow, Zhu Xi wrote, “With my name being listed as a member of the treacherous faction at such an old age, I feel so ashamed that I am still wearing the cap of an official. Now I finally realize this injustice is endless. I’d better be happy for the temporary leisure [because of the resignation of the post].” 老去光華奸黨籍，向來羞辱侍臣冠。極知此道無終否，且喜閑身暫得安。⁸³ After that, Zhu Xi turned to appreciate the style of religious Buddhism and Daoism in respect to his spiritual peace and encouraged himself with verses like “I will see the real tigers and dragons [referring to the inner alchemy (*neidan*

⁸¹ Guo (2000), 907.

⁸² Ningzong 寧宗 I of Benji 本紀 (emperors’ biography) 37 of vol. 37 in *History of the Song* (*Song Shi* 宋史). Tuotuo (1977), 718-728.

⁸³ Guo (2000), 838.

內丹]] form in my body. Why should I care about the meaningless earthly affairs?" 看成鼎內真龍虎，管甚人間閑是非。⁸⁴ While in his daily life, he spent much time compiling and proof reading literary works, ending up with the completion of the books *Examination on Han Yu's Writings* (*Hanwen kaoyi* 韓文考異) and *Collected Annotations to the Songs of Chu* (*Chuci jizhu* 楚辭集注). During this period, Zhu Xi's poems were primarily about expressing feelings. They were depressed and full of worries.

Before closing this chapter, I would like to emphasize that in addition to the many faces of Zhu Xi's poetry in terms of its content presented and emotions conveyed at different stages of his life, his works were also received with high praises for their artistic values throughout dynasties. For example, in his book *Selections from 15 Poets of the Song Period* (*Song shiwu jia shixuan* 宋十五家詩選), the critic Chen Xu 陳訏 (1650-1722) compliments: "Zhu Xi's poetry is incomparable in terms of its lofty spirit as well as its delicate and beautiful style, which is like Mount E'mei⁸⁵ with half of its height in the sky, so that no one else can reach his level. As for the aesthetic feeling that was presented, one can feel his breadth of mind that is like the light breeze and clear moon within it. In addition to the natural principle that was clearly embodied in his words, people a thousand years later can still imagine how broad his mind was." 朱子詩高秀絕倫，如峨眉天半，不可攀躋。至其英華髮外，又覺光風霽月，粹然有道之言，千載下可想其胸次

⁸⁴ Guo (2000), 910.

⁸⁵ It is located in Sichuan Province and famous for its precipitous and pretty scenery.

也。⁸⁶ This might well be an exaggerated compliment influenced by the great fame of Zhu Xi's philosophy of the time, but at least it suggests that his poetry is far from shallow and mediocre. Apart from being productive and diverse, there are senses of philosophical profoundness embedded within Zhu Xi's poetry.

To summarize, the above classification is meaningful in that it helps us to gain a deeper understanding of the complete picture of Zhu Xi's poetic texts, and to grasp the general content as well as the characteristics of Zhu Xi's poems at a macro level. But in order to investigate into the philosophical meanings of his poems, this kind of general categorization is still inadequate. It is vital then to go deeper into the poetry and see the underlying structure of the texts with reference to the framework of Zhu Xi's philosophical system, so that different poetic styles of Zhu Xi can be better analyzed, and the philosophical significance of his poetry within the cultivation enterprise of connecting man and nature, both philosophically and aesthetically, can be better studied. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁸⁶ 'Zhuzi shixuan' 朱子詩選, in Chen Xu (1693), 420.

CHAPTER THREE

Writing between Inner and Outer: Zhu Xi's Poetry at An Early Age

1. Overview

As discussed in the previous chapter, Zhu Xi wrote large quantities of poetry throughout his life; a fact that runs contrary to the common conception that Neo-Confucians despise literature. The primary focus and the writing style of the poems, as we have seen, varied according to different stages of his philosophical thinking. In this chapter, my aim is to examine these differences more closely, and consider how different thinking and emotional states may have shaped the appearance of a poem over and above the influences from particular events in his life. These events, in most cases, only affected the contents of poems rather than the deep structure. Specifically, I consider in detail the dynamics between outer objects, emotional feelings and intellectual thinking in Zhu Xi's literary writings.

Like other Song poets, Zhu Xi inherited a great deal from writers of previous dynasties (primarily in terms of forms and rules, imagery and its symbolizations and allusion). At the same time, however, his work demonstrates one of the features most distinctive of poetry of its time, namely the inclusion of rational arguments or philosophical discourse

into the poetic idiom.¹ However, rather than this assimilation of philosophical discourse, which is commonly understood as a defining attribute of Song poetry, I believe that what gave Zhu's work its unique appearance was his different understanding of the function of literary writings in the context of people's daily cultivation, i.e. to bridge the gap between the inner and outer world, and furthermore pre-emission (*weifa* 未發) and post-emission (*yifa* 已發),² as argued in the first chapter. Investigating the interaction between the three basic elements within poetry—outer objects, emotions and thoughts—would not only help to explain the formation of different poetry styles, but more importantly help us construct a better vision of the differing conceptions of the relationship between inner and outer, which, as I will explain in the fourth chapter, had always been the main concern in the minds of poets and poet-cum-thinkers throughout dynasties.

¹ According to Yan Yu 嚴羽 (ca. 1192-1245), poets of the Tang dynasty stressed interests and spontaneous personal feelings, so that their images were mostly creative and novel, without much influence from others. Hence Tang poetry tended to be clear, subtle and refined, conveying unlimited meanings within limited words. Song poetry tended to be odd and incomprehensible since writers focused on being unusual. They inserted discourse into poetry, they put knowledge into poetry, and they put arguments into poetry. See 'Shi bian' 詩辯, in Yan (1982), 688; 'Shi ping' 詩評, in Yan (1982), 696. Qian Zhongshu also maintains that Tang poets emphasized the vigor of personal style and romantic charm to present the poem naturally while Song poets emphasized the structure, presenting the poem with careful wording and arrangements. See Qian Zhongshu (2001), 2-7. For more discussions on the different characteristics between Tang and Song poetry, see Yoshikawa (1967), 1-48; Li Chunqing (2005), 214-224. More discussions on influences of Neo-Confucianism on literature of the Song, also see Fuller (2010), 476-556.

² There are various translations of the terms *weifa* and *yifa* in western scholarship. For example Thomas Metzger translated as "imminent issuance" and "accomplished issuance," whereas Joseph A. Adler interpreted them to be "not yet expressed" and "already expressed" when quoting Metzger's work. See Adler (2008); Metzger (1977), 87. Stephen C. Angle translated them to be "unactualized" and "actualized". See Angle (1998). Michael A. Fuller mentioned them as "what has not yet come forth" and "that which has come forth". See Fuller (2005). I follow A. C. Graham's mentioning of *fa* 發 as emission, hence translating the terms to be "pre-emission" and "post-emission" respectively. See Graham (1978), 51.

Zhu Xi advocated a plain and straightforward writing style which did not pay too much attention to wordplay, forms and allusions³, so relationships and interactions between these three crucial components of a traditional poem are relatively clear and easy to see. This contrasts with the poetry of the Jiangxi school, represented by Huang Tingjian (1045-1105), who stressed wording, rhetoric and allusions so that his emotions and thoughts were easily hidden behind the forms and thus ignored by the reader. Moreover, within the tension between objects, emotions and thoughts in the poetry, examining how principle (*li* 理), central to *lixue* 理學, works is crucial for understanding Zhu Xi's attitude to literature and the function of literary writings from the perspective of poetry analysis, as opposed to the approach of viewing them in light of philosophical texts used in the first chapter.

It is important to emphasize here that I do not consider my close reading of the poetry as literary criticism in its narrow sense. In particular, it has nothing to do with an aesthetical critique. Questions such as whether Zhu Xi is a good poet or not, and whether he is superior or inferior to other poets are not major concerns of mine, because I think this involves a different conception of literature, as argued at the beginning of the previous chapter. This will also be further elaborated in the following comparisons

³ For example in the *Discourse*, Zhu Xi criticized one of the flaws of poetry of his time: "contemporary people tend to use allusions when writing poetry". And he spoke highly of Tao Qian's poetry as "plain and bald because of being natural". In commenting on poems and poets prior to or in his time, he also stated that "poetry should be plain and straightforward, without taking much effort when writing, and the syntax should be harmonious". See Zhu (1986), vol.8.140, 3324-3328.

between the works of Zhu Xi and other poets: instead of revealing or presenting what a thing is, Zhu Xi tended to pay more attention to the relationship between the thing and his own internal mind. What he actually shows his potential readers is his conception of the perception of the outer world, or the process of exploring the right way of dealing with the relation between man and nature. So by examining the tension and changes of relationships between outer objects, personal emotions and intellectual thinking within his poetry throughout the development of his philosophy, I am aiming not only to gain a better understanding of the poetry, but also a clearer interpretation of the so-called unification of man and nature.

A comprehensive study of the inner dynamics of his poetry should be chronological, to deal with the distinct changes of style and emotions across the various stages of his life, as well as developments in his conceptualization of *lixue*. In this chapter, I shall first consider the poems in the period when Zhu Xi first started to compose, which, according to Guo Qi's chronology, was between 1148 and 1158 when Zhu Xi formally had Li Tong, the Neo-Confucian master as his teacher and began to devote himself to investigating Neo-Confucian thought.

This is the period when scholars such as Shu Jingnan, Guo Qi, Wu Changgeng hold that Zhu Xi had been accepting and appreciating ideas from both Chan Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism, according to a variety of evidence from Zhu Xi's anthologies,

discourses, poetry and his masters like Li Tong and Dao Qian's comments about him at his early age.⁴ But what I am aiming to find in this chapter is more than just evidence found that he had been writing poems directly related to different schools of thought or that he had been valuing their thoughts and representing them in his poetry. Rather I shall explain that a detailed analysis of all the poems of this time suggests that one of Zhu's primary concerns was how to rid oneself of anxieties coming from worldly affairs. Writing of these anxieties used to be one of the most important themes of Tang poetry. In order to solve the problem (without resorting to the traditional escape into nature and living a reclusive life as reflected in poetry of Wei and Jin dynasties represented by Tao Qian 陶潛 (365-427) and Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433)), Zhu Xi appealed to different types of *transcendence* that were inspired by both Daoism and Chan Buddhism but strictly speaking pertained to neither.⁵ Furthermore, to the disappointment of Zhu Xi, there are many contradictions between these different types of transcendence, and more importantly between what he intended to do and what he actually did. In all, I shall prove in this chapter that instead of having his heart and soul *indulged* in Chan Buddhism and Daoism as asserted by Shu Jingnan,⁶ essentially, in poetry at the early

⁴ Shu (1992), 77-115; Guo (2000), 1-40; Wu (1994), 11.

⁵ Transcendence as a philosophical term could be complicated in both western and eastern philosophies. In most cases in this chapter, unless otherwise clarified in the context, I am using the word in the sense that Zhu Xi wished to go beyond the limits of the finite time and space and his material experience, so that his worldly attachments which caused his annoyances could be got rid of, and he would therefore gain the pleasures of mind unobtainable by involving in societal activities and viewing objects of culture. I would argue that at his early stage, it is difficult to tell if he was actually seeking for a transcendent union with the Dao, the everlasting process of nature, or with the Buddha, the being of the pure land devoid of material experience. It is more of a literary translation of the Chinese phrase *chao* 超 or *chaoyue* 超越, which, as I will articulate later, had already become a generic word with the most general philosophical taste but complete deliverance from any partisan connotations by the Song period.

⁶ Shu (1992), 79.

age of his life, Zhu Xi had been struggling to find a solution to the contradiction between earthly annoyances and a tranquil mind, or further, a proper relationship between people's inner mind and the outer world.

Still, this was just the initial stage of Zhu becoming aware of the problem and seeking a transcendental state. In fact, the exploration of a proper solution to the contradiction between the inner and outer world had always been the main concern throughout Zhu Xi's poetry production in his life. In the next chapter, I shall examine his mature poems where he went back to worldly affairs, holding that all things in world have their principles and all these principles all together share one ultimate principle, namely *li yi fen shu* 理一分殊 (principle is one but its manifestations are many)⁷. This principle is also what explains the heavenly mandated human nature, as Zhu Xi emphasized that "human nature is just this principle" (*xing zhi shi li* 性只是理)⁸. In other words Zhu Xi believed that investigating all the principles of all the things in the world could help people comprehend the ultimate principle, and thereby understand both human nature and heavenly rule. This would be another sense of transcendence distinct from that of Daoism and Chan Buddhism. Since the viewpoint of the relationship between the inner and outer worlds had changed, the dynamics within Zhu Xi's poetry between outer objects, personal feelings and rational thoughts subsequently shifted, as did the problems. The fifth chapter of the thesis will be concerned with the poetry of Zhu Xi's

⁷ Mou (2009), 86.

⁸ Zhu (1986), vol.1.5, 83.

later period; the last, yet most important, stage of his exploration of the relationship with the outer world. It is important because, as we will see, it helps us understand the Neo-Confucian concept of aesthetics and make more sense of what they mean by the unification of the inner and outer world.

In this project I divide Zhu Xi's poetry according to the time periods traditionally associated with his philosophical development. While I am aware of the risk of this leading to a prejudiced perspective on his poems, I am confident that carefully reading the text of the poetry with minimal preconceptions can yield an interpretation that is more than a mere extension or footnote of his philosophical discourse. During these periods, Zhu Xi's poetry changed as his philosophy changed, but the relationship between these two processes was not a simple one.

2. The Position of Objects in Zhu Xi's Poetry

According to Guo Qi, there are about 160 poems written by Zhu Xi during this decade (from 1148 to 1158), including those that are roughly dated to the end of the Shaoxing reign.⁹ An encounter with the outer world appears to lie behind most of these 160 poems. At least this is what Zhu Xi would like us to believe since the titles he gave them place them very specifically in time, locale and context. Take these for example: "Two

⁹ The Shaoxing reign is from 1131 to 1162. When the poem is roughly dated by Guo Qi to the end of Shaoxing reign 紹興末 without a precise year, I just count it into productions within this early period that I am studying in this chapter.

Poems on Rising in the Morning Facing the Rain' ('Chen qi dui yu ershou' 晨起對雨二首); 'Writing on Hearing the Cicada When Staying in a Mountain Temple Overnight' ('Sushansi wen chan zuo' 宿山寺聞蟬作); 'Presented to Companions on Returning from Seeing the Moon on the River' ('Chuanshang jian yue gui shi tongxing zhe' 川上見月歸示同行者); 'Sharing Thoughts on a Moonlight Night' ('Yueye shuhuai' 月夜述懷). Among these 160 titles, there are only 52 that do not obviously refer to natural objects or scenes, like 'Eight Poems Imitating the Ancients' ('Nigu ba shou' 擬古八首), 'Expressing My Feelings' ('Shu huai' 述懷) and 'Writing on a Matter' ('Shu shi' 書事), but these are still context specific. And among these 52 poems, there are less than 10 that do not involve any relation with the outer world, being pure inner reflections or thoughts gained from reading. Other than that, it is fair to say that the natural environment constitutes an indispensable part of his early poetry.

A focus on the natural environment has been a predominant characteristic of traditional Chinese poetry ever since the first collection the *Odes*. Skimming through either the titles of important poetry collections (be it complete poems of Tang or Song), or literary critics in different dynasties reveals the importance of the outer environment. It was objects from the environment that were seen as the primary incentive for the production of a poem — as we see at the very beginning of *Ranks of Poetry* (*Shi pin* 詩品) by Zhong Rong 鐘嶸 (ca. 468-518): "it is because *qi* animates objects and objects inspire people that (people's) disposition and emotions are swayed, and expressed in

dance and song [...] nothing can be closer to poetry than that which moves heaven and earth and affects spirits and gods.” 氣之動物，物之感人，故搖盪性情，行諸舞詠 [...] 動天地，感鬼神，莫近於詩¹⁰. Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 465-520) also said in his *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (*Wen xin diao long* 文心雕龍) that “People possess seven emotions and are motivated by responding to objects. When motivated by objects and singing their intentions, nothing is unnatural.” 人稟七情，應物斯感，感物吟志，莫非自然.¹¹ Another influential Tang critic Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648) wrote while annotating the *Great Preface of the Odes* (*Shi da xu* 詩大序) that “Movements motivated by objects are called out as intentions.” 感物而動，乃呼為志.¹² Zhu Xi himself even proposed that poetry was “inspired by objects so as to express feelings” when making comments on the poetic tradition through time.¹³ This might be related to or shaped by the correlative thinking pattern of traditional Chinese texts,¹⁴ as represented by the commonly acknowledged principle of “observing objects so as to get the images” (*guan wu qu xiang* 觀物取象) of the *Classic of Change*.¹⁵

¹⁰ Chen Yanjie (1961), 1.

¹¹ Huang Shulin (2000), 64.

¹² Kong (1999b), 6.

¹³ He says in his *Discourse* that “In general, poetry making in old times is the same as nowadays. There is also the inspiration from objects, expressing of feelings and chanting of feelings and disposition ingrained in it. How can it be all about satirizing others?” 大率古人作詩，與今人作詩一般，其間亦自有感物道情，吟詠情性，幾時盡是譏刺他人? Zhu Xi (1986), vol.6.80, 2076.

¹⁴ Hall and Ames (1995)

¹⁵ It is said in *Commentary on the Appended Explanations* (*Xi ci* 繫辭) that “In antiquity when Pao Xi[Fu Xi] ruled all under heaven, he looked up and observed the images in heaven, he looked down and observed the patterns on earth, and he observed how the markings on birds and beasts were appropriate to their locales. Nearby he took it from his body, at a distance he took it from objects. Thereupon he initially made the eight trigrams, so as to know the virtue of divinities and to draw analogies to principles of all the things in the world.” 古者包犧氏之王天下也，仰則觀象於天，俯則觀法於地，觀鳥獸之文，與地之宜，近取諸身，遠取諸物，於是始作八卦，以通神明之德，以類萬物之情. See Su Xun et al. (2001), vol.1, 374. More comparison between

However, this does not mean that Zhu Xi's poems are either spontaneous (as most Tang poems were considered to be) or faithful responses to the outer world (as will be shown later in Song poetry, e.g. Su Shi's poems). Rather, Zhu's poetry demonstrates considerable tension between the inner and outer world – the emotional patterns we see are often inconsistent and sometimes even contradictory.

For most of the time in Zhu Xi's early period, the outer world that was presented in his poetry gives the feeling of being far away from both the author and the reader. It does not seem as immediately experiential as the titles suggest, not to mention how it is reconstructed by the reader. He tended not to give too much detailed description of the scenery, but rather to combine several general sketches of broader scenes together, giving the reader the feeling that even when both the title and content are about the natural environment, the visions are not vivid and lively, and the poet does not seem to be immersed in or even experiencing the scene. But this does not mean that his sketches are random. The images he chose tend to be among the most frequent images in earlier poems. Most of them were carefully selected according to traditional classics and Zhu's own understandings of the conventional links between objects and specific feelings. This helped him to present the theme of his poem symbolically and metonymically, albeit with a different emotional pattern. That is to say, nature and outside objects in his

“observing the objects so as to get the images” 觀物取象 and “inspired by objects so as to express feelings” 感物道情, see Liu Jianping (2007).

poetry at this time mainly served as vehicles for the poet's feelings or thoughts, as I shall be examining later, be they miscellaneous mundane feelings, or so-called transcendental leisurely and care-free Buddhist and Daoist feelings, or thoughts of life and ethical issues with a more Confucian flavor.

3. Ambivalence towards the Outer World: with a Close Reading of Poetry on the Rain

3.1 Abbreviated Scenes: the Rain Unfelt

Among all the natural images that appear in Zhu Xi's poetry of this first period, rain is certainly the most frequent one, as the titles clearly show. There are 15 titles indicating rain as the main object described, for example 'On Facing the Rain' ('Dui yu' 對雨), 'Autumn Rain' ('Qiu yu' 秋雨) and 'In the Rain at Jianshan Pavilion' ('Jianshan ge yu zhong' 兼山閣雨中). Rain also appeared in his other poems as a constituent of the scenes. Within so many occurrences of a single image, however, instead of trying to depict as many characteristics of the image as possible, so to present rhetorical variety and rich sentiments, the angles that the poet applies to see the object, the rhetoric devices that he prefers, the images that he uses to help represent the rain, and even the emotional patterns of different poems are largely similar. Consider, for instance, 'Two Poems on Rising in the Morning Facing the Rain after Getting up in the Morning':

Disconsolate and frigid the year nears the end	淒冽歲云晏，
Rain and snow mingle in the morning	雨雪集晨朝。
Just getting up after a good night's sleep,	高眠適方起，
I look around only to find a desolate scene.	四望但蕭條。
The remote cold vapor is veiled in whiteness,	遠氛白漫漫，
And the forest fog lifts when wind comes.	風至林靄消。
Accumulated flowing water covered barren roads	流潦冒荒塗，
The clear river is still far away	清川亦迢迢。
Looking afar my thoughts cannot exhaust	遐瞻思莫窮，
Living as usual my mind transcends naturally	端居心自超。
Surveying things while my thoughts are not placed on them	覽物思無託，
In such circumstances, I am temporarily unfettered.	即事且逍遙。
Getting up in the morning I look into the facing mountain range	晨起候前障，
White mist is vaguely floating above the forest top	白煙眇林端。

The signs of rain is yet to disappear	雨意方未已，
Whenever will the earth dry out?	后土何時乾。
Leaning against the bamboo I listen to the rustle in the air	倚竹聽蕭瑟，
Leaning over the ravine I listen to the startling torrent	俯澗聞驚湍。
How could the scenery not be fine?	景物豈不佳，
I sigh that the year is coming to an end	所嗟歲已闌。
Holding onto the way without being enslaved by things	守道無物役，
In this tranquil moment, I temporarily linger	安時且盤桓。
In seclusion, I formulate this principle	翳然陶茲理，
Poverty and sorrow are not what I bemoan	貧悴非所歎。

Despite the author indicating specifically that both poems were dedicated to the rainy scene in the morning, not a single detailed description of the natural environment appears in the poems. Both the first and the second poem inevitably involve images taken from nature, like the weather, rain, snow, cold air, wind, and forest fog, but none of them was depicted in realistic detail. The weather is just frigid, the cold air is white and just remotely veiling on top of the forest, and the wind blows away the fog. These are very general and cliché descriptions of the rainfall. The cold weather and the wind

cannot be felt, the fog cannot be seen, and there is no indication of the intensity of the rain. Without much detailed description of the imagery and not being experiential, the feeling is different from that in other poets' descriptions of similar situations. For example in Su Shi's 'Two Poems on the Rain at the Cold Food Festival' ('Han shi yu er shou' 寒食雨二首), he writes

The spring river is about to flow through my door	春江欲入戶，
Rain keeps coming and will not stop	雨勢來不已。
The little lodge is like a fishing-boat	小屋如漁舟，
Among the vast and hazy water and cloud	濛濛水雲裏。

And in another poem of Su Shi, entitled 'Torrential Rain at Youmei Hall' ('Youmei tang bao yu' 有美堂暴雨), he started with this:

A sound of thunder rolls out beneath the wanderer's feet	遊人脚底一聲雷，
A stubborn bank of clouds will not break	滿座頑雲撥不開。
A black wind from far heaven blows to roil the sea	天外黑風吹海立，
Fast-flying rain from eastern Zhe ¹⁶ comes sweeping across	浙東飛雨過江來。

¹⁶ River Zhe, ancient name of a river that refers to current Qiantang River and its upper reaches.

the river

Instead of sketching all relevant scenes with plain and straightforward narrative expressions, as Zhu Xi did for the rain, Su Shi tended to focus on particular scenes, with detailed description and various rhetorical devices. The first poem presents the scene in which the rain is continuously heavy so to cause the rising of the river level with the little lodge almost inundated. In this situation, Su compared the house to a small boat stuck in the mixture of water and cloud. All the individual natural images become supportive here to help form a detailed and vivid depiction of a rainy scene. What was described in the second poem is not necessarily one glance of the scene from a single angle, but it is still with more details and subtleties as compared with Zhu Xi's writings. The thunder rolled out of the ground beneath the wanderer's feet (which could also imply that the visitor was scared). The clouds were too dense to be broken up so that it deserved the personification of being stubborn (which could also imply a furious moving picture with the thunder). And the wind was so fierce as to become a black storm coming from the sky and blowing a heavy torrent of seawater. These close-ups within the scenes are realized with the help of a range of rhetorical devices, like the metaphor of the fishing-boat, the personification of stubborn clouds, as well as the exaggeration of far heaven, black wind and the sea being aroused. For Zhu Xi, there is barely anything like this, making the view hardly real enough to re-appear before the reader, not to mention having the reader experience and appreciate it.

3.2 Repeated Scenes: Unchanging Objects

Despite a very brief adumbration of the view in a loose fashion and uncharacteristic of the outer world, the images Zhu Xi used could be imposed on the readers if all the poems sharing the same subject are read throughout, because they tend to be predominant and repeated again and again in different poems of different occasions, which becomes another characteristic of Zhu Xi's description of natural environment. Again this shows that nature presented in his poetry is less vibrant, or that he was indifferent to it. As can be seen from the previous two poems, images that Zhu Xi applied to describe the rain were mostly the same, and the central scenes in both poems are simply identical: White fog veiling the top of the forest and the earth wet with accumulated water. The same kind of usage, especially the imagery of vapour (*fen* 氛), fog (*ai* 靄), mist (*yan* 煙), and cloudy air (*yun qi* 雲氣) floating on top of forests or mountains can be also found in a number of other poems with or without the same subject. For example in 'Listening to Rain in a Guest House' ('Ke she ting yu' 客舍聽雨), Zhu Xi wrote: "Spring fog rises from the forest, and a full sky of chilly rain begins" 春靄起林際, 滿空寒雨生. In 'On Facing the Rain', he also wrote: "Misty fog gathers on top of the forest, vast and becoming boundless" 煙靄集林端, 蒼茫欲無際. In some poems that are not about rain, there are also descriptions following this pattern, such as 'Look out at Dusk' ('Wan wang' 晚望): "Clear frost hardens on green trees and setting sun covers layers of hillocks" 清霜凝碧

樹，落日翳層丘, and ‘A Little Rest with Fellow-officials on Passing Baiyan When Going for a Memorial Ceremony to North Mountain’ (‘Yu zhu tongliao ye dian beishan guo baiyan xiaoqi’ 與諸同僚謁奠北山過白巖小憩): “The sparse forest unfolds a morning scene and jade mountain retains cloud and smoke” 疏林汎朝景，翠嶺含雲烟. These poems contain no hint of rain, but the images and scenes presented are similar, with slight variations in sentence structures and wordings. Take the first poem of ‘Two Poems on Thinking of Mountain Field’ (‘Huai shantian zuo er shou’ 懷山田作二首) for example:

The suburban garden is full of delights

郊園多所樂，

There we are at the ending of the year

況此歲云暮。

A chilly view presents itself in the far sky

寒色澹¹⁷遙空，

A clear frost in the red-turned trees

清霜變紅樹。

I fancy a look over the forest

欲舒林表望，

Who comprehends the novelties of this world?

詎識塵中趣。

At dusk it is quiet with nobody around

向晚寂無人，

Dense mist will turn into fog

氤氳欲成霧。

¹⁷ According to Guo Qi, one of the proof readings in the Song dynasty suggests that this should be the character *ai* 靄 (fog). See Guo (2000), 93.

Although the expressions are not exactly the same, the scenery presented here along with the images is not very different from those in the previous two poems about rain, even though this is supposed to be a poem on mountain fields. It is sufficient to say that vaguely floating clouds and remote mountains had (by this stage) become a stock scene in Zhu Xi's poetry of this time.

We can compare this with the poems of Zhu Xi's contemporary Su Shi and the Tang poet Du Fu who was admired by Zhu Xi. Within the oeuvres of these two poets, there are 60 and 52 poems respectively with titles referring to rain. But neither follows patterns of convention with stock scenery. There are all sorts of types of rain imagery. As the previously introduced two poems partly show, for Su Shi, the descriptions of rain tend to be vivid and with very different characteristics in different occasions. There is fast-flying heavy rain as appearing in the aforementioned "Fast-flying rain from eastern Zhe comes sweeping across the river", eloquent misty rain as depicted in "misty rain buried in deep wild woods" 深榛煙雨埋,¹⁸ lovely light rain as in "light rain with fine weather on the west lake, rippling and glittering, making the spring lotus to grow" 西湖小雨晴，濛濛春蕖長，¹⁹ romantic night rain as expressed in "overnight rain persuades people to stay and drink until sleep" 晚雨留人入醉鄉，²⁰ and winter hailing rain as

¹⁸ Su Shi (1982), 14.

¹⁹ Su Shi (1982), 81.

²⁰ Su Shi (1982), 430.

presented in “Hailing rain comes as plum blossom at night, making the red to die and the green to fade, for which I sadly sigh” 夜來雨雹如李梅，紅殘綠暗籲可哀。²¹ Just as Su Shi himself proclaimed in his essay *Self-assessment Writing* (*Zi ping wen* 自評文), he had been following the principle of “forms being determined by objects” (*sui wu fu xing* 隨物賦形)²² while producing literature, which means there is no such thing as repeated form or established pattern, a style so different from Zhu Xi.

As for Du Fu, the image of rain is also lively with different faces and depicted with divergent feelings. See for instance the very well-known poem ‘Spring Night, Delighted by Rain’ (‘Chunye xi yu’ 春夜喜雨):

Lovely rains, knowing their season,	好雨知時節，
Always appear in spring. Entering night	當春乃發生。
Secretly on the wind, they silently	隨風潛入夜，
Bless things with such delicate abundance.	潤物細無聲。
Clouds fill country lanes with darkness,	野徑雲俱黑，

²¹ Su Shi (1982), 625. More detailed analysis of the image of rain in Su Shi’s poetry, see Lu Chandi (2012).

²² Su Shi’s essay ‘Self-assessment Writing’ starts with “My writing is like tens of thousands of vessels of waterfalls. It does not need to choose where to come out. It surges and rolls on the flat ground, without any difficulty of traveling for a thousand miles a day. When it comes to the twists and turns of mountains and stones, the form is determined by objects and cannot be known” 吾文如萬斛泉源，不擇地皆可出，在平地滔滔汨汨，雖一日千里無難。及其與山石曲折、隨物賦形，而不可知也。 See Su Shi (1986b), 2069.

The one light a riverboat lamp. Then

江船火獨明。

Dawn's view opens: all bathed reds, our

曉看紅濕處，

Blossom-laden City of Brocade Officers.²³

花重錦官城。

There is a successful personification of rain in the first half of the poem, portraying the spring rain as cunning, adroit, soft and dedicated, which can be seen from the delicate usage of expressions like “knows their season”, “secretly on the wind” and “blessing things with delicate abundance”. There are also detailed depictions of other scenes that help to present the rainy environment and the lovely characters of the spring rain in the second half, which are original and refreshing. For example the description of the dark path and clouds implies the rain is yet to stop, and the close-up of dense flowers brings the feature of spring rain as moisturizing and nourishing everything to the fore. The novelty of this poem can by no means be similar to other works and the feeling embedded in it is spontaneous and unique.

Interpretations of the differences between Zhu Xi and other poets are multifarious.

However, what we can say with confidence is that on encountering nature with a variety of images, what went into Zhu Xi's mind was limited and stylized. What he perceives in

²³ Translated by David Hinton. See Hinton (1990), 61. There are also many other renowned scholarly translations of Du Fu, for example Hawkes (1967), Watson (2002) and Ono, et al. (1978), among which Hinton might be the least scholarly, but he does provide precise and enjoyable translation for this particular poem.

nature seems to accord with his pre-existing conception of the world around him. Some of these bear some resemblance to one of the traditional themes of Chinese poetry: transcendental roaming (*you xian* 遊仙), which is mostly about the protagonists' imagined journey to the celestial world. The haunting images and stock scenes shown above, for example, are also what appear frequently in conventional roaming poets' characterizations of the immortal celestial land, as what Zhu Xi described in verses "Going out I fancy the world of immortals. Raising my head (I see) the clouds embraced peak being dark green" 出門戀仙境，仰首雲峰蒼²⁴, "Clouds and mists deeply revolving around tens of thousands of layers of dark green mountains, (I want) to go to cultivate both body and soul and grow wings." 蒼山萬疊雲氣深，去鍊形魂生羽翼", etc.²⁵ This type of poetry enables poets to fantasize about a solitary escape from the mundane world into a pure land of eternal bliss, which in turn could have echoed Zhu Xi's aspiration of breaking through the limitations of time and space and acquiring a sense of relief and delight. Perhaps at this early stage of his life, he might have been interested in transcendental roaming in a general sense to seek distraction from worldly attachments.

²⁴ This line comes from the second poem of "Two Poems on Staying at Guanmiao Hall Overnight in Mount Wuyi" ('Su Wuyi Guanmiao tang er shou' 宿武夷觀妙堂二首) which, as both the title and content clearly show, are about Daoist associations while visiting a Daoist temple on a well-known Daoist mountain. Guo Qi also interprets them as specific Daoist poems via his annotation of many Daoist specific terms in the poems. See Guo (2000), 29.

²⁵ Guo (2000), 103. This kind of description is also not unusual among other Song poems of Daoist celestial realm. For example Huang Feixiong 黃非熊 writes in 'Wangxian Tower' ('Wangxian tai' 望仙臺) that "The high mountain in front of the tower is where the immortals reside. Layers of stones and thatched cottage lie opposite to the green peaks. Clouds and mists make people's paths cannot be distinguished. Instruments are always played in rainy weather." 臺前高嶽宅神仙，疊石誅茅對碧巔。雲霧不分人去路，管絃長動雨來天。 See Fu (1991), vol.7, 4940. Liu Zhi 劉植 writes in 'Viewing Waterfall When Revisiting the Stone of Immortality' ('Chong you xianyan guan pu' 重遊仙巖觀瀑) that "Where is the path to immortals. It is beside the jade green creeping plant and blue mists." 仙者路安在，翠蘿青靄邊。 See Fu (1991), vol.54, 33992.

Within this mind-set, his response to nature may still have been spontaneous, but his perception of it was undeniably fixed and narrow – despite the different occasions on which his responses were formed and the different faces nature showed him. In the next chapter where I explore Zhu Xi’s mature poetry, this will change dramatically. Overall what is worth noting here is that we cannot deem that the protagonist presented in Zhu Xi’s early poems a true Daoist, absorbed in self-cultivation, simply because of his imagination of an interstellar journey and his search for immortality, as Shu Jingnan has claimed of the young Zhu Xi.²⁶ As I will argue later, we can see in Zhu Xi’s lament on the passing of life and time, his concerns with what he called “the mundaneness”, and most importantly in the contradictions in his mind apparent in his poetry, that the transcendental roaming and the stock scenes are concerned not so much with Daoist philosophy as with literary imagination that reflected his non-partisan but wandering mind as an escapist.

3.3 Metonymy in Scenes: the Vast Outer World

In the two poems of Zhu Xi listed previously, the only rhetorical device that we can identify with any confidence is metonymy. In the third and fourth couplets of the first poem, it is possible that he tends to imply an even broader picture of the rainy scenery by describing the mist floating above the forest and accumulated water covering the

²⁶ Shu (1992), 77-115.

ground to show that what he was experiencing was something cold, wet, foggy, and windy and with a vast and vague view in front of him. The third couplet of the second poem is his imagination of what could happen in the forest. He may intend to use “listen to the rustle in the air” and “listen to the startling waves” to further imply the scene that he was enjoying himself in this beautiful natural environment. However, these are not examples of the usage of rhetoric that is normally acknowledged as impressive, because the vehicles he chose were themselves broad and blurry scenes viewed from a long-range perspective, which becomes another characteristic of Zhu Xi’s scenery poems of this time.

3.4 Long-range Perspective

Apart from this realization that his scenes are mostly distant and vast, there are also a number of other obvious references to his perspectives in the poems, for example, “looking around”, “remote cold vapor”, “looking afar”, “inspecting things” in the first poem and “looking into the facing mountain range” in the second one. These are also predominant in other poems with or without the same subject. For example the poem ‘Writing on Arriving Once Again’ (‘Zai zhi zuo’ 再至作) starts with: “As I get a brief view of the barren city, the sunset glows on the city gates” 荒城一騁望，落景麗譙門, ending with: “Straining my eyes, I return late; with whom can I discuss this feeling?” 極目歸來晚，茲懷誰與論. The poem ‘Sending the Inscription on Facing Mountain Pavilion in

Changtai to my Classmate Jin Yuanding' ('Ji ti Jin Yuanding tongnian changtai mianshan ting' 寄題金元鼎同年長泰面山亭) has in its second couplet, "Ascending a height for one brief view, looking afar to see the outside and inside thoroughly" 乘高一騁望, 表裏窮遐觀. And in the poem 'Writing about the Matter in Anxi' ('Anxi shu shi' 安溪書事), there are verses like "the mournful wind is howling in the remote forest" 悲風號遠林 and "straining my eyes to take it all in" 極²⁷目無遺眺. Again, just as the poet managed to present the images and scenes, the same type of angle of seeing things and similar wording appears repeatedly in the poems, reflecting clearly some settled pattern in his mind of perceiving and responding to the outer world.

3.5 Distance (*yuan*) and a Different Perception of Poetry

Along with the overwhelming usage of the long-range perspective from a high place, we can infer, from his poetry, that Zhu Xi tended to appreciate the spiritual realm of being remote and surpassing, expressed in traditional terms in the poems as *yuan xing* 遠興 (distant interest), *yuan yun* 遠韻 (distant charm), or *xuan yuan* 玄遠 (mysteriously distant) etc. For example he writes in 'Overcast and Rainy on the Winter Solstice' ('Dongzhi yinyu' 冬至陰雨) that "Living as usual I leave behind the official paperwork, in distant thoughts I long for solitude and purity" 端居遺簿領, 遠意懷幽潔, and in 'In Illness, Writing in My Studio' ('Bing gao zhai ju zuo' 病告齋居作), there are verses like

²⁷ According to Guo Qi, this could also be the character *yi* 一 (one). See Guo (2000), 98.

“Living loftily I develop distant interests; spring things overflow the open field” 高居生
遠興，春物彌平野，and “Free from worries the scenery begins to harmonize; matters are
far away but feelings cannot be discarded” 慮曠景方融，事遠情無捨。

The notion of *yuan* 遠 (distant) has been widely used in traditional critical appraisals of
literati and literary thoughts ever since the Wei and Jin dynasties.²⁸ This is believed to
be greatly influenced by the new current of thought at that time, known as *xuanxue* 玄
學 (“learning of the mysterious” or “profound learning”). This new philosophical sect
was developed from a radical reformulation and interpretation of the *dao* in *Laozi* and
the Book of Changes in terms of *wu* 無 (nonbeing) by Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249), who
was therefore considered to be the most important representative of philosophical
Daoism in his day.²⁹ In this sense, it is fair to say that the notion of *yuan* in most
contexts within traditional literary discourse has an essentially Daoist meaning. Verse
25 of the *Laozi* says “Greatness means passing off, and passing off means remoteness”
(*da yue shi, shi yue yuan* 大曰逝，逝曰遠)，³⁰ and Wang Bi’s interpretation is “*Shi* means

²⁸ In *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*, Liu Xie concludes eight main writing styles during that time as “when summarizing the ultimate approaches, there are eight styles to the end: one is called refined and elegant; one is called distant and profound; one is called succinct and to the point; [...] So-called distant and profound refers to the ones with fragrant expressions and refined writings, taking the classics as principle and the mysterious learning as pursuit.” 若總其歸塗，則數窮八體：一曰典雅，二曰遠奧，三曰精約 [...] 遠奧者，馥采典文，經理玄宗者也。See Huang Shulin (2000), 380. Zhong Rong comments on poetry of Lu Ji (261-303) in *Ranks of Poetry* that “the twelve poems by Lu Ji is soft and beautiful in writing, is sad and distant in meaning, and is profoundly affecting. This can almost be called ‘a single character is worth a thousand pieces of gold’” 陸機所擬十二首，文溫以麗，意悲而遠，驚心動魄，可謂幾乎一字千金。See Chen Yanjie (1961), 17. He also thinks Ji Kang’s writings to be “fresh and distant in metaphoric meanings, with differentiation and cutting. It is not falling down from first class” 然托論清遠，良有鑒裁，亦未失高流矣。See Chen Yanjie (1961), 32-33.

²⁹ For more discussions on Wang Bi and Wei Jin metaphysics, see Fraser (2008).

³⁰ Wang Bi (2008), 63.

to go. It means not keeping to a general substance. There is nowhere that the great cyclic principle cannot run, so it is called *shi* (passing off). *Yuan* means extreme. There is nothing that cannot be fulfilled to its extreme within the great cycle. It is not confined to one movement” 逝，行也。不守一大體而已。周行無所不至，故曰逝也。遠，極也。周無所不窮極，不偏於一逝。³¹ Here the meaning of *yuan* has already been extended beyond its original connotation of being far away in time and location, referring to the distance or situation surpassing time and space where the best condition of everything can be realized. It has become the status or realm that is idealized and represents the highest pursuit of Daoism. Also in *Laozi*, in vol.65, both the text and Wang’s annotation say “the immanent virtue is deep and distant” 玄德深矣，遠矣。As far as we can tell from context, “distant” in this case most likely means “profound”, which adds to the Daoist ideal realm another dimension of being spiritually transcendental. When applied in poetic thought, this becomes a particular style of poetry that reflects the poet’s mind being tranquil and surpassing. The Tang monk Jiao Ran summarized 19 characters to describe different types of poetry styles in his literary criticism entitled *Forms of Poetry* (*Shi shi* 詩式), among which there is *yuan*. He defined it as “It does not mean overlooking the wide expanse of water or looking out on the mountain from a far distance. It means being remote in mind.” 非謂淼淼望水，杳杳看山，乃謂意中之遠。³² It is worth mentioning that the identity of this literary scholar as a Buddhist monk shows

³¹ Wang Bi (2008), 63.

³² Li Zhuangying (2003), 71.

that both Daoism and Buddhism accept the notion of *yuan* as one of their spiritual pursuits.

In this context, now we understand that for Zhu Xi, the adoption of the viewing angle that is often far away from and higher than the objects not only presents his preference for broad pictures, but also indicates his metaphysical pursuit of unlimited spirit. By drawing the reader's sight over vast distances through broad and vague depictions, Zhu Xi meant to lead the mind to a level without limits, where aloofness from the crowd and an unfettered life style could be achieved. And this kind of spiritual status is characterized both in the Daoist sense of *wu* 無 (nonbeing) — i.e. that the possible is infinitely richer than the real, and nonbeing is infinitely vaster than being — and in the Chan Buddhist sense of *wu* 無 (emptiness) — i.e. that all things are equally empty, being devoid of definite nature, character, and function, and one should not be attached to anything. It is because Zhu Xi described the vast natural environment as a symbol of a transcendental and profound spirit, he tended not to care much about detailed depictions of the natural world, including delicate usage of rhetoric devices and novel selection of images and angles. Therefore, his poems convey the feeling of being far away from and indifferent to nature and present a sense of detachment from the outer world. Typical and direct representations can be found in his poem 'Six Poems on Reading Daoist Books' ('Du dao shu zuo liu shou' 讀道書作六首) where he wrote "the ultimate pleasure is within the mind, whereas mountains and rivers are not what

entertain (me)” 至樂在襟懷，山水非所娛³³, and in ‘Following the Rhyme of Cousin Zhu Zezhi’ (‘Ci Zhu Zezhi biaoqing yun’ 次祝澤之表兄韻), which includes the couplet “what is the reason for having tens of thousands of things in my mind? The setting sun and fragrant grass have their own springs and autumns” 萬事何由到懷抱？夕陽芳草自春秋”.³⁴

Furthermore, compared with the aforementioned poems of Su Shi and Du Fu of the same subject, we can now say that in writing poetry, instead of trying to present images like rain with a vividness to be directly felt and to express his immediate feelings to gain emotional resonance with the reader, Zhu Xi tended to pay more attention to the exploration of what suits his spiritual world and ways to treat its relationship with outer objects in a variety of occasional contexts. This allowed him more space within the limited structure of a poem to share with the reader his experience of pursuing an ideal inner mind, but in the meantime inevitably confined his perception of the colorful outer world to the repetition of some stock scenes and patterned perspectives. This is because what he aimed at was something unitary, a proper world view and an appropriate way to deal with the relationship between the inner and outer world. The same kind of perspective is echoed and developed further in his later poem ‘Feelings While Residing in the Studio’ (‘Zhai ju gan xing’ 齋居感興) where he started with very vague description of legendary mountains and talked about his understanding of the

³³ Guo (2000), 42.

³⁴ Guo (2000), 117.

philosophical terms and metaphysical constituents of the cosmos like *li* (principle), *qi* 氣 (vital force) and *yin* 陰 (the shady side of a hill), *yang* 陽 (the sunny side of the hill): “Kunlun is so broad that nothing can go beyond. It is of tremendous momentum and is deep and vast. The interaction of *yin* and *yang* never stops. Cold and hot are always exchanging.” 昆侖大無外，旁薄下深廣。陰陽無停機，寒暑互來往。³⁵ The only difference is that at the time of writing this poem, as we will see in the next chapter, his world view had changed, or more precisely, begun to accord with Li Tong’s Confucian teachings. So ways to the ideal state, or the relation he saw between inner and outer had changed during the time when his thoughts was maturing, but what remained the same throughout his life was his conception of the perception of the outer world.

3.6 Difficult Disengagement from the Outer World

If we take a closer look at his poems, it appears that the idealized situation of being disengaged from the outer world was not easy for Zhu Xi to realize. In his poems, the subjective involvement of the poet with the outer world is predominant and overwhelming, when compared with, for example, the Tang poet Wang Wei who is famous for his poems of natural sceneries like mountains and rivers, and who successfully managed to keep an appropriate distance from the objects so to let them

³⁵ Guo (2000), 370.

present themselves in their original form and without significant subjective distortion.

In Wang Wei's best-known poem 'Deer Park' ('Luzhai' 鹿柴), he wrote:

Empty mountain: no one seen,	空山不見人，
Yet the echoes of human voices can be heard.	但聞人語響。
Returning rays enter the deep woods,	返景入深林，
And light up the dark-green moss.	復照青苔上。

Living a lifestyle close to that of a Buddhist monk, with a deep faith in Buddhism, and as a master of Buddhist teachings,³⁶ Wang Wei presented the natural scenery here to be completely disengaged from the self and without any trace of the self. There are no emotive qualifiers that smuggle in subjective overtones, there is no semantic bias toward nature, and there is no reference to a responsive self enjoying the scene. He did not step into the poem, instead letting the scenery speak and act for itself – keeping himself entirely *outside* of the outer world.³⁷

On the contrary, in Zhu Xi's poems, first, many personalized adjectives, serving as emotive qualifiers, are imposed on the objects and environment. For example in "Two

³⁶ See "Biography of Wang Wei", in Liu Xu (1975), 5051. Also see Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi (1975), 5764.

³⁷ For more analysis of this poem and its potential Buddhist overtones, see Eoyang (1978); Yip (1972), xi; Seaton (2000).

Poems on Rising in the Morning Facing the Rain’, he used the word *qi lie* 淒冽 (disconsolate and frigid) at the very beginning to describe the scene at the end of year which transmits an abstract feeling of sorrowfulness coming from nowhere but the poet’s subjective mind. In the second couplet of the poem, he used another abstract and subjective word *xiao tiao* 蕭條 (desolate) to confine the scene and stamp his own emotion on the outer world, without mentioning any concrete images that might have provoked the feeling. This also appears frequently in other poems of this period. In ‘Two Poems at Autumn Eventide’ (‘Qiu xi er shou’ 秋夕二首), he wrote “How desolate are the cold leaves, woefully lamenting among the trees in the courtyard” 涼葉何蕭蕭，悲吟庭樹間。 In ‘Two Poems for Autumn Feelings’ (‘Qiu huai er shou’ 秋懷二首), he wrote “the woods are immersed in sadness and dreariness” 林深慘悲涼。 And in ‘Presented to Zijin on a Rainy Zhongyuan Festival’ (‘Zhongyuan yu zhong cheng Zijin’ 中元雨中呈子晉), he portrayed the shaking trees in courtyard as elegant and remote, to fit them with his own idealized spiritual realm.

Second, the direct involvement of the self is also apparent in occurrences of performative verbs indicating first person subject and in descriptions of the self enjoying or interacting with the scene. The previously analyzed verbs implying mostly long-range perspectives is one of the most typical cases in point, like *kan* 看 (look), *wang* 望 (look over), *zhan* 瞻 (look up), *lan* 覽 (inspect), *guan* 觀 (view), *tiao* 眺 (look afar), etc. And there are also other verbs like *xun* 尋 and *mi* 覓, generally

translated as looking for or seeking for, referring to what the poet was expecting from nature. Apart from this, scenes in which the poet was interacting with nature by different means are also pervasive. The first example at hand is from the *Two Poems*: “Leaning against the bamboo I listen to the rustling; leaning over the ravine I listen to the startling waves” 倚竹聽蕭瑟，俯澗聞驚湍, which reflects the poet enjoying things in the woods. Another similar instance is in ‘Passing Through the Forest Path’ (‘Chuan lin jing’ 穿林徑) where the Zhu Xi wrote “Walking and hearing mountain birds chirping, mixed with the sound of the spring underneath” 行聞山鳥鳴，下與泉聲亂. Rather than appreciating the experience in nature, there were other kinds of engagements that made him not at ease because of the conflict between his inner and outer world. For example in ‘The Ninth Day’ (‘Jiu ri’ 九日), he wrote “Wind and mist, late in the year, add to the grief of separation” 風煙歲晚添離恨 and “Unworthy of the fragrance of yellow flowers filling the hat” 辜負黃花滿帽香. Finally, the context provided in titles of his poems mostly gives a strong indication of the closely entangled relationship between the self and nature.

Hence, for Zhu Xi, neither the pursuit of detachment from the outer world in order to reach the ultimate realm of being spiritually free, as proposed by philosophical Daoist thought, nor ridding the self of earthly annoyances which Chan Buddhism suggests as simply illusions, can be easily achieved. This means he needed to transcend his inner self, or at least his emotional attachment with the environment before he could

transcend the outer world, because the thing presented tends to be so distorted by the self and stamped by his personal emotions. This is also why mostly in the second half of his poems, the transition and summing up parts in classical poetry writing,³⁸ the emotions and thoughts disclosed are usually entangled and contradictory, which does not match his expectation and bothered him immensely.

4. Contradictions in Zhu Xi's Mind

In most of his scenery poems of this period, the transitional and concluding parts tend to convey a keen desire to be spiritually transcendent of worldly affairs. However, if we take a closer look at each ideal situation that Zhu Xi described in his scenery poems, it turns out that there are essentially different types of transcendence that he had been pursuing. This led Shu Jingnan in his biography of Zhu Xi to simply conclude that Zhu Xi had dedicated himself to Daoism and Buddhism learning before he formally began to follow the teachings of Li Tong.³⁹ However, a close reading of his poetry yields a more complex picture.

³⁸ It is commonly acknowledged by traditional Chinese literati that there are four steps in the composition of an essay or poem, called *qi* 起 (introduction or opening), *cheng* 承 (developing or elucidation of the theme), *zhuan* 轉 (changing or transition to another viewpoint) and *he* 合 (concluding or summing up). Its earliest occurrence can be found in *Poetry Rules of the School* (*Shi fa jia shu* 詩法家數) and *Correct View on Poetry Rules* (*Shi fa zheng lun* 詩法正論) in the Yuan dynasty, and it has become prevailing since Ming and Qing. It is also convincingly argued by Wu Zhenglan that people has begun to think of poetry writing in generally the same way since Song and its very origin can be traced back to the Five Dynasties or even earlier. See Wu Zhenglan (2003).

³⁹ Shu (1992), 77-115.

Actually even a rough skimming of the titles reveals that Zhu Xi had been writing poems specifically about his understandings and aspirations of Daoist life and Buddhist life respectively throughout his early years. There are a considerable number of poems about Buddhist and Daoist temples and related places that he visited in his travels, like 'Two Poems on Staying at Guanmiao Hall Overnight in Mount Wuyi'⁴⁰ ('Su Wuyi Guanmiao tang er shou' 宿武夷觀妙堂二首) and 'Writing on Staying at a Mountain Temple Overnight and on Hearing the Cicada' ('Su shansi wen chan zuo' 宿山寺聞蟬作). There are poems dealing specifically with his encounters with natural images when reading Buddhist or Daoist works, like 'Chanting Sutras in My Studio in a Long Rain' ('Jiu yu zhai ju songjing' 久雨齋居誦經) and 'Two Poems Pacing the Void'⁴¹ ('Buxu ci er shou' 步虛詞二首). And there are also poems about his quiet contemplation of Buddhist and Daoist theories without any outer stimulation, like 'Six Poems on Reading Daoist Books' ('Du dao shu zuo liu shou' 讀道書作六首) and 'Chanting Sutras' ('Song jing' 誦經). Apart from these, there are also Confucian values and attitudes to life that appear in his poems from time to time, like one of his earliest poems 'Piece on Travelling Afar' ('Yuan you pian' 遠遊篇) where he expressed his burning ambition for great life achievements. Zhu Xi later described to his disciples what he had been learning during this period like this: "There was nothing that I would not learn when I was young. I was eager to learn

⁴⁰ Guanmiao hall is a Daoist construction in Mount Wuyi which is traditionally considered to be one of the Daoist Holy Lands.

⁴¹ Song of Stepping on the Void (*buxu ci* 步虛詞) refers to incantations used in Daoist ritual performances together with chanting scriptures and praises.

Chan Buddhism, Daoism, rituals and laws, *the Songs of Chu*, poems and military strategies and tactics, all of which have to be learnt.”⁴².

Having studied and accepted so many different schools of philosophy, it is possible that the emotions and thoughts revealed in his individual poems tend to be incompatible with each other, because of the essential differences ingrained within these confronting philosophical schools. Not only do different poems express different philosophical ideas. There is sometimes no consistency in the way Zhu dealt with natural images, the way he saw his relationship with the outer world, the realm he longed for or the thing he pursued—even within a single poem. This shows the paradox of Zhu seeking emancipation from any constraints on the one hand, and on the other hand his incapability of detaching from the outer world and the concomitant worrisome concerns of earthly affairs. Ultimately, he could only play around and switched from time to time between different modes of perception, seeking for an escape into nature and transcendence that was only temporary and very narrow.

Again, this is apparent in the ‘Two Poems on Rising in the Morning Facing the Rain’. First of all, as previously shown, Zhu Xi intentionally used a long-range perspective and broad delineations to deal with the outer world, so as to give the impression of an alienated relationship between inner and outer. This fits well with his mindset of appreciating a

⁴² Zhu (1986), vol.7.104, 2620.

world that transcends all outer objects and where he can find inner peace and spiritual freedom. But in the meantime he imposed a considerable amount of subjective adjectives stamped with his own worldly emotions on the outer world that he encountered and described, so that what he actually presented tends to be a confined nature with the projection of the self, rather than the Daoist ideal outlined in the *Zhuangzi*: “he treats things as things, and is not a thing to them” 物物而不物於物⁴³ or what the sixth Chan patriarch Hui Neng 惠能 (638-713) taught: “do not develop your mind within the phenomenal world” 不于境上生心.⁴⁴ This reveals the fact that at least in Zhu Xi’s scenery poems, he was not able to disengage from the outer world so to realize the transcendence in either the Daoist or Buddhist sense. And this entangled situation is a representation of his inner world where, as expressed mostly in the second half of the poems, it is filled with inconsistencies and contradictions.

4.1 Ambiguous Usage of Philosophically Suggestive Expressions

There is not an obvious framing in a Daoist, Buddhist or Confucian context for readers to ascertain the *dao* and *li* that Zhu Xi advocated “holding onto” and “formulating” at the very end of the second rain poem. All the philosophies speak of both *dao* and *li* as their core concepts and endow them with broad scope and extraordinary depth of meanings ;

⁴³ ‘The Tree on the Mountain’ (‘Shan mu’ 山木) in *Outer Chapters (Wai pian 外篇)*, *Zhuangzi*. See Guo Qingfan (1961), 668.

⁴⁴ Xu Wenming (2006), 43.

these meanings both overlap and conflict with each other.⁴⁵ Apart from *dao* and *li*, most other seemingly philosophical expressions in these poems are also ambiguously used without any hint of their original meanings. One example is the notion *chao* (transcendence 超) in the verse “living as usual my mind transcends naturally”. Tracing the possible sources of this notion, we can find it in both Daoist scriptures and Buddhist sutras prior to Zhu Xi’s time.⁴⁶ This situation here echoes the argument made by David W. Tien in his dissertation on the religious thought of Tang dynasty scholar-officials. He asserts that religions in Tang subtly borrow or even outright plagiarize discursive resources from one another, so it would be difficult to get at the objective origins or at a conclusive judgment for one side or another. In the thought of Tang literati, the

⁴⁵ More discussions on the original meanings of *dao* and its divergent developments, see Cheng (2004).

⁴⁶ In Daoist texts, the entry of *chao* first appears in the sense of being transcendence of time and space so to get rid of worldly annoyance in *Xu wu gui* 徐無鬼, in *Miscellaneous Chapters (Za pian 雜篇)* of *Zhuangzi*, as “spurning the dust” 超軼絕塵. See Guo Qingfan (1961), 819. And then in *Daodejing*, as “although he may have brilliant prospects to look at, he quietly remains (in his proper place), indifferent to them” 雖有榮觀，燕處超然. See Wang Bi (2008), 69. After that it appears continuously and increasingly with various collocations in later Daoist texts. For example there is “transcend life and death” (*chao sheng si* 超生死) in the ‘Four Spirits’ (‘Si fu’ 四符) chapter of *Scriptures of Wen Shi (Wen Shi zhenjing 文始真經)*; there is “transcend to the broad expanse of heaven” (*chao sheng hao cang* 超升昊蒼) in ‘Huang Di’ 黃帝 chapter of *Biography of all the Immortals (Liexian zhuan 列仙傳)*, and “being transcendental and living long” (*chaoran changsheng* 超然長生) in ‘Zhu Huang’ 朱璜, etc. And it has become prevailing in works of religious Daoism since Wei and Jin dynasties. For instance there are a large number of occurrences of this notion in various forms in the Eastern Jin book *Bao pu zi* 抱朴子, a summary of all the theories of immortals since Warring States period. See Zhang Jiyu (2010), 8: 13, 45: 2; 45: 14; 18: 158-169. In Buddhist sutras, there is the expression of “transcending the Buddha and surpassing the patriarch” 超佛越祖 in vol.17 of *The Record of the Transmission of the Lamp in Jingde (Jingde chuandeng lu 景德傳燈錄)*, meaning surpassing the ultimate realm of Buddha, not being obsessed by any matter so to reach the absolute freedom. See *Foguang da cidian* 佛光大辭典 (Taipei: Foguang Press, 1988), 5281. And earlier than that, there is also the cultivation method called “transcending the samadhi” 超越三昧 noted in vol. 81 of *Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom (Da zhi du lun 大智度論)* translated in the Northern and Southern Dynasties. It is composed of two reverse direction cultivation methods called “going into the samadhi” (*chao ru sanmei* 超入三昧) and “going out of the samadhi” (*chao chu san mei* 超出三昧), meaning Buddha or other well-cultivated men can transcend heaven and earth and travel freely in the deep meditation. See *Foguang da cidian* 1988, pp. 236, 3174, 4842, 5284. So the concept of transcendence is also deeply rooted in Buddhism teachings.

supposed conflicts and boundaries between different sides actually appear to be a great deal harder to pinpoint than one would expect. Hence, he believes that a more effective framework to interpret Tang religious history is to treat the various terms, phrases, concepts, images, artifacts, and other such elements as resources that can compose repertoires, which people employ to help them meet the vicissitudes of life and to make sense of the world.⁴⁷ As for the situation in the Song dynasty, he also found evidence of people consciously or unconsciously using free-floating discursive resources in their vocabulary and thinking without any clear origin. One example is the frequent usage of “returning to one’s nature” (*fixing* 復性) by the Cheng brothers. The term is argued by Barrett to be directly derived from Tang commentaries on Daoist classics.⁴⁸ Now we can see that the same is true of Zhu Xi. He just used the notion of *chao* here as a free-floating resource. The difference is that instead of laying claims and counter-claims of authority over this resource because of the involvement in the socio-political, intellectual, and cultural dynamics at play, Zhu Xi’s use of it is not subject to any particular discursive context and without any clear intention of referring to any content or meaning other than an ambiguous spiritual realm. This indiscriminate use of discursive resources we find in his early work contrasts with later, when he very consciously refused to use the expression *fixing* and denied that its proposer Li Ao 李翱 (772-841) was part of the Confucian orthodoxy because Zhu was unsatisfied with the phrase’s involvement in Buddhist teachings. This shows that Zhu Xi’s mind was unclear and non-partisan at that

⁴⁷ Tien (2009)

⁴⁸ Barrett (1992), 91.

time. He had some vague idea of an ideal spiritual state, yet without knowing its specific content and how to realize it.

4.2 Contradictions within Types of Transcendence

Moreover, no matter in what sense he meant to use “my mind transcends naturally”, it contradicts the first half of the couplet where the writer moved from natural scenery to his inner thoughts. The whole couplet is “Looking afar my thoughts cannot cease; living as usual my mind transcends naturally”. He described his mind as being with ceaseless thoughts in the first verse, and having realized an accompanying spontaneous transcendence in the second verse of the couplet. If he used the notion of transcendence or the character *chao* here in a Daoist style, I would say that the logic and the status of mind shown here is utterly incompatible, because Daoism teaches that spontaneous transcendence can only be realized after people get rid of various kind of thinking. Zhuangzi proposed in the ‘Ingrained Ideas’ (‘Ke yi’ 刻意) chapter that “The life of the sage is (like) the action of Heaven...His life seems to float along; his death seems to be a resting. He does not think or indulge any anxious doubts;⁴⁹ he does not lay plans

⁴⁹ Here James Legge translates *bu si lü* 不思慮 as “does not indulge any anxious doubts”. But according to *Gudai hanyu cidian* 古代漢語詞典, both the compound *si lü* and the word *lü* have an indispensable meaning of *si*, meaning to think, and referring to the behavior of thinking in a very broad and mostly positive sense. For example the usage of *lü* in the *locus classicus* of *The Analects*: “If a man take no thought about what is distant, he will find sorrow near at hand” 人無遠慮, 必有近憂. See *The Analects*, vol.15 in Zhu (1983), 164. And the usage of *lü* as worries or concerns appears much later than that period. So I think it is more appropriate to translate the *si lü* here as “think or indulge any anxious doubts”.

beforehand” 聖人之生也天行...其生若浮，其死若休；不思慮，不豫謀。⁵⁰ He also said in the ‘Correcting One’s Nature’ (‘Shan xing’ 繕性) chapter that “...those who would regulate their desires, by the vulgar ways of thinking, seeking thereby to carry their intelligence to perfection, must be called deluded and ignorant people” 滑欲於俗，思以求致其明，謂之蔽蒙之民。⁵¹ And in the chapter ‘Knowledge Wandering in the North’ (‘Zhi bei you’ 知北遊), Zhuangzi conveyed his idea via the Yellow Emperor that “To exercise no thought and no anxious consideration is the first step towards knowing the Dao; to dwell nowhere and do nothing is the first step towards resting in the Dao; to start from nowhere and pursue no path is the first step towards making the Dao your own” 無思無慮始知道，無處無服始安道，無從無道始得道。⁵² Hence it is sufficient to say that if Zhu Xi meant to express the transcendence in a Daoist style, he then presented an antinomy in this poem: Being transcendental means being infinite and surpassing all things, while thinking can only be about things, not the *dao*. Real transcendence in Zhuangzi’s sense is limited and biased by the thoughts, which, ambivalently, is what Zhu Xi cannot cease to do.

Likewise, if Zhu Xi meant to pursue the natural transcendence in a Buddhist way, the two verses of the couplet are still mutually incompatible. Because the cultivation method that Zhu Xi received from the Chan Buddhism master Dao Qian 道謙 (?-1155) at that time was “sudden enlightenment”(*dunwu* 頓悟). This is more of a spontaneous

⁵⁰ Guo Qingfan (1961), 539.

⁵¹ Guo Qingfan (1961), 547.

⁵² Guo Qingfan (1961), 731.

resonance in mind and opposite to thinking, as Zhu Xi later described when recalling the situation when he first met with his Chan master: “When I was fifteen or sixteen years old, I also used to pay attention to this. One day I met with a monk at Bingweng’s place and talked to him. The monk just echoed what I said, without judging right and wrong. But I told Liu that I have understood the bright and mysterious Chan” 某年十五、六時，亦嘗留心於此。一日在病翁所會一僧，與之語。其僧只相應和了說，也不說是不是；卻與劉說：“某也理會得個昭昭靈靈底禪”。⁵³ Also, when Zhu Xi was living together with Liu Zihui 劉子翬 (1101-1147) after his father’s death, there was a debate between Dao Qian’s master Zong Gao 宗杲 (1107-1163) and Liu Zihui, where Zong Gao summarized the method of sudden realization as “once understand all things are understood, once awakened all things are awakened from, once testified all things are testified. It is like chopping knotted thread. Once chopped, it is untied all of a sudden. Witnessing the boundless Dharma is the same” 一了一切了。一悟一切悟。一證一切證。如斬一結絲。一斬一時斷。證無邊法門亦然。⁵⁴ This means that one needs to get to a point where he can instantly be awakened and detached from all things before he can get the idea that Buddha transmits and the Buddhist sense of transcendence. In this case how would he be able to get there without having his mind cleared of all things in the world? This is like the verses Zhu Xi composed in the poem ‘Wulin’ 武林: “It is just that I do not have a mind to get annoyed, (leaving) the wind and moon on the west lake to play with the tiny

⁵³ Zhu (1986), vol.7.104, 2620.

⁵⁴ *Dahui Pujue chanshi yulu* 大慧普覺禪師語錄 (Discourse of Chan Master Dahui Pujue), vol.27. See Takakusu Junjirō et al. (1924-1932 [-1935]), T47, no. 1998A, p. 925, c19-21.

boat” 只我無心可愁得，西湖風月弄扁舟。⁵⁵ Chan Buddhism teaches people not to pin their minds on objects or any particular scenes so to become Buddha. This kind of transcendence can under no circumstances be realized if the person cannot cease his thoughts on worldly things.

Apart from that, the last couplet of the first rain poem writes “Inspecting things while my thoughts are not pinned on them; in such circumstances, I am temporarily unfettered”. The two verses from which it is composed are also contradictory to each other. Zhu Xi declared that he had reached a spiritual level where he inspected things without having his thoughts pinned on them on the one hand, whereas on the other hand he announced his indulgence by saying “in such circumstances, I am temporarily unfettered”. He was able to get disengaged from outer things and not rest his thoughts on them. This is similar to the discourse of Zhuangzi that says “go along with things and let your mind move freely” 乘物以遊心 and “let your mind travel through the illimitable” 遊心於無窮. Thus he would be free and unfettered despite the arising of whatever things and circumstances. Then why is it only about current circumstances and only temporarily? In addition, the most important and very likely the earliest occurrence of the notion of being free and unfettered (*xiao yao* 逍遙) was in *Enjoyment in Untroubled Ease* (*Xiaoyao you* 逍遙遊) in Zhuangzi.⁵⁶ What Zhuangzi meant by *xiao yao* was a status where the human mind is liberated from all instrumental rationality,

⁵⁵ Guo (2000), 888.

⁵⁶ See Guo Qingfan (1961), 1-42.

passions, desires and finite achievements, by transcending the unending inquiry of the external world, which only leads to self-misunderstanding. In this sense, the real realm of being free and unfettered is without any realistic attachment to any specific matter; otherwise it makes people shallow in their sensitivity to heaven's work.⁵⁷ So apart from the conflicts between the two verses, the expression "in such circumstances, I am temporarily unfettered" is self-contradictory as well. It is also possible that this is another random use of expression as a free-floating resource, indicating that the author was not clearly aware of what he wanted to reach, not to mention the approaches of getting there. In this case, consistency would not be possible. The same type of antinomy also appears in the penultimate couplet of the second poem when Zhu Xi wrote "holding onto the way without being enslaved by things; in this tranquil moment, I temporarily linger".⁵⁸

⁵⁷ "Deep in their passions and desires, they are shallow in the sensitivity to Heaven's working" 其耆欲深者，其天機淺。 *The Great and Most Honored Master (Da zong shi 大宗師)*, Zhuangzi. See Guo Qingfan (1961), 228. Translation see Watson (1968), 77-78.

⁵⁸ One of the earliest occurrence of "enslaved by things" in similar meaning can be found in 'Zhengming' 正名 chapter of *Xunzi*: "This is the so-called self being enslaved by things" 夫是之謂以己為物役矣。 But the "things" that both Xunzi and Zhu Xi used refer to different things with close readings of respective contexts. According to previous discussions of Xunzi, what he was primarily dealing with here is people's moral cultivation. He was worrying that people might be indulging too much on material enjoyment rather than seeking for ethical values so as not to reach inner peace. So the "things" that Xunzi described as might enslave people are those situations appearing in his text as "with all meat in mouth" 口銜芻豢, "with music of bell and drum in ears" 耳聽鐘鼓, "seeing gorgeous patterns on robes" 目視黼黻 and "sitting on bamboo mat, soft and warm" 輕煖平簟. See An Xiaolan (2007), 262-263. In Zhu Xi's poems, there is not any mention of luxurious material life of this kind at all. What he cannot put aside at this age that is revealed in his poems are mostly worries, triggered by outer images, of getting old without making much achievement, either of Confucian achievement of establishing a remarkable career, or of Daoist or Buddhist achievement of reaching a high spiritual level in spontaneous freedom and undefiled infinitude. And these worries mostly came from his awareness of human finitude and the vicissitude of worldly affairs, which contrasted or sometimes echoed his observations of the outer natural world. It is fair to say that the enslaving "things" that he mentioned in the poems mainly refer to images or sceneries or objects of the outer world in a broad sense, since the anxieties haunting him came and went together with the changes of his understandings of the outer world. The idea of "sticking to the way without being enslaved by things" is then very close

Also in the second poem, it is evident that Zhu Xi's lamenting of the year coming to an end, implying that everything inevitably has an end or death, which is sorrowful, fundamentally conflicts with his proclamation of not being enslaved by things in the following verse, which would mean seeing the beginning and end of things as well as life and death of people as the natural rhythm of cosmic creativity. People should follow this natural rhythm so as to attain the way of freedom instead of imposing themselves on specific forms of existence. This further demonstrates Zhu Xi's incapability of getting detached from the external world so to reach his ideal inner tranquility.

These poems are also sometimes observed to contain some Confucian elements. The ideas expressed in the verse "In such circumstances, I am temporarily unfettered" and the verse "In this tranquil moment, I temporarily linger", which were previously argued to be self-contradictory, bear some resemblance with some sayings of Zeng Dian 曾點 (fl. 525-504 BC), one of the most famous examples of Confucian way of pleasure in *The Analects*. When Kongzi asked about the wishes of his disciples, among all the ambitious wishes of social achievements, Zeng Dian simply answered "In this, the last month of spring, with the dress of the season all complete, along with five or six young men who have donned the cap, and six or seven boys, I would wash in the Yi, enjoy the breeze among the rain altars, and return home singing" 莫春者，春服既成。冠者五六人，童子

to Zhuangzi's discourse of "he treats things as things, and is not a thing to them: where is his liability to be involved in trouble?" This could be another example of Zhu Xi's random and unconscious use of undifferentiated phrases in addition to the contradictory verses and lines.

六七人，浴乎沂，風乎舞雩，詠而歸。⁵⁹ This shows a Confucian way of getting along with nature and life, a modest and practical perception of their career of reconstructing an ethical social order. This is very likely to be the origin of what Zhu Xi later developed in his *lixue* thought as the ultimate spiritual realm of “eagles flying and fishes jumping” (*yuan fei yu yue* 鳶飛魚躍), meaning enjoying the pleasure of fulfilling the great principle of nature. This will be further discussed in the following chapters. In addition, the last verse of the poem, i.e. “poverty and sorrowfulness are not what I bemoan”, is analogous to Kongzi’s commendation of Yan Hui 顏回 (521-481 BC): “Admirable indeed was the virtue of Hui! With a single bamboo dish of rice, a single gourd dish of drink, and living in his mean narrow lane, while others could not have endured the distress, he did not allow his joy to be affected by it. Admirable indeed was the virtue of Hui!” 賢哉回也！一簞食，一瓢飲，在陋巷。人不堪其憂，回也不改其樂。賢哉回也！⁶⁰ Both of them expressed the indifference to external material conditions and implied the emphasis on a noble aspiration of moral or spiritual achievements.

4.3 Contradictions within Poem Series

Within a poem series, there are also contradictions between discrepant ideologies, for example the Daoist-inspired deconstruction of the function of language and the idea of mutually supportive communications between friends as in ‘Two Poems Presenting to

⁵⁹ ‘Xian jin’ 先進, in Zhu (1983), 130.

⁶⁰ ‘Yong ye’ 雍也, in Zhu (1983), 87.

Wei Dunfu in the Rain, Cherishing the Memory of Huang Zihou' ('Yu zhong shi Wei Dunfu jian huai Huang Zihou er shou' 雨中示魏惇夫兼懷黃子厚⁶¹二首). After bald sketches of the raining scene in his patterned approach previously discussed, Zhu Xi ended the first poem with the couplet "I wish to preserve the charm of being non-active and peaceful and together with you, I am without words" 欲將冲靜趣，與子俱忘言. Up to this point, this is a poem of seemingly Daoist style, presenting Laozi's slogan of *wu wei*, literally non-action, meaning acting in a natural (effortless or spontaneous) way so to follow the flux of *dao*. It also conveys the writer's appreciation of Zhuangzi's thought of *wang yan*, forgetting the words,⁶² which is later echoed by Chan Buddhism as part of the well-known claim to be different from mainstream Buddhism: "A special transmission outside the scriptures; Not using words or letters; Direct pointing to the human mind; Seeing one's own nature to attain Buddhahood" 教外別傳，不立文字，直指人心，見性成佛.⁶³ But in the second poem of the series, Zhu Xi began to express his regret for the absence of his friend and the consequent loneliness he felt. He wrote "Feeling lonely I speak to my friend (Wei Dunfu) and when talking face to face I recall the knowledgeable and virtuous person (Huang Zihou)" 寂寞謝朋儔，晤語懷雋彥. The idea of sharing thoughts with like-minded friends is typically Confucian, as it is said in *The Analects*: "The superior man [...] by friendship helps his virtue" 君子 [...] 以友輔仁.⁶⁴ It is in

⁶¹ Huang Zhu 黃銖(1131-1199).

⁶² Zhuangzi said in *What Comes from Without (Wai wu 外物)* of *Miscellaneous Chapters (Za pian 雜篇)* "when the ideas are apprehended, men forget the words" 得意而忘言. See Guo Qingfan (1961), 944.

⁶³ *Qiannan huideng lu 黔南會燈錄* (The Record of the Meeting of the Lamp in South Qian), vol.1. See Maeda Eun and Nakano Tatsue (1905-1912), 2B:18, p. 370, a2.

⁶⁴ 'Yan Yuan' 顏淵 in Zhu (1983), 140.

The Analects that the conception of friends or friendship is repeatedly mentioned and emphasized.

But for Zhuangzi, the highest pursuit, the *dao* is ineffable, because our capacity to talk about it is limited by our linguistic capacity. The *dao* is infinite, and it transcends all things, whereas our language can express and discuss only things. In this sense, all the discussions and theories about the *dao* are limited and biased by our language. This is why Zhuangzi did not mention much about friendship and the occurrences of *you* (friend) in *Zhuangzi* are much less than those in *The Analects*. Moreover, in order to give prominence to his life praxis of following the cosmic rhythm, Laozi even bore a rather negative attitude towards communication, as exemplified by the words in *Daodejing* that “There should be a neighboring state within sight, and the voices of the fowl and the dogs should be heard between us, but I would have the people live to old age, even to death, not having any intercourse with each other” 鄰國相望，雞犬之聲相聞，民至老死不相往來.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the conception of loneliness was used in a much narrower sense here in this poem, referring to the depressive personal emotion owing to the condition of solitary isolation, as compared with the ontological sense that Zhuangzi indicated when saying “Vacancy, stillness, placidity, tastelessness, quietude, silence, and doing-nothing are the root of all things” 夫虛靜恬淡，寂寞無為者，萬物之本也.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Wang Bi (2008), 190.

⁶⁶ *The Way of Heaven (Tian dao 天道)* in *Outer Chapters, Zhuangzi*. See Guo Qingfan (1961), 457.

5. Other Types of Poetry

Apart from the poetry type I have discussed above, there is also poetry on other topics written and recorded at this early stage of Zhu Xi's life. Poems written about or for his friends or other specific readers, namely poetry dealing with other selves, and poems about his inner reflections obtained while reading or self-cultivating, i.e. poetry dealing with his own self, are two major types in addition to scenery poems that are directly related to his encounters with the natural world. As I noted at the very beginning of this chapter, the number of poems on these topics is not as large as that of poems of natural scenery. The number of poems about pure inner world is especially limited. As for poetry related to other people, much of it overlaps with scenery poems. Although some poems mention a specific person or not unusually a group of people as the addressee in the titles, they might actually be chanting the poet's personal sentiments as polite and fancy responses to other people's writing of the same subject or the same rhythms. So more often than not, what he showed to others was not much different from what was written in a scenery poem. For example 'Responding to Zihou's Work on Singing about the Snow' ('Feng chou Zihou yong xue zhi zuo' 奉酬子厚詠雪之作), which addressed Huang Zhu as a potential reader, is essentially a scenery poem about the snowy view and the poet's personal feelings and thoughts on seeing it. The only difference is that there is this notable occurrence of a third party that becomes another constituent of the outer world other than just the protagonist and nature. Aside from a very small number

of poems, as I previously mentioned, nearly all of Zhu Xi poems unavoidably involve the relationship between inner and outer, which is basically decided by what Zhu Xi believed to be the nature of poetry, as he said in the preface of his *Collected Annotation of the Odes* (*Shi ji zhuan* 詩集傳): “Poetry is what is left when human hearts are inspired or stimulated by objects and then embodied in words” 詩者，人心之感物而形於言之餘也。⁶⁷ This means that all the tensions that exist in between inner and outer in his scenery poetry could still exist in other types of his poetry despite a different emphasis of content.

One example of this is the poem ‘Presenting to Huang Zihou’ (‘Cheng Huang Zihou’ 呈黃子厚):

In the thatched cottage and far away from mundane affairs, 茅齋塵事遠，

(I) am infinitely stimulated in this serene solitude. 幽獨興無窮。

All day, I sigh indoors, 永晝呻吟內，

An intensified sense of coldness comes along with my melancholiness. 新涼愁思中。

The rosy face of a beauty is not what it was yesterday, 朱顏非昨日，

⁶⁷ Zhu (2007), 1.

And green hair at her temples encounters the autumn wind.

綠鬢又秋風。

The treasured guest in the east of the wall,⁶⁸

珍重牆東客，

Shares from afar the same feeling with me.

遙憐此意同。⁶⁹

Despite both the title and the content showing that this belongs to a different poem type comparing with what have been shown before, the way Zhu Xi dealt with natural images does not change. There are no detailed depictions, no rhetoric devices; the writer just presented the vague impression that everything was remote, irrelevant and in perfect peace, using subjective and philosophically suggestive words and phrases like “far away from mundane affairs” “serene” and “infinitely stimulated”. Still, there is a *biased* representation of a natural environment: he subjectively linked the autumn wind with people of old age, imposing on it his own regretful feelings. As for the third party who is both the reader and the subject and an ideal model whose personality the author highly appreciated, Zhu Xi spoke of him approvingly and exalted him as a hermit, normally in Daoist sense, and proclaimed that the spirit of his treasured friend was identical with his own interest. Here, by using archaic language and allusion to the *Hou Han shu*, Zhu Xi connected his friend to an ideal model with strong validity from the past. In this way, he naturally glorified the character of the friend as being spiritually transcendental, which

⁶⁸ This is an allusion referring to the story in *Book of the Later Han (Hou Han shu 後漢書)* where the person named Wang Jungong recluses in the place called Qiangdong during warfare, making a living by selling cattle. See Guo 2000, 158.

⁶⁹ Guo (2000), 157.

in turn conveyed the highest value that Zhu Xi held or even the ideal image that Zhu Xi imagined himself to be, as this might have been projected from his own mind. Thus it is clear that the inner self of Zhu Xi is still predominant even when seeing the others in the outer world. Moreover, it is still self-contradictory. Although the last couplet that expresses his pursuit of being a recluse echoes the first couplet where he depicted a natural scene and harmonious spiritual realm, the actual personal sentiments expressed in the middle couplets, i.e. the deep sorrow triggered by the past of limited life time as opposed to the permanence of nature, undeniably disclose his entangled inner mind when facing the outer world.

Above all, it is fair to sum up the tensions between inner and outer within Zhu Xi's poetry of this period in his own words that occasionally appear as verses in the poems:⁷⁰

"I pity myself for being unable to be free from the shackles of the mundaneness" 自憐塵
羈不得去⁷¹ "I am deeply ashamed for not knowing the way, and holding onto the center
is not how I can attain peace" 深慚未聞道，折衷非所寧。⁷²

⁷⁰ It is obvious that some of the poems Zhu Xi wrote in this stage are of social or occasional nature. But unlike poems that I will deal with in the next stages where the social environment and traditional ways of composing made him feel the fundamental contradiction between writing poetry and practicing *dao*, what he had deep in mind in this period, as reflected from the lines, is not influenced by the functions of his work.

⁷¹ 'Echoing Li Boyu Poetizing Plum Blossom with Dongpo's Rhymes' ('He Li Boyu yong Dongpo yun fu meihua' 和李伯玉用東坡韻賦梅花). See Guo (2000), 142.

⁷² 'To Fellow Partners' ('Shi zhu tongzhi' 示諸同志). See Guo (2000), 124.

CHAPTER FOUR

Writing between Feelings and Principle: Zhu Xi as a Poet and Mature Philosopher

頃以多言害道絕不作 [I] just feel that composing too much harms [the
詩兩日讀大學誠意章 learning of] Dao, [so I have decided] never to versify
有感至日之朝起書此 again. [This poem is about what I] realized when
以自箴蓋不得已而有 reading the chapter 'Making Thought Sincere' of *The*
言 *Great Learning* in the last two days. So I wrote [this
poem] to admonish myself when I got up in the morning
of this winter solstice. This is because I have no
alternative but to compose

神心洞玄鑒， The divine mind is like a bright mirror [that reflects]
好惡審薰蕕。 Goodness and impropriety, just as distinguishing
between sweet grass and stinkweed.
云何反自誑， So why do I deceive myself?
閔默還包羞。 Now I feel melancholic, reticent and shameful [about
writing poems].

今辰仲冬節，	At this midwinter festival
寤歎得隱憂。	I woke up at night and sighed with deep concerns.
心知一寸光，	The mind possesses the insightful light that
昱彼重泉幽。	Enlightens the infinite dark in the far deep netherworld
朋來自茲始，	Auspiciousness begins to thrive from here
群陰邈難留。	All the ominousness disappears without a trace
行迷亦已遠，	[I have] already gone too far on the wrong way
及此旋吾舟。	[I shall] have my boat veer around from here ¹

According to the chronology of Guo Qi, this poem is roughly dated to the year 1160, which coincides with Zhu Xi's decision to follow the teachings of the Neo-Confucian master Li Tong (1093-1163) after years of unguided study of Daoist and Chan Buddhist ideas, both philosophically and religiously. Among many (arguably more than a hundred) poems² that Zhu Xi wrote about his reflections on reading the Confucian classics at that

¹ Guo (2000), 165.

² Both collections of *Quan Song shi* 全宋詩 and *Zhuzi quan shu* 朱子全書 include an extra volume of poems entitled *Xun meng jueju* 訓蒙絕句 (Quatrains Teaching the Ignorant), following the ones that have been contained in Zhu Xi's anthology (*wenji* 文集) since the first edition and whose authorship has been beyond doubt. Both collections concede the fact that the authorship of this added volume as well as the exact number of poems have been under debate throughout dynasties. However, through detailed comparisons between different versions and consultancies of relevant evidences, as listed in the books, both of them hold that these poems are actually the works of Zhu Xi. In addition, they also reach the consensus that the volume *Xun meng jueju* should have 98 poems in total, including several that are already recorded in the anthology and dated to roughly this same period we are talking about here. Zhu Xi's preface to

time, this poem is perhaps most representative of his negative attitude towards the act of writing poetry from the perspective of a *daoxue* follower.

I see this as a notable shift not only in the content but also in the deep structure of Zhu Xi's poetry, as compared with his previous writings introduced in Chapter 3. The nature of his poetry then changed from abstract explorations of different types of transcendental relationship between the poet and the outer world to focused learning or experiencing of the *dao* he firmly believes and defends. In the meanwhile, there is also a shift of approach. Where there used to be random explorations and inspirations triggered by scenes and occasions (we may oversimplify and call it a bottom-up process), there is now a projection of the predetermined principle onto the outer world or the poet's inner mind—the *dao*, as the Neo-Confucians understood it, becomes prevalent and inherent in everything and every aspect of the things in the world (a top-down process). This is not the result of the interaction between the poet's sensory input and his/her expectations and selective mechanism, as we witness in Zhu Xi's early poetry.

What we can find in Zhu Xi's poetry of this stage is that while learning and thinking of his *daoxue* predecessors' teachings, he had also inherited to a large extent the way these

this series of poems clearly illustrates their nature: "Silently reciting the *Four Books* in sickness, I noted down some quatrains according to what I think. Then I use them to replace the readings of pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic lines of those who teach the ignorant" 病中默誦四書，隨所思記以絕句，後以代訓蒙者五言七言之讀。So in addition to the dozens of poems that are already in the anthology purely about his philosophical thoughts, it is fair to say that at this stage, Zhu Xi created more than 100 poems of this type that are essentially disapproval of sentiments and any kind of real experience of the outer world, with his persona as a Neo-Confucian philosopher dominate over the traditionally and supposedly aesthetic nature of the genre. There is but one exception in terms of the presentation of the relationship between the real world, feelings and thoughts, which is the poem entitled 'Zeng Dian' 曾點. This will be discussed later. See Fu (1991), vol.44.2395, 27671; Zhu (2002), vol.26, 1-2.

predecessors wrote poetry, which was entirely outside the mainstream poetic tradition. That tradition, dating back to the Six Dynasties and becoming more deeply ingrained in Tang dynasty, focused on the description of objects and chanting of personal feelings.³ In Zhu Xi's time, within the broadly defined *daoxue* school, according to *Literary Pursuits of Zhou Dunyi and the Chengs* (*Lian Luo fengya* 濂洛風雅) compiled by the Southern Song *daoxue* follower Jin Lüxiang 金履祥 (1232–1303) who promoted the *daoxue* poetic tradition and sorted out the lineages of different *daoxue* poetic schools, there was this tradition to encourage the students to imitate the poetic style of their masters rather than merely accord with their ideological ideals. This was considered a way to demonstrate the student's allegiance to his predecessors who belong to the same orthodoxy, to communicate ideas, and to share experiences of learning with his peers.⁴ As for Zhu Xi in particular, evidence of this pragmatic function of his poetry could be found both in his use of allusions that traced back to Zhou Dunyi, the Cheng brothers, etc.,⁵ and in some of the prefaces to his poems and his letters where he clearly

³ For the appearance and description of palace-style poetry (*gongti shi* 宮體詩) and poetry on things (*yongwu shi* 詠物詩) in the Six Dynasties that represent the initial evolution of this tradition, see Cai (2008): 141-156; also see Takayuki (2008).

⁴ Jin and Hu (1868-1882). It is particularly worth noting that the compiler Jin Lüxiang even presents a 'Chart of Poetic Inheritance of Zhou Dunyi and the Chengs' ('Lian Luo shimai tu' 濂洛詩脈圖) at the very beginning of the book, to graphically illustrate what he believed to be the "genealogy of literary pursuits of Zhou Dunyi and the Chengs" 濂洛風雅世系.

⁵ For example in Zhu Xi's elegiac poetry for Li Tong, entitled 'Three Poems Lamenting Death of Master Li of Yanping' ('Wan Yanping Li xiansheng sanshou' 挽延平李先生三首), he speaks highly of Li's poetry as "be generous and uninhibited as Lianxi's verses, while calm as works of the poets' society in Luoyang" 灑落濂溪句, 從容洛社篇, regarding poems of Zhou Dunyi and followers of Ouyang Xiu and Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002-1060) who initiated the Luoyang poets society as their good models. See Guo (2000), 250. For another example, in a scenic poem entitled 'Take the Cliffside Accumulated Snow to Eat and It Feels so Clear: Following the Rhyme of Jingfu' ('Yabian jixue qushi shenqing ci Jingfu yun' 崖邊積雪取食甚清次敬夫韻), after fine description of the snowy scene and the situation that they share the taste of the snow, Zhu Xi turned his rationale to the admiration of the poetic style of Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032-1085), saying that "I am willing to

pronounced his pragmatic purpose of writing poetry.⁶ The general style of this type of poetry is disapproving of the kind of literature we normally expect today. However, in fact, this is another development of Zhu Xi's poetic style after the "Nineteen Old Poems" that began to present individual reflections on various ways of coping with human transience, which should not be ignored.

The "Nineteen Old Poems" date from the sixth century or earlier. Generally speaking, these poems invoked different types of figures to express thoughts on human life between heaven and earth. In some cases such as the poem 'On and On, Again On and On' ('Xing xing chong xing xing' 行行重行行), the figure invoked was an abandoned woman lamenting the misery of separation and dwelling on the sorrow of aging. In other cases such as the poem 'Jade Green Cypress on the Graveyard' ('Qing qing ling shang bai' 青青陵上柏), the protagonist was a lonely wonderer who contemplated a desolate scene or lamented the human transience.⁷ Poets in Tang appealed to ideas of Chan Buddhism and Daoism (both philosophical and religious) for resolutions to this concern, showing their inclination to get away from the earthly world and find comfort in their

spend all my life on following Master Cheng, so that I can have my vulgar stomach washed when faintly reminded of those [early] years." 平生願學程夫子，恍惚當年洗俗腸。 See Guo (2000), 441.

⁶ For example in the previously mentioned preface of the volume of *Quatrains Teaching the Ignorant*, Zhu Xi clearly says that the purpose of writing the poems is using them to replace the readings of pentasyllabic and heptasyllabic lines of those who teach the ignorant. See footnote 2. Also in the preface of his "Twenty Poems on Inspirations While Residing in the Studio" ('Zhaiju ganxing ershi shou' 齋居感興二十首), he claims that the purpose is "to alert myself on one hand, and to give it as a gift to my congenial fellows" 既以自警，且以貽諸同志云。 See Guo (2000), 370. And in his letter to his disciple Xu Sheng 許升 (Xu Shunzhi 許順之), Zhu Xi attached his recent quatrain to show the development of his thought. In *Wenji* vol.39, Zhu (2002), vol.22, 1745.

⁷ Full analysis of the "Nineteen Old Poems", see Cai (2008): 103-116; also see Kao (1994).

constructed realms. Hence Zhu Xi's comments on 'Poetry of Sentiments on Encounters' ('Gan yu shi' 感遇詩) of the Tang poet Chen Zi'ang 陳子昂 (ca.661-702) were that it was defective for being "not proficient in reasoning, but relying on the celestials and the Buddha to make himself feel superior." 不精于理,而自託于仙佛之間以為高也。⁸ For the Song Neo-Confucians, in accordance with their philosophical thoughts, their poems centered on the predetermined principle that is within the world, the pursuit of which should be the first priority over all other spiritual activities. To them, the best way to cope with the transient life, as contrasted with the eternal world, was to live within the world, face the concrete things and cultivate oneself to find the tranquil and heavenly-endowed mind within oneself which lives in eternity with the ultimate *dao*. This is exemplified by Cheng Hao's couplet "With the heart being tranquil, I do not indulge myself in pleasures of the music of pipes and strings; with the *dao* being supreme, how can I feel flattered by vanity?" 心閑不為管絃樂,道勝豈因名利榮。⁹ In verses like "the mind goes through ages in the oaring songs" 欸乃聲中萬古心, Zhu Xi also suggested that the cultivation of the mind, shared by both man and nature, not only makes human life enjoyable in the vicissitude of the earthly world, but also connects people with the eternity of the natural world, thereby realizing a this-worldly transcendence.¹⁰ This will be further analyzed in the next chapter.

⁸ Guo (2000), 370.

⁹ Fu (1991), vol.12, 8232.

¹⁰ Guo (2000), 797.

Centered on the elaboration of this principle, the poetic style of the *daoxue* community is argued to have experienced several changes, with different modes and people predominating at different times. For example, Wang Limin argues that there are three major modes that appear successively over the course of the evolution of poetic styles in the collection of the *Literary Pursuits of Zhou Dunyi and the Chengs*: First is the mode of Lianxi 濂溪 represented by Zhou Dunyi, focusing on the poet's generous and lofty personality because of his spiritual achievement in learning the *dao*; Second is the mode of Mingdao 明道 represented by Cheng Hao, which aims to create a harmonious integration between the introversive experience of morality and the constantly moving external world; and finally the mode of *daonan* 道南 represented by Yang Shi 楊時 (1053-1135), Luo Congyan 羅從彥 (1072-1135) and others, which were primarily concerned with the methods and gains in the process of learning the *dao* as diligent students.¹¹ Being familiar with all of these modes, Zhu Xi at this stage of his work adopted these different approaches at different points to convey his understandings of the *dao*, while making careful adjustments to accommodate them to the changes of his own thought and the considerations on the relationship between *li* and *qing*. As argued in the first chapter, the existence of the prevalent *li* is the presupposition of Zhu Xi's entire philosophical construction. It is therefore undoubtedly the first thing he needs to defend. *Qing* is the element of poetry that is largely emphasized in the poetic convention outside the *daoxue* circle, which was not well articulated in Zhu Xi's thought. What is

¹¹ Wang (2006)

more interesting than his inheritance of the *daoxue* poetic tradition is that with development of his thought, especially the rethinking of his self-cultivation method, the general style of Zhu Xi's poetry changed from the philosophizing of his inner mind in relation to the *dao* to a gradual exploration of the outer world. This compelled him to face the challenge of being "inspired by objects and expressing feelings, chanting about one's feelings and nature" 感物道情，吟詠情性.¹² This was not only a basic logic in his interpretations of the *Odes* but had also been a serious problem in his own poetry because of the unsolved *qing-li* dilemma. A simple Zeng Dian style exemplified by the well-controlled "wash in the Yi, enjoy the breeze among the rain altars, and return home singing" 浴乎沂，風乎舞雩，詠而歸¹³ could have been a good solution for him when he had the time to sit down and contemplate before producing a structurally and philosophically well-organized poem. However, when it comes to social occasions where poetry was considered the way to express spontaneous feelings among friends, and under the rules of the Tang convention that was prevalent at that time, the structure of Zhu Xi's poems would turn completely different and yield a presentation that could give rise to fierce criticisms from his rivals.¹⁴ It could even be ironic when contrasted with the concern Zhu Xi always had about changing the overly embellished and emotionally loaded poetic style of the time and competing with their enchantment, as was

¹² Zhu (1986), vol.6.80, 2076.

¹³ 'Xian jin' 先進, in Zhu (1983), 130.

¹⁴ According to Hoyt Tillman's studies of the correspondences between Lü Zuqian, Zhang Shi and Zhu Xi, both Lü and Zhang had realized that there was a flaw in Zhu Xi's mind, which was also acknowledged by Zhu Xi himself: he was "too anxious and intolerant", and "if as a result you happen to have biases that you fail to scrutinize and correct, I'm afraid that the negative impact on the future will be inescapable". This means that Zhu Xi needs to be very careful with his public behaviors, teachings and even poems exchanged. See Tillman (1992): 131-132.

manifested by his numerous criticisms in the last two volumes of his *Conversation* and his critiques of Su Shi.

1. Inner Reflection on the *Dao*

In this poem of “never to versify”, we can see that Zhu Xi’s mind is presented as being very determined: he swears very decisively not to write poems, using an adverb of the highest degree in the title (i.e. *jue*). That is because he believes that such composition harms the learning of the *dao*. This *dao* in Zhu Xi’s understanding, according to the poem, is inherent in people’s mind and endows the mind with the innate power to distinguish right from wrong, good from bad, the same ability borne by a divine mind. This is consistent with Zhu Xi’s description of the mind and its nexus with other vital cosmological notions in his *Conversations*: “the principle of the mind is the great ultimate (*taiji* 太極), while the movement and stillness (*dong jing* 動靜) of the mind represent the yin and yang” 心之理是太極，心之動靜是陰陽; “the governor of the mind is omniscient, covering the past while knowing the future” 心官至靈，藏往知來.¹⁵ Since the ultimate morality for one’s very existence comes from the mind, there is no need to write poetry, which for Zhu Xi, as I argued in the previous chapter, meant the exploration of an appropriate relationship between man and nature, the inner mind and the outer world. The relationship is simply determined by *dao*. So exploring it elsewhere

¹⁵ Zhu (1986), vol.1.5, 84-85.

and struggling too much with different philosophies confuse the mind and hinder it from functioning insightfully with the endowment of *dao*. In this way, Zhu Xi rejects the way that he used to get entangled with the outer world which imposes unnecessary burdens upon him. He disavows the validity of his personal feelings stirred up by different encounters of the outer world. Most consciously he also rejects all previous ideologies that influenced him with regard to different types of inner and outer relationships. This is because he now believes that these had caused him to cheat himself. In short, he denies all the reasons for writing poetry and feels regretful for his previous productions.

Based on these new understandings, he decides that he should change his course. He believes that he will be on the right path from now on and starts to see auspicious things come. This means the absolute dominance of his newly accepted *daoxue* views, which in his view basically contradicts the approach of knowing the world via bottom-up sensory perceptions. The pre-determined “divine mind” is as bright as a magic mirror that reflects the nature of all things in the world. Obtaining such a mind enables people to be insightful and to live in the right way. So why waste one’s time and energy to find the right way elsewhere instead of learning from the previous Confucian sages who possessed this divine mind? This is in accordance with the cultivation principle that Zhu Xi learned from Li Tong at that time. Zhu Xi commented on Li Tong’s teachings that: “The

way of learning is not about saying much. It lies in quite-sitting to get a clear mind, so to grasp the heavenly principle” 學問之道不在於多言，但默坐澄心，體認天理。¹⁶

Ironically, however, this proclamation of not writing poetry is in itself expressed in the form of a poem, and more importantly, with extra regulated forms. Zhu Xi chose the ancient-style pentasyllabic lines (*wu yan gu ti* 五言古體) for this poem, which was meant to be less strict than the recent-style *shi* poetry (*jin ti shi* 今體詩) in terms of word choice, structure, tonal patterning and rhymes.¹⁷ The complex rules for recent-style poetry could easily imprison the poets and turn their works into a trivial word game. However, what we observe in this ancient-style ‘poem against poetry’ is that it strictly follows the tonal meter of a recent-style poem, using the level tone *you* at the end of every couplet without exception. In contrast, the ancient-style poems were generally freer in their rhyming schemes—they could change as many of the final rhymes as necessary. The level-tone rhyme is also more preferable in recent-style poetry than oblique tones. Besides, the tones Zhu uses in each verse also neatly follow the ancient-style tonal patterning that was not normally required or even much known to many ancient-style imitators. A word-for-word distinguishing of the tone reveals that with only a few exceptions, most verses of the poem end with either three levels, or three obliques, or oblique-level-oblique form, which complies with the rules of ancient-style poetic tones. This pattern was analyzed by the Qing scholar Zhao Zhixin 趙

¹⁶ *Yanping dawen* 延平答問 (Yanping’s Answers to Questions), in Zhu (2002), vol.13, 341.

¹⁷ Wang Li (2002), 61-77.

執信 (1662-1744), who was subsequently followed by the modern scholar Wang Li 王力 and the general modern scholarship owing to Wang's authority in the area.¹⁸ This shows that as a poet, Zhu Xi was well aware of the advantage of regulated forms and patterns of poetry that made his ideas more accessible to his readers. What Zhu Xi really rejects is not the form of poetry, but the content that mostly involve an encounter with the outer world and the subsequent personal feelings, distracting people from the learning of the *dao* by some unnecessary entanglement. In short, the *dao* has to be the first priority.

Zhu Xi produced a number of other poems around the same time that express his firm belief that the *dao* should assume absolute dominance, and that what he used to do in his early years was incorrect. For example, in the first poem of his 'Turn to Study After Having Been Vexed by Difficulties' ('Kun xue' 困學)¹⁹ he writes:

舊喜安心苦覓心， In the past I longed for a settled mind for which I desperately
explored,

¹⁸ Wang Li (2002), 82.

¹⁹ The title of the poem alludes to the *Analects* where it writes "Confucius said, 'Those who are born with knowledge are the highest. Next come those who attain knowledge through study. Next again come those who turn to study after having been vexed by difficulties. The common people, in so far as they make no effort to study even after having been vexed by difficulties, are the lowest.'" 孔子曰：“生而知之者上也，學而知之者次也；困而學之，又其次也；困而不學，民斯為下矣”。 So it is fair to say that the title itself reveals Zhu Xi's shift of mind on philosophical understandings of the world, and this is in accordance with his learning of *lixue* ideas. I follow the translation of D.C. Lau for this text. See Confucius and Lau (1983), 164.

捐書絕學費追尋。 Disregarding books and giving up learning to engage in a
relentless pursuit.

困衡此日安無地， Now with nowhere to settle down, getting confused and stuck,

始覺從前枉寸陰。 I finally realize that I have previously wasted my short span of
time [on the sundial].

Despite the form of a mostly regulated heptasyllabic quatrain in strict compliance with the semantic, tonal and rhyme patterns that is more associated with the poetry dealing with “things”, it excludes all the influences from the outer world, being of pure inner reflections on thoughts. This makes the poem imageless and less abundant in potentially either metaphorical or historical meanings that the readers would normally expect. The second one continues to discuss what he then believed to be the right way of seeking the truth: “How can the cultivation of studying after having been vexed by difficulties be easy to achieve? [...] Ordinary words and ordinary deeds are certainly incapable of it.” 困學工夫豈易成[...]庸行庸言實未能.²⁰ The two poems are entirely about thoughts and present the control of Confucian teaching over all other experiential elements of poetry, which lends to them the feeling of their being no more than nagging philosophizing. As mentioned previously, Zhu Xi wrote more than one hundred poems of this type, which might be the reason why his poetry as a whole has now been written off as anti-literary

²⁰ Guo (2000), 172.

and inferior. But this was actually the established fashion of writing poems within the *daoxue* community of that time. For example, Luo Congyan 羅從彥 (1072-1135), teacher of both Li Tong and Zhu Xi's father, wrote in his poem 'Seeing Yannian off' ('Song Yannian xing' 送延年行): "The sage's word is as remote as heaven and as deep as the ocean; it is solely about concentrating the mind and appreciating it for long" 聖言天遠海潭潭，獨在潛心久泳涵;²¹ Yang Shi 楊時 (1053-1135), teacher of Luo Congyan, also wrote poems like: "How can there be no pleasure with teaching? Intensive studying and pondering are endless. In reading books, it is not that oral reciting is valuable, but to learn with the mind being tranquil and clarified" 講習豈無樂，鑽磨未有涯。書非貴口誦，學必到心齋。²² All of them focused on the process of learning the sages' words, being of pure inner reflection and reasoning, and relying on the appealing character of poetic forms to better communicate and disseminate their ideas.

At around the same time, Zhu Xi wrote to his cousin Cheng Xun 程洵 to explain his experience with literary writing and this change of attitudes: "In former years I wrongly intended to write poetry and prose."²³ This year I strongly felt that this is beyond my capability. So I quit and no longer invest my feelings in it, thereby feeling that I have saved effort indeed. As for learning, I met with Master Li from Yan Ping recently and I have just begun to dimly see the gateway [...] I have been learning and have given up

²¹ Fu (1991), vol.23.1361, 15591.

²² Fu (1991), vol.19, 1148, 12959.

²³ There is not any record of Zhu Xi saying that he would want to quit "literary writing" 作文 as a whole. I translate the *wen* here as "poetry and prose" based on my reading of the context.

[different thoughts] all along as I like, not knowing what course to take. It was in the name of learning, but what did it actually amount to? This is just ridiculous.” 往年誤欲作文，今年頗覺非力所及，遂已罷去，不復留情其間，頗覺省事。講學近見延平李先生，始略窺門戶[...]向來汨濫出入，無所適從，名為學問，而實何有？亦可笑耳。 He also delivered his judgment that the ideas of Su Shi, who was famous for his literary writing and the principle of writing spontaneously according to the encounter with the objects without a pre-determined mind, was much inferior to that of the Cheng brothers.²⁴ He also criticized Cheng Xun’s appreciation of Su Shi’s poetry, arguing that Cheng was just too accustomed to the exquisite and fancy writing style of Su Shi to realize the deficiency of his thoughts behind the lines. He felt that Su Shi focused too much on his own way of writing, so much so that he was unable to recognize the orthodox *dao* of the sages. Concerning Su’s own ideas presented in poetry, those were just “dazzling the eyes and ears of people in the earthly world, while bewitching their hearts. It cannot really make people wash their hearts and cleanse their worries and immerse in the world of *dao*” 眩世俗之耳目而蠱其心，自非真能洗心滌慮以入其中。²⁵

It is fair to say that from here, we know that Zhu Xi had both theoretically and practically followed the *daoxue* tradition of writing poems, focusing on philosophical inner reflections and reasoning while eliminating the involvement of concrete experiences of the phenomenal world, let alone sentiments and emotions. This

²⁴ ‘Cheng Qinguo’ 程欽國, *bieji* vol.3, Zhu (2002), vol.25, 4879.

²⁵ ‘Da Cheng Yunfu’ 答程允夫, *Wenji* vol.41, Zhu (2002), vol.22, 1863. For the chronology of this two letters, see Chen Lai (2007), 19-20.

differentiates him from poets outside the *daoxue* circle. At the same time, however, he was vigilant of the potential problem of lacking influence for his poem is inadequate to “dazzle the eyes and ears of people” and less capable of touching people’s hearts as compared with those poems expressing powerful personal feelings.

In fact, however, this “ideal” situation of having everything under the control of rational thinking within the poems that are supposed to be inspirations from the outer world is in no way possible. The reason is that any philosophical rationality that fails to take into account the sensory dimension of human existence is bound to be pitched into crisis. As Terry Eagleton incisively points out in reference to aesthetics, the aesthetic in its modern Western sense began its life as a kind of prosthesis to Enlightenment reason.²⁶ This is also borne out by later development of Zhu Xi’s philosophy, and most importantly is reflected in the constant changing of his attitudes towards the relationship between man and nature in his later poetry production in the amount of over five times his early production of two volumes that makes him so regretful at this stage of his life.

²⁶ Terry Eagleton mentions in his article “The opposite of aesthetics is not philistinism but anesthetics. The aesthetic in its modern sense began life as a kind of prosthesis to Enlightenment reason. It represented an effort to bring this rather bloodless brand of rationality to bear on the sensory dimension of human existence, which threatened to elude its sovereignty altogether. A reason that proves unable to root itself in the texture of lived experience is bound to be pitched into crisis. Two centuries later, the term for this sensory rationality would be not aesthetics, which had now assumed its contemporary artistic sense, but phenomenology”. See Eagleton (2012).

2. Ineffable World of Sentiments

2.1 The Pleasure of Zeng Dian

Obviously and predictably, soon after completing his poem disavowing writing poetry, Zhu Xi broke his oath in terms of both the quantity and content structure of his work. It turned out that neither the external world nor the sensory personal feelings could be repressed and omitted in Zhu Xi's poems. He felt he needed to deal with the individual's lived experience. His first poem recognizing the unavoidability of the outer world is the poem called 'Zeng Dian' 曾點 in which he writes:

春服初成麗景遲， The spring clothes have just been made while the beautiful
scenery comes late.

步隨流水玩晴漪。 My steps follow the flowing water and I play with the shiny
ripples.

微吟緩節歸來晚， I come back late with soft chanting in slow rhythm,

一任輕風拂面吹。 Letting the gentle breeze caress my cheeks.²⁷

²⁷ Guo (2000), 175.

The style of this poem stands in striking contrast with the previous ones. Instead of clinging to the tedious discussion of his newly accepted school of thought and the reflections on his cultivation, Zhu Xi begins to look at the concrete outer world, showing his appreciation of the details and his willingness to spend time immersing himself in it. Instead of emphasizing the divine mind as the only and utmost truth to pursue, he appears to have forgotten about this dominant rationality of questing for the ultimate principle and has begun to let the outer objects and environment lead his body and mind. This is clear in his phrasing of “my steps follow the flowing water”, where the flowing water dominates Zhu Xi’s direction. His appreciation of this world is unveiled once and for all in the second half of the quatrain: he comes back late because he was detained by the attractive outer environment that persuaded him not to go back as planned. And we know that he is more than happy to linger there and cherish it as he tells us that he allowed the gentle breeze to “caress” his cheeks.

In fact, this is very likely to be just an imitation of the style of his predecessor Cheng Hao who had developed the type of poetry that aims to present the harmonious connection between people’s inner experience of the *dao* and the thriving condition of the outer world with his philosophical notion *ren* 仁 (humanity or human-heartedness). This was apparent in Cheng’s poetic lines: “With light clouds and gentle winds the time is approaching noon; beside the flowers and along with the willows I go past the front plain. People around do not recognize the pleasure in my heart, thinking that I snatch a

moment of leisure to imitate youngsters.” 雲淡風輕近午天， 傍花隨柳過前川。 時人不識余心樂， 將為偷閒學少年。²⁸ The pleasure here is less about the detailed situation of objects or sympathetic concern of the emotional self, it is more a philosophizing of the living environment where all things are considered to be sharing the same core, *ren*, within the framework of the *dao*.²⁹ Elsewhere, Cheng Hao said: “The will to live in all things is most impressive. This is the fundamental origin among all goodness. This is what is called *ren*” 萬物之生意最可觀， 此元者善之長也， 斯所謂仁也。³⁰ His younger brother Cheng Yi also said: “The mind is like seeds whose generative virtue is called *ren*” 心猶種焉。 其生之德， 是為仁也。³¹ The metaphysical construction of this realm of having the same body with the universe and the generative force of all things integrated by the dynamic vital force behind all life and production results in more attention being paid to the natural environment outside people’s inner reflections. But in writing a poem, it is still different from the myriad objects and scenes that trigger different types of inner responses. This rationale of seeking for a metaphysical reality appears to be part of Zhu’s intention to share a more extroversive experience of learning the *dao*. The slow rhythm that Zhu Xi follows while chanting quietly could be designed to create the feeling

²⁸ ‘Ou cheng’ 偶成, Fu (1991), vol.12.715, 8229.

²⁹ According to the analysis of Chan Wing-tsit, the notion of *ren* has gone through many stages of evolution and has grown more and more complex in meaning, from a particular virtue of the ruler to the final expansion to refer to an active, dynamic relationship between men and all things. Cheng Hao is one of the key figures that contribute tremendously to this final expansion. He considers *ren* to be not merely feeling, but vital force, the dynamic element behind all life and production. As Chan puts forward: “It is the foundation of all goodness, the ‘mind of man’, and the source of all productions in the universe. As such, *jên* is both ethical and metaphysical”. For a detailed discussion of the evolution of the notion *ren* and its relationship with the process of production of all things in the world, see Chan (1955).

³⁰ Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi (1981), 120.

³¹ Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi (1981), 1174.

that he is in harmonious resonance with the outer world, because he is learning from Zeng Dian or Cheng Hao and thinking of his potential readers as like-minded *daoxue* followers.

Despite this likely possibility, if we compare this poem with other works of Zhu Xi, we will note that it is not only different from the previous poems of pure inner reflections but also dramatically different from the poetry of his early stage discussed in the previous chapter, in which he intentionally kept a distance from the outer world, thinking of transcending it in various ways to reach an unfettered spirit. What we now see is the poet's close and rather harmonious relationship with the outer world, which is precisely antithetical to the Buddhist and Daoist approaches. This is a notable change worth further analysis. From the position of this poem in Zhu Xi's anthology and the chronology of Guo Qi,³² we know that it was written shortly after Zhu Xi became determined to focus all his writings on the abstract Neo-Confucian ideas. At the very beginning of accepting Neo-Confucian thought, Zhu Xi contrasted very quickly his rational inner self with his personal feelings and the triggering outer world, the relationship with which, as I would further argue, had been constantly under change

³² According to Guo Qi, this poem is roughly dated to the same period as that of the previous anti-poetry one. Seeing from the content, especially the title that straightforwardly refers to the symbolic figure of the renowned Confucian spiritual pursuit, we can ascertain that this is written after the previous poems, because his regrets on the fact that "I have already gone too far on the wrong way" can by no means include the Confucian spirit with that much determination. Also, in Zhu's anthology that is mostly chronologically arranged, this is placed just a couple of poems after the previous ones.

during this period when Zhu Xi gradually developed his philosophical system. This was reflected in the poetic style presented to the readers.

2.2 The Pleasure of Immersing in the Secluded World

Although the poem ‘Zeng Dian’ is above all about Zhu Xi’s enjoyable interaction with the outer world and in this aspect it contradicts his recent oath not to allow anything to distract him from the pursuit of Confucian learning, the title of the poem, which refers to a famous Confucian disciple known for his appreciation of natural beauty, reveals that the poem was still composed with the Confucian pursuit—at least nominally. In contrast, in the very next poem, even the hint of philosophical thought has vanished, leaving only the immersed subject, the vivid outer world and pleasurable personal feelings. That poem is entitled ‘Cutting Wood’ (‘Fa mu’ 伐木), imitating the poem in the *Odes* agreed by both the Mao *Preface* and modern scholars to be about banquets, friendships and pleasures.

伐木相將入遠山， Joining hands we go cutting wood in the distant hills.

共聽幽鳥語關關。 Together we listen to the secluded birds that sing “guan
guan”.

殷勤若解當時意， With deep affection if we understand the meaning at that

time,

此日那容不盡歡。 How can we endure not to enjoy ourselves to the full today?³³

This was written with standard form of a recent-style heptasyllabic quatrain, both the rhyme and tones of which precisely follow the rules of the genre. No sign of any philosophy or teaching can be noticed here.³⁴ Rather, what we see is the scenario of the poet and his friend, with great pleasure, immersing themselves in a remote mountain, which is a secluded land of peace and harmony.

Notably in this poem, unlike his previous brief adumbration of the view, Zhu Xi focuses on one particular image with detailed description of the entire scene so that the serenity of the secluded land can be experienced by the readers. He emphasizes the sound of the chattering birds, recreating their voice for the reader through one of the best-known

³³ Guo (2000), 176.

³⁴ The meaning of this poem here is mostly straightforward, only except for the allusion from the *Odes* that is worth articulating. There is generally no problem with the intention of the original poem, but theoretically, Zhu Xi's use of the expression "if we understand the meaning at that time" could refer to both the original meaning of the ode author and the intention that Kongzi had in mind when he was believed to have compiled the three hundred poems. And later commentators interpret the intention to be pragmatic teaching of moral values. However, we know that Zhu Xi's understanding of Kongzi's compilation was much different from previous commentators, and he was rather suspicious of the farfetched traditional prefaces before each poem. In the *Conversations*, when asked about Kongzi's deletions from the *Odes*, Zhu Xi answered: "How did you see that the sage removed this and kept that with his brushes. It is just the legend that has been passed on" 那曾見得聖人執筆刪那箇，存這箇！也只得就相傳上說。 His opinion on the nature of the poetry was also innovative at that time. He said: "Generally, ancient people's making of poetry is the same as current people, where there is also this intrinsic feature of inspired by objects thus expressing feelings, being the chanting of feelings and natural instincts. When did it become purely about satirizing others" 大率古人作詩，與今人作詩一般，其間亦自有感物道情，吟詠情性，幾時盡是譏刺他人？ See Zhu Xi (1986), vol.6.80, 2065, 2076. More evidences of Zhu Xi's understanding of the *Odes* mostly from the perspective of poets' personal feelings, see Liu Siyu (2010).

lines from the *Odes*: “Guan, guan, cry the fish hawks” 關關雎鳩.³⁵ It does not matter if this mimetic word initially is just a spontaneous and faithful response to the voice of the bird or not. Since the *Great Preface of the Odes* that interprets the poem from which this line is taken as a work of praise for the virtuous queen of the state, and because of the poem’s content—the beautiful love of a young man and the attractiveness of a fine lady, this simple mimetic word for birds’ chirping has been endowed the sense of elegance and purity, adding notes of literary taste to Zhu Xi’s description of the hills. Zhu Xi later annotates this “guan guan” in the *Odes* as the “harmonic sound of answers between female and male birds” 雌雄相應之和聲,³⁶ which shows that by borrowing this usage, he intends to transmit the peaceful and harmonious atmosphere as well as to indicate the joyful friendship between him and his friend in this beautiful natural environment.

In addition, he describes the birds to be “you” 幽, the literal meaning of which can be rather abstract and opaque. But it can be immediately experiential if used in a compound expression. The “you niao” in this poem can be understood as either secluded birds, or leisurely birds, or quiet birds, or the combination of all these three, even though literally speaking it cannot be quiet birds because the birds were obviously tweeting according to Zhu Xi’s description. This is because by focusing on depicting the birds, Zhu Xi actually aims to present the bigger picture that is to be “felt” or “visualized” by the readers as quiet and enjoyable. In this sense, we understand that the “you” is the

³⁵ Zhu (2007), 2.

³⁶ Zhu (2007), 2.

depiction of a particularly featured image of the outer world that actually suggests the overall atmosphere and to make it directly experienced by the readers. The birds' tweeting in this sense aptly contrasts with and exaggerates the quietness of the environment. This delicate portrayal of the birds is a synecdoche: the most memorable feature of this distant hill is used to represent the entire atmosphere of this place. In the meantime, the careful choice of expression implies the joyful emotions that come from not only the scenery but also intimate personal friendships. This is a typical example of the integration of natural scenery and personal feelings, which is not unlike a Tang scenic poem of mountains and rivers. This type of description is praised by later critics for having merged themes of the natural world with those of a personal state of mind—often described as a “fusion of feeling and scene” (*qing jing jiao rong* 情景交融).³⁷ This is not supposed to be the feature of Zhu Xi's poetry.

As previously mentioned, both the content of friendship and the title 'Fa mu' suggest that the intention might be to echo the poem in the *Odes* under the same title. The one in the *Odes* starts with “*Ding ding* sounds the wood-chopping. *Ying ying* sings the bird. Coming from the deep valley, it ascends to the tall tree.” 伐木丁丁，鳥鳴嚶嚶 出自幽谷，遷于喬木。³⁸ The very beginning of this poem presents a mountain scene that is secluded and quiet, with the melodious sound of wild creatures and solitary human activity. The symmetric sentence structure of as well as the juxtaposition of images and their

³⁷ Cai (2008): 199, 252.

³⁸ Zhu (2007), 120.

respective mimetic adjectives in the first sentence suggest a harmonious relationship between man and nature. The instinctive behavior of natural creatures ascending to the tall trees to look for a response from their own kind in the following line delivers a sense of the beauty of primitive ecology. These descriptions of the natural environment have since then become the *locus classicus* for later poets, especially those of Tang, to delineate the beauty of secluded nature and the feeling of nostalgia and longing. These are surely best represented in the condensed imagery of “fa mu”.

For instance, the renowned Tang scenic poet Wei Yingwu 韋應物 (737-ca.792) uses the imagery of the wood-chopping sound to express the peaceful atmosphere of a sequestered world: “There is nothing important to do for the whole day, with only the sounds of chopping wood in the mountain. I know that you have been in the earthly din for a long time. For a time, you can be rid of the entangled annoyances.” 永日無餘事，山中伐木聲。知子塵喧久，暫可散煩纒。³⁹ Here, as featured imagery representing the original beauty of nature and a carefree way of life, the wood-chopping sound contrasts with the annoyances of the earthly noise, conveying the poet’s intention to escape into the nature from the otherwise hustling world and his aspiration for a natural and leisurely lifestyle. The case is the same with Du Fu when he writes “*Ding ding* the sound of wood-chopping makes the mountain even deeper [...] Not being greedy, I see the sign of gold and silver at night. Abstaining from causing harm, I watch deer frolic in the

³⁹ Entitled ‘Presenting to Lu Zhi on Encountering Things by the West Creek’ (‘Xiqian jishi shi Lu Zhi’ 西澗即事示盧陟), in Peng and Yang (1960), vol.188 (vol.3), 1924.

morning.” 伐木丁丁山更幽[...]不貪夜識金銀氣，遠害朝看麋鹿遊。⁴⁰ The same imagery also appears in the poem by Chen Zi'ang, who was suffering from the frustrations in his political life and disappointed with social affairs manipulated by governmental officials and Empress Wu Zhao 武曩 (624-705). In his poem 'Getting to the Source of the Anju Stream and the Famu Stream in the Steep Valley, Deep and Secluded, the Forest and Mountain Ridges in Novel Contrast' ('Ru qiao xia Anju xi Famu xi yuan you Suilin ling xiangying you qizhi yan' 入峭峽安居谿伐木谿源幽邃林嶺相映有奇致焉), Chen starts with "Going slowly, I sing of chopping wood, I hasten to paddle the wave-tossed skiff" 肅徒歌伐木，驚楫漾輕舟. This establishes a pleasant nature-themed atmosphere for the rest of the poem. He then continues with six more couplets (12 pentasyllabic verses) for a detailed description of his romantic boat journey along the streams, with featured close-ups of various natural imagery on the banks. Indulging himself in this secluded natural world, he ends the poem with a revelation of his disappointment with the secular world in the very last two lines: "I vow to stop proposing policies to the ministry⁴¹, and will wander among the cassia trees." 誓息蘭臺策，將從桂樹遊。⁴² There is always this contrast between two different outer worlds: one is the natural world represented by the scene of wood-chopping in the deep mountains; the other is the dusty and oftentimes frustrating human society. While the former is much preferred and depicted in great detail, the latter is only briefly mentioned and is something Zhu Xi

⁴⁰ Entitled 'Two Poems on the Reclusive Dwelling of Mr. Zhang' ('Ti Zhangshi yinju ershou' 題張氏隱居二首), in Peng and Yang (1960), vol.224 (vol.4), 2391.

⁴¹ *Lan tai* refers to Secretary Ministry of Tang (*mishu sheng* 秘書省).

⁴² Peng and Yang (1960), vol.84 (vol.2), 915.

hopes to escape. This is supposed to be different from the Neo-Confucian understanding of principle that is equally inherent in all things in the world and the Confucian advocacy of actively shouldering the social, cultural and political responsibilities. This is also different from the supposed meaning of *ren*, where the metaphysical reality can only be seen in its function, namely the Confucian emphasis on active social relations. The reason for this is possibly that this poem was an improvised gift to his friend in a social occasion, with little time for him to use his *daoxue* intellect and terminology expressions. Zhu Xi mentioned in the *Conversation*: “As for making poetry,⁴³ the arrangement of characters is difficult indeed. The sages spoke in just these few words. I do not know how they could arrange them so well” 做文字下字實是難，不知聖人說出來底，也只是這幾字，如何鋪排得恁地安穩”。⁴⁴ Strong and unveiled emotion within the conventional structure of a Tang poem, in this special occasion, seems to be the most efficient way of maintaining the etiquette among close friends.

Escaping from one world to the other enabled poets to revel in pleasures that are not bounded by ideology or other concerns—Zhu Xi writes that “how can we endure not to enjoy ourselves to the full”. In this poem of Zhu Xi, the emotion was set forth no less strongly than those highly regarded Tang poems of spontaneous emotions. The most familiar example ready at hand is the renowned heptasyllabic couplet from the poem of Li Bai’s entitled ‘Bring in the Wine’ (‘Qiang jin jiu’ 將進酒): “Enjoy life to the full when

⁴³ According to the context of the paragraph that is talking about poets and poems, I translate the *wenzi* here as poetry.

⁴⁴ Zhu (1986), vol.139 (vol.7), 3301.

there is prosperity. Never tip a gold cup to the moon, empty” 人生得意須盡歡，莫使金樽空對月, where the feeling of cheering for the merrymaking is fully and influentially expressed. It also appears in the poem of Yan Wei 嚴維 (fl.756) who writes that “The beautiful scenery is indeed uneasy to see; we should celebrate the pleasure even harder today” 美景良難得，今朝更盡歡,⁴⁵ as well as in the poem of Zhang Wei 張謂 (?-777) “Facing each other if we do not enjoy ourselves to the full today, what good would it do if we miss each other after departing.” 即今相對不盡歡，別後相思復何益。⁴⁶

If the poem ‘Zeng Dian’ was arguably still made with abstinence under the poet’s philosophical contemplation in order to pay tribute to the distinguished predecessor in Zhu Xi’s school, the type of poem represented by ‘Fa mu’, expressing the poet’s pleasure of immersing in the secluded world, certainly presents another style of poetry that is even more different from that the one determinedly excluding all sentimental elements but the inner reflections on the *dao*. The style of the poem here is fundamentally shaped by the social function of poetry, one of the most fundamental functions of poetry among scholars of the time which requires spontaneous overflow of feelings and instinctive oral performances. More importantly, presented in the poetic texts, such “spontaneities” were largely predetermined by the ingrained poetic traditions and ideologies that had come into existence throughout time.

⁴⁵ Entitled ‘Encountering Things on the Tenth of the Ninth Month’ (‘Jiuyue shiri jishi’ 九月十日即事), in Peng and Yang (1960), vol.263 (vol.4), 2922.

⁴⁶ Entitled ‘Verses on Drinking Together on the Lake’ (‘Hushang duijiu xing’ 湖上對酒行), in Peng and Yang (1960), vol.197 (vol.3), 2016.

2.3 The Pleasure of Recording Scenes and Sceneries with Poetry

Displays of strong emotion were not unusual in Zhu Xi's works. However, as already discussed, they have always been suppressed under the dominant discussion on thought—either those thoughts on divergent ways of transcendence or those on Neo-Confucian reflections. Personal feelings and emotions of Zhu Xi were on the one hand presented vaguely and occasionally in his earlier poems when his thoughts and actual attitudes towards the outer world could not be consistent. So a feeling of struggling between these two was mostly unconsciously revealed, as described in Chapter 3. On the other hand, emotions were presented from time to time in his poems of chanting and responding to friends. For example, there are 99 of Zhu Xi's poems chronologically arranged by Guo Qi between the middle of Shaoxing reign and the early Chunxi years (roughly between 1145 and 1179) that were mostly his responses to or imitations of the poet Liu Wen 劉韞 (1101-1179). These poems express Zhu Xi's appreciation of Liu's poems, his fondness of natural scenery, his personal emotions evoked spontaneously by the deep involvement with the outer world, and most importantly his desire for the ability to write good poetry to record the joyful scenes, sceneries and emotions.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Guo Qi (2000), 194-200, 268-338.

Titles of some of these poems show that Zhu Xi was certainly very interested in writing poetry of this type and that he was keen to improve his skills. For example, one title notes that ‘Xiuye⁴⁸ wrote poetry using the rhyme of [Du Fu’s poem that writes] ‘pleased with the fact that the houses are not too many and rejoicing at the fact that they do not block the cloudy mountain’. Xi carefully read the fine work and rashly chimed in with disorderd rhymes and insufficient thought. It does not match the rhythm of the musical instrument. If you can bestow on me your corrections while reading it in amusement, I will be very fortunate indeed” 秀野以“喜無多屋宇，幸不礙雲山”為韻賦詩，熹伏讀佳作，率爾攀和，韻劇思慳，無復律呂，笑覽之餘賜以斤斧，幸甚。⁴⁹ As for the content, Zhu Xi’s love of immersion in the world of poetry with the scenery and feelings is no less strong and enduring than his vow to stop writing poetry. There are verses like “desperately calling my fellows to go wondering among the flowers, I do not feel that poetic feeling blocks the [learning] of the *dao*” 急呼我輩穿花去，未覺詩情與道妨; “merrily drinking guests, do not apologize for being drunk. After drinking, let us dry ourselves and turn to the sun” 淋浪坐客休辭醉，飲罷晞身向九陽⁵⁰; “I cannot resist the temptation of scenery. Even exhausting all my poetic talents cannot make up for the insufficiency” 不堪景物撩人甚，倒盡詩囊未許慳⁵¹; “the worldly feelings go away, following the passing years. All that’s left are poetic feelings that become sparse as I age” 世情分逐流年去，只有詩情老更慳。⁵² All of these suggest that there was a complex of “poetic feeling” triggered by the

⁴⁸ Style name of Liu Wen.

⁴⁹ Guo Qi (2000), 268.

⁵⁰ Guo Qi (2000), 292.

⁵¹ Guo Qi (2000), 307.

⁵² Guo Qi (2000), 308.

outer world that had always been there in Zhu Xi's mind. This aspect of Zhu Xi's disposition had just been consciously restrained by his awareness of its conflicts with the learning of *dao*. But it revealed itself from time to time when he was put in the right situation where there were triggering objects, friends and good reasons. It is also clear that this was unlikely to be simply the results of competitions of poetic skills when Zhu Xi was present at social gatherings, the reason being that we know from these examples that in both the titles and verses of his poems of this type, he has been very frankly confessing that he was unsatisfied with his writings in terms of the presentations of both scenes and feelings. As noted earlier, he also denied his fame as a poet when he was recommended for an official position because of his poems. What we see is more of his will to competently describe this kind of emotional experience with his poetic brush. Even if he took poetic competition seriously, he was competing in a way that differs from his *daoxue* stance.

Detailed description of imagery, the desire for life in a secluded world, and the feeling of the desperate need to fully celebrate the pleasure of escaping into the nature are quite common in Tang poetry where poets prized spontaneity, straightforwardness and strong emotion. However, these elements were believed by Zhu Xi at that time to be what "harms the *dao*" or "worldly entanglement". Therefore, it is somewhat surprising for us to see all these elements present in his poetry. In 1161, when touring the mountains and rivers with his friend Liu Wen, he wrote poems like the following:

“Thousands of woods without leaves, the plain is flat. Tens of thousands of gullies of jade-like snow brightens the night with light. Unaware that the remaining plum blossoms have all blown down, I only worry that the Qiang bamboo flute cannot be played.” 千林無葉一川平，萬壑瓊瑤照夜明。未覺殘梅飄落盡，祇愁羌管不成聲。⁵³ There are three different natural scenes that can be visualized and felt by the readers, achieved through detailed characterization of particular images: a vast plain with barren trees, valleys covered with bright snow and plum trees with scattered dying flowers. There is also great enthusiasm for the natural world, despite the cold and desolation that are indicated in the last verse. The fabricated image of the sound of the Qiang bamboo flute and its twisted use suggest that it is an allusion to previous works, one of which is very likely to be the verse of Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) that “The Qiang bamboo flute plays songs of poplar and willow, while beauties of Yan serve wine” 羌管吹楊柳，燕姬酌蒲萄⁵⁴, which conveys a cozy and consonant atmosphere of men, women and nature represented by the music of the flute. Moreover, it could also possibly be referring to a poem by Wen Tingyun 溫庭筠 (812-870) that: “Where does this tune of the Qiang bamboo flute come from? It is the melodious voice of the oriole ascending to the top of the branch in hundreds of twists and turns”. 羌管一聲何處曲，流鶯百轉最高枝。⁵⁵ The sound of the bamboo flute symbolizes the enjoyable sound of nature, and Zhu Xi’s allusive use of it shows his love for the natural world as well as the pleasure he takes in indulging himself in it.

⁵³ Guo (2000), 200.

⁵⁴ Peng and Yang (1960), vol.457 (vol.7), 5182.

⁵⁵ Peng and Yang (1960), vol.578 (vol.9), 6722.

It is clear that in this poem Zhu Xi lost his balance, i.e. this pervasion of outer objects and personal feelings and the exclusion of philosophical thought he swore would be his only focus. Moreover, with regard to the image of the bamboo flute, Zhu uses the synonym of *qiang guan, qiang di* 羌笛, which can be equally translated as Qiang bamboo flute in English. But in the context of traditional poetry since Tang, especially in warfare poems, the meaning of *qiang di* is instantly symbolic. It was normally deployed to create the cold and lonely atmosphere in the vast plain of the border area, far from the protagonist soldier's home, which then intensifies the sadness of the war. In most cases, it appears in parallel with scenery of the homeland, mostly the south, where there is peace and good weather, which exaggerates the feeling of homesickness and the keen desire for conciliation and prosperity. This is represented by the famous couplet of Wang Zhihuan 王之涣 (688-742): "What is the need for the Qiang bamboo flute to play the plaintive songs of poplar and willow? Spring time does not come through the Yumen Pass" 羌笛何須怨楊柳，春光不度玉門關。⁵⁶ In spite of invoking similar desolate scenery, Zhu Xi uses the bamboo flute in a way contrary to that by most Tang or even earlier poets that Zhu Xi must have known. This again proves his affection for the naturalness of the outer environment, which was not a result of any simple imitation or convenient borrowing of loaded images and meanings from others.

⁵⁶ Peng and Yang (1960), vol.253 (vol.4), 2849.

2.4 Two Directions of Poetry and the Problem of Zhu Xi's *Daoxue* Cultivation

Compared with the aforementioned poems of pure thoughts and inner reflections, Zhu Xi's poetry at this early stage of his Neo-Confucian career arguably went in two directions: on the one hand, he borrowed the form of a poem to facilitate his philosophical investigation, expressing his regret on wandering astray when seeking for the *dao* and his determination to solely focus on the cultivation of *dao*; on the other hand, however, he is interested in imitating the poetry of the Tang style, portraying only scenes and feelings, having himself immersed in the concrete outer world of nature and disclosing the pleasure of this indulgence as well as a hint of relief derived from a temporary escape into the nature.

Admittedly, contradictory styles existing within one poet's collection is far from uncommon for most of the Confucian disciples in both the Tang and Song dynasties. There is a consensus that no member of the traditional Chinese society would subscribe to only one belief or way of life. Even social activists with strong Confucian convictions conventionally called upon different ways to serve different needs. They may not necessarily fall into the category of Daoism or Buddhism when expressing their desires or appreciation for a secluded world or immortal land, but they do not mind following the tradition unreservedly and with high respect, as long as it fits the spontaneous feeling or experience in his private life at a particular time. For Zhu Xi at this stage of his

life, however, this was unacceptable because he knew that Buddhism and Daoism were what he needed to fight against. As shown in Zhu Xi's attitude towards Li Ao mentioned in the previous chapter, his intention was to establish a lineage of Confucian orthodoxy that excluded all the Buddhist and Daoist influences in a very strict sense. In the meantime, his newly accepted teachings of Li Tong were supposed to be a theory on top of the synthesis of these different traditions, which means a solution to this pragmatism and pluralistic inner minds.⁵⁷ Most importantly, as I discussed in the first chapter, what was new in Neo-Confucianism was the awakening of individual inner spirit that had never been emphasized under the dominant discourse of the heavenly *dao*. *Daoxue* followers of the time began to pay more attention to the inner mind, seeking for a way to have the heart-mind perfectly match the way of heaven without violating the Confucian teachings. This meant that the attitudes towards the heavenly principle, personal feelings and various outer worlds needed to be coherent. The relationship between these elements on encountering the outer world needed to be properly handled so that this philosophical thought, characterized by its inwardness, could be firmly grounded on sensory experience of individuals' lives, both public and private.

⁵⁷ For example, in the *Conversations*, Zhu Xi conceded the fact that all of the four distinguished disciples of the Cheng brothers—Xie Liangzuo 謝良佐 (1050-1103), Yang Shi 楊時 (1050-1135), You Zuo 游酢 (1053-1123) and Lü Dalin 呂大臨 (1040-1092)—had their thoughts mixed with Chan Buddhist and Daoist ideas, to different extent, so none of them was superior enough. He also believed that even though Lü Dalin's *daoxue* achievement was the highest among the four, it was a pity that he died at a young age; otherwise he could have better comprehended the wisdom of his master that is more advanced than his haphazard assortment of different schools of thought. In 'Chengzi menren' 程子門人, Zhu (1986), vol. 101 (vol.7), 2558.

This is in accordance with the philosophical agenda of Neo-Confucianism shaped by the time of its birth. As pointed out by Tzi-ki Hon, the Neo-Confucians “wanted to establish a long-lasting sociopolitical structure in China so that the country would be free from warlords, political partisans, and foreign invaders”. In order to reach this goal, they needed to respond to both “the Buddhists’ concern with attaining personal liberation from suffering” and “the Daoists’ concern with transcending anthropocentrism”, which had been dominating Chinese philosophy for seven centuries. Only in this way could their Neo-Confucian doctrine be tailored to the audience steeped in Buddhism and Daoism.⁵⁸ As mentioned before, Zhu Xi had certainly recognized that both philosophies that he was arguing against are deeply concerned with people’s spiritual needs. Therefore, in the field of writing poetry, it is of vital importance for him to find a poetic structure that provides equal spiritual comfort and aesthetic harmony rather than making mere superficial changes.

Apparently, Zhu Xi felt that he failed to meet the theoretical requirement of what he was learning at this stage. That is why he generally held this strong and negative attitude towards writing poetry, especially towards the situation where people devote too much time to exquisite forms and wordings. Zhu Xi considered this to be overlooking or ignoring the will (*zhi* 志), or in a narrow sense, social ambitions.⁵⁹ Paradoxically, he

⁵⁸ Hon (2003)

⁵⁹ In a letter ‘In Response to Yang Songqing’ (‘Da Yang Songqing’ 答楊宋卿), Zhu Xi comments on poetry writing at that time in general: “Xi heard that poetry represents the will. Having the will in mind, while expressed, it is poetry. [...] In this sense, since virtue of gentlemen of ancient times is great enough to have the will, and it necessarily comes from the realm where it is

could only write while swearing not to write, deny his fame as a poet and reject the practice of writing poetry while continuing to write large quantities of poems about mountains and rivers, sceneries and emotions.

If we look into the aforementioned letters Zhu Xi wrote to Cheng Xun about his critique of Su Shi during this period, these contradictory writing styles in Zhu Xi's poetry look particularly ironic, further exposing the problem of his *daoxue* learning at this initial stage. The primary argument Zhu Xi held against Su Shi's works was that Su did not bear the sage's principle in mind before dealing with the outer world. Consequently, more often than not, he started with the phenomena of the world mingled with personal desires and reached a conclusion that was just a superficial compromise: "Dealing with the inner self and handling outer objects should not follow two different *dao*. There is no such thing as having the *dao* in one's inner self while losing it in outer objects. So generally those who lose the *dao* in outer objects are those who did not get it in their inner selves [...] this is particularly the case with the followers of Su's learning. Because

profound, bright, pure and integral, they naturally possess the capability of writing poetry without learning. As for the precise and imprecise matching of the tonal meters, good and bad usage of rhythms and parallel phrasings, as well as metaphors and wordings, there is no instance of stressing on these when I examine works of each virtuous person before Wei and Jin dynasties, not to mention those poetry in ancient times. It is only recently poets who begin to pay special attention to these, which is how the poetic theory of exquisiteness and plainness was brought to the fore. They are superior in fancy language but they have the function of deliver the will neglected." 烹聞詩者志之所之，在心為志，發言為詩 [...] 是以古之君子德足以求其志，必出於高明純一之地，其於詩固不學而能之。至於格律之精粗，用韻屬對、比事遣詞之善否，今以魏晉以前諸賢之作考之，蓋未有用意於其間者，而況於古詩之流乎？近世作者乃始留情於此，故詩有工拙之論，而葩藻之詞勝，言志之功隱矣。As for himself, he also frankly confesses that he cannot write good poems. Zhu (2002), vol.22, 1728. According to chronology of Zhu Xi's letters by Chen Lai, this letter is dated to the year 1155, roughly the same period when he produced the aforementioned poems of neglected wills. See Chen Lai (2007), 9.

the origin is like this, it harms the disciples a lot.” 處己接物，內外無二道也，得於己而失於物者無之。故凡失於物者，皆未得於己者也 [...] 而為蘇學者為尤甚，蓋其源流如此，其誤後學多矣。⁶⁰ This analysis seems to fit well with the works of Zhu Xi discussed earlier, in which his depiction of the outer world varies from poem to poem. He is exactly in this situation of having two different *dao* in the inner and outer worlds. This contradiction also explains why Zhu Xi’s attitude towards Su Shu has always been ambivalent. Even within one paragraph of argument, his phrasing is rather twisted and at odds: “The language of Su is imposing and flowery, unrivaled in the recent world. If you want to compose literature, you may well imitate it. But the meaning of his words is arrogant, undisciplined, eccentric and wild, including the things that are not desired by gentlemen who know *dao*. So each time I read it, I cannot help liking it. But after liking it, I cannot help feeling tired of it. I often cannot finish the whole book before I quit. It is not that I intentionally want to disregard it, but that it just happens naturally, the reason for which is not known.” 蘇氏文辭偉麗，近世無匹，若欲作文，自不妨模範。但其詞意矜豪詭譎，亦有非知道君子所欲聞。是以平時每讀之，雖未嘗不喜，然既喜，未嘗不厭，往往不能終帙而罷，非故欲絕之也，理勢自然，蓋不可曉。⁶¹ Zhu Xi obviously admired Su Shi’s talents as a writer, just as he admired Liu Wen’s poems. This is also what he aimed to achieve when learning from Liu Wen about depicting landscapes. It is very likely that Zhu Xi liked the feelings expressed in Su’s poems, as they were seen to be spontaneous and natural. However, the more Zhu Xi read Su’s works, the more he felt that they

⁶⁰ Zhu (2002), vol.22, 1861.

⁶¹ Zhu (2002), vol.22, 1864.

contradicted with the philosophy that he was learning. However, it is unlikely that the problem lies with Su Shi as his poetry was stylish and spontaneous and therefore appreciated by Zhu Xi. It could only be that Zhu Xi's learning or understanding of the philosophy was problematic at some point.

3. Probing into the Post-emission: the Predominance of *Dao*

3.1 From the Unitary Principle to its Manifestations

As early as in 1153 when Zhu Xi first met with Li Tong and talked about what he learned from Chan Buddhism, Li argued that: "There is one principle with many manifestations in the world. Now where did you get this abstract big theory that comes from nowhere? How can you not grasp it from its manifestations?" 天下理一而分殊，今君子何處騰空處理會得一個大道理，更不去分殊上體認?⁶² In the year of 1158 when Zhu Xi went to visit Li Tong again and formally took him as his master, Li emphasized again on the primary difference between his thought and Daoism and Buddhism: "The reason why our learning of Confucianism is different from those heterodoxies is that [we stress] both the unitary principle and its manifestations. We need not be concerned if the principle is not unified. What is difficult is its manifestations." 吾儒之學所以異于異端者，理一分殊

⁶² This is noted by Xu Yongjian 徐用檢 (1528-1611) in his 'Preface for the Literary Anthology of Master Renshan' 仁山先生文集序, in Jin (1938), 91.

也。理不患其不一，所難者分殊耳。⁶³ Moreover, in his letter to Zhu Xi about the *Western Inscription* (*Xi ming* 西銘), written by the highly regarded *daoxue* predecessor Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1077), Li Tong urged Zhu Xi to apprehend further the different manifestations of the principle: “When I read the line in the *Words [of the Cheng Brothers]* that the benevolent person is fully united with the objective world, I grasp the gist of the *Western Inscription*. I see that the way he thinks is quite correct. It is appropriate to apply this broadly and seek for it. But it is not difficult to see the phenomenon of equal treatment without discrimination. [You] should perceive different manifestations without missing even the smallest bit. This is the ideal for scholars.” 見語錄中有“仁者渾然與物同體”一句即認得西銘意旨。所見路脈甚正，宜以是推廣求之。然要見一視同仁氣象卻不難，須是理會分殊，雖毫髮不可失，方是儒者氣象。⁶⁴ All these records show that Li Tong believed that there was a problem for Zhu Xi at that time: he was not paying enough attention to the concrete outer world or daily affairs in his comprehension of the principle. We can tell from Li Tong’s reminders that he felt that Zhu’s mind tended to be more metaphysical and abstract, which focuses on general issues of the *dao* and people’s heart-mind as well as an idealized yet unpractical way of realizing the *dao*. This characteristic of Zhu Xi’s thought echoed his mentality when writing poems on philosophical discussions, in which he mostly talked about ideological conceptions with no images from the real outer world. As to the way of cultivation, he also thought that it should be a process of exceptional difficulty or something extraordinary. This was clear

⁶³ This is recorded in the postscript written by Zhao Shixia 趙師夏 (fl.1190) for *Yanping dawen* 延平答問, in Zhu (2002), vol.13, 354.

⁶⁴ Zhu (2002), vol.13, 324.

in the previously mentioned verse in 'Two Poems on Learning for Bewilderment' where Zhu argued that the accomplishment of this cultivation could not be carried out simply by ordinary words and deeds.

As further evidence of this, in his later teachings to his disciples, Zhu Xi himself recalled this beginning stage of learning Confucianism with Li Tong: "In the old days, when I met with Master Li, I blabbered about a great many big thoughts. I also learned Chan Buddhism. Master Li said: 'you know about a great deal of empty theory like this, but you don't know the things in front of you. The *dao* is not mysterious. If you just comprehend it among daily affairs with serious cultivation, you can get it.' Later I finally understood what he meant, so now I do not reach the point as bad as not understanding." 某舊見李先生時，說得無限道理，也曾去學禪。李先生云：“汝恁地懸空理會得許多，而前面事卻又理會不得！道亦無玄妙，只在日用間著實做工夫處理會，便自見得。”後來方曉得他說，故今日不至無理會耳。⁶⁵ What Zhu Xi understood about the doctrine taught by Li Tong then was simply that: "Roughly this is about regarding the appreciation of the ultimate origin of things as the first priority, complemented with discussions of the meanings of the classics" 大概此事以涵養本源為先，講論經旨特以輔此而已。⁶⁶ Reflected in his poetry of this period, these problems indicated the difficulties in apprehending the detailed outer world and the concomitant personal feelings. This is because without a deeper understanding of this Confucian principle within the

⁶⁵ Zhu (1986), vol.101 (vol.7), 2568.

⁶⁶ Zhu (2002), vol.25, 4879.

immediate experience of encountering the outer world, Zhu Xi could not know how to treat the various outer objects, or differentiate complex personal emotions between appropriate feelings and excessive desires,⁶⁷ or control the tension and balance in the relationship between inner and outer, objects, emotions and thoughts. Furthermore, when it came to the occasion of chanting and responding with friends and wandering among mountains and rivers, it became even harder for Zhu Xi to achieve the balance because in those poems exchanged among the larger intellectual group, this immediate experience of people's reaction to the outer world was influenced by the strong lyric tradition of Chinese poetry and prose. This suggests that both theoretically and experientially (practically?), if he would ever continue to write, he needed to deal with the situation of writing poetry in two different extremes.

3.2 “Lixue” Poems of Zhu Xi and Hu Hong

Li Tong noticed the problem of Zhu Xi in paying inadequate attention to the multifaceted manifestation of *dao*, pointing to his inability to coherently understand the principle in

⁶⁷ In Zhu Xi's comments on poetry and poets recorded in the *Conversation*, both the poetry of Tao Qian and Li Bai are prized as strong and unconstrained (*haofang* 豪放), poetry of the emperor Xuan Zong 玄宗 of Tang are considered to have an “elegant grandeur” 飄逸氣概, and the Song poet Qin Guan 秦觀 (1049-1100) are highly regarded as being able to “wield his writing brush in front of the guests” 對客揮毫. See Zhu Xi (1986), vol. 140, 3325, 3330. In contrast, some of Li Bai's verses are deemed to be indecent (*yin* 淫) and distressing (*shang* 傷), some unknown person's work is criticized as “being too delicate, so to have the fault of being dispirited” 太細膩, 流於委靡, and Zhu Xi also clearly says that there is no need to write too many poems, as they tend to make people addicted and indulged (*xianni* 陷溺). See Zhu Xi (1986), vol. 140, 3328, vol.139, 3316, vol.140, 3333. This shows that when Zhu Xi was making these conversations, he was aware that there should be differentiations between different emotions.

all things in the world. The problem thus reflected in his poetry was also observed by another famous *daoxue* philosopher of the time, Hu Hong 胡宏 (1105-1161), when he read Zhu Xi's poetic lines about refusing to accept a governmental post. Zhu Xi wrote, "Permit the recluse to lie in the empty valley. The river, wind and moon need people to appreciate them" 留取幽人卧空谷，一川風月要人看, and "Floating clouds are allowed to gather and spread as they like, while since ancient times, green mountains have just been green" 浮雲一任閑舒卷，萬古青山祇麼青. Zhu's description of the landscape here was dominated by the feelings of indulgence and the differentiated attitudes toward two different outer worlds. Hu Hong commented to his disciple Zhang Shi that Zhu Xi knew only the essence of *dao* but not its function or manifestations. Hu therefore wrote three "heptasyllabic quatrains" for Zhu Xi, hoping to give him precautions and inspirations:

雲出青山得自由， Clouds are set free when getting out of the green mountain.

西郊未解如薰憂。 [But I am] worried as if being burnt [for the fact that you] do not yet perceive [the principle] of the western suburbs.⁶⁸

欲識青山最青處， If you seek to know the darkest green place in the green mountains,

雲物萬古生無休。 Since ancient times, clouds and objects have flourished without

⁶⁸ This expression of "I am worried as if being burnt" comes from the verse in the *Odes* that says "My heart is terrified with the heat; My sorrowing heart is as if on fire" 我心憚暑、憂心如熏. See Zhu (2007), 247.

ceasing.

幽人徧愛青山好， The recluse prefers the goodness of the green mountains,

爲是青山青不老。 Because this green mountain green will never grow old.

山中雲出雨乾坤， Clouds emerge in the mountains, raining over heaven and earth.

洗過一番山更好。 The mountains become better after a thorough washing.

天生風月散人間， Heaven bestowed the wind and moon and spread them in the
human world.

人間不止山中好。 In the human world, mountain views are not the only good
things.

若也清明滿懷抱， If clarity and insight are fully cherished in the bosom,

到處氛埃任除掃。 Everywhere the dust and debris can be swept away. ⁶⁹

While there is no hard evidence that these poems did influence Zhu Xi's poetry, the problem that Hu Hong pointed out for Zhu Xi and the "solution" he gave did somehow foreshadow the changes that took place in Zhu Xi's poetry over the next decade.

⁶⁹ Fu (1991), vol.35.1972, 22108.

According to a postscript he wrote for these poems of Hu Hong, Zhu Xi did not know about these poems until four years after Hu Hong's death, which took place one year after Hu's writing of the poetry dated to 1160.⁷⁰ That is to say Zhu Xi became aware of the poetry in the year 1165, just one year before he wrote his two most well-known poems named 'Two Poems on Thoughts on Reading Books' ('Guan shu you gan er shou' 觀書有感二首). These are stereotypically categorized as *lixue* poems because of his status as a *lixue* philosopher.⁷¹

半畝方塘一鑑開，	A half <i>mu</i> square pond opens like a mirror;
天光雲影共徘徊。	Sunlight and cloud shadows move back and forth [in the reflection].
問渠那得清如許，	If you ask how the pond can be so clear,
爲有源頭活水來。	I say that a spring replenishes it with flowing water.
昨夜江邊春水生，	The vernal flood rose on the riverbank last night;

⁷⁰ Zhu (2002), vol.24, 3821-3822.

⁷¹ Ever since one of the most important introductory books of the *lixue* philosophers' works compiled less than a decade after Zhu Xi's death, entitled *Sentence by Sentence Explanations of All Sorts of Works of Xing and Li* (*Xingli qunshu jujie* 性理群書句解), these two poems are collected and interpreted as representative philosophical works of Zhu Xi. In general, the first poem is interpreted as describing the feature of the essential body that is acute and discriminating, while the second one is interpreted as describing the process of reading to exhaust the principle, which normally starts from doubt and ends with enlightenment. See Xiong et al. (1973), vol.4, 14.

蒙衝巨艦一毛輕。

The colossal warship moves lightly as a feather.

向來枉費推移力，

Up to now, effort has been wasted in the effort of
pushing it.

此日中流自在行。

Today it drifts along on its own.

These poems are noticeably different from all the other previous poems of Zhu Xi, including the ones about his initial *lixue* reflections. First, they do not present an intention to transcend the objective world as in his earliest poetry. Moreover, nor do they exclude all the elements of the outer world to conduct only philosophical discussions. Third, they do not go to another extreme as they are not as sentimental and self-indulgent as most of Tang poets. Fourth, they do resemble the three poems of Hu Hong to some extent in depicting in detail the natural images with few abstract concepts from the *lixue* thought. But in both cases, the composition is dominated by philosophical thinking rather than emotional interaction with the world or the transmission of personal feelings in the tension between man and nature. The way Zhu Xi and Hu Hong see the outer world is largely the same in the sense that they both observe it from a certain distance, seeking for the manifestations of the unitary *dao* in it and using it to articulate and propagate their own understandings of the principle. They both use discursive language and logical reasoning in supposedly expressive and descriptive poems of natural scenery. For example, Hu Hong's poems mostly use different types of

adverbial clauses to arrange the natural imagery for the illustration of his philosophical ideas. The second half of his first poem is a typical adverbial clause of purpose in daily language, which he uses to indicate the reciprocal eternity of all things in the world behind the phenomenal world. “The darkest green place in the green mountains”, meaning the grandness of the phenomenal outer world, lies in the fact that there is this continuous reproduction breed in an endless succession, which is an ultimate presentation of eternity. Hu’s second poem consists of two adverbial clauses: one is a clause of reason, explaining the author’s understanding of Zhu Xi’s aforementioned poems of seclusion; the other is a clause of time and condition, referring to a potential event of rain in the mountains and the resulting improved scenery. The underlying idea is clearly that there are still better things or a better world beyond our current conception, subject to certain conditions, all of which are met within the clarity of a mind focused on the *dao*. After a logical clarification of the scope of the human world (*ren jian*) as opposed to the heavenly realm, there is still one more conditional clause in the last poem: The human world includes both the secluded mountains and the social world. If you have this insightful mind of the *dao*, you can use it to wipe out the dust in any world. As for Zhu Xi, he also uses the conditional sentence to develop his argument concerning how to find the *dao* within its various manifestations in the earthly world. Like Hu Hong, Zhu Xi also applies the logic of deductive reasoning throughout his poetry, reducing the ultimate principle from the concrete outer world and presenting a

mentality that explores the relationship between the unitary principle and worldly affairs.

That said, there are perhaps more differences than similarities between the poems of these two authors. They both use natural images to illustrate their thoughts, but Zhu Xi's imagery is much more detailed and visible. In each poem, Zhu Xi focuses on only one scene. In the first poem, he describes the size and shape of the pond, with the metaphor of a mirror to illustrate the cleanness of the water, and presents to the reader a beautiful view of the sky, the sunshine, the clouds and different shadows mixing together in its reflection. In the second one, he depicts the flood on the riverbank by placing it specifically in a spring night, which gives a peaceful and lively impression rather than a disastrous view. He then gazes on the warship that attracts his attention: it is colossal but now looks as light as a feather floating on the river because of the flood. Both still and moving sights are present in the poems. So is a mix of mutual-contrasted elements, making the scenes colorful and abundant with images. Although the title of the poems suggests that they were written when reading books, it is fair to say that they at least look like real observations of the outer world and they can be visualized or recreated by the readers.

For Hu Hong, however, even though all his three poems are about the green mountains, the images there are used in their most abstract sense and with frequent repetition. In

the first poem he uses the images of clouds and green mountains twice without any detailed description. In the second poem, he talks about the clouds again and even mentions the green mountains thrice in the remaining three verses. Quite obvious is that the author was not really experiencing the scenes. When writing the poems, he was probably sitting in his study, playing with the images in Zhu Xi's seclusion poetry and trying to construct his own thoughts based on a different arrangement of the imagery. He did stress the outer world, especially the elimination of the distinction between the world of men and world of nature. But that is only because of his Neo-Confucian convictions. Hu believed that the heavenly *dao* should be inherent in all things in the world without distinctions. Hence the social, cultural and political responsibilities of elites that had been advocated by the traditional Confucians would be given the same validity as the rules of the natural world.

Like most Neo-Confucian masters, Hu Hong refused to recognize the dimension of the personal emotions triggered by immediate sensory experience on encountering the outer world. This dimension, however, was the foundation to the mainstream poetic tradition. To reject it was especially difficult for poets with a dedicated eye and sensitive feelings for the outer world and who have long been immersed in the poetic tradition of dealing with a direct relationship between man and nature, without the meddling intellectual pressures of Neo-Confucian principle. Hu Hong saw the world with a rationally constructed philosophical mind, or through the illustration of the philosophy,

rather than with a poetic eye, which is manifested in the way he describes the natural world in his poetry. In this sense, Hu Hong's poetry does not reveal an individual person's actual encountering the outer world and the correspondent feelings do not occur in reality. Therefore, the dimension of personal feelings is simply ignored in Hu Hong's thought. Moreover, Hu's poetry did not follow the formal rules of the tradition recognized by both Wang Li and Cai Zongqi.⁷² The rules for the syntax structure, tones and rhymes are completely ignored. Given all these factors just demonstrated—the lack of real encounter with the outer world, let alone any lived experience, the adoption of daily language and the disregard of any formal rules—if we follow Hu Hong's own definition according to which he entitled his poems “three quatrains”, we may confidently conclude that rather than being poetic, his poems are more like barely rhymed discursive verses or at most poetry of *lixue*. Therefore, it is the difference between the poetry of Hu Hong and that of Zhu Xi that makes the latter distinctive from the general *lixue* poems, thereby making it worth a closer look.

Unlike Hu Hong, Zhu Xi was a poet with a great deal of practice and most importantly with a sensitive poetic eye, which is also the reason why he used to hold very strong and negative attitudes towards writing poetry and swear not to write any more at the beginning of accepting Li Tong's teachings. What I mean by this is that he understood the mechanism by which an actual experience in the outer world precipitates the

⁷² Wang Li (2000); Cai (2008): 161-172; 199-201.

tension within the relationship between man and nature. The outer world is either consistent or contrasting with the situation of the poetic persona, thus evoking feelings of either joy or sorrow, which are most difficult to extricate because of this constant tension and stimulation. It is based on this understanding that Zhu Xi said “As to writing poetry, it does not harm if you just make several verses occasionally to express your intentions, but there is no need to make a lot, otherwise you get indulged” 作詩間以數句適懷亦不妨。但不用多作，蓋便是陷溺爾。⁷³ As shown in the previous chapter, Zhu Xi failed in gaining an unaffected spiritual mind when trying to transcend the world and to disentangle himself from the worldly affairs by using Daoist and Chan Buddhist themes. As presented at the beginning of this chapter, he also failed in excluding all the distracting and sentimental elements by focusing on the predominant divine mind of the *dao*. Therefore, based on the way he started from a concrete observation of the outer imagery in the “two poems”, we know that Zhu Xi was serious in exploring the relationship between the various phenomena in the world and the philosophical principles. Different from Hu Hong, he did not simply let the metaphysical construction dominate everything. In other words, we can say that Zhu Xi was observing the outer world from the stance of a learner with a poetic eye rather than from the stance of an established philosopher with predetermined perspective. He considered that the post-emission (*yifa*) and pre-emission (*weifa*) were of equal importance and complexity and sought for the emitted principle within outer objects. This is in accordance with his

⁷³ Zhu (1986), 3333.

developing of the new idea of cultivation that stressed the integration of the post-emission and pre-emission in the year 1166, the same year when he wrote these poems, which was mentioned in the first chapter as the first awakening of equilibrium and harmony.⁷⁴

The difference between these two poems of Zhu Xi and his earlier seclusion and social poems of mountains and rivers is that in the latter, he not only describes the natural world he has seen in a self-indulgent manner but also naturally recreates the experience of being in nature. He is now replacing the latter with his philosophical deduction and conclusion. He is demonstrated to be observing the outer world in a cognitive and objective manner with a rational mind rather than doing so sensationally and subjectively with his emotional self. As in the poetry of the young Zhu Xi discussed in the previous chapter, he was seriously exploring man and nature, the inner and outer relationship from the perspective of a poet with a philosophical mind, which is what makes him different from other poets as well as other philosophers. In these two poems, he is closer to the outer world with his philosophical self but further away from entangled personal feelings. This makes his presentation of the world in the first two

⁷⁴ In one of Zhu Xi's correspondences with Zhang Shi dated by Chen Lai to be in the year 1166, Zhu Xi talked about the importance of investigating within the post-emission, which very much assembles the approach he took in writing these two poems: "Now I was unworthy of your teaching and advice, because I have just realized that I have the fault of treating it as two things. [Your letter] is what I desperately want to read. I am fortunate indeed... The emitted is about the go while the pre-emitted is about to express, this is where there should be no separation and division... If not virtually see it, there is nowhere we can assume and feel the ultimate foundation of the world" 茲辱誨喻,乃知尚有認為兩物之蔽,深所欲聞,幸甚幸甚...發者方往而未發者方來,了無間斷隔截處...天下之大本若不真的見得,亦無揣摸處也。In 'Yu Zhang Qinfu' 與張欽夫, *Wenji* vol.30, Zhu (2002), vol.2, 1313. For the chronology of the letter, see Chen Lai (2007), 35.

verses of both poems bear some resemblance to Wang Wei's nature poetry: neither has any emotive qualifiers, semantic bias, distortion of emotion, of self, or of conceptualization. It looks as if the poet just intentionally let the scenery itself to speak and act. But apparently the last two verses are dramatically different. For Zhu Xi, the natural world in the poetry is not a place to escape into or from. Neither is it a lucid place that declares itself and runs parallel with the human world. It is more of a reality to discover. Instead of having the scene of the pond or the spring flood that is in the moment that inspired the poem relived by the reader, Zhu Xi digs deep into a more fundamental level of the phenomenon, aiming to have his philosophical message/teaching passed on to the reader. This is why overall the poetry is visual but not experiential, aesthetic but not sentimental. Even though it is dominated by philosophy, there is no tension between the philosophy and the scene because both are basically about different levels of the same object. What is really under tension is the relationship between the ruling philosophy and the suppressed sensory feelings/self. By constructing the poetry with observations of the pond and warship in flood, as well as exploring their respective principles with his philosophical persona, Zhu Xi's real responsive emotional self as an individual poet is replaced or intentionally omitted, which leaves room for another crisis for his poetry production and his philosophy in general over the long run.

Even without emotional resonance with the reader or inhabitation of a sensory self, we cannot exclude Zhu Xi's works from the category of poetry as what I tend to do with Hu Hong's rhymed works. Zhu Xi's works comply fully with the rules of the form of a heptasyllabic quatrain and they explore a proper relationship between man and nature by dealing with actual experience of encounters with the outer world. In this sense we can say that the categorization of *lixue* poetry, as we normally use it to read poetry of thinkers like Shao Yong and Hu Hong, is too mechanical in confining understandings of the poetry to simple regurgitation of philosophical ideas rather than suggesting their meanings in providing a different approach in rethinking the appropriate positioning of man on poetically encountering the undifferentiated earthly world, which is the way how Zhu Xi's poetry should be read.

3.3 Different Appearances of *Dao* within the Outer World

In fact, the transformation of Zhu Xi's poetry was also reflected in his poems other than 'Two Poems on Thoughts on Reading Books', because his poetry in the whole period was centered on the same problem and took similar approach. By writing poems with careful observation of the outer environment, Zhu Xi attempted to find the resolution to resolve the tension between the Neo-Confucian cosmology and those mutually interactive elements from the outer world or people's lived experience and to ground the former on the latter. He follows the idea that the unitary ultimate principle governs the

multi-faceted earthly world. Therefore, he needs to trace the principle from its various manifestations. By doing so, he gives the objects in his poetry their own lucidity, with a real temporally and geographically verifiable physical experience, while intentionally and inevitably neglecting or suppressing the emotional experience. Based on this basic approach, the difference among Zhu Xi's different poems of this period is simply that the predominance of his philosophy is presented to different extents, as is the corresponding appearance of the outer images.

For example, as early as in his first year of devotion to the thought of principle, Zhu Xi wrote the poem 'Written on Occasion on a Spring Day' ('Chun ri ou zuo' 春日偶作):

聞道西園春色深，	I hear that the spring scene is vibrant in the west garden,
急穿芒屨去登臨。	So I hastily put on straw sandals to ascend and see.
千葩萬蕊爭紅紫，	Thousands of flowers and their myriad pistils compete in
	red and purple
誰識乾坤造化心。	Who knows the creating mind of heaven and earth? ⁷⁵

He depicts the spring scene in the first three verses, with considerable detail and rhetoric devices, recreating an actual experience in the world for his readers. The view

⁷⁵ Guo (2000), 178.

is colorful with thousands of flowers. The pistils form a synecdochal metonymy: The kernel part of a flower is used to represent the whole bloom. Similarly, “thousands of flowers” is used to describe the entire “spring scene”. And the portrayal of the flowers contending in beauty and fascination is an obvious personification, echoing the first verse that describes the spring scene as vibrant. Unlike the pond poem, there is the appearance of a sensitive self of an individual poet, as suggested by the transitive verbs “hear” and “put on”, which is why I use the first person subject twice in the translation. From the his use of the adverb “*ji*” (hastily), we can even detect a personal affection for the scene on the part of the poet—it shows that he is sharing with the reader both his physical and emotional experience. In this case, however, under the presupposition that *dao* should be predominant, as presented in the last verse that subsumes all the phenomena to the “creating mind of heaven and earth”, the artistic influence is removed because of the need to balance the different elements.

None of the components is fully developed due to the compromise: the sketch of the spring scene in the third verse (the first half of the second couplet) is delicate but still not impressive and innovative enough to give readers a vivid experience as detailed as those exquisite but spontaneous-looking Tang poems. Consider some of the Tang verses of similar subject for example: the spring flora under the brush of Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) is “The chaotic flowers are about to bewilder the eye” 亂花漸欲迷人眼,⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Peng and Yang (1960), vol. 443, 4957.

which directly delivers an exaggerated and fresh experience to the readers. Du Fu's description is even subtler, with carefully refined sentence structures: "Lush foliage easily scatters and falls, while soft pistils negotiate their nimble blooming" 繁枝容易紛紛落，嫩葉商量細細開;⁷⁷ "Red enters the delicate peach blossoms, while the green returns to the fresh willow leaves" 紅入桃花嫩，青歸柳葉新。⁷⁸ As for Zhu Xi, his particular strategy of constructing the poem with *lixue* taste makes the presentation of imagery not as vigorous as his poetic predecessors who might not feel the need to compromise between different elements.

Moreover, Zhu Xi's verse is likely to have just followed ready expressions of previous works. For instance, the portrayal of spring blossoms made by Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) that says "hundreds of types of red and purple contend in their fragrances" 百般紅紫鬪芳菲⁷⁹ is probably the model for Zhu Xi. And if we check for the metonymic use of "red and purple" for spring flora in both Tang and Song poetry, we find 13 instances in the Tang and more than 300 in the Song. If we look for its corresponding expression "tens of thousands of purple and red" 萬紫千紅, there are at least four poems by renowned Song poets or thinkers having the identical usage before Zhu Xi's well-known verse "tens of thousands of purple and red are all manifestations of the spring" 萬紫千紅總是春,⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Peng and Yang (1960), vol. 227, 2452.

⁷⁸ Peng and Yang (1960), vol.226, 2438.

⁷⁹ Peng and Yang (1960), vol.343, 3850.

⁸⁰ Guo (2000), 177. Before this poem, the Song poet Zhang Lei 張耒 (1054-1114) had the heptasyllabic line "Tens of thousands of purple and red do not laugh so nicely. Spring scene on earth is at the pink spot." 萬紫千紅休巧笑，人間春色在檀心. ('Mu xiang' 木香, Fu (1991), vol.20.1185, 13404.) The famous female poet Zhu Shuzhen 朱淑真 wrote the line "Not seeing

which was written in the same spring, just a little before the occasional poem discussed above. What's more, compared with the aforementioned Tang poems, the experience of the subject in nature, hastily putting on shoes to see the scenery after hearing about it, is basically a very common daily experience of normal life, without any novelty arrangement that refreshes people's eyes and attracts people's attention. So the feeling of affection is less transferable and intense, even though it takes up half of the space of the poem. Also, the philosophical ideas behind the lines, the "creating mind" the poet aims to pass on is rather vague and unspecific. It ends with a general question attempting to lead the attention to the Neo-Confucian *dao*, yet without giving any answer or description, because the portrayal of the scene, the experience and the feelings take up too much space and weight, making the keynote of the poem less of a rational exploration than a daily observation.

The exactly identical structure appears also in a number of other poems of the roughly same period. For example:

題西林可師達觀軒 An Inscription for the Da Guan Pavilion for Master Ke in Xi

the tens of thousands of purple and red at all, much groundless depress has already taken place." 萬紫千紅渾未見，閑愁先占許多般。 ('Yu zhong xiehuai' 雨中寫懷, Fu (1991), vol.28.1585, 17958.) Zhu Xi's predecessor, Neo-Confucian masters Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-1077) and Hu Yin 胡寅 (1098-1156) also used the same expressions in their respective poems: "Tens of thousands of purple and red fly everywhere, while loads of peach and plum blossoms in the river spread into a footpath" 萬紫千紅處處飛，滿川桃李漫成蹊 ('Luohua yin' 落花吟, Fu (1991), vol.7.379, 4667); "Tens of thousands of purple and red do not correspond with me, because they do not have the mind for the cold season in the year" 萬紫千紅非我對，為渠無有歲寒心. Fu (1991), vol.33.1874, 20976.

門外青山翠紫堆， Outside the door, the mountains pile up in azure and purple,
 幅巾終日面崔嵬。 Wearing my kerchief, all day I face the towering peaks.
 只看雲斷成飛雨， [People] just watch the clouds break and become driving rain,
 不道雲從底處來。 Not knowing from where the clouds emerge.

 擘開蒼峽吼奔雷， Breaking through the dark gorge and roaring like raging
 thunder,
 萬斛飛泉湧出來。 Myriad gallons of water boldly burst forth from the spring..
 斷梗枯槎無泊處， Dead twigs and withered grass have nowhere to stay,
 一川寒碧自縈回。 While a pool of cold green swirls around.

 步隨流水覓溪源， I step along the flowing water, seeking the headstream.
 行到源頭卻惘然。 When I come to the fountainhead, I become disappointed.
 始悟真源行不到， Finally realizing the true source cannot be reached
 倚筇隨處弄潺湲。 Leaning on my cane, here and there I play in the flow.⁸¹

⁸¹ Guo (2000), 231.

The first poem presents Zhu Xi's philosophical mind as predominant, when probing into the principle of things in the outer world. The main point is that on seeing the scenery of mountain rain and clouds, instead of indulging in its magnificence, people should look deeper into its original resource, which is where the principle lies under the phenomenal world. As the title suggests that Zhu Xi just wrote the poetry accidentally on seeing the scenes, and as he indicates that the view is just outside his door, we know that this is supposed to be an actual experience, showing the poet's intention of exploring the *dao* within the here-and-now of the outer world. However, the overall delineation of the scene is too abstract to be felt and memorized. The depiction of the mountain is simply done by a synecdochal feature of its colors, and the presentation of the clouds veiling the mountain is just from the stock scenes mentioned in the previous chapter. Sensory experience and potential feelings are also suppressed under the ultimate principle, as manifested by the author's complaint that people only superficially enjoy the great rainy scene without seeking for the principle behind the phenomena. With the same subject of a mountain view, the style of this poem with a sturdy philosophical involvement is dramatically different from Tao Qian's famous poetry on drinking wine: "The mountain air becomes lovely at sunset,, as flying birds return together in flocks.. In these things there is true meaning, I'd like to explain, but have forgotten the words." 山氣日夕佳，飛鳥相與還。此中有真意，欲辨已忘言。⁸² In Tao's poem, the intellectual thinking involved in the scene is presented more lightly than that

⁸² Lu (1983), vol.2, 998.

of Zhu Xi. Tao Qian does not seem willing to tell what he meant by the “deeper meaning”—he actually intentionally adds that he cannot express it. This certainly gives the reader more freedom to appreciate the scene that is delicately but still naturally depicted and to sense the feelings that are unconsciously transmitted. The less controlling philosophy and more attentive description make Tao’s poem completely different from that of Zhu Xi, despite the similar mountain views.

The second poem is more relaxed, with a detailed description of outer images, and only the images. The first couplet is a close-up of the spring, presenting its power and the magnificent view it creates when bursting out from the rocks. The poet uses a very descriptive adverb “*bo*” to show its suddenness and strength when coming out, a personification “*hou*” to show its fierceness and imposing atmosphere, and a metaphor of “raging thunder” to add an aural quality, making the experience multi-dimensional. The quantifier “myriad gallons” gives more detail to the view and add more grandeur to the splendor. The spring water is depicted by the poet as flying forth, which also helps to supplement the experience with a sense of awesomeness and wonder. The pace of the second couplet is much slower than the first one, which constitutes a drastic contrast with the previous furiousness but without any feeling of unnaturalness or weirdness. The twigs and grass are flushed out together with the spring water. In contrast to the action in the first couplet, here they are just quietly following the flow, ending up peacefully and leisurely floating on top of the green water. The overall atmosphere is

cold and relaxed. The quietness and comfort in the second half is as impressive as the magnificence of the first scene, especially when it is under the tension of two contrasting feelings. Other than these impressive scenes and re-creatable experience of being in this world, there is no appearance of other entangled elements as imposed in other poems of Zhu Xi: no subjective emotional interference, no predominant *lixue* philosophy, and even no hint of the inhabitation of the writer himself. The readers are just left free for their own imaginations, sentiments or thoughts. Just as Wang Wei presents the outer world with complete transparency, which was discussed in the previous chapter, the philosophy is almost unconsciously ingrained behind the lines.

Following the second poem that presents the outer images in a delicate and objective manner, with only a weak hint of *dao* between the lines, the third poem continues to describe the experience of a sensory self being in this world. While it is supposed to be sentimental, the experience of seeking for the headstream ends up being frustrating, because the poet wants to show that without a philosophical mind it is impossible for an innocent self with sentiments to locate the source and not get lost. It is only when the heavenly *dao* is kept in mind that things appear to be clear by themselves so that people can be disentangled from all other misleading explorations and just enjoy the view with its natural rhythm at leisure, as narrated in the last verse. It is fair to say that echoing the first poem that stresses the original resource of clouds, this last quatrain goes back to the predominance of philosophy, reminding the readers of the mind of *dao* that

naturally lies behind the phenomenal world, and helping people attain emotional detachment. This experience of getting frustrated during the process of exploration sounds similar to what was revealed in Zhu Xi's early poetry as discussed in chapter 3. But with the involvement of *dao*, it takes on an altogether different persona. As manifested in the last verse, with the realization of "the real source", the mood of the poet is presented as more relaxed and comfortable, enabling him to appreciate all the scenes with a settled mind. This again bears some resemblance to the poetic style of Cheng Hao, which was discussed earlier. A harmonious integration with the inner and outer world is achieved by presenting the joyful scene of the protagonist pleasantly appreciating and immersed in the world alongside a stable mindset receptive to the *dao*.

Overall, it is fair to conclude that although in these three poems there is detailed description of the outer world in a relaxed atmosphere and a contemplative individual experience of immersion in the world, these poems are still different from those expressed in his social poems on scenery and landscapes discussed in the first section of this chapter. In the latter case, most of the lines are presented as a most immediate sensational response to the outer world. The most spontaneous and complex part of the individual's heart-mind cultivation in the Neo-Confucian pedagogy is still overlooked or suppressed by philosophical thought.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, as an established philosopher, Zhu Xi's showing the rational control of his philosophy over all other sensory elements is one of the most undeniable features of his poetry at this mature stage. Even when he had been trying to balance the relationship to give both his poetry and philosophy a more experiential grounding, as his thought became more and more widely accepted, the increasing fame and respect for him as a Neo-Confucian master make him sometimes just ignore the disproportion, seizing upon some outer images for his *daoxue* teachings, which might be the direct cause for current scholars' stereotypical impression of Zhu Xi's poetry, as described in the second chapter. The most typical example is the 'Twenty Poems on Inspirations While Residing in the Studio' ('Zhaiju ganxing ershi shou' 齋居感興二十首). In the first one, Zhu wrote:

昆侖大無外，	Mount Kunlun is broad with nothing beyond.
旁薄下深廣。	Vast and grand the world is deep and profound.
陰陽無停機，	Interaction of Yin and Yang never stops,
寒暑互來往。	While cold and hot seasons mutually exchange.
皇犧古神聖，	The August [Fu] Xi, the ancient sage,
妙契一俯仰。	Integrates them by looking up and down.
不待窺馬圖，	Before seeing the chart brought out by the dragon horse,

人文已宣朗。	Human writing had already become bright and clear.
渾然一理貫，	A single principle threads everything together
昭晰非象罔。	Distinct and vivid, not vague and unclear.
珍重無極翁，	Repeatedly I treasure the greybeard of the Non-ultimate,
爲我重指掌。	Who repeatedly made me understand. ⁸³

This is basically a poem of metaphysical thinking rather than any verifiable encounter of a sensory self with the outer world. The few images from the natural world are used in their most abstract sense. It is no longer the world described and indicated for itself, but the terms of nature oppressed into metonymic service to exalt the value of the Neo-Confucian cosmology. The vision of the outer world is vague and subjective, or more precisely, it merely serves his philosophy. The use of images from the natural world becomes a correlative way of explaining his thoughts. The author is far from an observer of nature. Rather, he is more of a philosophical creator of his own world. For the duration of the entire twenty poems, construction of the philosophical world is supreme, without even the inhabitation of the poet himself, not to mention any sensational personal feelings. As explained in Zhu Xi's preface, these twenty poems are presented as imitations of 'Poetry of Sentiments on Encounters' ('Ganyu shi' 感遇詩) of

⁸³ Guo (2000), 370.

the Tang poet Chen Zi'ang, but their styles are radically different. Just a couple of Chen's poems are enough to demonstrate the difference:

蘭若生春夏，	The orchid and polia blossom in spring and summer,
芊蔚何青青。	How luxuriant and verdant they are.
幽獨空林色，	Reclusive and solitary, they bring color to the empty woods,
朱蕤冒紫莖。	A vermilion fringe covering the purple stems.
遲遲白日晚，	Slowly, slowly the day turns into night,
嫋嫋秋風生。	Gently, gently, the autumn wind rises.
歲華盡搖落，	When the year's blossoms all been shaken and fallen,
芳意竟何成。	How spring feelings be fulfilled? ⁸⁴
林居病時久，	I live in the woods with protracted illness,
水木澹孤清。	With trees and waters in seclusion and tranquility.
閑臥觀物化，	Idle, I lie and observe the changing phenomena,
悠悠念無生。	I calmly contemplate about the non-existence.

⁸⁴ Peng and Yang (1960), vol.2.83, 890.

青春始萌達， As the spring just begins to flourish,
朱火已滿盈。 The blazing summer is already in full swing.
徂落方自此， From here the withering and falling commence,
感歎何時平。 I am moved and sigh, when will it stop?⁸⁵

It is clear from Zhu Xi's preface that the reason he imitates poems of Chen Zi'ang is that he loves the profound meaning expressed in Chen's poems as well as the strong rhythm within his tonal structure. But seen from the point of view of their respective poems, it is apparent that their meanings are "profound" in different senses. Chen is observing the changing outer world with sentiments, a solitary sigh for the transience of human life against the backdrop of a rapidly changing environment. In contrast, Zhu Xi is basically constructing a systematic philosophy to explain the relationship between man and nature. This is why Zhu Xi mentioned that he only intended to imitate the structure rather than the content of Chen's poems. In his preface, he criticized Chen's poems for not being proficient in reasoning. Of his own imitations, Zhu Xi declared that "although they cannot explore the subtle essence and match with the predecessors' words, they are closely related to the practice of daily affairs, so the words are familiar and easy to know" 雖不能探索微眇，追跡前言，然皆切於日用之實，故言亦近而易知. Thus we know

⁸⁵ Peng and Yang (1960), vol.2.83, 891.

that Zhu Xi clearly saw his own poetry as more profound and superior in meaning to that of Chen Zi'ang.⁸⁶

Being so different from the poetry of Chen Zi'ang, this fashion of writing poetry nevertheless bears more resemblance to the style of Shao Yong who is also a productive poet and who is famous for this particular type of *lixue* poem. Most of his poems consist of rhymed verses like “The earth is square because it is motionless. The sky is round because it moves. Since the body of square and round is established, the dynamic of movement and stillness is realized. Long in stillness moisture must be generated; while motion reaches its pinnacle, the burning takes place. With moisture then the water takes shape, while when burning, the function of fire can be fulfilled” 地以靜而方，天以動而圓。既正方圓體，還明動靜權。靜久必成潤，動極遂成然。潤則水體具，然則火用全，⁸⁷ which is very similar to Zhu Xi's philosophical construction of poetry presented above. This again reminds us of the feature of Zhu Xi's poetry of this stage. Even though the general style of his poetry embodies the tendency of the poetic persona getting closely involved with the phenomenal world and personal sentiments, the philosophical intension still prevails.

4. Outburst of Confliction between Feelings and Thought

⁸⁶ Guo (2000), 370.

⁸⁷ Fu (1991), vol.7.374, 4603.

Despite so many different poetic styles presented above, it is clear that the tension between the outer world, emotions and thought is always present in Zhu's poetry. It cannot be coherently integrated under the grand narrative of *dao* by simply walking close to the world and forcing the undisciplined human emotions to give way to the heavenly principle. Along with the development of Zhu Xi's thought, the tension becomes particularly intense when it comes to the occasion we mentioned earlier, i.e. when poetry is meant to fulfill its social function, i.e. the function of commemorating gatherings and travels with friends among mountains and rivers.

At the end of the year 1167, the conflict between feelings and principle that had long been the undercurrent in Zhu Xi's poetry during this stage finally broke out when Zhu Xi toured Mount Heng with Zhang Shi and wrote 49 poems of scenes and sentiments within only 10 days. As I mentioned in the second chapter, the poems were later edited into the collection called *Chanting and Responses on Nanyue Mountain* (*Nanyue changchou* 南嶽唱酬). This collection consisted of 149 poems from Zhu Xi, Zhang Shi, Lin Yongzhong and Fan Niande. Poems by Zhu Xi in this collection surprisingly made very little mention of Neo-Confucian thought, even though the journey was intended to involve discussions of philosophical views with another serious philosopher and his *daoxue* disciples. What we can see is that the poems are all about detailed natural descriptions and are abundant with spontaneous sentiments, as if the philosophical lens

for viewing the outer world Zhu used frequently in his previous poems was now completely set aside.

The very first couplet of the entire collection was started by Zhu Xi, setting up the sentimental keynote for all the following writings: “Walking in the mountains for three days as the wind blows around the forest, the weather is cold, the year is ending while the traveler feels deep sorrow” 三日山行風繞林，天寒歲暮客愁深。⁸⁸ In another poem entitled ‘Making the Decision to Climb the Mountain When the Blizzard Is Yet to Stop, Using the Rhyme of Jingfu on the Hall of Spring Breeze’ (‘Fengxue weiyi juece dengshan yong Jingfu Chunfeng lou yun’ 風雪未已決策登山用敬夫春風樓韻),⁸⁹ the title itself suggests the poet’s great enthusiasm for seeing the grand view, delivering to the readers a strong sense of emotion and passion. In the poem, Zhu Xi declared “Tall and impressive is the mountain in snow, making my heart nearly break with grief” 峨峨雪山，心眼悽欲斷. Here Zhu’s description and sentiment is drastically different from the previously mentioned metaphysical and emotionless portrayal of Mount Kunlun that is simply broad and profound. The feeling here is expressed as real, strong, and in Zhu Xi’s own word “addictive and indulging” (*xianni* 陷溺). In addition, the deep structure of the following couplet “People like me enjoy the sight of magnificence, exclaiming by the river successively” 吾人愛奇賞，遞發臨河嘆 also differs from the aforementioned “[People] just watch the clouds break and become driving rain, not knowing from where

⁸⁸ Guo (2000), 432.

⁸⁹ Guo (2000), 435.

the clouds emerge” where a restraint of sensational emotion and return to the fundamental *dao* is emphasized. The sensory experience of Zhu Xi as an individual poet is especially delicately reflected in the poem ‘The Square and Wide Wooden House’ (‘Fang guang banwu’ 方廣版屋):

秀木千章倒， Thousands of fine trees are cut,
層薨萬瓦差。 For its layered roofs, tens of thousands of tiles are not enough
悄無人似玉， Being melancholy for there is no jade-like beauty,
空詠小戎詩。 I can only chant the poem ‘Xiao rong’ in vain.⁹⁰

The poem ‘Xiao rong’ is from the *Odes*, which depicts the unforgettable affection of a woman for her husband at war. The poem says “When I think of my husband, warm and soft as jade; Living there in his wooden house; it sends confusion into all the corners of my heart” 言念君子，溫其如玉。在其板屋，亂我心曲。⁹¹ Borrowed by Zhu Xi, it also adds into his poem sorrow and desire for love. This shows that the sentimental characteristic certainly outweighs any philosophical ideas.

Apart from these, we can pick up such couplets as “Why is there snow on the peak tonight, provoking my new poem to follow the old ones ” 如何今夜峰頭雪，撩得新詩續

⁹⁰ Guo (2000), 444.

⁹¹ Zhu (2007), 86.

舊篇⁹² and “Sentimental about each place, taking delight in each place. It does no harm for now to be one who ruminatively works on his chanting” 隨處留情隨處樂，未妨聊作苦吟人。⁹³ Here one finds that in Zhu’s encounters with the outer world, there comes an outburst of his personal emotions that prevails over even the mighty philosophical explorations. This closely resembles Zhu Xi’s complex of “poetic feelings” mentioned in the first section, where I argued that he was mostly following the styles of Tang poetry, expressing his fondness for spontaneous emotions and poetry production with delicate appreciation of the imagery. The only difference is that with the development of his thought, especially after he developed his method of cultivation to place more emphasis on the post-emitted phenomenal world, the differentiation between the secluded world and the earthly world in Zhu Xi’s mind became less obvious. In this case, there was now no longer another world that he needed to escape into or from. So there is less appreciation of a secluded life in these poems.

More importantly, because this type of poetic style follows the convention of depicting scenes and expressing feelings, it contradicts the aforementioned and gradually established approach of having the predominant *dao* control the structure of the whole poem. Zhu Xi became more seriously aware of and cautious about the problem of these two very different styles existing in parallel. Indeed, he increasingly believed that the excessive expression of emotions was obstructing the enterprise of self-cultivation. This

⁹² Guo (2000), 447.

⁹³ Guo (2000), 441.

is why in the postscript of this poetry collection discussed in Chapter 2, Zhu Xi reveals a demonstrably ambivalent attitude towards writing these poems. In brief, the postscript suggests that on the one hand, he thought that on encountering picturesque scenery and staying with friends, “the complicated feelings could not be expressed without poems.” On the other hand, he was extremely worried that the feelings would be “spread and causing harm”. So he eventually decided that they should only make poems that were “gentle, mild and somewhat neutral”, which would then not “lose their will” and “fall into decadence”.

This “spirit of vigilance and introspection” continued into the next poetry collection—hence the outburst of feelings. This collection is called *Miscellaneous Works While Returning to the East* (*Dong gui luan gao* 東歸亂稿) that includes 78 poems of Zhu Xi and more than 100 poems of Zhu’s two disciples written on their way back to Fujian within only 26 days. Unlike the previous collection, Zhu Xi began to write a series of poems to “admonish” both himself and his disciples. This can be explicitly shown by his titles: ‘Two Quatrains to Admonish Myself on Seeing the Poem Inscribed on the Wall When Staying At Hu’s Guesthouse in Meixi’ 宿梅溪胡氏客館觀壁間題詩自警二絕,⁹⁴ ‘The Unfamiliar Characters and Rhymed Words with Which Zezhi Responded Are Extremely Vigilant and Precise, So I Follow the Rhyme to Thank Him and Present It to Bochong’ 擇之所和生字韻語極警切次韻謝之呈伯崇,⁹⁵ and ‘Two Poems Following the

⁹⁴ Guo (2000), 470

⁹⁵ Guo (2000), 471

Rhyme of Bochong to Admonish Myself' 次韻伯崇自警二首.⁹⁶ As for the content, they are mostly about the contradictory relationship between what Zhu Xi deemed to be “pragmatic poems”⁹⁷ and personal feelings, exemplified by the verse in the second poem “When inscribing a poem, just be vigilant against the flow of emotions” 題詩只要警流情, where he asks his disciples to be cautious when writing poetry. One of the poems clearly resembles the poem “Never to Versify” discussed at the very beginning of this chapter. Even the title is very similar:

題二闕後自是不復 After Inscribing These Two Couplets, Never to Versify Again

作矣

久惡繁哇混太和, Having long been resenting the decadent music that mingles
within the great harmony,

⁹⁶ Guo (2000), 478

⁹⁷ When criticizing poems of previous poets in the Conversation, Zhu Xi mentioned many times to the effect that poetry should be useful. For example when speaking of poems of Du Fu, he said, “[Du Fu’s poetry] is meaningless indeed. There are thick books and thin books of his that amount to tens of thousands, but what good do they do to people?” [杜詩]是無意思。大部小部無萬數，益得人甚事？ He also made general comments on his contemporaries in this respect, “Recent gentlemen spend much efforts on making poetry. What are they used for? In the Yuanyou (1086-1094) reign, there were numerous matters that needed to be dealt with, but the gentlemen were just chanting and responding all day long. Now I say that it is unnecessary to make poetry, and I explain that it is in case of distracting the effort on learning. When it comes to a realization, [you] shall know by yourselves that making poetry is not beneficial indeed” 近世諸公作詩費工夫，要何用？元祐時有無限事合理會，諸公卻盡日唱和而已。今言詩不必作，且道恐分了為學工夫。然到極處，當自知作詩果無益。 This shows that when making these comments, Zhu Xi not only firmly believed that poetry should be pragmatic, but also denied its function of communicating emotions between friends in the form of chanting and responding, which was exactly what Zhu Xi did a great deal throughout his life. See Zhu Xi (1986): vol.139, 3307, vol.140, 3333.

云何今日自吟哦？ Today why am I chanting it myself?

世間萬事皆如此， All things in world are all like this,

兩葉行將用斧柯。 The two rows of leaves are about to be cut down by an axe.⁹⁸

However, what is drastically different from the poem quoted at the very beginning of this chapter is that his oath this time is much less determined, as the “flow of emotions” and the “decadent music” are still widespread in Zhu Xi’s poems in the collection. The most representative one is ‘Versifying at Dusk on the Boat’ (‘Zhou zhong wan fu’ 舟中晚賦) where he immerses himself in a careful portrayal of the romantic scenery at dusk, preoccupied with deep affection and having set aside the nagging philosophizing in the dim fog of the west mountain: “Discretely the trees float afar, while the lonely swan goose disappears. If someone inquires about tomorrow’s affairs, it is in the gloomy fog of the western hill.” 離離浮遠樹，杳杳沒孤鴻。若問明朝事，西山掩靄中。⁹⁹ It is either about philosophy or about personal sentiments. It seems that it is challenging for Zhu Xi to integrate his different identities as both poet and philosopher. Neither could he manage to satisfy the requirements of both chanting feelings and elaborating philosophy within one poem.

⁹⁸ Guo (2000), 477

⁹⁹ Guo (2000), 498.

Overall, behind the large number of poems showing dramatically different styles and constant contradictions discussed in this chapter, what we really see is another clear path of exploration, distinct from what could be seen in Zhu Xi's younger work. After he accepted the teachings of Li Tong, Zhu Xi no longer wandered between divergent ideologies and struggled to achieve an appropriate relationship with the outer world. His primary concern had then become the task of finding a proper structure for the tension between the aforementioned elements, the purpose of which was to have his thought firmly grounded on the sensory experience of people's daily lives, and, as I argued in the first chapter, to aesthetically explain and exemplify the individual cultivation method of grasping the heavenly *dao* through investigating the post-emitted things and feelings, which cannot be fully articulated in his philosophy. Seen from both his ambiguous attitude towards the standard of writing poetry and all the contradictory poems presented in this chapter, his attempt did not end up being satisfactory, which is why he continued the exploration in his later poetry, where a joyful reconciliation is reached at times.

CHAPTER FIVE

From Outward Experience to Inward Pursuit: Zhu Xi's Poetry under Turbulence

次韻別范伯崇二首	Following rhymes, two poems on leaving Fan Bochong
平生罪我只春秋，	The fault of my entire life only lies in [not treasuring] springs and autumns.
更作囂囂萬里遊。	I have been arrogant, travelling tens of thousands of <i>li</i> .
賴有吾人肯相伴，	Luckily I have my fellows willing to accompany me,
群譏衆詆不能憂。	Groups ridicule and crowds attack, but it does not vex me.
累月追隨今別離，	Having followed each other for months now we part ways.
人生離合豈無時。	How is it that in life, departures and reunions have no fixed timing?
願言更勵堅高志，	I intend my words to further encourage and strengthen your lofty determination.
力索窮探慰所思。	Your striving in full investigation will be a comfort for my thoughts. ¹

¹ Guo (2000), 518.

Following Chapter 4, this chapter mainly deals with Zhu Xi's poetry written after his trip to Mount Heng in Hunan, as mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, and analysed in Chapter 4, that brought about an outburst of personal feelings in his poetry, prevailing any of his philosophical concerns. From the year 1168 onwards, the general style of Zhu Xi's poetry shifted again. He is noted to have paid more attention to the protagonist's sensory experience within the outer world, depicting more the individual's emotional interaction with the world, be it in a social occasion or not. This could have resulted from the poet's continuous endeavor in finding solutions to the dilemma in his writing. He could have been increasingly influenced by the ingrained poetic tradition of the time as he got increasingly involved with the literati circle. It is more likely to be owing to the fact that the social and political situation he was in was becoming worse and worse, which fostered the change in his mentality. However, this does not mean that the tension between the presentation of the outer world, personal feelings and thoughts was resolved. Contradictions are still conspicuous with the shift of style and they continue to shape the appearance of his poetry in many subtle ways. In the meantime, this is also the stage when Zhu Xi was productive in establishing his systematic thought. Hence the mutual influence between his poetry and *lixue* philosophy will be emphasized.

The two poems above are the last set of poetry in the collection of *Dong gui luan gao* mentioned in the previous chapter. Written at the end of Zhu Xi's trip back from *nanyue*, in the year 1167, these two poems, as I argue, are summaries of the two different

mind-sets/persona adopted by Zhu Xi up to this point. This also reflects the two directions he had taken in writing poetry, which are being close to nature and sentimental on the one hand and being a Confucian disciple on the other. The first poem is his reflection on the Hunan trip that was about to end, and the second one shows us his thoughts on the prospects for the future of him and his disciples'. The first one reveals the poet's lament on the rapid passage of time and his regret for carelessly using it on travel rather than cherishing it with more focused learning. It also gives a hint of the severe circumstances Zhu Xi was experiencing: at that time he was under collective attack by different groups of people for his arrogant trips for "tens of thousands of *li*". It is likely that he was accused for wasting too much time and indulging himself too much in writing these emotional poems analyzed in detail in the previous chapter. The other poem shows the other side of Zhu Xi as a *daoxue* thinker who was calm and emotionless, explaining that departure is just one of the common occasions in life and that there is no need for sentiment. The reference to "strengthening your lofty determination" is probably the *Analects* passage where Yan Yuan 顏淵 (521-481 B.C.) commented on Kongzi's thought in this way: "the higher it is praised, the more conviction there is to explore it" 仰之彌高，鑽之彌堅.² Zhu Xi uses this reference to encourage his disciples and himself to be determined in pursuing the lofty learning of the sage. It is based on this pursuit that the sorrow of their separation can be comforted.

² 'Zi Han' 子罕, in Zhu (1983), 111.

Zhu Xi had the feeling that rather than helping with coping with the transience of life or making his life become more meaningful in any way, touring mountains and rivers as well as the effort spent in writing poetry had only turned out to be a waste of time for him. This is why he used the word “fault/guilty” (罪) in the very first line, expressing his regret for the passage of time. Touring did not give him much insight into either his life or his philosophy, which is why he tended to replace the sentiments with a renewed commitment to hard work, as manifested in the last line where he indicated that his longing for the companions and their memorable moments could be comforted by persistent exploration of the *dao*. On the one hand, this further proves that Zhu Xi’s travel poems had nothing to do so far with his philosophy, nor were they related to his philosophical presentation of nature like his philosophical poems in imitation of Zeng Dian and Cheng Hao. They were most likely created simply because of the “poetic feelings” discussed in the previous chapter, and due to the social pressures or temptations he felt when he was with a group of people. On the other hand, Zhu Xi always thought of himself as a *daoxue* thinker. It was this identity, as well as his awareness of the task of learning and exploring *daoxue* ideas, that made him feel the contradiction between these two directions of life, causing so many “expectations”, “determinations” and “vows” in his poetry.

In Zhu Xi’s poetry writing after the *nanyue* trip, we find that neither these guilty feelings nor his Confucian convictions stopped him from delving deeper into the world of nature

and composing what resembles the landscape poetry of the Wei, Jin and Tang periods. This is because the social role of poetry within the broadly defined intellectual group would never change because of Zhu Xi's struggle as a thinker on the human heart-mind. On the other hand, the "poetic feelings" aroused during the process of writing this poetry, and the contradiction with his philosophical cultivation could have compelled him to think more about the meaning of the human relationship to nature. If we compare the poems of this period with those presented in the previous chapter, we find that both the focused description of the outer world, the liberation of personal feelings, and the elaboration of philosophical ideas were substantially reduced, giving way to the poet's sensory experience within nature. He began to really face the problem of the ineffability of sentiments and emotions triggered by the outer world, and started a new round of exploration of the human relationship to nature. And these poems of exploration, compared to the tradition of landscape poetry since Tao Qian, indicate an evolution from a focus on the human relationship to nature towards reconciliation between emotions and the outer world, following the ideal of Zeng Dian in the *Analects* which was significantly developed by the Neo-Confucian master Cheng Hao. Eventually, because of the severe and adverse circumstances he experienced in his old age, Zhu Xi shifted towards a return from an emphasis on the outer world to a focus on his inner mind, in which he sought a fulfillment and tranquility to allow him to better embrace the beauty of the outer world and to transmit the ultimate morality of the world through his poetic brushes and feelings.

1. Sensory Experiences within Nature

From the year 1168, the first year after he came back home from the visit to Zhang Shi to 1170, the year when he was recommended to the emperor as a poet and swore not to write any more for at least the fourth time, Zhu Xi wrote 27 poems that can be clearly dated. Most of the poems are about natural scenery, but they are different from either the type of social poetry with the outburst of emotions he used to write or the type of nature-investigation *lixue* poetry with the awakening of philosophical ideas at the end. In contrast, these poems tend to focus on the experience within the scenery. There is still plenty of sentiment, but it is more subtly conveyed along with the poet's experience within nature rather than a release of emotions that was long suppressed by his conception of moral principle in the outer world.

Let us briefly compare these three poems:

'Two Poems on Thoughts on Reading Books' ('Guan shu you gan er shou' 觀書有感二首)

半畝方塘一鑑開，

A half *mu* of square pond opens like a mirror;

天光雲影共徘徊。

Sunlight and cloud shadows move back and forth [in the reflection].

問渠那得清如許，

If you ask how the pond can be so clear,

爲有源頭活水來。

I say that a spring replenishes it with flowing water.

The first poem, discussed in the previous chapter, starts with a detailed observation and description of the outer world, presenting the scene that can be visualized by the reader and involving a variety of images, metaphors, and contrasts between different colors, stillness and movement. Yet it does not involve the poet's emotional self. Because the poet had a clear philosophical agenda in mind, which is to explore the ultimate principle within its multifaceted manifestations, he delved into the world of nature intentionally and carefully, with the clear purpose of digging deeper into the scene to find something fundamental in a rational manner.

道中景物甚勝吟賞 Scenery on the Way Is Magnificent. I Am Too Busy

不暇敬夫有詩因次 Chanting and Enjoying It. Jingfu Has A Poem, So I Follow

其韻 His Rhyme.

穿林踏雪覓鍾聲， Going through the woods, treading on snow, I look for the
sound of the bell.

景物逢迎步步新。 Scenes and objects greet me and I am refreshed with each
step.

隨處留情隨處樂， Sentimental about each place, taking delight in each place.

未妨聊作苦吟人。 It does no harm for now to be one who ruminatively
works on his chanting

This second poem was in the collection of *Chanting and Responding on Nanyue Mountain*. As discussed previously, the most salient feature of the whole collection is the wild outburst of strong personal feelings, after the poet's having carefully avoided such sentiment in his *lixue* poems. As we can see in this poem, despite the long title that distinctly explains how splendid the vista is and how much he immersed himself in it, the depiction of this world is not impressive at all. Instead of painting the magnificence of the scene, the first verse is a simple delineation of what the poet was doing, with all the natural images subordinate to the moves of the poet. The wood, the snow and the sound of the bell are just vaguely mentioned. The "sound of the bell" seems to be added randomly to facilitate the balance of the poetic structure, because the reason being that compared with the concrete image of the bell that transmits sound through long distance and obstacles, the "sound of the bell" is less likely to be something that needs "looking for". The second verse is more general and more discursive declaration than poetic description. The poet just uses the vaguely indicative word "scene" for the scenes, and they just create single abstract impression of being refreshing. It is obvious that the emphasis is not on the scenes but on the poet's emotional experience. From the beginning to the end, the poet sees and describes the outer world from his emotional self, solely concentrating on what he did and how he felt. It is based on this personal enthusiasm that the second half of the poem becomes completely irrelevant to the scene and turns into an expression purely of his joyful feelings that are dramatically different

from the feelings of “living as usual” in his studio. Both the desire for unconstrained sentiment and pleasure, and the interest in writing intricate and emotional poetry, which used to be seriously denigrated in his earlier writings, are now conveyed with strong passion here, showing nothing but his relaxed and festive mood when going out with friends.

歸報德再用前韻 Returning to the Bao De Temple, Using the Previous Rhyme
Again

幾枝藤竹醉相攜， Several branches of rattan bamboo are drunkenly carried.
何處千峰頂上歸？ Where do we go from the summits of the thousands of
 mountain peaks?
正好臨風眺平楚， Now is the time to face into the wind and gaze over the
 wooded plain,
却須入谷避斜暉。 But we will have to go into the valley to take shelter from the
 glare of the setting sun.
酒邊泉溜寒侵骨， Next to the wine, the chill of the flowing of the spring chills the
 bones,
坐上嵐光翠染衣。 Upon the seats, the misty glare stains our clothes in blue.
踏月過橋驚易晚， Walking in the moonlight I cross the bridge, alarmed at the

hastening dusk.

林垌回首更依微。 In the woods, I look back; the view seems to grow faint.

This was written in 1168, only one year after the *Nanyue* trip, but the style is already drastically different. Unlike the first poem that focuses on the exploration of the outer world, and unlike the second poem that is primarily concerned with unbosoming the poet's emotions, every verse of this poem presents the close interaction between the outer world and the poet, showing that this relationship between man and nature, or personal sensory experience within the environment is what concerns the poet.

In terms of both the syntax rules and meanings, each heptasyllabic verse of the first couplet creates a harmonious and rather melodious 4+3 semantic rhythm. The first four characters, meaning "several branches of rattan bamboo", match with those at the beginning of the second verse, referring to the place which is even further away or higher than the summits of the thousands of peaks. They are both objective images from the outer world and followed by the involvement of human activities, which, according to normal discursive rules, function as predication of the protagonist and thus actually should have been placed before the objects. What we see in this couplet is that a group of drunken friends carry branches of bamboo and that after climbing to the top of the peak, the poet wonders if there is another higher realm (possibly celestial world) that is different from the world he knows. But it is the outer object/world rather than human

action that is emphasized here. Unlike the SVO structure (with the subject omitted³) that is used in the beginning verse of the second poem, the reversed order of this couplet places more weight on the outer world, stressing the human experience within the world rather than allowing personal emotions to dominate. Moreover, the emphasis on experience is also clear in the ambiguous use of the word “*xiang xie*” that is difficult to get a precise English translation. The modifying adverb “*xiang*” refers to the situation of mutual interaction and indicates that the subject of the verb “*xie*” (carry) could be either the poet, or his friends, or even the bamboo branches, all of which could also at the same time be the object. The poet intentionally obscures both the subject and object of the action to create an impression of all things being harmoniously blended together. This is cognate to the couplet of Wang Wei: “Grove so deep, no one knows. The moon comes to shine on me” 深林人不知，明月來相照⁴ Li Bai’s very well-known couplet in his poem ‘Sitting Alone on Mount Jingting’ (‘Du zuo Jingting shan’ 獨坐敬亭山) illustrates this case even better: “Looking at each other, neither of the two gets tired. There is only this Mount Jingting” 相看兩不厭，唯有敬亭山。⁵ As indicated in the title, the poet was sitting in the mountain alone, so the “each other” in the couplet could only refer to the poet himself and the mountain. The personification of the natural environment naturally attracts the reader’s attention to the experience of the poet within the world and it suggests an experience of very deep immersion.

³ For a profound analysis of the omission of first person subjects in traditional Chinese poetry, see Eoyang (1973).

⁴ Eoyang (1973).

⁵ Peng and Yang (1960), vol.3.182, 1858.

The third couplet repeats the structure of the first one, stressing images of the outer world with the first four characters—the flow of the spring next to the wine in the first verse and the misty glare among the seats in the second verse—it then turns to their effects on humans present with the concluding three-character phrases. *Han* (chill) and *cui* (blue) are both human sensory responses to the scenes, *qin* (invade) and *ran* (stain) denote the actions of the outer world on the human world, and *gu* (bones) and *yi* (clothes) are objects of the human experience.

The emphasis of the second and the last couplets are more focused on the human element, but without the strong emotions. It is human action that dominates the verses, but that is still because of the pleasant experience this natural environment gives him, rather than the enthusiastic emotion coming from his own mind for emulation or for social purposes. No matter what the protagonist does in the poem, it always reflects the theme of his mutual interaction with external objects. This is particularly exemplified by the subtle description of “taking shelter from the glare of the setting sun” and the “looking back” before leaving. The setting of the scene in the second verse of the second couplet is that the protagonist HAS TO go into the valley to get shade because the setting sun shines right in front of him, dazzling his eyes. On the one hand, this indicates the time of the experience, delivering a hint of a pleasurable mood because of the good weather under bright sunshine. On the other hand, it creates a contrast between the

broad and magnificent vista one sees on top of a mountain and the shady and concealed view of the valley that is also part of the natural world to experience. It is in this fashion that the interaction and natural experience go deeper and become more worth looking at.

The last verse is very representative of the endings of Zhu Xi's poems of this period. Unlike previous cases that mostly end with either philosophical elaborations or personal emotions, this one ends without a clear conclusion and just sketches again the joyful experience and harmonious relationship by showing his unwillingness to leave. He draws the attention of the reader to the vast and natural outer world by simply pointing out its vagueness and limitless, leaving the reader the space for a taste of some philosophical profoundness.

2. Further Analysis: Tension between Aesthetic Experiences and Thoughts

It is difficult and meaningless to say whether Zhu Xi was intentionally bringing the reader's attention to the outer world for a purposeful exploration of the man and nature relationship, or if he was just unconsciously becoming more interested in this interaction between humans and nature without knowing where this subtle experience would lead him when he laments at the peak of the mountain about where to go next. But what we clearly know is that the style of his poetry is different from his previous

writings in which the tension between external objects, emotions and thoughts indicated either the elaboration of philosophical ideas correlated with visual images, or the deduction of the multifaceted outer images under some unitary principle, or an excess of passionate emotions at a temporary social gathering. Probably because of the purposeful engagement with the natural world shown in his previous writing and the subsequent inevitable clash between philosophy and emotion, Zhu Xi became more attracted to this unpretentious sensory encounter with the outer world. Here he began to seriously face the problem of positing this type of experience within his cultivation theory, rather than dismissing these poems as simply “useless works”, a stance he took with respect to Du Fu’s poetry in his *Conversations*.⁶ What we certainly see in these poems is that the selection of outer images is more subtle and poetic and the presentation of the outer world more natural and complete, concluding with a description of the protagonist’s reaction to the actual setting. Here he displayed the theme of interaction and the personal feelings of enjoyment and relaxation without preconceived ideas or stubborn emotions.

Comparing connotations of the image of “reading books” in Zhu Xi’s poetry at this stage with his earlier ones, we can further understand this shift in Zhu Xi’s poetic style. From Zhu Xi’s intention behind compiling and annotating a great number of Confucian classics

⁶ “Asked: What is the use of Du Fu’s poetry? Answered: It is meaningless indeed. There are thick books and thin books of his that amount to tens of thousands, but what good do they do to people?” 因言，杜詩亦何用？曰：“是無意思。大部小部無萬數，益得人甚事？” Zhu (1986), vol.8.139, 3307.

and his teachings in the *Conversations* regarding the right way of reading and learning to be a sage, we know that he considered reading books as a crucial method for getting to know the *dao* transmitted from ancient sages.⁷ Because of the concerns on worldly issues, in Zhu Xi's early poetry, he mentions the image of "reading books" as something contrary to the appreciation of natural scenery. For example, one of his early poems writes "Hope that [reading] books does not make the spring view grow old, and that the wooden hut can be open for secular people" 書卷莫教春色老，柴荆肯為俗人開。⁸ The couplet delivers the protagonist's modest view that he who devoted himself to reading books is just a secular person while the pursuit of spring view and life in the wooden hut is spiritually superior. In his poem on touring mountains, he also wrote verses like "How can I pay my debt on writings and readings, so that my hope on having half a day with leisure for my drifting life could be satisfied" 何當酬却詩書債，遂我浮生半日閑。⁹

In contrast, in his later years, the irreconcilable relationship between "reading books" and aesthetic experience within the outer world has changed and the struggling feeling of the protagonist has been relieved. The way he mentions the imagery turns to the following: "My remaining wish is to carry the scrolls, and agree together to rent a fishing boat" 願欲携書卷，相將買釣舟；¹⁰ and "At the first night in the empty mountain, the cuckoo is cuckooing, I am tranquilly facing the zither and the books, with all my

⁷ For a detailed discussion on Zhu Xi's teachings on reading books, see Zhu (1990).

⁸ Guo (2000), 293.

⁹ 'You Lingshi' 遊靈石, in Fu (1991), vol.44, 27667.

¹⁰ Guo (2000), 534.

anxieties relieved” 空山初夜子規鳴，靜對琴書百慮清。¹¹ The imagery of “reading books” is no longer considered a constraint or debt to be repaid that prevents the poet from delving into the world of nature. Rather, it becomes one of the crucial elements that constitute a complete picture of the enjoyable natural world. It even becomes a symbol of his superior spiritual achievement. Facing this magnificent world of nature, the poetic persona is no longer presented as a humble secular person, but a lofty recluse who is away from the worldly entanglements and only interested in reading books and appreciating natural views. The shifted connotation of “reading books”, the method that is regarded of great importance in Zhu Xi’s philosophical enterprise of self-cultivation, at least suggests Zhu Xi’s change of style in writing poems, if not necessarily his change of philosophical views. It is evident from this shift that having got rid of the paradoxical view that restrained his immersion in nature, Zhu Xi begin to pay more attention to his sensory experience within the reclusive world with less concern about his philosophical agenda.

2.1 Zhu Xi and Tao Qian

We further notice some structural resemblances between Zhu Xi’s poetry of this period and the farmstead and landscape poems of Tao Qian 陶潛 (365-427) and Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433), which are distinctive representatives of the tradition of Chinese

¹¹ Guo (2000), 648.

nature poetry. The rise of them, as argued by Wendy Swartz, was championed and bolstered by the passive virtues of withdrawal and serenity within *xuanxue*, the “philosophy and system of scholarship rooted in Daoist metaphysics”.¹² If we compare Zhu Xi’s poem ‘Returning to the Baode Temple’ with Tao Qian’s fifth poem on ‘Drinking Wine’ (‘Yin jiu’ 飲酒):

結廬在人境，	I built my hut in the midst of men,
而無車馬喧。	Yet hear no clamor of horse and carriage.
問君何能爾，	You ask how it can be like this?
心遠地自偏。	With the mind detached, place becomes remote.
採菊東籬下，	Plucking chrysanthemums by the eastern hedge,
悠然見南山。	From afar I catch sight of the southern mountain.
山氣日夕佳，	The mountain air becomes lovely at sunset,
飛鳥相與還。	As flying birds return together in flocks.
此中有真意，	In these things there is true meaning,
欲辨已忘言。	I’d like to explain, but have forgotten the words. ¹³

Disregarding the content, we find that the structures of these two poems are very similar. They both depict the natural and human realms, presenting the intersection of and interaction between these two realms. In Tao’s poem, as in Zhu Xi’s, there are

¹² See Cai (2008), 121.

¹³ Translated by Wendy Swartz, in Cai (2008), 125.

abundant human actions that transmit the appeal of reclusive life and a recluse's state of mind by joyfully responding to the natural images. These are exemplified by the description of "building the hut", "detaching the mind" from "the midst of men", and "plucking chrysanthemums" (argued by Swartz to be a substance for prolonging life).¹⁴ In the meantime, there are also several delicate portrayals of the external images in the poem. For example, in the first couplet, the general atmosphere of this natural world is depicted as being without "clamor of horse and carriage", sharply contrasting with the setting beforehand that is "in the midst of men", thereby quickly catching the eyes of the reader and directing the attention to the world of nature.

The third couplet is one of the most frequently quoted couplets of Tao. If we just look at the grammatical structure, it seems that both verses of the couplet are dominated by intentional human actions, since all the objects follow the pattern of verb + object + adverbial modifier, with the verb and the omitted first person subject predominating in each case. However, if we carefully compare the verb *jian* (to catch sight of) with its other synonyms, like *wang* and *tiao* that are very frequently used by Zhu Xi, as Swartz incisively quotes from Su Shi, verbs like *wang* (to gaze from afar) denote a certain intentionality that runs counter to the happy coincidence of the scene and the idea. But in Tao's poem, in the use of the verb *jian* lies the marvelous subtlety of the couplet.¹⁵ Linguistically, if we consider different categories of verbs, we find that *jian* is not the

¹⁴ Cai (2008), 125.

¹⁵ Cai (2008), 126.

type of verb that implies the subject's own initiative. Rather, in this couplet, it suggests the paramount position and independence of the southern mountain, attracting the poet's attention. The adverb *youran* in turn reveals the poet's pleasure on seeing it.

Moreover, the fourth couplet looks like a pure delineation of the natural world, with the peaceful scene of mountain air reflecting the beautiful sunset and the birds returning home in flocks. But those who are familiar with other works of Tao could immediately link the birds' return to the poet's ideal of returning to nature that is prevalent in his works. For example, one of his most renowned poems 'Let Me Go Back Home' ('Gui qu lai xi' 歸去來兮) has its central theme of returning to a reclusive natural life echoed right in the opening verse: "My fields and garden will soon turn into wastelands—Why not go back now" 田園將蕪胡不歸, straightforwardly and firmly telling the reader his decision to resign from the political world. This is repeated in another verse of the poem: "So they flee from official service to return to farming" 及逃祿而歸耕.¹⁶ In addition, he also wrote couplets like "The clouds make their movement without consciousness from mountain peaks, the birds, growing tired of flying, know it is time to return" 雲無心以出岫, 鳥倦飛而知還.¹⁷ The leisure of the natural world and the intentional projection of the unaffected habit of birds are exactly the same as the fourth couplet of the poem we see here. Therefore, it is fair to say that what we find behind this simple depiction of the

¹⁶ Translation and more analysis of the poem, see Chang (1986), 21.

¹⁷ Chang (1986), 40.

natural scene is the protagonist's projection of his own mindset, which was initially inspired by his sensory experience within the natural world.

The kinship between Zhu Xi and Tao Qian is to be found in their shared tendency to intricately posit their sensory experience within the natural world, presenting various types of interactions instead of having one aspect dominating the other. They both seriously consider the world they depict as a very rich source for their meditations on the cosmos and their ways of life. It is from this perspective that we can better understand Zhu Xi's most frequently quoted comment on Tao Qian: "The poetry of Tao Yuanming is plain and light, emerging out of naturalness" 淵明詩平淡出於自然.¹⁸ Tao's poetry is plain and light because on encountering the external world, he concentrates on his own sensory experience and mutual interaction, instead of focusing on either his emotional self which leads to the overflow of imposing and sometimes exaggerated adjectives and excessive feelings, or the exquisite outer world that brings about overly embellished wordings and luxurious expressions. His poetry is natural (*ziran* 自然) not simply because he presented the whole scene and feelings to be spontaneous, but also because the ideas he embedded within his poetry are based on his reflexive meditations of the natural world, the very approach Zhu Xi became in favor of in his philosophically mature stage.

¹⁸ Zhu (1986), 8.140, 3324.

However, it is almost impossible for Zhu Xi to agree with Tao's philosophical belief that the true meaning cannot be expressed by words because that not only contradicts the Confucian spirit of actively shouldering social responsibilities and fulfilling humanity (*ren* 仁), which is the very nature of being a person. It also violates the Neo-Confucian conception of sagehood (with full comprehension of the ultimate *dao*) as something potentially achievable by everyone who practices his or her cultivation method. This is why despite the fact that Zhu Xi spoke of Tao Qian's poetry as the fundamental model of poetry second only to the *Odes* and the *Songs of Chu*,¹⁹ he still believed that Tao had a significant drawback: "Although [the poetry of] Tao is powerful, but while the words are forceful, the meaning is slack. Recluses tend to be people with anger and strong personalities. Tao wanted to be successful, but could not. However, he was still fond of getting reputation." 陶卻是有才，但語健而意閑。隱者多是帶氣負性之人為之。陶欲有為而不能者也，又好奇名。²⁰ Zhu Xi admired Tao's language and his natural and persuasive voice as a recluse, but obviously he does not like the "slack" ideas in Tao's poetry. Zhu Xi thought that it was because Tao failed to achieve the success he wanted that he turned to a reclusive life with anger, striving for fame through his pretentious Daoist transcendence.

¹⁹ "The works of Guo Jingchun and Tao Yuanming is in self one volume, which is attached as an epilogue to the *Odes* and the *Book of Chu* and taken to be the fundamental principle for writing poetry" ...郭景純、陶淵明之所作，自為一編，而附於三百篇楚辭之後，以為詩之根本準則。See 'Da Gong Zhongzhi' 答鞏仲至, in *Wenji* vol.64, Zhu (2002), 23, 3095.

²⁰ Zhu (1986), vol.8.140, 3327.

However, Zhu Xi's disagreement with the "slack" ideas of Tao Qian does not mean that Zhu Xi managed to present a better idea. We can see in his poem of the Baode Temple that there is not any particular philosophical idea transmitted through the verses. Despite a delicate portrayal of the protagonist's aesthetic experience in nature, the poem is not felt to be as thoughtful as that of Tao. This is because the dimension of aesthetically meditating on a good way of life, as argued in the first chapter, was generally neglected within the Neo-Confucian discourse. Caught up in such a dilemma, when depicting the experience within the natural world, Zhu Xi on the one hand felt the sense of deep meaning analogous to the feelings of Tao (influenced by the philosophical Daoist idea of retreat and tranquility). This was not only because of the Daoist philosophy's predominance of the taste of the literati class since the Wei and Jin periods,²¹ but also because the fundamental *daoxue* cosmology Zhu Xi followed originated from Zhou Dunyi's interpretation of the Daoist diagram of the Great Ultimate (*taiji* 太極) where the tendency of naturalism is almost inevitable. On the other hand, Zhu Xi had to conclude his pleasant experience in nature in a way that is different from the Daoist approach of Tao Qian. This is essentially identical to the situation in his philosophy where he managed to swallow his pride and struggled to explain the different problems in utilizing the concept with Daoist origin to meet the requirement of a logical, comprehensive and organic system of Neo-Confucian philosophy.²² Without a

²¹ Li Chunqing (2008)

²² For discussions on Zhou Dunyi and his *Treatise on the Diagram of the Great Ultimate (Taiji tu shuo* 太極圖說) in relation to the Daoist origin, as well as how Zhu Xi molded Neo-Confucian philosophy chiefly on the basis of this diagram, see Chan (1973).

coherent philosophical thought behind this change of poetic style, the poem was eventually yielded with a compromised and ambiguous presentation of the entire natural world and the experience: “In the woods, I look back; the view seems to grow faint”.

2.2 Zhu Xi and Xie Lingyun

With his philosophical concerns in mind, Zhu Xi presented in his poems of this type the thoughts that are sometimes similar to those of Xie Lingyun, which probably explains why Zhu Xi expressed in his poems his great appreciation for Xie Lingyun almost to the same extent as his praise for Tao Qian. However, he did not indicate that Xie had drawbacks. For example, in a landscape poem Zhu Xi wrote for the pavilion built by his disciple entitled ‘Inscription on the Xin Mu Pavilion of Lin Zezhi’ (‘Ti Lin Zezhi Xin Mu ting’ 題林擇之欣木亭), after describing the general settings of the pavilion and the poet’s experience within it, Zhu wrote:

連林爭秀發，	Successive woods compete to show off their growth.
生意各呈露。	The forces of life each present themselves.
大化本無言，	The great flow of change is essentially without words.
此心誰與晤？	Who is going to understand this mind?
真驩水菽外，	Real joy lies beyond water and beans,

一笑和樂孺。 Within laughter there are harmony, happiness and filial piety.²³
 聊復共徜徉， For now, we stroll around together,
 殊形乃同趣。 [In this world with] different forms but the same objectives.²⁴

Based on his sensory experience within this landscape, the metaphysical ideas expressed in each line—the subjective emphasis of the vibrant life force of things in nature, the philosophizing of the wordless flow of change and the wordless mind shared by all things in the world, the elaboration of his understanding of filial piety, and his philosophical interpretation of different types of pleasures—all come together to prove

²³ This line involves two allusions, one in each verse. The first one alludes to Kongzi, who was quoted in *The Classic of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記) and *Sayings of Kongzi and His Disciples* (*Kongzi jia yu* 孔子家語) to have said that “Bean soup, and water to drink, while the parents are made happy, may be pronounced filial piety.” 啜菽飲水盡其歡，斯之謂孝。 See Confucius and Legge (1879-1885), part III, 182. The second one alludes to the *Odes* where there is a poem entitled ‘Chang di’ 常棣 in the *Minor Odes of the Kingdom* (*Xiao ya* 小雅) that says “when your brothers are all present, you are [a] harmonious and happy [family], with filial piety [to your parents]” 兄弟既具，和樂且孺。 See Zhu (2007), 120. By looking into these two allusions and the way Zhu Xi used them to comprise his line, we understand that Zhu Xi believes that although the act of feeding the parents with water and beans is a means to fulfill one’s filial duty, the real sense of pleasure lies in somewhere beyond the satisfaction of these basic needs. The most important thing is to stay with them and share the laughter with them so that an atmosphere of happiness and harmony is created and filial piety fulfilled. In this poem of pavilion and landscape, he put this idea in parallel with his understanding of the relationship between the learning of *dao* and the real sense of knowing the great flow of change, to suggest that although reading Confucian classics such as *The Classic of Rites* and the *Odes* is necessary to get to know the thoughts of the sage and the *dao*, it is just the basic requirement. The real sense of knowing the *dao* lies in immersion in the world of nature, experiencing the life force and trying to understand the mind shared by all things in the world. It is through this correlation that Zhu Xi explained the wordless flow of change and gave validity to his appreciation of beautiful scenery and poetic feelings. It is in this sense that at the very end of the poem, he says the outer natural world in which he was strolling is different in form from the world of humans but shares the same objective--so is our life force. Moreover, it should be noted that the way I translate this line in the *Odes* is different from standard English translations. For example, James Legge translated it as “it is when your brothers are all present, that you are harmonious and happy, with child-like joy”. Bernhard Karlgren translated it as “when brothers are there, they are peacefully happy and mild”. See Legge (2001), vol.4, 252, and Karlgren (1950), 108. The reason behind my different translation is because I choose to comply with Zhu Xi’s understanding in interpreting his allusion. In Zhu Xi’s annotation to the *Odes*, he specifically glossed the character *ru* to be “children’s reverence for parents” 小兒之慕父母也, interpreting the line to be with a clear sense of filial piety rather than just brotherhood. This is also consistent with the meaning of the first half of the line Zhu Xi wrote in his poem.

²⁴ Guo (2000), 530.

the structural shift of Zhu Xi's poetry as compared with his previous works that were pulled in two different directions. Structurally, what we now see is that because of his more focused attention to the experience within the natural world, and his resistance to the prevailing Daoist aesthetics, he now appeals to the "mind of heaven and earth and all living things" 天地生物之心, the starting point of Confucian cosmology, correlating to the rule of nature with the constructed rule of the human world.²⁵ This is to say, when the poet is about to get lost in the phenomenal world that brings multifaceted emotional experiences, he returns to the very beginning and the presupposition of his philosophical construction of social rules. The pursuit of this mind within this natural world not only endows his experience in the landscape with aesthetical meanings, but also echoes Confucian philosophical teachings thus further elaborating on individual cultivation. The linkage between the mind of nature and the mind of creatures gives

²⁵ There are abundant discussions on the "mind of heaven and earth and all living things" in the *Conversations*. In each occurrence, this is mentioned as one of the most important concepts connecting the logic of man and nature. For example, Zhu Xi said: "The principle that leads to the existence of people is the principle of heaven and earth, while the vital force is the force of heaven and earth. The principle is without trace and cannot be seen, so [we need to] observe the vital force. We need to recognize the meaning of humanity. It is the force that is integral and mild, which is the force of the vibrant spring of heaven and earth, while its principle is the mind of heaven and earth and all living things. [...] [Kongzi] told Yanzi to 'subdue one's self and return to propriety', subduing the selfishness of one's self so as to return to propriety. It naturally means this again" 人之所以為人，其理則天地之理，其氣則天地之氣。理無跡，不可見，故於氣觀之。要識仁之意思，是一箇渾然溫和之氣，其氣則天地陽春之氣，其理則天地生物之心。[...]告顏子以"克己復禮"，克去己私以復於禮，自然都是這意思。 See Zhu (1986), vol.1.6, 111. Here, Zhu Xi laid out a perfect juxtaposition for his followers: both the *li* and *qi* of human beings follow exactly those of the heaven and earth; while what is called humanity is the focused manifestation of the force of the vibrant spring and the mind of heaven and earth, that is in turn shared by all living things in the world. It is because men share this core with nature that human society should naturally follow the rules of the natural world, fulfilling its heavenly endowed nature of being benevolent. This corresponds to the construction of Kongzi noted in the *Analects* where he said, "Does heaven speak? The four seasons pursue their courses, and all things are continuously being produced, but does heaven say anything?" 天何言哉？四時行焉，百物生焉，天何言哉？ The description of the metaphorical wordless heaven suggests that there is a rule hidden but mighty. It predetermines not only the course of the seasons but also the order of all things in the world. See 'Yang huo' 陽貨, in Zhu (1983), 180.

more validity and “meaningful” concern (as opposed to Zhu Xi’s comments on Du Fu mentioned in note 6) to the poet’s pleasure of mountains and rivers, without falling into Daoist reclusion.

Despite the different ideological discourses behind the lines, this method of seeking a stable pattern within nature is analogous to some of the poems of Xie Lingyun, the remote echo of which further manifests this ongoing major theme of the exploration of the relationship between man and nature that prevailed throughout the history of Chinese poetry. For example, in the ending couplet of Xie’s poem ‘Climbing Yongjia’s Green Crag Mountain’ (‘Deng Yong Jia Lüzhang shan’ 登永嘉綠嶂山), he wrote “As tranquility and knowledge conjoin, from that point on, one’s nature begins to heal” 恬如既已交，繕性自此出。²⁶ In the last three couplets of Xie’s ‘What I Observed as I Crossed the Lake in My Way from Southern Mountain to Northern Mountain’ (‘Yu nanshan wang beishan jing hu zhong zhantiao’ 於南山往北山經湖中瞻眺), he wrote “Embracing change, my heart never tires. Observing these things, I cherish them even more. I do not regret that I am far away from other people, I only lament that there is no one to join me. Wandering alone, I sigh not out of personal sentiments, rather if appreciation is abandoned, who else will understand nature’s principle?” 撫化心無厭，覽物眷彌重。不惜去人遠，但恨莫與同。孤遊非情歎，賞廢理誰通。²⁷ The last verse is particularly similar to Zhu Xi’s verse, “who is going to understand this mind [of change].” The ultimate

²⁶ Lu (1983), vol.2. *Song shi* 宋詩. 2, 1162-1163.

²⁷ Lu (1983), vol.2. *Song shi*. 3, 1172-1173. For translations of these two quotes, I follow Wendy Swartz in Cai (2008), 131,133.

morality here is the appreciation of the constantly changing yet unchanging natural world, which enables insights on the human world to be gained by this aesthetical exploration of the mysterious outer world and more profound meaning to be found in this landscape roaming.

This resemblance probably explains why Zhu Xi referred to Xie Lingyun as a remote and supreme model of immersing the self within the world of nature in his landscape poems written during this late stage of his life. For example, the last two couplets of Zhu Xi's poem in the series of 14 poems entitled 'Respectfully Accompanying Supervisor You Yanzhi, Miscellaneous Verses on Mount Lu' ('Feng tong You Yanzhi tiju Lushan zayong' 奉同尤延之提舉廬山雜詠) wrote "[I remember] Xie Kangle²⁸ in those years, the music was finished and now it has disappeared. The water is azure, making it look warm and mild, and I think of him among the five lakes" 當年謝康樂，絃絕今已矣。水碧復流溫，相思五湖裏。²⁹ The ending of this poem obviously rephrased poem of Xie Lingyun entitled 'Entering the Inlet of Lake Peng Li' ('Ru Peng Li hu kou' 入彭蠡湖口), where Xie described the lake water in the following way: "the water is azure, decorating the water to look warm and mild" 水碧綴流溫, and concluded the poem with the feeling of loneliness, loss and deep longing: "I made this tune of a thousand miles in vain, because when the music finishes, the longing becomes more intense" 徒作千里曲，絃絕念彌敦。³⁰

By rearranging the meaning of this poem, Zhu Xi paid his tribute to Xie and further

²⁸ Kangle is the name of Xie's title.

²⁹ Guo (2000), 707-708.

³⁰ Lu (1983), vol.2.*Song shi*.3, 1178.

expressed his appreciation of Xie in his verse that conveys his longing “among the five lakes”, the metaphorical vehicle for the reclusive natural world.

However, what makes Zhu Xi’s poetry distinctively different from Xie Lingyun is that Zhu Xi apparently does not share Xie’s loneliness. Where Xie painfully expresses his sadness of being alone and immersing himself in nature as a poet in pain, with no one understanding his feelings and the natural world offering no comfort, Zhu Xi simply chants for his pleasure in viewing pleasant scenes of mountains and rivers, usually accompanied by a group of friends writing and responding to each other. In Xie’s verses, we notice his friendlessness and dreariness when he expresses feelings like “having no one to join me”, “no one shares the understanding of this principle” and “more and more intense longings”, with his pursuit of the natural principle. In contrast, what we see in Zhu Xi’s poems of this period is the use of “together” and “joy” for many times. There are couplets like “For now, we stroll around together, [in this world with] different forms but the same objectives.” There are also couplets like “Reveling in the creeks and mountains we linger together. Forgetting our feelings, we wander among the fishes and birds” 得意溪山共徙倚，忘情魚鳥共徜徉，³¹ and verses like “strolling together with the wind and moon at the Wu altar 舞雩風月共徜徉，³² “how can the joyful feelings just fade like this” 歡情豈遂闌，³³ “bearing wine, I hope we can watch together” 載酒想同看，³⁴

³¹ Guo (2000), 923.

³² Guo (2000), 534.

³³ Guo (2000), 365.

³⁴ Guo (2000), 365.

“open the books and [play the game of] targeting the vessel, the joy is endless” 散帙投壺樂未央,³⁵ etc. These not only clarify the existence of a poetic persona who enjoyed the scenery and the company of friends, but also deliver a sense of compatibility and integration with the outer world, rather than an inharmonious contrast.

3. Beyond Zeng Dian: Escaping into the Natural World

This consonant tone of the poet in nature bears some resemblance to the poem mentioned in the previous chapter, which is named ‘Zeng Dian’ and was written when Zhu Xi was in his early *daoxue* career. In that poem, the title indicates the meaning of the whole work because it is named after the Confucian disciple famous for giving a satisfactory answer on the wishes Confucians are supposed to have.³⁶ Unlike the Daoist idea of a primitive and reclusive life in the natural world, the pleasure of Zeng Dian encourages people to enjoy the harmonious rhythm of outer things, though after fulfilling the heavenly endowed human duty and respective social roles. This difference could be seen in Zhu Xi’s understanding of why Kongzi only praised the answer of Zeng

³⁵ Guo (2000), 923.

³⁶ As briefly mentioned before, there is a story in the *Analects* that says: Confucius one day asked four of his disciples to tell their respective wishes. Zi Lu said that he wished to make people in a small state in difficulty become bold and recognize the rules of righteous conduct within three years; Zi Ran said that he wished to make a small state become prosperous within three years; Gong Xi Hua said that he wished to act as a small assistant at the services of the ancestral temple, and learn to achieve what his classmates hoped to do. When it came to Zeng Dian, his wishes were dramatically different from these three gentlemen. He simply said that, “In this, the last month of spring, with the dress of the season all complete, along with five or six young men who have assumed the cap, and six or seven boys, I would wash in the Yi, enjoy the breeze among the rain altars, and return home singing”. On hearing that, Confucius is recorded as heaving a sigh and saying, “I give my approval to Dian.” See Zhu (1983), 129-131. For translation, see Legge (2001), vol.1, 248-249.

Dian: “The scholarship of Zeng Dian is generally about realizing that the principle of nature is complete when human desires end and acquiring new knowledge out of the quotidian. That is why he is so calm between action and stillness. Yet when he talks about his intentions, it is no more than staying where he already is and adapting to what he experiences daily. Then he can enjoy all the happiness under the heaven. Applying this to our life is not different from the endeavors of Yao and Shun. Nothing more needs to be done.” 曾點之學，蓋有以見夫人欲盡處天理渾然，日用之間隨處發見，故其動靜之際從容如此。而其言志，則又不過即其所居之位，適其所履之常，而天下之樂無以加焉。用之而行，則雖堯舜事業亦不外此，不待更有所為也。³⁷

Although the outer presentation of the idea of Zeng Dian is similar to that of a Daoist recluse, simply enjoying the pleasure of being in nature, Zhu Xi's presupposition is different. To him, rather than just having fun in the mountains and rivers, following the model of Zeng Dian actually means following a strict cultivation process. One ought to work hard first to eliminate the excessive human desires and keep to one's social position so that one calmly does what one is supposed to do. Then one comes to realize the prevalent heavenly principle. It is only after one has reached such spiritual achievement that one can enjoy this supreme pleasure. In Zhu Xi's poem 'Zeng Dian', all the couplets are a detailed delineation of the outer world in which the poet is immersed and the pleasant feelings triggered by the encounter with nature. The poem ends

³⁷ *Wenji* vol. 51, in Zhu (2002), vol.22, 2389.

without any obvious expression of emotions or philosophizing, just “letting the gentle breeze caress his face”. However, taking the connotation of the title into consideration, we understand that instead of merely showing his love for the experience of the natural world, Zhu Xi actually indicates the ideal realm of morality after the Confucian spiritual and daily cultivation, which in turn exalts the spiritual achievement of the poet himself, making evident his thorough comprehension of the heavenly principle.

In terms of both the outer objects, emotions and thoughts presented, Zhu Xi’s poetry of this period not only appears to follow the idea of Zeng Dian, but is also cognate to the style of the *daoxue* master Cheng Hao. Cheng is known to have further developed the aesthetical dimension of Zeng Dian’s idea in his poetry, connecting the moral human mind with the heavenly endowed mind of all outer objects in the world, thus giving the notion of humanity (*ren*) a deeper grounding. Examples of Cheng’s poetry were discussed in the previous chapter. However, if we look more closely, we notice that there are major differences between Zhu Xi and Zeng Dian/Cheng Hao, as the following example of Zhu’s poetry indicates.

擇之寄示深卿唱和 Zezhi Sent Me the Fine Lines on the South Lake of Mount
鳥石南湖佳句輒次 Niao Shi that He Harmonized with Shenqing. I Therefore
元韻三首 Write Three Poems Following the Original Rhyme.

未識南湖景，	Not knowing the vista of the South Lake,
遙欣二子遊。	I enjoy from afar the trip you two took.
賞心并勝日，	With a delighted heart and on a wonderful day,
妙語逼清秋。	Splendid words approximate the fresh autumn.
贖欲携書卷，	My remaining wish is to carry the scrolls,
相將買釣舟。	And agree together to rent a fishing boat.
微吟歸去晚，	Chant softly and return back home late,
杜若滿汀洲。	With the polia covering the sandbars.
平湖渺空闊，	The flat lake is vast and expansive.
積水暮生寒。	The accumulated water grows chilly at night.
但見綠千頃，	I see only the thousands of acres of green,
不知深幾竿。	But I know not how many poles deep.
人間元迫隘，	The human world is actually constricted and narrow,
世路足艱難。	And the social path is full of predicaments.
若了滄洲趣，	If one understands the pleasure of sandbars,
無勞正眼看。	There is no need to bother with directly seeing [this human world].
年來年去為誰忙？	As the years come and go, for whom do we busy ourselves?
三伏炎蒸忽變涼。	The dog days were hot and steaming but it suddenly

becomes cool.

閱世謾勞心悵悵， Observing the world and striving in vain, my heart is
depressed.

懷人空得鬢蒼蒼。 Unable to be with the one I long for, I only ended up with
grey temples.

詩篇眼界何終極， How limitless is the horizon of poetry,
道學心期未遽央。 Yet my heart's desire for *daoxue* will not cease.

安得追尋二三子， How can I follow you gentlemen,
舞雩風月共徜徉？ Strolling together with the wind and moon at the Wu
altar.³⁸

First, unlike a normal social poem written in response to friends' work, we see from the title that Zhu Xi was not really in a social occasion and that he was not in the real scenery at all. He was just following the rhyme of poems exchanged between his disciples who visited the lake in the mountain. In this situation, the title alone suggests Zhu Xi's passion for writing these poems and chanting about the scenery.

As for the main text, the most striking feature is that the entire first poem and the first half of the second poem actually describe imagined scenes. We know from the title and the first couplet that Zhu Xi was not among the travellers and that all he did was merely

³⁸ Guo (2000), 534.

to imagine and admire the tour. But his imagination was detailed: it was on a beautiful day; people had delighted hearts and made splendid poetry that perfectly described the beauty of the clear autumn; after that, they wished to boat on the lake with books, chanting and admiring the pollia on the sandbars. The lake was vast, and the water refreshing. It was deep, but only the green expanse was visible. With so many imagined details of somewhere he had never been to, it is really difficult to say that the poet was seeking for the principle in nature. For one thing, he could do that just around his own home since a peaceful world of nature was everywhere. For another, he might prefer to be in a real scene with a real experience. As discussed earlier, the Chinese poet tended to include the time, location and all relevant factors in the title to indicate that it was a real experience. Again, this shows the poet's passion for the world in his imagination, which is more excessive than the normal Confucian way of grasping the principle in any sense. In addition, included in the imagined scenes, there is also a poetry exchange that is admired by the poet: "With a delighted heart and on a wonderful day, splendid words approximate the fresh autumn". This is obviously contrary to Zhu Xi's teaching that *dao* is the root while *wen* is just a small branch, the reason being that poems here could perfectly match the supreme creation where *dao* resides. These imagined scenes and experiences suggest that they had little to do with the poet's philosophical thought.

The rest of the poem confirmed that Zhu Xi was actually using the imagery of an imagined world and the fantasized experience to vent his anxieties about the harsh

world of human society, similar to the approach attributed to Qu Yuan, which depicts a mystical journey through celestial realms to express political defiance,³⁹ and to the approach of Wei and Jin poets like the “Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove” who exchanged poems on landscape and contemplation on manifestations of the Way to escape political entanglements and to indicate their protest.⁴⁰

Among the obvious laments Zhu Xi expressed, like his complaint about the constriction and narrowness of the human world and his sorrow for the rapid passage of time and the meaninglessness of his hard work, it is worth pointing out that the last couplet of the second poem, which says “If one understands the pleasure of sandbars, there is no need to bother with directly seeing [this human world]”. “Sandbars” here is a literal translation of *cangzhou* 滄洲 which metaphorically means the residence of hermits. Zhu Xi believes that the pleasure of sandbars is well worth pursuing even more than the things in the human world. The profound message contained in the natural world would prove the emptiness of human society. This is very likely a particular reaction to the poem exchanged between his disciples, written by Shenqing and mentioned in the title. One of the couplets in Shenqing’s poem says, “The dust of the marketplace is still fine for a reclusive life. I have no time to drift around the sandbars” 市塵差可隱，未暇泛滄洲。⁴¹

This probably alludes to the couplet of Bai Juyi : “The supreme recluse lives in the court

³⁹ Eoyang (1978)

⁴⁰ Knight (2012), 40-43.

⁴¹ This is recorded in Zhu Xi’s letter to Lin Zezhi, in *bieji* 別集 vol.6, in Zhu (2002), vol.25, 4944-4945.

and the market, while a petty recluse lives among the hills and fences [in the country]” 大隱住朝市，小隱入丘樊。⁴² Shenqing’s poem suggests that he was indeed longing for a reclusive life, but mingled with his awareness of his Confucian role, his desire for a purely natural seclusion further developed into a Confucian way of living in the marketplace as a spiritual recluse, which is superior to the primitive way of reclusiveness. Zhu Xi’s disagreement with Shenqing shows his passion for the remote natural world, despite his Confucian ideals.

In Zhu Xi’s comments on this line of Shenqing we read from his letter to Lin Zezhi, we know that Zhu Xi was actually aware of this problem of “reclusive taste”. He said that Shenqing’s phrasing regarding this taste was tricky and showed his hesitation: Shenqing admired the reclusive way of life, but he certainly did not want to follow the idea of “heterodox learning” (*yixue* 異學). However, Zhu Xi also defended the idea in his own writing by saying that this spiritual pursuit is of vital importance. If a *daoxue* follower does not have this spiritual pursuit deep in mind, his thought cannot be profound and thus cannot be known. This ambiguous argument could be owing to Zhu Xi’s understanding of the profundity of Daoist thought. Or it could just be an excuse for his adoption of the Daoist way of expressing dissent. The enigmatic attitude towards this “heterodox” taste explains why in the same letter, Zhu Xi said that this poem he wrote was just a careless and spontaneous work that was inferior in phrasing—hence he asked

⁴² Peng and Yang (1960), vol.7.445, 4991.

Ze zhi not to show it to others.⁴³ This also goes beyond the circumstances of the helpless retreat into nature when frustrations and setbacks in his career as an official leave a Confucian scholar with no alternative way to fulfill his social responsibility.

What is even more interesting is that Zhu Xi may have realized that his desire to be a recluse went too far so that it could lead to a poetic world with only simple encounters with the world, embellished language, and mysterious endings, resembling the type of poetry he criticized for having reversed the order of *wen* and *dao*. This might be the reason why the last two couplets conclude the entire poem with a sudden twist of meaning, showing an apparent contradiction in Zhu Xi's mind. First, there is a couplet juxtaposing the realm of poetry that he appreciates greatly and his expectation for *daoxue* that is not supposed to be forgotten at any point, saying "How limitless is the horizon of poetry, yet my heart's desire for *daoxue* will not cease". Both of them are worth engaging and are vitally important to him. Yet as previously explained, both theoretically and practically, they are mutually exclusive of each other. This unresolved conflict could only yield a wish and another imagined realm as the conclusion of the entire poem, showing Zhu Xi's aspiration towards a solution that merges the differences into an integral whole: "How can I follow you gentlemen, strolling together with the wind and moon at the Wu altar?" As discussed before, the mention of the wind and moon on the Wu altar is obviously an allusion to the story of Zeng Dian. This is why on

⁴³ 'Lin Ze zhi' 林擇之, *bieji* 別集 vol.6, in Zhu (2002), vol.25, 4944-4945.

the first sight, we normally understand this poem full of pleasures of interaction with the natural world as analogous to his earlier poem on Zeng Dian and the poetic style of Cheng Hao. Indeed, raising this question means that Zhu Xi may believe that Zeng Dian's sense of pleasure is the ultimate solution, where there is some philosophical idea that provides legitimacy for the limitless horizon of poetry within the framework of his *daoxue* cultivation so that these two mutually exclusive pursuits could be connected and integrated. However, the sentence that starts with "how can I" reveals Zhu Xi's uncertainty, which is the result of the inherent contradiction between the poetry with its tendency to retreat into the nature and outpourings of strong feelings and *daoxue* that aims to persuade people to constrain excessive feelings and carry out their heavenly endowed duties. In addition to the convoluted ending and the poet's uncertainty, the way he organized the poem is also different from that of 'Zeng Dian'. While previously he wrote with a top-down structure, having the established philosophical idea dominating the experiential encounter with the outer world, he now offers an unsatisfactory bottom-up structure, inadequately appealing to his *daoxue* ideal as a conclusion for the entire poem of imagined scenes and painful laments. Appealing to somewhat aesthetic ideas of his Confucian predecessors for the conclusion of his poem is just an incoherent compromise with the powerful feelings of discontent, protest and retreat that begin to prevail in this period of his life.

These feelings and struggles transmitted through detailed descriptions of the natural world are abundant in Zhu Xi's poetry of this period, essentially becoming the main theme that runs through his life and work at this stage. For example, there is a poem entitled 'Following the Rhyme of "The Zhou Han Pavilion"' ('Ciyun Zhou Han 次韻晝寒'). The name of the pavilion named by Zhu Xi, meaning coldness in the daytime, first strikes us with its irony. Even the daytime is cold, implying that the harsh societal situation is literally everywhere, what then is the poet supposed to do? On the one hand, he delicately describes his experience within the wood as well as the view he sees from the pavilion: "the valley creek rushes down in a thousand feet of white, with the peaks encircled in green on four sides" 澗瀉千尋白，峰回四面青. While this scene appears rather attractive and pleasant, he is not satisfied with indulging in this scenic world, concluding the poem with a temporary escape in getting drunk: "Now drunk, what time is it? I have no will to versify [in the way as if I am] the only one who is sober" 一醉今何許？無心賦獨醒. With this couplet, we understand the poet's helplessness even better. It resembles a line from the *Songs of Chu*: "When the whole world was turbid I was clear. When all the people were drunk I alone was sober" 舉世皆濁我獨清，眾人皆醉我獨醒.⁴⁴ By conceding that he was just one of the ordinary drunkards, Zhu Xi further indicates to the reader that his feelings are even worse than those of Qu Yuan who was experiencing real difficulty and despair.

⁴⁴ 'Li sao' 離騷. 'Yu fu' 漁父, in *Chuci jizhu* 楚辭集註, in Zhu (2002), vol.19, 129.

There is another poem of similar type that is also worth briefly mentioning for its embedded discontent transmitted through a light-hearted tone. The poem is entitled 'Inscribing This Poem Because Zhu Xiaoyou Painted A Little Scene on The Pillow Side Screen Named "Thick Trees after Frost"' 祝孝友作枕屏小景以霜餘茂樹名之因題此詩, explaining that the painting is supposed to function as something auspicious, pleasant, enjoyable, and beautiful. Yet after descriptions of the scenes he sees and feels in the painting, Zhu Xi ends the poem with a displeased lament, almost to the extent of being offended by the supposed settings. He writes in response to the focus of the pillow in the title, saying "there are too many autumn dreams in lives" 一生秋夢多,⁴⁵ which is apparently miserable and emotional. It would certainly be socially awkward if Zhu Xi had really inscribed this poem on the pillow of his friend, but it is clear that when writing the poem, Zhu Xi took the chance to express his overwhelmingly pessimistic feelings.

The prevalence of the excessive sour feelings and tendency of paying closer attention to the reclusive natural world within Zhu Xi's poetry might be influenced by the embedded theme of political protest within poetry of the natural world in the Song period, when there was much strife and exile, layered with allusions to poems of political dissent in ancient times.⁴⁶ It is likely that this heavily freighted poetic tradition agreed with Zhu Xi

⁴⁵ Guo (2000), 364.

⁴⁶ Alfreda Murck's work entitled *Poetry and Painting in Song China: The Subtle Art of Dissent* argues that Song literary elites tended to use landscape painting and poetry as an indirect mode of expressing dissent because of the severe political culture of the time. This was influenced by the poetic tradition of referring to Qu Yuan and Jia Yi 賈誼 (200-168 BCE), who established the

in this phase of his career, providing him a convenient and tempting venue to vent his spleen.

We know from Zhu Xi's biographer that he initially planned to serve the court after the political reform and reconstruction initiated by some of his allies. But soon after that, he witnessed the miserable collapse of everything he had pinned his hopes on. All his allies faced misfortune, being impeached, defamed, degraded or exiled. For Zhu, it was clear that any hard work on rebuilding a better political environment would be in vain and the human society was bound to be muddy and depressing. He also saw disastrous scenes of drought, flood and famine when he served in some lower rank positions during this period, concluding that all the difficult situations and sufferings of the poor masses were actually caused by the rotten and hopeless bureaucracy. Moreover, he experienced the painful losses of his mother and wife in succession, which inevitably added to his grief and further detached him from the earthly world.⁴⁷

However, this was also the period when he had most of his academic works completed and a systematic teaching of his thought established.⁴⁸ Furthermore, he went through

vocabulary of southern political exile and began the evolution of a literary tradition focusing on scholar-officials in serious difficulties. It is just that "the themes of exile and return, darkness and lament, so intimately linked to the political turbulence of the 1070s and expressed in the encoded discourse of dissent", were repeated so frequently, that they lost their intensity, to the extent that "the implications of those painted complaints become so obscure that we have come to think of Song dynasty landscape paintings primarily as expressions of harmony and of elegant refinement". See Murck (2000).

⁴⁷ Shu (1992), Chapter 6, 188-221; Chapter 11, 398-462.

⁴⁸ Shu (1992), Chapter 10, 362-397.

those well-known and heated debates with the Lu brothers and Chen Liang, as well as the close conversations and cooperation with Lü Zuqian, resulting in what Hoyt Tillman has called Zhu Xi's ascendancy over the preceding Confucian discourse.⁴⁹ The essential contradictions between his thought (including the teaching and debating environment he was involved in) and feelings, both of which became even more intense during this period, shaped the seemingly relaxed but actually entangled form that his poetry was to take. This explains why during this time, he rejected his fame as a poet and swore not to write poetry anymore at least twice more.⁵⁰ On the other hand, he began to frequently relate his fondness of mountains and rivers in his various articles and letters to his friends, where the nature of the genre provided him the same space for imagination and comfort, but with less difficulty in controlling the excessive feelings.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Tillman (1992).

⁵⁰ One refers to the story previously mentioned, which is that Zhu Xi felt unhappy about the recommendation made for him because of his fame of making poetry, so he swore not to write anymore. This was in 1170. See Shu (2008), 343; Guo Qi (2000), 936. The other one was noted in an annotation Zhu Xi made for his own poem entitled 'Follow the Previous Rhyme Again Because on Reading the Poems after the Departure with Jizhong and Jingren, I Find Them Related to *Collected Commentaries on the Odes* and *Detailed Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror for the Aid of Government*' ('Du Jizhong Jingren bie hou shiyu yin ji Shi zhuan gangmu fu yong qianyun' 讀機仲景仁別後詩語因及詩傳綱目復用前韻), written in 1177, saying that "[I have been] ceasing drinking and abandoning poetry for two years" 兩年止酒罷詩. See Guo (2000), 415.

⁵¹ Reading through the *Collection of Literary Works by Huian Xiansheng Zhu Wengong* 晦庵先生朱文公文集 and consulting the chronology of his letters made by the modern scholar Chen Lai and Zhu Xi's own markings of dates in some cases, I notice that most of the discussions and records related to the appreciation and keen desire for mountains, rivers and beautiful scenery come into existence in this period. In a letter dated 1172, Zhu Xi talked about his pleasant journey in Mount Shang Lan 上嵐 with his friend, despite the fact that they were caught in wind and rain during the adventure ('In Reply to Huang Zihou', *Wenji* vol.41, in Zhu (2002), vol. 22, 1891); In 1174, he expressed his fondness for bringing books into the landscape with the most splendid views so that he could receive extra pleasure after teaching ('In Reply to Lü Bogong', *Wenji* vol. 33, in Zhu (2002), vol.21, 1451). In another letter, he also invited his friend to join him for a tour in Huai Yu because of its famous natural scenery ('In Reply to Lü Bogong', *Wenji* vol. 33, in Zhu (2002), vol.21, 1453). More occurrences appear in his noted memories (*ji* 記) during this period. Examples can be found in the noted memories of Mount Baizhang ('Baizhang shan ji' 百丈山記), Yungu ('Yungu ji' 雲谷記) and Mingtang chamber ('Mingtang shi ji' 名堂室記) approximately written during 1174 to 1176, and the noted memories of the Studio of Lying

4. Poetry and Philosophy: Identical Approaches

If we look at the content of the philosophical works that Zhu Xi was so intensively working on during this period, we find that surprisingly, the approach Zhu Xi had taken in establishing his system aptly matches the central concern of his poetry we have been discussing: turning the metaphysics of his philosophy outward and trying to provide validity and philosophical meanings for the world in which he lived. Moreover, he was seeking for something stable and penetrating to comfort his feelings in the frustrating and unpredictable human world as well as to solve the contradictions between feelings and thoughts. I would further argue that rather than seeing poetry as mere footnotes to or reflections of Zhu Xi's philosophy, as both imperial-era and modern scholars have done, the problems Zhu Xi faced when writing poetry have actually influenced the way he constructed his philosophy. The poetry provided the formulation of the philosophy with more practical concerns, thus redirecting it, or at least changing its emphasis and approach. For example, the poetic tradition of embedding political dissent facilitated Zhu Xi's increasing attention to the natural world, thus directing the pursuit of the

Dragon ('Wolong an ji' 臥龍庵記) and the Studio of the West Plain ('Xiyuan an ji' 西原庵記) written in 1180 and 1181 respectively (See Zhu (2002), vol.24, 3725, 3726, 3730, 3757, 3758. All of them tell of his tremendous enthusiasm for the beautiful scenery. In addition, he also complimented some of his predecessors and friends, speaking highly of their immersion in scenery of mountains and rivers. For instance, he felt that Zhou Dunyi "cherished elegance and had elevated tastes,, fully enjoying the pleasure of fine mountains and rivers [...] it is a reflection of profound comprehension of virtue" 雅有高趣, 尤樂佳山水 [...] 知德者亦深. ('Lianxi xiansheng shishi ji' 濂溪先生事實記, *Wenji* vol. 98, in Zhu (2002), vol. 25, 4558.) He even took his "great passion" for mountains and rivers as an excuse to reject offers of official posts. ('Yu chengxiang bie zhi' 與丞相別紙, *Wenji* vol. 26, in Zhu (2002), vol. 21, 1153).

ultimate moral principle in his philosophical teaching more towards the external world. As another example, the embedded powerful feelings within the genre of poetry, together with his unpleasant experiences later in life made him aware of the increasing tension between emotions and thoughts, thus compelling him to seek philosophically for something constant, realistically achievable and helpful in eliminating the excessive emotions.

According to the chronology of Shu Jingnan, during the roughly two decades when Zhu Xi mostly remained in his studios (the Han Quan Studio 寒泉精舍 and the Wu Yi Studio 武夷精舍) writing, teaching and immersing himself in the world of mountains and rivers⁵², he first worked on editing manuscripts of the Cheng brothers, works of Zhou Dunyi, Zhang Zai, Hu Hong, and other works, primarily for the sake of trying to establish what he saw as the *daoxue* orthodoxy and its lineage, to provide validity to his thought, and to help construct the cosmology with basic ontological notions within a clear definitory framework. Zhu Xi's focused interpretation of *The Treatise on the Diagram of the Great Ultimate* and *The All-Embracing Book* during this period mainly puts forth the ideals of being sincere and keeping reverent towards the great ultimate, a further elaboration on the concepts of the unitary principle and its multifaceted manifestations, and a polarized rather than dual relationship between movement (*dong*) and stillness

⁵² Approximately starting from his second awakening on the theory of equilibrium and harmony in 1169 and ending at when he took the post of grand administrator of Zhang Zhou in 1189, including the brief period when he held the post as Prefect of Nankang from 1179 to 1181, and the post of Supervisor of the Tea and Salt Supervisorate in Eastern Zhe from 1181-1182.

(*jing*), *yin* and *yang*⁵³. This philosophical emphasis on a cosmological explanation of the heavenly principle fits with the frame of mind that we have seen in Zhu Xi's poetry, which is to seek for something ultimate and steadily achievable from within the vicissitude of human society. Moreover, the metaphysical discussion on the generation of all things in the world under this principle indicates greater attention devoted to an outward cultivation approach, so that the investigation within the natural world, which he personally inclined to pursue, became equally important as, if not more meaningful than the social world.

This tendency is further evidenced by his compilation and annotation of the *Four Books* during this period. In 1177, Zhu Xi finished the first version of his collected annotations and questions (*jizhu huowen* 集註或問) on *The Analects*, *The Book of Mengzi*, *The Great Learning*, and *Doctrine of the Mean*, to which he wrote prefaces as well. After that, he extensively revised these works again and again until he eventually settled on a final version of all the annotations and prefaces in 1189 before publishing them in 1192. That is what we now know as *The Collected Annotations on the Four Books* (*Si shu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集註). The first paragraph of Zhu Xi's annotations on the *Great Learning*, the first one in the collection of four, tells us that the *Great Learning* is the most

⁵³ The relationship is not dualistic because when commentating on *The All-Embracing Book* (*Tongshu* 通書), Zhu Xi said "There is motion in stillness, stillness in motion. Stillness leads to motion and motion leads to stillness. There is Yin in Yang and Yang in Yin. Complex and endless" 靜中有動, 動中有靜, 靜而能動, 動而能靜, 陽中有陰, 陰中有陽, 錯綜無窮, suggesting that they are ontologically interdependent, interpenetrating and complementary fundamental things: changing/becoming and unchanging/being. See Zhu (1986), vol.6.94, 2403.

important one among others because it helps the beginners to know the virtue and suggests the sequence of ancient people's learning process.⁵⁴ Its purpose, or I would rather say the purpose of the entire collection, as elaborated, is to return to the beginning state of people when they are endowed with the bright and moral nature from heaven and getting to know the ultimate principle of all things in the world.⁵⁵ As for the rest, he said that "the book of the *Analects* does not go beyond [teaching] the essentials of holding, preserving and nourishing; the book of the seven passages is nothing more than the starting point of experience and expansion" 論語之書，無非操存、涵養之要；七篇之書，莫非體驗、擴充之端，⁵⁶ and the *Doctrine of the Mean* "initially talks about one principle, then dispersed as tens of thousands of things in the middle, and

⁵⁴ The opening passage of Zhu Xi's *Commentary on the Great Learning* says "Master Chengzi said: 'The Great Learning, a book left by Confucius, is the door into virtue for beginners'. From this we can see the sequence in which the ancients conduct learning depends first on the existence of the Great Learning, to which the *Analects* and the *Book of Mencius* are secondary. If any scholar starts his learning from this, he will not deviate too much." 子程子曰：“大學，孔氏之遺書，而初學入德之門也。”於今可見古人為學次第者，獨賴此篇之存，而論、孟次之。學者必由是而學焉，則庶乎其不差矣。Zhu (1983), 3.

⁵⁵ In interpreting "What the *Great Learning* teaches, is to illustrate the illustrious virtue; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest morality" 大學之道，在明明德，在親民，在止於至善，Zhu Xi said that "the illustrious virtue is what people get from heaven, lifting one out of the dark and equipping one with various principles to respond to all things. However, if it is restrained by the vital forces people hold or blocked by human desires, it will sometimes be obscured. But the illustriousness of itself is never ever gone. Therefore, a scholar should illuminate whatever comes to his mind, thereby returning to the origin. To renovate means transforming what is old. When one has already illustrated his own illustrious virtue, he should extend this to other people, giving them something to rely on so as to clean the stain left from the past. To rest means staying there without moving away. The highest morality means the natural ultimate of the principles of things. To illustrate the illustrious virtue and to renovate the people is to reach where the highest morality is and do not move away from there. Then one can reach the ultimate of the heavenly principle without a single trace of the selfishness of human desires. These three things are the main themes of the *Great Learning*." 明德者，人之所得乎天，而虛靈不昧，以具眾理而應萬事者也。但為氣稟所拘，人欲所蔽，則有時而昏；然其本體之明，則有未嘗息者。故學者當因其所發而遂明之，以復其初也。新者，革其舊之謂也，言既自明其明德，又當推以及人，使之亦有以去其舊染之污也。止者，必至於是不遷之意。至善，則事理當然之極也。言明明德、新民，皆當至於至善之地而不遷。蓋必其有以盡夫天理之極，而無一毫人欲之私也。此三者，大學之綱領也。Zhu (1983), 3.

⁵⁶ Zhu (1986), vol.2.19, 444.

integrates into one principle again in the end” 始言一理，中散為萬事，末復合為一理。⁵⁷

In brief, by arranging the sequence of and interpreting the *Four Books*, Zhu Xi had his comprehensive methodology of realizing the ultimate morality elaborated, which generally revealed his desire to craft a well-ordered societal world, which is in harmony not only with all things in the world but, more importantly, with an objective and consistent principle at its core.

This method of grasping the *dao* is particularly clear in the key paragraph of the *Annotations on the Great Learning* (*Daxue zhangju* 大學章句) that proposes one of Zhu Xi's most well-known methods: the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge (*gewu zhizhi* 格物致知). The original paragraph in the *Great Learning* on the meanings of this notion was believed to be lost, so it was almost entirely reconstructed by Zhu Xi:

The fifth chapter of the text to the right is generally about explaining what is meant by the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge, which are now lost. I once drew on the ideas of Master Cheng to make the following comments to make up for it: “the proposition that extension of knowledge is conditioned upon the investigation of things means that in order to extend my knowledge, I must approach the things and fully understand their principles. The spirit of the human

⁵⁷ Zhu (1986), vol.4.62, 1489.

heart-mind can know everything and everything under heaven has its own principle. It is only when these principles are not fully understood that the knowledge is not exhausted. So from the beginning, the *Great Learning* teaches that the scholars shall approach everything under heaven and use the principles known to them to investigate further until reaching the ultimate of knowledge. One day when achieving mastery after making such effort for a long time, one can have a thorough understanding of both the outside and inside, the delicate and general of all things, and the entirety and great function of our heart-mind are without any incomprehension. This is when things are investigated and the ultimate of knowledge reached.”

右傳之五章，蓋釋格物、致知之義，而今亡矣。聞嘗竊取程子之意以補之曰：“所謂致知在格物者，言欲致吾之知，在即物而窮其理也。蓋人心之靈莫不有知，而天下之物莫不有理，惟於理有未窮，故其知有不盡也。是以大學始教，必使學者即凡天下之物，莫不因其已知之理而益窮之，以求至乎其極。至於用力之久，而一旦豁然貫通焉，則眾物之表裏精粗無不到，而吾心之全體大用無不明矣。此謂物格，此謂知之至也。”⁵⁸

The knowledge that needs extension here could be understood as both the knowledge of all things in the world in its general sense, and a state of ultimate realization that the originally bright and moral human heart-mind is recovered and the pattern that

⁵⁸ Zhu (1983), 6-7.

underlies everything could be penetrated. But no matter what, it aims at one's knowledge of *li*, which ultimately lies in heaven and earth, the world outside of people's heart-mind, as well as the world (both human and natural) that makes Zhu Xi experience suffering and joy. This is why in order to extend this knowledge, one needs not only to fully investigate the principle of things but also to approach these things. To investigate things not only involves uncovering the underlying principle of the natural world, such as the principle of vibrant vital forces and the natural course of the great flow of change, which is consistent with and influenced by Zhu Xi's poetry endeavors of this period. It also includes examining daily affairs such as the relationship between parents and their children and the bureaucracy that exacerbated the severity of peasants' hardships, which, as mentioned in Chapter 2, is also contemplated in Zhu Xi's poetry. Furthermore, it also refers to studying classics and historical records, providing him good reason and reconciliation for solely concentrating on reading books while ignoring official invitations and behaving like an escapist. As previously mentioned, the connotative effects of Zhu Xi's references to reading in his poetry underwent a transformation during this period: books began as a negative force in constant conflict with the poetic persona's inclination to enjoy his natural environment; they then changed into something that could be brought into the landscape, adding pleasure and profoundness to any pastoral excursion. Moreover, the requirement of approaching things makes it clear that different from induction or empirical generalization, the cultivation method is closer to gaining insights through personal experience, which is

exactly the shift in Zhu Xi's poetic style during this period but definitely before his versions of the *Annotations*. Above all, what most closely resembles the appearance of Zhu Xi's poetry in this period is again the evident outward approach of pursuing stability within turbulence, order within disorder, as well as the integration of emotions and thoughts through an emphasis on individual's mind nature cultivation.

Zhu Xi's *Commentary to the Odes* is also worthy of consideration here. As discussed in my Master's thesis, a salient feature of his commentary, as compared to all the previous ones, was his disregarding of Mao's prefaces that deeply influenced the commentarial tradition of the *Odes*, featuring its farfetched interpretation of ethical and political meanings, and its proposition of "the trigger of objects and the expression of feelings" (*gan wu dao qing* 感物道情) that is prevalent in the entire collection.⁵⁹ Zhu Xi said when discussing the general nature of the *Odes*: "Generally speaking, ancient people's composition of poetry is the same as that of current people. There is naturally the trigger of object and the expression of feelings. They chanted about their feelings and their nature. How could they merely be criticizing others?" 大率古人作詩，與今人作詩一般，其間亦自有感物道情，吟詠情性，幾時盡是譏刺他人?⁶⁰ In interpreting the *Odes*, Zhu Xi was prominent in emphasizing the idea of personal feelings, thus opening up a different dimension of self-cultivation for learners to enjoy and explore. This might not

⁵⁹ Liu Siyu (2010)

⁶⁰ Zhu (1986), vol.6.80, 2076.

have been possible, had Zhu Xi not experienced his own unresolved conflict between the strong feelings triggered by the severe social circumstances and his *daoxue* thought.

5. Returning to the Heart-mind: Zhu Xi's Poetry in the Late Years

Because of the outward approach of his cultivation method as exemplified by the investigation of things and extension of knowledge that we discussed before, as well as his general theoretical agenda of restoring people to their original heavenly endowed nature, ultimately the pursuit of something pertaining to the outer world, within the Neo-Confucian lineage, Zhu Xi's thought is categorized in the school of *Cheng Zhu lixue* 程朱理學. In contrast, thinkers such as Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139-1193) and Wang Shouren who put more emphasis on the cultivation within people's heart-mind are categorized as *Lu Wang xinxue* 陸王心學. This school is contrasted with Zhu Xi in terms of both its cultivation method and metaphysical understanding. However, if we take a closer look at Zhu Xi's poetry in this period, including those from his late years when the political situation turned out to be more grievous for him primarily because of the official ban of his thought, I believe that both theoretically and practically, the importance of nourishing the heart-mind is not neglected by Zhi Xi. Instead, he shows us the tendency to redirect the outward approach for *dao* back to the heart-mind, the inherent stability and harmony of which outweighs any outer changes and stays eternal with the mind of heaven and earth.

Let us first look at one of Zhu Xi's most renowned poems of this period:

淳熙甲辰中春精舍 閑居戲作武夷棹歌
十首呈諸同遊相與 一笑
In the mid-summer of the Jiachen year of the Chunxi reign
(1185 AD), while leisurely dwelling in the study I playfully
composed ten boat songs of Wuyi. I presented them to friends,
and together we shared a laughter.

武夷山上有仙靈，
山下寒流曲曲清。
欲識個中奇絕處，
棹歌閑聽兩三聲。
一曲溪邊上釣船，
幔亭峰影蘸晴川。
虹橋一斷無消息，
On top of Mount Wuyi are immortals and gods,
And at its foot a cold stream runs winding and clear.
If you wish to know the rare and astonishing places in its
midst,
Listen at your leisure to these two or three boat songs.
I board a fishing boat at the bank of the first bend.
The reflection of Curtain Pavilion Peak dips into the clear
river.
There is no word from the disconnected rainbow bridge.⁶¹

⁶¹ The verse alludes to a story recorded in an anthology of the Daoist canon entitled *The Essentials of the Seven Sections of the Daoist Canon* (*Yunji qijian* 雲笈七籤). The story tells that in ancient times, the rainbow bridge on Mount Wuyi was magically manufactured by the celestial of Wuyi to help the invited local villagers go from their secular realm to the heavenly realm of the celestials, for banquet and entertainment on every Mid-Autumn festival. The scene and atmosphere of the banquet is described as simply spectacular. However, according to the records of another Song scholar Zhu Mu 祝穆 (ca. 1221-1255), the story goes that on the Mid-Autumn

萬壑千岩鎖翠煙。 Ten thousand ravines and a thousand cliffs confine the green
mist.

二曲亭亭玉女峰， Upright and graceful Jade Maiden Peak at the second bend,
插花臨水為誰容。 Wearing a flower and standing by the water, for whom did you
adorn yourself?

道人不復陽臺夢， The man of the *dao* no longer dreams of the Sun Terrace,⁶²
興入前山翠幾重。 Our interests piqued, we enter the front mountains, several
layers of green!

三曲君看駕壑船， At the third bend you see the boats parked in crevices.
不知停棹幾何年。 No one knows how many years have passed since their rowing
ceased.

桑田海水兮如許， Mulberry fields like an ocean, now so vast—
泡沫風燈敢自憐。 Like floating foam and lamps in the wind, dare we pity
ourselves?

festival in the second year of the reign of Qin Shihuang (259-210 B.C.), on their way back home after the banquet, the villagers saw that the bridge disappeared after torrential rain and storms, as if nothing ever happened. See 'Renjian ke ai zhiqu' 人間可哀之曲 in Zhang Junfang and Li Chengsheng (2003), vol.4.94, 2099-2100; 'Manting feng' 幔亭峰, in Zhu Mu (1992), vol.1.11, 231-232.

⁶² The Sun Terrace dream alludes to the story described in the 'Gaotang fu' 高唐賦 of Song Yu 宋玉 (ca. 298-222 B.C) that the King of Chu once had a wet dream about a goddess who told the King that she lived somewhere below the Sun Terrace in the Mountain Wu. See Xiao and Li (1986), vol.2.19, 875-876. The Sun Terrace dream has since been used in literary works to refer to wet dreams with fine ladies.

四曲東西兩石岩， To the east and west of the fourth bend are rocky cliffs.
 巖花垂露碧氤氳。 Cliff flowers drip dew from their long green leaves.
 金雞叫罷無人見， The golden rooster⁶³ has finished its crowing but no one has
 seen it.
 月滿空山水滿潭。 The moon fills the empty mountain, and the water fills the
 pond.
 五曲山高雲氣深， At the fifth bend, the mountain is tall, the cloud mist is thick.
 長時煙雨暗平林。 Lingering mist and rain cast a shadow on the quiet forest.
 林間有客無人識， In the forest there is a guest whom no one knows,
 欸乃聲中萬古心。 In the sound of the boat song lies the heart of high antiquity.
 六曲蒼屏繞碧灣， At the sixth bend, the Green Screen encircles a bend of jade
 water.
 茆茨終日掩柴關。 Bramble gate of the thatched house is shut all day long.
 客來倚棹岩花落， As the guest leans on the oar, cliff flowers fall.
 猿鳥不驚春意閑。 Gibbons and birds are not startled for the spring feelings are
 slack.

⁶³ According to Guo Qi's comments, the golden rooster refers to a fetish in ancient tales. Once it crows, it evokes all the cocks to crow. Zhu Xi here meant to use it as a pun referring also to the name of the mountain by the fourth bend that is called Mountain of the Golden Rooster. Guo (2000), 799.

七曲移船上碧灘， At the seventh bend, I move the boat up the green beach.
 隱屏仙掌更回看。 Looking back, I see Recluse's Screen Cliff and Immortal's Palm
 Cliff once more.
 卻憐昨夜峰頭雨， Lovely is last night's rain over the mountain peak,
 添得飛泉幾道寒。 Making the flying waterfall several times cooler!

八曲風煙勢欲開， At the eighth bend, winds and mists are about to clear.
 鼓樓巖下水縈洄。 At the foot of Drum Tower Cliff, the water swirls around.
 莫言此地無佳景， Don't say there is no beautiful scenery in this place.
 自是遊人不上來。 From here on ordinary travelers cannot advance.

九曲將窮眼豁然， Almost reaching the ninth bend, eyes suddenly open up.
 桑麻雨露見平川。 Through mulberry and hemp, rain and dew, a flat field is
 revealed.
 漁郎更覓桃源路， If the fisherman once again seeks the road to Peach Blossom
 Spring,⁶⁴
 除是人間別有天。 [Here it is,] besides the realm of man, under another sky!⁶⁵

⁶⁴ The Peach Blossom Spring alludes to a famous fable by Tao Qian in 421 about a chance discovery of an ethereal utopia where people lead an ideal existence in harmony with nature, unaware of the outside world for centuries. Full translation of the story, see Tao (2000); More discussions on this story of Tao, see Schafer (1986); Bokenkamp (1986).

⁶⁵ Guo (2000), 797. I primarily followed the translation of Han (2013), with slight modifications. For example, Han translates the *daoren* 道人 as "the Daoist priest" which I cannot accept in Zhu Xi's case. There is an occurrence of *daoren* in *Zhuangzi* that says "道人不聞，至德不得", translated by James Legge to be "The Man of Tao does not become distinguished; the greatest virtue is unsuccessful", which I think makes more sense than the one with partisan connotations. See Legge and Zhuangzi (1927), 379. Also consulted Yang (2012).

This was written in 1184, the second year after Zhu Xi resigned his official post and returned to the studio in Wuyi, to continue his writing, teaching, debating and reclusive life among the mountains and rivers. Before this, he had unpleasant experiences in the political world during his time in officialdom and he submitted six impeachment memorials to the emperor to petition for the dismissal of the corrupt official Tang Zhongyou 唐仲友 (1136-1188), resulting in nothing else than more political opponents and slanders.⁶⁶ It is fair to say that the political situation he was involved in deteriorated as he grew older. Surprisingly, however, in some of his poems written in this period, the poetic style appears to be dramatically different from what we have previously seen. Instead of showing the desperate escape, anxious feelings and unresolved conflicts of the poetic persona of Zhu Xi, these nine poems present peaceful views in harmony with the protagonist's inner feelings, which in turn share the perfect rhythm with the invisible pattern. This is all because of Zhu Xi's salient shift from seeking for the principle from the outside world to finding it within his own heart-mind, therefore endowing the heart-mind with the all-encompassing capabilities to leisurely and sensitively react to all details in the outer world (including contemplation on his dismal problems) and to appreciate it with pleasant feelings. Comparing the just-cited poems with his poems discussed earlier in this chapter, i.e. the ones written under less severe situation but with more pessimistic views on human life and keen desire to

⁶⁶ For more stories of Zhu Xi's experiences during this period, see Shu (1992), Chapter 12, 463-523; Chapter 13, 524-561.

escape into the world of nature, I would argue that without a strong conviction from within his heart-mind, in this very late and difficult period, Zhu Xi would never have been able to face the harsh circumstances with so much ease in writing poetry and to eliminate his inner struggles with so much compatibility.

The first observation on seeing this Nine Bends poem would be the disappearance of nagging philosophizing. Recall that Zhu Xi's poetry in his early or middle years mostly ended with descriptions of his philosophical mind. In striking contrast, we can now see that there is no moralizing or intellectualizing anymore. These nice poems just conclude without conclusions. What is more, there is very little egocentricity projected into the scene. There are neither any subjective adjective nor any patterned scene or perspective or ideological allusion. As we can see from the first poem, the poet is introducing this place to others. More precisely, he is telling about a world that is first, in his eyes, second, in his emotional perception, third, in his thought, eventually coming out in his rational composition. But I would say that with so many worlds intermingled together, there is no more contradiction.

There are many stories mentioned in the poems. Unlike other poems that allude to the Confucian classics, nature in these poems is not allegorical at all. When using the fairy stories or any related stories of particular scenes, e.g. the romanticized myth of the arch bridge, the associations of ancient boats that had gone through many ebbs

and flows and the tale of looking for the Peach Blossom Spring, the experience is described from the poet's view, but not as the private and individual experience of the poet, emotionally colored like it had been in his early poetry, but as a sample of shared human memory and experience, so that the scenes and atmosphere become immediately experiential to the reader and a sense of relaxed transparency is transmitted. The result is that the reader may enter the poem more freely, without having to follow the poet's train of thought or think about the principles embedded therein. But the reader can still be pleased and moved by the poet's tranquil state of mind.

That said, the poet did not avoid giving a specified subject, namely the poetic self of Zhu Xi. But the self in the poems is definitely not as declarative as that in his early poems where he was basically expounding philosophical processes or emotional experiences that were occurring within his mind. It is apparent that these poems are the poet's acts of discovering the nine-bend stream. But we can see that neither the self nor the scene dominates. The outer objects and human emotions are presented in balance.

Here, the natural world is not a set of allegorical images used to vent the spleen as Qu Yuan presented it. It is not to provide a form of escape as Tao Qian understood it. It is not somewhere to seek for melioration and consolation as Xie Lingyun saw it. It is not just a mirror of the human world where its independence and objectiveness mirrors the

emptiness of human activities and meaninglessness of human emotions as how Wang Wei used it. The natural world is neither an objective lesson where one is to derive some form of truth or principle as Zhu Xi did in his middle years. In these poems, the natural world and the human world are one, in which the two parts interact with and fulfill each other.

It is the human experience and romantic associations that better clarifies the vitality of nature, like the metaphor of a fine lady decorating herself for someone special, giving the reader a vivid vision of the beauty of the Jade Maiden Peak. Meanwhile, it is the harmonious rhythm of nature that gives people a peaceful mind, as Zhu Xi expressed on the fifth bend that immersing in the quiet forest and lingering mist, the mind could journey through the ages in the rowing songs. And the joyful emotions that follow the flow of life are also in harmony with the scene. In depicting the maiden's peak, Zhu Xi said that he was not supposed to daydream amorously. But in fact, the "meddling intellect" aptly affirms what the intuition refuses to recognize, so that his personal feelings about this "balcony dream" is presented in a tricky and amusing way. The poetic persona of Zhu Xi as one of the subjects of these poems does not have to be absent in order to give way to free access into nature. They integrate very well so that nothing is submerged or blocked. The integration and free experience in turn give some sense of the natural order. The slight restraint of the self as shown in his resisting the balcony dream naturally progresses into a heightened experience of reality where he suggested

“our interests piqued, we enter the front mountains, several layers of green”. The reality was just naturally and dispassionately transcribed with shared experience and emotions, as manifested in the poem of the third bend, so that an empathetic yet peaceful mind is transmitted to the reader and more room is left for the taste of profundity or principles.

On top of all these detailed change of poetic styles, if we are really interested in looking for the hidden philosophical messages, we should note that the second couplets of the third, the fourth, the fifth and the sixth poems actually demonstrate the different philosophical approach. The couplet in the third poem challenges people’s most common lament of the fast passage of time and life’s transience by putting the situation in a really time-honored context. Since throughout all times, even the mulberry field and the ocean are interchangeable, how can human beings avoid the natural course of life and death? The contrast with the grand natural flow of change tells the uselessness of one’s self-pity. The crow of the golden rooster in the fourth poem is more of a metaphor of human activity. Even the sound of the fetish could be muted within the deep forest, let alone human activities. This again tells the tininess of people as compared with the moon and water that stay tranquil and permanent under whatever circumstances. All these observations tell us that in order to live a meaningful life, all people need to do is to nourish their own heart-mind, which is the only reliable resort within the world. More importantly, it is feasible, through enlarging it, to make it the heart of ten thousand ages. The last couplet in the sixth poem is a description of the ideal harmony that can

only be really appreciated after the realization of all things being equal: the “guest”, the “flowers”, the “animals” and the “spring” share the same mind of principle.

Here, the sense of cultivating the heart-mind to make it all-embracing is no less valued than the idea of Wang Shouren that emphasized “my mind [...] is the bodily nature of the heart-mind, and the nature is the principle” 吾心[...] 心之體性也，性即理也。⁶⁷ In fact, three years later, Zhu Xi finished his *Elementary Learning* (*Xiao xue* 小學) that according to one of his letters, centers on “honoring the virtuous nature and seeking for the lost mind” 尊德性，求放心，⁶⁸ closely analogous to the teachings of Lu Jiuyuan who claimed that Zhu Xi wrongly put textual study before moral reflection.

This return to an inwardness of his thought also echoes with the conscious statement Zhu Xi delivered regarding his philosophical approach one year before the writing of this Nine Bend poem. This is noted and translated by Yü Ying-shih in his article:⁶⁹

“Generally speaking, since the time of Tzu-ssu “honoring the moral nature” (*tsun te-hsing*) and “following the path of inquiry and study” (*tao wen-hsüeh*) have been the two basic methods of instruction according to which people are taught to exert themselves. Now, what Tzu-ching [Lu Hsiang-shan, 1139-1193] talks about are matters pertaining exclusively to “honoring the moral nature” whereas in my daily

⁶⁷ ‘Da Gu Dongqiao shu’ 答顧東橋書, in *Chuan xi lu* 傳習錄, Wang Yangming (1992), vol.1.2, 42.

⁶⁸ ‘Da Lü Ziyue’ 答呂子約(24), in *Wenji* vol.47, Zhu (2002), vol.22, 2196.

⁶⁹ Yü (1986)

discussions I have placed a greater emphasis on “inquiry and study” ... From now on I ought to turn my attention inwardly to self-cultivation. Thus by removing weakness on the one hand and gathering strength on the other, I probably would be able to prevent myself from failing into one-sidedness.”

In his article, Yü holds that it was this type of communications between Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan that “led later scholars to believe that the basic difference between Chu and Lu lies in the fact that the former stressed the importance of inquiry and study [*dao wen xue* 道問學] whereas the latter that of moral nature [*zun de xing* 尊德性]”. “By the time of the Ming dynasty, this view had become so firmly established that even Wang Yang-ming found it difficult to alter”. According to Yü, this is also the reason why there is the same distinction perpetuated in the *Scholarly Records of Confucians of the Song and Yuan Dynasties* (*Song Yuan xue'an* 宋元學案) written by Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610-1695). However, Yü makes the argument that neither side completely ignored the emphasis of the other and that the difference between the two is more of a problem of priority. He believes that Zhu Xi did give the first priority to the restoration of the heavenly mind. It is just that “the mind is essentially a knowing mind; the best a person can hope to accomplish is to raise his mind to the level of purification as high as the sage’s minds [...] He is convinced that only the sage’s words exhibit the sage’s mind, which is nothing but the embodiment of the principles in the world.” This is generally why Zhu Xi emphasized the investigation of things and the learning of Confucian classics,

but it does not mean that his ultimate goal of achieving the sagely mind could be neglected.

This pursuit of sublime and blissful sagely mind is one of the salient features of Zhu Xi's poetry in this late stage of his life, stated grandly in his poem (not a social poem) entitled 'Tribute to Kuoran Pavilion on Mount Jiuri' ('Jiti Jiuri shan Kuoran ting' 寄題九日山廓然亭):

昨遊九日山，	I toured Mount Jiuri yesterday,
散髮巖上石。	Letting loose my hair on the stones above the cliff.
仰看天宇近，	Looking up I felt that heaven is close,
俯歎塵境窄。	Looking down I lamented that the human world is narrow.
歸來今幾時？	What is the time when I return?
夢想掛蒼壁。	My dream still hangs on the green cliff.
聞公結茅地，	Hearing that this is where you built your cottage,
恍復記疇昔。	I seem to relive the old times again.
年隨流水逝，	Years have passed along with the flowing water,
事與浮雲失。	Things have gone along with the floating clouds.
了知廓然處，	I understand that the open and quiet place
初不從外得。	Cannot be reached from outside initially.
遙憐植杖翁，	From afar I am thinking of the old man with a walking stick,

鶴骨雙眼碧。 Whose bones are like those of the crane and whose eyes are
green.

永嘯月明中， I sigh in the moonlight for a long time,
秋風桂花白。 The tea olive is white in the autumn wind.⁷⁰

Having tried with all different types of man-and-nature relationship under the tension between poetic rules and the logic of his *daoxue* learning, and having been through all the turbulences of his life, Zhu Xi in the late period presented in his poetry the tendency of shifting from an emphasis on the protagonist's outward experience to the inward pursuit. The dedicated depiction of the experience of "letting loose the hair on the stones" provides a sufficient condition for the poet's understanding that "the open and quiet place cannot be reached from outside", while this inward realization in turn enables the poetic mind to ease its excessive feelings and appreciate the "whiteness of the tea olives".

⁷⁰ Guo (2000), 762.

CONCLUSION

Michael Fuller's 2013 book, *Drifting among Rivers and Lakes: Southern Song Dynasty Poetry and the Problem of Literary History*, examines the writings of major poets and Confucian thinkers of the Song period with concerns that are very similar to those of this study in investigating the philosophical meanings of Zhu Xi's poetry. As Fuller indicates, poetry is not simply an authentic expression of the writer's intentions; nor does it merely follow the shifts in a discourse or in a culture. Rather, it plays a distinctive role in shaping emergent trends. Moreover, there is a complementarity between poetry and *daoxue* in which neither discourse was self-sufficient.

However, the differences between our studies are more evident than the similarities. Fuller argues that *daoxue* discourse, represented and established largely by Zhu Xi, generally "recognized that the aesthetic as a para-epistemological category was such a threat" that it was systematically excluded from Zhu Xi's interpretation of the learning of *dao*.¹ Therefore, a "central question in the transformation of poetry in the Southern Song" Fuller aims to examine is: "how did elite culture negotiate the role of the aesthetic experience of texts as it came to terms with *Daoxue*?"² That is to say, the premise of Fuller's entire discussion is that *daoxue* replaced the aesthetic experience with its moral enterprise of learning to be a sage. My thesis demonstrates that the opposite of this

¹ Fuller (2013), 325.

² Fuller (2013), 301.

premise is true, or at least it supplies part of the story that is left out in Fuller's analysis.

As a synthesis of different sources, what is new about Neo-Confucian philosophy (centered on the discourse of *daoxue*) is that it articulated a coherent integration of the human heart-mind with the imperative moral principles that support a well-constructed Confucian society. In other words, it is a Confucian vision of how to connect humans and nature based on thorough discussions of human nature and feelings, validating the philosophy through precisely correlative observations. Hence, a complete replacement and ignorance of the aesthetic dimension of people's daily experience was both theoretically and practically impossible.³

³ Fuller has examined the Neo-Confucian emphasis on the heart-mind. In contextualizing the discourse of the *dao* in the late twelfth century, he quoted the description of Ye Shi 葉適 (1150-1223): "Thus the learning of the current generation starts from the mind, extends to the fathoming of the principles of objects and events, and turns inward to arrive at the cusp of restoring the Nature and mandate. After these are attained, it relies on the canon of Confucius to seek the Way of Tang, Yu, and the Three Dynasties, and invariably [this learning] attains what they shared. The intentions of the 'August Ultimate', the *Mean*, and the 'Great Learning' can begin again to be seen and [we can be] without doubts. Oh, expressing to making it clear, grasping to keep it, broadening it to make it expansive, nourishing it to make it whole, extending its duration to lead to transformation, in this use of mind, how does it differ from the sages Tang, Yu, and [the rulers of] the Three Dynasties?" See Fuller (2013), 303. However, instead of digging further into this theory of the mind, Fuller pays more attention to the approaches that the Neo-Confucians took to "rediscover the mind they shared with the sages of history". Rather than an inward integration of the theory of the human heart-mind, nature and feelings, these approaches are what we normally understand as outward, namely examining things to seek for the principles behind objects and events, and the reading of the Confucian canon, in order to comprehend the intentions of the sages preserved in the words. It is these outward approaches that fundamentally conflict with the approach of grasping meanings via aesthetic experience, therefore causing the prevailing impression that Neo-Confucian poetics is essentially a displacement of aesthetics in *daoxue* discourse. But I argue that the very supposition that there is an inherent mind shared by every individual, including the sages, and the natural world, which needs to be recovered with effort, determines that the problems regarding the initial human perception of the outer world, the sensations and emotions, all of which essentially belong to the realm of aesthetics cannot be disregarded. If we look carefully into the Neo-Confucian theory of the mind and into Zhu Xi's poetry practice, we find that there is still plenty of room left for the aesthetic experience.

After a comprehensive examination of Zhu Xi's poetry at different stages of his life, along with his discussions on the human mind, personal feelings, and the natural order, I have developed a new way of understanding both Zhu Xi the poet and his philosophy, which is crucial for us to understand the complementarity between poetry and *daoxue*, as well as the philosophical nature of Chinese poetry in the Song.

First, I looked into the philosophical meanings of Zhu Xi's poetry within his theories of self-cultivation. By comparing the two major shifts in the development of Zhu Xi's thought, I find that all the adjustments of his theories are linked to the methods of cultivation. It was in the process of adjusting his views on these methods that the problem of how to deal with personal sensations and the concomitant aesthetic space was brought to attention. The key concept is *qing* (emotions/personal feelings), be it universal or dependent on culture or ideology.⁴ For Zhu Xi, it is the human nature in its post-emission phase, which is biased and dark due to the influence of the turbid vital force, that makes each person unique. In Zhu Xi's theory, in order to cultivate the seemingly faint and illusory heavenly principle in the human world, or in other words, to rediscover the heavenly endowed human nature, studying from the outer world and reading from the canon are just auxiliary steps. The most important thing is to internally

⁴ Anna Wierzbicka incisively distinguishes the expressions of emotions and feelings across different languages and cultures. She argues that emotions are mostly culturally dependent and specific while feelings are more instinctive and thus universal. See Wierzbicka (1999). In Zhu Xi's theoretical positioning, *qing* refers to both emotions that are ideologically specific and personal feelings based on people's very initial sensory encounter with the outer world, because even the most intrinsic feeling within the heart-mind is the post-emitted presentation of the moral nature, and at the very moment of its emission, it becomes obscured and murky.

preserve and nourish the heart-mind, until it finally achieves a smooth control of the emitted feelings and emotions that are neither good nor bad, but could be inspired into either the real knowledge of morality, or something excessive and dangerous. So for Neo-Confucians, *qing* is a crucial bridge in the unification of inner and outer spheres. The cultivation method preserves and nourishes the heart-mind (*hanyang*), a point that was especially emphasized by Zhu Xi after the second shift of his thought. It stresses a natural way of life and an empathetic response to things encountered in the outside world. Zhu Xi's method of *hanyang*, involving extensive sensory elements, is essential to his cultivation theory. Moreover, this sensory inspiration also requires the state of stillness. He believed that if the mind is unoccupied and still and therefore clear, good things could be recognized. The requirement of the integration of the unoccupied mind (*xinxu*) and the illuminated principle (*liming*) basically shows that after his second shift, Zhu Xi put the cultivation theory and aesthetics, in the sense of intuitive learning, together and made them the basic requirements of learning to be a sage.

Put into practice, this theoretically important role of aesthetic intuition within Zhu Xi's moral self-cultivation is manifested in his innovative way of interpreting the *Odes*. In rejecting the traditional political and moralistic interpretations that he recognized as mostly far-fetched, he claimed that poetry is originally and naturally the representation of individual feelings emitted from human nature on encountering the outer world. It is the artistic expression of the active phase of the mind, shared by both man and nature.

Second, despite the theoretical importance and coherence of the role of aesthetical intuition, I contextualized not only the historical situation in which Zhu Xi's poetics was created and received, but also the general circumstances of Zhu Xi's poetry production alongside the development of his philosophy. I show the complexities of composition in individual poems, and the issues surrounding his writings on the aesthetic requirements of his Neo-Confucian thought.

One of the central questions in my historical contextualization of Zhu Xi's poetics and poetry is: Given that poetry can function as a symbol or a tool to represent and interpret the world, how can the view "Song *Daoxue* Confucians despised literature" become almost a consensus among scholars on Neo-Confucianism? As I have demonstrated, in fact, what *Daoxue* Confucians generally opposed was literature that was created solely for its linguistic art or, in other words, literature for its own sake. At the same time, they were also concerned about literature that was composed merely to express feelings, because it was believed that excessive personal emotions could disturb people in their appreciation of the *dao*. The negative stereotype was formed in recent scholarship, following Chinese literary currents that established avant-garde literature in the beginning of the 1980s. This view was a reaction against the extremely politicized discursive realm during the first 30 years of the People's Republic, epitomized by the Cultural Revolution rhetoric. This new current was characterized by the advocacy of

pure artistic creation, the expression of personal emotions and the opposition to grand narratives and unitary ideologies. Consequently, modern avant-garde literary trends also influenced research on literature of the imperial period. Corollary to this trend is the rise of the contemporary view that Neo-Confucians despised literature.

That said, the fear of excessive emotional disturbance to the learning of *dao* reveals that in actual writing practice, the ideal mentality of “unoccupied in mind and clear on principle” was seen as difficult to attain, or to be more precise, the overflow of emotions within this sensory encounter with the world was difficult to control, for a variety of reasons. The 1400 poems left by Zhu Xi, the most representative Neo-Confucian philosopher and poet, thus become important material for us to extensively study the interaction between poetry and *daoxue* discourse. I have shown that despite the contradiction between his known attitude toward literature and his own practice, together with the development of his philosophy, Zhu Xi had been producing poems throughout his life, with different styles and themes at different stages of his life.

Third, I discovered that ever since his early stage of writing poetry, even before he began to follow the partisan *daoxue* teachings of Li Tong, Zhu Xi’s poetry had been expressly philosophical, a condensed version of the previous artistic explorations of appropriate human relationships with nature, a perennial philosophical concern in much of traditional Chinese poetry. His philosophical yet non-partisan mentality of

seeking for a life transcendent from all earthly attachments decisively influenced the style of his early poetry, and the emotions disclosed within the poetry had in turn determined his later choice among different philosophical resources.

Most biographical scholars hold that Zhu Xi had *indulged* himself in Daoism and Chan Buddhism in the early stage of his life. But I argue that there is actually no clear indication in his poetry of any specific philosophical context or any distinct boundaries between different schools. What he was really doing with his poetry was to explore a proper relationship between his inner mind and the outer world, a perceived dilemma among Chinese poets since the Wei and Jin dynasties. In his exploration, Zhu Xi appealed to different types of *transcendence* including themes and images from Daoism, Chan Buddhism, Confucianism and various elements of his own imagination. This not only influenced the way he described outer environment and natural images in his poetry, but also caused many contradictions between his verses, which reflected contradictions in his mind.

In addition, what is more profound behind the contradictions between different ideologies of transcendence within his mind is his attachment to the world. This is revealed in one of the features of Zhu Xi's early poetry that he consciously or unconsciously stamped his various personal emotions subjectively onto his presentations of the outer world. It was this deep concern with an essentially

“this-worldly”, rather than “other-worldly” way of life manifested within his poetry that determined his later devotion to his emerging *daoxue* philosophy.

Moreover, basing my conclusions on comparisons between Zhu Xi’s poetry and the works of other poets like Du Fu and Su Shi, I hold that rather than presenting images and the outer world in vivid realism, Zhu Xi tended to see the aim of poetry as showing the writer’s understanding and his own cultivation of a proper relationship between the inner and outer spheres, man and nature. His focus on this often resulted in stilted or clichéd imagery in his early poetry. It was this understanding of poetics that shaped his compositions, and it has nothing to do with the *daoxue* agenda.

Fourth, my research on Zhu Xi’s middle and later years takes into consideration the poetic and philosophical traditions of poetry writing that Zhu Xi was involved in, and reveals the conceptual difficulties that Zhu Xi was facing in producing satisfactory poetry. After accepting Neo-Confucian thought, Zhu Xi no longer wandered between divergent ideologies, struggling with finding an appropriate relationship with the outer world. His primary concern had become the task of finding a proper structure for the tension between the outer world, his emotions and his thoughts, as he was determined to have his thought firmly grounded on the sensory experience of daily life. And, philosophically, his individual cultivation method of grasping the heavenly *dao* through investigating the post-emitted things and feelings, which, as argued in the first chapter,

could not be fully articulated, needs to be aesthetically explained and exemplified in his philosophy. Seen from both his ambiguous attitude towards the standard of writing poetry and all his contradictory poems, his attempt did not end up being successful. Aside from his philosophical concerns, the composition of poetry also follows its own rules, which had long been deeply ingrained in the history and ethos of poetry writing.

Ever since the “Nineteen Old Poems” on encountering the outer world appeared in the Han dynasty, reflections on the individual’s various ways of coping with human transience was brought to the fore in Chinese poetry. Over the centuries, the ideas of philosophical Daoism and Chan Buddhism that encouraged people to behave naturally or to learn from the natural world gradually became deeply ingrained in the shared values of poets after generations of learning and imitating. Poetics before the Song tended to value poems that followed a transparent perceptual-expressive procedure, filled with inspirations from the natural world and spontaneous emotions that were seen as authentic and ready to evoke empathetic resonance with the readers. This bears some resemblance to Su Shi’s writing principle mentioned earlier: “forms are determined by objects and cannot be known”.

But Zhu Xi could not accept the ways previous poets chose to deal with the man and nature relationship, which essentially abnegated any individual social involvement. Nor could he accept the unstructured procedure they favored in producing poetry, which

could ultimately lead into uncertain directions. Because according to the ideas that Zhu Xi accepted and developed, poems should center on the predetermined principle that is within the world and the pursuit of that should be the first priority above all other spiritual activities. Zhu Xi was confronted with a poetic tradition that generally valued spontaneity, powerful feelings and reclusive spirits. He could not accept these features of the tradition, even as they became the most predominant values in social occasions where poetry exchanges between friends within communities was indispensable.

My analysis indicates that for only a brief period of time, the approach of achieving meaningful aesthetic experience was found contradictory to the gist of *daoxue* cultivation. So at that point, writing poetry was considered useless, dangerous and redundant to some thinkers. At the beginning stage of his commitment to the learning of *daoxue*, the general style of Zhu Xi's poetry changed dramatically from his vague descriptions of the outer world and his tangled mental state into something showing an essential absence of the real outer world, faint personal feelings and a predominant ideology that constrained other elements. This is represented by poems like 'Twenty Pieces on Inspirations While Residing in the Studio' ('Zhaiju ganxing ershi shou' 齋居感興二十首) which are most frequently quoted by critics as evidence of Zhu Xi's bad taste in poetry. However, in actual practice, the composition of poetry could not be as simple as that. As mentioned, both the philosophical and the social implications of the powerful poetic tradition in which Zhu Xi was immersed made him aware of the risks of writing

poetry and the need to think of a philosophical alternative. This is also the starting point for Zhu Xi's extremely contradictory attitudes towards writing poetry, some of which lasted throughout his life.

One of the philosophical breakthroughs Zhu Xi had when addressing these challenges is presented in his poems after the decisive year 1169 when he had finally established his new theory of equilibrium and harmony. As I have argued, this shift in his views essentially meant the adoption of a new method of cultivation. This was the concept of grasping the heavenly principle through the investigation of daily things within the phase of post-emission (*yifa*). This shift of thought seems to have helped with solving the conflict between writing poetry and pursuing the *dao*, because according to Zhu Xi, one of the most important tasks in composing poetry was to reveal the writer's appropriate responses to the outer world, which echoed his new cultivation method. In other words, poetry may be practiced as a means of investigating daily issues and the outer world in general. This is basically the logic of Zhu Xi's renowned "*lixue* poems" 'Two Poems on Thoughts on Reading Books' ('Guan shu you gan er shou' 觀書有感二首). My readings of poems of this type are that they offer images that can be visualized (depicting the outer world in more detail) but are not experiential, aesthetic but not sentimental. Even though it is philosophy that dominates, there is no tension between the philosophy and the scene, because they are basically about different levels of the same object. But in the meantime, I argue that what really remains under tension is the

relationship between the governing philosophy and the suppressed sensory feelings/self.

By writing poems with careful consideration of the outer environment, Zhu Xi had been attempting to find a way to properly ground the Neo-Confucian cosmology in mutually interactive elements from the outer world or from people's lived experience under tension. He followed the idea that the unitary ultimate principle governs the multi-faceted earthly world. Therefore, he needed to trace this principle in reverse from its various manifestations. In doing so, he gives the objects their own lucidity, with temporally and geographically verifiable physical experience in it, but intentionally and inevitably neglecting or suppressing the emotional experience. The tension became particularly intense on occasions when poetry was meant to fulfill its social function, and the function of recording when touring among mountains and rivers with friends. This is why at the end of 1167, the conflict between feelings and principle, the undercurrent in Zhu Xi's poetry during this stage, broke out when he toured Mount Heng with Zhang Shi and seemingly uncontrollably wrote 49 poems purely of scenes and sentiments within only ten days.

Finally, but most importantly, behind the large quantities of poems showing dramatically different styles and constant contradictions, I have revealed an important tendency towards a possible reconciliation of the tension Zhu Xi had been wrestling

with throughout his life. Because of the need to exchange poetry within the broadly defined intellectual group of the period, and the “spontaneous overflow of emotion” in his description of the natural setting, Zhu Xi had always been compelled to think carefully about representing the relationship between humans and nature in verse, even though he wanted to simply abandon writing poetry when swearing not to write any more. By comparing the poems in Zhu Xi’s philosophically mature stage with those composed in his early age and his early *daoxue* career, I find that the most salient manifestation is that the focused description of the outer world, the liberation of personal feelings, and the elaboration of philosophical ideas were substantially reduced, giving way to a prevailing presentation of the poet’s sensory experience within nature. After many stylistic experiments and a number of failures, he began to really face the problem of the ineffable sentiments and emotions triggered by the outer world, and he started a new round of exploration of the man and nature relationship based on his sensory interaction with the world.

The first stage of this exploration started by drawing on the figure of Zeng Dian whose interaction with Kongzi gives inspiration on the Confucian sense of aesthetic experience, for reconciliation between excessive personal feelings and the spiritual achievement of the sage. According to Zhu Xi’s interpretation, Kongzi praised Zeng Dian for his immersion in the natural world while singing and chanting his feelings because it showed his modest attitude in practicing Confucian teachings. Compared with other

disciples who wished to renovate the social order and enrich people of the state within a short period of time, Zeng Dian was less ambitious and less arrogant. He only wished to do what he was capable. This “capability” of singing and chanting his feelings on encountering the prime of spring actually refers to the ideal situation of people all finding their own positions within the society. This story thus came to represent the sages’ highest spiritual achievement, with immanent aesthetic connotation. There was no problem with it being an ambiguously described spiritual realm, but in Zhu Xi’s poetry, it became more of a cover for his actual desire to escape from the human world into the natural world. More often than not, this desire of escape was revealed to be a powerful feeling of discontent, protest and withdrawal.

Later, as the social and political circumstances Zhu Xi experienced in his old age became more and more severe and adverse, the temporary comfort from the natural world became not only contrary to his proclaimed philosophical pursuit, but also inadequate to provide him with inner peace. So there emerged another trend of Zhu Xi’s poetry to seek for meanings and stability from the outer world of turbulence. Meanwhile, this is also the time period when Zhu Xi had been most productive philosophically. In the philosophical works that Zhu Xi had been so intensively working on during this period, the approach he had taken in establishing his system aptly matched with the central concern of his poetry at this time. This was the need to turn the metaphysics of his philosophy outward, to provide validity and philosophical meaning for the world in

which he was engaged, and to seek for something stable and penetrating to comfort his feelings in the frustrating and unpredictable human world, and ultimately to resolve the contradiction between his feelings and his thoughts.

Hence, I conclude that rather than seeing Zhu Xi's poetry as footnotes or reflections of his philosophy, the mechanism of poetry production may have actually influenced the way he constructed his philosophy. It provided the formulation of the philosophy with more practical concerns, thus redirecting it, or at least changing its emphasis and approach. For example, the poetic tradition of embedding political dissent further facilitated Zhu Xi's attention to the natural world, thus directing the pursuit of the ultimate moral principle in his philosophical teaching more to the outer world. For example, if we consider the time period when Zhu Xi established his renowned theory of the investigation of things and extension of knowledge (*gewu zhizhi*), there are clear signs of the influence of his poetic concerns. For another example, the powerful embedded feelings within the genre of poetry, together with his unpleasant life circumstances made him aware of the increasing tension between emotions and thoughts. This helped to drive his philosophical search for something constant, realistically achievable and useful in eliminating the excessive emotions.

The result of this outward investigation is a return to the inner mind, the very starting point of his *daoxue* philosophy, as well as the very central concern in Zhu Xi's earliest

poetry. But after all these explorations and developments, the connotation of this inward pursuit became entirely different. Observations from some of Zhu Xi's late poetry indicate that in order to live a meaningful life, all people needed to do was to nourish their own heart-mind, where there is the only reliable resort within the world of constant change. And it is feasible, through enlarging the heart-mind, to bring it into compliance with the eternity of the natural world. In brief, this is the place where people obtain stability within turbulence, order within disorder, eternity within transience, as well as the integration of emotions and thoughts. But yet, this process remains utterly aesthetic, because it could only be attained after all sorts of outward explorations, philosophical or emotional. It does not abnegate any poetic element, instead, the attainment of a peaceful inner mind naturally enables mild emotions, more acute sensations, more skillful deployment of poetic language, more tolerant and synthetic attitudes towards different ideologies, and most importantly, more empathetic presentations of the outer world. This is compatible with one of the goals of self-cultivation set out at the very beginning of Zhu Xi's career, to be unoccupied in mind and clear on principle.

Historically, because of the outward approach of Zhu Xi's cultivation method as exemplified by the investigation of things and extension of knowledge, as well as his general theoretical agenda of recovering people's originally heavenly-endowed mind-nature that ultimately pertains to the outer world, Zhu Xi's thought has been

categorized into the school of *Cheng Zhu lixue*, within the Neo-Confucian lineages, characterized by its advocacy of outward learning. In contrast, thinkers like Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139-1193) and Wang Shouren 王守仁 (1472-1529) who put more emphasis on the cultivation within the heart-mind are categorized as *Lu Wang xinxue* in order to be differentiated from Zhu Xi in both cultivation method and metaphysical understanding. However, my close readings of Zhu Xi's poetry suggest that, theoretically and practically, the importance of nourishing the heart-mind was not neglected by Zhu Xi. Rather, he tended to redirect the outward approach for *dao* back to the heart-mind whose inherent stability and harmony outweighs any outer changes, and stays eternal with its cultivation achievement. It is very likely that the distinction between the school of *lixue* and that of *xinxue* was mechanically emphasized in their later transmission, just for the convenient labeling of each complicated philosophy. As mentioned before, Yü Ying-shih also notices the problem in his philosophical discussion of Zhu Xi's thought, suggesting that the difference between the two ideas is more of a problem of priority. Liang Tao, in his research on the *daoxue* orthodox that Zhu Xi established for the legitimacy of his thought, even argues that Zhu Xi's inheritance of Confucian thought is only partial, in the sense that he had only followed the idea of Mengzi that focused on the development of people's inner mind, while omitting the other aspect of Confucianism represented by the thought of Xunzi, who emphasized objective rituals and rules external to the inward sageness.⁵

⁵ Liang (2014)

Above all, I think that the contribution of this thesis to the field is two-fold: First, I have brought to attention the limitation of the modern disciplinary distinction between philosophy, literature, and history, to show that it is of vital importance to bring the philosophical tradition, poetic tradition and historical context together in understanding the broader story of the formation of intellectual ideas, as well as the interaction between different discourses. Second, I have presented the aesthetic world of Zhu Xi beyond all his ambiguous philosophical discussions, unsupportive poetic views, and extremely tangling attitudes towards writing. My study suggests that behind the known challenges of negotiating the logics of *wen* and *dao* that Zhu Xi launched for later poets through his more influential philosophy, in between his discussions of related concepts and more importantly within his extensive poetic efforts, he opened the gate for more profound explorations of aesthetic experience for years to come.

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