

BOOKS, READING, AND KNOWLEDGE IN MING CHINA

A THESIS SUBMITTED BY

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OF

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN THE FACULTY OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

AT

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

APRIL 2012

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To my family

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THIS current thesis inaugurated at the University of Oxford and was completed on Salt Spring Island, Canada, with most of preliminary studies conducted earlier at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Vancouver. Professors Catherine Swatek and Timothy Brook (UBC) advised and witnessed my preparations and writing, and Dr. Hilde De Weerd (Oxford) joined in supervising the final stage of my programme. They critically read the different editions of all chapters, and their scrupulous and constructive comments were incorporated into the final appearance of this writing. Dr. Joseph McDermott (Cambridge) and Dr. Peter Ditmanson (Oxford) helped me clarify and streamline my ideas in my confirmation of status. Thanks also go to Professors Craig Clunas (Oxford) and Timothy Barrett (SOAS), who conducted my *viva voce*.

Migrations between China, Canada, and England have enriched my life and widened my cultural and academic visions. I have the fortune to communicate with my fellow graduates, colleagues, friends, and professors of various backgrounds at UBC and Oxford. Without their support, advice, and encouragement in their own ways, I could not complete my academic apprenticeship or fulfill most of my responsibilities as a husband and father.

Acknowledgements

My apprenticeship began in January 2002 at UBC, where the faculty of Asian Studies introduced me to the North American tradition of China Studies, a tradition different from that in which I had been trained in Mainland China. With their openness and generosity, Professors Swatek and Brook offered me freedom to pursue my academic interest.

Professor Mark Vessey in English Department directed me to the pathway towards the history of the book and the history of reading in Europe. Dr. Alison Bailey, Professors Jerry Schmidt, Michael Duke, and Timothy Cheek also taught me their ways of thinking about Chinese culture and history. Dr. Itoh Ikuko and Ms. Kim Ihhwa trained me in reading and writing in Japanese. And I still remember the smile and support of the graduate secretaries Mina Wong and Jasmina Miodragovic in Asian Studies. Jing Liu in the Asian Library managed to meet my demands for Chinese books. The discussions and friendship of Anna Belogurova, Desmond Cheung, Nianhua Feng, Ching-hua Huang, David Luesink, Tim Sedo, Dewei Zhang, and other fellow members of the Prospect Society (*Wang she*) have been my treasure since we met at UBC.

After transferring to Oxford in October 2007, University College, the Faculty of Oriental Studies, and the Institute for Chinese Studies had strongly supported me in various ways. Professor Glen Dudbridge encouraged me to survive my hardest time at Oxford. At the college, I owed my thanks to Lord Butler of Brockwell, Professor Ngaire

Acknowledgements

Woods, Rev. Dr. Andrew Gregory, Mrs. Elizabeth Crawford, and MCR. In the faculty and the institute, Sarah O'Brien, Dr. Bob Mahoney, Rosanna Gosi gave me administrative advice. I also appreciate Dr. Laura Newby's friendship and support. Support of David Helliwell, Minh Chung, and Izumi Tytler in the Bodleian Libraries made my research and writing possible. Dr. Jan Spurlock and Mr. Jonathan Stockland made Oxford our hometown in England.

In September 2010, we moved back to Canada, and Professor Brook and Fay Sims unusually generously helped us live on Salt Spring Island, where most chapters and their revision were completed. In this community, Julia F. Liao and Edward C. Chen supported me in their own ways. I also enjoy the friendship of the Taylors, the Lams, the Dixones, and Verne and Maureen Williams.

During my studies at UBC and Oxford, I was offered generous financial aids: Gregory Tso Memorial Scholarship in Asian Studies (2002), T. K. Lee Scholarship (2003), Dr. Chi-Kit Wat Scholarship (2004-2005), UBC Graduate Fellowship (2002-2007), Run Run Shaw Studentship (Oxford, 2007-2010), Great Britain-China Educational Trust Awards (2010), and David Fund (2011). Without these aids, I could not complete my research and writing.

In my academic pursuit, my close friends Brandon Y. Chen and Sherry X. Tang of

Acknowledgements

Boston, James Y. Huang and Chen Wu of San Jose also supported me in their particular ways. I appreciate in particular the consideration and support of my parents, brother, and sister. Liaoyin's accompany of the past ten years has been crucial in my long march. My son Gengye witnessed the formation of this thesis. His interruptions, which are always welcome, reminded me of other meaningful facets of my life. This thesis is dedicated to him and his beloved mother.

ABSTRACT

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“BOOKS, READING, AND KNOWLEDGE IN MING CHINA”

THE art of reading and its application to knowledge acquisition and innovation by elites have been largely neglected by historians of print culture and reading in late imperial China (1368-1911). Unlike most studies, which are concerned more with the implied reader and individual reading experience, the present study assumes that the actual reader and the social, cultural and epistemic dimensions of reading practices are the central issues of a history of reading in China. That is, while the art of reading was internalized by the individual, his learning and application of it had social, cultural and epistemic features. At a time when secular reading practices in Renaissance England were informed by Erasmian principles, Ming literati, regardless of their different philosophical stances, were being trained in an art of reading proposed by Zhu Xi (1130-1200), whose Neo-Confucian philosophy had been esteemed as orthodox since the fourteenth century. Transformations and challenges in interpreting and applying his art did not hinder its general reception among elite readers. Its common employment determined the practitioner’s epistemic frame and manner of knowledge innovation.

My dissertation consists of five chapters bracketed with an introduction and conclusion. Chapter One discusses Zhu’s theory of reading and the implied pattern of acquiring and innovating knowledge, based on a careful reading of his writings and conversations. Chapter Two describes the transmission of Zhu’s theory from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. During its transmission, Zhu’s art was reedited, rephrased, and even readapted by both government agencies and individual authors with different intentions and agendas. Chapter Three focuses on the reception of Zhu’s theory of reading by 1500 and argues that the moral end of reading eventually triumphed over the intellectual one in early Ming Confucian philosophy. Chapter Four explores the affinity of Ming philosophers of mind with Zhu’s theory in their reading concepts and practices from 1500 to the mid-seventeenth century. Despite their attempts to separate themselves intellectually from the Song tradition, Ming philosophers of mind followed Zhu’s rules for reading in their intellectual practices. Chapter Five outlines the reading habits and knowledge landscape based on a statistical survey of extant Ming imprints. Despite some deviations, the Ming reading habits and knowledge framework largely accorded with Zhu’s theory and its Ming adaptations. The continuity of reading habits from Zhu’s time to the seventeenth century, I conclude, inspires us to rethink the Ming apostasy from the Song tradition. The particularity of scholarly knowledge acquisition and innovation in Ming-Qing China by the eighteenth century was not invented by Ming-Qing scholars but anticipated by Zhu through his theory of reading.

With respect to late imperial China, the history of reading, together with the history of knowledge, is yet to be fruitfully explored. With this dissertation, I hope to be able to make a contribution to the understanding of the East Asian orthodox habit of reading as represented by Zhu’s admirers. By placing my investigation in the context of the history of knowledge, I also hope to contribute to the understanding of the relationship of reading to the way that knowledge evolved in traditional China. Intellectual historians tended to consider the Ming Confucian tradition as having broken off from the Cheng-Zhu tradition, but at least in reading habits and practices Ming elite readers perpetuated Zhu’s theory of reading and the knowledge framework it implied.

REIGNS OF THE MING DYNASTY (1368-1644)

Hongwu 洪武	1368-1398
Jianwen 建文	1399-1402
Yongle 永樂	1403-1424
Hongxi 洪熙	1425
Xuande 宣德	1426-1435
Zhengtong 正統	1436-1449
Jingtai 景泰	1450-1456
Tianshun 天順	1457-1464
Chenghua 成化	1465-1487
Hongzhi 弘治	1488-1505
Zhengde 正德	1506-1521
Jiajing 嘉靖	1522-1566
Longqing 隆慶	1567-1572
Wanli 萬曆	1573-1620
Taichang 泰昌	1620
Tianqi 天啓	1621-1627
Chongzhen 崇禎	1628-1644

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INTRODUCTION

WANG Qiao (1521-1599) did not begin his preparation for the civil examination until 1534, memorizing the commentaries to the Four Books compiled by Zhu Xi (1130-1200) and a selection of successful graduates' exemplary essays under his father's supervision. His careful obedience to the commentaries and models, according to his own estimation, guaranteed his admission into the local Confucian school as a government student but led to his failure in the 1543 provincial examination. Aware that his previous reading had been superficial, Wang turned to the Confucian Classics, intensively reading the main texts, memorizing them, contemplating them, and writing down his understanding, until he had mastered their meaning. He attributed his successive passing of the provincial (1546) and metropolitan (1547) examinations to the change in his reading strategy, which he valued so highly that he required his sons be taught to use it.¹

An admirer of Zhu, Wang excelled in the exegesis of the *Changes*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and in particular the *Documents*. Classical Learning, together with medicine and the Ming Statutes, had been the main part of the academic tradition carried on by his family for successive generations.² Wang perhaps conceived his strategy of reading as orthodox and his exegesis as fundamentalist. Most of Wang's contemporaries, however, adopted another style of reading, focusing on only (sub)commentaries to the Four Books and exemplary essays, as Wang himself previously did. Gu Yanwu (1613-82)

¹ Wang Qiao 1781, "Shou Qingyuan Zhang xiansheng liushi xu" 壽清源張先生六十序 [A celebration to Mr. Zhang of Qingyuan for his sixtieth birthday], 5:21b-22b.

² For Wang Qiao's studies of the Confucian Classics, see Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 7.133, 12.244, 14.271, 28.568-69; Tani Toshihito 2004, 64-67 describes the scholarly tradition of the Wang family.

condemned this habit of reading as an expedient but opportunist and irregular way of meeting the requirement of the deteriorating civil examination system of the Ming.

Since the expansion of the examination system in the Song dynasty (960-1279), examination titles more than consanguinity and hereditary privilege determined how one advanced in the system of political appointment. In Ming China as well, examination titles commonly earned symbolic capital for acquiring and maintaining a family's gentry status and stood as proxies for political power and wealth in the local rather than national context.³ Benefits of this sort encouraged a further expansion of the system, and consequently led to the standardization of examination procedures. It was proposed that the test cover the designated texts of the Four Books and the Five Classics and their commentaries, with answers to be written in the formulated eight-legged style. Thus an exam candidate as a reader not surprisingly focused on only the commentaries and exemplary essays in his preparation. Gu confirmed that the alteration in the reading practice occurred in the 1530s-1540s (particularly in North China), which was Wang's experience; attempts to read early texts other than the commentaries and exemplary essays were commonly viewed as a waste of time and a cause for possible failure in the examination.⁴ This popular reading practice, in Gu's view, was an academic disaster. One of its consequences was the candidates' ignorance of Classical Learning and traditional historiography.⁵ To stop the degeneration, Gu prescribed methods of reading and learning (*dushu xuewen zhifa* 讀書學問之法) that the candidate should have mastered before participating in examinations.⁶

³ Brook 1990.

⁴ Gu Yanwu 1834, 17:17b, 18a-b; 16:11b.

⁵ Ibid., 16:10a-11b, 17b; 18:13b.

⁶ Ibid., 16:19b.

Being an admirer of Zhu Xi, what Gu prescribed must have been Zhu's celebrated art of reading, although he did not give details or outline the ideal framework of learning he expected the candidate to possess. It is this art of reading and learning, which had been common among scholars in Gu's age but has already become alien to us today, that will be the topic of this study. The art of reading and its application to knowledge acquisition and innovation by leading elite readers in late imperial China are subjects almost entirely neglected in current studies of the history of reading, although a few intellectual historians have touched on aspects of this programme.

Before exploring the reading strategy of Ming readers, a general assessment of its place in field of the history of reading and its feasibility for study will be offered in this introduction. The assessment will be made in terms of both the theory and practice of reading. In general, historians of reading have borrowed their theoretical assumptions mainly from reader-response criticism, and their descriptions of readers and reading activities have varied widely. This introduction will first assign a place for the art of reading in theories of reader-response, and then attempt to outline its intellectual significance by relating it to the history of knowledge. The approaches to be employed in my study will also be introduced.

0.1. Reader: Implied or Real

My concern is the art of reading rather than historical readers, yet an assessment about the nature of readers that historians have discussed will help us understand not only the subject of the history of reading but also the priority of the cultural aspect of reading over pinpointing an individual real reader (which tends to be hard). Reader and reading

naturally are two terms of interdependence. The logic of applying rules for reading is that they are taught to readers and then programme their activities. The exploration of rules behind readers is more fundamental. Readers were theoretically primary in reader-response criticism, which is the work of literary critics who investigate the reader, the reading process and the reader's response. Theoretical knowledge of readers will facilitate an understanding of the art of reading in the context of reader-response criticism.

Their most important contribution to the terminology and theory of reading are the concepts of "implied" and "real" readers. Previous works about reading and readership in late imperial China generally have paid more attention to implied readers than to actual ones. This tendency is common in studies of literary criticism, educational history, intellectual history, social history, and book history. A systematic description of their various issues and arguments is more than can be undertaken here,⁷ but their focus on implied readers can partly be inferred from their approaches and materials.

The only comprehensive description of the reading acts of late imperial Chinese up to now is an unpublished dissertation, in which Li Yu outlines how reading was conceptualized, perceived, conducted and transmitted within groups of children, men, women, and non-Han Chinese. Her inquiry is historical-ethnographic, and does not take book history into consideration at all. Both the art of reading and instructional commentary on novels, which she defines as "prescriptive," are conceived to have been followed without any vicissitudes in reading practices throughout the period of 1000-1800, and readers of all ages are presumed to have read the very same books or texts in the same pattern.⁸ Similar anachronism and misplaced universality are also assumed in

⁷ For the state of the field, see Brokaw 2007, 276-79, 280; Meyer-Fong 2007, 802-06; Bussotti 2008, 59-67.

⁸ Yu 2003, 13, 27.

publications about the reception of vernacular Chinese literature, in which readers and their readings have been supposedly implied in the traditional commentaries to fiction or to texts in other genres. Those commentaries, however, were intended to reorient the reading of the work that the commentator chose to comment on, and functioned to show the techniques of composition, with the aim of helping the reader turn into a writer rather than to understand the meaning of the text proper. The reader was expected to read in the suggested way and to find the notable aspects of the text. To the extent that he may be called “actual,” the reader was just the commentator-editor himself.⁹

In fact, some literary commentaries to any genres including history, prose and verse were largely excluded from the orthodox art of reading, on the grounds that they were produced to teach writing rather than reading. The skill of writing, in the orthodox view, was taught to help students be good eight-legged essayists of technical proficiency and aesthetic sensibility in the civil examinations, whereas reading was practiced to acquire learning and reveal the Way.¹⁰ Thus, the orthodox art of reading allocated writing and reading roles different from those assigned by the classical curriculum designed for the civil examination, in addition to those intended in literary commentaries. In the art of reading, knowledge and the Way were the goal of reading, and writing was the embodiment of knowledge and the Way. In classical education, examination candidates were trained to “think and write properly in classical forms” which would make possible communication, identification and survival within the court and the bureaucracy; reading was a supporting skill necessary to reach the final goal, which was composition.¹¹

⁹ Rolston 1997, chaps. 4, 9-10; Bailey 1991.

¹⁰ Sun Deqian 1936, 211-12.

¹¹ Elman 2000, 276-80, quotation from 277.

Because of the historical affinity between them, however, the orthodox art of reading was adopted and adapted in the classical curriculum to benefit examination candidates.

Among those literary scholars whose academic interests have turned to the history of reading and reception, very few still think of looking for actual readers in the commentary tradition. Most approach the real reader's world from the text proper he encountered, as well as its devices and physical forms. This alteration in approach makes possible conversations between literary experts and historians of publishing and reading. The actual individual reader can be identified only in very rare cases; for example, the Ming chantefable texts excavated from a tomb obviously were the deceased reader's favourite.¹² The importance of analyzing the text proper for the reconstruction of readership is still widely recognized.¹³ It is widely accepted that the publishing of fiction and plays was standardized,¹⁴ which means that their physical forms can be used to identify the social range of reading publics.¹⁵ Of the textual devices, "paratexts," sometimes with physical features, have been plausible sources of evidence for literary experts interested in readership, who have used such materials to reconstruct the reading public or editorial strategy of a text in question.¹⁶

The analyses of texts and paratexts, together with an examination of their physical forms and other extratextual evidence, are also productive for social and intellectual history, particularly when historians seek to recover reading publics for specific genres, such as ledgers of merit and demerit or encyclopedias for daily use.¹⁷ For historians of

¹² Roy 1981; McLaren 1998, 67-76.

¹³ E.g., McLaren 1995.

¹⁴ Hegel 1998, 110-26, 152-53, 155.

¹⁵ Hegel 2005.

¹⁶ McLaren 2005; Isobe Akira 1995; Sieber 2003.

¹⁷ Sakai Tadao 1958; Sakai Tadao 1960; Brokaw 1991; Chow 2004, 12-14, 109-23.

popular (non-elite) culture, those textual and material elements, in addition to the linguistic feature (such as whether the text was composed in classical or vernacular, Mandarin or dialect), determine whether a text is highbrow or lowbrow. The assumption behind identifying a text as lowbrow is that it represents popular culture, and was largely produced for and consumed by a less literate or illiterate audience.¹⁸ Text-based studies of popular culture tend to assume that the content and style of a work were intentionally designed to fit its audience.¹⁹ Knowing where they stood in the structure of social dominance and subordination, it is maintained, an audience consumed the content and style that reflected that sense. Thus reading in popular culture is regarded as determined by social and economic elements such as power, prestige, education, wealth, region, dialect and occupation.²⁰

Literary scholars and historians interested in reading and readership obviously share the theoretical assumption that the reader and his reading should be found in the (para)text or else in the physical form. Whether or not influenced by reader-response criticism, no one but their literary colleagues clearly elaborates this assumption and fully practises it. In reader-response criticism, most readers are imagined inside rather than outside the text, based on the text rather than empirical sources, and created by the author and the critic. The reader's role in understanding the literary work is (re)defined within his relationship with the author/narrator or the text. Not all reader-response critics create fictitious readers and neglect the existence of real readers who make signs on the page. It is still unclear, however, how the actual reader encounters and interprets the text. Reader-response critics have failed to find effective methods for dealing with the actual reader.

¹⁸ E.g. Idema 1974, 93-94; Johnson et al 1985.

¹⁹ Hegel 1985.

²⁰ Johnson 1985.

The real reader existed historically, and most authors also had their target readers in mind when writing, but reader-response criticism is concerned more with the imagined reader than with the historical reader. Therefore, it is hard to substantiate the reader they create on the basis of the author's intention and text.

How is the notion of "paratext" applicable to the history of reading? Invented by Gérard Genette for his theory of textual transaction, this term initially refers to liminal devices, both within and outside the book, which function to mediate between the author, book, publisher, and reader. They include front and back covers, jacket blurbs, indexes, footnotes, tables of contents, etc., which generate "a privileged place of pragmatics and a strategy of an influence on the public, an influence that—whether well or poorly understood and achieved—is at the service of a better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading." In short, they are designed to ensure "for the text a destiny consistent with the author's purpose."²¹ Genette's literary utilization of those devices undoubtedly differs from what traditional bibliographers, Chinese, French and English, found in them. Actually, the reader's features reconstructed from paratexts are not as reliable as the publisher's and his relationship to the author, the text, or the book as an object described in them in most imprints. From the point of the paratext designer and producer, Genette's notion of reader means less the actual reader than the imagined one.

It is notable that the paratext is a device *intended* to efficiently transmit the author's and publisher's intentions to their imagined reader. Essentially a mental output of the author and the publisher, the designedness of paratexts distinguishes them from the real reader's notes about his reading of the text. The real reader's notes are not always consistent with the author's intention and the publisher's purpose and, in some cases,

²¹ Genette 1997, 2, 407.

even contradict them. Therefore, these notes in essence are not paratexts in Genette's definition, unless they are included into or manipulated outside the book as expressive or propagational devices by its author and publisher. When the real reader makes notes after reading, he is independent from the author and the publisher, even though they still largely ground their notes on the text in question.

The division between the highbrow and the lowbrow in studies of popular culture has been challenged by historians of reading. At an earlier stage of our historiography, popular culture was conceived as the passive reflection of a dominant culture, and its texts were equated with social levels.²² Applying these traditional definitions to their studies, most scholars tend to assume that differences in reading practice are correlated with a priori social contrasts (i.e. social, occupational, and economic hierarchy determines the diversity of reading).²³ The challenge came mainly from Roger Chartier, whose notions of "appropriation" and "popular" transformed the understanding of reading's culture significance. Chartier's notion of "appropriation" describes the discrepant ways in which social groups took over and remade orthodox or official stories, texts, and practices. His notion recognizes the complexity and variety of forms of expression and cultural communication, and emphasizes the plurality of uses and diversity of understandings of texts. The uses and representations readers created were not necessarily in accordance with the desire of those who produced the discourses and fashioned the norms. Any acceptance of a text will be accompanied by an adjustment of or diversion from the authorial intention, even by resistance.²⁴

²² Burke 1978; Levine 1988.

²³ Cavallo and Chartier 1999, 4.

²⁴ Chartier 1987, 6-7, 9; Chartier 1995, 92-93; Chartier 1999, 275-76.

The notion of appropriation led to a redefinition of “popular.” Contrary to Peter Burke’s argument that European elites after 1800 abandoned popular culture to the lower classes, Chartier insists that the term “popular” can be defined as a kind of relation, a way of using cultural products or norms shared by society at large.²⁵ “Widely distributed texts and books crossed social boundaries and drew readers from very different social and economic levels. Hence [there is] the need for the precaution of not predetermining their sociological level by dubbing them ‘popular’ from the outset.”²⁶ In his reassessment of reading’s cultural significance, Chartier develops the terms “popular reader” and “popular reading” (or “popular” use of a text). In his study of reading practices in early modern France, he argues that “popular” readers formed only a minority of the public for books, a minority that more often than not purchased or owned only a few titles. These readers—the humblest on the social scale—had no expectations specific to them as a group. They did not read all that the notables read and the books that they owned or acquired were not reading matter they could call their own. Those books that reached them were products of the printers’ art disseminated within a market shared by several groups. All strata of society related to the printed word in the same way, and an exclusive market available to a printer-publisher was absent.²⁷ In the reconstruction of the popular reader and popular reading, the contrast between reading and recitation is particularly pertinent for societies where orality holds an essential place. The co-existence of oral and written traditions made possible the submission of printed texts to procedures proper to oral “performance.” Meanwhile, the circulation of the printed repertoire affects oral traditions, which are profoundly contaminated and transformed by literate and learned

²⁵ Burke 1978, 207-08, 270; Chartier 1995, 83-84, 89.

²⁶ Chartier 1989, 4.

²⁷ Chartier 1987, 146-51.

versions of traditional stories. Popular reading, for Chartier, does not unfold in a separate and specific symbolic universe; its peculiarity is always constructed by way of mediations and dependencies that tie it to dominant models and norms.²⁸ Therefore, Chartier holds that a popular reader should be identified not with the corpus of works that he read but rather with his way of reading them and appropriating their texts to serve his own personal world. No reading matter was exclusive to any one group.²⁹

Chartier's notions of "appropriation" and "popular" are suggestive for the investigation of popular reading and popular (or humbler) readers who left little record of their experiences. Both popular reading and popular readers can be brought more into light if situated within the relation between imposed norms and individual uses. For historians of the Ming and Qing periods, when vernacular literature played a significant role in cultural and social transformation, he reminds us to rethink the circulation of the alleged "popular" texts and their social and cultural effects. On the other hand, as not texts or genres but the ways of reading and appropriating them characterize their readers' cultural-social statuses, the style of encountering texts and uses of them deserve more exploration than what texts and genres were recommended and actually read. Ultimately the style and uses, as the next section shall discuss, are culturally and socially developed more than individually determined.

The implied reader exists in the author's, critic's, and publisher's mind only. Wolfgang Iser was among the first critics to historicize this. Acknowledging the historicity of the reading process and response, he tried to distinguish the response of contemporary readers ("participants") from that of later readers ("observers") of a text.

²⁸ Chartier 1995, 94-95.

²⁹ Chartier 1999, 271-72.

For the former, the text discloses deficiencies of the prevailing thought systems or systems of norms; for the latter, the text can “recreate that very social and cultural context that brought about the problems which the text itself is concerned with.” Therefore, the contemporary reader will see “what he would not have seen in the course of his everyday life” in the text, while the later reader will “grasp something which has hitherto never been real for him.”³⁰ Iser’s division is simple and his description of the response of each remains as schematic and abstract as the implied reader’s response,³¹ but it invites a possible historicization of the implied readers according to their historically varying responses. In pursuing such a project, one problem is how to illustrate the implied reader’s historical presence (or absence) in the reading process of a given text and, if possible, their *mentalité*, by using historical and empirical sources rather than by appealing to any theoretical assumptions. This plan is not perhaps entirely feasible, as an imaged thing is not empirically provable.

Historical studies of implied readers are undoubtedly of importance for the literary world, but this target audience should not substitute for “actual historical readers.” The implied reader cannot be treated as the real reader, and *vice versa*.³² Moreover, the reaction of those “hypothetical readers” within the text is also imagined, or worse, simply nothing but the response of the critic himself.³³ Even though real readers of the past are hard to pinpoint, for the historian of reading, the concern with real readers is still the first mark separating the history of reading from literary reception studies.

³⁰ Iser 1978, 78-79.

³¹ Suleiman and Wimmers 1980, 25-26.

³² Davis 1975, 192-93. In his case study of the readership of *New York Magazine*, David Nord demonstrates that this periodical which was intended for an elite audience only indeed enjoyed a surprising number of real readers belonging to the working class; see Nord 1989.

³³ Rose 1992, 49.

0.2. Reading: Individual or Collective

The reader gives meaning to the text together with its author. This does not mean that the real reader essentially dwells in the text or paratexts. First of all, he is an extratextual being and has been culturally forged before encountering texts.

The reader's act of reading is psychologically subjective. The history of reading begins and ends with individual experience—no reading experience is universal or timeless.³⁴ To pinpoint the social and cultural significance of reading, however, we should first go beyond its individuality and assume it as a collective phenomenon. Regarding the collective nature of reading, some reader-response critics, particularly German critics of reception aesthetics, focus on the relationship between genre and tradition, on the one hand, and the artificial reading public, on the other hand. For them, reading is essentially a collective phenomenon and the individual reader exists as a part of a reading public. This theory, with some modifications, makes possible a social and cultural examination of reading in its historical context.

By locating meaning in the reading process, reader-response criticism investigates reading as an activity first within the reader's self and then in the strategies of interpretation, with the focus shifting from the interactions of the reader with the author to the community of readers. The cultural or literary context in which the reading process is conducted is thus brought to light, while the text and the author (and sometimes even the reader himself) are pushed into the background. It is in the reading process, for reader-response critics, that the text's meaning is made.

³⁴ Raven 1998, 285-87.

Until the reading process *per se* is endowed with literary value, the reader is made passive by the author or the text. His success in reading is attributed to his taking the role of the implied reader who identifies the implied author's values and beliefs, which means that the reader is expected to be subjugated to the author's consciousness.³⁵ Iser was among the first critics who assigned the reader an active role in the reading process and viewed the reading activity as the source of literary value. In his phenomenology, the reader co-creates the work with its author, constructing the portion not written but implied by the author. The act of reading is essentially a sense-making activity, in the course of which the reader selects, organizes, formulates, and modifies what he encounters in the text. Reading varies with individual readers and contexts, which lead to variations in the reading of a text. Those variations, however, simply derive from the text's indeterminacy and inexhaustibility; that is to say, the reader's activities are still constrained by the text itself as intended by the author.³⁶ In this sense, Iser's reader is active but not autonomous, simply supplying what is implicit in the text.³⁷

Stanley Fish's investigation of reading as an activity focuses on the reader's developing response "in relation to the words" as he negotiates the text sentence by sentence and phrase by phrase. The reader's active participation in the creation of meaning, according to Fish, allows for a redefinition of meaning and of literature itself: meaning happens between words and the reader's mind, not as an extraction from words but as the experience the reader has in his reading process; thus, literature is a sequence of meaning experiences unfolding in the reader's mind.³⁸ Therefore "the place where

³⁵ Booth 1983, 49-50, 137-44; Booth 1974, 126.

³⁶ Iser 1972, 284-88.

³⁷ Tompkins 1980, xv.

³⁸ Fish 1970, 126-27, 128.

sense is made or not made is the reader's mind rather than the printed page or the space between the covers of a book."³⁹ Fish's study marks a decisive shift from the literary text to the reader's cognitive activity.⁴⁰ But his reader, even so, is not completely free to create meaning but is subject to predetermination by a system of rules originating from his shared language: "If the speakers of a language share a system of rules that each of them has somehow internalized, understanding will, in some sense, be uniform; that is, it will proceed in terms of the system of rules all speakers share. And insofar as these rules are constraints on production...they will also be constraints on the range, and even the direction, of response."⁴¹

If meaning, as Fish theorizes, is an experience had in the course of reading, then how does the reader make meaning? While Fish attempts to find the answer in the reader's linguistic competence, Jonathan Culler appeals to the idea of "literary competence," which means the reader's ability to utilize "a set of conventions for reading literary texts."⁴² For Culler, a reader's linguistic competence "would enable him to understand phrases and sentences," while his complex literary competence (or the internalized "grammar" of literature) "would permit him to convert linguistic sequences into literary structures and meanings."⁴³ Therefore, the literary meaning does not emerge from the convergence between the reader and the text/author, but is a function of institutionalized and internalized conventions. Culler's aim is not to examine how the reader applies those conventions to his literary reading, but to "make explicit the underlying system which makes literary effects possible." His question is "not what

³⁹ Ibid., 134.

⁴⁰ Tompkins 1980, xvii.

⁴¹ Fish 1970, 141.

⁴² Culler 2002, 137.

⁴³ Ibid., 132.

actual readers happen to do but what an *ideal reader* must know implicitly in order to read and interpret works in ways which we consider acceptable, in accordance with the institution of literature.”⁴⁴ The organizing principle of textual interpretation is not located in the reader but in the institutions that teach him to read.

Culler’s notion of institutionalized and internalized conventions expands those on whom reading has its effects from the individual reader to a group of readers who share a literary discourse, since any set of conventions is not purely the outcome of individual decisions but must be a collective phenomenon. Stanley Fish makes the same point with his theory of “interpretive community,” which is temporarily stable but grows larger and declines as individual members move in and out.⁴⁵ Because all sign systems are social constructs that individuals incorporate into their minds more or less automatically, an individual’s perceptions and judgments are a function of the assumptions shared by the group he belongs to. As already noted, for Fish literary meaning is experiential; meaning is what happens to a reader as he negotiates the text and is not something already in place before he experienced it, although the properties of the text also effect the reader’s experience.⁴⁶ His interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies, and these interpretive strategies produce meanings. But those shared strategies, Fish reiterates, were originally “not for *reading* (in the conventional sense) but for *writing* texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions. In other words these strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read rather than, as is usually assumed, the other way around.”⁴⁷ This means

⁴⁴ Ibid., 137, 144; my italics.

⁴⁵ Fish 1976b, 484.

⁴⁶ Fish 1970.

⁴⁷ Fish 1976b, 483, my italics; see also Fish 1980, 164.

that interpretive strategies “are the shape of reading, and because they are the shape of reading, they give texts their shape, making them rather than, as it is usually assumed, arising from them.” Texts are felt to be different not because of their formal structures but because of differences in interpretive strategies in execution that produce different formal structures. This model, Fish believes, can explain both the stability and the variety of interpretation of a given work.⁴⁸ Fish’s theory perceives the formal feature of the text, the authorial intention, and the reader’s interpretive strategy as interdependent on one another, jointly producing the literary meaning.⁴⁹ This argument uproots the claims of most of other reader-response critics, who were attempting to separate the response from the text, the interpretation from the interpreted.⁵⁰

Culler thinks that institutions teach readers to read. Similarly, Fish claims that “interpretive strategies are not natural or universal, but learned” by readers who must acquire the ability to read a literary text.⁵¹ A question then arises: What does the institution teach? Or, what does the reader learn from the interpretative strategy? This question can be answered with Hans Jauss’s notion of “horizon of expectations,” meaning a set of cultural, ethical, and literary expectations of a work’s reader, on the basis of which a work of the past was created and received.⁵² To interpret a text or a society, the notion of a horizon of expectations stipulates that readers bring to bear the subjective models, paradigms, beliefs, and values of their necessarily limited background. The reader’s biases function as a positive constructive influence and found his individual horizon, with which neither the text’s meaning nor the author’s intention is perverted or

⁴⁸ Fish 1976b, 481-82, 484.

⁴⁹ Fish 1976a.

⁵⁰ Tompkins 1980, xxii-xxiii.

⁵¹ Fish 1976b, 484.

⁵² Jauss 1970, 18.

misinterpreted.⁵³ The reconstruction of the horizon of expectations helps us find the questions that the text originally answered and thereby discover the ways its contemporary readers viewed and understood it. This notion brings out the hermeneutic difference between past and present ways of understanding and denies the permanent presence of literature and the objectivity of its meaning.⁵⁴ Every work has its specific, historically and sociologically determined audience, every writer is dependent upon the milieu, views and ideology of his readers, and literary success requires that a book accord with the expectations of the writer and his readers.⁵⁵ The social function of literature becomes manifest only when the literary experience of the reader enters the horizon of expectations of his life, forms his interpretation of the world, and thereby has an effect on his social actions.⁵⁶

Jauss's notion of horizon of expectations allows for a systematic study of the history of reception. With his notion, we can track the historical conditions and changes in the understanding of a work, changes that are the consequence of changes in the reader's horizon of expectations. This notion is also helpful to explain why, among those works that appeared in the same period, some are *à la mode*, some *passé*, and others, depending on the degree to which a work meets, fails or predicts the reading public's horizon of expectations at that time.⁵⁷

For historians of reading and the book, these literary approaches suffer somewhat from ahistoricity. For example, Culler's literary competence refers to not what the actual reader does with his literary discourse but what the ideal reader must know in order to

⁵³ Jauss 2001.

⁵⁴ Jauss 1970, 18-19.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 15-16.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 19n. 29, 29; Tompkins 1980, 36-37.

read a literary text. Fish's interpretive strategy was not designed for reading but for writing, shaping the formal features of a text. Membership in an interpretive community of shared interpretive strategy, Fish admits, cannot be historically determined, because the only evidence is the interpretation.⁵⁸ Implicitly or explicitly, they begin not with reading/reader but with writing/author, not with historical settings but with literary or aesthetic experience. Their notions are essentially instruments invented to reveal literary meaning rather than achieve a social description of reading practices of the past.

Not all reader-response proponents failed to acknowledge this failure to take account of the historical and the empirical. For example, Iser admits that the reading process will "vary historically from one age to another."⁵⁹ In Jauss's notion of horizon of expectations, expectations are historically formulated by previous aesthetic texts and then reformulated by the author of a text. Readers' horizons are subject to change, partly as a consequence of a great text, "through negation of familiar experiences or through raising newly-articulated experiences to the level of consciousness."⁶⁰ The aesthetic experience can also make it "possible for new expectations of the seemingly immovable horizon of a social order to open up."⁶¹ Clearly, in Jauss's theory, the author's and reader's historical context matters. Generally speaking, however, in their practices reader-response critics have privileged the aesthetic dimension of the reader's response over the influences of specific ideological, social, political, economic, and material elements on that reception. None of them succeeded in describing the diachronic variations of "implied reader," "interpretive strategies," "horizon of expectations." Accordingly, their theoretical

⁵⁸ Fish 1976b, 485.

⁵⁹ Iser 1974, xii.

⁶⁰ Jauss 1982, 25.

⁶¹ Jauss 2001, 26.

assumptions do not answer the questions of who read a literary text or how they really read it, but impose the reading of the critic himself as an ideal reader upon the actual reader.

An historical approach demands that we recognize that reading practices change over time. The notion of a horizon of expectations is largely able to encompass diachronic variety, so one task of the history of reading is to reconstruct those expectations, although, as Jauss himself admits, the horizon of expectations of literature is different from the horizon of expectations of historical life. The former “not only preserves real experiences but also anticipates unrealized possibilities, widens the limited range of social behavior by new wishes, demands, and goals, and thereby opens avenues for future experience.”⁶² Jauss does not propose an historical approach to the two horizons of expectations, but this does not mean that his notion of horizon of expectations, Culler’s institutionalized conventions, or Fish’s strategies of interpretative community have no significance or insight for historians of reading. Rather, their questions provide something on which we can reflect as we incorporate a historical perspective.

Historians of reading make use of reader-response concepts to assess the competences, expectations, and habits of readers, as seen in the works of Michel de Certeau, Paul Ricœur and Roger Chartier.⁶³ De Certeau, the spiritual leader for historians of reading, developed a binary assumption about the activity of reading: (1) in the practice of reading, the reader invents in texts a meaning different from that intended; and (2) the text exists only through its readers who lend it meanings.⁶⁴ His statement on reading is the well-known metaphor of the reader as poacher: the reading activity “has all

⁶² Jauss 1970, 33.

⁶³ Chartier 1997, 86.

⁶⁴ de Certeau 1984, 169, 170-71.

the characteristics of a silent production: ...[The reader] insinuates into another person's text the ruses of pleasures and appropriation: he poaches on it, is transported into it, pluralized himself in it like the internal rumblings of one's body."⁶⁵ De Certeau's dual assumption has been widely cited because he was the first one who from a historical perspective underlines the paradox inherent in reading: it appears passive and submissive but actually functions inventively and creatively in its own way.⁶⁶ The reader-response notion of interdependence between the reader and the text is shared by Ricœur, who says: "Without the reader who accompanies it [i.e. text], there is no configuring act at work in the text; and without a reader to appropriate it, there is no world unfolded before the text."⁶⁷ His "world of the reader" is the equivalent of Fish's interpretive community, both of which define shared competencies, habits, codes and interests. Inspired by Ricœur, Chartier tasks the history of reading with exploring how the encounter between the "world of the reader" and the "world of the text" operates.⁶⁸ He extenuates the highly individualist nature of reading by emphasizing the norms and conventions shared by readers, allowing us to examine historical reading practices within the context of social and cultural history. To achieve this, Chartier has proposed his constraint-invention opposition, which is how he describes the tension between the individual and collective nature of the activity of reading. In the traditional sense, historians of literacy concerned with reading ask how pedagogical practices in the past introduced children to reading and writing. Behind this question is the tension between norms and practices, which together

⁶⁵ Ibid., xxi; more elaboration in Chapter XII, "Reading as Poaching," 165-76.

⁶⁶ Cavallo and Chartier 1999, 1-2.

⁶⁷ Ricœur 1984, III:164.

⁶⁸ Cavallo and Chartier 1999, 2-5, 276; Chartier 1994, 3; Ricœur 1984, III: chap 7, "The World of the Text and the World of the Reader."

determine how readers responded to what they read.⁶⁹ Chartier theorizes this intrinsic tension as one between constraint and invention. The fundamental object of a history of reading, Chartier reiterates, “resides in the tension between the inventive capacities of individuals or communities and the constraints, norms, and conventions that limit their thinking, expressions, and practices.”⁷⁰ The book always aims at installing an order, whether an order intended by its author, publisher/printer, or authority, or an order in which the text is to be deciphered or understood. This set of constraints and obligations will always be undermined by readers, who are by nature “rebellious and vagabond.”⁷¹ The reader’s inventiveness itself depends upon his own specific skills and upon the cultural habits shared by the interpretive community to which he belongs. When the norms and conventions imposed by the text encounter the “schemes of perception and judgment inherent to each community of readers,” the tension between constraints and inventions will appear and be tightened.⁷²

Chartier’s constraint-invention opposition, together with his notion of appropriation, tends to put the reader and reading in a macro-context but illuminates less how the norms and conventions are utilized in individual reading processes. That is perhaps because neither literary critics nor historians of reading have described in detail what actual interpretive strategies look like in real life. The strategies that the actual reader applies to his reading are more complex and richer than theoretically supposed. The historical study of the reader’s response cannot confine the source of meaning to assumed interpretive

⁶⁹ Lyons 1999, 50-51.

⁷⁰ Chartier 1995, 96.

⁷¹ Chartier 1994, viii.

⁷² Chartier 1995, 1.

strategies. “Intersecting ideologies, epistemic frames, and material conditions” also function to make texts meaningful for individual readers.⁷³

The norms and conventions that the reader utilizes to shape his interpretation of written signs may be theorized prior to any activity of reading, but it should not be *a priori*. The historian of reading cannot neglect the historical production of norms and conventions. What institutions teach the reader is not merely prior to reading but derived from it, enriched and transformed in the process of reading through assimilation and accommodation.⁷⁴ That is, the activity of reading also contributes to the formation of a reader’s repertoire, especially when reading becomes the main method of knowledge acquisition and innovation. Internalized interpretive strategies are important, but the strategies of acquiring and applying them are not less significant. Searching for these will bring us closer to the content and process of real reading.

0.3. Reading Strategies

Eugene Kintgen first investigated the strategies of acquiring and applying interpretive strategies in his studies of reading strategies in Tudor England. The term was not Kintgen’s invention,⁷⁵ but he was among the first historians who tried to define it. Kintgen uses it to refer to the repertoire of habitual strategies for making sense of texts, which functions as the bridge “between external information about the historical contexts of reading and the inherently private activity of reading a particular text.”⁷⁶ He distinguishes those strategies into two kinds: teleological or goal-oriented (or strategic),

⁷³ Machor 1993, 63.

⁷⁴ Goodman 1984, 80.

⁷⁵ E.g., Beach and Appleman 1984.

⁷⁶ Kintgen 1990, 4.

and operational or process-oriented (or tactical): “[t]he teleological ones specify what counts as an acceptable interpretation of a text, and the operational ones tell you how to achieve it.”⁷⁷ This distinction points to the proper uses of the books, manners of reading, and interpretation of texts. His statement is much more specific than Chartier’s general description of the distinctive norms and conventions of communities of readers.⁷⁸

Because they are specific, Kintgen’s reading strategies are easier to pinpoint and perceive in historical literatures.

For Kintgen, reading strategies, which he simply equates with interpretive strategies, are “a series of cognitive rules” that the reader applies to enable his performance of any particular reading. The goal of a historical study of reading should thus be the reconstruction of these rules, although for him reading is a learned behavior less collective than individual.⁷⁹ His interpretation of interpretive rules and reading clearly diverges from both Chartier’s account and reader-response criticism. Kintgen investigates a few models of reading provided in institutions such as schools and churches and commonly internalized and shared by Tudor readers. Either Erasmian or religious, those models of reading indicate that reading was more collective than radically subjective.⁸⁰ Such inculcated reading strategies reveal both advocacy and opposition. “The very fact that an author recommends a particular strategy for reading indicates that someone was capable of reading that way; but the fact that he has to recommend it also suggests that many people, perhaps most, were not already reading that way.”⁸¹

Furthermore, neither the Erasmian nor the religious model exhausted the individual

⁷⁷ Ibid., 3-4; Kintgen 1996, 204-05.

⁷⁸ Cavallo and Chartier 1999, 2-3.

⁷⁹ Kintgen 1996, 11-13.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 200, 209.

⁸¹ Kintgen 1990, 13.

reading strategies of Tudor readers, as Kintgen acknowledges—“It is naïve to expect absolute identity.”⁸² But they were commonly internalized, which tells us what a typical reading act, the legitimate use of a book, and the acceptable interpretation of a text was.

Kintgen notes that Tudor theories of reading occupied a disciplinary place in the history of reading. Reading strategies cannot be equated with interpretive strategies, however. The latter are much wider and consist of more than just what is contained in theories of reading. What concerns us in this thesis are the strategies for acquiring interpretive tools and other norms and conventions of reading, for which both ends of Eurasia had a term: the “art of reading” (C. *dushufa* 讀書法; J. *dokushohō* 読書法).

0.4. Approaches to Zhu Xi’s Art of Reading

“Art” is method: it means a set of rules for a particular practice. Sixteenth-century Europeans used this word to define the methods of literary writing and reading.⁸³ And just as Renaissance readers in England practiced Erasmian rules, elite readers in late imperial China were trained in the art of reading conceived by Zhu Xi and expected to apply it to knowledge acquisition. Since the art of reading tends to be justified in terms of a philosophy, in this thesis I will use the phrase “theory of reading” as a substitute for “art of reading” to include its philosophical foundation. When speaking of specific content of the art, I will use the phrase “rule for reading.”

The art of reading emerged with the coming of the book (in any physical form) and was not already distinctive within a print culture. St. Augustine (354-430) designed his theory of reading Scripture as a “ladder to paradise,” which helped to make possible a

⁸² Kintgen 1996, 13.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 222.

modern reading culture.⁸⁴ About a century earlier, the Chinese philosopher Ge Hong (283-343) described (but did not theorize) his experiences of reading and writing in his autobiography, which shaped his scholarship.⁸⁵ Scattered instructions on reading, however fragmentary and unsystematic, appear in Chinese family instructions of the late sixth century and since then have become common.⁸⁶ The ideas produced in the scribal culture were further developed in the age of printing, when printing intensified the possibility of textual variants and multiple copies. Detailed instructions became necessary to help readers, both common and professional, to decide their manner of reading and to legitimize their interpretation of texts, which is what happened in Southern Song China in Zhu's circle.⁸⁷ Given his involvement in editing and publishing and his acknowledgement of textual variants in different editions,⁸⁸ Zhu's theory of reading can be considered a response to the ascending printing industry in Fujian, where he was born and had spent most of his life.⁸⁹ His was a time when printing facilitated the reinterpretation of the Confucian canon and the circulation of knowledge and scholarship.⁹⁰ In later dynasties, Zhu's theory was incorporated, reedited, rephrased and even readapted.⁹¹ With the establishment of Zhu's philosophy as an official ideology in the thirteenth century and then as orthodoxy in the fourteenth and fifteenth, his theory of reading became officially

⁸⁴ Stock 1996.

⁸⁵ Sailey 1978, 242-72, 305-86.

⁸⁶ Yan Zhitui 1968, 20-21, 54-55, 110-11, 153-86.

⁸⁷ de Bary 1989, 188, 217-18.

⁸⁸ Chen Rongjie 1988, 127-29; Chan 1989, 77-81; Li Liliang 1997.

⁸⁹ Chia 2002; Edgren 1989.

⁹⁰ Shimizu Shigeru 1997; Cherniack 1994, 29n.55 lists main studies of the relationship between printing and scholarship in Song China.

⁹¹ Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 92.1920, 93.1921-22, 96.1991, 98.2024; Shi Tingyong 1982, II:762a-65b.

recognized and recommended. It was incorporated into the compendia compiled as the standard textbooks for the civil examination under Ming and Qing imperial auspices.⁹²

According to intellectual historian, as a hermeneutics Zhu's art of reading was firmly grounded in his belief in the close affinity between the text and the Way. He viewed books as the embodiment of the sages' wisdom: reading books was a direct and unmediated contact between the reader and the sages. As reading was one way to apprehend principle and further self-cultivation, Zhu laid out an order in which books should be read, starting with the Four Books, then the Five Classics, and then histories. He stressed the need to read slowly and ponder the meaning of the text, word by word, sentence by sentence, and chapter by chapter. The act of reading should be conducted with an open mind in a clear and settled state, free of any preconceived ideas.⁹³

Reading practices in Buddhist and Daoist communities were different from those in the Confucian community. Within Confucian communities, Zhu's theory of reading was not the only one in the late imperial period, an age characterized by intellectual controversy. Intellectual historians have tended to examine his theory in the context of intellectual debates, noting how epistemological discrepancies led to different conceptions of the use of books and the reading activity. Zhu's conceptualization of books and reading was interpreted by his admirers as a means of opposing what was advocated by his contemporary philosophical rival, Lu Jiuyuan (1139-93), and then developed by the Ming philosopher of mind, Wang Yangming (1472-1529). Both of them suggested pursuing learning through cultivating mind. The Lu-Wang agenda was pervasive in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, although rarely applied to the actual

⁹² Hu Guang et al 1986 [1415], chaps. 53-54; Li Guangdi et al 1986 [1715], chap. 8.

⁹³ Levey 2000, 255-66; Gardner 1990, 35-56.

investigation of things and extension of knowledge or to the activity of reading, as I shall argue.⁹⁴ In the twelfth- and thirteenth-century civil examination field, the teachers of the Yongjia school designed practical curricula and compiled annotated anthologies of Ancient Prose texts, teaching readers how to write essays beautifully and correctly as key to success. With the imperial endorsement of the Learning of the Way in 1241 and again in 1270, Zhu's Classical scholarship and curriculum obtained supremacy over the Yongjia school in the examination field.⁹⁵ The epistemological orientation of Zhu's theory has induced scholars to examine it in relation to his concept of learning (C. *xuewenguan* 學問觀; J. *gakumonkan* 學問觀).⁹⁶ From the vantage point of philosophical history rather than of the history of reading, Zhu's theory of reading is considered a constituent of his epistemology and ontology rather than a set of rules practiced in the activity of reading. Taking a more practical approach, modern Chinese educators first interested themselves in Zhu Xi's theory of reading in the 1930s, when they and their students encountered the problem of how to treat ancient texts and the tradition they embodied, a problem that still perplexes readers. Citing Zhu, such educators as Chen Zhongfan and Wang Pijiang suggested their readers should or should not read in certain ways, sometimes appealing to modern educational theories and psychology as support.⁹⁷

Philosophy and education, though sometimes non-historical, have contributed to the theoretical and textual reconstruction of Zhu's theory of reading, illuminating its logic and systematizing those seemingly incoherent and scattered pieces by different rationales

⁹⁴ Huang 1987; Tillman 1992, 211-30; Elman 2005, 6-10, 28, 33-36, 226.

⁹⁵ De Weerd 2007, 151-69, 298-318.

⁹⁶ Ōtsuki Nobuyoshi 1955; Ōtani Kunihiko 1965; Cheng 1987, 147-50; Gardner 1990, 35-56.

⁹⁷ Qiu Chun 1933; Yang Ming 1963; Chen Zhongfan 1933; Wang Pijiang 1988 [1944].

in the forms of translation, commentary, or anthology.⁹⁸ But until now the historian of reading has been absent from the investigation of Zhu's theory. His questions will be different from those that his colleagues in philosophy or pedagogy have asked. Our interest in this dissertation is not the residual text itself but its transmission and application to knowledge acquisition and innovation by actual readers. This is what the historian of reading is concerned with.

0.5. Reading and Knowledge

In Ming China, book learning was the educated people's main method of knowledge acquisition and innovation. Some of the learned developed their knowledge from fieldwork and collections of antiquities,⁹⁹ and knowledge was also transmitted in the traditional oral-aural channel from masters to disciples,¹⁰⁰ but I will set aside means of communication other than the book in this dissertation. Neither will we consider the epistemology of the period, a topic that belongs to intellectual or philosophical history. My concern here, instead, is how activities of reading determined the construction of the Ming reader's knowledge framework. Since the surviving materials are largely written by and about elite readers, this study will deal with scholarly forms of knowledge more than with the everyday or technical knowledge such as cooking, making wine, and carving woodblocks.

The individuality of reading to some degree implies a singularity of epistemic landscape. This may seem contradictory to the social or collective nature of knowledge maintained by sociologists of knowledge from Emile Durkheim to Michel Foucault, and

⁹⁸ E.g. Qian Mu 1971, II:613-87; Gardner 1990, 128-62; Kōzen Hiroshi et al 2009.

⁹⁹ E.g. Xu 1974; Riemenschnitter 2003; Rawson 1993; Clunas 2004.

¹⁰⁰ Sivin 1995b, 186.

also contrary to the notion of socially-situated knowledge emphasized by Max Scheler and Karl Mannheim. In the traditional sociological conception, knowledge production tends to be reduced to a set of social practices similar to economics, designed to obtain profit (a Marxian metaphor) or politics, designed to achieve power (a Nietzschean metaphor). Political and economic approaches were combined in the sociology of knowledge initiated by Mannheim in an attempt to more successfully account for knowledge production and to make more predictable changes in the epistemic system. The tendency of the two approaches to intersect is more apparent in the work of Karin Knorr-Cetina and Bruno Latour, although their central metaphors of knowledge go back and forth between a Bourdieu-inspired quasi-economic model and a Foucauldian quasi-political one.¹⁰¹ Both the polarization and the convergence of economics and politics, however, discard the intrinsic feature of the quest for knowledge and conceal the autonomy of knowledge. Its production is not merely fashioned by economic and political elements but routinized in its own way independent of other social practices. Neither the economic or political model alone or together suffices to explain the construction of knowledge at the level of the individual historical reader

The way out of this dilemma is to approach the actual historical reader, who used reading to obtain and innovate knowledge following some accepted rules. Since reading functions as the main method of knowledge acquisition and innovation, the construction of the individual elite reader's knowledge is shaped by his interpretive strategies and eventually determined by the set of rules of reading he pursues. If such rules and strategies are clarified, the reader's knowledge system in relation to his activities of reading can come to light. The art of reading with which he was trained was essentially

¹⁰¹ Pels 1997.

social and cultural, whilst his application of the rules to his reading individual and incidental. Focusing on the actor-as-reader in the historical drama of knowledge rather than on what knowledge the economic and political institutions stipulated him to have will help find a balance between the social origin and individualistic feature of the reader's epistemic frame. This in turn will help us to illuminate knowledge acquisition and innovation at the micro-level.

Individual readers decided the destiny of knowledge. The role of contingency in the communication of knowledge through print has been persuasively demonstrated by Adrian Johns in his investigation of the relationship between the so-called "print revolution" and the "scientific revolution" in early modern Europe. For Johns, neither authors nor printers gave print authority, and early modern readers tended to question the reliability of the printed book in the face of pervasive textual variants. The efficacy of communication depended upon the reader's usage and reception of them. Therefore, the power to grant legitimacy and authority to print ultimately lay with the reader.¹⁰² Johns' argument is supported by the reception of Jean Bodin's (1530-96) *Universae naturae theatrum* (Lyon, 1595), a Renaissance attempt to organize the scientific knowledge of his age. Its original Latin version, the French translation, and the readapted and selective German version had "different rhythms of natural philosophy among different categories of reader," scholarly (or elite) and popular.¹⁰³ Thus book history and the history of reading can shed light on the historical diffusion of knowledge: the reader, who was trained in a certain reading strategy, denied, accepted, or rendered what he read,

¹⁰² Johns 1998, 30, 408, 427, esp. chap. 6.

¹⁰³ Blair 1997, chap. 6; quotation from 180.

excluding or including it into his knowledge repertoire. Neither the economic nor political element alone was determinative.

Peter Burke's observations on the imperial Chinese knowledge system exemplify the simplicity of the predominant economic and political models. After a brief comparison between the organization, function and readership of Chinese and Western encyclopaedias, Burke suggests a large difference between the two knowledge systems: the bureaucratic organization of knowledge in imperial China versus the more entrepreneurial system in early modern Europe; in other words, a closed system versus a more open one. Burke assumes the "selection, organization and presentation of knowledge...is the expression of a world-view supported by an economic as well as a social and political system," and he attributes the openness of the European knowledge system to the "commercialization of knowledge" resulting from the growing market in printed knowledge.¹⁰⁴ He fails to take into consideration the commercialization of knowledge in late imperial China, the various ways of knowledge transmission and acquisition, and the diversity of epistemological traditions. Analyzing the reader's concept, and practices if possible, will reveal an epistemic system that is complex and was not really determined by the bureaucratic structure of authority.

0.6. About This Dissertation

Gu Yanwu was not the first or the last to lament the ignorance, uselessness, and emptiness of common scholars who devoted themselves only to examination preparation. The debasement of learning was one of the main reasons for Zhu's proposal for a better curriculum and examination system. His suggestion that the Confucian Classics and

¹⁰⁴ Burke 2000, 175-76.

practical knowledge be exalted above literary and aesthetic studies was consistent with his theory of reading.¹⁰⁵ In 1313 Zhu's version of the Four Books was officially designated as required of the civil examination; in later periods, Zhu's theory of reading had been promulgated to stop the repeated degeneration of reading habits among scholars, though its actual application was more complex than might be thought. My exploration of its complexity will concentrate on the application of Zhu's theory to elite reading practices from the early sixteenth century, when his theory was philosophically challenged by Wang Yangming, to the mid-seventeenth century. In order to historically understand Zhu's theory and its transmission, however, my discussion will involve some episodes from the late twelfth to late fifteenth centuries and from the Ming's fall to the eighteenth century.

As this introduction has argued, the history of reading should be firmly grounded upon actual readers and their activities rather than those implied in texts and imagined by their authors and critics. Studies of what happened rather than what could or should happen in history are made possible by both the individuality and collectiveness of reading, and by the interpretive strategy shared by the reader community. When reading functioned as the main method of knowledge acquisition and innovation, however, the internalized rules for reading became the dominating elements in nourishing the reader's interpretive strategy and horizon of expectations. This theoretical evaluation of the role played by the theory of reading in the historical study of reading leads to this study of the application of Zhu's theory to the elite activities of reading in Ming China. How significant his theory was in elite reading practices will be investigated in the relationship of reading to knowledge and of knowledge acquisition to reading. Therefore, this study

¹⁰⁵ de Bary 1989, 206-13; De Weerd 2006, 370-74.

will focus on scholarly reading of the Classics, history, and philosophy, which were the sources of scholarly knowledge in traditional China, rather than on popular reading of classical or vernacular literature.

In the course of discussing Ming reading concepts and practices, I will focus on some leading Confucians of different philosophical schools, who left records about their reading habits. They are first of all viewed as real readers who encountered books and developed their reading concepts more than philosophers/scholars who authored texts. I also tend to distinguish mature intellectual ideas from their formation through reading so as to differentiate the history of reading and historical studies of knowledge acquisition from intellectual history. It makes possible an investigation of how Ming philosophical rivals as actual readers received Zhu's theory. Given that Ming elite readers acquired knowledge mainly through reading, the rationale underlying this study is that concepts and practices of reading must be treated as prior to philosophical controversies.

Chapter One, "Learning to Be Learned: Zhu Xi's Theory of Reading," discusses Zhu's theory of reading and the implied pattern of acquiring and innovating knowledge, based on a careful reading of his writings and conversations. In his theory, Zhu defined both the goal and methods of reading by elaborating the categories that delineated the scope of discussions about learning among Confucians of later generations. In his concepts and practices of reading, Zhu unified intellectual and moral ends, evidential reading and the apprehension of principle, broad learning and the mastery of essentials, wide reading of various texts and engagement in Classical Learning, drawing textual meaning and experiencing it personally. For the incorporation of these epistemological categories, I characterize Zhu's theory of reading as rational organicism.

Chapter Two, “The Textual Transmission of Zhu Xi’s Theory of Reading,” describes the transmission of Zhu’s theory from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. During its transmission, Zhu’s art was reedited, rephrased, and even readapted by both government agencies and individual authors with contrasting intentions and agendas. Its adaptation in the examination field narrowed students’ scope of reading and consolidated the priority of Neo-Confucianism by designating the orthodox texts and removing the heterodox. Editors of different philosophical stances were involved in the publication and interpretation of his theory of reading, each attempting to justify his own learning. Despite different uses of his writings and conversations, Zhu’s theory of reading remained central in these intellectual controversies.

Chapters Three, “The Ming Confusion of Reading (1368-1500): Intellectual or Moral?”, focuses on the early Ming reception of Zhu’s theory of reading by Eastern Zhe Confucians (Song Lian [1310-1381] and Fang Xiaoru [1357-1402]) and the Pure Confucians (Cao Duan [1376-1434], Xue Xuan [1389-1464], Wu Yubi [1392-1469], and Hu Juren [1434-1484]). In their interpretation, Eastern Zhe Confucians emphasized the intellectual end of reading by advocating concrete knowledge, whereas the Pure Confucians proposed a fundamentalist moralization of reading by limiting the scope of reading to core texts and decrying evidential reading. Both tendencies resulted from early Ming socio-political and intellectual changes. After analyzing Qiu Jun’s (1421-1495) restoration of Zhu’s tradition, I argue that both changes in reading concepts occurred within rather than beyond Zhu’s theory. Yet, the moral end of reading eventually triumphed over the intellectual one in early Ming Confucian philosophy.

Chapter Four, “The Ming Confusion of Reading (1500-1644): Mind or Books?”, explores the affinity of Ming philosophers of mind with Zhu’s theory in their concepts and practices of reading. Despite their attempts to separate themselves intellectually from the Song tradition, Chen Xianzhang (1428-1500), Wang Yangming (1472-1529) and most of his admirers followed Zhu’s theory for reading in their intellectual practice. Philosophically they valued mind over books in moral cultivation, but books remained the key device in the formation of their learning, and their reading concepts resonated with Zhu’s rules. In the late seventeenth century, Wang’s admirers eventually recognized the theoretical importance of books in intellectual life and Zhu’s art of reading as the proper way of knowledge acquisition and innovation.

Chapter Five, “Knowledge Landscape and Reading Habits in Ming Imprints,” outlines the reading habits and knowledge landscape implied in extant Ming imprints. Entries in a recently compiled bibliography of extant Ming imprints will be identified in terms of the commonly recognized fourfold classification scheme, and then a statistical survey will be made to show historical trends in printed knowledge available to Ming readers and the difference in the way of reading between elite and common readers. Despite some deviations, the Ming knowledge framework largely accorded with Zhu’s theory and its Ming adaptations, and the uses of printed books demonstrates both subjugation to and subversion of Zhu’s theory.

In the Conclusion, I reiterate the continuity of reading habits from Zhu’s time to the seventeenth century. This continuity inspires us to rethink the Ming apostasy from the Song tradition. The particularity of scholarly knowledge acquisition and innovation in Ming-Qing China by the eighteenth century was not invented by Ming-Qing scholars but

anticipated by Zhu through his theory of reading. I will also briefly discuss the role of Zhu's art of reading in East Asian reading habits. As an emphasis on the individuality of reading threatens our understanding of the social and cultural significance of the history of reading, it is important not to disregard cross-cultural comparisons. Because the art represents the collective context of reading practice, it is possible to compare the history of reading between late imperial China and other East Asian cultures, which may help to shed more light on the role that Zhu's theory of reading played in the East Asian tradition.

CHAPTER ONE

LEARNING TO BE LEARNED: ZHU XI'S THEORY OF READING

ZHU Xi's theory of reading was intended as a reading strategy, a set of rules and principles that taught readers what a typical activity of reading, legitimate use of the book, and acceptable interpretation of a text were. Under this set of rules and principles, late imperial Chinese readers forged, acquired, and applied their shared strategy of interpretation, which in turn directed their process of producing meaning from the texts they encountered. The legitimate interpretive strategy should be constructed through the legitimate manner of reading, as I have discussed in the Introduction.

Thanks to intellectual historians' work, we know much about Zhu's rules for reading as well as their philosophical assumptions and intellectual significance. In his theory, the purpose of reading was to apprehend the principle of things and the wisdom of the sages embodied in the text, which would be the first step to a moral or even a spiritual advancement. The ideal reader should limit the scope of his reading list to begin with the Four Books, before advancing to the Five Classics, histories and philosophies in a proper sequence. He would approach the canonical texts from the easiest to the most difficult, seeking to understand all parts of each text following the natural order of its argument through close reading. Thus Zhu's art of reading was essentially a hermeneutics, "a comprehensive theory and method of reading and learning from the Confucian Classics."¹

With its moral goal, Zhu's art first aimed to teach readers how to grasp the objective meaning of the canonical texts intended by the sages and worthies. To

¹ Gardner 1990, 35-46; quotation from 42.

guarantee a correct understanding, Zhu suggested the reader have an open mind (*xuxin* 虛心) and allow the text to speak for itself. “Open” here means empty of “any preconceived ideas about what the text should or might say.” Preconceived ideas would distract the reader from understanding the sage’s intention. Thus the ideal reader was expected to identify himself with the sage’s intention.² Only after his mastery of the principle in the text could the reader “experience it personally” (*qiejì tìchá* 切己體察) to make the text his own and gain moral advancement.³

Philosophical interpretation, however, did not exhaust the implications of Zhu’s art. I tend to assume that his theory had cultural implications for reading habits and knowledge acquisition in late imperial China. It suggests that with his mind open the ideal reader would obtain knowledge from texts before moral improvement. His sequence of reading texts also implies a set of principles of managing learned knowledge. Such cultural significance of his art for the ideal reader is the central issue of this chapter.

Zhu himself represented the image of an ideal literatus-reader. According to his own account, Zhu formed his rules of reading in the early 1150s; since then he had been a sincere practitioner of his art when pursuing learning.⁴ This suggests that we examine his theory of reading in relation to his practices. In what follows, I will read Zhu’s discussions and practices of reading keeping my mind open as he instructed, using materials mainly from the collections of his writings and conversations (i.e. *Zhu Wengong wenji* [1532] and *Zhuzi yulei* [1986 (1270)]) more than those from the sections of “Reading Methods” (*dushu fa* 讀書法) in his collected conversations. My sketch will

² Ibid., 56.

³ Ibid., 46, 42.

⁴ Li Jingde 1986, 104.2621; Qian Mu 1971, III:37-47.

not discuss any controversies about his overall philosophy among intellectual historians, although I will refer to their studies. My exploration will focus on the categories that Zhu revealed in his theory. After investigating the intellectual rather than moral aspects of his theory, I will discuss the evidential style of reading that Zhu advocated. Then I will discuss the epistemic result of his theory, concentrating on his textual/knowledge hierarchy with Learning of the Way's superiority over other branches of knowledge and taking the Classics as the core texts. As my examination of his own practices will show, Zhu as a reader was pragmatic and he did not resolve the tension between his theoretical constraints and practical results.

1.1. The Intellectual Goal of Reading

Zhu Xi's art of reading was a part of his theory of learning. Its ultimate goal was moral, but first of all it meant a set of rules governing intellectual exercises. It emphasized reading as the main source of all intellectual, sociopolitical, and moral improvements. In his approach, Zhu proposed several sets of apparently complementary categories, such as moral vs. intellectual goals, delimited vs. wide reading, recognition of the text vs. interrogation of it, and broad learning vs. the essentials. Tensions between them were fully defined in Zhu's theory of reading.

Zhu developed his theory of reading as a response to the scholarly fashion in the contemporary Confucian world. He rebuked multifariousness, disorder, abstractness, and expedition in scholarly pursuits. The Cheng brothers and some of their disciples, according to Zhu, emphasized meditation and cultivating mind to the neglect of reading. In their discussions, they tended to disregard the Classical texts, textual meaning, and the

sages' original intentions. In both his theory and practices, Zhu meant to correct this intellectual negligence, upholding “low studies” as the substitutes for abstract discussions.⁵ Reading authentic texts in an evidential style to improve one's intellectual achievement, thus in Zhu's theory, became the main path towards moral advancement.

I.1.1. Learning through Reading

For Zhu and other leading Neo-Confucians, learning meant not only the imitation and internalization of models provided in texts written by the sages and worthies, but also realizing what people possessed innately and cultivating their morality through practice.⁶ Hence intellectual historians, who have frequently cited Zhu's art in their studies, tend to emphasize its moral significance to the neglect of his own definition of learning first of all as the acquisition of knowledge. Zhu admitted that learning generally functioned to change the student's vital constitution (*qizhi* 氣質),⁷ but his full definition was both intellectual and moral. “Learning cannot be defined as only one sort of thing,” he wrote to one of his disciples. “Virtuous principles and practice (*dexing* 德行), ability in speech (*yanyu* 言語), administrative talent (*zhengshi* 政事), and literary acquisition (*wenxue* 文學), all are branches of learning. Nowadays scholars tend to treat only virtuous principles and practice as learning—This is definitely wrong!”⁸ Among these four branches, speech, administration, and literature evidently were the intellectual achievements of reading. They prepared the foundation for moral advancement. Zhu expected the reader to acquire more skills and responsibilities than simply cultivating his own virtue.

⁵ Qian Mu 1971, III:231-51.

⁶ Bol 2008, 195-93. See also Bol 1989; Yu 1986.

⁷ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Teng Decui" 答滕德粹 [Reply to Teng Decui], 49:24b.

⁸ Ibid., "Da Pan Duanshu" 答潘端叔 [Reply to Pan Duanshu], 50:7b.

Zhu's theory of reading was firmly based on his belief in the close affinity between the sages' written texts and the Way.⁹ For himself, learning was more than book learning, but without reading the student would be ignorant of the path to the pursuit of learning.¹⁰ He emphasized the indispensable role of reading in his pursuit of learning, as he summarized in a memorial to the new Ningzong emperor (r. 1195-1224) in the autumn of 1194:

...No way of pursuing learning is superior to apprehending principle. The key of apprehending principle certainly lies in reading. No method of reading is more valuable than reading in proper sequence and obtaining the essentials. The origin of obtaining the essentials lies in inner mental attentiveness and adherence to the will. This is an infallible hypothesis... Those several sentences have turned out to be effective in my hard and painstaking pursuit of learning. I presume to consider it the only method with which even the sages and worthies of the past would teach people. Not only common scholars should carry on this method, but even emperors will have no substitutes for it in their study of ruling...¹¹

Obviously Zhu considered his reading method valuable, effective and universal, even though he acknowledged contemporary derision of it as a dogmatic approach to Learning of the Way. His method required the ideal reader to grasp the objective meaning of the designated canonical texts without any preconceived ideas before applying the sages'

⁹ Levey 2000, 255.

¹⁰ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Zhu Pengsun" 答朱朋孫 [Reply to Zhu Pengsun], 60:1a.

¹¹ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Xinggong biandian zouzha er" 行宮便殿奏劄二 [The second memorial presented in the Emperor's lodge], 14:12a, 13b.

sayings to his daily life through introspection. Such a delimitation of the curriculum of study and the moral goal of reading in Zhu's theory, however, did not discourage readers from acquiring more knowledge than found in the sages' teachings or from innovating their knowledge repertoires.

Zhu often advised his disciples to concentrate on one of the designated canonical texts at a given time rather than to devote themselves to several texts at the same time. In this way, the student could easily understand the text's meaning before directly applying it to his daily life. Reading too widely would cause confusion and superficiality making the reader's pursuit of the Confucian Way futile.¹² This was just Zhu's pedagogical strategy. He designed an agenda for knowledge innovation. With the guidance of the sages' and worthies' principles, the reader could approach other texts to extend his knowledge without any confusion. The extension of knowledge was achieved through proper questioning while reading:

There's a kind of talk going around these days that makes the younger students lax. People say things like, "I wouldn't dare criticize my elders," or "I wouldn't dare engage in reckless talk"—all of which suits the fancy of those who are lazy. To be sure, we wouldn't dare criticize our elders recklessly, but what harm is there in discussing the rights and wrongs of what they did? And to be sure, we mustn't engage in idle talk, but some parts of our reading pose questions while some parts inspire views, so we have to set out arguments. Those who don't have any arguments are reading without dealing with the questions.¹³

¹² E.g., *ibid.*, "Da Zhu Pengsun," 60: 1a.

¹³ Li Jingde 1986, 11.190; translation modified from Gardner 1990, 153-54 (5.46).

A problem was thus the starting point of knowledge innovation through reading. “Unless various questions that arise [during reading] are resolved day in and day out, [the scholar’s] learning cannot be dramatically improved.”¹⁴

Questions should be raised only at essential points, however, particularly in the reading of the sages’ texts. A reader would not be able to grasp the sage’s intention if he doubted the text at his first encounter with it. He should dispose of all of his preconceived ideas before carefully listening to the sages’ words.¹⁵ Questions, Zhu suggested, could arise only from contradictions and obscurities difficult to understand, which the reader confronted after reading the text again and again and pondering the sages’ words.¹⁶ Thus the procedure of questioning the text, for Zhu, should be (1) to grasp the literal meaning of the canonical text with an open mind, (2) to intimately familiarize oneself with the text and obtain its essentials, and (3) to read broadly to know diverse and perhaps controversial opinions before raising questions.¹⁷

The role of reading in moral and intellectual improvement was a pressing question in the philosophical controversies of Zhu’s times and later ages. There was a tendency to downplay reading among both some Cheng-Zhu followers and adherents of the Philosophy of Mind, since cultivating mind was considered an alternative approach to moral advancement. Zhu’s hypothesis concerning reading may have been a positive recognition of the thriving book industry in his time, and it also was a philosophical

¹⁴ Li Jingde 1986, 10.163; for another discussion about questions driving the progress, see Gardner 1990, 151 (5.36).

¹⁵ Li Jingde 1986, 20.456-57.

¹⁶ Ibid., 11.186; Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Jiang Degong" 答江德功 [Reply to Jiang Degong], 44:47b-48a.

¹⁷ Qian Mu 1971, "Zhuzi lun dushufa zhong" 朱子論讀書法中 [Master Zhu on reading methods, part II], III.643-68.

response to this development.¹⁸ Zhu philosophically theorized the role of reading in learning and his hypothesis became an achievement that later scholars confronted, whatever their philosophical stances were.

I.1.2. Reading Broadly and Hunting for Essentials

Despite his limitation of the curriculum of study, Zhu clearly encouraged broad reading as a step to knowledge innovation. Reading, in his theory, is “one way of apprehending principle in things” to extend knowledge.¹⁹ Both canonical and standard historical texts conveyed the same universal principle or Confucian truth, although each text contained a particular aspect of it.²⁰ A complete understanding of one book would enable the reader to apprehend an aspect of principle, and reading more books would enable him to know more aspects. In Zhu’s own words,

What the canonical texts say is simply a coherent Way and principle, repeatedly and in various appearances...Books should be read one by one. Until you completely understand one, you cannot turn to another. If you totally comprehend one, you will not have to return to it any more for the rest of your life...If you do not understand them one by one, the texts will remain unfamiliar from your reading until you get old, just as if you had never approached them. They will be of no help to you at all...²¹

¹⁸ Ibid., III:616-17, 633.

¹⁹ Li Jingde 1986, 10.167; Gardner 1990, 133 (4.29) with more details in 53-56.

²⁰ Gardner 1990, 41-42.

²¹ Li Jingde 1986, 118.2852.

Thus, learning through reading was a gradual and cumulative process. Because of the above-mentioned coherence of principle, a detailed understanding of one text or one part of it will facilitate the reading of another.²² The intellectual goal of reading is to obtain a coherent understanding of those texts, catching the “associations, correlations, relationships, and links” between them.²³ Therefore,

Under Heaven, no book should not be read, as no work should not be done. If one book is not read, the principle contained in it will be lost. If one work is not done, the principle in it will be absent. Principal things such as the Heaven, the Earth, *Yin* and *Yang*, and minor items such as insects, grass and plants, all should be investigated. If one thing is not investigated, the principle in it will be missing.²⁴

To apprehend principle, Zhu expected devoted and bright students to read as widely as possible to become learned.²⁵ The tension here lies between broad reading (*bo* 博) and hunting for essentials (*yue* 約) in reading habits, an issue that remained controversial among Ming and Qing Neo-Confucian scholars. For Zhu, reading widely and grasping the essentials were interdependent but characterized different stages of pursuing learning. Among his contemporaries, in Zhu’s opinion, Lu Jiuyuan and his followers preferred the essentials from the core canonical texts over broad knowledge, while Lü Zuqian (1137-1181) and his admirers concentrated only on broad historical knowledge but never organized trivial information into principles or constrained their extensiveness. Zhu

²² Ibid., 10.169; Gardner 1990, 136-137 (4.38 and 4.39).

²³ Bol 2008, 173-74.

²⁴ Li Jingde 1986, 117.2817.

²⁵ Ibid., 10.175, 10.168.

disagreed with both approaches to learning. He maintained that the essentials should be examined with broad knowledge while the latter should be united under the former. The pursuit of learning should be established upon a “great base” (*daben* 大本), the central principle or purpose of the text. To apprehend principle, “at the outset of learning [we] should be concerned largely with what’s essential; in the middle stage, largely with breadth; and in the end, with what is essential again.”²⁶ In reading practices, neither fragments nor principle could be ignored. With the mastery of principle, the reader would see the coherence in fragments; without working through fragments, he would not be able to understand principle.²⁷ Principle was after all ultimate and governing when reading books. The reader, Zhu upheld, should strictly follow the guidance of principle in the text throughout reading. Too much attention to minor issues would cause the reader to miss principle.²⁸

Zhu gave priority to breadth over essentials in practice, however. Broad reading was the ideal prerequisite for grasping the essentials. He justified this order by interpreting two sayings in the *Analects*:

My [i.e. Confucius’] studies lie low, and my penetration rises high.²⁹

The superior man, extensively studying all learning, and keeping himself under the restraint of the rules of propriety, may thus likewise not overstep what is right.³⁰

²⁶ Li Jingde 1986, 11.188; Gardner 1990, 152 (5.42).

²⁷ Li Jingde 1986, 8.131; Gardner 1990, 101 (2.12), 102 (2.14).

²⁸ Li Jingde 1986, 11.188, 16.352.

²⁹ *Analects* 14.37, in Legge 1960, I:288-89.

³⁰ *Analects* 6.25, in Legge 1960, I:193; cf. *Analects* 9.10 in I:220. For Zhu Xi's reading, see Gardner 2003, 132-33.

Zhu tended to equate “low studies” with “extensive studying” and “high penetration” with the “restraint of propriety.”³¹ Like Confucius, the student should honestly and humbly investigate things before he apprehended principle in them. The understanding of principle was the natural and transcendent achievement of studies. It was not practicable to arrive at this transcendence without wide investigations.³² Just as principle was contained in things, the essentials were distributed broadly in various pieces. Accordingly, pedagogy should begin with inducing the student to be interested in diverse things, teaching him how to investigate them to extend knowledge.³³ Broad knowledge, Zhu implied, should be subject to the Confucian Way or principle, which alone should predominate over all other branches of knowledge. Wide reading helped the reader to be unbiased, and the comprehension of essentials led to his adherence to principle in its applications.³⁴

Learning to be learned, in Zhu’s theory, was thus not a sudden enlightenment but an accumulative process. The apprehension of principle was preconditioned by the accumulated understanding of numerous things and then by “comprehension of all connections [between them] with total clarity” (*kuoran guantong* 廓然貫通). Without this accumulative process, the student could not discriminate ultimate principle from other philosophical rules.³⁵

³¹ Qian Mu 1971, "Zhuzi lunxue zaduo" 朱子論學雜掇 [Master Zhu's miscellaneous records on learning], III:696.

³² Li Jingde 1986, 44.1139-40.

³³ Ibid., 33.834, 36.963.

³⁴ Ibid., 33.832-37, 36.963.

³⁵ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Wang Zihe" 答王子合 [Reply to Wang Zihe], 49:9b-10a.

Zhu's theory of broad knowledge and the essentials derived from pre-Qin Confucianism. For his pre-Qin predecessors, learning in general meant acquiring knowledge and skills through studying and was eventually aimed at promoting self-cultivation. Considering learning the center of their daily practices, they advocated wide knowledge and set up studiousness (*haoxue* 好學) as a standard for evaluating scholars.³⁶ Confucius's disciples also had their own exclusive subjects of learning. As mentioned in the *Analects*, their specializations included "virtuous principles and practice," "ability in speech," "administrative talents" and "literary acquirements."³⁷ This classification was also adopted in Zhu's definition of learning as I have mentioned earlier. Yet, Zhu expected Confucian students to break through the boundaries between these four fields since, as he said in 1199 just before his death, "[Confucius] the Sage had instructed his disciples to be erudite."³⁸ In reading the canonical text, therefore, the reader should concentrate on it and examine the origins of any things mentioned in it, ranging from natural phenomena to institutions and rituals.³⁹

It should be noted that Zhu distinguished his broad learning from multifarious and disorderly intellectual practices such as miscellaneous and random records (*biji* 筆記). Various branches of knowledge acquired through wide reading, according to him, should be helpful in exploring the Way. It was also crucial to study them in a proper sequence and manage them in a hierarchy whereby Learning of the Way enjoyed its sovereign over other branches.⁴⁰ I will discuss the hierarchy in his knowledge frame in Section I.3.

³⁶ Kurita Naomi 1949, 148-56, 157-58.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 151; *Analects* 11.2.2, in Legge 1960, I:237-38.

³⁸ Li Jingde 1986, 117.2831.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.2830-31, 113.2741.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.142, 64.1564.

With the above categories, in sum, Zhu defined the intellectual goal of reading that was fundamental for the moral goal. The tension between them led scholars of later generations to emphasize one but neglect the other. With the categories they preferred, scholars of different philosophical stances disputed whether the intellectual or the moral goal of reading was fundamental and how to achieve the goal, as we will find in Chapters Three and Four.

1.2. Evidential Reading as An Approach to Principle

In intellectual terms, in Zhu's theory, reading firstly aimed to apprehend principle implied in texts. Before making meaning in their encounters with texts, readers should understand *words* and *sentences*, which Zhu believed embraced the sages' and worthies' intentions. The text and its textual meaning thus were the base of the reader's apprehension of principle. Zhu proposed an evidential style of encoding the text to cover two categories: comprehension of both the text and principle.

Cheng Yi (1033-1107) divided contemporary scholarship into the art of literary composition, philology and etymology (parts of evidential studies), and Confucian Learning which he regarded as the only approach to the Way (excluding Buddhism and Daoism as heterodox).⁴¹ Literary compositions, in Cheng Yi's view, were hurtful to those cultivating the Way.⁴² He decried the contemporary propensity to literary arts, obstinacy in etymology, and forays into Buddhism and Daoism. Absent these three "irregularities," he insisted, scholars would have adhered to the Confucian Way.⁴³ After Cheng Yi, Zhu firmly upheld the superiority of Confucian principle learned from the Classics and

⁴¹ Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian 1967, 63 (2.56).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 64-65 (2.57).

⁴³ Yang Shi and Zhang Shi 1936, 16.

philosophical and historical writings over literary arts. To Zhu's mind, what the best and most enduring writing exhibits is the proper understanding and practice of principle rather than pleasant and superficial literary techniques.⁴⁴ In his intellectual practices, however, Zhu appreciated literary arts and employed the Han-Tang evidential tradition of Classical exegesis in his philosophical and literary pursuits.

I.2.1. Evidential Reading

The Han-Tang tradition of Classical exegesis featured etymology and the discernment of passages and phrases. On the grounds that this textual focus concealed the sages' intentions and the moral principle in their texts, leading Neo-Confucians like the Cheng brothers excluded their Han-Tang predecessors from the Transmission of the Way and declared that they were the only ones to have rediscovered the Confucian Way after Mencius (ca.372-ca.289 BC), whom they regarded as the true transmitter of Confucius' teachings.⁴⁵ Zhu, however, disagreed with the Cheng brothers and their disciples, who totally neglected the textual scholarship of Han Learning and were thus, in his view, misguided into pursuing fanciful discussions. He considered their textually groundless speculations to be more disastrous for pursuing the Way than Han-Tang exegeses could be.⁴⁶ His own method of reading the canonical texts was evidently derived from that of Han scholars:

⁴⁴ Li Jingde 1986, 139.3319.

⁴⁵ Wilson 1995, 73-94; Chan 1989, "The New Tao-t'ung," 320-35.

⁴⁶ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Zhongyong jijie xu" 中庸集解序 [Preface to the *Collected Commentaries of the Doctrine of the Mean*] (1173), 75:29b.

When reading the Sage's text, you should look for its meaning in the textual context, and seek completely to understand *each word without any obstructions*....⁴⁷

[You should] get up early every morning, punctuate two hundred characters in the texts of the *Liji* (Book of Rites) and the *Zuo Commentary* [on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*] respectively, and rectify their *pronunciations* referring to Lu Deming's (ca. 550-630) *Dictionary*.⁴⁸

A sentence embraces a principle in it; understand the sentence and you will apprehend the principle in it. When reading the text, you should understand its literal meaning before deliberating the sages' and the worthies' intentions...*Understand one sentence, and you will grasp the principle in it; understand one passage, and you will clarify its meaning.* After a long-term accumulation, you will gradually apprehend [the sages' and the worthies' purposes].⁴⁹

Thus Zhu's apprehension of the text was based on the literal understanding of the word, the sentence, and the passage. To describe this gradual and accumulative but intensive reading process, he used some allegories: the ideal reader should read like the valiant warrior in bloody battle, the merciless judge in cross-examination, and the sheriff interrogating the thief for evidence.⁵⁰ The scrupulous reader, Zhu suggested, should base his reading on philology and phonology. The character's form and pronunciation may be

⁴⁷ Ibid., "Da Xiang Pingfu" 答項平父 [Reply to Xiang Pingfu], 54:8b.

⁴⁸ Ibid., "Yu Wei Yingzhong" 與魏應仲 [To Wei Yingzhong], 39:33a.

⁴⁹ Li Jingde 1986, 124.2978-79.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 10.164.

secondary to principle, but knowledge of them would facilitate the comprehension of the canonical texts and the sages' true intentions.⁵¹

Zhu did not systematize his philological and phonological knowledge,⁵² but he employed both etymology and phonology in his Classical exegeses. He declared this literal and evidential approach a fundamental principle for his expositions of the *Analects* and the *Mencius* and expected his disciples to pay particular attention to his explanations of words.⁵³ In 1163 he completed a primer of the *Analects* for children, in which he based his etymological explanations of words on early commentaries and rectified characters' pronunciations by referring to Lu Deming's dictionary of pre-Qin and Han texts.⁵⁴ The same approach was continued in his *Yu Meng jiyi* (*Collected meanings of the Analects and the Mencius*, 1172), with reference to many commentators from the Han period (202 BC-AD 220) down to his own time. Classical scholars of the Han and Wei (220-265), for Zhu, contributed much to the study of phonology, etymological explanations, empirical studies of ancient institutions and things. Without knowing those early achievements, it would not be possible to understand the ancient texts. Meanwhile, Zhu also incorporated the evidential studies of earlier Song scholars that he considered helpful.⁵⁵

With an almost religious commitment to restoring the Way and reshaping the Confucian tradition, which he regarded to be in decline, Zhu naturally had his own reading of the *Analects*. His commentaries in the *Lunyu jizhu* (*Collected commentaries on the Analects*, 1177) esteemed the Cheng brothers as orthodox, citing them and their

⁵¹ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Yang Yuanfan" 答楊元範 [Reply to Yang Yuanfan], 50:1b.

⁵² For Zhu Xi's phonological achievements, see Qian Mu 1971, V:206-07, 224-27.

⁵³ Li Jingde 1986, 11.184, 11.191, 72.1812.

⁵⁴ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Lunyu xumeng kouyi xu" 論語訓蒙口義序 [Preface to *Catechism on the Analects for the instruction of the young*], 75:8a.

⁵⁵ Ibid., "Yu Meng jiyi xu" 語孟集義序, 75:21a, 22a.

disciples much more than early Confucians, especially in their investigations of principle. His style appeared different from that of He Yan 何晏 (190-249), who followed traditions of Han exegesis.⁵⁶ Despite his “greater, more autonomous presence and identity in his commentary,”⁵⁷ Zhu still cited more than thirty commentators from the Han to the Song, firmly basing his interpretation on etymological explanations from early *scholias* and Lu Deming’s dictionary, as he had done in his earlier work.⁵⁸

In addition to etymology and phonology, Zhu’s evidential style of reading was also fully reflected in his theory and practice of collation, empirical investigation, and distinction of textual forgeries, which are conventionally considered to be hallmarks of Qing philology. His collation and distinction practices were obviously motivated by his stress upon the authenticity of the text, which he believed embraced the author’s original meaning. In the case of reading the Classic, its authentic text ensured its readers’ proper understanding of the sage’s intention.

Zhu did not intend that his bibliographic practices elaborate a tradition that was pioneered in the first century and eventually glorified in Qing evidential scholarship.⁵⁹ Yet, he was involved in editing and publishing many books, for as a scholarly reader he was concerned with textual variants in different editions. In his writings he often mentioned the differences between particular editions,⁶⁰ although he did not theorize those variants in relation to the process of circulating, editing and publishing as Qing specialists did in their bibliographical practices. Within the Chinese bibliographical

⁵⁶ Gardner 2003, esp. 162-79.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 163-64.

⁵⁸ Qian Mu 1971, “Zhuzi zhi sishuxue” 朱子之四書學 [Master Zhu’s studies of the Four Books], IV:189.

⁵⁹ Zhu Xi 1532b, “Quanzhou Tongan xianxue gushumu xu” 泉州同安縣學故書目序 [Preface to the catalogue of the County School Library of Tongan, Quanzhou Prefecture], 75:1a-b.

⁶⁰ Li Liliang 1997.

tradition, Zhu contributed much to studies of collation (*jiaokan xue* 校勘學). Careful collation would guarantee the authenticity of the text, which Zhu believed to be the reservoir of the sages' original intentions.

Zhu developed his theory of collation mainly from editing and publishing the Cheng brothers' writings.⁶¹ He reiterated his principles of reading in exchanges with his co-editors and utilized these principles when collating the Cheng brothers' texts. The rule of keeping an open mind in his art of reading, he insisted, was also indispensable in textual collation. Any preconceived ideas threatened the comprehension of the text and would mislead the editor into changing whatever he pleased.⁶² Minor textual errors might be corrected with caution, but any major changes or questioning of texts ought to be carried out in full conformity with Confucian principle.⁶³ This means that Confucian principle also served as a standard in Zhu's practices of collating texts. More specific rules, Zhu added, should be followed in textual collation as in reading. (1) Minor variations in phrasing could influence the expression of principle and intentions; thus when referring to other versions, the author's words should be kept unaltered with textual variants noted. (2) Any change of phrase, if necessary, should accord with the purpose of the text. In general, Zhu discouraged changing the sages' and worthies' phrases. As a reader, the collator should treat the text with modesty and reverence. Any unreasonable change could turn out to be an obstruction to apprehending the author's true intention.

⁶¹ Cf. Ichikawa Yasuji 1966 emphasizing the philosophical implication of Zhu Xi's theory of collation.

⁶² Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Liu Gongfu" 答劉共父 [Reply to Liu Gongfu], 37:12b-13b.

⁶³ Ibid., "Yu Zhang Qinfu" 與張欽夫 [To Zhang Qinfu], 30:22b.

These rules, revealed in the case of the Cheng brothers' writings, were also applicable to editing ancient texts.⁶⁴

Zhu successfully applied principle as a standard for editing Xie Liangzuo's 謝良佐 (1050-1103) conversations. In 1159 he obtained a printed version of this collection. When editing it, Zhu removed more than fifty entries from the final edition since, after examining them with Xie's theory of principle in mind, he believed that those entries were not Xie's own words or his meaning.⁶⁵ In 1168 he happened to read a collection of another Neo-Confucian's conversations, in which he found all of the passages he had removed from Xie's work. This experience strongly supported the judgment he had made ten years before.⁶⁶

As with reading practices, Zhu insisted, an open mind without any preconceived ideas meant that any changes the collator made should be supported by evidence. The collator should not impose his own idea upon the author just as the reader should not read his own idea into the text.⁶⁷ The same attitude, Zhu repeated to his disciples, should be taken in reading and collating Buddhist scriptures and other kinds of texts.⁶⁸ His collation of the *Yili* 儀禮 (*The Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*), which was based on a printed edition of limited circulation and accorded with his rules, was still esteemed in the late thirteenth century. Xu Heng (1209-81) used the edition Zhu approved as the basis for his

⁶⁴ Ibid., "Yu Zhang Qinfu lun Cheng ji gaizi" 與張欽夫論程集改字 [A letter to Zhang Qinfu to discuss changes in phrases in the Cheng brothers' collection], 30:24a-26b; cf. "Da Xu Shunzhi" 答許順之 [Reply to Xu Shunzhi], 39:20a.

⁶⁵ Ibid., "Xie Shangcai yulu houxu" 謝上蔡語錄後序 [Postscript to the Collection of Xie Liangzuo's conversations], 75:3a-4a.

⁶⁶ Ibid., "Xie Shangcai yulu houji" 謝上蔡語錄後記 [Ending note to the *Collection of Xie Liangzuo's conversations*], 77:14a-b.

⁶⁷ Ibid., "Da Hu Guangzhong" 答胡廣仲 [Reply to Hu Guangzhong], 42:6b.

⁶⁸ Ibid., "Da Xu Shunzhi," 39:19b.

own punctuated version because Zhu had made this ancient text authentic and readable for common students.⁶⁹

When collating, Zhu suggested, several collators should work together in a cross-examination of the text so that all parts of the text could be checked several times.⁷⁰ He advocated the method invented by Liu Xiang (77-6 BC) at the turn of the first century: two collators worked together, one of whom read aloud while the other listened, comparing and marking the variants; after a session they changed their roles.⁷¹ In this process, the reader-collator should keep his mind open to reasonable words from any source. "If commendable, even the commoner's words should not be disregarded," he wrote. "If questionable, even those words reportedly from the sages and the worthies should be examined and cited with caution."⁷²

Thus the openness in Zhu's art of reading was transplanted into his textual studies. Despite his stubborn Neo-Confucian tenets, such openness led to his interest in the authenticity of a diverse range of texts. A genuine text facilitated the apprehension of its author's true intention. The serious scholarly reader would collate the text he encountered when reading it, even though he did not favour it or disagreed with its author. For instance, Zhu fully put into practice his theories of reading and collation in his textual studies of Han Yu's (768-824) writings.

Han Yu enunciated the earliest genealogy of the Confucian Way, praising Mencius as the true transmitter of Confucius' teaching. His view was cited by leading Song Neo-

⁶⁹ Ibid., "Ji Yongjia Yili wuzipian" 記永嘉儀禮誤字篇 [Note to the collected wrong characters in the *Yili* of Yongjia edition], 70:18a-19a; Wu Shidao 1998, "Yili jingzhu dianjiao jiyi houti" 儀禮經注點校記異後題 [Postscript to the Punctuated text of and commentaries to the *Yili* with variants noted], 18.467.

⁷⁰ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Xu Shunzhi," 39:19b.

⁷¹ Ibid., "Da Lü Bogong" 答呂伯恭 [Reply to Lü Bogong], 33:20a.

⁷² Ibid., "Da Zhang Jingfu" 答張敬夫 [Reply to Zhang Jingfu], 31:10a-b.

Confucians to justify their own places in the Confucian tradition.⁷³ Although Zhu praised Han Yu's defense of Confucian orthodoxy against Buddhism, he decried Han's elaboration and practice of the Way. In Zhu's view, Han "had not probed principle but devoted himself to literary composition."⁷⁴ As a scholar, Han was showy and lax, seeking wealth, honour and success; nor was he good at applying lessons from history to his political service.⁷⁵ Zhu had enjoyed Han's literary writings since his teenage years, however. This enduring interest made him wish for an authentic version of Han's prose, since he was not satisfied with any of the versions available to him. Around 1192 Zhu began to draw up the principles for collating. He preferred to place the variants from different versions right after the related words selected from the text proper, so that the collator's decision could be automatically demonstrated while the reader could understand the merits and demerits of different versions. Even when the collator made a mistake, the recorded variants would help the reader judge for himself.⁷⁶ He completed this project in 1197 using an approach that was basically followed in later generations including the Qing period:

My Examination of Variants in Han's Prose (Han wen kaoyi 韓文攷異) is based on the Directorate of Education edition. I will note textual variants, discriminate their rights or wrongs, and justify my choices among them. When evidence is insufficient to support my choice, I simply make a brief note, without

⁷³ Wilson 1995, 77-83, 158-59; Bol 1992, 302.

⁷⁴ Li Jingde 1986, 137.3276.

⁷⁵ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Wang shi Xu jingshuo" 王氏續經說 [Mr. Wang's supplementary interpretation of the Classics], 67:25a-b.

⁷⁶ Ibid., "Ba Fang Jishen suo jiao Han wen" 跋方季申所校韓文 [Postscript to Han Yu's prose collated by Fang Jishen](1192), 83:4a-b.

making a judgment. In this way, the examination of textual variants will appear reasonable and logical.⁷⁷

This approach originated in Liu Xiang's collation of ancient texts and was widely employed in the Qing period, but Zhu as a reader-collator elaborated his theory and method by himself.⁷⁸ The collection of textual variants implied an objectivity of the text that its reader should respect. In his process of discrimination, justification, and selection Zhu clearly utilized his theory of reading. Without understanding individual words and phrases in Han's writings, he insisted, the reader could not apprehend Han's meaning and intentions.⁷⁹

Whereas textual collation generated an authentic and ideal text, the discrimination of forgeries was used to date a text. The latter, for Zhu, also benefited from his theory of reading. Insights gained from intimate reading of texts were helpful in proving a forgery, a literal misrepresentation, or a misattribution of authorship.⁸⁰ Among leading Song scholars who proved forgeries, Zhu contributed much in both methods and practices.⁸¹ Principle as a standard and point of reference, which he emphasized in his textual collation, was also valid for the discrimination of forgeries, as he wrote in a letter to a friend:

⁷⁷ Ibid., "Yu Fang Bomo" 與方伯謨 [Reply to Fang Bomo], 44:27a-b; detailed notes of how to operate are not translated.

⁷⁸ Zhang Xuecheng 1922b, "Zhuzi *Hanwen kaoyi* yuanben shuhou" 朱子韓文考異原本書後 [Postscript to the original edition of Master Zhu's *Hanwen kaoyi*], 13:24b-26a.

⁷⁹ Zhu Xi 1532b, "*Han wen kaoyi xu*" 韓文攷異序 [Preface to the *Examination of variants in Han Yu's prose*], 76:29b-30a.

⁸⁰ Li Jingde 1986, 84.2187.

⁸¹ Bai Shouyi 1933, esp. 6-11.

Someone reading an ancient text today, I venture to think, can discriminate the authentic from the forged by two means: one is to determine whether the principle evinced in a text is proper, and the other is to examine the text against variants evident in other sources. Nobody can abandon these two paths and just surmise by conjectures.⁸²

Actually, in practice Zhu proposed as his third method the comparison of a text's literary style against texts that were deemed to be representative of the period in question. One could only practice this method after reading widely in and gaining an intimate knowledge of those texts. In general, for Zhu, "both ancient and modern texts can be examined and distinguished from each other [by diction]. Ancient texts are solemn by nature."⁸³ His discrimination between the Old and New Texts of the *Documents* was based on their literary styles. He judged that the Old Text was a forgery because it was inexplicably easier to read than the New Text. Moreover, neither the preface nor the commentary was written by Kong Anguo 孔安國 (d. ca. 100 BC) of the Western Han—both were instead forged during the Jin dynasty (AD 265-420). Zhu admitted that only one friend who knew literary styles well understood and supported his finding.⁸⁴ After examining its literary style, Zhu even suggested that the *Doctrine of the Mean* appeared

⁸² Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Yuan Jizhong" 答袁機仲 [Reply to Yuan Jizhong], 38:5a.

⁸³ Li Jingde 1986, 137.3269.

⁸⁴ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Sun Jihe" 答孫季和 [Reply to Sun Jihe], 54:3b; "*Shangshu*" 尚書 [On the *Book of the Documents*], 65:4b-5a; "Shu Linzhang suokan sijing hou" 書臨漳所刊四經後 [Ending note to the four classics published in Linzhang], 82:20b-21b.

much later than the *Mencius* because its articles were carefully ordered and the meaning smoothly expressed in comparison with earlier texts.⁸⁵

Intimacy with various texts and the ability to collate and discriminate among them, i.e. an evidential style of reading, prepared Zhu's rich knowledge repertoire for his evidential studies. In his epistemic framework, however, evidential studies ranked second to the apprehension of principle. They were laborious and less fruitful, but helpful in probing principle.⁸⁶ Evidential studies, for him, should be grounded in wide reading and mastery of principle rather than being derived from any preconceived ideas. Otherwise, such studies would be useless for knowledge acquisition and innovation.⁸⁷ A successful evidential scholar, Zhu applied his principles of reading to his evidential scholarship and firmly based his studies on his broad reading practices. According to his method, an evidential study should be taken in three steps: collect as much evidence as possible through reading widely, organize it logically after understanding the text's meaning, and then compare and synthesize.⁸⁸ Since probing principle was the student's ultimate goal, Zhu also warned his followers against too much engagement in evidential studies, which could only distract them, making them confused, proud and niggardly.⁸⁹ The reader, then, should not linger over the raw or organized information he acquired from evidential reading, but make a philosophical distillation so that he could apprehend principle. Both textual collation and discrimination of forgeries, which methodologically benefited from Zhu's theory of reading, contributed towards the foundation of his philosophy but were

⁸⁵ Li Jingde 1986, 62.1479, 64.1565. This suggestion was contradictory to the authorial pedigree he designed for the Four Books, in which the *Doctrine of the Mean* was attributed to Confucius' grandson Zisi 子思 (483-402 BC) whose follower instructed Mencius.

⁸⁶ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Sun Jihe," 54:3b.

⁸⁷ See also *ibid.*, "Ba Li Shaoying *Cuoshuo*" 跋李少膺脞說 [Postscript to Li Shaoying's *Trifling words*], 81:14b-15a.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, "Da Wang Bofeng" 答王伯豐 [Reply to Wang Bofeng], 54:28a-b.

⁸⁹ Li Jingde 1986, 84.2181, 86.2204-05.

not the end of learning. For Zhu, an evidential style of reading and the evidential studies resulting from it served as nothing more than a tool. On the other hand, Zhu successfully associated evidential reading with his philosophy of investigating things to extend knowledge. He theorized the evidential understanding of words and sentences in reading as a sort of investigation of things, and thus distinguished his theory from unsystematic descriptions of reading experiences before and after him.

I.2.2. Philosophical Use of Literary Arts in the Evidential Style

Zhu Xi encouraged his disciples to read literary compositions. Yet, the goal was not to improve their literary skills but again to distinguish the rights and the wrongs of earlier figures and events and to apprehend principle.⁹⁰ The reader probing principle should not pay too much attention to the literary art itself, but concentrate on philosophical implications. Such a reading, in Zhu's scheme, was also in the evidential style.

Zhu admitted that he had been enthusiastic for learning literary arts before the age of forty.⁹¹ He strongly suggested that his disciples learn literary skills from the *History of the Former Han* and the writings of Han Yu, Liu Zongyuan (773-819), Ouyang Xiu (1007-73), and Zeng Gong (1019-83).⁹² As for poetry, he recommended those prior to the Western Jin period (265-316) including songs for entertainment.⁹³ Zhu recommended those essayists not for their philosophical but for their literary merits. As mentioned above, he depreciated Han Yu's achievement in apprehending principle. On Su Shi (1037-1101), whose writings were popular in the twelfth century, Zhu harshly denounced

⁹⁰ Ibid., 139.3319.

⁹¹ Ibid., 139.3302.

⁹² Ibid., 139.3321.

⁹³ Ibid., 140.3324.

his political and moral philosophy, declaring that Su's ideas would have brought disastrous consequences if he or his followers had ever run the government.⁹⁴ In Zhu's view, Su Shi's thought was heresy and his writings did not imply the Confucian truth but "evil." In reading practices, Zhu assumed, it would not be possible to dissociate words and the Way from each other. "Without embracing the Way, writing cannot be literary." Probing principle through literary writings, Zhu maintained, the reader should be able to apprehend both literary arts and the principle; detaching them from each other, he would miss both.⁹⁵

In terms of the unity of literary arts and Confucian principle, Zhu recommended the Confucian classics and pre-Qin philosophical writings as models of literary writing. Both the Confucian sages and pre-Qin philosophers had "substance" (*shi* 實, i.e. the Way) in mind so that they were able effectively to express themselves with literary arts. Since the second century BC, according to Zhu, literature had become dissolute and literary arts dissociated from the Way, even though Han Yu and Ouyang Xiu successively advocated for the ancient style represented in the Confucian classics.⁹⁶ Beautiful literature that did not embrace the Way, Zhu reiterated, could temporarily benefit some scholars, but its lasting popularity would "ruin talent and corrupt public morals."⁹⁷ Thus the interpenetration between the Way and the literary arts was considered the core of his literary theory.

⁹⁴ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Wang Shangshu" 答汪尚書 [Reply to Wang the Minister], 30:7b-9a.

⁹⁵ Ibid., "Da Wang Shangshu," 30:11b-12a.

⁹⁶ Ibid., "Du Tangzhi" 讀唐志 [Reading note to the Ritual and musical section of the *New History of the Tang Dynasty*], 70:3a-5a; on Han Yu and Ouyang Xiu, see Bol 1992, 124-36, 178-88.

⁹⁷ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Lü Bogong," 33:5a, 5b.

The Way is the root of literary arts, while literary arts are its leaves and branches. Being rooted in the Way, what rises from literary writing is nothing but the Way. All the writings of the sages and the worthies of ancient times arose from their hearts, so their words accord with the Way.⁹⁸

Before apprehending Confucian principle, Zhu suggested, the student need not learn literary arts through reading.⁹⁹ He even instructed his disciples not to spend time on composing poetry, on the grounds that meditation on principle would be more practical and useful than deliberating how to polish a line.¹⁰⁰

Zhu's unification of the literary arts and the Way, however, was originally intended for the writer rather than the reader. As Zhu had done, the reader was expected to approach poetry and prose on their literary merits, whether or not they embraced principle in the way that Zhu suggested. He valued literature's autonomy from philosophy, and contributed much to literary studies of the *Book of Songs*, the *Elegies of Chu*, and Han Yu's prose. He did not reject literary writings at all, but was actually an enthusiastic reader and critic.¹⁰¹ He was also a productive essayist and poet. Although he denounced Su Shi's philosophy, he appreciated the latter's literary skills, comparing his literary writings to those of Han Yu and Ouyang Xiu.¹⁰² For him, Su Shi's literary techniques were worthy of imitation despite his misguided political and moral philosophy.¹⁰³ He recommended the literary writings of Han Yu, Su Shi, and a few other

⁹⁸ Li Jingde 1986, 139.3319.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 139.3320.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 140.3333.

¹⁰¹ Qian Mu 1971, "Zhuzi zhi wenxue" 朱子之文學 [Master Zhu's literary studies], V:151-90; Lynn 1986.

¹⁰² Li Jingde 1986, 139.3309, 3310, 3311-12, 3314ff; Qian Mu 1971, V:160.

¹⁰³ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Cheng Yunfu" 答程允夫 [Reply to Cheng Yunfu], 41:12b-13a.

Tang-Song authors as models of prose rather than bearers of orthodox philosophical principle.¹⁰⁴ For him, poetry developed in its own way distinct from philosophy. He rated the ancient style of poetry before Tao Yuanming (365-427) the most highly. In the second place was poetry from the early fifth to the early eighth centuries, which generally followed the ancient style. Poetry from the mid-eighth century up to his own day came third because of its abandonment of the ancient style. He recommended that readers take the earliest poems as their model and distance themselves from poetry of the later two periods. Based on his own experience, Zhu expected his disciples to learn literary skills by their twenties or thirties through reading orthodox pieces when they were forming their own styles. In their forties and fifties, readers should pursue philosophical and moral advancement rather than literary style in their reading.¹⁰⁵ Zhu himself did not compile anthologies of model prose or ancient poems, but his idea of literary orthodoxy was generally followed by his immediate disciples in their anthologies, which shaped reading habits in the civil examination field.¹⁰⁶

In his theory of reading essays and poetry, he expected his disciples to memorize and recite the text (intone in the case of poetry; see below) after rectifying the literal meaning with etymology and phonology. Intimacy with the model text was also required.¹⁰⁷ Of note is how Zhu intended the unification of literary art and the Way to be realized in the practice of reading. His instruction was more philosophical than literary:

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., "Da Gong Zhongzhi" 答鞏仲至 [Reply to Gong Zhongzhi], 64:14a.

¹⁰⁵ Li Jingde 1986, 139.3301-02, 3321.

¹⁰⁶ De Weerd 2007, chap. 6-7.

¹⁰⁷ Li Jingde 1986, 116.2805-06, 139.3297-98, 80.2070ff.

Who cannot understand the literal meaning [of the essay and the poem]? [You] should see its merit...by apprehending the meaning beyond the words, thereby revealing its vitality and morale (*jingshen* 精神)...There are two layers: to understand the literal meaning is superficial, while to know the implied merit is central. It is a serious disadvantage only to become acquainted with the superficial but be ignorant of the implied.¹⁰⁸

Zhu thus encouraged the reader of literary writings to approach them from a broad perspective (*dachu* 大處, i.e. philosophical and moral positions). Linger over the literal words the reader could understand something, but it would only be trifling.¹⁰⁹

In Zhu's age, literary studies as a branch of knowledge were actually independent from Neo-Confucianism and Classical Learning. In his theory, however, evidential reading served the learning of literary arts, and eventually both evidential and literary knowledge obtained their significance as aids for the reader to probe Confucian principle.

I.2.3. Applications of the Evidential Style in Reading the Classics

The Confucian Classics rather than literary writings remained as the core texts in Zhu's theory and practices of reading. The evidential style featured his reading of the Classics in particular. With this style, he distinguished the Classical text from *scholia* on it and paid more attention to the text proper than the commentaries. He considered *scholia* as only uses made of the Classical texts. Evidential reading first enabled him to clarify the origin and nature of the Classical text, so that he could apprehend the textual

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 114.2755-56.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 117.2819.

meaning and the sage's original intention. In Zhu's Classical exegeses, some texts originally were not as sacred as their commentators and readers might have thought. This recognition would help the reader to distinguish further the Classical text from its subsequent uses and expositions before apprehending the sages' true intentions. On the other hand, the evidential style was not always possible or effective for reading difficult portions of the Classics. In these cases, Zhu suggested, readers should grasp only the general meaning rather than devote much effort to understanding the word and the sentence. Therefore, the reader should approach Classics of different origins and natures in different ways, with accordingly modified principles of reading including the evidential style.

For Zhu, the Five Classics were more historical, descriptive, and concrete, which means that reading them would require some reading skills and techniques and even some intellectual aids to understanding the texts.¹¹⁰ A good example was his reading of the *Changes*. He was the first among Song Confucians to characterize the original *Changes* as an oracular manual rather than a philosophical work. The hexagrams were designed for divination rather than to propagate moral principles.¹¹¹ This interpretation went beyond the *Ten Wings* (*Shiyi* 十翼) attributed to Confucius and other later commentaries, and it was firmly based on Zhu's evidential reading of the text proper rather than the commentaries. It was not possible, he insisted, to appreciate this finding without an intimate knowledge of this Classical text.¹¹² Divination was not logical, predictable or reproducible; Thus by nature it could not support any learning that was

¹¹⁰ Gardner 2007, xxii; Chan 1973, 85-86.

¹¹¹ Smith et al. 1990, chap. 6.

¹¹² Li Jingde 1986, 67.1654, 66.1623.

coherent and rational.¹¹³ The descriptions in the *Changes* were too broad, abstract and ambiguous.¹¹⁴ Earlier commentators simply focused on the numerological and cosmological symbolism of the hexagrams or attempted to extract moral principles from the diagrams. They denied the text's oracular origin and interpreted it according to their own preconceived ideas, misrepresenting its original meaning. The *Changes* thus was harder to comprehend than other Classics.¹¹⁵ This text, for Zhu, was not intended to teach the principles of self-cultivation at all.¹¹⁶ Divination was no substitute for self-cultivation. The reader should not appeal to the *Changes* for a solution until he had exhausted himself in his pursuit of the Way.¹¹⁷ He should treat the words as the result of his own divination, pondering their meaning with an open mind, finding a reasonable explanation, and then applying the oracular instruction to practices.¹¹⁸ Therefore reading the *Changes* was not urgent for the student. It was not as effective for self-cultivation as reading the *Analects* and the *Mencius*.¹¹⁹ When the student had to read the *Changes*, Zhu suggested, he could endeavor to master only the general meaning.¹²⁰

Zhu's theory of reading as hermeneutics also informed his reading of the *Songs*. In his commentary he dispensed with the "minor prefaces" (*xiaoxu* 小序), which he argued were written in the first century AD and badly misrepresented the original meaning and intention of this Classical text.¹²¹ Therefore the proper understanding of a song should

¹¹³ Ibid., 66.1626.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 34.885-86, 75.1922.

¹¹⁵ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Chen Mingzhong" 答陳明仲, in 43:4a; "Da Liu Junfang" 答劉君房, in 60:13b; Li Jingde 1986, 67.1661; cf. Smith et al. 1990, 177-88.

¹¹⁶ Li Jingde 1986, 67.1685.

¹¹⁷ Smith et al. 1990, 203.

¹¹⁸ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Lü Bogong," 33:35a; Zhu Xi 1532c, "Da Sun Jihe" 答孫季和 [Reply to Sun Jihe], 3:10a.

¹¹⁹ Li Jingde 1986, 104.2614.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 67.1659.

¹²¹ van Zoeren 1991, 228; Li Jingde 1986, 80.2074.

not be based on the brief preface to it but on the song itself. Otherwise the reader would be misled.¹²² Given the inclusion of some poems inconsistent with Confucian moral principle, Zhu also suggested that his students read for the general meaning only, just as they read the *Changes*.¹²³ Concentration on the songs and intimacy with their texts helped Zhu realize their literary nature that would “foster and elicit correct emotional and moral responses.”¹²⁴ For him, however, those texts were intended as poems that deserved appreciation rather than as didactic instructions in verse.¹²⁵ Thus his treatment of the *Songs* was more literary than classical. The reader should intone the poem aloud (*fengsong* 諷誦) over and over till he gradually appreciated its original meaning or taste. Zhu himself first intoned a poem forty or fifty times to gain a rough impression. He then read the commentaries to learn earlier interpretation, before finally intoning it another forty or fifty times until he utterly comprehended it.¹²⁶ When intoning a poem, Zhu assumed, the reader could be inspired didactically or affectively, enjoying what the poet enjoyed and being concerned with the poet’s concerns.¹²⁷ The power of the *Songs* largely derived from their ability to stimulate (*xing* 興) the reader. Only the stimulated reader could be called a true reader of poetry. No reader could be inspired or stimulated if the poet’s intentions were obscured by commentaries.¹²⁸

As he emphasized the literary nature of the *Songs*, Zhu underscored the historical essence of the *Documents* and the *Spring and Autumn*. Yet, he admitted that these two Classical texts were as difficult to read as the *Changes*. Philological and literary

¹²² Li Jingde 1986, 80.2077, 2078, 2092; Zhu Xi 1532b, “Da Lü Bogong,”34:4b.

¹²³ Li Jingde 1986, 80.2082, 2083; van Zoeren 1991, 229.

¹²⁴ van Zoeren 1991, 229.

¹²⁵ Li Jingde 1986, 80.2083.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.2091, 104.2612, 104.2613.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.2082.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.2086, 2084.

approaches were not applicable to reading them. Most of phrases in the *Documents*, Zhu told his disciples, were too intractable and obscure to be understood, and the ancient institutions in it were hard to investigate. He even refused to punctuate the whole text.¹²⁹ Therefore he suggested the reader of the *Documents* read only those passages that could be apprehended while putting to one side those that were obscure and questionable. The reader would not have to draw a literal meaning from every word in the entire text.¹³⁰ What the reader could do was to grasp the general meaning of the *Documents* so that he could save time for reading ancient histories to supplement what he missed in this Classical text. It was hard, according to Zhu, to comprehend historical changes in ancient times from the *Documents* alone. Instead, he suggested his disciples seek to comprehend the sages' mind as a general meaning, i.e. the ancient principles followed by rulers and ministers, from reading this Classic.¹³¹ Therefore, evidential and literary studies were not indispensable for reading the *Documents*, although the apprehension of principle in general was still the ultimate goal.

So far we have found that Zhu tried to put aside his evidential style of reading in his encounter with some parts of the *Changes* and the *Documents*. When it was hard to understand precisely the literal meaning, it would be fine to know only the implied general meaning. In comparison with the *Changes* and the *Spring and Autumn*, Zhu thought, the Four Books including *the Analects* and the *Mencius* were written in a simpler style, more readable and more practical and effective for self-cultivation.¹³² Therefore, until he understood the Four Books well, the reader should not turn to the Five Classics.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 78.1979, 1981-82.

¹³⁰ Zhu Xi 1532a, "Da Cai Zhongmo" 答蔡仲默 [Reply to Cai Zhongmo], 3:12a; Li Jingde 1986, 78.1980-81, 1982-84.

¹³¹ Li Jingde 1986, 78.1983, 1984.

¹³² Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Zhao Zuoqing" 答趙佐卿 [Reply to Zhao Zuoqing], 43:17b.

Readers should be practical, keeping in mind the apprehension of principle and the cultivation of virtue rather than evidential studies as their ultimate goal.

A text and its meaning, together with its author's intention, however, remained fundamental for the reader's interpretation and use of it. The *Spring and Autumn* was the only Classic that Zhu never tried to annotate, even though he had familiarized himself with the text and the *Zuo Commentary* on it since childhood. In his late years he still held that reading this Classic was a waste of time, having no benefit for self-cultivation at all.¹³³ The only way of reading this text could be to "discuss the successes and failures of the past and investigate the textual variants," a way often employed in "reading histories and collecting anecdotes."¹³⁴ Actually Zhu suggested that his disciples read this text as a history rather than a Classic. Read as a history together with its *Zuo Commentary*, the *Spring and Autumn* was an illuminating work.¹³⁵ As a Classic, it was hard to understand since the expositions (i.e. the Gongyang and Guliang commentaries) were arbitrary and farfetched despite their importance in elaborating the Confucian Way. These two (groups of) commentators imposed their own readings upon Confucius the historian, declaring that each phrase in this Classic illustrated his attitude towards the historical figure or event described. Zhu refuted this Classical approach since it was impossible for the two commentators to "know Confucius' thinking."¹³⁶ Confucius' original intention was simply to write down the history of his native state of Lu up until his own times to show the patterns of order and disorder, rise and fall.¹³⁷ Thus as far as history was concerned,

¹³³ Ibid., "Shu Linzhang suokan sijing hou" 書臨漳所刊四經後 [Postscript to the four Classics published in Linzhang], 82:22b; Zhu Xi 1532a, "Da Cai Jitong" 答蔡季通 [Reply to Cai Jitong], 2:6b.

¹³⁴ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Wei Yuanlü" 答魏元履 [Reply to Wei Yuanlü], 39:36a-b.

¹³⁵ Li Jingde 1986, 83.2148.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 83.2144, 2155.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 83.2144, 2145, 2148.

the *Zuo Commentary* was closer to Confucius' intention and more reliable as an aid to readers of the *Spring and Autumn* than were the Gongyang and Guliang commentaries.¹³⁸ This means that the reader should understand the *Spring and Autumn* based on the historical *Zuo Commentary* rather than on the moral Gongyang and Guliang expositions. When it was time to apprehend the principle the *Spring and Autumn* embraced, the reader could utilize what he had known about principle from the Four Books to analyze what he read from this text.¹³⁹ Because the commentarial tradition exaggerated, if not fabricated, Confucius' political and moral thoughts, Zhu discouraged his disciples from engaging with the *Spring and Autumn*. It should not be a Classical specialization in the civil examination since it was unreasonable to write an essay deducing Confucius' moral intention from just a few words.¹⁴⁰

In his theory of reading, Zhu proposed an evidential approach to the Classics and other texts. This style of reading carried on the Han-Tang tradition of Classical exegesis. When applied to reading practices, its epistemic achievement was evidential studies of the Classics and other texts, as Zhu's scholarship indicates. The evidential style did not mean evidential studies themselves but was a tactic of reading instead. As a tactic, it was subject to the strategic pursuit of principle. When evidential and literal interpretation of the text was impractical, the reader should not devote much effort to the literal meaning of the word and the phrase but grasp the general meaning. In later reading practices, however, the evidential style was employed despite the underrating of evidential studies, as I shall discuss in Chapters Three and Four.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 83.2148, 2151-52.

¹³⁹ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Pan Zishan" 答潘子善 [Reply to Pan Zishan], 60:41a; Li Jingde 1986, 55.1318.

¹⁴⁰ Li Jingde 1986, 83.2173, 2174, 109.2697.

I.3. Textual/Knowledge Hierarchy

Reading widely would lead to broad knowledge, but not all texts were equal. Zhu's theory of reading implied the relationship between branches of knowledge, which was in turn presented as a textual hierarchy. Corresponding to it, Zhu proposed a sequence of reading from the core texts to the difficult. Accordingly he expected the student adherent to Neo-Confucian principle to ground his repertoire of knowledge on the Classical texts and Classical Learning. Zhu encouraged students to read widely, but in his ideal knowledge framework there lay an exclusive anticipation that emphasized the superiority of Neo-Confucian principle over all other branches of knowledge. With his textual/knowledge hierarchy, Zhu intended to correct the multifarious and disorder tendency in scholarly discussions.

I.3.1. Read in Sequence with Adjustments

Understanding the origins, natures and literary forms of the Classics, Zhu instructed his disciples to read in a prescribed sequence that intellectual historians have noted. This sequence, however, could be slightly adjusted to accommodate the reader's individuality. Zhu's well known order of reading stipulated the mastery of the basic texts of Neo-Confucianism before approaching other Confucian Classics, standard histories, and philosophical writings. All texts to be read could be listed in a sequence from the easy to the difficult and then from the core to the periphery: *Elementary Learning* (*xiaoxue*小學), *Reflections on Things at Hand*, the *Great Learning*, the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the six Classics, and finally standard histories and philosophers.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Ōtsuki Nobuyoshi 1955, 104.

A selection of passages from the Classics, standard histories and other works from the pre-Qin to the Song, the *Elementary Learning* was intended as a primer to lay a foundation for a person's social development by providing "all the great models (*dafa* 大法)." ¹⁴² The *Reflections* was the first anthology of Neo-Confucian conversations. It contained the "pure essence of [Neo-Confucian] moral principles," eventually aiming at the cultivation of virtue. Zhu considered this anthology the ladder to the Four Books and the Six Classics. ¹⁴³ By reading the *Elementary Learning* and the *Reflections* the student would prepare themselves for the next stage of learning. The proper demeanor and basic understanding of Neo-Confucian principle, in Zhu's curriculum, preceded the "investigation of things to extend knowledge," the central topic of the *Great Learning*. ¹⁴⁴

Since reading books was theorized as a main way of investigating things to extend knowledge, Zhu's theory of reading was originally intended for adult disciples who were supposed to have finished the preliminary stage before coming to him. This explained why his art elaborated how to read the Four Books, the Classics and other advanced texts rather than lingering over the *Elementary Learning* and the *Reflections*. Even the *Great Learning*, for him, only prescribed some abstract rules. In order effectively to investigate things and extend knowledge, the adult reader should widely examine the Classics and histories as much as possible, compare and reflect on their readings until they had gained a clear understanding of them. ¹⁴⁵ These reading practices, however, should be constrained by the Neo-Confucian principle embraced in the Classics.

¹⁴² Kelleher 1989, quotation from 221n.7; Li Jingde 1986, 105.2629.

¹⁴³ Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian 1967, xx; Li Jingde 1986, 105.2629.

¹⁴⁴ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Hu Guangzhong" 答胡廣仲 [Reply to Hu Guangzhong], 42:1a-b.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., "答孫敬甫" [Reply to Sun Jingfu], 63:23b.

For readers who began with the *Great Learning*, Zhu designed a programme of probing principle through reading the core texts in sequence: the Four Books, one of the Five Classics, the *Grand Scribe's Records*, the *Zuo Commentary to the Spring and Autumn*, the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*, and other dynastic histories if possible.¹⁴⁶ Zhu justified this sequence and maintained that it should be strictly followed. “[W]e must first read the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, the *Great Learning*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean* in order to examine the intentions of the sages and worthies;” he said to his disciples. “We must read the histories to examine the traces of dynastic preservation and ruin, order and disorder; and we must read the thinkers of the hundred schools to observe their various confusions and faults.”¹⁴⁷

Within the Classics Branch, the Four Books were the core of Zhu's Classical exegesis and the stepping stones to the Five Classics. Even within the Four Books, Zhu suggested, the texts should be read in a proper order: first the *Great Learning*, then the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, and finally the *Doctrine of the Mean*. Theoretically his sequence was not to be altered.¹⁴⁸ Zhu briefly justified this sequence, saying:

I want men first to read the *Great Learning* to fix upon the pattern of the Confucian Way; next the *Analects* to establish its foundations; next the *Mencius* to observe its development; and next the *Doctrine of the Mean* to discover the mysteries of the ancients. The *Great Learning* provides within its covers a series of steps and a precise order in which they should be followed; it is easy to understand

¹⁴⁶ Gardner 1990, 160-61(5.66); Li Jingde 1986, 11.195, cf. 67.1658.

¹⁴⁷ Li Jingde 1986, 11.188; translation modified from Gardner 1990, 152 (5.42).

¹⁴⁸ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Shu Linzhang suokan sizi hou" 書臨漳所刊四子後 [Postscript to the Four Books published in Linzhang], 82:26a-b; Li Jingde 1986, 14.249.

and so should be read first. Although the *Analects* is concrete, its sayings are scattered about in fragments; on first reading, it is difficult. The *Mencius* contains passages that inspire and arouse men's minds. *The Doctrine of the Mean*, too, is difficult to understand; it should be read only after the other three books.¹⁴⁹

Until his completion of these four texts, the reader was not capable of using other texts as Confucian principle stipulated.¹⁵⁰ Zhu viewed the *Great Learning* as an outline, a route book for the pursuit of learning and self-cultivation.¹⁵¹ He himself devoted most of his time to its exposition.¹⁵² The *Analects* used concrete examples to teach the reader proper conduct, while the *Mencius* provided theoretical elaborations.¹⁵³ Thus Zhu suggested that the reader ponder the *Analects* carefully and read the *Mencius* over and over until he had an intimate knowledge of it.¹⁵⁴ The *Doctrine of the Mean* was too abstract for the beginner to understand; it could be apprehended only after the three other texts had been mastered.¹⁵⁵

It should be noted that Zhu in a few cases changed the above sequence of reading the Four Books. For those who could not apprehend the pattern of learning prescribed in the *Great Learning*, Zhu suggested reading the *Analects* and the *Mencius* first so that they could gradually learn the steps towards the cultivation of virtue.¹⁵⁶ For some readers, he recommended the *Analects* first followed by the *Mencius*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and

¹⁴⁹ Li Jingde 1986, 14.249; translation modified from Gardner 2007, xxv; cf. Gardner 1986, 5-6.

¹⁵⁰ Li Jingde 1986, 14.249.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 14.250, 251, 252; Gardner 1986, 4.

¹⁵² Li Jingde 1986, 14.258; Gardner 1986, 3.

¹⁵³ Li Jingde 1986, 19.429, 430.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.432.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.1479.

¹⁵⁶ Zhu Xi 1532a, "Da Huang Zhiqing" 答黃直卿 [Reply to Huang Zhiqing], 1:9b.

finally the *Great Learning*. Whatever the suggested sequence was, those texts should be read following Zhu's rules.¹⁵⁷

With respect to self-cultivation and apprehending principle, Zhu insisted that reading the *Analects* and the *Mencius* from the Four Books was more effective than directly approaching the Five Classics.¹⁵⁸ The Four Books embraced Neo-Confucian principle in a simple and illuminating style. In comparison, reading the Five Classics was not as urgent for self-cultivation because of their obscurity, as I have discussed above. The reader should read the Five Classics in different ways, but with the principle he first apprehended from the Four Books in mind.

For students reading history, Zhu also prescribed a sequence: first the *Grand Scribe's Records*, then the *Zuo Commentary to the Spring and Autumn* considered supplementary to the former, the *History of the Former Han*, the *History of the Later Han*, the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* and last the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*; if possible, more dynastic histories could be read.¹⁵⁹ Before reading the *Comprehensive Mirror*, the reader should have as his background a rough knowledge of the dynastic history that interested him. The dynastic history, which was in the annalistic-biographical style, described events in more detail than the simply annalistic *Comprehensive Mirror* did. In general, the annals simply chronologically listed events without mentioning historical causes and results.¹⁶⁰

Despite slight adjustments, Zhu's sequence of reading aimed to establish the core place of the Four Books in the textual hierarchy and that of Classical Learning in the

¹⁵⁷ Zhu Xi 1532a, "Da Wang Qinzi" 答王欽之 [Reply to Wang Qinzi], 58:9b; Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Luo Canyi" 答羅參議 [Reply to Consultant Luo], 5:13b.

¹⁵⁸ Li Jingde 1986, 19.428.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.195-96; Gardner 1990, 160-61 (5.66).

¹⁶⁰ Li Jingde 1986, 11.196.

knowledge hierarchy. As core texts, the Four Books provided the textual ground and philosophical presumption for Classical Learning and Neo-Confucianism. They also set up the constraints for other branches of knowledge such as history. Inferior to Classical Learning, the field of history had its own textual hierarchy. The fundamental and core text, in Zhu's theory, provided a disciplinary paradigm, a paradigm that the reader pursuing the field was expected to adopt.

I.3.2. Knowledge Core and Periphery

Zhu's stipulated sequence in reading aimed at illustrating Neo-Confucian principle's universality and Classical Learning's superiority over other branches of knowledge. Since Classical Learning prepared the foundation of Neo-Confucian principle, the priority of the Classics in Zhu's theory also meant the dominance of Neo-Confucian principle over knowledge acquisition and innovation. His theory of reading was actually devoted to establishing this dominance in elite intellectual life. For some Song Neo-Confucian masters such as Cheng Yi, as I have mentioned, Neo-Confucianism was superior to evidential studies and literary arts, both simply considered as dispensable aids to apprehending principle. Zhu in his theory further reconfigured the relationship between branches of knowledge, assigning each branch a place in his ideal knowledge framework. Corresponding to his reading sequence from core to periphery texts, Zhu's ideal knowledge framework was hierarchic in essence. At the top of this pyramid lay Learning of the Way, with Classical exegesis as the pillar; the latter in turn was supported by other branches of knowledge such as history, non-Neo-Confucian philosophies, and literary arts (see Figure I.3.1).

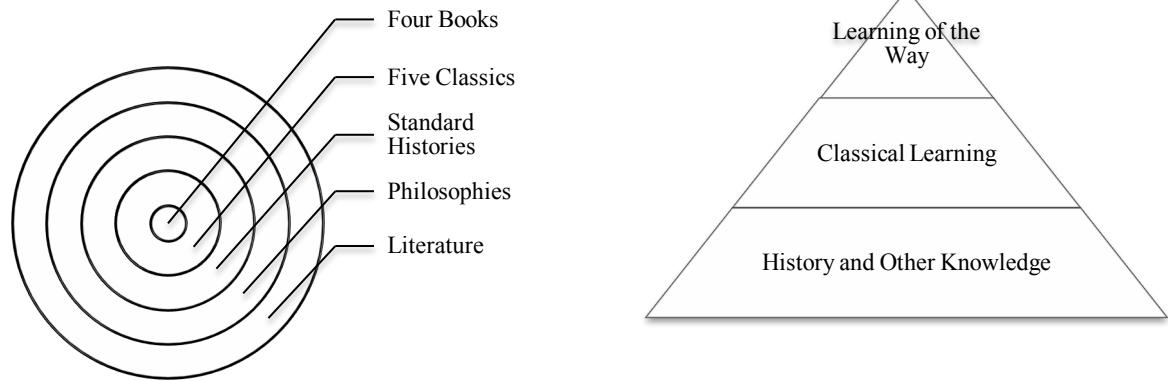


Figure I.3.1. Zhu Xi's Textual/Knowledge Hierarchy

Zhu once talked about his *Collected Commentaries to the Analects*, saying, “[I just intended to] reveal the meaning of words, to remind people to ponder the Classical text since the principle is implied in it.”¹⁶¹ Clearly, he attempted to base his Learning of the Way on Classical exegesis. He encouraged readers to figure out the sage’s intention through understanding every word in the Classical text. The mastery of principle implied in the Classical texts, in Zhu’s reading theory and practices, would facilitate the application of principle to social and political life in a practical way, either through internal self-cultivation or external government service. However the reader might apply principle, the foundation was established in his study of the Classics.

Zhu expected students to combine Classical Learning and historical studies into their repertoires of knowledge: Classical scholars should have a firm command of history while historians should understand Confucian principle as their intellectual origin and basis (*yuanben* 原本).¹⁶² Zhu assumed that everything followed a “general root” (*da genben* 大根本, i.e. principle) but also had its own “urgency” (*yaoqie chu* 要切處, i.e.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 19.438.

¹⁶² Zhu 1532b, “Xuexiao gongju siyi,” in 69:26b; “Qizhou jiaoshouting ji” 蕪州教授廳記 [Record of the lecture hall of Qizhou], in 77:22a.

nature) to be determined. The latter could not be revealed until the former was apprehended. Both were indispensable for responsible learning.¹⁶³ A matter's general root was established through Classical Learning and Learning of the Way, while its elements were covered by historical studies. To apprehend both the principle and the nature of a matter was the main task of learning. Trained in this way, the scholar could be firmly established and understand order and disorder, successes and failures, and dynastic survival and collapse, whether in the past or the present.¹⁶⁴

What the reader was expected to learn from histories were the “great moral principles, the great opportunities, and the developments of order and disorder, success and failure.”¹⁶⁵ The pursuit of principle was still the ultimate goal of reading histories. Even though they deserved to be read, Zhu argued, histories could not effect moral or spiritual improvement of the reader as the Classics could.¹⁶⁶ “Histories are superficial things,” not as urgent as the Classics that greatly affected the reader's self-cultivation.¹⁶⁷ Thus he reiterated the priority of Classical Learning over historical studies. Only those readers equipped with an understanding of the Four Books could have proper standards of historical criticism.¹⁶⁸ He disagreed with the historians of the Eastern Zhejiang School who, according to Zhu, neglected the Classical texts and focused instead on pre-Han historical writings with the aim of finding the principles of historical development in their studies of institutions and systems. Zhu derided their “self-deception” and “heretical” approach to learning and their misplacing of histories over the Classics and historians

¹⁶³ Ibid., “Da Zhang Jingfu” 答張敬夫 [Reply to Zhang Jingfu], 25:5a-b.

¹⁶⁴ Li Jingde 1986, 113.2740, 11.189-90; Gardner 1990, 153 (5.44).

¹⁶⁵ Li Jingde 1986, 11.196; translation modified from Gardner 1990, 161 (5.67).

¹⁶⁶ Zhu Xi 1532b, “Da Pan Shuchang” 答潘叔昌 [Reply to Pan Shuchang], 46:22b.

¹⁶⁷ Li Jingde 1986, 11.189, cf. 11.197.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 11.195; for more details, see Qian Mu 1971, V:110-18.

over the sages.¹⁶⁹ He expected the reader to judge the past by the principles he was supposed to apprehend through reading the Classical texts.¹⁷⁰

The priority of Classical Learning over historical studies was incontestable in Zhu's theory. Until he was twenty years old, as he himself told it, Zhu had not approached any histories, which he considered less pressing than the Classics.¹⁷¹ He alerted students to the "bustle" of historical writings in comparison with the "serenity" of the Classics. Histories were worth reading, but one should not turn to them before understanding the core Classical texts and apprehending the sages' essentials of self-cultivation and governance.¹⁷² The Six Classics Confucius edited should be esteemed as the infallible and perpetual criteria of one's study, while "ordering the world" (i.e. government and social services) was secondary.¹⁷³ The proper sequence of pursuing learning, Zhu said, should be "to improve oneself before improving people, and to apprehend principle before taking governance."¹⁷⁴ This means that the reader should know Classical Learning well before approaching historical studies.

I.3.3. Inclusive Reading and Exclusive Attainment

Philosophical pursuits other than Neo-Confucianism were on Zhu's reading list and subject to his knowledge hierarchy, as historical studies were. He recognized that "books by the thinkers of other various schools also include[d] good discussions."¹⁷⁵ He

¹⁶⁹ Li Jingde 1986, 11.195, 45.1149, 114.2757; cf. Gardner 1990, 160 (5.65); Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Lü Ziyue" 答呂子約 [Reply to Lü Ziyue], 47:26a-b.

¹⁷⁰ Li Jingde 1986, 11.197.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 104.2616.

¹⁷² Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Lü Bogong" 答呂伯恭 [Reply to Lü Bogong], 33:35b; "Da Liang Wenshu" 答梁文叔 [Reply to Liang Wenshu], 44:30b.

¹⁷³ Li Jingde 1986, 108.2687.

¹⁷⁴ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Lü Bogong," 35:12a.

¹⁷⁵ Li Jingde 1986, 137.3253.

encouraged his disciples to read those texts only if they first had mastered Neo-Confucian principle and could adhere to it. One of his disciples, who was worried about the possible confusion caused by the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, asked Zhu whether or not he should ignore these two “heretical” texts, and Zhu replied,

[As Confucius said,] the superior man [does] not put aside good words because of the man [who said them]. If a word can be recommended, why not take it? ... As long as you firmly possess principle, what harm would it cause to read them? The key lies in your discrimination of the heretical intentions from those of the sages'.¹⁷⁶

The employment of “good words” from “heretical” texts clearly resulted from Zhu’s rule to read with an open mind. In approaching the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi*, he insisted, the reader should also focus on the authors’ original meaning. Early commentators of these texts had missed their intent by reading their own ideas into the original.¹⁷⁷ Zhu discouraged a disciple from devoting too much time to the *Zhuangzi* because its argument was useless for apprehending principle.¹⁷⁸ Yet, Zhu appreciated the literary merit of the *Zhuangzi* and encouraged his disciples to learn literary arts from it.¹⁷⁹ With his Confucian stance and adherence to principle, he totally rejected the Mohists as Mencius did, holding

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 97.2498; *Analects* 15.22, Legge 1960, I:300.

¹⁷⁷ Li Jingde 1986, 125.3001.

¹⁷⁸ Zhu Xi 1532b, “Da Teng Decui,” 49:24b-25a.

¹⁷⁹ Li Jingde 1986, 125.2991, 2992.

that Mohism was completely “evil” and violated the human relationships that Confucianism defined.¹⁸⁰

Zhu’s encounters with Daoist, Mohist and other non-Confucian texts meant a process of reading and assessing the text before his final decision to assimilate or reject its meaning and intention. The process of reading and assessing was evidential and literary, while the decision was philosophical (moral and political). The former was tactical, the latter strategic. His rule of keeping one’s mind open was applicable more to the process of reading and assessing than to the philosophical decision-making. In other words, the process of pondering could be inclusive but the result of contemplation should be exclusive.

This combination of inclusiveness and exclusiveness can be confirmed in his evaluations of earlier Confucians. For Zhu, Confucians from Xunzi (313-238 BC) to Han Yu all deviated from the principle established by Confucius and Mencius. Some of them finally turned to Legalism, some converted to Daoism. Whatever their original theories were, they were not able to unify perfectly principle and its application.¹⁸¹ Zhu attributed earlier digressions from the genealogy of the Way to improper reading methods: Confucians after Confucius and Mencius did not carefully read the Classical texts at all but simply imposed their own reading upon these two sages.¹⁸²

It is well known that Song Neo-Confucians were conventionally labeled with Confucianism but largely inspired by Buddhism and Daoism. Their borrowing from and similarities to pre-Qin philosophies other than Confucianism were also evident, even

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 55.1313-14, 1319-21.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 137.3255.

¹⁸² Ibid., 137.3258.

though they intentionally concealed their intellectual origins and stimuli.¹⁸³ This suppression resonated with Zhu's concentration on the core Classical texts in his theory of reading, by which he intended to train readers who could internalize Neo-Confucian principle. They were expected first to read the Four Books to establish their adherence to principle, then to investigate things largely through reading widely as an accumulative progress to the apprehension of the essentials, and finally to apply principle to moral, social and political practices.¹⁸⁴ Reading the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, the *Mozi*, and other philosophical pursuits clearly was a part of the investigation of things, which exclusively aimed at the apprehension of principle.

1.4. Pragmatism in Reading

In applying his theory of reading to educational practices, as I have mentioned, Zhu was not hesitant to adjust his pedagogy and recommended reading list. Moral cultivation in his theory was a goal of reading. Meanwhile, Zhu expected students to apply principles they apprehended to their socio-political service. I tend to assume that in his theory of reading, Zhu implied his ideas about the socially and politically practical uses of book learning. This pragmatic goal led him unconsciously to break with the textual/knowledge hierarchy he attempted to maintain. In his intellectual practices, Zhu recognized the literary nature of the *Songs* and appreciated the literary merits of those who failed to embrace principle in their compositions, as I have discussed above. His historical studies and knowledge of arts, pursued out of a pragmatic interest, sometimes appeared to overthrow the constraints imposed by the Classics and his Learning of the Way.

¹⁸³ Liu Shipei 1936, 44b-45b.

¹⁸⁴ Qian Mu 1971, III:580-600.

I.4.1. Pragmatic Reading of the Classics and Histories

Despite his stress on moral didacticism, Zhu was interested in the social and political model found in the Classics, especially ancient rites. He highly valued rites. In his polemic against Buddhist rites, Zhu compiled his *Family Rituals* based on the Confucian Classics. The liturgies he proposed had been widely used from the thirteenth century onward in spite of some criticism in the sixteenth century.¹⁸⁵ For learned scholars, in his view, the knowledge acquired from broad reading was to be constrained by and practiced in ritual, which were indispensable for both the court and the gentry.¹⁸⁶

Zhu examined ancient rites precisely with an intention to adapt them to the contemporary condition.¹⁸⁷ Students who did not put into practice what they learned from the evidential reading of ritual texts achieved nothing. Any rites, for Zhu, should be practicable and accord with local and contemporary customs. They could be practiced if they did not violate Confucian principle.¹⁸⁸ Among those texts on rites, ancient rites were rooted in the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* (*Yili* 儀禮) while the *Book of Rites* essentially consisted of Qin and Han interpretation of the former. He once planned a book that included only the *Yili* and the *Liji*, since he esteemed the Han commentators for their contributions to social customs. He held that without Han scholarship on rites, the text would have remained incomplete and obscure.¹⁸⁹ The *Rites of the Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮)

¹⁸⁵ Patricia Ebrey, "Introduction," in Zhu Xi 1991.

¹⁸⁶ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Jiang *Liji* xushuo" 講禮記序說 [Brief introduction to the lecture on *Rites*], 74:17b.

¹⁸⁷ Qian Mu 1971, "Zhuzi zhi lixue" 朱子之禮學 [Zhu Xi's studies of rites], V:117-20.

¹⁸⁸ Li Jingde 1986, 84.2177, 2178, 89.2275.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.2186; Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Li Jizhang" 答李季章 [Reply to Li Jizhang], 38:44b; "Qi taolun sangfu zhazi shu zougao hou" 乞討論喪服劄子書奏藁後 [Postscript to my memorial suggesting a discussion about rites of mourning garments], 14:28a.

was independent from the other two texts. It was worth studying, but not as effective as the *Yili* and the *Liji* for self-cultivation.¹⁹⁰

Pragmatic reading complicated the tension between Classical Learning and historical studies, or between Neo-Confucian principle and historical truth. While emphasizing the apprehension of principle, Zhu suggested that his disciples memorize certain important parts of the historical text. Those parts illustrated the moments (or great opportunities) when historical turns happened, and included important historical criticism.¹⁹¹ To understand and handle those historical turns—that is, “urgencies” to be clarified in his instructions of reading history—was among the social and political responsibilities that the court, officials, and gentry were assumed to take.¹⁹² To know decisive historical events was one of Zhu’s instructions for reading histories.

As a result of this tension, reader-practitioners including Zhu himself sometimes wavered between their Classical orthodoxy and disciplinarily autonomous historical studies. When he was planning the *Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror*, Zhu realized that he should follow the style of the *Spring and Autumn* but was cautious about completely adopting it without any modifications.¹⁹³ He recognized that this Classic, together with the *Documents*, was the origin of Chinese historiography.¹⁹⁴ As mentioned above, however, he did not think that every phrase in the *Spring and Autumn* implied Confucius’ moral and political judgments, as the text’s exegetical traditions had attempted to reveal. He just esteemed the general purpose of the *Spring and Autumn* to

¹⁹⁰ Li Jingde 1986, 84.2186, 86.2203.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 11.197; Gardner 1990, 161-62 (5.69).

¹⁹² Li Jingde 1986, 13.237, 95.2449; Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian 1967, 55 (2.31).

¹⁹³ Zhu Xi 1532b, “Da Cai Jitong” 答蔡季通 [Reply to Cai Jitong], 44:7b.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, “Ba Tongjian jishi benmo” 跋通鑑紀事本末 [Postscript to the *Comprehensive mirror for aid in government, tropically arranged*], 81:7a-b.

“exterminate rebellious ministers and punish the wicked, assimilate [the people in] the Middle Kingdom and alienate barbarians, honour the King [of the Zhou] and despise the dukes [under him].”¹⁹⁵ From this purpose, Zhu developed his idea of dynastic legitimacy (*zhengtong* 正統). He thought that Sima Guang in his *Comprehensive Mirror* failed to carry on Confucius’ purpose in the *Spring and Autumn* to rectify the original ranks of dukes who usurped the title of the king.¹⁹⁶ In his plan of the *Outline*, Zhu tended to phrase carefully to imply his moral attitudes toward historical figures and events, in contrast to his reading of the *Spring and Autumn*.¹⁹⁷ Informed by his idea of dynastic legitimacy, therefore, the *Outline* was intended as an ideological adaptation of Sima Guang’s *Comprehensive Mirror*.¹⁹⁸ This idea was actually inherited from the exegetical tradition of the *Spring and Autumn*.

On the other hand, Zhu indeed had his own historical ideas. His attempt to balance Classical Learning and historical studies was obvious in his four principles for editing the *Outline*, highlighting them with both physical formats and historical narratives. (1) The entry should begin with the year of the legitimate reign, with the corresponding combination of the heavenly stem and the earthly branch written at the beginning of the first column. (2) What occurred in the legitimate reign should be written in big characters in single column, while the event in the illegitimate reign was in small characters in double columns. (3) Both positive and negative elements in the legitimate reign should be written with equal attention to praise and blame. (4) The detailed comment in the entry

¹⁹⁵ Li Jingde 1986, 83.2144.

¹⁹⁶ Zhu Xi 1532b, “Cimian Jiangdong tixing zouzhuang er tiehuang” 辭免江東提刑奏狀二貼黃 [Summary in yellow sheet attached to the second memorial asking the resignation from the Judicial Commission of Jiangdong], 22:27b.

¹⁹⁷ Qian Mu 1971, V:132-34.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, V:129-40.

was intended as a historical narrative, investigating the event and evaluating the figure.¹⁹⁹ Among these principles, the use of big characters in single column was clearly an imitation of the *Spring and Autumn*, while the detailed note was inspired by the *Zuo Commentary*. The second and third principles indicated Zhu's tradition of Classical exegesis and the fourth his recognition of autonomous historical studies.²⁰⁰

Although he valorized the superiority of the Classics over histories, Zhu emphasized in his reading practices the understanding of historical events as the prerequisite to Neo-Confucian judgment. He expected his disciples to examine why a historical description was right or wrong before apprehending the principle it embraced.²⁰¹ Zhu did not hesitate to recognize and accept some descriptions in reliable historical works such as the *Grand Scribe's Records* rather than the related narrative in a Classic such as the *Mencius*, when the latter appeared contradictory or inconsistent with the former.²⁰² His disagreement with the commentarial tradition of the *Spring and Autumn* was also based on his questioning of the events described in that Classical text. Without knowing well the events Confucius briefly described, he insisted, it would not be possible to deduce Confucius' moral and political intentions.²⁰³ Sometimes, Zhu directed his Classical exegesis to historical studies of ancient institutions.²⁰⁴ Here the Classics were not determining of history but subject to it.

¹⁹⁹ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Zizhi tongjian gangmu xu" 資治通鑑綱目序 [Preface to the *Outline of the Comprehensive mirror for the aid in governance*], 75:23b-24a; Burton Watson's translation in de Bary et al 1999, I:662; cf. Lee 2009, 56.

²⁰⁰ Qian Mu 1971, V:139.

²⁰¹ Li Jingde 1986, 11.196, 197; Gardner 1990, 161 (5.68).

²⁰² Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Cao Ziye" 答曹子野 [Reply to Cao Ziye], 44:53b-54b; Qian Mu 1971, V:311-12, 327-30.

²⁰³ Qian Mu 1971, V:324-26.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, V:312-13.

For Zhu himself, reading history should produce knowledge that was practical and useful for moral, social, and political life. Unreliable and useless portions of the *Documents* could be neglected, since knowledge helpful in dealing with current individual and public affairs was more urgent than an aimless investigation of the past. Geographical knowledge should not be learned from the “Tribute of Yu” (*Yu gong* 禹貢) in the *Documents*, but from contemporary writings and fieldwork instead because of topographical changes.²⁰⁵ Histories, Zhu proposed, were important in current affairs because they revealed lessons from the rise and fall, order and disorder, successes and failures of the past and present. Other areas of knowledge traditionally classified under History, such as institutions and geography, were also indispensable for ordering state and society. Because of its practical significance, Zhu suggested students be trained in history. He even proposed a scheme of specializations in history and practical knowledge for the civil examination system. His scheme was designed to recruit scholars who were well versed in both the Classics and history and had mastered the skills useful in government service.²⁰⁶ In this sense, Zhu’s use of historical studies was more utilitarian than moralistic.

I.4.2. Extending Interest to Diverse Arts

Zhu expended pragmatism in his reading strategy from Classical Learning, historical studies, and literary composition, which literati conventionally called learning or the sciences (*xue* 學), to diverse arts (*shu* 術). Unlike the Cheng brothers who tended to despise arts as cunning, artful, and miscellaneous, Zhu defined them as indispensable

²⁰⁵ Li Jingde 1986, 79.2023, 2025, 2027ff; Qian Mu 1971, V:297-310.

²⁰⁶ Zhu Xi 1532b, “Xuexiao gongju siyi,” 69:23b, 24a; more details below.

skills for solving practical problems.²⁰⁷ At the same time, he advocated practicing those skills as a way of apprehending principle.

In 1163, Zhu recalled his early interests in calligraphy, painting and diverse arts in addition to the Six Classics, philosophies, current politics and literature.²⁰⁸ He had kept up these interests until his last days. His achievements in natural studies and ideas on diverse arts have been fully described elsewhere.²⁰⁹ What is important to the present argument is that while Zhu shaped his own intellectual life largely through broad and unconstrained reading, he also expanded his interests to those arts conventionally considered of less moral importance but useful in daily life, such as divination and life nourishment.

Zhu's chosen spiritual master Cheng Hao (1032-1085) warned students about "miscellaneous learning," which was unlimited in quantity and would drown those with insufficient self-cultivation.²¹⁰ For Cheng, "[m]ost things young people enjoy will destroy their purpose...[and] will prevent understanding the Way." Even calligraphy and composition should be prohibited.²¹¹ Zhu disagreed with Cheng but justified himself by citing Confucius. The Sage instructed his disciples to "let the will be set on the path of duty. Let every attainment in what is good be firmly grasped. Let perfect virtue be accorded with. Let relaxation and enjoyment be found in the polite arts."²¹² Arts, Zhu declared, were indispensable in daily life and also embraced principle. Apprehending

²⁰⁷ Li Jingde 1986, 51.1223, 16.362.

²⁰⁸ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Song Huang Ziheng xu" 送黃子衡序 [Essay presented for a farewell to Huang Ziheng], 75:5b-6a.

²⁰⁹ Qian Mu 1971, "Zhuzi gewu youyi zhi xue" 朱子格物遊藝之學 [Master Zhu's natural studies and knowledge of arts], v:342-409; Yamada Keiji 1978.

²¹⁰ Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi 1981, "Henan Chengshi yishu" 河南程氏遺書 [Collected conversations of the Cheng brothers], 2A.23.

²¹¹ Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian 1967, 262 (11.5).

²¹² *Analects* 7.6, in Legge 1960, I:196.

principle by practicing arts and investigating things at hand was more practicable for most people in that they could be continuously reminded of mental attentiveness. As long as he followed the sequence of reading, discriminated both the important and the less important, and kept attentive in his daily cultivation, the student would obtain sagehood.²¹³ “Even the thing of less importance,” he reminded one of his disciples, “deserves investigating and practicing as relaxation and enjoyment with meticulous attentiveness.”²¹⁴

An open mind and meticulous attentiveness, both stipulated as Zhu’s rules of reading the Classics, were also practiced in his learning of Yin-Yang theory and divination. Among the Song Neo-Confucian masters who preceded him, both Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073) and Shao Yong (1011–1077) based their metaphysics on Yin-Yang theory. In their theories, the interaction between the Yin and Yang elements functioned as the ultimate principle of both the macro- and micro-cosmos. Their theories fertilized Zhu’s metaphysics and cosmology.²¹⁵ As one of the Confucian Classics, the *Changes* was a divination manual by nature. Thus both Yin-Yang theory and divination were fields that Confucian students were expected to study. For Zhu himself, his mastery of them was a by-product of his investigation of the original meaning through reading those texts.²¹⁶ Meanwhile, as Song Neo-Confucians adopted their Yin-Yang theory from Daoism, Zhu naturally extended his interest to the Daoist use of the *Changes*. As a result, he commentated on *Zhouyi cantongqi* 周易參同契 (Token for the Agreement of the Three According to the *Book of Changes*), a main Daoist scripture combining the *Changes*,

²¹³ Zhu Xi 1983, “Lunyu jizhu” 論語集注 [*Analects* with collected commentaries], 4.94.

²¹⁴ Zhu Xi 1532c, “Yu Sun Jihe shu” 與孫季和書 [Letter to Sun Jihe], 3:11a.

²¹⁵ Wang 2005; Adler 2008; Birdwhistell 1989, 51-64, *passim*.

²¹⁶ Qian Mu 1971, V:344.

alchemy, and ideas of everlasting life.²¹⁷ From his interest in everlasting life, Zhu practiced the art of life-nourishment and quiet sitting,²¹⁸ and then became interested in medicine. He suggested to his friends that they ought to “read fixed prescriptions in [their] spare time to understand the principle of self-nourishment.”²¹⁹

Zhu’s encouragement of his students to develop these varied interests did not go unchallenged. Chen Liang (1143-1194) derided Zhu’s interests and practices as addictions to trivial things and a waste of time, on the grounds that arts such as divination and painting could be tempting and distracting from the Confucian Way.²²⁰ In the fifteenth century, however, the Confucian Zhuang Chang (1437-1499), a predecessor of Wang Yangming, highly praised Zhu’s broad interests and achievements in addition to his philosophical contributions. In Zhuang’s words, Zhu’s Classical exegeses, *Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror*, astronomy, geography and topography, musicology, and the like were all “learning of the sages and worthies helpful [in improving] human nature and morality,” and thus Zhu actually consummated Confucian learning prior to his age more than simply carrying on the Cheng brother’s teachings.²²¹ In his own reading experience, Zhu justified the literatus’ broad learning, including those practical and apparently unrelated to moral cultivation. The ideal reader should not constrain his explorations within a few texts only but was encouraged to learn widely from various books in order to investigate everything he encountered.

²¹⁷ Ibid., V:345-46; Wei 1994.

²¹⁸ Qian Mu 1971, V:349-50.

²¹⁹ Li Jingde 1986, 107.2677.

²²⁰ Chen Liang 1987, "Ba Huian song xiezhao Guo xiucui xu hou" 跋晦庵送寫照郭秀才序後 [Postscript to Zhu Xi's Essay presented to the painter Cultivated Talent Guo], 23.256-57.

²²¹ Zhuang Chang 1778, "Wuyuan sanxian citang ji" 婺源三賢祠堂記 [Record of the Shrine to the Three Worthies in Wuyuan], 8:10a-b.

I.5. Between Ideal and Real: Reading for the Civil Examinations

An ideal literatus-reader, in Zhu's theory, was supposed to practice arts in the literatus-style and read widely beyond the Confucian Classics, but to esteem Confucian principle as his ultimate rule of knowing and acting. Zhu's ideal readers, however, could not be equated to real readers, who had to be pragmatic in their preparations for the civil examinations. Reading habits were shaped in educational practices, but their socio-political status was determined by institutions. Zhu not only instructed his disciples to read properly as we have found above, but also proposed a reformation in the civil examination system as an institutional foundation of his ideal reading habits.

I.5.1. Declining Reading Habits in the Examination Culture

Expeditious preparations for the civil examinations, for Zhu, largely misled students-readers, causing them to approach the designated texts in an improper way. In their exercises of answering questions in the stipulated style, students did not understand the original meaning of the Classical text at all but strove for novel ideas as topics for their examination essays. This transformation in reading habits, Zhu observed, occurred in the second half of the twelfth century.²²² He was dissatisfied with this superficial and utilitarian reading habit common among examination candidates. He called candidates who bargained with their examiners for the style of their essay “bandits,” those unsuccessful as loafers, and even derided as “worthless” the successful, because of their groundless and empty essays.²²³

²²² Li Jingde 1986, 10.175, citing Lü Zuqian's family as an example.

²²³ E.g. *ibid.*, 34.867, 109.2693-94.

The failure in recruiting talents through civil examinations, Zhu maintained, directly resulted from the present system itself more than the examiners. The degeneration of the literati's morals was another cause as scholars tended to impose their own ideas upon the sages and worthies.²²⁴ Even those recommended and selected as good and virtuous, for Zhu, were not able to compose sound essays but “discredited moral conduct and integrity and believed in plots and tricks” without any sense of propriety, justice, honesty and honor.²²⁵ This moral decline among the recruited was the consequence of exploding and discarding Learning of the Way.²²⁶ In comparison with their moral corruption, the disadvantages of the system seemed to be more easily corrected.²²⁷ Zhu thus proposed in 1195 a scheme for reforming the civil examination system in his “Personal Proposals for Schools and Official Recruitment,” into which he incorporated his theory of reading and ideal knowledge framework.²²⁸

I.5.2. Unification of Classical Learning, Learning of the Way, and Statecraft

Zhu's “Personal Proposals” was his application of his reading theory to transforming the civil examination system.²²⁹ Here it is notable that this proposal also suggested the framework of knowledge Zhu expected the ideal examination candidate to construct through reading. Among his nine proposals five highlighted his ideal knowledge framework and intellectual goal of reading. (1) The specialization of empty poetry and rhapsodies should be abolished. (2) The Classics, philosophies, histories and

²²⁴ Ibid., 108.2688, 109.2700.

²²⁵ Ibid., 109.2701.

²²⁶ Ibid., 108.2686.

²²⁷ Ibid., 108.2688.

²²⁸ Zhu Xi 1532b, “Xue Xiao Gongju Siyi,” 69:20a-28b; Ron Guey Chu's translation in de Bary et al 1999, I:737-42.

²²⁹ De Weerd 2006, 317-74.

contemporary affairs should be studied in a three-year cycle. (3) Candidates majoring in the Classics should follow the proper paradigm (*jiafa* 家法) of interpretation. (4) Examiners should ask questions by following the rule of paragraph and phrase (*zhangju* 章句) rather than randomly selecting a few proximate words without any context or grammatical coherence. (5) In his answers, the candidate should demonstrate his mastery of the Classical text at hand, listing different interpretation before his own.²³⁰

With his proposals, Zhu unsurprisingly emphasized Neo-Confucian morality over “empty” learning and practical skills.²³¹ What is noteworthy is his attempt to unify Classical Learning, Learning of the Way, and practical knowledge implied in philosophies and histories into the civil examinations. This combination was carried on, more or less, in subsequent orthodox pedagogies and examination systems, as I will discuss in Chapter Two.

Zhu argued that empty words fully represented as poetry, and other literary compositions in particular, were not suitable for pedagogy or didacticism, and that literary skills did not indicate the candidate’s practical skills in government service.²³² He elaborated the second proposal as the core content of examinations by referring to the theory of “investigating things to extend knowledge” in the *Great Learning*. “All things under heaven are what the student should know about.”²³³ Principle embraced in the Classics, Zhu thought, was not replaceable but rather particular. Students should not neglect any of the Classics. As for philosophical writings, they also “derived from the sages.” Their excellences deserved emulation while their weaknesses should be criticized.

²³⁰ See also *ibid.*, 368-69.

²³¹ Lee 1985, 231-33.

²³² Zhu Xi 1532b, “*Xuexiao gongju siyi*,” 69:23a.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 69:23b.

Zhu described history as a field covering histories and practical knowledge ranging from rites and music to laws and punishments, all of which were “necessary in dealing with the contemporary world” and should not be left unstudied.²³⁴

Given the challenges of totally understanding the Classics, philosophies and histories, Zhu suggested a triennial cycle of examinations. Under his proposed curriculum, students could be allowed three years to read intensively one Classical text, one history and one philosophical piece while also acquiring some practical knowledge.²³⁵ With sufficient time the student could become intimately familiar with the texts. If the government advertised in advance what texts were to be covered in the next examination, students could fully prepare by concentrating on those particular Classical, historical, and political texts. After several examinations, candidates would be able to apprehend most of the Classics and histories and master some practical skills.²³⁶ In his answers, the candidate was to cite the Classical texts before referring to exegeses and demonstrating his own conclusions. This means that he should devote more time to the Classical text than to its commentaries and grasp its general meaning, independent from early scholars but adhering to the sage’s original intentions.²³⁷ Here it was proposed that both history and philosophy be studied as separate fields, shedding more light on the tension between their theoretical subjugation to and actual autonomy from Classical Learning. These were the same points found in Zhu’s ideal knowledge framework.

²³⁴ Ibid.; de Bary 1989, 207.

²³⁵ Zhu Xi 1532b, 69:24a.

²³⁶ Ibid.; Li Jingde 1986, 109.2694, 2698-99.

²³⁷ Li Jingde 1986, 109.2698, 2699.

I.5.3. Pursuing Learning and Preparing the Civil Examinations

Significantly, Zhu's "Personal Proposals" was not published until after his death. He even limited its circulation among his disciples.²³⁸ When it became public, it was highly praised and imitated in later generations.²³⁹ Zhu clearly wanted to have his theory of reading employed in the examination system and used by students in local schools and the national university, and expected his knowledge framework to be widely recognized. His own reservations perhaps resulted from uncertainty about the practicability of his proposals in his age, when both the disadvantages of the system and the "declining morale of the elite" were ruining the examination culture.

The pursuit of learning and preparation for examinations, Zhu held, should be distinguished from each other. For self-cultivation of virtue, knowing humanity, and realizing the Way, learning was more valuable and helpful than any examinations external to human morality could be.²⁴⁰ His theory of reading was intended as an approach to learning, not a means for preparing the civil examinations. His instructions meant a gradual and accumulative progress. He suggested his disciples should extend the time they planned for reading the Classics by limiting their curriculum.²⁴¹ In reading, he reiterated, the student should not think about gain. Otherwise the reader would become "distressed," and his mind would not be open.²⁴² Yet, for most students preparing for the examinations, such a time-consuming process was less efficient and practical. Most students would rather master unusual (*xinqi* 新奇) composition skills and ideas as soon as possible which could help them to answer questions impressively, since the number of

²³⁸ Ibid., 109.2698-99; De Weerd 2006, 367.

²³⁹ De Weerd 2006, 374-77.

²⁴⁰ Li Jingde 1986, 13.243-44; Walton 1999, 13-14.

²⁴¹ Li Jingde 1986, 10.165, 166; Gardner 1990, 132 (4.22, 4.23).

²⁴² Li Jingde 1986, 10.164, 165; Gardner 1990, 131-32 (4.16, 4.20, 4.21).

candidates and competition in the examination system had dramatically increased since the mid-twelfth century.²⁴³

Zhu nonetheless argued that his proposals were conducive to nurturing superior candidates, saying, “If students read [those listed] texts [following my rules], perhaps eminent talents will be successfully trained in thirty years.”²⁴⁴ Even after his philosophy was upgraded as the official ideology with his commentaries on the Four Books designated as the national university textbooks in 1212, however, Zhu’s curricular reform proposals did not necessarily produce his intended result. As an observer of the mid-thirteenth century caustically observed, neither the proposal to read the Four Books to apprehend the sages’ and worthies’ intentions, nor that of investigating things to extend knowledge using Cheng-Zhu instructions, raised any heroic ministers or improved the literati’s morale.²⁴⁵

Many more Confucians praised Zhu’s proposals after his death anyway. The first of them was Han Xintong 韓信同 (1252-1332), who predicted the employment of Zhu’s proposals by the Yuan government when they reinstated the examination system in 1314.²⁴⁶ This employment was confirmed later by another admirer of Zhu, who instructed his disciples that they should understand Zhu’s studies of the Four Books and the Five Classics before attending the examinations.²⁴⁷

Later records show the absence of Zhu’s proposals in the Ming-Qing examination system, but comments on them remained positive. Even though the Cheng-Zhu school

²⁴³ Li Jingde 1986, 109.2693; Chaffee 1995, 35-41.

²⁴⁴ Li Jingde 1986, 109.2698.

²⁴⁵ Luo Dajing 1983, 5.314.

²⁴⁶ Huang Zongxi and Quan Zuwang 1986, 64.2081.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.2061-62.

was established as orthodox by the Yongle emperor in 1414,²⁴⁸ Zhu's proposals perhaps were rarely taken seriously in local schools. For example, in the second half of the fifteenth century, Peng Shao (*jinsi* 1457) recommended Zhu's proposals to a newly appointed instructor of a local school. According to Peng, most local instructors failed to teach the Classics, philosophies, and histories following Zhu's scheme. Neither teachers nor students should neglect Zhu's proposals.²⁴⁹ Around two centuries later, both the Kangxi emperor (r.1662-1722) and his Confucian minister Lu Longqi (1630-1692) thought that Zhu's proposals should be used to reform the examination system since, for them, he prescribed a solution good enough to correct the declining examination culture and "effectively recruit real talents."²⁵⁰

Despite their institutional inapplicability, Zhu's proposals were adopted and adapted by Cheng Duanli (1271-1345) into his *Daily Schedule of Study in the Cheng Family School* (1335 [1315]), a curriculum developed one year after the reinstatement of the examination system and particularly intended for students attending the examinations. Cheng incorporated Zhu's theory of reading and proposals into his curriculum.²⁵¹ However, he did not suggest any application of Zhu's proposals to the civil examination and official-recruitment systems but to pedagogy. He meant instead to direct reading for civil examinations, following Zhu's instructions.²⁵² Cheng's *Daily Schedule* provided a model for Ming formal education on the Classics and the commentaries on them, with "a fixed and voluminous content and a regular sequence of study" that were commonly

²⁴⁸ Elman 2000, 97-124.

²⁴⁹ Peng Shao 1777, "Zeng sixun Zheng Ruicheng zhi Fenshui xu" 贈司訓鄭瑞澄之分水序 [Essay presented to Zheng Ruicheng who is going to Fenshui as an instructor], 2:44b-45b.

²⁵⁰ Kangxi 1778, Series III, 43:8b; Lu Longqi 1778, 4:22a.

²⁵¹ Cheng Duanli 1335, 3:42a-53a; de Bary 1989, 213, 214; Meskill 1982, 160-64.

²⁵² de Bary 1989, 214-16.

accepted.²⁵³ Actually in late imperial China, Cheng's *Schedule* had been theoretically esteemed by elite readers as the only proper guide for reading books. It conveyed to elite readers Zhu's theory of reading, a set of rules for pursuing learning and preparing for the examinations with some adaptations.²⁵⁴

Before I turn to adoptions and adaptations of Zhu's theory of reading in next chapter, I want to emphasize here that my readings lead me to believe that the suspension of Zhu's "Personal Proposals" in the actual Ming-Qing institutions of the civil examination did not hinder the acceptance and adoption of his theory of reading among elite readers in ways that need further investigating. As Zhu suggested, the examination candidate first should be an ideal reader who follows his [Zhu's] rules of reading.²⁵⁵ What we need to do now is to understand how Zhu's notion of ideal readers was interpreted and how his theory of reading was read and used—all to be discussed in the following chapters.

1.6. Conclusion

Zhu Xi's theory of reading consists of sets of complementary categories, and his own practices show the tensions between them. His theory was intended to teach students how to be a sage, but fundamentally discusses how to be learned. Reading, in his theory, first of all prepared the intellectual foundation for socio-political and moral improvements. In the intellectual pursuit, the ideal reader was confronted with the tensions between sets of categories such as limited curriculum vs. wide reading, broad learning vs. the essentials, evidential reading vs. apprehension of principle, core texts/knowledge vs. periphery,

²⁵³ Meskill 1982, 61.

²⁵⁴ Terada Takanobu 1991, 57-68; de Bary 1989, 213.

²⁵⁵ Li Jingde 1986, 13.244, 245-48.

theoretical constraints vs. pragmatic overthrows, and pursuit of learning vs. preparation for the civil examinations. It should be noted that these categories are not binary oppositions or “complementary bipolarities” allegedly characterizing the dualism of Chinese thought.²⁵⁶ They are not synchronic “polarities” that co-exist, but diachronic stages in the pursuit of learning. They are complementary because they represent tactics and strategy, approaches and goal. In terms of intellectual improvement, therefore, Zhu’s theory of reading features rational organicism. Zhu did not invent these categories, but successfully incorporated them into his theory.

Like these categories, a knowledge hierarchy in reading practices was not Zhu’s invention either. Within the Confucian tradition, the student had long been expected to read books “before he can be considered to have learned,” and what he should read were the Five Classics.²⁵⁷ The flourishing of histories from the first century onward finally encouraged the independence of history as a branch of knowledge from the Classics in bibliographical enumeration of the mid-third century. This bibliographic reformation, however, perpetuated the priority of the Classics over history and philosophy.²⁵⁸ Texts increased, and so did options available for readers. As an ideological response to the increase, the superiority of Classical Learning was emphasized in the teaching of reading. In the second quarter of the sixth century, an emperor instructed his princes:

Reading books in general should be rooted in the Five Classics. Do not read any texts that were not written by Confucius. Read the Classical text one hundred times, and its meaning will automatically become clear. Texts other than the

²⁵⁶ Plaks 1976, 43-53.

²⁵⁷ *Analects* 11.24, in Legge 1960, I:246; Huang Hui 1990, 28.1126.

²⁵⁸ Inoue Susumu 1999; Togawa Yoshio 1992.

Classics can be read extensively. Standard histories show the [principle of] historical successes and failures; they are urgent for governance. Thus after the Five Classics, you should first read standard histories.²⁵⁹

This emperor's words are remarkably similar to Zhu's injunctions as laid out in this chapter. For gentlemen of the late sixth century, a complete understanding of the meaning of the Five Classics, together with knowledge of pre-Qin philosophy, could function as a special skill to provide the reader with his livelihood.²⁶⁰ Zhu inherited, with some reconfiguring, the idea of the priority of the Classics, but more from Song Confucians than from sixth-century predecessors. In *Reflections on Things at Hand*, which he co-compiled, Cheng Hao expected his disciples to devote themselves to Classical Learning but discouraged them from studying history. History for Cheng simply meant "trifling with things and losing one's purpose" by memorizing, reciting, and "acquiring extensive information."²⁶¹ Confucian poet and scholar Huang Tingjian (1045-1105), contemporary with the Cheng brothers, also suggested the same priority of the Classics. For Huang, a thorough understanding of the Classics could help the reader to understand history, know the world and manage affairs.²⁶² This suggestion was praised as an insight by the Ming scholar He Liangjun (1506-73).²⁶³

Not all parts of Zhu's reading theory were his inventions. He borrowed ideas from the Han-Tang tradition and some Song Confucians prior to him. He was not the forerunner of the individual rules in his theory, but the first of his age successfully to

²⁵⁹ Xiao Yi 1781, 2:12b-13a.

²⁶⁰ Yan Zhitui 1968, 54-55.

²⁶¹ Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian 1967, 52-53 (27).

²⁶² Huang Tingjian (14th cent.), "Da Su Datong shu" 答蘇大通書 [Reply to Su Datong], 16:4b-5a.

²⁶³ He Liangjun 1959, 3.26.

systematize reading experiences and habits in philosophy. He was not the only one who developed rules of reading among Song Confucians. For students preparing for the civil examinations, scholars of the Yongjia School proposed their own principles for reading model writings of a selected group of Tang and Song authors. In a number of published anthologies of Tang and Song prose, the Yongjia masters attempted to teach examination candidates how to analyze those model texts before applying the rhetorical techniques acquired to writing their answers. The structure of prose texts, their syntactic patterns, and effective word usage were marked with a critical apparatus to facilitate recitation and memorization of model texts. Thus, for the Yongjia scholars reading was a step to the goal of literary writing.²⁶⁴ Zhu treated those composition-oriented principles as a main obstacle to students' understanding of the Way. He and his immediate disciples challenged the Yongjia theory by developing their literary criteria and compiling anthologies in accordance with Learning of the Way.²⁶⁵ With the recognition of Learning of the Way among literati and at court in the thirteenth century, Zhu's literary and reading theories eventually dominated the examination field. Learning of the Way criteria were successfully imposed on the selection and interpretation of model texts, and in turn redefined the scope and purpose of Ancient Prose anthologies, since many Learning of the Way texts were selected to show their supremacy in the examination field.²⁶⁶

In the field of philosophy, Zhu and Lu Jiuyuan shared the moral goal and practical methods of reading despite their intellectual rivalry. Unlike Zhu, who suggested the accumulative process of apprehending the sage's intention embraced in the text, Lu emphasized the self-sufficiency of the reader's mind. In Lu's theory, students were

²⁶⁴ De Weerd 2007, 151-69.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 231-51, 299-301.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 304-05, 309.

advised to approach the Classical text without following the footsteps of its commentators. He aimed to simplify the task of reading into a more practicable one for most readers. Even in his easier process, however, Lu also stressed the significance of the Classical texts and the proper approach to them. He instructed his followers to understand the literal meaning of the text before apprehending its intention. The reader should keep his mind calm and easy, limit his curriculum, and read the easy text before the difficult one. The reader of histories was advised to understand the causes for successes and failures as well as the principle of historical development. Thus Lu was as positive as Zhu about book learning, although, in Lu's own words, "it is only that I [i.e. Lu himself] who read them [i.e. books] a bit differently from other men."²⁶⁷ Even Zhu confirmed that Lu did enjoy reading as a master and a scholar: he used texts to support his philosophy.²⁶⁸ Although derided for their practice of quiet-sitting and meditation as substitutes for apprehending principle through reading, Lu's admirers actually read Classical texts and Neo-Confucian pieces, with commentaries that differed from those that Zhu's followers were required to read. They tended to reject Zhu's interpretation.²⁶⁹ In reading the Classical texts, Lu instructed his disciples to master etymology as an approach to the literal meaning and to become intimate with texts so that the basis of learning could be firmly established. Reading was thus originally intended not for writing but for self-cultivation.²⁷⁰

Lu's theorization, which was ultimately conducive to sudden enlightenment in the reader's mind, appeared more mysterious than Zhu's. Both men, however, shared

²⁶⁷ Hymes 1989, 436-38; quotation from 437.

²⁶⁸ Li Jingde 1986, 124.2978-79.

²⁶⁹ Huang Zongxi and Quan Zuwang 1986, 74.2478.

²⁷⁰ Lu Jiuyuan 1561, "Yu Shao Zhongfu" 與邵中孚 [Letter to Shao Zhongfu], 7:3a-b.

techniques of reading and knowledge hierarchy in relation to the sequence of reading that they inherited from the Cheng brothers. In terms of reading methods, the competition between Zhu and Lu was not practical but philosophical. Reading books, for both, was a crucial way of acquiring and innovating knowledge. Their divergences lay in how to interpret and use (“appropriate” in Roger Chartier’s term) what they read from books. Lu’s emphasis on the self-sufficiency of mind as an approach to self-cultivation exaggerated the reader’s autonomy in appropriating meaning and downplayed the functions of text and form. Meanwhile, Zhu attempted to balance the three elements of reader, text, and form. The reader’s appropriation (“personal experience”) should be solidly based on evidential reading and the understanding of literal meaning. The textual meaning, the physical form, and the author’s intention would still function as constraints on the reader’s interpretation. Various branches of knowledge in hierarchy would support the reader’s philosophical and moral attainment from what he read.

As a reading practice, Lu’s idea lacked clarity and also operability, and thus failed to distinguish itself from Zhu’s art. In this historical exploration of reading habits, therefore, we shall pay more attention to *actual* reading practices than to the reader’s philosophical stance (the Cheng-Zhu’s Learning of the Way or Lu’s Learning of Mind), beginning in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION OF ZHU XI'S THEORY OF READING

THE first collection of Zhu's conversations on reading was conventionally attributed to his immediate disciple Fu Guang (fl. 1190s). Ever since Cheng Duanli published his *Daily Schedule* in 1335, it had been believed that Fu Guang himself summarized his master's art into Six Rules that took the form of proverbs:

- (a) inner mental attentiveness and adherence to the will (*jujing chizhi* 居敬持志);
- (b) progressive iteration in proper sequence (*xunxu jianjin* 循序漸進);
- (c) intimacy with the text and pondering its meaning (*shudu jingsi* 熟讀精思);
- (d) deliberating on the text with an open mind (*xuxin hanyong* 虛心涵詠);
- (e) experiencing the text personally (*qieji ticha* 切己體察);
- (f) studying the text with due diligence (*zhuojin yongli* 著緊用力).¹

These six proverbs were not formulated by Fu Guang but by Zhu Xi, as an examination of the master's writings reveals.² Fu's compilation was approved by Zhu in 1200 just before his death.³ These Six Rules thus were esteemed as the authentic representation of Zhu's original intention and the framework of his theory. After Cheng Duanli, Li Xian (*jinsi* 1433; d. 1466) and Wang Shu (1668–1743) also equated them with the whole

¹ Cheng Duanli 1335, "Gangling" 綱領 [Principles], 9a.

² Zhang Hong and Qi Xi 1781, 1:1a-10a.

³ Shu Jingnan 1991, 573, 589; Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Fu Hanqing" 答輔漢卿 [Reply to Fu Hanqing], 59:27b, 28a.

content of Zhu's art.⁴ Modern scholars also refer to these rules to characterize Zhu's theory of reading, as we have cited in Introduction and Chapter One.

As the main features of Zhu's theory, the Six Rules indeed contain hints for tracking its transmission. Zhu's conversations and collected essays undoubtedly were published in the Ming and the elite read him. His discussions on reading were edited and adopted into different volumes that were widely circulated. These editorial activities and their implications will be discussed in the first section. In addition to direct quotations, widely recognized elucidations and applications also functioned as a means of passing down Zhu's theory of reading. In this sense, first Zhen Dexiu (1178-1253) in his *Reading Notes* and *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning* and then Cheng Duanli in his 1315 *Daily Schedule* provide good examples. Zhen adopted Zhu's theory into his programme designed for moral and intellectual cultivation, while Cheng applied it to his curriculum intended for the civil examinations. Although proposed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries respectively, their programmes remained orthodox in Ming intellectual practices and largely shaped the elite concept of learning and reading habits from the early fourteenth century onwards. The second section will focus on the Ming interpretation of Zhen Dexiu and the third will investigate Cheng Duanli's adoption of Zhu's art in his pedagogy. What aspects of Zhu's theory were kept and altered in transmission will be highlighted in this chapter.

II.1. Editing Zhu Xi's Art of Reading

Since the early thirteenth century, Zhu's discussions on reading had been compiled into separate volumes and edited into other books. This should be the most direct and obvious

⁴ Li Xian 1778, 20:9b-12a; Wang Shu (the 18th century).

channel of textual transmission. As products of human agency, texts in transmission embody human craft and decision-making with innumerable physical variations. In this section, however, I will not reveal the textual variations but rather examine the editorial intentions and interpretation underlying these attempts, which essentially were selective. In my bibliographic survey, separate volumes of Zhu's theory of reading were edited and published from the early thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries, but their circulations were limited. Despite the shifting uses of and attitudes towards Zhu's conversations and writings, his theory of reading was imperially endorsed and penetrated into Ming elite intellectual life. Admirers of both the Cheng-Zhu and the Lu-Wang schools recognized the significance of his theory and evolved in their editing of his discussions.

II.1.1. Limited Circulation of the Southern Song Versions in the Ming

In the Southern Song, at least two well-known versions of Zhu's art were edited into separate volumes. Fu Guang's compilation was first published by the 1220s and then perhaps again in 1332 in Nanjing (see below).⁵ The earlier edition was supplemented and revised twice in the thirteenth century, and Zhang Hong (fl. the second half of the 13th century) was involved in both projects. He first enlarged Fu Guang's version with the cooperation of two other scholars, and their enlarged version consisted of two sections. In 1266 Zhang and Qi Xi revised this enlarged version into two chapters and published this new compilation in present-day Ningbo. This 1266 version begins with a section of "Principles" (*Gangling* 綱領), which explain in general terms by citing Zhu on why and how the student should read. In its second section extracts from Zhu's writings are then

⁵ Zhang Hong and Qi Xi 1781, "Xu" 序 [Preface]:4a; Cheng Duanli 1335, "Gangling," 9a.

cited to support the above Six Rules. For the two editors, these rules meant the path to the Way. Zhu did not invent all of them, they claimed, but he elaborated the goal of reading as being to apprehend principle and authored the rule of “progressive iteration in sequence.” He thus was a successful synthesizer of the reading methods practiced prior to his time.⁶

Despite their high evaluation, the two editors of the 1266 version actually overlooked some points of Zhu’s theory that I have highlighted in Chapter One. It is evident that their main goal was to help the reader approach the Confucian Classics, but with few words devoted to literary composition and even fewer to the standard histories. No conversations on reading non-Confucian philosophical writings were included at all. Unlike Zhu, who encouraged his disciples to read widely, Zhang and Qi sought to narrow the ideal reader’s scope of reading down to the Confucian Classics and emphasized their indispensability for his moral and intellectual cultivation. Meanwhile, they declared, “the apprehension of principle should be *based* on reading those books [i.e. the Classics], and books should be read by following the Six Rules.”⁷ In Zhu’s theory reading books was *one* kind of investigation of things and *one* way of apprehending principle, and various things should be investigated one by one; thus diverse books should be read to consolidate the apprehension of principle in different ways. The 1266 version introduced a selective understanding of Zhu’s theory. Zhang and Qi’s partial summary was used as an excuse by Yan Yuan (1635–1704) to rebuke Zhu for basing learning only on book reading.⁸

⁶ Zhang Hong and Qi Xi 1781, “Xu”:2a-b, 4b, 5b-6a.

⁷ Ibid., “Xu”:5b; my italics.

⁸ Yan Yuan 1972, 91-92, 185; Tu 1975, 519-20.

The original woodblocks of the 1266 version were destroyed in the Yuan and a new set was carved around 1332 in Nanjing. The 1332 edition was scattered through the *Yongle Encyclopaedia* (*Yongle dadian* 永樂大典, 1408), from which its text was recovered in 1781 by the editors of the *Emperor's Four Treasuries*. They rearranged the chapters, but fortunately preserved the text complete.⁹ When compiling another version in 1781, it became clear that the circulation of the 1266 and 1332 collections was so limited in the Ming period that even the Qing imperial editors could not refer to any separately printed copies.

The disappearance of the 1266 version in the Ming was remarked by Qing bibliographers and bibliophiles. They acknowledged the publication of the 1332 edition, but personally saw only the 1781 edition and a couple of hand-copied editions.¹⁰ Some Ming catalogues, however, reveal more about the Ming circulation of the versions edited by Fu Guang and Zhang Hong. Around 1225, a set of woodblocks for Fu Guang's version (totaling 230 leaves) was still preserved in the county school of Siming 四明 (today's Ningbo).¹¹ Woodblocks for the 1332 edition (totaling 170 leaves) were still preserved in Nanjing in 1344, and this edition may have been the one that Cheng Duanli and Li Xian successively cited.¹² In the first half of the sixteenth century, an incomplete set of woodblocks for a book titled *Huian dushufa* 晦菴讀書法 (Master Huian's reading methods) was found at the National University in Nanjing. According to an instructor's description, these blocks should be those originally carved for the enlarged edition of Fu

⁹ Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 92:1920.

¹⁰ Lu Xinyuan 1882, 41:9a-14a; Lu Xinyuan 1892, 6:9a; Shao Yichen 2000, 399.

¹¹ Luo Jun 1341, 2:11a.

¹² Zhang Xuan 1781, 9:28b; Cheng Duanli 1335, "Gangling":9a; Li Xian 1778, 20:9b-10a.

Guang's version, and only four chapters were extant then.¹³ It is unclear when those woodblocks were carved, but this enlarged edition was indeed published by the University, as Zhou Hongzu (*jinshi* 1559) recorded in his catalogue.¹⁴ The *Hui'an dushufa* was first enumerated in the 1441 imperial catalogue,¹⁵ and subsequently in Ye Sheng's (1420-1474) private library catalogue compiled in the third quarter of the fifteenth century.¹⁶ This is the only bibliographical information about the Fu Guang and Zhang Hong versions I have found in dozens of Ming catalogues. No information about the 1266 version prior to 1781 can be recovered in those catalogues. My bibliographic investigation appears to support the Qing observation about the disappearance of the 1266 version, and demonstrates how limited was publication and circulation of the Song versions of Zhu Xi's art during the Ming.

II.1.2. Ming Recompilations of Zhu Xi's Art

The inaccessibility of the Song versions and their Yuan editions drove a few Ming Confucian scholars to compile their own versions of Zhu's art. Among the first of them was Peng Xu 彭勳 (b. 1390; *jinshi* 1415), whose *Dushu yaofa* 讀書要法 (Essential methods of reading) contained the rules of reading proposed by Zhu and later Confucians.¹⁷ This compilation has been lost, but we can try to recover its intellectual bias from Peng's philosophical position. Peng was a fundamentalist admirer of Zhu. During his time as instructor in Jianning, Fujian, Peng memorialized for the institution of spring and autumn sacrifices to Zhu and exemption of Zhu's descendants from levy and

¹³ Mei Zhuo 1902, 2:29b.

¹⁴ Zhou Hongzu 1906, 1:6b.

¹⁵ Yang Shiqi 1937, 8:89.

¹⁶ Ye Sheng 1625, 53a.

¹⁷ Huang Yuji 2001, 299.

corvée, on the grounds that Zhu was the Confucian second only to Confucius. Peng also proposed the construction of a shrine for the worship of some of Zhu's outstanding followers.¹⁸ In 1436, Peng attempted to revise the imperially sponsored textbooks, the *Great Compendia of The Four Books and Five Classics*, on the grounds that some interpretation found in them departed from Zhu's commentaries. He was dissuaded from doing so since the compendia were compiled under imperial auspices and the Yongle emperor had written the prefaces to them.¹⁹ For Peng, no interpretation save Zhu's commentaries were sufficiently refined and deserving of study; other commentarial traditions, including Han-Tang Classical exegeses, should be removed from the state-approved textbooks.²⁰ In his pedagogy, Peng expected his students to become intimately familiar with the Classical texts and interpretation before studying literary arts, as had Zhu.²¹ However, he neglected Zhu's emphasis on the Han-Tang tradition as an indispensable foundation upon which to draw the literal meaning from the Classical text, and also downplayed the importance that Zhu had assigned to evidential reading. His selection of Zhu's discussions stressed Song Neo-Confucian items, in particular Zhu's Classical exegesis, as the only materials for reading and highlighted the recently established orthodoxy of the Cheng-Zhu school, in a manner even more fundamental than that of the Ming court.

Unlike Peng Xu who was ideology-oriented, Wu Xu 吾昇 (1431-1504) compiled his version of Zhu's art to teach his disciples the pursuit of learning. Wu's compilation,

¹⁸ Zhang Tingyu *et al*, 1974, 161.4383; Ye Sheng 葉盛, "Peng xiansheng Xu zhuan" 彭先生勗傳 [The life of Master Peng Xu], in Jiao Hong 1616, 95:58b.

¹⁹ Lu Rong 1985, 3:32.

²⁰ Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 13.264-65.

²¹ Ye Sheng, "Peng xiansheng Xu zhuan," in Jiao Hong 1616, 95:55b.

also entitled *Zhuzi dushufa* 朱子讀書法 (Master Zhu's reading methods), has been lost.²²

Its assumptions were cited in some descriptions of his life as an instructor and tutor in Cheng-Zhu philosophy. Wu was a practitioner of Zhu's family rituals. In his learning and teaching, he did not neglect preparations for the civil examinations, but put more stress on the self-cultivation of virtue. He suggested that his disciples read with "mental attentiveness" and practice what they learned from their reading. Students, for him, should not devote too much time to literary arts. In his own writing, Wu did not imitate earlier models, but aimed to interpret Confucian principle in a simple style. He emphasized "deliberating" on what one had read as an important way of apprehending principle, and concrete knowledge as the main understanding of principle to be acquired. Yet, he upheld the idea that the student's social and political achievements ultimately depended upon his moral cultivation.²³ Wu propagated Zhu's theory of learning and reading, seemingly in an attempt to counterbalance the emerging Old Phraseology movement and the revival of the Learning of Mind (see Chapter Four). Like Zhu, he stressed the moral goal of reading, concrete knowledge and skills, and the predominance of Confucian principle in literary compositions. The very limited materials available, however, tell us little about whether he encouraged his disciples to read widely and how he connected reading practices with knowledge acquisition and innovation.

A few attempts were made to compile Zhu's discussions on reading in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Ao Ying 敖英 (*jinsi* 1521) edited his version in the mid-sixteenth century.²⁴ In 1606 a county school instructor published a collection of reading

²² Huang Yuji 2001, 299.

²³ Zhang Mao 1935, "Wenshan xiansheng Wu jun mubiao" 文山先生吾君墓表 [Tomb inscription to Master Wenshan, Mr. Wu], 6.196, 197; cf. Shen Jia 1780, 1:67a-69a.

²⁴ Zhu Mujie 1903, 3:3b.

methods, most of which were proposed by Zhu and a few by other Song Confucians. Its anonymous editor suggested that the reader first become intimate with the Classical text, ponder its meaning, and at last experience it personally.²⁵ Nothing more can be inferred about these two compilations and their compilers' intentions remain unclear.

The above-mentioned incomplete bibliographic information reveals that separate collections of Zhu's discussions on reading circulated on a very limited scale in the Ming period. Such unexpectedly small circulations could stem either from a diminished interest in Zhu and his art or from its unquestioned universality for readers. Although Zhu was indeed challenged and even attacked in the Ming, his orthodoxy had endured. Even a mid-fourteenth century encyclopedia for daily use, which was supplemented and republished in the sixteenth century, included the six principles and some of Zhu's other sayings on reading methods.²⁶ Thus Ming elite readers perhaps took Zhu's rules of reading as common sense.

II.1.3. Ming Uses of Zhu Xi in Publications

Their inclusion in a popular encyclopedia reminds us that there were channels of transmission other than the separate collection. In comparison with the separate collection, collections and selections of Zhu's conversations and writings, together with the imperially sponsored *Xingli daquan* (Compendium of Nature and Principle, 1414-1415) circulated more widely and were more accessible for readers. All of these publications contained reading methods developed by Zhu, and the principles of editing them implied how their editors interpreted his theory and ideal knowledge framework.

²⁵ Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 96.1991.

²⁶ Anonymous 1568, jia:24a-25b.

Before surveying Ming publications of Zhu's conversations and writings, it is necessary to examine their editing and publishing history in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, so that we can have a wider background against which to understand Ming publications of Zhu.

Zhu wrote only two particular essays outlining some essentials of his art.²⁷ Lots of his discussions on reading were scattered through his exchanges and conversations with students and his commentaries on the Classics. As a genre of philosophical writing supplementary to the Han-Tang commentarial tradition, recorded conversations released Song Neo-Confucians from the constraint of line-by-line responses to the Classical text and gave them more autonomy and self-confidence when arriving at their philosophical reflections.²⁸ The authenticity of recorded conversations, however, had been questioned ever since an important collection of Zhu's was published in 1215. Zhu's disciple and son-in-law, Huang Gan 黃榦 (1152–1221), doubted the reliability of the recorded conversations and insisted on the priority of Zhu's formal writings for understanding his thought. For Huang, conversations recalled after lectures were not systematic and often were even distorted by the recorder.²⁹ Whilst the authenticity of the conversations was open to question, systematization of them began in 1219, when another of Zhu's disciples, Huang Shiyi 黃士毅 (fl. the early 13th century), arranged them topically rather than by the recorders' names, as earlier compilers had done. With this classification, Huang attempted both to represent and to interpret Zhu's philosophy. The topics he listed

²⁷ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Dushu zhiyao" 讀書之要 [Essentials of reading books], 14:11a-14a; "Xinggong biandian zouzha er," 74:14a-15a.

²⁸ Gardner 1991.

²⁹ Huang Gan, "Chizhou kan *Zhu*zi yulu houxu" 池州刊朱子語錄後序 [Postscript to *Master Zhu's collected conversations* published in Chizhou], in Li Jingde 1986, 2; Li Xingchuan 李性傳, "Raozhou kan *Zhu*zi yu xulu houxu" 饒州刊朱子語續錄後序 [Postscript to the *Supplement to Master Zhu's collected conversations* published in Raozhou], *ibid.*, 3.

contained important concepts of the master's learning, and the reading methods in two chapters were considered indispensable.³⁰ Huang's classification scheme was adopted by Li Jingde (fl. the late 13th century), whose collection appeared between 1263 and 1270. Li combined most of the earlier important collections in his work, which was considered the richest and most popular one despite his neglect of some earlier compilations. Compilers who came after Li simply selected materials related to certain topics from his collection and, if necessary, from Zhu's other writings.³¹

In the Ming period, as Table 2.1.1 shows, Zhu's writings were published in more editions than his conversations alone. While his writings circulated throughout the Ming, his conversations were notably emphasized in the last three decades of the fifteenth century and then in the first half of the seventeenth century. This chronological distribution roughly corresponded to the editorial lineage of Li Jingde's compilation. In this lineage, the 1473 and 1604 editions preceded others produced in Ming-Qing China, Japan, and Korea.³² Yet, Li's version was not the only approach to Zhu's conversations, and Ming readers also encountered Zhu's theory of reading through other compilations.

What is noteworthy is that Ming readers made different uses of Zhu's writings and recorded conversations. In the fifteenth century, Zhu's writings were viewed as perfect literary representations of the Way. They were selected, in addition to his theory of the unity between literary art and the Way, as models for training schoolboys in literary composition.³³ For Huang Zhongzhao (1435-1508), Zhu's collected writings were also

³⁰ Tomoeda Ryūtarō 1963, 148-51.

³¹ Shu Jingnan 1991, 585-89.

³² Fukuda Shigeru 1969; Kumamoto Hiroshi and Fukuda Shigeru 1969.

³³ Zhou Mu 周木, "Huian wenchao xu" 晦菴文鈔序 [Preface to the *Selection of Zhu Xi's writings*] (1482), cited in Shum 1999, 645. This selection was edited by Wu Ne 吳訥 (1372-1457) and first published in 1435.

encyclopedic, since they contained practical knowledge helpful in serving state and society as well as prescriptions for moral cultivation. They functioned as “steps to sagehood and the gate to the Way.”³⁴ However, sixteenth-century publications of his writings were also intended as a response to challenges from Old Phraseology and the Learning of Mind advocates.³⁵ Whatever their intentions, editors and publishers at that time still recognized the Way as represented in Zhu’s writings, but when it came to his conversations, their uses of them differed from those in the late Ming.

For the high official and writer Yang Shiqi (1365-1444), Zhu’s conversations deserved to be read with mental attentiveness and reverence.³⁶ The collection of Zhu’s conversations he had access to was *Zhuzi yulue* 朱子語略 (Summary of Master Zhu’s conversations, 1220) edited by Yang Yuli 楊與立 (fl. 13th century), one of Zhu’s disciples. The copy that Shiqi had was printed in the National University and once owned by his father, but unfortunately incomplete. After searching for several years, Yang Shiqi received another incomplete copy as a gift in 1410. He did not succeed in obtaining a complete copy until he hand-copied lost portions from another edition several years later. Despite such difficulties, Shiqi said, old scholars in his day tended to suggest that young students read Zhu’s conversations in addition to the Classics and standard histories. Yang Shiqi regarded both collections of Zhu’s conversations and writings as basic works for inclusion in a gentleman’s studio.³⁷ Yang Yuli’s *Summary* focused on Zhu’s

³⁴ Huang Zhongzhao 1778, "Shu Huian Zhu xiansheng wenji hou" 書晦菴朱先生文集後 [Postscript to the *Collection of Master Zhu Huian*], 4:13b-14a.

³⁵ Su Xin 蘇信, "Chongkan Huian xiansheng wenji xu" 重刊晦菴先生文集序 [Preface to the republished *Collection of Master Huian's writings*], in Zhu Xi 1532b.

³⁶ Yang Shiqi 1779, 17:11a.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 17:6b-7a, 18:17a-b.

discussions of mind, but also included two sections on teaching, learning and reading.³⁸ For Yang Shiqi, they contained all the keys to moral and intellectual advancement.³⁹

An intellectual discrimination of Zhu's recorded conversations from his writings and Classical exegeses, however, reemerged in the late fifteenth century. In his postscript to Li Jingde's compilation, Zhang Yuanzhen (1437-1506) questioned the authenticity of the conversations, as had Huang Gan. Proper use of the conversations, according to Zhang, depended on the reader's apprehension of principle. In order to apprehend principle, the reader should first understand Zhu's writings, especially his commentaries on the Four Books, which were commonly viewed as the core of Zhu's learning. A complete understanding of the Four Books, Zhang insisted, was the only legitimate approach to other texts. He discouraged students from reading Zhu's conversations until they had mastered the Four Books, even though he admitted that the conversations were helpful in reading the Classics.⁴⁰ In Zhang's view, Zhu's conversations were thus inferior to his writings and Classical exegeses in terms of intellectual authenticity and authority.

The inferiority that Zhang attributed to Zhu's conversations was rejected at the beginning of the seventeenth century in responses to the challenges posed by the Learning of Mind. Amidst the controversies, Zhu's admirers treated his conversations as instructions for the pursuit of learning and emphasized their epistemological more than their Classical significance. As I have argued, Zhu grounded his theory of reading and learning in Confucius' teaching of "extensively studying all learning and keeping [oneself] under the restraint of the rules of propriety." With this theoretical assumption in

³⁸ Tomoeda Ryūtarō 1963, 152.

³⁹ Yang Shiqi 1779, 17:6b-7a.

⁴⁰ Zhang Yuanzhen 1517, "Chongke *Zhu*zi yulei daquan houxu" 重刻朱子語類大全後序 [Postscript to the republished *Complete collection of Master Zhu's conversations*, topically arranged], 7:1b, 2b.

mind, we find that Zhu was viewed in the late Ming as the true transmitter of Confucius' Way; his conversations revealed his approach to learning, and his learning was the only path to Confucius' intellectual world and sagehood.⁴¹ For his admirers, Zhu's approach to learning appeared "trivial" and "slow" but was the only effective and practical one nonetheless. Wang Yangming's instructions sounded "simple and direct," but were the opposite of Confucius' teaching and, more important, were hard to put into practice. Such a comparison eventually prompted the conversion of Ye Xianggao (1562-1627) from Wang's theory to Zhu's philosophy.⁴² Another strong recognition of Zhu's conversations came from Chen Longzheng (1585-1645), a sincere admirer of Wang. In 1637 Chen began to read and edit Zhu's conversations that were included in Li Jingde's compilation. Two years later, he completed editing and rearranging them into a more concise and coherent version, as he himself claimed, while Zhu's discussions on Classical exegesis were edited into a separate volume. From exposure to Zhu's conversations, Chen found that attacks on Zhu from Wang's followers were unreasonable, since Zhu himself had anticipated their disputations and answered them. After the collapse of the Ming dynasty in 1644, Chen recalled his earlier intention to read Zhu's conversations: when most scholars in his time had converted to Chan Buddhism and the Learning of Mind inspired by Chan, those conversations, especially Zhu's discussions of reading the Classics, could direct his contemporaries to the Way established by Confucius and Mencius. Zhu's learning, as orthodoxy, could effectively help one to cultivate virtue.⁴³

⁴¹ Dong Yingju 1623, "Zhuzi yulu xu" 朱子語錄序 [Preface to the *Collection of Master Zhu's conversations*], "Xuyi" 序一:13a-b; Ye Xianggao 1606, *Zhuzi yulei xu* 朱子語類序 [Preface to the *Collection of Master Zhu's conversations, topically arranged*], 5:7a-8b.

⁴² Ye Xianggao 1606, "Zhuzi yulei xu," 5:7b-8b.

⁴³ Chen Longzheng 1664, "Canding Zhuzi yulei xu" 參定朱子語類序 [Preface to the reedited *Collection of Master Zhu's conversations, topically arranged*] (1639), 54:11a-12a; "Zhuzi jingshuo xu" 朱子經說序

Uses of, and attitudes towards, Zhu's conversations from the second half of the fourteenth to the first half of the seventeenth centuries corresponded to the chronological distribution of printed conversations in Table 2.1.1. In the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, Yang Shiqi and his contemporaries read Zhu's conversations with the same reverence and attentiveness they gave to required texts. In the second half of the fifteenth century, Zhu's conversations were used not as a Neo-Confucian classic but as an optional aid to reading the Classics, one not strongly recommended. Their epistemological significance for the pursuit of learning (and cultivation of virtue) was rediscovered and emphasized by Zhu's admirers only when contending with Wang Yangming's radical followers. These uses and attitudes are indicative of the changing Ming reception of Zhu's theory of reading.

Among the Ming imprints of Zhu's conversations, Li Jingde's version was well known. Its chapters titled *Dushu fa* (Reading methods) have been the main source for studies of Zhu's theories of reading and learning, although other chapters and his writings also contain exciting discussions. Those discussions included in Li's version covered Zhu's last thirty years, and most were treated as his final conclusions.⁴⁴ Compared with Li's version, however, other versions were more selective. Just as Yang Yuli in his *Summary* focuses on his master's discussions of mind, Ye Shilong also chose those passages that were helpful in his teaching and accorded with what he had learned from Huang Gan when compiling his *Huian xiansheng yulu leiyao* (Classified essentials of

[Preface to the Collection of Master Zhu's discussions of the Classical exegeses] (1640 and 1644), 54:12a-13a; cf. Julia Ching, "Ch'en Lung-cheng," in Goodrich 1976, 174-76.

⁴⁴ Chan 1989, 375.

Zhu Xi's conversations. 1238).⁴⁵ In the section on reading methods, Ye included conversations mainly concerned with how to read the Classics, and stressed only two of the Six Rules: "intimacy with the text and pondering its meaning," and "deliberating on the text with an open mind."⁴⁶

This selectiveness also appeared in Ming compilations of Zhu's conversations, which for the most part were assembled in the dynasty's last 140 years (1500-1644), a period that witnessed vigorous disputations between the Cheng-Zhu and the Lu-Wang schools (see Table 2.1.2). Editors from both parties were enthusiastic in compiling Zhu's conversations. Their debates are not covered in this thesis, but what should be noted is that the controversies were closely related to methods of reading the Classics (and other texts). Luo Qinshun (1465-1547), a leading admirer of Zhu and philosophical rival of Wang Yangming, suggested that the differences and similarities between the Cheng-Zhu and the Lu-Wang schools could be revealed by reading the Classical texts and philosophical writings with an open mind.

Thus if one carries on his studies without reference to the Classics [and the commentaries to them] and is utterly arbitrary and opinionated, it is inevitable that he will be misled. It is wrong to allow oneself to be misled, worse yet to mislead others.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ See Zhu An's 朱安 preface (1238), Wang Sui's 王遂 preface (1244), and Zhan Tianxiang's 詹天祥 postscript (1302) in Ye Shilong 1302.

⁴⁶ Ibid., chap. 17; Tomoeda Ryūtarō 1962.

⁴⁷ Luo Qinshun 1987, 144-45, 136-43.

Different rules of reading texts, including the Classics, were at the heart of the intellectual debate in the Ming Neo-Confucian world. Ming Confucians attributed the debates to differing attitudes towards and uses of the Classics, as had their Song predecessors. Challenges from the Lu-Wang school had stimulated a rereading of Zhu's writings and conversations since the early sixteenth century, and this rereading produced different significances for readers of different philosophical stances. A reader could use Zhu's conversations, in particular his discussions on reading, to consolidate a belief in Cheng-Zhu philosophy, support theory learned from Wang Yangming, or compromise between the two schools. Whatever his theoretical intent, the reader's reading methods *in practice* deserve further exploration. Zhu's theory of reading evidently interested Ming elite readers of different philosophical stances, who all considered his theory and instructions as the point of departure to further metaphysical explorations.

II.1.4. Imperial Endorsement and Appropriation

Most elite readers, when preparing for the examinations at least, were expected to know Zhu's instructions from the imperially designated textbooks. Compared to collections and selections of Zhu's writings and conversations, the *Compendium of Nature and Principle* circulated more widely as an imperially designated textbook for the civil examinations in the Ming. All examination candidates, including admirers of Wang Yangming, were supposed to read this Neo-Confucian collection. In 1417, together with the *Great Compendia* of the Four Books and the Five Classics, it was bestowed on government agencies, national universities, and local schools. The Yongle emperor requested that students treat this newly edited collection as the "base of learning" and

“reservoir of essentials from the sages and the worthies,”⁴⁸ and thereafter copies of the *Compendium of Nature and Principle* were often given to individuals and institutions and even used as gifts in the tribute system. In university and school libraries, the compendium was deposited as a core text.⁴⁹ In 1575 an edict required students to memorize and study it, among other designated texts.⁵⁰

The Yongle emperor intended the *Compendium of Nature and Principle* to be a supplement and aid to the Four Books and the Five Classics. He and his editors emphasized the indispensability of the Confucian Classics as model and guide in an ideal world order. They considered the Cheng-Zhu interpretation of the Classics as the only authentic transmission of the Way established by Confucius and Mencius.⁵¹ Thus how to read and interpret the Classics was one of the editors’ main concerns.

The *Compendium* included conversations of 120 Song and Yuan Confucians, and among these items from Zhu numbered the most. The editors cited not just Li Jingde’s version of the conversations, but also other collections compiled by Zhu’s disciples.⁵² Two chapters (53 and 54) devoted entirely to the art of reading focused on how to read the Classics, with rules for Classical exegeses and reading the histories as supplements. Entries in the *Compendium* were edited and arranged in an order that differed from that of Li Jingde, but all of Zhu’s Six Rules were represented, though to different degrees. Of interest here is which of these principles the editors chose to reveal or conceal, underscore or understate. Of the six, they gave priority to those of “deliberating on the

⁴⁸ *Ming shilu*, “Taizong shilu” 太宗實錄 [Veritable records of the Taizong emperor], 186.1990-91.

⁴⁹ Brook 2005, 109.

⁵⁰ Shen Shixing 1587, 78:17b-18a.

⁵¹ Hu Guang et al 1560, the Yongle emperor, “Yuzhi *Xingli daquan xu*” 御製性理大全序 [Imperial preface to the *Compendium of Nature and Principle*]; Hu Guang et al, “Jinshu biao” 進書表 [Memorial of submitting the book].

⁵² Shu Jingnan 1991, 589.

text with an open mind,” “intimacy with the text and pondering its meaning,” and “experiencing the text personally.”⁵³ Guided by these three rules, the reader was expected to humble himself and pay reverence to the sages and the worthies, in both his encounter with the Classical text and his application of its meaning in practice. This personal and intellectual hierarchy between reader and sagely author insured the infallibility of the Classics and the sages. Yet, as argued in Chapter One, in Zhu’s theory the reader began by opening his mind to the text in which the sages expressed themselves and would determine the meaning mainly through evidential reading based on the Han-Tang tradition of Classical exegesis. However, the imperial editors disregarded this tradition. While they included Zhu’s suggestion that the reader have an etymological understanding of every word in the text, they rejected this way of reading at the very beginning of the section by citing the Cheng brothers’ warning that readers not concern themselves with etymology.⁵⁴ This rejection of the Han-Tang tradition made it incumbent on readers to ignore the very nature of the Classical text, which Zhu sought to clarify through evidential reading. Among reader, text, and form, Zhu understated the reader’s subjectivity and emphasized the role that the text and its forms played in the process of reading, while the Yongle emperor’s editors brought to the forefront the producers (in D.F. McKenzie’s sense) of the text and its forms. For them, the reader should keep his mind open first and foremost to the sages and worthies, not to the text. Thus readers could draw meaning not from texts but from the sages and worthies themselves, that is, not the text but its author would determine its readers’ understandings—This is different from reader-response criticism.

⁵³ Hu Guang et al 1560, 53:2a-11b.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 53:1a, 1b. For quotations from Zhu Xi, see 53:18a; 54:1a, 7b.

The editors of the *Compendium* upheld Zhu's ideal knowledge hierarchy and went even further. They emphasized the priority of the Classics over the histories in both the knowledge hierarchy and sequence of reading, but withdrew their recommendation from philosophical and literary pieces.⁵⁵ While Zhu's literary and philosophical criticism was included in other chapters, his rules for reading philosophy and literary writings were not.⁵⁶ The imperial editors were hesitant to encourage the ideal reader to read widely for broad learning. For them, the Classics rather than history or philosophy were fundamental and vitally important for readers, and Zhu's instructions on reading the Classics were more useful for school students than his rules for reading other texts were. Regarding Zhu's discussions on broad learning and essentials, they put more stress on the latter than the former. Zhu's suggestions for reading books were quoted, and his strictures against browsing among books were strengthened by citing Yang Shi (1053-1135), who preferred essentials refined from the Classics over erudition obtained by reading the histories. For Yang, "the more erudite in learning, the more alien from the Way."⁵⁷

Despite these subtle concealments, the *Compendium* preserved Zhu's principles of reading the Classics well in comparison with the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century collections and selections of his conversations. Its sections on reading methods aimed to establish the authority of the Classics (and the Cheng-Zhu interpretation in particular) in intellectual life, an ideological task that the Yongle emperor accomplished for his Ming court. Its compilation under imperial auspices illustrated the unassailable authority of Zhu's theory of reading in the early Ming, and its popularity (greater than other

⁵⁵ Ibid., chap. 54.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 56:1b-8b, 13a-25b; 57:2a-7a, 8b, 9b-12a ff.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 54:11b; for quotations from Zhu Xi on broad learning, see 53:9b; 54:2a, 12a; for those on the essentials, see 53:6a, 11b, 13b.

collections and selections of Zhu's writings) meant that his theory was accessible to most students in the course of the Ming dynasty. They were expected to read the Classics (and histories if possible) and construct their knowledge framework as outlined in the *Compendium*. Regardless of the philosophical stances of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century compilations of Zhu's writings, the compilers were trained according to the programme that the *Compendium* stipulated for the civil examinations, before they made their ultimate philosophical choices. This means that, in theory at least, students forged their reading habits by following Zhu's theory as imperially explicated.

II.2. Book Learning in Statecraft

Among Zhu's disciples of the second generation, Zhen Dexiu was esteemed for his articulation of the master's philosophy with reference to various Classical and historical texts. His reading strategy perfectly resonated with Zhu's Six Rules.⁵⁸ For both of them, reading was the primary method of learning, and the only path to both the Way and sociopolitical improvement.⁵⁹ The sections on "Reading sequence" and "Reading methods" in Zhen's *Reading Notes* were also intended for reading the Classics.⁶⁰ His own reading practices, however, were in keeping with Zhu Xi's idea of wide reading. What distinguishes Zhen's approach is his intention to convert his understanding of Cheng-Zhu philosophy into an administrative theory about emperorship and local government.

Zhen was subsequently regarded as a figure of orthodoxy, for his *Reading Notes* (*Dushuji* 讀書記), *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning* (*Daxue yanyi* 大學衍義), the

⁵⁸ De Weerd 2010, 236-37.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 232, 233, 235; Tang Han 湯漢, "Gangmu" 綱目 [Outline], in Zhen Dexiu 1777.

⁶⁰ Zhen Dexiu 1777, 25:1a-24b.

Classic of Mind (*Xin jing* 心經), and the *Classic of Governance* (*Zheng jing* 政經) were featured in Yuan and Ming court education, teaching the heir apparent and emperors how to be ideal Confucian rulers.⁶¹ In terms of statecraft, Zhen's heir was Qiu Jun (1421-1495), represented by his *Supplement to the Extended Meaning of the Great Learning* (*Daxue yanyi bu* 大學衍義補).⁶² A continuous line connected Qiu back to Zhen, and Zhen back to Zhu, for by interpreting and advocating statecraft, Zhen was bringing Zhu's theory of book learning to Ming elite readers.

II.2.1. Zhen Dexiu's Presence in the Ming Elite World

Most editions of Zhen's works were published as Zhu Xi's were, as household publications plus a few as government ones, and these in general circulated among elite readers. Commercial publishers appeared to be more interested in Zhen's anthology, *Wenzhang zhengzong* 文章正宗 (The true source for compositions), and its supplement than in his philosophical writings, even though both household publishers and government ones also produced editions of this anthology for the interest of the large examination market (see Table 2.2.1).

In Ming publishing, however, Zhen appeared more as a Neo-Confucian scholar of statecraft than as an editor of model prose. Although the Song woodblocks of his *Reading Notes*, in which his *Extended Meaning* was included, remained in use in the early Ming, the *Extended Meaning* tended to be published separately (see Table 2.2.1). An early Ming edition of his *Extended Meaning* was produced in 1434, much earlier than the above-noted first publication of his *True Source*. Even prior to this edition, however, the

⁶¹ de Bary 1981, 124-26, 152-85.

⁶² de Bary 1993; Chu 1986 highlights the intellectual differences between Zhen Dexiu and Qiu Jun.

Extended Meaning was imperially endorsed and used in court education. Zhu Yuanzhang's Confucian advisors from Jinhua praised it for the idea that the emperor's moral and intellectual cultivation was the prerequisite for successful rulership.⁶³ Thus the *Extended Meaning* circulated more widely than the other parts of Zhen's *Reading Notes*. Some of the other parts were simply collected in the Imperial Library until they were published outside the court in the first quarter of the sixteenth century.⁶⁴ In 1502, Shao Bao (1460-1527), the Education Intendant of Jiangxi, published the *Extended Meaning* as a textbook for school students, with a purpose of teaching them the way of serving the emperor and statecraft skills.⁶⁵

As Table 2.2.1 shows, the *Extended Meaning* was adapted, abridged, edited, and imitated from the late fifteenth century onwards. Editions appeared mainly in the Jiajing period. The Jiajing emperor, who was serious about his Classics colloquia and daily lectures, was a devoted reader of Zhen.⁶⁶ Around 1527, he bestowed copies of the *Extended Meaning* and his notes on the text on some of his close advisors, expecting them to read Zhen. To judge from the responses in their thank-you memorials, these officials expected the emperor to conduct himself as Zhen directed.⁶⁷ The emperor even composed a poem describing his reading of the *Extended Meaning*, and officials were

⁶³ de Bary 1981, 157-58.

⁶⁴ Yin Xiang (*jinshi* 1511) 1881[1531], "Chongkan Zhen Xishan Dushuji yi zhi xia xu" 重刊真西山讀書記乙之下序 [Preface to the republished second section of Zhen Dexiu's *Reading Notes*, II], 6:9a.

⁶⁵ Shao Bao 1777, "Daxue yanyi chongkan xu" 大學衍義重刊序 [Preface to the republished *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*], 14:2a-3a.

⁶⁶ Chu 2008.

⁶⁷ E.g. Zhang Fujing 1615, "Xie ci Daxue yanyi" 謝賜大學衍義 [Thanks for bestowing a copy of the *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*], 6:32a-34a; Yang Yiqing 2001, "Song shengzhi Daxue yanyi shuo zoudui" 誦聖製大學衍義說奏對 [Memorial after reading the your majesty's Notes on the *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*], 922-23.

ordered to reply in the same rhyme.⁶⁸ The favour he showed to the *Extended Meaning* undoubtedly promoted its popularity among elite readers and encouraged its publication. The work was in demand in the Wanli and Chongzhen periods, when a sense of increasing political and social crisis called for work on statecraft. In his 1632 preface to the *Extended Meaning*, Chen Renxi (1581-1636) cited the disastrous involvement of eunuchs in state affairs as well as the arbitrary exercise of power by some notorious grand secretaries, blaming them for hoodwinking the emperor and distracting him from the idea of statecraft espoused in Zhen's work. Chen's reason for editing and publishing the book was to illustrate what was helpful for the emperor in governing the state.⁶⁹

From 1488 onward, however, the significance of Zhen's *Extended Meaning* in Ming education was overshadowed by the imperial favor given to Qiu Jun's *Supplement*. Qiu in 1487 presented his *Supplement* to the newly enthroned Hongzhi emperor, who highly praised it, sponsored its publication, ordered its wide distribution, and promoted Qiu to a ministerial post. Since its publication in 1488, Qiu's *Supplement* became recognized as more influential and practical than Zhen's *Extended Meaning*.⁷⁰ In the sixteenth century, some officials reportedly referred to Qiu's *Supplement* before making their decisions.⁷¹ Qiu drew so many elite readers that Zhen was largely neglected, as

⁶⁸ E.g. Xu Xianqing (early 17th cent.), "Ni shang yuzhi Ting jingyanguan jiang Daxue yanyi shi, shi fuchen ziyun gonghe, ming huiwei yice, mingyue Xuxueshi xiebiao" 擬上以御製聽經筵官講大學衍義詩示輔臣輔臣依韻恭和命彙為一冊名曰翊學詩謝表 [Drafted memorial to appreciate the bestowed copy of Poems Encouraging Learning, a collection of poems that the Grant Secretaries composed in the same rhyme as the Emperor used in his poem Listening to the lectures on *Daxue yanyi*], 20:32b-34b; Zhu Yibin 1626, "Ni yuzhi Tingjiang Daxue yanyi shi shi fuchen zhuhe, yin hui wei yibian banci shichen xiebiao" 擬御製聽講大學衍義詩示輔臣屬和因彙為一編頒賜侍臣謝表 [Drafted mamorial to appreciate...], 23:16a-18a.

⁶⁹ Chen Renxi 1633, "Daxue yanyi xu," *Maji*.4:41b.

⁷⁰ Chu 1986, 6-14.

⁷¹ Zong Chen 1623, "Chongkan Daxue yanyi hebu xu" 重刊大學衍義合補序 [Preface to the republished *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*, with the *Supplement*], 4:8a.

Chen Renxi complained. Therefore Chen published both Zhen and Qiu in a single edition, with Zhen preceding Qiu, to remind readers of the Song origin of Qiu's ideas.⁷²

Zhen's decline and Qiu's rise were due to the difference in the contents of their works. Not all Ming emperors were willing to recognize Zhen's advice to the throne, such as the political disasters that eunuchs caused through the ages, an issue that Qiu did not mention at all. Because of this difference, according to Lu Rong (1436-1494), eunuchs sought to prevent the emperor from reading Zhen.⁷³ Around 150 years later, Shen Defu (1578-1642) confirmed that eunuchs favored Qiu over Zhen. Both the Xuande and the Chenghua emperors refused the suggestion that they read Zhen's *Extended Meaning*. According to Shen, only the Jiajing emperor enjoyed Zhen's book though the Wanli emperor also showed some interest in it.⁷⁴ So even though it was designated as a textbook for use in court education, Zhen's *Extended Meaning* was not recognized as essential reading. As we can find in the Ming *Veritable Records*, officials regularly memorialized their emperors to read the *Extended Meaning* in addition to the Confucian Classics and standard histories, yet this guide to imperial self-cultivation was largely neglected. Even in the early Ming, as Zhang Ning (1426-1496) suggested in 1464, Zhen's *Extended Meaning* was rarely referred to in the court educational practices.⁷⁵

⁷² Chen Renxi 1633. "Daxue yanyi xu" 大學衍義序 [Preface to the Extended Meaning of the Great Learning], Maji 4:41a.

⁷³ Lu Rong 1985, 14.170-71.

⁷⁴ Shen Defu 1959, 25.634-35.

⁷⁵ Zhang Ning 1781, "Qi jinjiang Daxue yanyi biao" 乞進講大學衍義表 [Memorial for lecturing on the Extended Meaning of the Great Learning], 1:19b; *Ming shilu*, "Xianzong shilu" 憲宗實錄 [The veritable records of the Xianzong emperor], 7:6a-b.

Even so, Zhen's *Extended Meaning* was maintained in theory and considered indispensable reading for both the throne and ministers.⁷⁶ Zhen remained present in Ming intellectual life and his *Extended Meaning* shaped Ming learning and reading in statecraft. In fact, surviving portions of lectures presented at court reveal that the *Extended Meaning* was a text lecturers presented to some emperors. In the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Classics colloquia, the learning of emperorship (*dixue* 帝學) and its applications to political life were important topics. The emperor was encouraged to cultivate himself and learn to set up good personal interactions with his ministers,⁷⁷ so that they could collaborate for a peaceful world. What is noteworthy is the emphasis on the significance of book learning in political life. Outside the Classics colloquia, Ming interpreters of Zhen's *Extended Meaning* tended to consider intellectual rather than moral cultivation as the foundation of governance (*zhi* 治). Governance should be rooted in book learning, and so both the emperor and his officials were expected to acquire sufficient book learning before setting policies.

Political service, Yin Xiang (*jinshi* 1511) declared, should accord with the Confucian Way, and that in turn originated in knowledge (*shi* 識). Knowledge was as important as the apprehension of the Way in determining political achievement.⁷⁸ Among officials of the generation after Yin, Wang Lidao (1510-1548) upheld that learning first came from the Six Classics, which he regarded as basic to governance. "Nobody will discuss governance without rooting it in learning, nor pursue learning without

⁷⁶ Yang Shiqi 1779, "Daxue yanyi sanji" 大學衍義三集 [Three notes to the *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*], 17:2b-3a.

⁷⁷ E.g. Lu Jian 1522, "Rijiang zhijie" 日講直解 [Simple explanations in the daily lectures], 1:10a-22a; Zhang Bi 1545, "Daxue yanyi jiangzhang" 大學衍義講章 [Lectures on Daxue yanyi], 3:1a-20b; Yan Song 1545, "Daxue yanyi zhijie" 大學衍義直解 [Simple explanations of Daxue yanyi], 25:1a-11a.

⁷⁸ Yin Xiang 1881, "Chongkan Zhen Xishan Dushu ji zhi xia xu," 6:7b-8a.

considering governance,” he wrote. “Learning aims at governance and governance should be based on learning. Only then will we clearly understand the sequence from learning to governance and the key points of learning and governing.”⁷⁹ Zong Chen (1525-1560) went further. “Scholars are those who should plan for and consider the state and the world,” he wrote. “If it does not help the state and the world, learning will not be worth pursuing.”⁸⁰ For both Wang Lidao and Zong Chen, then, sociopolitical application was the only function of book learning. This statecraft orientation was prescribed when followers of Wang Yangming’s philosophy of mind failed to respond to threats from the nomadic states on the northern border and Japanese pirates on the southeast coast. Zong Chen rebuked the inward-looking tendency of mind cultivation and abstract metaphysical discussions. Although he recognized Zhen’s moral didacticism as necessary for political practices, Zong clearly preferred Qiu’s *Supplement* as a “work to turn the tide of the times” (*jiushi yishu* 救時一書).⁸¹

Thus, for his Ming interpreters, Zhen in his *Extended Meaning* confirmed the indispensability of book learning for political practices. As a result, reading continued to function as the main method of pursuing learning in the context of statecraft. In reading for learning, even the emperor was expected to follow the rules that Zhen derived from Zhu. In 1595 Yuan Zongdao (1560-1600), though a radical practitioner of the philosophy of mind, suggested to the Wanli emperor that he read the *Extended Meaning*. Self-cultivation, Yuan thought, could be practiced by grasping only the essentials, but learning and its application deserved more devoted effort. Yuan proposed three principles:

⁷⁹ Wang Lidao 1779, “Ni chongkan *Daxue yanyi xu*,” 4:31a-32b.

⁸⁰ Zong Chen 1623, “Chongkan *Daxue yanyi hebu xu*” 重刊大學衍義合補序 [Preface to the republished joint edition of the *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning* and the *Supplement*], 4:5b-6a; quotation from 6b.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, “Chongkan *Daxue yanyi hebu xu*,” 4:6a-b, 8a.

“sincerity in implementing [the comprehension of the Way], receptivity in consulting ministers, and persistence in pursuing learning.”⁸² Yuan’s three principles actually had been elaborated in Zhu’s theory of reading, as I have described in Chapter One.

The Jiajing emperor, who closely read Zhen’s *Extended Meaning*, acknowledged the importance of cultivating the mind even while he recognized the role of reading in learning. In response to a petition to attend daily lectures, he replied: “Books may be stacked up like pillars, but if one does not read them seriously, their accumulation is just for vain glory. In addition, if officials do not correctly nourish their minds, it would be useless even if they are called [to lecture].”⁸³ In the context of the daily lectures, however, I judge that the emperor’s reply was derived from Zhen Dexiu, whose *Classic of Mind* and *Classic of Governance* were as popular as his *Extended Meaning* among elite readers. In his *Classic of Mind* Zhen proposed his philosophy of cultivating mind, whilst in his *Classic of Governance* he selected files from his own administrative practices and stories of eminent magistrates in previous dynasties to illustrate his institutional principles. This means that Zhen was as concerned with institutional transformations and administrative practices as he was with self-cultivation.⁸⁴ The question confronting Ming elite readers was whether moral or intellectual cultivation was prior. In the mid-Ming, elite readers could tend to assume the priority of mind cultivation over the pursuit of learning, but they upheld the indispensability of administrative skills and sociopolitical knowledge, as did

⁸² Yuan Zongdao 1976, “Qi jinjiang Daxue yanyi shu” 乞進講大學衍義疏 [Memorial for suggesting to explain the *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*], 8. 1a-3b.

⁸³ “Shizong shilu” 明世宗實錄 [The veritable records of the Shizong emperor], 189.3996, cited in Chu 2008, 197; for the Jiajing emperor’s interest in learning, see Chu 2008, 217-18.

⁸⁴ de Bary 1993.

Cheng Minzheng (1445-1500) and Yan Ne (1511-1584).⁸⁵ For Cheng Minzheng, mind and governance could not be distinguished from each other as substance and function. He defined mind as the unit of both substance and function (*quanti dayong* 全體大用).⁸⁶ This definition was none other than Zhu's invention, part of his theory of investigating things and extending knowledge.⁸⁷

Despite Zhen's stress upon self-cultivation in his *Extended Meaning* and *Classic of Mind*, idealistic officials prior to the early sixteenth century believed that Zhen's theory should be of use to practitioners (i.e., the emperor and his officials), as Zhen himself believed. Once the ruler had cultivated his mind, he could easily learn the arts of governing the state and pacifying the world.⁸⁸ In his 1464 petition to the Tianshun emperor for reading the *Extended Meaning*, Zhang Ning expected the throne to consult the Classics and standard histories if he had any questions, but to put Zhen Dexiu's wisdom into practice once he achieved some learning. As a result, Zhang suggested, the ruler would morally and politically meet the Confucian ideal.⁸⁹ Similarly, in his preface to the 1502 edition of the *Extended Meaning*, Shao Bao insisted that Zhen's idea of statecraft was not moral or metaphysical at all but concrete and practicable. Zhen's citations from and comments on the Classics and histories illuminated historical

⁸⁵ Cheng Minzheng 1779, "Ba Zhen Xishan xiansheng *Xinjing* fuzhu" 跋真西山先生心經附註 [Postscript to Master Zhen Dexiu's *Classic of Mind*, with commentaries], 39:2a; Yan Ne 1587, "Chongke Zhen Xishan xiansheng *Xin Zheng Jing xu*" 重刻真西山先生心政經序 [Preface to the new joint edition of Master Zhen's *Classic of Mind* and *Classic of Governance*], 1:18b.

⁸⁶ Cheng Minzheng 1779, "Ba Zhen Xishan xiansheng *Xinjing* fuzhu," 39:1b.

⁸⁷ Zhu Xi 1983, "Daxue zhangju" 大學章句, 6-7; Legge 1960, "The Great Learning," I:229-30.

⁸⁸ Zhen Dexiu 1781, "*Daxue yanyi xu*" 大學衍義序 [Preface to the *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*], 3a.

⁸⁹ Zhang Ning 1781, "Qi jinjiang *Daxue yanyi biao*," 1:18b; "Xianzong shilu" 憲宗實錄 [The veritable records of the Xianzong emperor], 7:6a-b.

developments with “specific examples and realistic arguments” (*zhishi qieli* 指事切理).⁹⁰

Some pragmatic scholars like Zong Chen criticized the inward tendency of self-cultivation in intellectual life, however, and regarded the purpose of reading Zhen’s *Extended Meaning* to be to find help in regulating families, governing states, and making the world tranquil.⁹¹

In general, the fluctuation in elite uses of Zhen’s statecraft work in the Ming did not alter the emphasis on book learning in acquiring statecraft skills and other practical techniques. Zhen was simply perpetuating Zhu’s philosophy of investigating things to extend knowledge in his *Reading Notes*, and Ming readers followed suit.

II.2.2. Qiu Jun and Late Ming Admirers of Zhen Dexiu

Did the significance of, and approaches to, book learning legitimated by Zhu’s theory remain fundamental in the Ming adaptations, abridgements, and imitations of Zhen’s *Extended Meaning*? To answer this question, we need to examine these Ming texts in terms of how far they cleaved to or departed from Zhen’s original ideas.

Among Zhen’s admirers, Qiu Jun was unquestionably the most constructive. Qiu perpetuated Zhu’s statecraft idea through his *Supplement*, in which he adopted Zhen’s assumptions about substance and function, principle and fact, and self-cultivation and rulership.⁹² On the other hand, the distinctions between Qiu and Zhen are obvious. While Zhen focused on self-cultivation, Qiu was more interested in solving contemporary practical and institutional problems.⁹³ Thus Zhen has been labeled a moralist and Qiu a

⁹⁰ Shao Bao 1777, “Daxue yanyi chongkan xu,” 14:2a.

⁹¹ Zong Chen 1623, “Chongkan Daxue yanyi hebu xu,” 4:6a-b.

⁹² de Bary 1981, 180-85; de Bary 1993.

⁹³ Chu 1986.

utilitarian, being representative of the Song and Ming statecraft traditions respectively. As we can find in catalogues of Ming imprints and Ming writings, however, Ming scholars tended to juxtapose Zhen and Qiu and even combine their works into one through their editorial activities. This juxtaposition points to the vitality of a tradition of intellectual practices lasting from the Song to the Ming.

Qiu Jun presented his work on statecraft as a cluster of various branches of practical knowledge. This means that we can interpret the term “statecraft” as knowledge of how the world should be ordered (*jingshi zhixue* 經世之學) rather than as a higher conceptualization of institutional and administrative issues. Behind this knowledge cluster is an epistemological rationale that enabled Qiu to assemble various specialized fields into his framework, and his contemporaries and late generations to juxtapose his work with Zhen’s. Despite their differences, in my view, Qiu and Zhen shared Zhu’s epistemological theory of investigating things to extend knowledge. This learning concept not only dominated the Ming elite interpretation of Zhen as discussed above, but also informed Qiu’s statecraft work and Ming elite ideas concerning his intellectual affinity with Zhen and Zhu.

Qiu Jun’s *Supplement* benefited from his wide reading. The past, he upheld, should be understood to serve the present and knowledge of history be employed to deal with current issues. As had Zhu, Qiu considered learning a gradual and cumulative process. In compiling his *Supplement*, Qiu “examined classics and worthies’ writings” and “recorded good conduct and wise words” in history without neglecting any details. He described his

efforts as “investigating things to extend knowledge” and his goal as “governing the state and unifying the world in peace.”⁹⁴

Qiu Jun justified his method by recourse to the unity of substance and function in Zhu’s theory of investigating things to extend knowledge. Confucian learning, Qiu explained, should consist of both substance and function; the former originated in principle apprehended correctly, and the latter was represented in things to be investigated. The *Great Learning* stipulated the eight steps from investigating things to pacifying the world, and the student should follow them in sequence. Qiu summarized this sequence as knowledge preceding action; that is, before applying the essentials of Confucian learning to sociopolitical practices, the student should understand the meaning of the essentials. Qiu therefore intended his *Supplement* as a guide to both the method of investigating things to extend knowledge, and the knowledge of key points for governing the state and pacifying the world accessible to all from the emperor to those out of office.⁹⁵ This emphasis on knowledge and action differentiated Qiu from those who insisted on the cultivation of mind as the ultimate goal of learning, following Lu Jiuyuan. Qiu criticized Lu and his followers for focusing more on moral than on intellectual cultivation. Because Lu’s radical admirers denied book learning, for Qiu their approach was heterodox, intellectually groundless, and could only lead to intellectual scepticism.⁹⁶ Like Zhu, Qiu assumed knowledge acquisition to be the first task students should undertake (*xue zhi xianwu* 學之先務). He expected Confucian scholars to be erudite for

⁹⁴ Qiu Jun 1559, “Jin *Daxue yanyi bu biao*” 進大學衍義補表 [Memorial of presenting my *Supplement to the Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*](1487), 2b, 4a.

⁹⁵ Ibid., “*Daxue yanyi bu xu*” 大學衍義補序 [Preface to the *Supplement to the Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*], 2b-3b, 5b-6a.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 71:9b-10a; 72:6b-7a, 9a-b.

the ultimate purpose of bringing peace to the world.⁹⁷ Citing the *Mean* as well as the Song commentaries, Qiu suggested that in order to attain sincerity in their thoughts, students should pursue learning through acquiring knowledge in a stipulated order: “the extensive study of what is good, accurate inquiry about it, careful reflection on it, the clear discrimination of it, and the earnest practice of it.”⁹⁸ Book learning, in Qiu’s view as in Zhu’s, was the main source of statecraft skills.

As discussed in Chapter One, Cheng Yi classified learning into three parts: literary composition, philology and etymology, and Confucian Learning. Of these, Confucian Learning was the only gateway to the apprehension of principle. Following Zhu, however, Qiu considered literary composition and etymology as part of Confucian learning, the former helpful in expressing the apprehension of principle and the latter in expounding the Classics.⁹⁹ As etymology was indispensable for reading the Classics, Qiu perpetuated the evidential style of reading that Zhu proposed. Qiu suggested that students reading the *Songs* should slowly appreciate the phrases and phonetically examine the characters, so that they could properly draw the meaning from the text (*suiwen yi xunyi* 隨文以尋意). After Zhu, Qiu stressed the Han tradition of *zhangju* (paragraph and sentence) and etymology for reading the *Songs*.¹⁰⁰ Without the Han-Tang commentaries and etymological studies, Qiu declared, the student could not understand the *Songs* or other Classics, nor would they be qualified to engage in metaphysical discussions.¹⁰¹ At the same time, however, in reading the Classics, both students and their tutors were expected

⁹⁷ Ibid., 71:3b-4a, 16b.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 72:4b; Zhu Xi 1983, “Lunyu jizhu” 論語集注 [Collected commentaries of the *Analects*], 2.57; *The Mean*, in Legge 1960, I.277.

⁹⁹ Qiu Jun 1559, 72:18b-19a.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 74: 8a, 11a, 11b.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 74:5b-6a, 76:5a .

to personally experience their learning so that it could transcend mere etymology. The principle implied in the Classical texts should function as the ultimate criterion for judging people and events.¹⁰²

Qiu actually recognized the applicability of Zhu's theory to reading all Confucian Classics, though in some cases he cited other Song Confucians whom Zhu had referred to, agreed with, and taught, such as Zhou Dunyi (1017-1073), the Cheng brothers, Zhang Shi (1133-1180), and Zhu's immediate disciples.¹⁰³ All students, for Qiu, should employ Zhu's method as their pattern (*faze* 法則) of reading, with an expectation of achieving sagehood:

Employing the two worthies' [Zhu Xi and Cheng Yi's] instructions for reading, the student will be able to apprehend from words and their meaning why the Sage and worthies wrote and propounded sayings as well as how they cultivated mind and set up moral models of sagehood. Apprehend their sayings in your mind, with your apprehension cultivate your moral faculty, deal with affairs, pursue learning, and administer the government, and then you will be able not only to master what you have learnt from the Sage and worthies, but also to relate [learning] to your moral cultivation and apply it to your [socio-political] practices. If so, it will not be difficult for you to attain sagehood.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ibid., 76:9a.

¹⁰³ E.g. *ibid.*, 73:8b-9a on the *Changes*, 73:12a on the *Documents*, 75:8b-9a on the *Spring and Autumn*, and 76:15a-16a on the *Analects*.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 77:10b-11a.

Reading was the first gateway to sagehood and practicality in moral, social and political action. By perpetuating Zhu's theory of reading in its entirety, Qiu distinguished himself from the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century tendency to give priority to mind cultivation over book learning. Epistemologically he divided learning into knowledge and action, for which reading was the starting point. The student "reads the Classics to be a Confucian, apprehends the implied principle to cultivate himself, and administers the government to govern others. These are the effects of learning and mean its complete unification of substance and function."¹⁰⁵ Mastering the Classical texts' literal meaning simply for passing the civil service examinations was not what Confucian learning was for.¹⁰⁶ What the student learned from the Classics was for sociopolitical applications. Thus Qiu was concerned with both substance and function rather than the latter only, making his theory of learning and reading both utilitarian and moralistic.

Despite being an imperially endorsed core text in Ming school libraries,¹⁰⁷ Qiu's *Supplement* was not above being criticized. Seeing it in relation to Zhen's work, some readers questioned Qiu's supplements and his theoretical originality. Immediately after its first publication in 1488, Xie Duo (1435-1510) compared the *Supplement's* topics and central ideas to those in Zhen's *Extended Meaning* and concluded that Qiu added redundancies to Zhen's idea. According to Xie, Qiu's *Supplement* was merely a "carefully edited encyclopedia" (*leishu zhi jingzhe* 類書之精者), hence no match for Zhen's work.¹⁰⁸ Later criticism targeted Qiu's untraditional views on history, his

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 73:13b.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 76:11a-12a .

¹⁰⁷ Brook 2005, 109 *Table 5.1*.

¹⁰⁸ Xie Duo 1521, "Du Daxue yanyi bu" 讀大學衍義補 [Reading the *Supplement* to the *Extended Meaning* of the Great Learning], 32:7a-b.

impractical suggestions on matters such as grain transport, and his silence on eunuch meddling in state affairs.¹⁰⁹

In their works on statecraft, Zhen Dexiu and Qiu Jun described an ideal of rulership as benevolent, omniscient, and omnipotent. They gave Ming scholars a framework for interpreting history, evaluating policies, and developing political theories. For example, in 1593 Wu Ruideng (fl. the late 16th-early 17th centuries) organized his history of the Ming dynasty up to 1573 in the very same way in which Zhen compiled his *Extended Meaning*. Ming emperors who successfully cultivated themselves and applied themselves to the learning of emperorship, as Zhen suggested, were praised.¹¹⁰ Other Ming imitations of Zhen were merely abridgements intended to shape court culture and propagate the statecraft idea.

In 1522, Yang Lian (1452–1525) presented to the new Jiajing emperor an abridgement of Zhen's *Extended Meaning*. Yang was an admirer of Zhu who knew well the rites, finance, grain storage, astrology, the calendar, and mathematics.¹¹¹ He had sent several memorials to the Hongzhi emperor, suggesting that he read the *Extended Meaning* as a textbook and regularly attend the Classics colloquium. Yang regarded Zhen's *Extended Meaning* as a means to help the emperor understand the *Great Learning* and properly use the various texts that Zhen referred to. To facilitate reading, Yang distilled Zhen's original from forty-three chapters to twenty. He summarized the essence of Zhen's philosophy as being “mind” (*xin* 心) and “inner attentiveness” (*jing* 敬), but he

¹⁰⁹ Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 93.1926-27.

¹¹⁰ Wu Ruideng 1593.

¹¹¹ Zhang Tingyu *et al* 1974, 282.7247-48.

suggested that “extending knowledge” and “making thoughts sincere” were urgent first tasks for the Jiajing emperor.¹¹²

Around the 1550s, Wang Zheng (*jinsshi* 1550) further compressed Yang Lian’s abridgement into ten chapters and condensed Qiu’s *Supplement* from 160 chapters to twenty. Wang adapted them originally for his family school, adding brief interlinear notes and glossaries.¹¹³ These two abridgements were published as a joint edition in 1564, on the assumption that combined they would provide a complete elaboration of the eight steps to Confucian learning stipulated in the *Great Learning*.¹¹⁴ In this joint edition, Wang kept the original chapter organization and subtitles. His intent was to highlight statecraft rather than reexamine the historical evidence for or philosophical assumptions underlying the original works, on the grounds that such investigation was of purely academic interest.¹¹⁵

In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, Wang Yangming and his disciples challenged Zhu’s theory of investigating things to extend knowledge. Wang attempted to find evidence to support his philosophy of mind in an old version of the *Great Learning*, but distorted its textual meaning (see Chapter Four). Wang Zheng’s work on Zhen and Qiu, according to a colleague who published his abridgements, was meant to rebuke Wang Yangming’s use of the *Great Learning* and to draw scholarly attention from metaphysical controversies back to sociopolitical issues. Adhering to Zhu’s interpretation of the *Great Learning*, Wang Zheng and his colleagues suggested that one should begin

¹¹² Yang Lian 1525, “Memorials,” 1a-6b.

¹¹³ Liu Shiju 劉時舉, “*Daxue yanyi tonglue ba*” 大學衍義通略跋 [Postscript to the *General abstracts of the Extended Meaning*...], in Wang Zheng 1564, “Houxu” 後序:1a-b.

¹¹⁴ Song Jian 宋鑒, “*Daxue yanyi tonglue xu*” 大學衍義通略序 [Preface to the *General abstracts*...], *ibid.*, 12b-13a.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, “*Daxue yanyi tonglue yili*” 大學衍義通略義例 [Principles of editing the *General abstracts of*...], 14a.

with the investigation of things and then follow in sequence the eight steps.¹¹⁶ The investigation of things, extension of knowledge, governance of the state, and pacification of the world were all logically related, the first two being prerequisite for the last two. To develop statecraft skills, one had to be a devoted investigator of things—and a good reader of books.

In the 1633 edition of Qiu Jun's *Supplement*, Chen Renxi recognized the theories of investigation and extension and the philosophy of mind as opposed.¹¹⁷ However dominant the Yangming school became, Zhen Dexiu and Qiu Jun represented a tradition that was much longer and firmer than Wang's philosophy of mind. The perpetuation of this tradition from the Song to the Ming was essentially independent of the philosophical controversies between the Cheng-Zhu and Lu-Wang schools. Zhen suggested that the first six of eight steps stipulated in the *Great Learning* represented the substance of Confucian learning while the last two were its function.¹¹⁸ The assumption of the unity of substance and function, together with their shared textual basis, legitimated the Ming juxtaposition of Zhen's *Extended Meaning* as substance and Qiu's *Supplement* as function. Zhen was concerned with both moral cultivation and institutional issues whereas Qiu's orientation was both utilitarian and moralistic, but their works were, after all, independent of each other. The cultivation of mind could neither automatically

¹¹⁶ Xue Tianhua 薛天華, "Ke *Daxue yanyi tonglue houxu*" 刻大學衍義通略後序 [Postscript to the *General abstracts...*], *ibid.*, "Houxu":2a-b.

¹¹⁷ Chen Renxi 1633, "*Daxue yanyi bu xu*" 大學衍義補序 [Preface to the *Supplement* to the *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*], "Maji," 4:43a-b.

¹¹⁸ Zhen Dexiu 1781, "*Daxue yanyi zhazi*" 大學衍義劄子 [Memorial of presenting the *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*], 1a.

generate nor substitute for any policies and measures.¹¹⁹ In terms of knowledge acquisition, however, Zhen and Qiu shared a tradition of emphasizing book learning. Wide reading and broad learning were the basis of statecraft. Even among political activists, reading remained the main way of acquiring knowledge and skills, just as Zhu had proposed.

II.3. Classical Learning, Knowledge of Principle, and Civil Examinations

Zhu's theory of book learning was imperially endorsed as orthodox and perpetuated in statecraft ideas and practices. Accordingly, the Ming elite was confronted with the question of how Zhu's instructions were to be carried out in their reading practices. The answer largely lay in education, whereby the elite reader prepared for the civil examinations as the sole gateway to government service. For both tutor and student, an ideal pedagogical approach was to incorporate Classical Learning and Neo-Confucian principle into the civil examinations, as the Ming court had undertaken to do in the three *Compendia* of the Four Books, the Five Classics, and selected Neo-Confucian texts.

In late imperial China, students formed their reading habits mainly while preparing for the civil examinations. It was during these preparations that they studied the Confucian Classics and Neo-Confucian philosophy. How to combine the civil examinations, Classical Learning, and knowledge of principle in pedagogy was of concern to classical educators. In order to obtain a satisfactory outcome, various curricula had been developed since the early thirteenth century. Zhu's immediate disciples incorporated Neo-Confucian writings into anthologies that were compiled for the examination market. They expected examination candidates to adhere to Neo-Confucian

¹¹⁹ Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 93.1926-27.

principle in answers written using literary skills learned from canonical writers.¹²⁰ This approach was largely a response to the specializations that were tested in the Song civil examinations. Song students had witnessed changes in examination subjects between Classical exegesis and literary composition, but in general literary skill remained the predominant criterion for recruiting officials.¹²¹ In his “Private Proposals,” as analyzed in Chapter One, Zhu suggested that this literary criterion be abolished and that students be assessed according to their grasp of the Classics, history, philosophy and political affairs.¹²² With the reinstatement of the civil examination system in 1314, Classical Learning was stipulated as the primary subject with priority over literary composition. An early 1314 decree required that for questions in the first session, students should answer based on the Four Books with Zhu’s commentaries; political affairs and applied compositions (e.g. edicts and memorials) would be tested in the second and third sessions respectively.¹²³ This transformation in subjects to be examined was initiated by Xu Heng (1209-1281), an admirer of Zhu and key advisor of the Mongol Khan.¹²⁴ It was from this transformation that Cheng Duanli developed his *Daily Schedule* as a programme of study, in which he attempted to incorporate Classical Learning and knowledge of principle into the civil examinations and reshape students’ reading habits.

¹²⁰ De Weerd 2007, 304-18, 252-54.

¹²¹ Tuotuo *et al* 1977, 155.3613-14, 156.3625ff.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 156.3633-34.

¹²³ Song Lian *et al* 1976, 81.2015, 2018-19; de Bary 1981, 50-60.

¹²⁴ Song Lian *et al* 1976, 81.2018; Lam 2008; for a discussion of Xu Heng's philosophy, see de Bary 1981, 131-47.

II.3.1. Inward Tendency of Reading Concepts in the Yuan

As Zhu had done, Xu Heng emphasized intensive reading of the Classical text as the basic way of apprehending the sages' intentions rather than intellectual transmission within a master-disciple network.¹²⁵ Only after exhaustively deliberating on a text could the reader turn to earlier commentaries before making his own meaning or accepting one interpretation.¹²⁶ Xu considered the argument and description found in the Six Classics, the *Analects*, and the *Mencius* as the ultimate criteria for assessing philosophy and history; any ideas contradictory to the Classic texts should be disregarded.¹²⁷ Yet, as we have shown, Zhu took principle embraced in the Classics, rather than the Classical text *per se*, as his ultimate standard. Xu, evidently, neglected Zhu's emphasis. He also suggested that students read history using Zhu's rule of progressive iteration, but expected them to cultivate virtue by emulating virtuous historical figures and using notorious figures as cautionary examples.¹²⁸ Xu's inwardly directed and moralistic reading of history differed from Zhu's expectation that the student observe historical developments and extract lessons useful for sociopolitical service. Xu removed literary composition from his programme completely. In his view, Zhu, like the Cheng brothers, had never discussed literary compositions, hence literary composition was "harmful to [the apprehension of] the Way" and literary writers were court jesters.¹²⁹ He discouraged students from reading literary writings dating from after the third century AD, including Tang pieces, on the grounds that they could "ruin the reader's spirit."¹³⁰ Instead Xu took only Zhu's

¹²⁵ Ditmanson 1999, 103.

¹²⁶ Xu Heng 1781, 1:13b-14a.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:14a.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:14b.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:15b-16a.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:16a-b.

Elementary Learning and Four Books as gospel.¹³¹ In a letter dated 25 January 1267, he encouraged his son to become intimate with these texts, which should be completely understood by the age of fifteen; failure to read other texts was no cause for regret if he had mastered well the *Elementary Learning* and Four Books.¹³²

The inward tendency of Xu's concept of reading preceded the moral orientation of reading concepts in the early Ming, which I will discuss in Chapter Three. What should be noted here is that Xu's treatment of the Four Books as the core texts of his programme of study was largely realized in the 1314 reinstatement of the civil examinations. As a pedagogical response to this reinstatement, however, Cheng Duanli's *Daily Schedule* had more intellectual affinity to Zhu than to Xu. Xu represented the development of Neo-Confucianism in the North, but in his day a different and more far-reaching intellectual development took place in South China, especially in Jinhua in today's Zhejiang Province.¹³³ Xu's simplified curriculum for teaching the core Confucian texts to the Yuan imperial family and other non-Chinese youth perhaps did not suit the South with its greater intellectual vigour.¹³⁴ In the Jiangnan area, Zhu's idea of wide reading was largely advocated through Cheng Duanli's *Daily Schedule*.

II.3.2. Pedagogical Application of Zhu Xi's Theory

A native of today's Ningbo, Cheng Duanli traced his intellectual lineage back to one of Zhu's disciples. His master was the first propagandist of Zhu's Learning of the Way in his locale, but it is alleged that Cheng recognized Zhu's original teaching even

¹³¹ Hok-lan Chan, "Hsu Heng," in de Rachewiltz 1993, 420-21.

¹³² Xu Heng 1781, "Yu zi Shike" 與子師可 [Letter to my son Shike], 9:5a; also cited in Ditmanson 1999, 103.

¹³³ Dardess 2003, 130-31; Bol 2003, 265-69.

¹³⁴ Huang Zongxi and Quan Zuwang 1986, 90.3002-03.

more than did his master.¹³⁵ Meanwhile, Cheng adapted and even concealed some points in Zhu's theory of reading and ideal knowledge framework, in order to fit in the civil examination system.

Cheng employed Zhu's reading methods in his educational practices, and his teaching reportedly bore fruit.¹³⁶ For Cheng himself, it was definitely wrong to teach students literary skills before they had mastered the Classics. He thought that the Yuan imperial stipulation of Zhu's Classical exegesis as the main criterion for examining students signaled an unprecedented incorporation of Classical Learning and knowledge of principle into the civil examinations.¹³⁷ When reading the Classics to prepare for the examinations, he insisted, Zhu's rules should be effective and helpful for students.¹³⁸ Cheng based his programme on Zhu's theory of reading as edited by Fu Guang and other Song Confucians' discussions if they proved useful and compatible. With the help of his programme, he hoped that students would understand the Classics, principle, governance and history, and improve their morality and practical knowledge and skills,¹³⁹ just as Zhu expected.

Of the above Six Rules, Cheng in his interpretation emphasized those of "deliberating on the text and pondering its meaning" and "experiencing the text personally" as essential, while also advocating the other four to his students.¹⁴⁰ These two rules, as discussed above, were often employed in reading the Classics and practicing

¹³⁵ Ibid., 87.2910, 2913.

¹³⁶ Li Xiaoguang 李孝光, "Cheng Jingshu *Dushu fennian richeng xu*" 程敬叔讀書分年日程序(1332), in Cheng Duanli 1335, "Xu":5a.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 2:18b.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 2:17b.

¹³⁹ Cheng Duanli 1335, "Xu" 序 [Preface].

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., "Jiqing Lu Jiangdong shuyuan jiangyi" 集慶路江東書院講義 [Lecture at the Jiangdong Academy of Jiqing Route], 3:58a.

self-cultivation. However, Cheng's curriculum appeared to be more technical and intellectual in its orientation than didactic. Concerned with teaching students how to prepare for the Neo-Confucian oriented examinations, Cheng allocated the core texts to different stages of study based on Zhu's reading list and attempted to teach students how to read them (see Table 2.3.1).

Following Zhu's suggestion, Cheng required his students first to read the texts proper of the Four Books and Six Classics, completing them by the age of fifteen. Even between sixteen and nineteen, he expected that students should also copy and read them, with priority given to the texts rather than commentaries.¹⁴¹ He demanded that Zhu's style of evidential reading be followed and asked students to understand the literal meaning of each word, term, sentence and paragraph.¹⁴² He expected students to approach Zhu's commentaries on the Four Books when they were sixteen years old and complete reading Song interpretation of the Five Classics by nineteen. Cheng particularly emphasized use of the Six Rules for reading those Classical texts.¹⁴³ Even so, he carefully selected titles of Cheng-Zhu Classical exegesis as aids for reading and required students to read the interpretation only after having become intimate with the Classical texts—They should not turn to earlier commentaries until they had exhausted themselves in apprehending the Song masters' intentions, especially those of Zhu. For instance, he suggest that the reader of the *Changes* copy Zhu's commentary right after the relevant Classical passage and then Cheng Yi's; following Cheng Yi's interpretation would come, in succession, earlier commentaries, Lu Deming's (ca. 550–630) glossary, Zhu's discussions in his writings and conversations, explanations of Zhu's discussions by his

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 1:15a-b, 2:18b-25a.

¹⁴² E.g. *ibid.*, 1:5a-6a, 8b-10a.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1:16a.

disciples, and other discussions compatible with Zhu's. The reader should first understand Zhu's interpretation and then that of Cheng Yi, before proceeding to the selected earlier commentaries.¹⁴⁴ The priority assigned to Song commentaries over any others in Cheng's curriculum clearly adhered to Yuan imperial stipulations regarding the subject matter appropriate for testing. In his "Private Proposals," Zhu had suggested that in their answers, examination candidates follow their preferred paradigms of Classical exegesis before reaching their own conclusions. This suggestion was taken up in the 1314 reinstatement.¹⁴⁵ However, Cheng did not suggest any paradigms be used other than those that obtained in the Song Neo-Confucian tradition. As a result, students should be preoccupied only with Neo-Confucian interpretation and in practice were not encouraged to keep their minds open in their encounter with the Classical texts. Clearly, the Neo-Confucian oriented examination system was a deviation from Zhu's theory of reading, even though his rules were advocated for students as in Cheng's curriculum.

The *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* was the only historical work that Cheng required his students to read. He designated the *Outline* that Zhu planned as a guide that ensured a Neo-Confucian reading of this chronicle. *The Grand Scribe's Records*, *History of the Former Han*, *History of the Tang Dynasty*, and Fan Zuyu's 范祖禹 (1041-98) *Tang jian* 唐鑑 (the *Mirror for the Tang History*) were recommended as cross-references. Students, Cheng suggested, could browse only a few chapters of these historical writings while reading the *Comprehensive Mirror*, since they were presumed to be competent in historical criticism having mastered the Four Books. As Zhu had done, Cheng suggested that the task of reading history was to study historical developments and

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 2:18b-20b.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 1:19a-b, 2:11a-12b; cf. Song Lian *et al* 1976, 81.2019.

lessons, and he stressed the application of the Six Rules in such reading of history. However, unlike Zhu, who assigned priority to the *Grand Scribe's Record*, the *Zuo Commentary* to the *Spring and Autumn*, *History of the Former Han*, *History of the Later Han*, and *Records of the Three Kingdoms* over the *Comprehensive Mirror* in his reading sequence, Cheng removed the standard histories from his required reading list and recommended some companions to the *Comprehensive Mirror* in addition to the *Outline*.¹⁴⁶ History was one of the main subjects for examination in Zhu's "Private Proposals," but was not listed in the 1314 imperial decree. In Cheng's programme, reading the *Comprehensive Mirror* could be an effective shortcut to historical knowledge that would be of use to candidates when answering policy questions. Those historical studies of width and depth advocated by Zhu appeared unnecessary for Cheng's students preparing their examinations.

Cheng provided many more instructions for literary composition than for reading history. His students would be tested for their literary skills in the second session, a subject that Zhu had proposed abolishing from the examination system but that was nonetheless retained in 1314. In Cheng's programme, students were expected to spend about five years on literary composition. After finishing their reading of the *Comprehensive Mirror* around the age of twenty, students would begin to read Han Yu's literary writings and then the *Elegies of Chu*, completing them in two years. By twenty-five when he was supposed to be well prepared for the metropolitan examination, the student should learn more literary skills from Ouyang Xiu (1007-72), Zeng Gong (1019-83), Wang Anshi (1021-86), Liu Zongyuan (773-819), and Su Xun (1009-66).

¹⁴⁶ Cheng Duanli 1335, 2:1a-3a.

Cheng's instructions in literary composition were derived from Zhen Dexiu's theory. In his anthology *Wenzhang zhengzong*, Zhen employed Zhu's Learning of the Way to judge all early writings, in an attempt to show students the "true" models of compositions. His anthology included only those writings that were in the style of Ancient Prose and whose meaning was close to the Classics, coherent with Neo-Confucian principle, and useful in sociopolitical service. He classified all items to be included into four modes: the imperative, the argumentative, the narrative, and the poetic.¹⁴⁷ These four modes covered the genres that the 1314 edict stipulated would be tested in the second session.¹⁴⁸ Cheng's instructions in composition began with Han Yu's selected argumentative and narrative writings as found in Zhen's anthology. An evidential and intensive reading in progressive iteration of the internal logic of Han's prose, according to Cheng, would benefit the reader for life in his compositions.¹⁴⁹ In order to learn more literary skills, students were expected to read the collected writings of Han Yu and selections from the writings of Ouyang Xiu, Zeng Gong, Wang Anshi, Liu Zongyuan, and Su Xun. They did not have to read other canonized writers.¹⁵⁰ Yet, Cheng also recommended more particular readings to students interested in specific genres for testing, such as historical writing, the rhapsody, memorials for various occasions, imperial edicts, and even Classical exegesis. For example, those who were interested in historical writings needed to read the complete *Grand Scribe's Records* and the *History of the Former Han* after finishing the relevant items in Zhen's anthology. Those interested in memorial writing needed to learn skills from the selected memorials of

¹⁴⁷ De Weerd 2007, 310-14.

¹⁴⁸ Song Lian *et al* 1976, 81.2019.

¹⁴⁹ Cheng Duanli 1335, 2:3a-b.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:9a-b.

eminent Han, Tang and Song officials, including Zhu Xi, Fan Zhongyan (989-1052), Wang Anshi, and Su Shi.¹⁵¹ As Zhu had done, however, Cheng also emphasized the universality of principle embraced in the Four Books. For him, literary compositions were secondary to the apprehension of principle. Intimacy with the Classics and histories, understanding of principle, cultivation of learning, insights and skills, and the achievement of a vital constitution would all constitute the great base of literary composition. Cheng believed that his curriculum would elevate the learning, writing ability, and personality of top examination candidates under Heaven.¹⁵²

Cheng did not mention philosophers other than those of the Cheng-Zhu school at all and even neglected some pre-Qin philosophers whose literary merits Zhu had considered commendable and helpful for interested students. No philosophy other than Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism was imperially stipulated as subject matter for testing in Cheng Duanli's age. His curriculum was, after all, intended for the examination market and its main concern was practical utility for the student's preparations. Given this concern, Cheng designated some twenty Neo-Confucian philosophical texts (*xingli shu* 性理書) for reading between the ages of sixteen and nineteen. All were by eminent Confucians of the Cheng-Zhu school.¹⁵³ Reading them would ensure the student's ideological correctness. Since Cheng Duanli assumed that the Cheng brothers and Zhu had transmitted Confucius' meaning in the Classics, the reader's adherence to the Cheng-Zhu school ensured his apprehension of that meaning.¹⁵⁴ Given this assumption, Cheng

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 2:10a-16a.

¹⁵² Ibid., 2:5a-b.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 1:11b-12b.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 1:24a-25a.

justified the uniting of Classical Learning and knowledge of principle in the civil examinations.

Cheng was not the first to attempt to justify this incorporation. For Zhu himself, the apprehension of principle could give the examination candidate more competence in writing, but in general Zhu viewed reading for learning and reading for examination preparation as different matters and suggested that the former be given priority.¹⁵⁵ His immediate disciple, Chen Chun 陳淳 (1159-1223), agreed that the learning of the sages and the worthies was not harmful to writing in the examinations but beneficial. A student well versed in principle, Chen suggested, naturally was able to present his arguments with sound rhetorical skills. Both Zhu and Chen required students to apprehend principle before preparing their examinations. Some fifty years later, Zhu's follower, Rao Lu 饒魯 (1193-1264), further developed this parallel between the study of principle and preparation for the examinations. Students, he said, could explore philosophy by reading the Classics in the morning and prepare for the examinations in the afternoon.¹⁵⁶ In Rao's view, pursuit of principle and preparation for examinations could be undertaken at the same time, although he gave intellectual priority to principle over composition. Whatever the later interpretation was, the superiority of Neo-Confucian principle as an ultimate standard of literary composition remained unassailable. The 1314 imperial edict directly required this ultimate standard as the subject matter for testing and institutionally recognized the incorporation of Classical Learning and knowledge of principle into the civil examinations. Cheng endeavored to realize this incorporation by applying Zhu's theory of reading in his curriculum.

¹⁵⁵ Li Jingde 1986, 13.244-48.

¹⁵⁶ For the citations of Chen Chun and Rao Lu, see Hu Guang *et al* 1560, 55:25b.

It should be noted that Cheng designed a knowledge framework for students that went beyond Classical Learning and Learning of the Way, by requiring them to read at night books on institutions and governance (*zhidu shu* 制度書 and *zhidao shu* 治道書) between the ages of nineteen and twenty-two. Neo-Confucians such as Zhen Dexiu discussed the art of governance in his work.¹⁵⁷ For Cheng, however, governance was inseparable from knowledge of institutions and both were concrete and useful in government service, the objective of examination candidates. Cheng thus offered a list of more than forty readings covering diverse topics including mathematics, astronomy, land systems, geography, agriculture, ceremonial and etiquette, musicology, law, phonology, and etymology. He encouraged students to compile their own commonplace books, in which they could topically arrange extracts from these readings. Following Zhu, Cheng justified such a process of reading and compiling as a part of the investigation of things.¹⁵⁸ Cheng's students could refer to those readings in their answers to policy questions in the third session, but his emphasis on usefulness for sociopolitical practice obviously accorded with Zhu's accentuation of concrete knowledge and practical skills in the epistemic reservoir constructed through reading. The evidence thus suggests that Cheng's curriculum preserved Zhu's idea of statecraft in his theory of reading. This idea, discussed in the previous section, was elucidated by Zhen Dexiu and perpetuated by Ming elite readers in their interpretation and imitations of Zhen.

While this perpetuation of the statecraft idea reiterated Zhu's concepts of book learning, Cheng's pedagogical application of the theory made it more practicable. In order to help the student succeed in the civil examinations, Cheng adapted some aspects

¹⁵⁷ Cheng Duanli 1335, 1:12b.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:6b-8b.

of Zhu's theory in his curriculum, narrowing his students' scope of reading and highlighting the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucian orientation to meet the requirements in the civil examination system. Stressing the unity of Classical Learning and knowledge of principle in the civil examinations, Cheng's application could thus be pragmatic for his selective interpretation of Zhu's Six Rules.

II.3.3. The Circulation of the *Daily Schedule*

Cheng Duanli designed his schedule according to Zhu's suggestion that studying be done with due diligence over an extended period, but his curriculum was even more intensive than its Song counterparts. A scholar of the eleventh century estimated that it would take a common reader four to nine years to complete his reading of the Classical texts listed in Table 2.3.1, excepting the *Etiquette and Ceremonial* and the Gongyang and Guliang commentaries to the *Spring and Autumn*.¹⁵⁹ Cheng allocated seven years for reading all of the Classical texts. It is unclear whether or not this reading load was reasonable for a teenage student, but the *Changes* and *Documents* were hard to understand for adult readers, as Zhu noted, let alone younger readers. As noted in Chapter One, Zhu discouraged his disciples from devoting too much time to the *Changes* and *Documents*, and even suggested that the *Spring and Autumn* be eliminated as a field of specialization for the civil examinations.

The curriculum became more intensive between the ages of sixteen and nineteen. Cheng required the student to copy into his commonplace books the Classical texts and all commentaries that accorded with Cheng-Zhu philosophy and to devote the evening to reading orthodox Neo-Confucian writings. For his curriculum Cheng proposed a long

¹⁵⁹ Zhou Yongnian 1895, 45b-46a.

reading list, even though the accessibility of most texts was questionable in his age. The Chinese publishing industry sustained its vitality in the Yuan, but the examination market was too small to motivate commercial publication of companion texts for students.¹⁶⁰ It was not until the sixteenth century that readers benefited as voluminous examination cribs were printed with the rapid expansion of commercial publishing.¹⁶¹ Cheng's students perhaps were able to encounter some printed copies of texts that he recommended, but other texts could circulate in the schools only by recourse to inefficient scribal publication. To what extent Cheng's programme was carried out in practice thus deserves further investigation.

Cheng himself witnessed the wide circulation of his *Daily Schedule* in the Jiangnan area and its distribution to local schools by the Directorate of Education,¹⁶² perhaps because of its first correspondence with the Yuan examination system and its effectiveness in educational practices. A few contemporary discussions of his curriculum by his colleagues in Jinhua are extant, and their disagreements appeared to have been slight. For Huang Jin (1277-1357), Cheng established a goal that the ordinary student should be able to reach, albeit with effort. This goal was an imitation of the ancient curriculum described in the *Classic of Rites*, but Huang maintained that "both intellectual and moral attainments are not necessarily gained by following [Cheng's curriculum]."¹⁶³ Another leading Jinhua Confucian, Wu Shidao (1283-1344), challenged Cheng's attribution of punctuation and annotation to Huang Gan, stating that it was not Huang

¹⁶⁰ Chia 2003, 296-302; for a survey of Yuan publishing industry, see Tian Jianping 2003.

¹⁶¹ McDermott 2006, 67.

¹⁶² Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 93.1848.

¹⁶³ Huang Jin 1355, "Ba *Jinxue gongcheng*" 跋進學工程 [Postscript to Cheng Duanli's Curriculum], 21:23a-b; for the ancient curriculum in the *Classic of Rites*, see Legge 1885, XVI.83-84.

Gan but Xu Heng who had developed those aids to reading the Classics.¹⁶⁴ Thus contemporary reviews of Cheng's *Daily Schedule* were generally positive. Cheng himself stated that he used Zhu's theory of reading to train his students, but he did not live to witness the eventual success of his pedagogy in schools.¹⁶⁵ Although the 1314 reinstatement of the civil examination system was originally intended to recruit officials by following Zhu's suggestions in his "Private Proposals," Cheng was so frustrated by the absence of Zhu's philosophy from the contemporary examination culture that he resigned his instructorship in a county school and refused to examine local students.¹⁶⁶

Fewer comments on Cheng's curriculum appeared in Ming literature. Because of Ming scholars' silence, Lu Longqi (1630-93) considered his publication of this curriculum in 1689 to be a rediscovery of Zhu's theory of reading and described its reception in the Ming as follows:

...Early Ming Confucian scholars, in their reading practices, commonly followed [Cheng's curriculum] as a guide. Accordingly, although talented men were not as eminent as their predecessors in the Tang and Song, their Classical scholarship and moral achievements were quite outstanding. Coming to the mid-Ming, educational institutions fell into desuetude; each family had its sons taught in its own way and every student pursued his own learning. In spite of its existence,

¹⁶⁴ Wu Shidao 1998, "Ti Cheng Jingshu Dushu gongcheng hou" 題程敬叔讀書工程後 [Postscript to Cheng Duanli's Curriculum], 17.457-458; Cheng Duanli 1335, 2:20b-25b; cf. De Weerd 2007, 307-09.

¹⁶⁵ E.g. Cheng Duanli 1781, "Song Feng Yansi xu" 送馮彥思序 [Essay to present to Feng Yansi], 4:16a-19a; "Song Wang Jifang xu" 送王季方序 [Essay to present to Wang Jifang], 4:19a-21a. Both the application of Zhu Xi's methods to reading the Classics and his own *Daily Schedule* were the main topics of Cheng's prose.

¹⁶⁶ Huang Jin 1355, "...Cheng xiansheng muzhiming"程先生墓誌銘 [...Tomb Inscription to Master Cheng], 33:11a-b.

only a very few scholars followed this curriculum. [Literati] became reckless and did not have guidance any more. Thus it was more difficult to recruit talent as prominent as before, was it not? Now our [Qing] court honours [Zhu Xi's] orthodox learning,...and scholars have begun to know this book [i.e. Cheng's curriculum] only recently.¹⁶⁷

For Lu, the methods of reading the Classics that Cheng presented in his curriculum were not Cheng's own but Zhu's, which in turn were essentially what Confucius and Mencius would have used to teach readers. He felt it was impossible to learn Confucius' and Mencius' Way without following their methods of reading.¹⁶⁸ Lu clearly related the reception of Cheng's curriculum to the whole story of Zhu's philosophy in the Ming. His impression of the mid-Ming neglect of Zhu sounds reasonable in the context of intellectual history, since he disagreed with Wang Yangming and defended Zhu.

A survey of the limited extant materials, however, prompts us to reexamine Lu's assumption. In January 1442, Zhou Xu 周敘 (1391-1452) memorialized the Zhengtong emperor, suggesting that Cheng's *Daily Schedule* be printed with Zhu Yuanzhang's educational regulations attached, and distributed to schools so as to reemphasize requirements no longer widely known. The emperor accepted this suggestion.¹⁶⁹ Zhu Yuanzhang's regulations were administrative in nature, prohibiting students from illegal

¹⁶⁷ Lu Longqi 1780, "Ba *Dushu fennian richeng hou*" 讀書分年日程後 [Postscript to the *Dushu fennian richeng*], 4:32a.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 4:35a.

¹⁶⁹ *Ming shilu*, "Yingzong shilu" 英宗實錄 [Veritable records of the Yingzong emperor], 86.1731, 1733; Zhang Tingyu et al 1974, 152.4198.

and immoral activities and engaging in political criticism,¹⁷⁰ and Cheng's curriculum was the only pedagogical text that was issued with imperial sanction in that year. Zhou's memorial was brief and did not explain why the *Daily Schedule* mattered, which suggests that for him, the emperor and all officials and students were presumed to recognize its institutional significance. Cheng's text continued circulating in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A set of Yuan woodblocks of the *Daily Schedule*, although incomplete, were stored at the National University in Nanjing, and its text could be printed on demand.¹⁷¹ In the sixteenth century, it was published by the National University in Nanjing and also by some local governments in various editions.¹⁷² Printed and manuscript copies were collected in both the Imperial and private libraries, as attested by catalogues compiled mostly in the last 150 years of the dynasty.¹⁷³ By the time that Zhou Xu submitted his memorial, Zhu's orthodoxy in official ideology had not been seriously challenged, although the early Ming witnessed some subtle deviations from his philosophy.¹⁷⁴

Before Lu Longqi "rediscovered" Cheng's *Daily Schedule* in 1689, its significance for reading methods and habits had in fact continued to be recognized. Lu Shiyi (1611-1672), an admirer of Zhu, was trained in the last decades of the Ming dynasty. From his earlier practices, Lu Shiyi upheld Cheng's pedagogy and the reading methods implied in it. Lu cited Cheng to the effect that the Classical texts should be read prior to the

¹⁷⁰ *Ming shilu*, "Taizu shilu" 太祖實錄 [Veritable records of the Taizu emperor], 147.2301-02; Zhang Tingyu et al 1974, 69.1686.

¹⁷¹ Mei Zhuo 1902, 2:29b.

¹⁷² Zhou Hongzu 1906, 1:6b, 21b, 40a.

¹⁷³ Yang Shiqi 1937, 93; Sun Nengchuan and Zhang Xuan 1912, 8:6b; Ye Sheng 1625, 3:7a; Zhu Mujie 1903, 1:12a; Qi Chenghan 2:11a; Dong Qichang 1994, 5:2b; Anonymous 1994, 1:23b, 25a; Qian Qianyi 1820, 26b.

¹⁷⁴ Chan 1970.

commentaries on them.¹⁷⁵ He proposed a reading schedule lasting for thirty years, from the age of five to thirty-five. Confronted with the publishing boom, students from five to twenty-five years of age should concentrate on the core texts: the Four Books, the Five Classics, the *Outline* of the Comprehensive Mirror, and the Song Neo-Confucian pieces. After passing the metropolitan examination around the age of twenty-five, the student could aspire to the study of other texts, in particular those on current institutions, from which he could acquire practical knowledge and attain statecraft skills. Compositional skills were not stressed in his proposal, but Lu designated lots of books on institutions and governance in addition to the Neo-Confucian philosophical texts, as Cheng had done.¹⁷⁶

Lu Longqi's logic of relating the mid-Ming neglect of Cheng's curriculum to the influence of the emerging school of Wang Yangming does not explain Zhou Xu's motivation of emphasizing the application of this programme in the educational institution. We need to look for another approach to the Ming reception of Cheng's curriculum and Zhu's theory of reading, and in the next two chapters I will stake out such an approach by appealing to ideas of reading proposed by some individual Confucians and their practices.

In this section, I have discussed Cheng Duanli's adoption and adaptation of Zhu's theory of reading into his curriculum. Like the collections and selections of Zhu's conversations and the imperial *Compendium of Nature and Principle* analyzed in the first section, Cheng's *Daily Schedule* also treated the Classics as the core texts of the student's reading regime. Cheng's pedagogical interpretation of Zhu was as Cheng-Zhu oriented as

¹⁷⁵ Lu Shiyi 1780, 1:3b-4a.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:4b-8a; 4:3a.

the prescriptions that came before him and after, but it encompassed more reading materials. He required students to devote much time, though less than that spent on the Classics, to history, compositions and even concrete knowledge and practical skills, but he eradicated philosophies other than those of the Cheng-Zhu school from his curriculum. Zhu's Six Rules for reading the Classics were reiterated and even applied to the reading of history and literary writings, but in these fields Cheng and other admirers of Zhu attempted to alter what their students should read from what Zhu had originally suggested. Narrowing the scope of reading in order to focus on preparation for the examinations, Cheng prepared ideal readers to base their knowledge framework firmly on Classical Learning, particularly Zhu's Four Books. In his interpretation of Zhu's theory of reading, the ideal reader would learn to be a learned Neo-Confucian examination candidate (and then an official if he was fortunate).

II.4. Conclusion

Despite some minor alterations and selective interpretation in its transmission, Zhu Xi's theory of reading remained vital in the tradition of intellectual practices from the thirteenth through the seventeenth centuries. In these four centuries, several separate volumes on Zhu's art of reading were compiled, although their circulation was limited. Its penetration into Ming reading habits, however, was institutionally guaranteed. First, Zhu's art of reading was imperially endorsed in the *Compendium of Nature and Principle*, a designated textbook that circulated widely in the Ming. Zhen Dexiu preserved Zhu's theory of reading well in his *Extended Meaning of the Great Learning*, and in their appropriations of this far-reaching book, Ming readers recognized the significance of book learning in sociopolitical service, a concept that Zhu developed in his epistemology

and systemized in his theory of reading. Before entering into office, the student was asked to read the *Compendium of Nature and Principle* and train himself according to Cheng Duanli's pedagogy, as derived from Zhu's theory of reading. Cheng's curriculum resonated with the Yuan system of civil examinations, which the Ming government inherited. In such a programme, examination preparations forged students' reading habits and knowledge framework.

My bibliographic survey of the textual transmission of Zhu's theory of reading in different forms shows that attempts to reinterpret it were concentrated in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. From the 1520s onwards, the reinterpretation had been made by both Zhu's admirers and Wang Yangming's followers. In their uses of Zhu's theory of reading, philosophers of mind could have purposes that were quite different from those of Zhu's admirers, but their involvements tempt us to examine further receptions of Zhu's theory in their intellectual practices rather than in the context of philosophical controversies between Zhu's admirers and Wang Yangming's followers. Did philosophers of mind employ Zhu's theory of reading in their intellectual practices, even while they attacked his philosophy? This question will be discussed in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MING CONFUSION OF READING (1368-1500): INTELLECTUAL OR MORAL?

ZHU Xi's teachings and his admirers were traditionally considered predominant in the early Ming Confucian world, and it was not until the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that Ming scholars broke from the Song tradition and invented their own.¹ This conventional view has been challenged by modern intellectual historians, who have noted an early Ming "tendency toward the cultivation of mind...[that] determined the direction and prepared the atmosphere in which Neo-Confucianism was to grow," that is, the emergence of Ming Learning of Mind.² This philosophical apostasy from the Song tradition, however, is not the main concern of this chapter but arouses my interest in Ming intellectual practice and methods of intellectual exercise in particular. Despite the philosophical apostasy, I will argue in this and the next chapter, Zhu's theory of reading was followed in different ways in Ming intellectual life. In practice, his theory of reading remained effective in Ming reading habits and knowledge acquisition. Ming elite readers of different philosophical stances followed his rules, more or less and in spite of some challenges. Changes occurred in the content of Zhu's theory as learning was redefined in different theories, but the subversions of the constraints that his rules for reading imposed actually occurred within rather than beyond the framework that he delineated.

With Zhu's philosophy established as Ming official ideology, his theory of reading eventually became a portion of orthodox pedagogy in classical education. Controversies and thus confusions appeared between the forced subjugations to and attempted

¹ Huang Zongxi 2008, 5.79; Zhang Tingyu et al 1974, 282.7222.

² Chan 1970, quotations from 46.

subversions of his theory. Thus an examination of the Ming reception of Zhu's theory of reading should be contextualized in sociopolitical and intellectual history. Given the fact that scholarly readers left more records about their reading concepts and practices, I will begin with the questions they asked about reading and knowledge.

For Zhu's admirer Gu Yanwu, Ming scholarship declined precipitously in comparison with the Confucian tradition in previous dynasties. Gu attributed this decline to institutional, literary and philosophical changes: the eight-legged style of essay stipulated in 1384 as the standard in the civil examination, the archaist literary movement of Old Phraseology (*guwenci* 古文辭) advocated by Li Mengyang (1472-1529) and He Jingming (1483-1521), and Wang Yangming's (1472-1529) prioritizing of innate knowledge of moral consciousness in the mind over the investigation of external things.³ All three transformations in intellectual life were closely related with reading as well as its outcomes, writing and learning, the three central forms of intellectual enterprise on which Zhu focused. These changes had a bearing on reading practices, the last two emerging in opposition to Song Neo-Confucianism and Zhu's doctrine in particular. Thus the beginning of the sixteenth century can be viewed as an intellectually subversive period in the late imperial Chinese history of reading. Regarding the adverse impact of the examination culture on reading habits, as touched on in the preceding chapter, this had already been of concern to Zhu, his contemporaries and disciples, and even their Song predecessors. After Zhen Dexiu, Cheng Duanli in his 1315 *Daily Schedule* adapted Zhu's rules to his curriculum designed for the civil examinations. His pedagogy revised Zhu's ideal knowledge framework, largely shaping adult readers' habits from the early fourteenth century onwards. Yet the examination culture, for Ming observers, was in

³ Gu Yanwu 1834, 16:10a-11b, 17b, 20b-21a; 18:13b, 19a-21a, 29a; 19:12b-14a, 15b-17a.

decline and inferior to ideal reading habits and knowledge acquisition. As the institution most directly connected with reading and knowledge, the Ming examination culture thus will be a major topic of this chapter.

Gu deplored these transformations from his orthodox stance in the Cheng-Zhu school, and his criticisms were popular among early Qing scholars investigating the intellectual causes for the collapse of the Ming dynasty.⁴ Since his criticism, however, was the view of a scholar and historian trained in the Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy of the late Ming, I would like to use his observations as my point of departure for exploring the Ming reception of Zhu's art of reading in this and the next chapter.

As Zhu had been, Ming scholars were also concerned with the intertwining of reading, writing and learning. From their views of learning and writing, they proposed particular concepts of reading and knowledge acquisition. This chapter is devoted to a survey of the early Ming discourses proposed by scholars from Song Lian (1310-1381) and Fang Xiaoru (1357-1402) to Qiu Jun (1421-1495). As leading Confucians, they represented reading concepts and practices of the contemporary scholarly world in their responses to Zhu's theory. By 1500, because of the limited accessibility of printed books to readers, Ming Confucians in general tended to select moral cultivation rather than intellectual attainment as their main purpose in reading, limiting the scope of their reading within the Classics even while accepting Zhu's rules (One should note that Zhu's view of knowledge hierarchy was unchallenged in this period).

I will first discuss the original intellectual orientation of the Ming civil examination system, and then survey the early Ming deviations from the categories developed in Zhu's theory, such as broad learning, concrete knowledge, evidential reading, and

⁴ E.g. Yan Ruoqu 1780, 1:50a.

intellectual improvement, on the one hand, versus the essentials, virtuous cultivation, apprehension of principle, and moral advancement, on the other hand. In Zhu's theory, as I have discussed, the former were defined as efforts while the latter as forms of the substance of learning. This survey will end with Qiu Jun's restoration of Zhu's doctrine, which confirmed the affinity of the early Ming concepts with Zhu. In what follows I will distinguish my approach from that of intellectual historians, but will refer to their studies and traditional narrative framework. For a historian of reading, what really matters are why, how and what to read and the epistemic result of such reading rather than philosophical concepts and controversies.

III.1. Early Ming Expectations for Examination Candidates

The Ming civil examination system was designed by the leading Eastern Zhe Confucians, who had received training and degrees in the Yuan system before lending their skills and reputations to Zhu Yuanzhang in founding the Ming dynasty. Therefore the Ming system largely imitated the Yuan one and was shaped by the Eastern Zhe Confucian tradition, both of which employed Zhu Xi's theory with some modifications to reading and epistemic concepts. As I have already discussed the affinity of the Yuan system with Zhu's theory, in this section I shall begin by examining what the early Ming examination system required from readers in relation to Zhu's theory and how those requirements were changed.

III.1.1. Intellectual Requirements of the Eastern Zhe Confucian Tradition

Examinations in the 1370s generally followed the Yuan system.⁵ In 1384, with the help of his advisor Liu Ji (1311-75) who was a leading Eastern Zhe Confucian, Zhu Yuanzhang officially re-established the examination system, which remained in place up to the collapse of his dynasty in 1644.⁶ In this system, the subjects for testing and designated textbooks of Classical Learning basically were duplicated from the 1314 imperial edict of the Yuan court.⁷ It should be noted that both Liu and another Eastern Zhe Confucian, Song Lian, introduced their concept of learning into the first Ming examinations. Song supervised the 1371 metropolitan examination and designed the questions with an emphasis on concrete knowledge based on “clarified principle.”⁸ This emphasis represented the character of the East Zhe Confucian concept of learning, which Liu summarized in an essay about the teaching of a charity school:

Learning means to learn the way to be a sage and to apply what one learns to practice. In ancient times, the mentor practiced the way and his disciples imitated him. So they investigated things between Heaven and the world and examined the past and present. As a result they totally understood the condition of things and obtained wisdom...Regarding learning, it should be filled with wisdom, unified [as principle] with inner attentiveness, and practiced [as effects] with humanity. [The student] should establish himself at the key point, but he cannot neglect the minutiae. He should be mentally strict with himself, and cannot be physically lax.

⁵ Elman 2000, 71-78.

⁶ Zhang Tingyu et al, 1974, 70.1693.

⁷ Ibid., 70.1693-94; Song Lian et al 1976, 81.2018-19; Elman 2000, 39-42.

⁸ Song Lian 1929, "Huishi jilu tici" 會試紀錄題辭 [Note to the record of the 1371 metropolitan examination], 6:5a; cf. Elman 2000, 74n.18.

He should embellish his learning with elegant language, but perpetuate it with a simple disposition. Thereby he succeeds in virtuous cultivation, without any violation of the regulations.⁹

Here, as did Zhu Xi and Cheng Duanli, Liu disagreed with contemporary mentors who taught their students only compositional skills but ignored principle and moral cultivation.¹⁰ Learning, in Liu's view as in Zhu's, should be firmly based on the investigation of things, including reading books. Only through broad investigations and wide reading could the student achieve intellectual and moral advancement. Yet, Liu believed that the practical application of the sages' principle should be the end of learning. He gave priority to concrete knowledge and practical skills over virtuous cultivation.

The early Ming emphasis on practical knowledge and skills met the needs for the enterprise of founding this new state. Those Eastern Zhe Confucians who contributed to Zhu Yuanzhang's regime devoted themselves to problems of the institutional framework for government, both local and central. Most of them were well-trained jurists and bureaucrats, and their approach to government was more utilitarian and historical than moralistic as traditional Confucian officials tended to be.¹¹ Practical skills in government service were more effective and preferable than abstract metaphysical discussions. With their utilitarian attitude towards knowledge, both Song and Liu recommended that students read non-Confucian philosophers, and they even advocated imitating pre-Qin philosophers for the purpose of writing and discussion. As Song Lian suggested in his

⁹ Liu Ji 1572, "Shaban Zizhong *Xing yishu shi xu*" 沙班子中興義塾詩序 [Preface to Shaban Zizhong's *Poem about establishing the charity school*], 5:6a.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Langlois 1981; Dardess 1983.

studies of philosophers, however, truth and principle is revealed in the works of Song Neo-Confucians, not the assumptions of other philosophers. Reading of the latter was supposed to enhance understanding of Neo-Confucian writings rather than substitute for them.¹²

Song's concepts of reading and knowledge were evidently formed in the Song-Yuan Confucian tradition and came from Zhu's doctrine in particular. For him, the Classics and standard histories embraced principles that the sages and worthies had developed. Although philosophical and literary diversity was advisable, according to Song, reading the Classics and standard histories facilitated apprehension of the essentials and basis of the Way. Proper methods of reading were a guide out of confusion for readers whose "open mind" and "inner attentiveness" played central roles.¹³ Song's intellectual affinity with Zhu in reading was demonstrated in his recognition of Zeng Lu's 曾魯 (1320-1373) reading practices and knowledge framework. Zeng, a native of Jiangxi, was trained in a locally prestigious gentry family and admired the Confucian philosopher Wu Cheng 吳澄 (1249-1333). Wu traced his learning back to Zhu's disciple and son-in-law Huang Gan. Wu essentially agreed with Zhu in intellectual and virtuous cultivation through reading the Classics, although he attempted to make the learning of Zhu and Lu Jiuyuan more eclectic.¹⁴ Zeng's work has been lost, but his reading practices were recorded in his biography by Song Lian, a close colleague in government service and supervisor of the compilation of the *History of the Yuan Dynasty* in which Zeng participated. According to Song, Zeng pursued learning by reading in an "old" way:

¹² Song Lian 1928; more discussions in Chapter Five.

¹³ Song Lian 1929, "...Dushu zhen..." 讀書箴 [...Admonitions of reading...], 73:18a-b.

¹⁴ Gedalecia 2000, 91, 96-101.

In an earlier time...even the elite literary writer was both [intellectually] refined and sufficiently erudite to serve as a state-craftsman. In his boyhood, he [i.e. Zeng Lu] was expected to memorize all fourteen Classical texts according to an annual schedule, and then was prompted to read Sima Qian, Ban Gu and Fan Ye (398-445), not browsing but memorizing [their histories] as he had the Classics. Only after his [intellectual] base was rightly established could the reader peruse all the standard dynastic histories, examining the historical merit and demerit, investigating similarities and dissimilarities between them, and apprehending the key points, so that [historical] knowledge would increase and obtain refinement. Following that, he [was instructed to] approach philosophies from the Qin and Han period onwards and literary collections of the past and present as well, from which he could seek profound principle without anything being hidden. Thereafter, the reader could grasp the principles of morality and Nature, as well as astronomy, geography, etiquette and ritual, musicology, military science, criminal law, the system of principalities, sacrifices, official posts, the examination system, schools, finance, taxation, household registration, the levy and corvée system, and so on. When memorializing the court, he could cite broadly in support of his proposals and clarify questions; doing so would be extremely easy. Since the implementation of the civil examination system, however, the student has only aimed to read extracts from the Classical texts and revise likely topics for testing. Most urgent for him are the commentaries on the Four Books and one Classical text. He delves into these [designated] texts, totally neglecting others. In conversation, he looks stunned

and cannot answer any questions with his numbed tongue. Alas! It is a shame for the Confucian to know nothing about a thing. Who would declare such learning useful for saving the world?¹⁵

By “earlier time,” Song Lian referred to the Song period.¹⁶ His old way was intended to be opposite to the ignorant way of reading for examination preparations in the present. According to Song’s description, Zeng was trained strictly in Zhu’s rules and Cheng Duanli’s curriculum. Wide reading, broad learning, and especially concrete knowledge were remarkable features in his reading practices and knowledge framework. As did Zhu, Song and Zeng viewed the Classics as the basis of learning and the histories as a rich source of concrete knowledge and practical skills. Diverse philosophies, natural studies, and literary writings were also included on the required reading list. The Confucian should be erudite, but first of all his knowledge should be useful for world ordering. In the criteria of knowledge, for Song, the determinant was not the individual’s moral level but whether or not what he possessed could meet statecraft needs.

In Song Lian’s times, Jinhua was south China’s intellectual center during the Yuan-Ming transition. Local Song dynasty predecessors such as Lü Zuqian, Chen Liang and Ye Shi (1150-1223) had propagated utilitarianism and meritorious service, training students in examination-oriented literary composition and historical studies.¹⁷ The competition between Zhu’s disciples and the Eastern Zhe scholars continued in the field of civil examinations until the third quarter of the thirteenth century, when at last Zhu’s followers

¹⁵ Song Lian 1929, “...Libu shilang Zeng gong shendaobei”禮部侍郎曾公神道碑 [...Divine-path stele for Mr. Zeng, former Minister of Rites], 17:2a-b.

¹⁶ Qian Qianyi 1996, “Fu Xu Juyuan shu” 復徐巨源書 [Reply to Xu Juyuan], 38.1323.

¹⁷ Tillman 1982.

succeeded in dominating the content and standards of the examinations.¹⁸ From the mid-fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries, Jinhua Confucians perpetuated the Song literary and statecraft traditions in their locale. Even though incorporating Daoism, Buddhism and Lu Jiuyuan's Learning of Mind into his own learning, Song Lian himself traced his scholarship back to Zhu and the Learning of the Way, as evinced in the above quotation.¹⁹

Song emphasized statecraft as the goal of reading and socio-political service as the main part of learning beyond moral cultivation and literary achievement. In terms of a Classics-based broad learning acquired through reading widely, the habits that Song recognized were closer to Zhu's instructions than to Lü Zuqian's teaching, even though Song appeared to stress statecraft over the cultivation of virtue. In a manual of institutional history attributed to Lü and designed for the examination market, rich primary sources and brief explanations were chronologically arranged to prepare students to answer policy questions. Those materials were drawn occasionally from the Classics and philosophies but mainly from dynastic histories and institutional encyclopedias. The manual's erudition was harshly criticized by Zhu, who thought that such historical knowledge was not crucial to the student's moral cultivation.²⁰ For Zhu, historical knowledge should be grounded upon Classical Learning that was organized around principle, and should eventually confirm what the sages said in the Classics.

Song's emphasis on institutional history could have been derived from Lü Zuqian, but more likely was a resonance of Cheng Duanli's requirement of reading books on

¹⁸ De Weerd 2007.

¹⁹ Bol 2003, 265-69; Dardess 1983, 156-73; Araki Kengo 1972, "Shisōka toshite Sō Ren 思想家として宋濂" [Song Lian as a thinker], 4-22.

²⁰ De Weerd 2007, 141-50, esp. 144, 146-47.

institutions and governance. When both Song Lian and Zeng Lu were schoolboys, Cheng's curriculum was officially authorized and circulated in the Jiangnan area. The habit of reading the Classics as described by Song perhaps was also shaped within Cheng's curriculum, in that Zhu himself discouraged students from memorizing *all* the Classical texts in their teenage years whereas Cheng did. In general, Song's and Zeng's habits of reading were fertilized by Zhu's theory, with the addition of some utilitarian adaptations by Eastern Zhe Confucians, who introduced a stress on the concrete knowledge and practical skills into the early Ming civil examinations.

The legacy of utilitarianism from Song Lian and Liu Ji featured Ming civil examinations. From 1370 onwards, poetry and rhapsody were completely removed from all Ming examinations but the Classics remained as the only subjects for testing on session one. The removal of the literary genres from the curriculum did not hinder their survival and prosperity in Ming literati writings, but the sovereignty of Classical Learning in intellectual life was undoubtedly consolidated as the Learning of the Way scholars after Zhu had expected.²¹ In 1384-1385 judicial judgments (*panyu* 判語) were introduced into the civil examinations, an administrative skill in which Eastern Zhe Confucians excelled as a branch of concrete knowledge. Until 1643, judicial judgments had been covered on session two in all provincial and metropolitan examinations. In addition, skills of writing administrative documents in ancient forms and policy essays about contemporary affairs were also referred to as measures of ranking candidates.²² These measures ideologically accorded with the Cheng-Zhu philosophy that Zhu Yuanzhang and his successors used as a cultural language of their dynastic legitimacy, as

²¹ Elman 2000, 37-38.

²² Ibid., 43-44.

the policy question and the first prized answer in the 1371 palace examination indicate.²³ They also introduced concrete knowledge and practical skills as the criteria for official recruitments. They were originally intended to shape students' reading habits with the statecraft tradition that had continued from Zhu to Song Lian. They gave the intellectual goal of reading a priority over the moral one.

III.1.2. Inward Turn towards Moral Cultivation

The early Ming stress on concrete knowledge was disrupted in the early fifteenth century, when the Ming court after a *coup d'état* more firmly took control of the entire state. For the usurping Yongle emperor, an official of Confucian virtues and personal loyalty would be more reliable to the court than a talent of socio-political skills. Song Lian's prize disciple Fang Xiaoru was a representative Confucian in this disruption. An ardent propagandist of the Learning of the Way, Fang was executed in 1402 because of his reproach to the usurpation. Before the usurpation, Fang had worked as an advisor for the Jianwen emperor, planning some social and political changes according to his reading of the Classics and history. As did his master, Fang emphasized concrete knowledge as preparation for Confucian socio-political ambitions, but correspondently devalued pure Classical Learning and held Neo-Confucian moral philosophy in highest regard (see below). Both his reordering of the knowledge hierarchy and his bloody end represented a new tendency in Ming reading habits and epistemic practices.

It is believed that Fang incorporated Neo-Confucian ethical fundamentalism and ideas about statecraft from Jinhua Confucians,²⁴ yet he saw himself as a sincere admirer

²³ Ibid., 71-78.

²⁴ Ditmanson 1999, chap. 6; Goodrich 1976, 430-31.

and practitioner of Cheng-Zhu philosophy. He valued the Song Neo-Confucian tradition over the Han-Tang tradition and saw his own age as being totally under the influence of Song Confucians. To propagate and carry out the Song tradition, he believed, would lead to a moral improvement and cultural flourishing comparable to that of the Song.²⁵ This intellectual stimulus from Song predecessors shaped Fang's political philosophy,²⁶ and characterized the substance of his learning as well.

For Fang, the gentleman's pursuit of learning was an urgent matter, since ethical learning distinguished human beings from animals, the outstanding from the common, and helped the scholar conduct himself correctly in the social and political realms.²⁷ He suggested that students of moral conduct select their major area of inquiry according to their natural intelligence. Those major areas were hierarchically ordered, and among them, the Learning of the Way (*daoshu* 道術) was paramount and dominant. Only a select number of excellent students were recommended to take this field as their specialty, and they could study other fields if they liked. Secondary to the Learning of the Way was administrative service (*zhengshi* 政事), a field consisting of concrete knowledge useful in political practice. After government service came Classical Learning (*zhijing* 治經), an area of learning that Fang allocated to students possessed of thoughtful insight who were good at lecturing. Literary arts (*wenyi* 文藝) were inferior to these other three; even so, only those erudite who could write well enough to convert readers to Neo-Confucian

²⁵ Fang Xiaoru 1561, "Shixue guifan xu" 仕學規範序 [Preface to the *Regulations of government service and pursuing learning*], 12:13b.

²⁶ Danjō Hiroshi 1984, 37-38; Danjō Hiroshi 1989.

²⁷ Fang Xiaoru 1561, "Zongyi" 宗儀 [The clan etiquettes], 1:53b-54a; "Zajie" 雜誡 [The miscellaneous admonitions], 1:13b-14a, 1:21a.

beliefs and practices were qualified for this specialty.²⁸ Unlike Zhu, who was willing to appreciate literary writings, Fang sometimes excluded literary arts from his learning regime, even though his writings were highly praised in later generations. Literary writings, in his theory, should take “clarifying the Way” (*ming dao* 明道) as the only responsibility following the Classical style. Eventually they should be useful for people’s benefit and governance.²⁹ He was of the view that literary skills, together with trivial etymological reading of texts and a desire for official titles and wealth, spoiled the quality of learning. Thus it was harmful to recruit officials simply according to their literary skills or to teach students only those techniques.³⁰

Fang’s stress upon concrete knowledge over Classical Learning appeared to differ from Zhu’s proposal. Concrete knowledge and political wisdom in particular, in Zhu’s view, came from history more than from the Classics. The priority of concrete knowledge in Fang’s knowledge hierarchy was a mark of Jinhua utilitarian Confucianism that he carried on from Song Lian. Although reading the Classical texts remained the main avenue to scholarly achievement in Fang’s view, it did not turn out as theoretically fundamental for a knowledge framework as it was in Zhu’s theory. Instead Fang upheld that the pursuit of learning should begin with the pursuit of principle and end with the knowledge of Heaven, and that one should first of all cultivate his virtue as well as his scholarly achievement.³¹ Therefore his arrangement of the Learning of the Way preceding and defining the other three fields was intended not only to emphasize Neo-Confucian principle as the ultimate standard for evaluating studies but also to highlight

²⁸ Ibid., "Zongyi," 1:54b-55b.

²⁹ Cf. Miura Shuichi 2000.

³⁰ Fang Xiaoru 1561, "Zajie," 1:15a, 1:21b; "Zongyi," 1:54b.

³¹ Ibid., "Zongyi," 1:54a; "Xue bian" 學辨 [Discerning learning], 6:14a-b; cf. Ditmanson, 1999, 209.

moral cultivation as the goal of learning. Virtuous cultivation thus became more important than intellectual exploration. Zhu patented both the intellectual and moral ends of learning, and designed the sequence from intellectual enquiries to moral achievement, whereas Fang listed moral cultivation as an independent subject, without proposing any intellectual approach to it.

With his emphasis on moral cultivation over intellectual attainment, Fang's modification of Zhu's programme for studies appeared fundamentalist, so did his method. As for the goal, Fang discouraged students from studying to prepare for the examinations but instead encouraged them to pursue learning for the fulfillment of Neo-Confucian sociopolitical and moral ambitions. Cultivation of virtue, after all, was the first goal of his learning.³² Fang suggested that readers approach non-Neo-Confucian philosophers as Zhu had done. In terms of perpetuating the Cheng-Zhu tradition, however, Fang appeared to be more dogmatic than Song Lian. Song had pioneered Ming studies of philosophical writings from bibliographic, literary, and philosophical perspectives, while Fang tended simply to be more radical and read these texts as philosophy, judging each with recourse to Neo-Confucian principle as his only standard.³³ In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century publications of pre-Qin philosophical writings such as the *Shenzi* 慎子 (Master Shen) and the *Annals of Lu Buwei*, Confucian official Wang Xijue 王錫爵 (1534-1614) and others still cited and praised in their prefaces and postscripts Fang's critical readings based on his firm Neo-Confucian stance (rather than his master's studies).³⁴

³² Fang Xiaoru 1561, "Siyou zhen" 四憂箴 [Admonitions on the Four Concerns], 1:25b.

³³ Aoki Yōji 2008.

³⁴ Wang Xijue, "*Shenzi xu*" 慎子序 [Preface to the *Shenzi*] (1579), in Guoli Zhongyang Tushuguan 1993, 2.354; Anony. 闕名, "*Ke Lüshi chunqiu xu*" 刻呂氏春秋序 [Preface to the republished *Annals of Lü Buwei*] (the 17th century), *ibid.*, 2.366.

Fang's adherence to the moral dimension of Zhu's learning also shaped his rules for reading and attitudes towards learning. He proposed these rules and attitudes not for any particular field of the above four of learning but as universal for all of them. Because the Classics were the core texts of learning, reading them for virtuous cultivation was Fang's main concern. As Zhu had done, he intended to expand the rules for reading the Classics and attitudes towards them to all areas of learning.³⁵

Fang developed his nine rules by emphasizing a devotion to Neo-Confucian moral philosophy. For him, a good scholar should first be fond of Confucian learning and scholarship (*zehao* 擇好) and able to devote himself to the sages' and worthies' learning (*shenxi* 慎習). In his reading of the Classics, the scholar should completely master the original meaning and intention embraced in the text (*mingyi* 明義). As Zhu had instructed, Fang also believed that proper questions and their clarification (*bianyi* 辨疑) were the key to making intellectual progress. He insisted on the role of an open mind in reading the Classics (*xushou* 虛受) and the mastery of key points in the texts as the basis of learning (*zhiyao* 知要). Having apprehended principle in the Classics, according to Fang, the scholar should firmly adhere to it as his strong faith (*duxin* 篤信), without submitting to any political powers. Eventually, the scholar was expected to treat apprehended principle with attentiveness (*shendu* 慎獨) and sedulously conduct himself according to it in his daily life (*duxing* 篤行).³⁶ Fang did not provide instructions as detailed as Zhu's, but put weight on the inner attitudes towards the apprehension and conduct of principle. His rules for reading were not as technical or practical as Zhu's, but more morally

³⁵ Fang Xiaoru 1561, "Xue zhen" 學箴 [Admonitions on learning], 1:22b.

³⁶ Ibid., "Xue zhen," 1:22b-25a.

didactic. The above rules and attitudes *per se* could be practiced as principles of cultivating one's virtue.

Fang presented an alteration in applying Zhu's theory of reading. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Fang was esteemed as a moral model more than as a Confucian thinker because of his courageous resistance to the Yongle emperor that led to his martyrdom.³⁷ Yet one of his eminent contemporaries made a comment on the significance of his survival for the scholarly world, saying, "If he were killed, the seed would be deprived of great readers and scholars."³⁸ More than 160 years after his death, Li Zhi (1527-1602), who highly praised Fang, interpreted the "seed" as loyalty and righteousness.³⁹ This interpretation confirmed the moral orientation of Fang's learning. In the seventeenth century, Fang was viewed as a good example of someone trained in Zhu's art of reading and Cheng Duanli's curriculum.⁴⁰ Although his influence over the reading habits and practices of later generations was hard to prove, his ethically fundamentalist emphasis on reading and learning and his underrating of examination culture preceded an inward tendency in reading concepts from emphasizing sociopolitical application of intellectual attainment to focusing on virtuous cultivation.

Fang's high moral reputation and unwillingness to accept political compromise were interpreted by his contemporaries and scholars of later generations as evidence of the conflict between Confucian sociopolitical ideals and Ming emperorship (or the emperor's personal agents). The dilemma led them to question the effectiveness of the

³⁷ Ditmanson 2001; Ditmanson 2007.

³⁸ Zhang Tingyu et al 1974, 141.4019.

³⁹ Li Zhi 1974, II:5.291.

⁴⁰ Qian Qianyi 1996, "Fu Xu Juyuan shu" 復徐巨源書 [Reply to Xu Juyuan], 38.1323-24. Qian's description of Zhu Xi's art of reading was actually cited from Cheng Duanli's *Daily Schedule*.

orthodox approach to sagehood that Zhu proposed.⁴¹ In terms of reading concepts and habits, their concern could be translated into how helpful the apprehension of principle through reading and its application to sociopolitical practices could be to their social and political survival. As the result of their brief negotiation, the Yongle emperor provided his own instructions to those preparing examinations and pursuing government careers. He ordered the court to compile the *Compendia* of the Four Books, the Five Classics, and *Nature and Principle* (1414-1415), into which the Cheng-Zhu tradition that Fang advocated was incorporated. Designated as textbooks and core readings for students, these three *Compendia* not only consolidated and routinized the educational and examination systems, but also reformed reading habits and programmed the development of intellectual ideas. All scholars such as Xue Xuan used them as catechisms. To guarantee their success in civil examinations and safe employment in government, meanwhile, most Confucian students just concentrated their reading on the approved commentaries in the *Compendia* to the neglect of the original Classical texts and histories.⁴² This means that students involved in the examination system were expected to employ text fundamentalism to serve conservative politics.

For some fundamentalists, all three imperial compilations distorted Cheng-Zhu philosophy. Concerned with the declining reading habits caused by examination preparation, conservative scholars such as Peng Xu, whom I have already discussed in Chapter Two, attempted to restore Zhu's doctrine of reading and supplement the *Compendia*. Their attempts were declined.⁴³ Subsequently the decline in reading habits in relation to the examination culture remained a concern of leading Confucians of different

⁴¹ de Bary 1981, 169-70.

⁴² Ibid., 168.

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*

philosophical stances until the end of the Ming, as we can find in this and the next chapter. They shared the assumption that neither the moral practices nor administrative abilities of officials recruited as successful examination candidates met the expectations of the Cheng-Zhu tradition. Since the approved instructions in the imperial *Compendia* were unchallengeable, they suggested after compromise, cultivating one's own virtue while reading these textbooks (and others) should be the best resolution to the dilemma, satisfactory to both pragmatic scholars and the emperor. Thus Fang Xiaoru's age anticipated a change in reading concepts from rational organicism to moral fundamentalism, a change that was finally propelled by the examination culture.

III.2. Reading like A Pure Confucian

The transformation from rational organicism to moral fundamentalism can be traced in the reading concepts developed by so-called "Pure Confucians" (*chun Ru* 醇儒), such as Cao Duan (1376-1434), Xue Xuan (1389-1464), Wu Yubi (1391-1469), and Hu Juren (1434-1484). Among them, two northern philosophers, Cao Duan and Xue Xuan, together with the southern Hu Juren, are viewed as pioneers of the Ming tradition of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism after Fang Xiaoru. Cao intellectually prepared the way for Xue and Hu.⁴⁴ Wu was a commoner but successful teacher. He mentored Hu, and also trained Chen Xianzhang (1428-1500) who pioneered Ming Learning of Mind.⁴⁵ Despite their different philosophical expressions, they shared three tendencies in theorizing reading: (1) to value moral improvement over concrete knowledge acquisition, (2) to prefer the mastery of

⁴⁴ Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 92.1891; cf. Huang Zongxi 2008, 2; Ching 1987, 51; Zhang Tingyu et al 1974, 282.7229, 7239.

⁴⁵ For Wu Yubi's place in the Ming philosophical history, see Yoshida Kōhei 1970; Fukuda Shigeru 1992; Kelleher 1982.

essentials over broad learning, and (3) to emphasize the goal of apprehending principle over the process of evidential reading. In Zhu Xi's theory, a mastery of essentials implying principle located in the Classics made moral cultivation possible, yet the understanding of textual meaning through evidential reading, as well as broad learning and concrete knowledge, could render students intellectually prepared for both moral and sociopolitical practices. The four Pure Confucians' preferences meant an emphasis on the moral goal over the intellectual approach in reading habits.

Among these four, Xue Xuan was the first who frankly demonstrated the significance of Zhu's art for the development of his reading habits. In reading the Four Books, he clearly suggested that students employ Zhu's rules of "intimacy with the text and pondering its meaning" and "progressive iteration in proper sequence."⁴⁶ As Zhu had done, Xue advocated reading with an open mind, recitation, inner attentiveness, limitation of curriculum and due diligence.⁴⁷ Also like Zhu, he expected students to first read the Classical texts and then refer to the orthodox exegeses, but ignore other voluminous commentaries and notes that were inexhaustible.⁴⁸ As for the obscure *Changes*, *Documents*, and *Spring and Autumn*, Xue adopted Zhu's suggestion of grasping just their outlines and suspending judgment on words in doubt,⁴⁹ and he agreed with Zhu that the *Changes* originally was a work of divination.⁵⁰

The other three Pure Confucians did not expatiate in detail on their concepts of reading, yet in their extant writings, we can find them referring to reading practices

⁴⁶ Xue Xuan 1781, 1:13a.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2:9a, 6:6a.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 4:26a, 30b.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 4:31b, 32a.

⁵⁰ Ibid., "Xulu" 續錄 [Supplements], 1:22a, 6:8b, 9:2b.

through which they attempted to theorize their preferences and propose different devices to achieve the goal of cultivating virtue.

III.2.1. Fundamentalist Moralization of Reading

The substance of Cao Duan's learning, as he summarized it, was the apprehension of principle and self-introspection (*qiongli fangong* 窮理反躬) through reading.⁵¹ It focused on the reader's own cultivation of virtue, rather than transforming people through teaching, as Zhu sought to do. He discussed mainly moral practices and emphasized the role that the mind could play in the pursuit of learning.⁵²

Xue Xuan also insisted on moral cultivation as the core value of his learning. With this end, he moralistically divided all texts and knowledge into corrective (*zheng* 正) and deformative (*xie* 邪): corrective were the *Elementary Learning*, the Four Books, the Five Classics, and the writings of Song Neo-Confucians from the Cheng brothers to Zhu; deformative were non-Neo-Confucian philosophy, miscellaneous stories, *belles lettres* and myths (*guaidan bujing zhi shu* 怪誕不經之書). Scholars, he cautioned, should read the corrective and disregard the deformative.⁵³ In his learning, only Song Neo-Confucianism was orthodox. Until readers mastered principle in the orthodox texts, exposure to the heterodox, which could confuse and mislead, was ill-advised. For Xue, among Song Neo-Confucians only the Cheng brothers and Zhu were the true transmitters of Confucius' Way; interpretation by others were open to question and the reader should

⁵¹ Cao Duan 2003, 241.

⁵² Chan 1970, 30-31, 33-34, 36-37; Goodrich 1976, 1302-03.

⁵³ Xue Xuan 1781, 2:14b, 3:37a; "Xulu," 2:20a, 2:20b, 2:25b-26a.

be cautious about accepting their theories.⁵⁴ He reiterated that students preparing for the examinations tended in their reading to neglect the original meaning of the Classical text as the basis of Confucian learning. What they prepared thus was not conducive to the cultivation of virtue but harmful to the apprehension of the Way.⁵⁵

Reading books was just the first step towards learning in Xue's view. Employing Zhu's rule of experiencing textual meaning personally, he stressed moral improvement through self-introspection as the final stage of reading. The reader was expected to transform and refine his conduct by following the sages' and worthies' sayings.⁵⁶ Like Zhu, Xue also suggested investigating anything one encountered, including "the books of the sages and worthies, the texts of the six arts, and the political affairs of the various dynasties." In his practice, however, Xue focused on moral attainment much more than on intellectual interest in those items.⁵⁷ Daily practices of self-introspection after reading could deepen what one had learned.⁵⁸

The very same philosophical interest in reading practices appeared in south China. With a desire to obtain sagehood, Wu Yubi denounced preparations for the civil examinations and taught himself about the Confucian cultivation of virtue through reading the Four Books, the Five Classics and Song Neo-Confucian writings. He rarely discussed ontology or metaphysics, which had interested his Song predecessors.⁵⁹ Wu's emphasis on moral cultivation in learning was even incorporated into the regulations he designed in 1430 for his disciples. What they were expected to learn in his school were

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1:15a, 2:25a-b.

⁵⁵ E.g. *ibid.*, 1:32b, 2:2a-b, 8:4b.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1:20b, 1:28a, 2:3a-b.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2:36a-b; Chan 1970, 34; cf. Chen Lai 2004, 178-79.

⁵⁸ Xue Xuan 1781, 3:32a, 36b.

⁵⁹ Goodrich 1976, 1497-1501; Kelleher 1982, chap. 2.

not “superficial” literary skills but the ways of attaining sagehood.⁶⁰ He also suggested that the student make a daily record (*rilu* 日錄) about reading and daily activities.⁶¹ Wu himself did so, as we can find in his extant collection.⁶² In essence these records were different from the commonplace book that Cheng Duanli suggested the student compile when preparing for the civil examinations. Wu envisioned the daily record as a device of self-introspection, by which he and the student monitored their moral cultivation. He tended to stress a gap between his and the student’s moral standing and the ideal personality proposed in the Classics.⁶³

Hu Juren, Wu’s countryman and prize disciple, was an ardent admirer of Zhu’s teaching.⁶⁴ Following Zhu, Hu thought learning should begin with investigating things. Since investigations could be endless, however, Hu upheld an inward turn towards self-cultivation some time after an appropriate accumulation of knowledge had been achieved.⁶⁵ To gain the sagehood inherent in one’s mind, Hu proposed continuous reverence towards all activities strictly following rituals in daily life as the approach.⁶⁶ Hu maintained that the writings of the Cheng brothers and Zhu, which allegedly transmitted the sages’ meanings, facilitated reading of those ancient texts. However, the moral outcome of reading ultimately depended on self-introspection and putting what one had learnt into practice, a process that Hu also termed “experiencing personally” (*tiyan* 體驗). In this process the student could obtain unity of self with the help of the model

⁶⁰ Wu Yubi 1781, "Xuegui" 學規 [School regulations], 8:43a-b.

⁶¹ Ibid., "Qian Yanhai Li Pu shi Jinxi" 遣晏海黎普使金谿 [To send Li Pu of Yanhai to Jinxi], 8:44a.

⁶² Ibid., chap. 11.

⁶³ Kelleher 1982, chaps. 3 & 4.

⁶⁴ Goodrich 1976, 625-27.

⁶⁵ Kim 2000, 25-28.

⁶⁶ Ch’ien 1979, 183-89.

provided in the Classical texts.⁶⁷ Hu adopted all of Zhu's six principles of reading but put more stress upon this rule alone, which for him was more practicable and effective than the others when it came to self-cultivation.⁶⁸

Both self-introspection and experiencing personally in daily life as devices of moral cultivation, for the Pure Confucians, logically were a part of reading and the reader's efforts towards moral achievement. They were used to underscore the moral orientation of the Pure Confucians' reading concept and practices. In Hu's mature philosophy, the first goal of pursuing principle and sincerely conducting it in daily life was nothing but to improve one's morality. Virtuous cultivation *per se* implied the way of governance. Possessing advanced virtue, he suggested, the Confucian was capable of both serving government and clarifying the Way, both superior over literary skills and examination titles.⁶⁹ Moral cultivation thus functioned as the source of other achievements and guaranteed the Confucian success in a field. His moralism was based on his assessment of the Yuan and early Ming decline of Zhu's learning. The Yuan and early Ming Confucians, Hu criticized, devoted themselves to the etymological interpretation of Zhu's philosophy and broad learning but neglected their personal experiences of the substance (i.e. principle) that Zhu elaborated.⁷⁰ His moralization of reading, therefore, was intended to rectify the intellectual tendency among Zhu's admirers.

Despite their philosophical moralization of reading, we should note, the Pure Confucians were actually involved in local affairs. They tended to contribute their

⁶⁷ Hu Juren 1777, 2:10a-b, 8:68b-69a, 8:69b.

⁶⁸ Ibid., chap. 2.

⁶⁹ Hu Juren 1781, "Feng Yu xiansheng" 奉于先生 [To Mr. Yu], 1:1b; "Fu Wang Qian" 復汪謙 [Reply to Wang Qian], 1:9b-10a.

⁷⁰ Ibid., "Fu Yu xiansheng" 復于先生 [Reply to Mr. Yu], 1:4b; "Feng Luo Yifeng" 奉羅一峰 [To Luo Yifeng], 1:14a-b.

reputation and learning to the local society, which meant that they could not keep themselves aloof from concrete knowledge. Concerned with drought, famine, and poverty in his locale, Hu Juren presented to a local official his work on water conservancy he edited after intensive research, suggesting the government improve the local irrigation. He still considered his concern and research as a moral practice of Song Neo-Confucian learning.⁷¹ Yet Hu's story reminds us of the complex relationship between concepts and practices of reading, as well as that between the expected knowledge framework and the actual one the reader possessed. This issue will be discussed in Chapter Five.

III.2.2. Hunting the Essentials in the Classics Only

For the Pure Confucians, the fundamentalist pursuit of moral achievement meant pondering the essentials in the Classics and Song Neo-Confucian writings. They tended to assume that concentrating on limited texts would be more effective for moral improvement than browsing voluminous books; the latter could be helpful in intellectual attainment but unnecessary if not harmful for moral cultivation. Like Xue Xuan, the other Pure Confucians simply equated the Classics and Song Neo-Confucian writings with orthodoxy and other texts with heterodoxy. Such an assumption limited their recommended reading lists.

Cao Duan developed his learning based on a personal reading of the limited ancient texts and Song Neo-Confucian writings accessible to him. He designated the goal of reading to be “to reveal the [orthodox] Way and exterminate heterodoxy.” For him, the Way transmitted from Confucius and Mencius to Song Neo-Confucians was orthodox, while Buddhism, Daoism and other philosophies were heterodox. He expected his sons to

⁷¹ Ibid., "Feng Xia xianfu" 奉夏憲副 [Present to Educational Commissioner Xia], 1:25b-26b.

learn the Way of the Sage and worthies and forbid any study of heterodox texts.⁷² Accordingly, he recommended only the Four Books and Five Classics as the core texts on his reading list.⁷³ In his family instructions he stipulated that his sons should not linger over literary composition but apprehend filial piety and righteousness through the reading of core texts.⁷⁴ As Cheng Duanli had suggested, Cao required his sons to memorize the texts of the Four Books and one Classic and to explain orally their key points by the age of sixteen. Those who could not do so would be punished with the cancellation of their capping ceremony,⁷⁵ which meant that they would not be treated as adults but as boys even when they had become physically mature.

While Cao proposed only the Classics as the core texts for cultivating virtue, Xue Xuan echoed with him, declaring neither wide reading nor broad learning as necessary for moral improvement. The key to learning was the “essentials” embraced in the Classical texts. Even if wide reading and broad learning were useful, Xue argued, intellectual advancement eventually depended on *what* was read. By reading the corrective materials, the reader could grasp the essentials; otherwise, he might miss them.⁷⁶ Since only the Classical texts and Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucian writings were considered corrective, Xue suggested, the only option was to read these orthodox books. In his emphasis on moral practice, however, Xue came up with his own way of innovating knowledge. Unlike Zhu who proposed proper questioning as the impetus to knowledge innovation, Xue discouraged scholars from questioning earlier Confucians

⁷² Cao Duan 2003, 174-80, 203, 241.

⁷³ Ibid., 246.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 202-03, 245, 246-47.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 203.

⁷⁶ Xue Xuan 1781, 6:23a.

because that would sound unhistorical and disrespectful.⁷⁷ The Song masters' contributions to the sovereign status of Confucianism in intellectual life and social morality triumphed over all "heretical" philosophical doctrines that had appeared since the Han dynasty, including Buddhism, Daoism and literary art, and the Song interpretation of the Four Books revived and perpetuated the Sage's learning. He even valued Zhu over Mencius.⁷⁸ Accordingly, he assigned Song Neo-Confucian works an importance second only to the Five Classics and Four Books, and expected scholars to devote themselves to those Classical texts and Song writings before approaching other books.⁷⁹

For Xue, therefore, learning should be firmly grounded in Zhu's *Elementary Learning* and his commentaries on the Four Books; otherwise, neither teaching nor learning would be proper.⁸⁰ For him, Xu Heng was the only true transmitter of Zhu's philosophy, since Xu had selected the *Elementary Learning* and Four Books as the means to cultivate oneself and transform others.⁸¹ In Xue's regimen of learning, knowledge hierarchy was accordingly oversimplified, at the cost of misunderstanding Zhu's some points. As Cheng Hao had done, Xue discouraged students from composing poetry and prose and practicing calligraphy because they could be a waste of energy and a drain on ambition.⁸² Scholars might read the standard histories and make judgments according to Neo-Confucian principle, but it was impossible for them to understand the Way from history rather than from the Five Classics and Four Books. In terms of seeking moral

⁷⁷ Ibid., 3:15b.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 3:10b-11b, 3:29a, 5:13a-b, 9:13b.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1:37a; "Xulu," 2:20a.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 3:36b-37a, 4:38a.

⁸¹ Ibid., 1:14a, 1:15a, 8:4b-5a; "Xulu," 7:2b.

⁸² Ibid., 2:29a-b; Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian 1967, 262 (11/5).

advancement (and political ideas), Xue tended to discourage students from reading history on the grounds that lessons learned from historical writings were superficial, while those from the Classics were profound and thorough.⁸³

Following Zhu, Wu Yubi also believed the process of learning was accumulative and gradual. In a curriculum focused on the Classics and a few Song Neo-Confucian writings, his disciples were required to employ Zhu's rules of reading and in particular to experience texts personally in self-introspection.⁸⁴ Wu also recommended the same rules to his friends and family.⁸⁵ For him, however, to read the works of the sages and worthies was the *only* way to obtain benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom—the four merits that distinguished human beings from animals. Imitating models of self-introspection provided by the sages and worthies would be fruitful in apprehending the Way and improving one's conduct.⁸⁶ In his school, what he would teach his disciples was only Neo-Confucian principle, individual cultivation and careful conduct. Zhu's *Elementary Learning*, the Four Books, and then the Five Classics were the only texts he designated. He worried that other texts could be harmful to the mind of readers who had not yet mastered the core texts.⁸⁷ As reading notes, Wu's daily records illustrate the limitations of his reading of the core texts he designated for his disciples.⁸⁸

It should be noted that the Pure Confucians themselves also read other texts than the core ones that they strongly recommended. Neo-Confucian principle was the ultimate

⁸³ Xue Xuan 1781, 6:6b, 7a, 20a-b; "Xulu," 4:15b.

⁸⁴ Wu Yubi 1781, "Xuegui," 8:43a-b.

⁸⁵ Ibid., "Yu youren shu" 與友人書 [Letter to my friend], 8:25a-b; "Yu Jiushao shu" 與九韶書 [Letter to Jiushao], 8:28b; "Fu Yuerang shu" 復曰讓書 [Reply to Yuerang], 8:29b-30a; "Yu Yuerang shu" 與曰讓書 [Letter to Yuerang], 8:30b-31b.

⁸⁶ Ibid., "Quanxue zeng Yang Dequan" 勸學贈楊德全 [Encouraging learning: to Yang Dequan], 8:42a-b.

⁸⁷ Ibid., "Shang yanqin shu" 上嚴親書 [Letter to my father], 8:26a-b.

⁸⁸ Kinami Takuichi 1992.

standard for using these texts, however. Xue Xuan himself read the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, Confucian writings other than those of Song Neo-Confucians, some standard histories, and even medicine, as cited in his *Reading Notes*, but he tended to judge these texts in relation to Cheng-Zhu philosophy. He disagreed with Song Lian, who placed Song Neo-Confucians after other philosophers in his studies of philosophers by the thirteenth century.⁸⁹ Xue labeled both the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* “strange” on the grounds that neither of them followed the sages’ and worthies’ learning but created their own “extraordinary” theories.⁹⁰ Heterodox texts could not be neglected if the reader wished to know the errors in them, Xue admitted, but the reader should not read them until he completely understood the Confucian Way. Without such an understanding, he might drown or become confused.⁹¹ On the other hand, Xue recognized the literary value of pre-Qin philosophical writings for readers studying ancient prose; the compositional techniques found in the *Zhuangzi* were helpful for examination candidates, but only those techniques, not the principles or theories they conveyed, were of value.⁹² Therefore, the recommended core texts were not the only option that readers encountered in their practices. The designated core texts embraced the ultimate standard and provided the foundation for an acceptable knowledge framework, but other reading-derived knowledge could be inserted into that framework.

⁸⁹ Xue Xuan 1781, "Xulu," 4:15b-16a.

⁹⁰ Ibid., "Xulu," 4:13b.

⁹¹ Ibid., 1:15a.

⁹² Ibid., 1:15b, 4:25a.

III.2.3. Apprehend Principle Only

In Zhu's theory, reading books was a sort of investigation of things conducted to extend knowledge and to apprehend principle. The early Ming Pure Confucians, in their fundamentalist interpretation, stressed the goal of apprehending principle only. The process and methods of drawing meaning from the Classics were not described in their concepts, even though all of them declared their adherence to Zhu's theory.

In order to improve morality through reading the Classics, Cao Duan recommended Zhu's rules for reading. He expected his sons to understand every word in the Classic, personally experience its meaning, and put what they learned into daily practice.⁹³ An open mind and attentiveness while reading, according to Cao, could foster both the apprehension of principle and self-introspection.⁹⁴ Unlike Cao, however, Xue Xuan underrated Zhu's evidential reading of the Classics and warned that the pursuit of literal meaning would harm the apprehension of principle found therein.⁹⁵

Hu Juren appreciated Zhu's exegeses of the Classics based on evidential reading,⁹⁶ but suspected that evidential studies were pointless. Principle, he suggested, should be apprehended by way of daily practice rather than from recourse to evidential studies or the literal commentaries favored by Han-Tang scholars.⁹⁷ Hu employed these rules in his reading practices, convening a reading club and establishing a set of regulations that gave moral cultivation priority over practical skills and literary composition. Members should read with progressive iteration in proper sequence, concentrating on the core texts and the

⁹³ Cao Duan 2003, 203, 211.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 240-42; Chan 1970, 33-34.

⁹⁵ Xue Xuan 1781, 1:11a, 4:10a.

⁹⁶ Hu Juren 1777, 3:13a.

⁹⁷ Hu Juren 1781, "Fu Wang Qian" 復汪謙 [Reply to Wang Qian], 1:10a; "Bailudong jiangyi" 白鹿洞講義 [Lecture in the Academy of White Deer Grove], 2:54b-55a.

writings of the Song Neo-Confucian masters. Reading these texts, members should aim to understand the learning of the sages and worthies and cultivate their virtue. Superficial literary compositions were prohibited in his club, since the members read books not for the sake of the civil examinations but for moral cultivation. Like Wu Yubi, club members were required to record daily what they read and practiced in notebooks, so that they could check each other's scholarly and moral progress.⁹⁸ Considering its core texts and sequence of reading them, Hu's club employed Zhu's rules and Cheng Duanli's curriculum,⁹⁹ but reading for its members was not an intellectual but a moral practice. What concerned them was the Neo-Confucian principle rather than compositional skills or other various branches of knowledge that both Zhu and Cheng had also expected students to possess.

Evidential reading of the Classics was only an approach to the apprehension of principle in Zhu's discourse. It was considered secondary to the moral goal, which represented the Song masters' contribution to Confucian scholarship after the Han-Tang exegetical tradition. The above early Ming Pure Confucians tended to cite Song Neo-Confucians such as the Cheng brothers and even Zhu himself to depreciate evidential studies and even the evidential style of reading. In terms of the history of knowledge, this differed from Zhu's intention of evidential studies and reading.¹⁰⁰ For the sake of moral cultivation, as these Pure Confucians assumed, what mattered was not the precise textual meaning but the main points implied in the text. As we shall find in Chapter Five,

⁹⁸ Ibid., "Lize tang xueyue bing xu" 麗澤堂學約並序 [Agreements on studying in the Lize Hall, with preface], 2:56b-57b.

⁹⁹ Terada Takanobu 1991, 57-58.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Hashimoto Takakatsu 1998.

evidential studies of the Classics and histories were rare and almost disappeared in Ming imprints by 1500, testimony to the reading habits that the Pure Confucians advocated.

Besides their decrial of evidential reading, the early Ming Pure Confucians tended to cite Zhu Xi's words to justify their concepts and to emphasize the applicability and effectiveness of his rules for reading the Classics. But their deviations from Zhu's theory were evident. In his theory, as we have discussed, Zhu suggested both intellectual and moral ends of reading. As the preparation for moral advancement, in Zhu's theory, intellectual attainment should be based on widely reading and broad learning in an evidential style. Given their theoretical preferences, the early Ming Pure Confucians' interpretation and employments of Zhu's theory were selective.

More work needs to be done about the social and political causes for the Pure Confucians' fundamentalist moralization of reading practices, their limitation of the recommended reading list and emphasis on experiencing personally as a stage of reading. One cause could be the limited availability of printed books in the early Ming, as the publishing boom had not emerged until the first the quarter of the sixteenth century. Before that time, the manuscript had continued to dominate Chinese book culture, and most ordinary readers and book collectors had to rely on scribed copies to obtain the texts they wanted to read.¹⁰¹ Reading thus was a luxury and privilege. Among a few printed circulations, only those core texts and the Classics in particular were urgently needed. Neither widely reading nor broad learning was possible for the majority of early Ming readers, and intellectual achievement thus appeared harder than moral improvement. In the Pure Confucians' prescriptions, cultivating one's mind obviously was more practicable than widely reading texts that were hard for most readers to encounter.

¹⁰¹ McDermott 2005, 77-82.

III.3. Restoration of Zhu Xi's Tradition

Concrete knowledge, moral cultivation, apprehension of principle, evidential reading, concern for the essentials, and broad learning, all were elaborated in Zhu's theory of reading. These categories had remained popular among leading philosophers after Zhu, and those related to the inward turn towards mind were further elaborated in the theories of cultivating mind. The early Ming Confucians from Song Lian to Hu Juren referred to Zhu in theorizing reading, even though they selected some points of his theory but neglected others in order to justify their hypotheses. Their intellectual affinity with Zhu, whether superficial or profound, prompts us to rethink the nature of the early Ming deviation from the Cheng-Zhu tradition that has been increasingly accepted among intellectual historians. I tend to believe that this so-called deviation was in essence a selective interpretation of Zhu rather than a departure from his theoretical framework. In terms of reading, the inward turn towards mind was actually derived from Zhu, whose rational organicism emphasized the roles that both the external text and internal mind played in the process of drawing meaning from the text.

Both Song Lian's emphasis on concrete knowledge and the Pure Confucians' inward turn to moral cultivation in their concepts of reading were criticized by Qiu Jun, who was concerned with the Confucian tradition of statecraft and the intellectual environment more than specific metaphysical topics.¹⁰² Government service and social involvement, as well as moral improvement, were unified into the goal of reading in Zhu's theory. Qiu summarized Zhu's learning, in Zhu's own words, as "complete

¹⁰² Goodrich 1976, 250-51; Chu 1986.

substance and full function” (*quanti dayong* 全體大用), that is, to both apprehend substance (i.e. principle) and realize its function in practice.¹⁰³ For Qiu, moral cultivation meant the apprehension of principle whereas concrete knowledge and practical skills were the functions of principle (see Chapter Two). Thus neither Eastern Zhe Confucians nor the Pure Confucians, for Qiu, completely understood Zhu’s learning.

To restore Zhu’s tradition, Qiu compiled in 1463 a selection of Zhu’s sayings on learning with the title *Zhuzi xuedi* (The targets of Master Zhu’s learning) in the style of the *Analects* but thematically arranged. In this selection, Zhu’s theory of reading was more detailed than other topics since, according to Qiu, reading books was the main way of investigating things and apprehending principle in an age when the teacher’s lecture has become secondary.¹⁰⁴ Qiu’s intention might have been to refute the emerging Learning of Mind,¹⁰⁵ but I would rather believe that his compilation was primarily intended to rectify early Ming selective interpretation of Zhu’s theory.

As I have discussed in Chapter One, Zhu justified his theory of reading and knowledge framework with reference to two sayings of Confucius found in the *Analects*: “(My) studies lie low, and my penetration rises high,”¹⁰⁶ and “extensively studying all learning, and keeping himself under the restraint of the rules of propriety.”¹⁰⁷ Qiu

¹⁰³ Lee 1998, 174-76.

¹⁰⁴ Qiu Jun 1936, 104.

¹⁰⁵ Lee 1998 argues Qiu Jun's intention to refute Chen Xianzhang's Learning of Mind, but this may not be historically accurate. When Qiu compiled his *Zhuzi xuedi* in 1463, Chen Xianzhang had been studying in isolation for several years at home. Not until his visit to Beijing in 1466 did Chen become well-known for his learning among scholars-officials; see Ruan Rongling 阮榕齡, “Bianci Chen Baisha xiansheng nianpu” 編次陳白沙先生年譜 [The chronological biography of Chen Xianzhang, reedited], in Chen Xianzhang 1987, 808-09.

¹⁰⁶ *Analects* 14.37, in Legge 1960, I:289.

¹⁰⁷ *Analects* 9.10, 12.15, in Legge 1960, I:220, 257.

recognized this theoretical foundation and used it as his rationale for arranging the themes of Zhu's sayings in his selection. In Qiu's own words,

Men's learning should begin with the study of human affairs that lie low.

From low studies, one then proceeds to profound or higher penetration. This is thus the programme of learning for Confucians...Scholars of ancient times started their training as literati and finally became sages. The principle behind this remarkable transformation is [the elevation of] "low studies" to "high penetration."¹⁰⁸

Of note is that Confucians from Cao Duan to Hu Juren did not mention this logic in their discussions of reading, since their focus on reading the Classics and a few Song Neo-Confucian writings for moral cultivation deprived Zhu's learning of "low studies," i.e. wide reading as a means of investigating things to gain broad learning. Their emphasis on inward self-cultivation meant a deviation from Zhu's idea of statecraft, a commitment which Fang Xiaoru and his Jinhua masters had carried on. In this sense, Qiu's interpretation was much closer to Zhu's meaning than those promoted by his Ming predecessors and contemporaries. Qiu even retained some original but controversial points found in Zhu's theory. For instance, he listed some entries from Zhu's discussions of the Han-Tang evidential tradition of Classical exegesis,¹⁰⁹ which early Ming followers of Zhu largely neglected and even underrated. In the case of the *Changes*, Xue Xuan had agreed with Zhu on its origin in divination and oracles and suggested that readers approach its text by following Zhu's instruction, while Hu Juren took issue with this

¹⁰⁸ Qiu Jun 1936, "Postscript," 103-04; cf. Zhu Wubi 朱吾弼, "Preface" (1606). Translation modified from Lee 1998, 181.

¹⁰⁹ Qiu Jun 1936, 15, 17, 53.

position and insisted that the *Changes* be read before other Classics. The *Changes*, for Hu, contained the universal rules and the origin of the cosmos that made divination possible. Hu expected students to refer to Cheng Yi's interpretation rather than Zhu's studies in order to understand the text properly.¹¹⁰ Various versions and interpretation of the *Changes*, Hu argued, implied different exposures of the Way by the earlier sages and worthies that students could not neglect.¹¹¹ In contrast to Xue and Hu, Qiu's restoration of Zhu's principles for reading the *Changes* was complete. For Qiu, as for Zhu, the *Changes*, and the *Spring and Autumn* as well, should be read last because they were much harder than other Classical texts.¹¹² Zhu's reading of the *Changes* was largely derived from his employment of the evidential style. Qiu's recognition of Zhu and rejection of Xue and Hu perhaps resulted from his preference of concrete knowledge over metaphysical concern. The former, as above discussed, was neglected by the Pure Confucians.

Zhu's broad scope of reading, largely recognized by Cheng Duanli and Song Lian but neglected by Cao Duan and other early Ming Confucians, was also kept in Qiu's compilation. He devoted much space to Zhu's discussions of reading the Classical texts, to Zhou Dunyi, the Cheng brothers and Zhang Zai, but strongly suggested that scholars read history and philosophy, which were helpful in both the apprehension of principle and the drawing of historical lessons.¹¹³

Qiu subtly criticized the early Ming partial emphasis on self-cultivation as the goal of reading. He devoted a second part to the application of what the Confucian reader

¹¹⁰ Hu Juren 1777, 8:53b-54a, 57a-b, 57b-58a, 58b.

¹¹¹ Hu Juren 1781, "Yu Luo Yifeng" 與羅一峰 [To Luo Yifeng], 1:32a-33a.

¹¹² Qiu Jun 1936, 14-15, 104.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 1-20, esp. 17.

could learn through wide reading to intellectual cultivation, etiquette and ceremonial, government service, moral relationships, and even evaluations of historical figures.¹¹⁴ These broad applications of learning to sociopolitical services had been endowed with less significance for Confucians after Fang Xiaoru's age. In Qiu's compilation, Zhu had discussed all aspects that the early Ming Pure Confucians emphasized in their ideas about reading. Reverence or inner attentiveness was a theme exclusively covered in the second chapter on "Sustained Reverence" (*Chi jing* 持敬). That readers should imitate the models that the sages and worthies provided in the Classics was underscored in the sixth chapter, "Lash Oneself Forward" (*Biance* 鞭策). "Improving One's Morality" was the topic of the seventh chapter (*Jinde* 進德), while the apprehension of the universal Way in daily practice was covered in the eighth chapter (*Dao zai* 道在).

The cultivation of mind through reading that the early Ming Confucians had focused on, according to Qiu, had been fully discussed in Zhu's theory. We can cite a few instances. "The scholar pursuing learning," said Zhu, "aims simply to [cultivate] his mind and [apprehend] principle."¹¹⁵ "The investigation of things relates to principle, while the extension of knowledge relates to mind."¹¹⁶ The reader "should return to his self [i.e. his mind] to examine principle."¹¹⁷ "If you excel at memorizing and reciting the Classical texts but do not put the principle [embraced in them] into practice, gentlemen commonly will be ashamed with you."¹¹⁸ In Qiu's interpretation, therefore, reading involved more

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 48-99.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 3; Zhu Xi 1781, 2:18a.

¹¹⁶ Qiu Jun 1936, 7; Li Jingde 1986, 15.292.

¹¹⁷ Qiu Jun 1936, 10; Li Jingde 1986, 11.181.

¹¹⁸ Qiu Jun 1936, 20; Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Lin Chongzhi" 答林充之 [Reply to Lin Chongzhi], 43:36a.

than extracting principle from set texts. Readers should concentrate on both concrete knowledge acquisition and moral cultivation in their practices.

Qiu selected many of Zhu's sayings about cultivating the mind besides the passages cited above.¹¹⁹ In fact, Zhu treated both mind and principle as the central issues of his philosophy and sometimes equated mind with principle.¹²⁰ With his confirmation of the difference between Zhu and Lu Jiuyuan and his adherence to the former, it appears that Qiu selected those sayings on the mind not to support the coming revival of Learning of Mind, but to indicate that the early Ming Confucians' promotion of cultivating mind through reading the Classics got its intellectual stimuli from Zhu. As readers, those early Ming Confucians had simply selected some moralistic precepts from Zhu's pervasive theory rather than converting to Lu Jiuyuan's philosophy or pioneering a learning of mind.

In their reading concepts, early Ming Confucians after the early fifteenth century understood self-cultivation to be the only purpose of Zhu's theory of reading. While they cultivated their mind through reading the Classics, they discouraged readers from engaging in literary arts that could improve their competencies in the civil examinations. Even so, most of them and their disciples succeeded in winning examination titles. They harshly criticized the examination culture on the grounds that students preparing for the examinations neglected the apprehension of principle and successful candidates did not incorporate principle into their literary and sociopolitical practices. Theoretically, therefore, they still subtly recognized the incorporation of Classical Learning and knowledge concerning principle into the civil examinations, an assumption that Zhu

¹¹⁹ Qiu Jun 1936, 21-24.

¹²⁰ Kakiuchi Keiko 2005.

initiated and Cheng Duanli elucidated in his curriculum. Qiu reiterated this position by citing Zhu Xi.¹²¹ With their emphasis on self-cultivation through reading the Classics, early Ming Confucians also held to the knowledge hierarchy implied in Zhu's theory of reading. For them, Neo-Confucianism based on Classical Learning dominated other branches of knowledge. Yet they oversimplified this predominance, such that they removed non-Neo-Confucian philosophy (and sometimes even history) from their recommendations. It was this highly selective reception of Zhu's theory of reading that Qiu attempted to rectify.

III.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed details concerning the reception of Zhu Xi's theory by early Ming Jinhua Confucians and orthodox Confucians in both north and south China until 1500. In the first decades of the Ming dynasty, students' reading habits were forged through civil examinations that the Jinhua Confucians designed, focusing on concrete knowledge helpful in sociopolitical practice. The change in the application of Zhu's theory took place at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when both northern and southern Confucians proposed that the focus of reading be on moral advancement but neglected the intellectual end that Zhu suggested as the foundation of virtuous cultivation. I have argued that this change was made within Zhu's theory rather than intended to redefine cultivation of mind or to introduce the Learning of Mind. The early Ming selective interpretation of Zhu's theory of reading did not challenge, but rather radicalized, the ideal goal of reading and knowledge framework it implied. In early Ming orthodox concepts of reading, both northern and southern Confucians strengthened the

¹²¹ Qiu Jun 1936, 49, 50, 88.

predominance of Classics-based Neo-Confucianism over other branches of knowledge, at the expense of the wide reading and broad learning that Zhu expected. In this radicalization, Zhu's evidential style of reading was largely underrated in the name of apprehending principle. The result was the decline of Classical scholarship that Gu Yanwu observed.¹²²

Why the early Ming Confucians selected moral rather than intellectual advancement from Zhu's theory as their only goal of reading and limited their scope of reading to the Classics and a few Song Neo-Confucian writings as a result deserves further exploration. While Song Lian and Fang Xiaoru suggested extending knowledge by reading widely, the imperial editors of the *Compendium of Nature and Principle*, as well as Cao Duan and other orthodox Confucians, advocated self-cultivation through reading the Classics. Their shared explanation for this transformation, as I mentioned, was that students training for the civil examinations tended to neglect moral cultivation in their reading practices. This statement actually does not tell us why they abandoned intellectual pursuits and instead selected moral cultivation as the primary objective of learning. The limited availability of printed books could result in the impracticability of intellectual attainment through wide reading and broad learning, yet the 1402 *coup d'état* perhaps began this inward turn towards moral cultivation. The sociopolitical ambition represented by early Ming Jinhua Confucians suffered a heavy blow from the rivals of Confucian learning who accommodated the demands of emperorship. The goal of reading was redefined after negotiations between literati and the emperor (i.e. between Confucian teachings and the imperial power). Readers' inward turn towards moral cultivation and

¹²² As I will discuss in Chapter Five, however, the first century of the Ming dynasty witnessed the publication of a few works of Classical scholarship of the Han-Tang tradition.

their neglect of intellectual attainment occurred as the emperor instructed. Yet, this change occurred within the Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucian tradition of rational organicism. What the early Ming Confucian philosophers selected as their goal of reading was not intellectual attainment but moral improvement, both of which Zhu had suggested in his discourse.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MING CONFUSION OF READING (1500-1644): MIND OR BOOKS?

FROM 1500 onwards, Zhu Xi's theory of reading encountered a challenge from the emerging and dramatically growing Learning of Mind, which carried on the early Ming moralization of reading/learning and dominated sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Chinese intellectual discourse. In the first half of the Ming dynasty elite readers envisioned the goal of reading to be moral or intellectual, while those in the second half focused their efforts on how to achieve sagehood. In terms of reading habits and practices, their explorations have been seen as responses to the increasing prosperity of publishing in this period. The proliferation of publishing and writing could put Ming scholars in a "modern dilemma"—How in their moral and intellectual pursuits were they to cope with increasingly numerous texts and specialized branches of knowledge?¹ This problem, however, was not what actually confronted mid-Ming students. Before the publishing boom appeared in the 1520s, as is well known, philosophers of mind had been involved in controversies over book learning and reading for several decades.

What perplexed sixteenth-century students and elite thinkers was a problem regarding the goal of reading that Zhu had discussed, that is, the proper balance between propagating Confucian Learning and seeking political achievements. Although he attempted to incorporate both objectives in the civil examinations, as discussed in Chapter One, Zhu clearly emphasized as the goal of reading the pursuit of learning but overrated the civil examinations. As his theory of reading entailed a time-consuming and cumulative process of learning, its efficiency and applicability became an issue for

¹ de Bary 1970, 9.

students eager to pass their civil examinations. Moreover, with the decline of examination culture, political achievements were equated with official rank and riches while Confucian Learning was largely ignored. This was definitely not the original intent of the civil examination system or the spirit of Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy. From the vantage point of the examination market, the mid-Ming Confucian world was in an intellectual crisis and suffering from moral degeneration. While admirers of Zhu Xi such as Qiu Jun reiterated the Song master's learning and reading concepts, philosophers of mind provided their own solutions, reconfiguring Cheng-Zhu concepts in an attempt to transform contemporary students' reading habits.

This chapter begins with the fifteenth-century intellectual and moral crisis, and then takes up frustrations in applying Zhu's theory that Chen Xianzhang (1428-1500) and Wang Yangming (1472-1529) confronted in succession. Chen pioneered the Ming Learning of Mind that Wang consummated. After a detailed discussion of Chen's and Wang's reading concepts and practices in relation to Zhu's theory, I will turn to Liu Zongzhou (1578-1645), who revised Wang's philosophy and corrected a tendency of intellectual scepticism prevalent among Wang's radical followers. Before concluding this chapter, I will also discuss the reading concepts of Huang Zongxi (1610-1695), who perpetuated Liu's views, rediscovered the intellectual goal of reading, and anticipated the rise of early Qing scholarship. For these philosophers of mind, Zhu's theory of reading remained effective in their intellectual practices, shaping their reading concepts and habits.

IV.1. The Mid-Ming Intellectual and Moral Crises of Reading

For critics, intellectual and moral crises had dogged examination culture since the early second century BC, when Emperor Wu of Han (156-87 BC) initiated the nomination of talented men for official appointments, and harsh criticism of the examination system became a constant. In his “Personal Proposals,” Zhu Xi criticized the contemporary tendency of seeking official honors and wealth through the civil examinations to the neglect of both the Confucian Way and moral cultivation.² It is hard to say whether what mid-Ming Confucian critics witnessed was worse than what Zhu decried, but they did feel that the examination culture of their day was in an intellectual and moral crisis.

IV.1.1. The Loss of the Sage’s Learning in the Examination Culture

Gu Yanwu rebuked late Ming students for studying only to obtain efficiency in official honours and wealth, and suggested that such a utilitarian goal eroded political morality. As a solution, he prescribed praising moral integrity and advocating Neo-Confucian learning among students.³ Similar statements had also appeared in the mid-Ming, but with provision of more detailed descriptions and commentary. In the early 1520s Huang Xingzeng (1496-1546) suspected most officials’ motives for taking the civil examinations; in his words, his own time was one when “literati became dishonorable and the [Confucian] Way was increasingly unrecognized and forgotten.”⁴ The court recruited officials and commissioned them to rule the people in peace, but throughout their government careers these officials instead sought honours and wealth for themselves and their families.⁵ Honour and wealth became the only standards for judging success or

² Zhu Xi 1532b, “Xuexiao gongju siyi,” 69:20a-b, 22a-23a.

³ Gu Yanwu 1834, 13:13a-b, 15b.

⁴ Huang Xingzeng 1568, 1a.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2a-b.

failure, standards that even schoolboys knew well how to apply to their own situation.⁶ Huang saw “material desire” (*liyu* 利欲) as the cause of the contemporary political chaos and branded those officials who gave into their material desires as businessmen, butchers and wine sellers, thieves, and robbers.⁷ For him, the civil examination system by the sixteenth century no longer recruited intellectually and morally qualified officials, because schoolboys were accustomed to view textbooks as ladders to social and economic success rather than vehicles of the Way or repositories of statecraft skills. Huang failed in the metropolitan examination and his criticisms appeared to be aimed at those holding the *jinshi* degree in particular.⁸ It is hard to know how much his own failure influenced his views, but his criticisms were echoed by Gu Yanwu.

The intellectual outcome of this decline was exemplified by He Liangjun (1506-1573). Like Huang, He did not win a *jinshi* degree, but began his short government career when he was a national university student. The declining examination system, for He, drew students away from the Confucian Classics to material desires that could be satisfied with compositional skills in the eight-legged style. He Liangjun attributed this degeneration to the imperially sponsored *Compendia of the Four Books and Five Classics* (1414-1415), in which Cheng-Zhu exegesis was adopted as orthodox while the Han-Tang tradition was abandoned. What the examination candidate was expected to do was simply to elaborate the Cheng-Zhu interpretation in the stipulated style, to the neglect of the intentions of sages embraced in the Classics. He Liangjun expected officials to meet the Confucian ideal; hence the current examination system as a method of recruitment did not work at all. Neither literary arts nor Cheng-Zhu commentaries on the Classics but

⁶ Ibid., 1b, 2b-3a.

⁷ Ibid., 3a-4a, 2a.

⁸ Ibid., 3a.

rather the Classical Learning represented by the Han-Tang tradition should be the materials tested, so that the sages' intentions preserved in the Four Books and Five Classics could be perpetuated,⁹ as Zhu instructed in his theory of reading.

He Liangjun attributed the loss of the Confucian Classics to a shift in reading habits. Since the completion of the *Compendia*, students had focused on the Cheng-Zhu commentaries in their reading practices. Around the 1530s, the focus was placed on model eight-legged essays, with even the Song commentaries set aside. Nobody would personally experience the meaning of the Classics anymore.¹⁰ Therefore, He particularly prescribed the proper method of reading the Classics, citing the Song Confucians Huang Tingjian (see Chapter One) and Chen Shidao 陳師道 (1053-1102). In his prescription, the evidential style, intimate familiarity with the text, coherence among the Classical texts, and the superiority of the Classics over histories were emphasized.¹¹ These points are exactly those that Zhu had suggested in his theory.

Especially noteworthy is He's attitude towards Zhu's doctrine. He harshly criticized Zhu's intellectual predominance in the civil examinations and claimed that the Cheng-Zhu commentaries dispersed the original meaning of the Classics,¹² but did not dispute Zhu on philosophical grounds. I tend to assume that He simply took issue with Zhu's orthodoxy in the civil examinations. For him, Han exegesis was much closer to the sages' original intentions than were the Cheng-Zhu interpretation. What concerned him was nothing but these sages' intentions. As Zhu had done, he upheld the combination of Classical Learning with Learning of the Way and regarded the former as the foundation

⁹ He Liangjun 1959, 3.22-24.

¹⁰ Ibid., 3.23-24.

¹¹ Ibid., 3.26-27.

¹² Ibid., 3.22-23, 26.

of the latter. He attributed the divergence between these two fields to Ming Confucians from Xue Xuan to Wang Yangming, though he was a believer in the philosophy of mind. He wrote,

In our dynasty, Xue Xuan, Chen Xianzhang, Wu Yubi, and Wang Yangming all were fond of metaphysical discussions about Principle and Nature. They did excel in Classical Learning, but they simply favored abstract discussions and accordingly their doctrines are not of practical use. Their disciples were just slaves to their theories and split up into sects..., using Learning of the Way as a shortcut to success in the civil examinations and officialdom. Thus Classical Learning and Learning of the Way diverged into two [totally unrelated] fields.¹³

He Liangjun traced the origin of this divergence back to the fifteenth century, but the loss of Classical Learning that he could sense evidently occurred at the turn of the sixteenth century. He grouped readers at this juncture into two camps, those eager for riches and honours (*zaojing zhi tu* 躁競之徒) and those who personally experienced the Classics (*tiren jingzhuang zhi ren* 體認經傳之人). The former commonly succeeded in the examination market and officialdom while the latter tended to fail.¹⁴ Desires for riches and honours thus altered the examination culture as well as reading habits.

Such desires also had concerned Ming scholars prior to He Liangjun, who came up with different solutions. For Chen Xianzhang, the prevailing climate of seeking honour and wealth in the name of learning was the main problem that he and his contemporaries

¹³ Ibid., 3.27-28.

¹⁴ Ibid., 3.24.

must fight against. This problem was differed from those that Zhu Xi confronted when he defended Confucianism against Buddhism and Daoism.¹⁵ Thus for Chen moral cultivation of mind rather than devotion to reading was the first task that students should take up.

Wang Yangming by his own account developed his philosophy in order to correct desires for the honour and wealth. He criticized his age as one when literati tended “to deceive people with delicate literary arts and flowery words, to encourage each other hypocritically, and to fight each other out of self-interest” in the name of “the learning of sages and worthies.” Wang called such people “beasts in human dress.”¹⁶ By his time, the sages’ and worthies’ learning had long been forgotten and occasional discussions of it tended to be derided as eccentric. A few so-called wise literati in the Ming set out to study this learning, but in their daily conduct and family instructions they remained anxious to establish as the ultimate goal pursuit of official ranks and riches. What they called “the learning of sages and worthies” was, in most cases, “used only to adorn their discussions and writings.”¹⁷

Not all Ming scholars in practice rejected desire for honour and wealth in the same way that Chen and Wang had done. As commercialization penetrated gentry life, social mobility between literati and merchants redrew the traditional boundary between these classes. Accordingly, literati adjusted themselves to commercial culture and even became involved in it.¹⁸ In the philosophy of mind discourse, Wang and his followers justified this social transformation, keeping their Confucian world open to merchants and

¹⁵ Huang Zongxi 2008, 4.75; cited in Ruan Rongling, “Nianpu,” in Chen 1987, 829.

¹⁶ Wang Shouren 1992, “Shu Lin sixun juan” 書林司訓卷 [Essay to present to Instructor Lin] (1526), 8.282.

¹⁷ Ibid., “Shu Huang Mengxing juan” 書黃夢星卷 [Essay to present to Huang Mengxing] (1527), 8.283.

¹⁸ Brook 1998.

confirming the latter's embrace of and contributions to the sages' and worthies' learning.¹⁹ What concerned Wang and his contemporaries, therefore, was not commercialization *per se*, but the survival, recognition, and practice of the sages' and worthies' learning in the context of commercialization. This problem, Chen had declared, had not seriously concerned Zhu Xi or other Song masters but was an urgent one for mid-Ming Confucians. In their efforts to solve it, they realized the social alteration of their audience, which had expanded from the Confucian elite to include those from the commercial stratum of culture. Correspondently, they needed to adjust their pedagogy and legitimate it anew. Challenges to Zhu's theory thus emerged.

IV.1.2. Frustrations in Applying Zhu Xi's Theory

The inapplicability of Zhu's theory of reading to any solution of these unprecedented problems was unquestionable for mid-Ming followers of the philosophy of mind. Chen Xianzhang and Wang Yangming had in common a concern with the central philosophical question concerning the convergence of mind and principle, that is, how mind apprehends principle. Their ultimate goal was to achieve sagehood through self-cultivation. In cultivating themselves, they were both stymied in their attempts to employ Zhu's theory of reading.

In 1454 Wu Yubi enrolled Chen into his school, teaching this frustrated university student the Confucian Classics and Song Neo-Confucian tradition following the orthodox Cheng-Zhu programme. Over several months of intensive study, however, Chen failed to assimilate what Wu had taught him into his philosophical pursuit. For Chen, Zhu's instructions concerning moral cultivation through wide reading and broad learning were

¹⁹ Yu Yingshi 1987, 104-36.

too complicated and time-consuming. After returning to his native place in Guangdong in 1455, Chen spent several more years following Zhu's theory of wide reading, but his reward was nothing but deteriorating health. Finally he saw that the secret of pursuing learning did not lie in books but in his own mind—cultivation of mind was the key to sagehood.²⁰ Subsequent to his enlightenment Chen elaborated his own approach philosophically, and for his contemporaries and Qing Confucians his views departed from Zhu Xi's doctrine in ways that anticipated the Ming Learning of Mind.

Such apostasy was confirmed by Chen himself, who in his mature philosophy deliberately separated himself from Zhu. He tended to trace his learning back to Zhou Dunyi and the Cheng brothers and remained ambivalent about Zhu. In 1466, Chen declared to the Chancellor at the National University in Beijing,

My Way has a grand master,
The immortal Zhu Ziyang [i.e. Zhu Xi].
He spoke of reverence unceasingly,
Showing me the way to virtue...²¹

Yet in 1481 Chen refused an invitation from the Jiangxi government to supervise the newly reconstructed White Deer Grotto Academy founded in the late eighth century and revived by Zhu in 1179-1181, explaining that he could neither understand nor perpetuate

²⁰ Jen 1970, 56-57.

²¹ Chen Xianzhang 1987, "He Yang Guishan 'Ciribuzai' deyun" 和楊龜山此日不再得韻 [Poem in the rhyme that Yang Shi (1053-1135) used in his "This day has gone"], in "Fulu yi" 附錄一, 701; translation cited from Jen 1970, 58.

Zhu's learning.²² This revived Academy was viewed as a pedagogical and political model in the late imperial Neo-Confucian tradition.²³ In 1482, on his way to Beijing, Chen offered a sacrifice to his late master Wu Yubi, highly praising Wu as the "pure" perpetuator of the Cheng brothers' learning but passing over Zhu's influence on Wu, as discussed in Chapter Three.²⁴ As early as 1454 Chen preferred Zhou Dunyi and the Cheng brothers, who advocated desirelessness, reverence, and quiet-sitting in the pursuit of learning, over Zhu Xi, who insisted on the extension of knowledge as the prerequisite for cultivating virtue.²⁵

Chen divided learning into two kinds: that obtained by accumulating and transmitting words, and that which cannot be achieved by accumulating and transmitting words.²⁶ According to his favorite disciple Zhan Ruoshui 湛若水 (1466-1560), Chen referred to Zhu's learning as of the former kind and his Learning of Mind as of the latter. Zhan labeled Zhu's learning as "the learning of worthies" (*xianren zhixue* 賢人之學) and his master's learning as "the sage's learning" (*shengxue* 聖學). Since the sage's learning was rooted in nature, Zhan asserted, it was more genuine than the learning of worthies.²⁷ For Chen and his disciples, therefore, Zhu's learning was dispensable, and too his reading concepts and methods.

²² Chen Xianzhang 1987, "Zeng Li Liu ersheng huan Jiangyou shi xu" 曾李劉二生還江右詩序 [Preface to the poem to present to Mr. Li and Mr. Liu who is returning to Jiangxi], 1.18-19; "Fu Jiangyou fanxian zhugong" 復江右藩憲諸公 [Reply to the local officials of Jiangxi], 2.138-39; cf. Jen 1970, 61-62.

²³ Chaffee 1985.

²⁴ Chen Xianzhang 1987, "Ji xianshi Kangzhai mu wen" 祭先師康齋墓文 [Elegaic essay to present before my late master Kangzhai's tomb], 1.107.

²⁵ Ibid., "Shu Liantang shuwu ce hou" 書蓮塘書屋冊後 [Postscript to the *Album of the Studio of the Lotus Pond*], 1.64-65.

²⁶ Ibid., "Fu Zhang Dongbai neihan" 復張東白內翰 [Reply to Zhang Dongbai, the Hanlin Academician], 2.131; cf. Jen 1970, 81, views the former as intellectual learning and the latter as moral cultivation.

²⁷ Chen Xianzhang 1987, "Fulu yi," 710.

Similar frustrations cropped up in Wang Yangming's self-cultivation and he went even further in his efforts to overcome them. Little extant evidence supports the assumption that Wang directly received intellectual stimuli from Chen. Until his sudden enlightenment in 1508, Wang had attempted to follow Zhu's approach to sagehood, despite sometimes also appealing to Buddhism and Daoism in an effort to resolve his intellectual and political dilemmas. Neither Lu Jiuyuan nor Chen had influenced his intellectual pursuits.²⁸ Ming compilations of Wang's writings and conversations were highly selective, including far fewer writings prior to 1508 than from 1509 onwards. Despite later attempts to recover these earlier writings, Wang's early intellectual development was less systematically reconstructed than his mature philosophy.²⁹ Thus, we can assume, after his enlightenment Wang theorized reading habits and practices in a way that differed from Zhu's theory, but until 1508 he had presumably followed Zhu's theory of reading. Wang's reading experience, however, contains some details that deserve further examination.

As early as 1482, according to an anecdote, Wang declared the first goal of reading to be learning to become a sage rather than winning an examination title.³⁰ Moral advancement was also the ultimate aim in Zhu's theory, but in Wang's case it came to be characterized as the sole purpose of reading. Superior theoretically to any intellectual accomplishments, cultivation of virtue transcended any practical achievements of Wang's educational activities and political and military service.

²⁸ Tu 1976, 155-63ff.

²⁹ Qian Ming, "Yangming quanshu chengshu jingguo kao" 陽明全書成書經過攷 [A study of the formation of Wang Yangming's complete collection], Wang Shouren 1992, 1632-48; see also Qian Ming 2002, 257-65.

³⁰ Wang Shouren 1992, "Nianpu" 年譜 [Chronological biography], 33.1221; cf. Tu 1976, 32.

In his youth, Wang had been praised as a talented poet. He did not turn to Neo-Confucian learning until a visit in 1489 to Wu Yubi's disciple Lou Liang 婁諒 (1422-91). Lou taught him Zhu's theory of the investigation of things and redirected him from a devotion to literary arts to the quest for sagehood through book learning. Before his visit to Lou, Wang had doubted his talent for learning to be a sage, having failed to discern the principle inherent in bamboo as practiced in Zhu's approach to "investigating things," a story that is well known.³¹ Scholars have tended to assume that Wang accepted Lou's instruction, since for the next several years he read widely the Classics, philosophy, and history in Zhu's way.³²

Wang finally stopped practicing Lou's instruction. In 1497 he devoted his efforts to the art of war, carefully reading military books after twice failing the metropolitan examinations.³³ Two years later he became interested in nourishing life, a pursuit he enjoyed discussing with his disciples even in his late years. This change resulted from another failure at utilizing Zhu's art to apprehend principle. In his earlier practice of wide reading, Wang realized that he had not followed Zhu's rule of "progressive iteration in proper sequence" to master the essentials (see Chapter Two). He improved his methods with subsequent intellectual benefit, but still was unable to integrate his mind and external phenomena (the same problem that had dogged Chen Xianzhang). Too much reading and thinking damaged his health, and he turned to Daoism for life nourishment.³⁴ He did not abandon Daoism and Buddhism until 1502, having found neither conducive to maintaining the natural family affection that Confucians found paramount. He was

³¹ Wang Shouren 1992, "Nianpu," 33.1223.

³² Ibid.; Tu 1976, 47-49; Goodrich 1976, 989-90.

³³ Wang Shouren 1992, "Nianpu," 33.1224.

³⁴ Ibid., 33.1224, 34.1282.

hesitant to continue his study of literary arts and turned his attention to statecraft.³⁵ In 1505, he began as a mentor to teach Neo-Confucianism and the Learning of Mind in particular. He encouraged his disciples to obtain sagehood through cultivation of mind, discarding literary arts and superficial Classical studies pursued in preparation for the civil examinations.³⁶ Like Chen, Wang was frustrated in his efforts to use Zhu's art of reading to obtain moral improvement.³⁷

Even so, he was hesitant to break intellectually with Zhu. In 1511 (three years after his sudden enlightenment), he explained in theoretical terms the frustrations he had faced, by highlighting Zhu's idea of cultivation of mind as the crux of the difficulty. While advocating wide reading and broad learning as a main way of investigating things, Zhu also suggested that students cultivate their minds with sincere thoughts and rectified hearts, as advocated by Lu Jiuyuan. Later followers of Zhu, Wang argued, simply focused on investigating things, including reading books, to the neglect of cultivation of mind; thus their failures in moral advancement were caused not by Zhu's teaching but by their misapplication of it.³⁸ Wang's philosophical expression differed sharply from Zhu's, however. For Wang, sagehood was located in one's mind rather than achieved through investigating external things and reading books in particular.³⁹ Eventually, in 1520, he declared that reading books was ineffective when it came to the attaining of sagehood:

If one reads the Classics and history to investigate the past and the present and to extend his seeing and hearing [i.e. knowledge], that will be fine. If one

³⁵ Ibid., 33.1226.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ For a complete description of Wang's early intellectual practices, see Tu 1976, chap. 1.

³⁸ Wang Shouren 1992, "Da Xu Chengzhi" 答徐成之 [Reply to Xu Chengzhi], 21.808.

³⁹ de Bary 1970, 150-57.

intends to find the doorway to sagehood through reading books, that will be difficult. To do so is akin to the parable of picking branches and leaves to nourish the tree's root. It is not possible to enable the tree's blood to circulate in this way.⁴⁰

Wang instead gave priority to the mind (i.e. "root") over book learning (i.e. "branches and leaves") in self-cultivation. The main way to sagehood, in his philosophy, was not to read books but to cultivate one's mind instead. Like Chen Xianzhang, Wang now also traced his learning back to Zhou Dunyi and the Cheng brothers, bypassing Zhu's philosophy.⁴¹

The above-noted failures in utilizing Zhu's theory in both Chen's and Wang's early years were moral rather than intellectual. Like Chen's, Wang's sudden enlightenment in 1508 was an achievement of his ceaseless quest for sagehood.⁴² The two men's philosophical experiences were also the result of their repudiation of earlier intellectual explorations through reading widely with an open mind. This prompts us to examine whether or not Zhu's theory programmed their reading practices and directed their intellectual exercises. Despite their frustrations with Zhu's theory, both Chen and Wang actually practiced Zhu's art, at least until their enlightenment experiences. Zhu's theory thus should have played a role in their intellectual practices. It remains difficult to reconstruct what texts they preferred and what ones they disliked, and how they made meaning in their encounters with books. However, their reading concepts, philosophical

⁴⁰ Wang Shouren 1992, "Nianpu," 34.1280.

⁴¹ Ibid., "Bie Zhan Ganquan xu" 別湛甘泉序 [Preface as a farewell to Zhan Ruoshui] (1512), 7.230-31; "Nianpu," 33.1233-34.

⁴² Tu 1976, 120-28.

categories, and reading instructions for individual students can tell us how close philosophers of mind were to Zhu's theory.

IV.2. Reading and Quiet-Sitting

Chen Xianzhang clearly attempted to separate his philosophy from Zhu's doctrines, but the process of developing his philosophy did not entail a complete break with Zhu's theory of reading. As the lines cited above indicate, Chen benefited intellectually from Zhu's idea of reverence achieved by the age of forty when formulating his own approach to virtue. According to Zhan Ruoshui, learning for Chen was "derived from the idea of reverence and achieved by quiescence" and quiescence was "a normal and healthy state of mind" that could be obtained through quiet-sitting.⁴³ Besides reverence, other key concepts in Chen's formulation of the learning process were intellectually indebted to Zhu's theory of reading.

IV.2.1. Quiet-Sitting as A Way of Apprehending Principle

Chen's solution to the convergence of mind and principle was quiet-sitting in meditation.⁴⁴ Early Ming "pure Confucians" also encountered this same question and advocated cultivation of mind through intensive reading of the Classics and Song Neo-Confucians, as already discussed. Chen, however, gave supremacy to mind over principle and matter. He insisted on "putting principle in order" with mind rather than "putting mind in order" with principle as Zhu had suggested.⁴⁵ To obtain this intellectual goal, Chen designed specific methods, which corresponded to Zhu's rules for reading. (1) In

⁴³ Chen Xianzhang 1987, 702; Jen 1970, 77.

⁴⁴ Jen 1970, 57, 71-72.

⁴⁵ Jen 1970, 70-72, 74.

and after reading, one should personally experience what he learned “with the mind” and supplement it by “close examination of the sages’ teaching.”⁴⁶ (2) One should “empty” his mind and keep it “quiet” before commencing the effort of reading. “Emptiness” (*xu* 虛), in Chen’s theory, meant keeping one’s mind unoccupied like a piece of blank paper or an unfilled cup so that he could receive principle and reject any preconceptions and prejudices. This is exactly what Zhu meant by “an open mind.” Chen’s idea of quiescence was also intended to keep one’s mind “open wide.”⁴⁷ (3) Self-acquisition (*zide* 自得), a term that Chen allegedly borrowed from Cheng Yi, meant “the acquiring of principle by and for oneself,” free from entanglement by external events and obtain happiness.⁴⁸ According to Chen himself, self-acquisition was the first goal of learning and the precondition for reading.⁴⁹ As a goal self-acquisition meant the apprehension of principle, and as a precondition it meant an open mind. Chen thus elaborated Zhu’s rules of “keeping mind open” and “personally experiencing” (see Chapter Two) in his own way.

Chen’s definition of self-acquisition differed essentially from that of Cheng Yi but resonated with Zhu’s expectation of readers. By self-acquisition, Cheng referred to a natural way of pursuing learning, a way that Zhu interpreted as his rule of “keeping mind open” for reading.⁵⁰ In such a natural way, for Cheng as for Zhu, the student could find his own particular approach to a text.⁵¹ Cheng elaborated his approach with several rules for reading that evidently preceded Zhu. For example, Cheng expected his disciples

⁴⁶ Ibid., 72.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 75-76, 77; Chen Xianzhang 1987, "Yu Zhang Tingshi zhushi" 與張廷實主事 [To Secretary Zhang Tingshi], 2.162.

⁴⁸ Jen 1970, 81-83; Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi 1981, "Henan Cheng shi yishu" 河南程氏遺書, 25.316.

⁴⁹ Ruan Rongling 阮榕齡, "Bianci Chen Baisha xiansheng nianpu" 編次陳白沙先生年譜 [Chronological biography of Chen Xianzhang, reedited], in Chen Xianzhang 1987, 807.

⁵⁰ Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian 1967, 57-58 (3.41).

⁵¹ Ibid., 97 (3.24).

reading books to “inquire deeply, understand quietly, and ponder for a long time,” “accumulate his thoughts, and cultivate himself leisurely” in a gradual and progressive process.⁵² On the other hand, in Zhu’s view, Cheng’s idea of self-acquisition could be used by students when reading as an excuse, to justify relying on preconceived ideas that were obstacles to an open mind.⁵³ Chen emphasized “an open mind” for reading, clearly in an attempt to prevent individualism and preconceived ideas in reading but to advocate proper uses of texts based on textual meaning.

Quiet-sitting was the main practice that Chen propagated as the means to achieve emptiness and quiescence. In his theory, it aimed to restore the natural mind so that the beginning of virtue (*shanduan* 善端) could be found as a doorway to self-acquisition. Even this concept, I believe, did not successfully distinguish Chen from Zhu in terms of intellectual practices. Again, Chen allegedly derived this conception from Cheng Yi.⁵⁴ Also inspired by Cheng, Zhu had occasionally suggested that students practice quiet-sitting before and after reading, but in general he downplayed the role of quiescence and disagreed with Cheng’s view that quiet-sitting was a way of apprehending principle.⁵⁵ Chen acknowledged Zhu’s negative attitude towards quiescence and quiet-sitting, and opined that Zhu spoke less of quiescence than of reverence because he sought to avoid any possible confusion between Neo-Confucianism and Chan Buddhism when it came to

⁵² Ibid., 90-91 (3.7), 264 (11.14). Cheng Yi also suggested applying self-acquisition to the cultivation of mind; see 128 (4.14).

⁵³ Zhu Xi 1532b, "Da Ke Guocai" 答柯國材 [Reply to Ke Guocai], 39:7b; "Da Xu Shunzhi" 答許順之 [Reply to Xu Shunzhi], 39:11a.

⁵⁴ Jen 1970, 78-79.

⁵⁵ Qian Mu 1971, "Zhuzi lun jing" 朱子論靜 [Master Zhu on quiescence], II.277-97; Chen Rongjie 1988, "Zhuzi yu jingzuo" 朱子與靜坐 [Master Zhu and quiet-sitting], 299-308; "Banri jingzuo banri dushu" 半日靜坐半日讀書 [Half-day quiet-sitting and half-day reading], 309-13.

practice.⁵⁶ Quiet-sitting thus was used by Chen to distinguish his epistemology from Zhu's. In his teaching practices, however, Chen shared Zhu's concerns. While he required his disciples to turn to the mind and concentrate on apprehending principle so that they would not be distracted by their ears and eyes, Chen also cautioned against overemphasis on emptiness and quiescence and suggested that the student actively participate in daily life.⁵⁷

IV.2.2. Integration of Mind and Texts

The close affinity of Chen's self-acquisition and quiet-sitting to Zhu's resulted from their shared emphasis of books learning and reading in intellectual practices. The role of book learning has been employed to mark the distinction between Chen and Zhu. A survey of Chen's reading theory and practices, however, demonstrates his subtle perpetuation of the Song significance of book learning and reading from which he attempted to break. In his own theory, Chen suggested an integration of mind and texts with the former's supremacy over the latter; yet as a real reader Chen considered book learning and reading crucial for both knowledge acquisition and moral improvement.

The role of book learning in intellectual and moral improvement had been controversial among Song Confucians from the Cheng brothers to Zhu Xi. Unlike Cheng Yi, who emphasized quiet-sitting more than reading books, Zhu saw reading books as the main way to pursue learning. Chen followed Cheng Yi and theoretically went even further, once saying that in the pursuit of learning, "reading books and broad learning are

⁵⁶ Chen Xianzhang 1987, "Yu Luo Yifeng" 與羅一峰 [To Luo Yifeng (Lun, 1431-78)], 2.157.

⁵⁷ Zhang Xu 張翹, "Baisha xiansheng xingzhuang" 白沙先生行狀 [A biographical sketch of Master Baisha], in *ibid.*, 880; Jen 1970, 83-84.

not as effective as quiet-sitting.”⁵⁸ For Chen, the books and writings that were proliferating with the emerging publishing boom were a burden for students. The more books and writings the reader encountered, the greater his confusion. Thus the reader should free himself from external influences, including books, and focus on his mind.⁵⁹

In his practice, Chen did widely read and thus became erudite as well as artistic. He isolated himself and devoted much of his time to reading various books in the period 1455-1465.⁶⁰ In this sense, his enlightenment was the result of wide reading and his philosophy ultimately was based on book learning rather than deriving from a mysterious enlightenment experience. Although secondary to quiet-sitting in theory, book learning was still crucial in Chen’s theory of intellectual and moral cultivation.⁶¹ As Zhu had done, Chen held that “words embrace the Way—If the sages and worthies disregarded all words, how can the Way be apprehended?”⁶² He encouraged his disciples to teach themselves by reading the Classics and Song Neo-Confucian writings.⁶³ What the student should not do was to linger over memorization and recitation, nor should he constrain his learning within what he saw and heard, but rather transcend the literal meaning of words.⁶⁴

On the other hand, Chen conceded that quiet-sitting was not the only way to learn and practicing it was subject to conditions. When teaching it to his disciples, Chen taught

⁵⁸ Chen Xianzhang 1987, “Yu Lin You” 與林友 [To my friend Lin], 2.269; translation cited from Jen 1970, 79.

⁵⁹ Chen Xianzhang 1987, “Fu Zhang Dongbai neihan,” 2.131-32; “Daoxue zhuan xu” 道學傳序 [Preface to Biographies of Learning of the Way scholars], 1.20; Jen 1970, 80.

⁶⁰ Zheng Xu, “Baisha xiansheng xingzhuang,” in Chen Xianzhang 1987, 879.

⁶¹ Jen 1970, 79-80.

⁶² Chen Xianzhang 1987, “Fulu yi,” 763; “Xulezhai ji” 尋樂齋記 [Record of the Studio of seeking for happiness], 1.48.

⁶³ Ibid., “Yu He Kegong huangmen” 與賀克恭黃門 [To He Kegong, the Supervising Secretary], 2.134.

⁶⁴ Ibid., “Fulu yi,” 703.

what he had verified by his own experiences and rejected practices he felt were unsubstantiated and misleading.⁶⁵ Quiet-sitting, as he told one of his disciples, was hard to learn after all. Before taking it as an approach to learning, the student should evaluate his own condition, keeping in mind the risk of Chan Buddhist tendencies.⁶⁶ Book learning was fundamental when it came to seeking the Way in one's mind, according to Chen:

...When he [i.e. the student] desires to hear of the Way, if he seeks for it in books and the Way is there, then let him seek for it in the books. But if he seeks for it in books and fails to acquire it, and then returns to seek it in his mind and the Way is found there, then let him seek for it in his mind. How then can he become entangled by externals?⁶⁷

Chen treated books as the first point of origin of learning, especially for beginners. Chen's emphasis on appealing to mind, I think, was intended to unify mind and principle, or mind and texts. His ideal approach to learning was the integration of texts and mind with the supremacy of mind over texts. Learning for him was a process from books to mind. He wrote:

...If the scholar does not seek for principle only in books but also in his own mind,...cultivating what is in himself,...when he opens a book, he acquires

⁶⁵ Ibid., "Fu Zhao tixue qianxian" 復趙提學僉憲 [Reply to Mr. Zhao, the education-intendant censor], 2.145.

⁶⁶ Ibid., "Yu Zhang Tingshi zhushi," 2.162; "Yu Luo Yifeng," 2.157.

⁶⁷ Ibid., "Yu Lin Jixi shu" 與林緝熙書 [Letter to Lin Jixi], in "Xu buyi" 續補遺, 974; translation cited from Jen 1970, 79-80.

everything easily. It is not from the books that he acquires it, but from himself. For, if one studies the books with oneself (*yi wo guanshu* 以我觀書), one will acquire benefits everywhere; but if one lets oneself be tied down with books (*yi shu bowo* 以書博我), then, when the volume is laid aside, one will remain utterly ignorant.⁶⁸

It should be noted, however, that the above quoted mind-text integration and hierarchy (i.e. “one studies the books with oneself” and “one lets oneself be tied down with books”) were not Chen’s theoretical inventions. This expression was originally from Huang Tingjian and cited by Zhu, who totally agreed with it, when instructing his disciples.⁶⁹ Most likely, Chen first encountered this quotation in Zhu’s conversations, as he had been an admirer of this Song master until his enlightenment. To justify this integration with his philosophy, Chen allocated different functions to reading and quiet-sitting: quiet-sitting should be practiced to cultivate one’s beginning of virtue (*shanduan* 善端) while reading books should aim to apprehend principle. Books could be dispensed with only after principle was apprehended and virtue cultivated.⁷⁰

IV.2.3. Chen Xianzhang’s Reading Habit under Zhu Xi’s Instructions

More indications scattered through Chen’s extant writings illustrate the relationship between his reading habits and Zhu’s theory, in which he was trained during his early years. For example, in his late years Chen still insisted on Zhu’s *Elementary Learning* as the foundation of learning and a sequence of learning that proceeded from this text to the

⁶⁸ Chen Xianzhang 1987, "Daoxue zhuan xu," 1.20; translation cited from Jen 1970, 80.

⁶⁹ Li Jingde 1986, 10.169.

⁷⁰ Chen Xianzhang 1987, "Yu Lin Jixi shu," in "Xu buyi," 975.

Great Learning.⁷¹ He tended to read a text over and over until completely understanding its author's intention and becoming capable of utilizing the principle embraced therein.⁷² To grasp the author's intention, Chen suggested, the reader should understand the structure and internal logic of the text and the meaning would necessarily follow. This evidential style of reading was useful for both learning compositional skills and apprehending principle.⁷³ As Zhu had done, Chen insisted that learning through reading should be undertaken in proper sequence with progressive iteration; the key lay in having proper doubts.⁷⁴ (For a comparison with Zhu's rules, see Chapter Two.)

Emptiness (i.e. an open mind in Zhu's terms) and actual wide reading led Chen himself to a tolerance and understanding of other branches of knowledge. Unlike his early Ming predecessors, who tended moralistically to distinguish orthodox Neo-Confucian texts from heterodox philosophies, Chen remained interested in intellectual exchanges with Buddhists.⁷⁵ More illuminating was his attitude towards geomancy and *yin-yang* occultism. Confucians and other philosophers, for him, could "advocate and enjoy what they appreciate respectively."⁷⁶ He carefully read the *Book of Burial* (*Zang shu* 葬書), a geomantic work of the early fourth century.⁷⁷ Undoubtedly his understanding was that of a Neo-Confucianist. Confucians, for him, should not subjugate themselves to geomancy because an uncritical reception would harm the apprehension of

⁷¹ Ibid., "Chengxiang xian shexue ji" 程鄉縣社學記 [Record of the community schools in Chengxiang County](1490), 1.31.

⁷² Ibid., "Yu Hu qianxian tixue" 與胡僉憲提學 [To Mr. Hu, the education-intendance censor], 2.152.

⁷³ Ibid., "Yu Zhang Tingshi zhushi," 2.167.

⁷⁴ Ibid., "Yu Zhang Tingshi zhushi," 2.165; Jen 1970, 76.

⁷⁵ Araki Kengo 1972, "Chin Hakusa to Taikyo hōshi" 陳白沙と太虚法師 [Chen Xianzheng and Priest Taixu], 23-50.

⁷⁶ Chen Xianzhang 1987, "Song Li Shanren shixu" 送李山人詩序 [Preface to the poem to present to Hermit Li], 1.21.

⁷⁷ Ibid., "Yu Hu qianxian tixue," 2.152; Guo 2004.

principle, but they could incorporate the merits of geomancy into their own learning as the Cheng brothers and Zhu had done.⁷⁸ In his extant writings, Chen did not describe his own knowledge framework, but so far we can assume that he recognized Zhu's ideal knowledge framework as implied in his theory of reading, that is, the supremacy of the Way or Principle over other branches of knowledge. Reading habits could be inclusive but the philosophical achievement of reading should be exclusive. As Zhu had done, the poet Chen also insisted that poems be emotionally moving for readers. In order to move his readers, Chen upheld, the poet should compose his lines from his own feeling.⁷⁹ The Neo-Confucian Way, however, should be the foundation, origin, and content of poetry. Chen tended to compose poems that declared his essential theories of the Way and virtue.⁸⁰ Even his calligraphy inculcated the Way and his Learning of Mind.⁸¹

After all, we should admit that there is a distinction between Chen's substance of learning and that of the Cheng-Zhu tradition. They had different theoretical premises. Following the *Great Learning*, Zhu suggested investigating things to extend knowledge as the basis of learning before one made his thoughts sincere (*cheng* 誠).⁸² Chen, on the other hand, insisted that learning should begin with the establishment of sincere thoughts, theoretically rejecting the Han-Tang evidential tradition and the actual supremacy of

⁷⁸ Chen Xianzhang 1987, "Yu Deng Shengzhi" 與鄧勝之 [To Deng Shengzhi], 2.220; "Yu Lin You," 3.270.

⁷⁹ Ibid., "Renzenzi shiji xu" 認真子詩集序 [Preface to the *Collected poems of Master Renzhen*], 1.4-6; "Danzhai xiansheng wanshi xu" 澹齋先生挽詩序 [Preface to the *Elegiac poems of Mr. Danzhai*], 1.9-10; "Xitizhai shiji houxu" 夕惕齋詩集後序 [Postscript to the *Collected poems of the Studio of Evening Caution*], 1.11-12.

⁸⁰ Ibid., "Yu Zhang Tingshi zhushi," 2.174; Zhan Ruoshui, "Shijiao jie yuanxu" 詩教解原序 [The original preface to the explains of the teachings in the poems], *ibid.*, "Fulu yi," 699.

⁸¹ Ibid., "Shufa" 書法 [On calligraphy], 1.80; "Fulu yi," 763.

⁸² Zhu Xi 1983, "Daxue zhangju" 大學章句 [Phrases and sentences of the *Great Learning*], 3-4; translation in Legge 1960, I:357-59.

literary art in the examination culture from the Song period to his own time.⁸³ The difference between his view and that of the Song masters, Chen asserted, was simply in the approach to a shared goal of achieving sagehood in different historical and intellectual circumstances.⁸⁴ The differences between Chen and Zhu, in my view, lay in the substance of learning and philosophical achievement rather than in the way of achieving them. It is evident that Chen's general sketch of learning was derived from the Song masters including Zhu. In his words:

[The student's] mind should be wide and broad, views and knowledge should be remarkable, the scope of learning should be of sufficient magnitude, and implementation [of principle] should be sincere and solid. If he can obtain these four capabilities, he will be qualified to discuss learning.⁸⁵

Here again, for Chen, an open mind without preconceptions would make the reader receptive and broad learning possible. Chen perhaps borrowed this idea from Cheng Hao, who also emphasized an "open and broad" mind and a broad and firm foundation for learning, an idea eventually perpetuated and elaborated upon by Zhu.⁸⁶ As for sincerely putting what one had learned into practice, this was one of Zhu's rules for reading (see Chapter Two).

⁸³ Chen Xianzhang 1987, "Gu Mengzhou xueji" 古蒙州學記 [Record of the School of old Meng Prefecture], 1.28; "Song Luo Yangming huan Jiangyou xu" 送羅養明還江右序 [Preface to present Luo Yangming, who is returning to Jiangxi], 1.25; "Fu Peng Fangbo" 復彭方伯 [Reply to Mr. Peng, the Provincial Administration Commissioner], 2.128-29.

⁸⁴ Ibid., "Shu Liantang shuwu ce hou," 1.64-65; "Fu Zhao tixue qianxian," 2.144.

⁸⁵ Ibid., "Yu He Kegong huangmen," 2.135.

⁸⁶ Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian 1967, 51 (2.24).

So far I have surveyed Chen Xianzhang's reading concepts and practices in relation to Zhu Xi's theory. In his own philosophical way, Chen actually elucidated Zhu's rules of "keeping mind open" and "experiencing personally." As Zhu had done, Chen admitted book learning and reading as an origin of self-cultivation and accepted the goal of reading as being to apprehend principle. Mind should be integrated with texts in both intellectual and moral improvements, although Chen assumed supremacy of mind over texts. Quiet-sitting could not substitute for reading by any means. Despite his philosophical depreciation of the Han-Tang evidential tradition on which Zhu based his theory, Chen actually and perhaps unconsciously practiced most of Zhu's rules. He emphasized mind over book learning, but his Learning of Mind was no more than a philosophical transcendence of wide reading and broad learning. Without reading habits nourished by Zhu's rules, the formation of Chen's learning would be too mysterious to be described in words.

Chen himself did not mention at all his intellectual affinity with Zhu, although he occasionally cited him in his extant writings. Since Zhu undervalued quiescence and quiet-sitting in the pursuit of learning, Chen could and did find more theoretical support from Zhou Dunyi and the Cheng brothers, who advocated both conceptions. Even in his definitions of the categories he allegedly borrowed from the Cheng brothers, Chen's affinity with Zhu was evident. Chen thus ultimately failed to escape the influence of Zhu's theory of reading on his own pursuit of learning, even though he attempted to break with the Song master.

IV.3. Reading and Innate Knowledge

Among leading philosophers in the Ming, Wang Yangming was the most subversive against Zhu Xi. He undoubtedly approached Chen Xianzhang's learning through Zhan Ruoshui, despite the doctrinal differences and philosophical debates between him and Zhan.⁸⁷ Wang's reading concept, however, appeared more radical than Chen's. In his mature philosophy, Wang totally denied the significance of book learning and reading. He theorized this problem, in his own words, as "pulling up the root and stopping up the source" (*baben saiyuan* 拔本塞源). In this formulation, Wang harshly devalued utilitarianism that was prevalent in contemporary intellectual life. A desire for examination titles and official ranks had eroded the teachings of the Sages, a tendency that accelerated with the pursuit of incorrect reading methods:

Extensive memorization and recitation merely serves to increase [students'] pride; substantial and abundant knowledge merely serves to help them do evil; enormous information merely serves to help them indulge in argumentation; and a wealth of flowery compositions merely serves to cover up their artificiality... In reality their purpose lies in their relief that unless they do this they cannot satisfy their selfishness and fulfill their desires.⁸⁸

For Wang, all scholarship and intellectual pursuits in his age were fruitless and all earlier methods were wrong. He argued so to justify his idea of innate knowledge: when

⁸⁷ Woo 1984, 141-66. The intellectual linkages between Chen Xianzhang, Zhan Ruoshui, and Wang Yangming have been controversial among intellectual historians; for more discussions, see Araki Kengo 1972, "Tan Kansen to Ō Yōmei" 湛甘泉と王陽明 [Zhan Ruoshui and Wang Yangming], 51-80; Araki 1992, "Chin Hakusa to Ō Yōmei" 陳白沙と王陽明 [Chen Xianzhang and Wang Yangming], 1-42; Shiga Ichiro 1969; Shiga 1995; Mori Hiroshi 2004.

⁸⁸ Translation modified from Chan 1963, 123; cf. Møllgaard 2004.

pursuing sagely learning, the student should reject memorization and recitation, wide reading and composition, and instead realize innate knowledge in his mind.

Wang's theorization of reading, as I shall describe, indeed appeared revolutionary in relation to the Song tradition. His radical disciples even developed his theory into an intellectual and moral scepticism. In terms of reading habits and practices, however, Wang also benefited from and responded to Zhu's theory even though he devalued reading books in moral cultivation.

IV.3.1. Reading with "One's Own Mind"

With his philosophy developed, Wang in his last years suggested that students read the Classics with their own minds. Since the substance of the Classics (i.e. the universal principle embraced in them) was ultimately located in the mind, he argued, these sacred texts actually contained what one's mind contained (i.e. the substance of mind). For Wang reading the Classics meant apprehending principle in the reader's mind rather than lingering over the *scholia* or restraining an understanding of the text within its literal meaning. He criticized using the Classics to win examination and official titles, making a pretense of scholarliness with superficial memorization and recitation, and distorting meaning to serve a political agenda.⁸⁹ In terms of reading habits and practices, then, how was Wang's reading with mind close to Zhu's theory?

Lu Jiuyuan stressed the role of mind in reading, and this for Wang meant to experience personally the meaning drawn from the text.⁹⁰ By reading with the mind, Wang referred both to experiencing personally as a reading method and to cultivating

⁸⁹ Wang Shouren 1992, "Jishan shuyuan Zunjingge ji" 稽山書院尊經閣記 [Record of the library in the Academy of Mount Ji] (1525), 7.254-56; see also "Nianpu," 35.1293.

⁹⁰ Ibid., "Da Xu Chengzhi," 21.807-08.

mind as the goal. Not examining the literal meaning but instead reading with the mind helped the reader understand the text completely.⁹¹ What mattered in the encounter with the text was not grasping the author's intention or original textual meaning, but attaining an individual understanding that would help the reader reach the goal of cultivating mind.⁹² The process of drawing meaning was to be governed by the reader's innate knowledge (*liangzhi* 良知). With cultivation of mind as the goal, memorization and understanding of the text should be "secondary" for the reader.⁹³ He intended his theory of extending innate knowledge to cover Zhu's idea of investigating things to extend knowledge, even though the two defined the investigation of things in different ways.⁹⁴ This means that, for Wang, reading to extend innate knowledge meant reading to both investigate things and extend knowledge in Zhu's terms. In this respect, Wang and Zhu shared the same aim of reading despite their different philosophical expressions.

However, innate knowledge seemed more fundamental than Zhu's investigation of things.⁹⁵ For Wang, Zhu's instruction that the student investigate any things he encountered and widely read lacked a "root" (*genben* 根本) or essential of learning.⁹⁶ Moreover, Wang suggested that the reader use the knowledge innate in his mind to adjust the process of reading. The reader's innate knowledge, according to Wang, could overpower any impulse to memorize by rote, reach the goal in haste, or make a show of erudition. Innate knowledge could help the reader gradually to understand and experience

⁹¹ Chen Rongjie 1983, 69; Chan 1963, 32-33.

⁹² Chen Rongjie 1983, 407, 398.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 319; Chan 1963, 213.

⁹⁴ For a discussion of Wang's definition in relation to Zhu Xi, see Tu 1976, 163-67.

⁹⁵ Chen Rongjie 1983, 411.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 311; Chan 1963, 206-07.

the essentials so that he could apprehend principle in nature.⁹⁷ Principle, Wang maintained, was the only subject that the reader should focus his mind on, and the sole substance of Neo-Confucian learning was eliminating desires and preserving principle, as the Classics were intended to illustrate.⁹⁸ Hunting essentials for moral improvement was the same goal that Zhu required readers to attain through widely reading books, as I have discussed in Chapter One.

In my view, Wang declared the ineffectiveness of reading books in cultivation of virtue simply to highlight the place of mind and innate knowledge in his philosophy. In his intellectual practice, reading remained the main means of acquiring knowledge, as attested in biographies that describe how diligently he read various books.

IV.3.2. Quiet-Sitting and Introspection as Mental Preparation

To practice his idea of reading with one's own mind, Wang did not systematize his rules for reading books, but briefly outlined a programme of study in which an open mind was required as a precondition. He tended to teach beginners quiet-sitting to purify their thoughts. To prevent a Chan Buddhist tendency in quiet-sitting, Wang continued to teach his students critical introspection (*xingcha kezhi* 省察克治), a process of correcting demerits and extinguishing private desires to keep the mind clear. With a clear mind, the beginner could establish his sincere thought concerning heavenly principle.⁹⁹ In Wang's theory, this was the only practicable way to sagehood. It was misleading or even wrong to acquire knowledge and skills in an accumulative process—which Zhu had suggested—as preparation for the attainment of sagehood, as preconceived ideas tended to form in

⁹⁷ Chen Rongjie 1983, 312; Chan 1963, 207-08.

⁹⁸ Chen Rongjie 1983, 46, 56, 132, 137; Chan 1963, 20.

⁹⁹ Chen Rongjie 1983, 75-76, 411; Chan 1963, 35-36.

this process. “The broader one’s knowledge is, the more procreative his desires are; the more talented a student is, the more obscure heavenly principle is for him.”¹⁰⁰ Thus the less educated could be closer to sagehood than the well educated. This assumption anticipated the humanitarianism and what has been called the democratization of knowledge in late Ming thought,¹⁰¹ but in terms of reading practices and the knowledge framework, it misled students to pursue very limited reading and give priority to essentials over broad learning, a point I shall take up later.

Wang’s critical introspection was originally moral. He also used it in an epistemological sense for with it he meant the student’s receptivity in pursuing learning. Without continual critical introspection, according to Wang, the student would believe, falsely, that he had mastered something about principle without asking questions, and this meant that he could not make any progress in apprehending principle. Only with a clear mind free of desires or preconceptions could the student have a full understanding of principle.¹⁰² In reading practices, Wang alerted, having any presuppositions and desires would lead to a misunderstanding of the text.¹⁰³

Wang illustrated the significance of a clear mind to receptivity by recounting his own experience living in exile with non-Han Chinese tribes in Guizhou. He could easily discuss his idea of the unity of knowledge and action with those “barbarians,” but found it difficult to exchange such views with well educated Chinese. “In the pursuit of learning,” he said, “those who are preoccupied with certain ideas are the first cause for worry, since they tend to be afraid of possessing less knowledge [than others have]. The

¹⁰⁰ Chen Rongjie 1983, 119-20; Chan 1963, 60-62.

¹⁰¹ de Bary 1970.

¹⁰² Chen Rongjie 1983, 95-96; Chan 1963, 45-45.

¹⁰³ Chen Rongjie 1983, 144; Chan 1963, 78-79.

more knowledge there is in one's mind, the more obscurity he will encounter."¹⁰⁴ Wang's notion of receptivity was richer than Zhu's, because he gave more philosophical and moral significance to having a clear mind, while Zhu emphasized developing an open mind as a rule for reading books. Despite this slight difference, a clear mind obtained through critical introspection and employed in reading in Wang's programme corresponded to Zhu's rule of "deliberating with an open mind" (see Chapter Two).

IV.3.3. Departure from the Text: Wang Yangming's Use of the *Great Learning*

Critical introspection and elimination of private desires, in Wang's programme, resulted in sincere thought regarding principle. Wang developed this idea more in terms of philosophy than of reading practices. Before he conceived of innate knowledge, Wang had viewed making thoughts sincere as the core of his teaching.¹⁰⁵ He based both ideas on his reading of the *Great Learning*. The formation of his ideas concerning sincere thoughts and their transformation into innate knowledge illustrates his attitude towards reading the Classic, as well as the ambivalent place of Classical exegesis in the formation of his philosophy.

In Confucian tradition, to make thoughts sincere was one of the steps towards learning stipulated in the *Great Learning*. Before taking this step, the student was expected to investigate things and extend his knowledge.¹⁰⁶ Zhu Xi had elaborated this sequence of learning in his theory of reading, and suggested reading books as a main way of investigating things. Unless one investigated a sufficient number of things and extended his knowledge broadly, according to Zhu, one could not make his thoughts

¹⁰⁴ Chen Rongjie 1983, 399.

¹⁰⁵ Chen Lai 1991, 122-24; Qian Ming 2002, 50.

¹⁰⁶ *The Great Learning*, in Legge 1960, I:357-59.

sincere or rectify his heart. Zhu's interpretation was squarely based on his evidential reading of the *Great Learning* and his supplements to the commentary.

The text proper of the *Great Learning*, originally a chapter of the *Record of Rites*, was attributed to Confucius, handed down and commented upon by his disciple Zeng Can (505-435 BC), and transmitted by Zeng's disciples, who wrote down both the text and Zeng's commentary to it. Like the Cheng brothers, Zhu assumed that both the Classic and commentary available to him and his Song predecessors were confusing because of textual disarrangement and erosion.¹⁰⁷ Therefore he edited and rearranged both text and commentary and reconstructed the section in the commentary on the investigation of things and extension of knowledge, which he considered to be incomplete in the received version of the text.¹⁰⁸ In Zhu's version, the *Great Learning* consisted of the Classical text of only 205 characters plus the commentary of ten chapters as supplemented by him. Among these ten chapters, in Zhu's view, the one on investigating things to extend knowledge that he reconstructed "contain[ed] the important subject of comprehending true excellences" and the next chapter on making thoughts sincere was "the foundation of the attainment of true sincerity." Both chapters "demand the essential attention" of the beginner, who should not "despise them because of their simplicity."¹⁰⁹ Zhu expected the learner to make efforts in the stipulated order, that is, to investigate things to extend knowledge before making thoughts sincere. Neither the efforts nor the order, he reiterated, could be disregarded.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Zhu Xi 1983, "Daxue zhangju," 4; Legge 1960, I:360.

¹⁰⁸ Zhu Xi 1983, 6-7; Legge 1960, I:365.

¹⁰⁹ Zhu Xi 1983, 13; translation cited from Legge 1960, I:381.

¹¹⁰ Zhu Xi 1983, 8.

Zhu's editing of the *Great Learning* and the commentary on it was intended to highlight the Transition of the Way and underscore the significance of investigating things to extend knowledge in his philosophy. Although his commentary was more philosophical than philological, given his evidential reading which was coherent with the textual meaning, he also carried on the Han-Tang exegetical tradition.¹¹¹ While Zhu's interpretation of the *Great Learning* predominated among late Yuan and early Ming scholars, the original version contained in the *Record of Rites*, known as the Old Text (*guben* 古本), was still the subject of serious studies that paved the way for Wang's philosophical use of this text.¹¹²

Wang's use of this Classic began with his enlightenment of 1508, but he did not publish his results until 1518, when he printed the Old Text as an excerpt from the *Record of Rites* without any editing.¹¹³ The text proper from the *Record of Rites* that Wang printed was as same as that in Zhu's version, but in the commentary there was not the paragraph on investigating things to extend knowledge that Zhu reconstructed. All extant commentary in Wang's version was attributed to Zeng Can.

Based on his philosophical assumptions, Wang challenged the textually established sequence of learning argued by Zhu. For Wang, as for Chen Xianzhang, it was not the investigation of things or extension of knowledge but rather sincerity of thought that enabled learning to progress. To make thoughts sincere was the key, Wang upheld, since this was exactly what "to illustrate illustrious virtue" (*ming mingde* 明明德)—the first teaching of the *Great Learning*—meant. With sincere thoughts people could conduct

¹¹¹ Gardner 1986, 43-44.

¹¹² Rusk 2004, 287-317; Rusk 2006, 192-212.

¹¹³ Wang Shouren 1992, "Nianpu," 33.1253-54.

themselves rightly and banish evil. Thus making thoughts sincere referred to moral cultivation for which the student should strive in his investigation of things and extension of knowledge. At its best, Wang asserted as Chen had done, sincerity of thought meant the highest excellence of virtue.¹¹⁴

Both Wang and his disciples realized his rearrangement of the received steps without textual grounds compared with Zhu's exegesis.¹¹⁵ The Old Text of the *Great Learning* appeared helpful for his interpretation, since there was no elaboration in it of the steps to be taken when investigating things and extending knowledge. Such textual uncertainty (incompleteness for Zhu) gave Wang an opening for the interpretation he sought. In his original preface of 1518, Wang repudiated both Zhu's separation of the Classical text from the commentary and his division of the commentary into ten chapters. He naturally rejected Zhu's reconstruction of the chapter on investigating things to extend knowledge, because in his view it did not represent the sage's intention but Zhu's own idea.¹¹⁶ Wang's published interpretation of the Old Text focused on the priority of making thoughts sincere over other steps of learning. He largely rejected Zhu's evidential style of reading and basically disregarded textual meaning. Thus his attitude towards the Classic was literally nihilist.¹¹⁷ In 1521 Wang proposed his concept of extending innate knowledge in the mind.¹¹⁸ In 1523, he revised the 1518 preface and had its new version inscribed in stone at the White Deer Grotto Academy. In this final edition, Wang's

¹¹⁴ Chen Rongjie 1983, 140-41, 154-55; Chan 1963, 76-77, 86-87.

¹¹⁵ Chen Rongjie 1983, 154; Chan 1963, 86.

¹¹⁶ Wang Shouren 1992, "Daxue guben yuanxu" 大學古本原序 [The original preface to the Old Text of the *Great Learning*], 32.1197; this preface was not included in the Ming collections of Wang's writings but preserved in Luo Qinchun 1990, 95-96.

¹¹⁷ Wang Shouren 1992, "Daxue guben pangshi" 大學古本傍釋 [Attached commentary on the *Old Text of the Great Learning*], 32.1192-1197; Mizuno Minoru 1995.

¹¹⁸ Wang Shouren 1992, "Nianpu," 34.1278.

philosophical interpretation of the *Great Learning* concentrated on the idea of innate knowledge, although making thoughts sincere remained crucial in his philosophy.¹¹⁹ Despite his developing philosophical concepts, Wang's attitude concerning the Old Text and Zhu's version remained unaltered.

Wang's attitudes were harshly criticized by his philosophical rival Luo Qinshun. Luo firmly upheld Zhu's interpretation of the *Great Learning* and the received sequence of learning. In 1520, he wrote to Wang, stating that the steps stipulated in the text should be followed, even though Wang redefined investigation (*ge* 格) as rectification (*zheng* 正) and things (*wu* 物) as a function of thoughts (*yi* 意).¹²⁰ Luo accused Wang of being a heterodox Chan Buddhist because of his passive resistance (*yinli yanghe* 陰離陽合) to the Classical text.¹²¹ In his reply, Wang insisted on the completeness of the Old Text. Since he had kept following Confucius, Wang declared, Luo's denunciation of him for rejecting Zhu's reconstruction was unwarranted. He maintained that evidence supporting Zhu's editing and reconstruction was lacking. The Old Text was "clear and consistent" for him, he argued, and the method of cultivating virtue implied in it was "easy, simple and workable."¹²² In his response, Wang actually did not mention the textual meaning and internal logic of the Classic at all, which was the focus of Luo's criticism, but only argued in Confucius' name.

Wang's redefinitions of the terms, however, could not subvert the identical logic inherent in the Classical text of both the *Record of Rites* version and Zhu's. To indicate

¹¹⁹ Ibid., "Daxue guben xu" 大學古本序 [Preface to the *Old Text of the Great Learning*] (1523), 7.242-43; for Wang's revision of the preface, see Tsurunari Hisaaki 2008; for the consistence of making thoughts sincere in Wang's philosophy, see Yoshida Kōhei 1990, 267.

¹²⁰ Luo Qinshun 1990, "Yu Wang Yangming shu" 與王陽明書 [Letter to Wang Yangming], 108-09.

¹²¹ Ibid., 95-96.

¹²² Chen Rongjie 1983, 248-49; Chan 1963, 159, 160.

his adherence to Confucius, Wang in his last two or three years interpreted the *Great Learning* based solely on the Classical text of 205 characters. He taught beginners only these 205 characters to show them the doorway to learning, and his *Inquiry on the Great Learning* (*Daxue wen* 大學問. 1527) focused on the teachings of this part, without any attention given to the commentary that Zhu valued so highly. In his final statement he argued that the steps to learning should be unified and not “separated into first and last.”¹²³ Thus, Wang’s reading evidently “departed from the *Great Learning*.” He simply employed this Classic as “a vehicle to express his own ideas,” directly contrasting his method to that of Zhu.¹²⁴ In his reading, as his admirer Wang Dong 王棟 (1503-1581) admitted, Wang did not intend to interpret the Classical text word by word at all.¹²⁵

Wang justified his departure from the Classic by recourse to his philosophy of mind. Unlike Zhu, who used Neo-Confucian principle as the ultimate standard for judging what had been read, Wang emphasized the central role of mind in the encounter with texts. In his encounter with the *Great Learning*, Wang declared, he evaluated the words through “the exercise of mind”:

If words are examined in the mind and found to be wrong, although they have come from the mouth of Confucius, I dare not accept them as correct. How much less those from people inferior to Confucius! If words are examined in the mind

¹²³ Wang Shouren 1992, “Daxue wen,” 26.967-73, quotations from 967 and 973; translation cited from Chan 1963, 271-80, with quotations from 271 and 280.

¹²⁴ Chan 1963, 271; for a comparison between Wang and Zhu on the *Great Learning*, see Yoshida Kōhei 2003a.

¹²⁵ Cited in Qian Ming 2002, 55.

and found to be correct, although they have come from the mouth of ordinary people, I dare not regard them as wrong.¹²⁶

As I have noted, Zhu had a similar expression when he declared principle as the ultimate standard in reading practices. The difference between their theories of reading and knowledge acquisition was that Wang stressed individualism in reading based on the mind while Zhu emphasized the collective feature programmed by principle. Even in elementary education, Wang suggested, the goal of reading should be not only to “widen [pupils’] intellectual horizon” but also to “preserve their minds” and “express their will” through intensive reading of the Classics.¹²⁷ In terms of reading habits and practices, Wang’s individualism provoked a departure from the text, its meaning and its author’s intention, to all of which Zhu expected readers to adhere. It also posed a philosophical challenge to Zhu’s theory, which largely directed elite reading habits by Wang’s time.

IV.3.4. “Simplicity” and “Purity” in Returning to the Classics

The *Great Learning* was not the only Classic that Wang expected his disciples to understand in his way. Despite his radical idea of “pulling up the root and stopping up the source,” Wang had to recognize as the sources of his intellectual idea the Classics that he used to legitimate his philosophy as his Confucian predecessors had done.

External to the mind in Wang’s philosophy, books should not be the source of cultivating virtue. Making thoughts sincere and extending innate knowledge in the mind should precede the reading of books. His advocacy of extending innate knowledge stirred

¹²⁶ Chan 1963, 159; Chen Rongjie 1983, 248-49.

¹²⁷ Chen Rongjie 1983, “Xunmeng dayi shi jiaodu Liu Bosong deng” 訓蒙大意示教讀劉伯頌等, 276-77; Chan 1963, 183.

up late Ming controversies over the way of obtaining learning, by sudden enlightenment or gradual accumulation.¹²⁸ He disagreed with Zhu when it came to widely reading and broad learning, since for Wang this meant to “neglect the internal” and “lack essentials.”¹²⁹ Accumulative cultivation through investigating things was time-consuming and scattered, and reading widely generated nothing but confusion. In his philosophical exchanges with disciples, Wang preferred oral discussion to written communication on the grounds that writings were less effective than face-to-face conversations.¹³⁰ He engaged much less in publishing than Zhu had done, and he hesitated to have his writings published when his disciples suggested this to him.¹³¹ As a second option, the goal of writing should not be to show literary talent but to illuminate the Way (i.e. the preservation of heavenly principle and elimination of private desires), as Confucius had done when editing the Five Classics. Superfluous words and abundant literary productions, to which later scholars devoted most of their time and energy, was the cause of the prevalent intellectual chaos and decline of the concrete practice of moral cultivation.

With respect to book learning, therefore, Wang advocated returning to the pure and simple Five Classics attributed to Confucius as a way of pursuing the sage’s learning, as Zhu had done. Wang underrated the exegeses that Zhu also recommended to readers, however. For instance, unlike Zhu, Wang insisted that the *Spring and Autumn* was self-sufficient and clear enough, whereas the *Zuo Commentary* to it was superfluous and

¹²⁸ Araki Kengo 1992, “Tongo to zenshu” 頓悟と漸修 [Sudden enlightenment and gradual cultivation], 108-40.

¹²⁹ Wang Shouren, “Da Gu Dongqiao shu” 答顧東橋書, in Chen Rongjie 1983, 163; Chan 1963, 91.

¹³⁰ Qian Dehong 錢德洪, “Ke *Wenlu* xushuo” 刻文錄敘說 [Notes about publishing the *Selected essays* (of Master Yangming)], in Wang Shouren 1992, 41.1574.

¹³¹ Qian Dehong, “Ke *Wenlu* xushuo,” *ibid.*, 41.1573-74.

dispensable.¹³² Wang thus limited his recommended reading to the original Classics, and saw this list as a prescription for “returning to simplicity and purity” (*fanpu huanchun* 返樸還醇), so that scholars could remove superficial writings, to make scholars’ thoughts sincere and to rectify their mind.¹³³

Wang justified his antipathy towards writing and printing by reinterpreting two passages in the *Analects* that Zhu Xi had used to support his ideas of wide reading and broad learning. As quoted earlier, these were: “Extensively study all learning and keep [oneself] under the restraint of the rules of propriety” and “My study lies low, and my penetration rises high.” For Zhu, the precondition for “keeping [oneself] under the restraint of the rules of propriety” was “extensively studying all learning,” as was “study lying low” for “penetration rising high.” Intellectual attainment through wide reading and investigating should precede moral cultivation through personal experience and concrete practice (see Chapter One). In his unique interpretation, however, Wang synchronized the two stages of learning so that they complemented his theory of the unity of knowledge and action. In this theory, the cognitive and affective dimensions of one’s decision to pursue sagehood were identical, inseparable and simultaneous.¹³⁴ In respect of the above-cited passages, Wang interpreted learning (*wen* 文), propriety (*li* 禮) and heavenly principle (*tianli* 天理) as one and the same. Heavenly principle manifested as propriety and propriety as learning. Propriety was the substance of learning and learning was the function of propriety. “Extensively studying all learning” simply meant completely understanding propriety, and restraining oneself under the rules of propriety meant

¹³² Chen Rongjie 1983, 33-46; Chan 1963, 17-21.

¹³³ Wang Shouren 1992, "Ji Zou Qianzhi" 寄鄒謙之 [To Zou Qianzhi](1526), 6.205.

¹³⁴ Tu 1976, 172-76.

apprehending heavenly principle in one's mind. Thus this teaching of Confucius, Wang reiterated, was identical with his own theory of extending innate knowledge in the mind through rectifying misconduct.¹³⁵ The promotion of it by Confucius' favorite disciple, Yan Yuan (521-481 BC), was Yan's afterthought, since the Way (or principle) was difficult to explain in "its total reality" and should be studied and understood by the student himself,¹³⁶ that is, students should approach the Way with their own minds.

Wang disagreed with Zhu's dichotomizing of low study and high penetration and suggested that the latter lay in the former. He allocated all that is tangible to low study whereas all that is intelligible pertained to high penetration. The sage's teachings, however profound, were only low studies because they were external to the mind. High penetration was implicated in low study, and thus no particular efforts were needed to obtain it. For moral cultivation, low study meant an unceasing and practicable process whereas high penetration was a result that lay beyond human efforts.¹³⁷ Zhu equated "extensively studying" with "study lying low" and "keeping oneself under the restraint of rules of propriety" with "penetrating high." By "extensively studying," Wang referred to the goal of study, that being to apprehend propriety and principle; by "study lying low," he referred to concrete practices in daily life as being the best way to approach to the goal.

With this reinterpretation of these two teachings from Confucius, Wang sought to undermine Zhu's theory of reading. He not only placed book learning secondary to mind but also removed wide reading and broad learning as the doorway to sagehood. Nothing but mind would determine the apprehension of the Way; even the Four Books and Five

¹³⁵ Wang Shouren 1992, "Bo yue shuo" 博約說 [On widely studying and restraints] (1525), 7.266-67; Chen Rongjie 1983, 41; Chan 1963, 16. For an intellectual interpretation of this discourse, see Yoshida Kōhei 2003b.

¹³⁶ Chen Rongjie 1983, 105-06; Chan 1963, 52-53; cf. *The Analects* 9.10, in Legge, 1960, I:220.

¹³⁷ Chen Rongjie 1983, 62-63; Chan 1963, 28-29.

Classics for Wang were just discussions of the substance of mind. It was not things or books but mind that comprised the “basis of learning.”¹³⁸

Thus, any branches of knowledge or skills not essential to the “basis of learning” were of no use. Wang discouraged his disciples from engaging in natural studies and diverse arts such as musicology, which had interested Zhu, on the grounds that they were not “fundamentals.”¹³⁹ Until one completely understood the substance of mind, one’s studies should not touch upon natural things and social institutions (*mingwu dushu* 名物度數)—external things that Zhu had emphasized as the basis of understanding textual meaning in evidential reading. Apprehending the substance of one’s mind, for Wang, would enable the student to develop his ability for more accomplishments.¹⁴⁰ Wang recognized the value of Daoism, political tactics, science and occultism, medicine and other forms of knowledge and skill *only if* they were understood from the substance of mind, but he insisted that they were not applicable to the governance of the state. Gentlemen disregarded these branches of knowledge and skill, he believed, because they were not helpful in achieving the sincerity of thoughts.¹⁴¹ For Wang and his disciples, the sage’s learning (i.e. his philosophy of mind) was all-inclusive, self-contained, and omnipotent. This being so, he also viewed all other philosophical schools as functions of his own philosophy.¹⁴² Both he and his disciples considered his philosophy superior to Zhu’s doctrine and that it contained its essentials.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Chen Rongjie 1983, 69; Chan 1963, 32-33.

¹³⁹ Chen Rongjie 1983, 93; Chan 1963, 44-45.

¹⁴⁰ Chen Rongjie 1983, 97; Chan 1963, 47-48.

¹⁴¹ Chen Rongjie 1983, 409.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 415; Wang Shouren 1992, “Nianpu,” 35.1289.

¹⁴³ Chen Rongjie 1983, 418; Wang Shouren 1992, “Nianpu,” 35.1292 .

As discussed in Chapter One, Zhu also regarded his own philosophy as superior to other branches of knowledge. In terms of a knowledge hierarchy, Zhu based this superiority on his Classical Learning, but Wang eroded this foundation in his reading practices, even though he attempted to seek evidence from the *Great Learning*, the only Classical text to which he devoted himself as an exegete. As he departed from the Classical text, the textual meaning was no longer as determinative as it had been in Zhu's intellectual practice. This was the consequence of Wang's depreciation of etymology and evidential reading, a tendency that had appeared in the early fifteenth century among Confucians, as noted in Chapter Three. Thus in Wang's knowledge framework, the actual place of the Classics dropped down even though he praised their significance in the pursuit of learning.

Before his studies of the *Great Learning*, Wang had attempted to cite the Five Classics to support his 1508 enlightenment experience in Guizhou, where he had no access to books and had to recall the Classics from memory. He collected evidence from those Classics he remembered, but subsequently never planned to publish the Guizhou writings or teach them to his disciples until eventually they were lost. Those collected writings, in the form of traditional Classical exegesis, allegedly supported his new philosophical findings, but he admitted that not all of his interpretation accorded with those of earlier worthies, especially the Song masters'. He had recorded them simply to express his feelings and entertain himself in exile.¹⁴⁴ As we can find in thirteen extant entries from this collection, Wang carried on the etymological tradition of Classical exegesis, but addressed his interpretation to the role of mind in self-cultivation. This

¹⁴⁴ Wang Shouren 1992, "*Wujing yishuo xu*" 五經臆說序 [Preface to *The opinions on the Five Classics without foundation*], 22.876.

explains why his disciples found consistency in his learning. When he developed his idea of innate knowledge, however, he considered this early collection of comments to be trivial and scattered, just as Zhu's exegesis was found to be by his critics. Thus, in the end, Wang completely removed Classical exegesis, which was external to mind, from the textual foundation of his philosophy.¹⁴⁵

Wang's departure from the Classics made possible his independence from the restraints that texts were supposed to impose upon readers. He did not intend to overthrow the superiority of the Classics in Zhu's knowledge hierarchy, but redefined their nature. Zhu had characterized the *Spring and Autumn* as a history and suggested that readers regard it as history rather than a collection of moral judgments (see Chapter One). In response, Wang proposed that all of the Classics were essentially histories:

A history deals with events while a classic deals with principles. However, events really embrace principles and principles are really implied in events. Thus the *Spring and Autumn* also is a classic, while the other five Classics are also histories. The *Changes* is the history of Fuxi, the *Documents* is the history of the period from the times of Yao and Shun on, and the *Rites* and *Music* are the histories of the Three Dynasties.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 26.976-82, "Wujing yishuo shisan tiao" 五經臆說十三條 [Thirteen entries extant from the Opinions on the Five Classics without foundation], esp. Qian Dehong's note in 976.

Since all of the Classics were records of events and represented the very same principle, Wang continued, there should not be anything different between them.¹⁴⁶ Both the Classics and histories were morally didactic despite their different verbal devices.¹⁴⁷

The relationship between the Classics and history had been a traditional topic before Wang.¹⁴⁸ Zhu had referred to the Classics in his historical studies, yet Wang could be the first philosopher to have theorized an affinity between these two fields. His proposal, though unsystematic, inspired other assumptions in the late Ming and directly shaped Zhang Xuecheng's theory that "all the Six Classics are histories."¹⁴⁹ Although he did not develop his philosophy of history, Wang actually invented a new approach to the Classics. As histories, descriptions found in the Classics should be seen as historical despite the consistency of principle in them.¹⁵⁰ This means that the Classics, even considered infallible, could be examined from the perspective of history and their descriptions could be historically true or false. Thus historical studies, rather than the apprehension of principle or Classical exegesis, should function as the standard for reading the Classics. History should become an autonomous field of study supplementary to Classical scholarship, not a "superficial thing" that was subject to the latter, as Zhu had theorized. This standard was not finalized until Zhang Xuecheng articulated in his theory, but it stimulated widespread interest in history among both Wang's followers and Zhu's admirers.¹⁵¹ As will be described in Chapter Five, unofficial history and historical

¹⁴⁶ Chen Rongjie 1983, 51.13; translation modified from Chan 1963, 23.

¹⁴⁷ Chen Rongjie 1983, 53; Chan 1963, 23.

¹⁴⁸ Yamaguchi Hisakazu 1998, 110-34.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 134-49; Inoue Susumu 1996, 567-78.

¹⁵⁰ Chen Rongjie 1983, 46; Chan 1963, 22.

¹⁵¹ E.g. Xue Yingqi 1566, "Yili" 義例 [Principles of editing], 2b-3a, 5b-6a; cf. Nivison 1966, 100, 150-51, 201-04.

criticism flourished amidst the controversies between the Wang and Zhu schools in the late Ming.

Wang himself did not elaborate further the relationship between the Classics and history, nor did he explore the philosophical and epistemic significance of his assumption. After all, he was more concerned with the role of mind in the pursuit of learning. Reading the Classics and histories, he suggested to his disciples, was indispensable for learning, but of less importance than cultivating the mind; devotion to texts meant “trifling with things and losing [one’s] purpose.”¹⁵²

Thus, from Wang’s mixed attitude towards book learning we can perceive a tension between his mature philosophy of mind and his approach to this achievement, that is, between his intellectual ideas and intellectual practices. He emphasized the role of mind over book learning, but obtained his intellectual accomplishments mainly based on what he read. He maintained individualism in reading with innate knowledge in the mind, but also advocated the reader’s receptivity as Zhu had done, albeit expressed differently. He upheld the sovereignty of the Five Classics in the continuity of Confucian tradition, but also ignored in his interpretation their internal logic and textual meaning. He decried wide reading and broad learning, but was an erudite master of statecraft, Classical, literary, political, and military subjects in addition to philosophical ones. He insisted on the priority of the Classics over history, but assumed that the former could be examined in the same way as the latter. These contradictions in his orientation, as I have discussed so far, results from the tension between his philosophy of mind and actual approach through book learning and reading, that is, between his mature philosophy and the actual approach to it in which he was trained.

¹⁵² Wang Shouren 1992, "Yu Huang Mianzhi" 與黃勉之 [To Huang Mianzhi] (1524), 5.192.

IV.3.5. Reading Practices: Subversive or Subjugal?

From the age of eighteen to thirty-seven, as we have noted, Wang was a follower of Zhu despite some frustrations experienced in applying the latter's approach to sagehood. In his early reading practices, Wang delved into the Classics, Neo-Confucian pieces, literary arts and statecraft, with a typical Confucian dream underlying his preparations for the civil examinations. This reading experience, undertaken with the orthodox rules in mind, informed his Classical scholarship of 1508 in Guizhou. Despite different philosophical goals, Wang interpreted the Five Classics in an evidential manner. After his sudden enlightenment, however, Wang's subversion of Zhu's philosophy did not erase Zhu's influence on the intellectual labors of his last twenty years. Instead Wang followed Zhu's theory for reading to different degrees in his own late practice and instructions to students.

Zhu's philosophy shaped Wang's early years. He declared Zhu's teachings as a revelation he received from the gods. Once he arrived at conclusions that differed from Zhu's, he faced a dilemma, since he had to make a choice between perpetuating the teachings of the Song master and illuminating the Way as he newly apprehended. In Wang's own words, "The fact is that in my own heart I cannot bear to contradict Master Zhu but I cannot help contradicting him because the Way is what it is and the Way will not be fully evident if I do not correct him."¹⁵³ In 1515 he compiled a selection of Zhu's letters that illustrated their philosophical consistency as he saw it. Those selections, Wang assumed, represented Zhu's final conclusions arrived at late in life, and justified Wang's philosophy of mind. In respect of Zhu's theory of reading, Wang selected only those

¹⁵³ Chan 1963, 164.

sayings concerned with reading in relation to the cultivation of mind and its application to daily life. He also stressed Zhu's idea of limiting reading load and emphasis on moral transcendence over textual meaning.¹⁵⁴

Wang's arbitrary editing methods, which cited some letters out of context and misdated others, invited severe criticism from late Ming and early Qing admirers of Zhu.¹⁵⁵ For Wang, most of Zhu's works appeared in his middle age and his recorded conversations had been distorted by his disciples before being published. Therefore he could only select a few items from a limited repertoire of works that he felt reflected Zhu's final conclusions faithfully.¹⁵⁶ Using them, Wang intended to find common ground with Zhu's spiritual orientation rather than promote his own philosophical views to Zhu's admirers.¹⁵⁷ At least in his reading practices and instructions, we shall see, Wang adhered to Zhu's theory, with some modifications.

Wang did not dissuade his disciples from acquiring practical knowledge or skills through widely reading. If they could keep their minds away from the desire for titles and riches, Wang suggested, widely reading to obtain broad learning was also a way to moral cultivation.¹⁵⁸ Reading books was a topic often covered in Wang's family letters. He sincerely expected the sons of his family to devote themselves to reading and learning as he had done, so that they could advance their conduct in accordance with the rites.¹⁵⁹ As Zhu and Cheng Duanli had suggested, boys in the Wang family school were not taught

¹⁵⁴ Wang Shouren 1992, "Zhuji wannian dinglun" 朱子晚年定論 [Master Zhu's final conclusions arrived at late in life], 3.130, 132-33, 133-34, 136, 138; for a comparison between Wang's selection and Zhu's original, see Yoshida Kōhei 2001.

¹⁵⁵ Yoshida Kōhei 1981, 54-59; Chan 1963, 263.

¹⁵⁶ Wang Shouren 1992, "Zhuji wannian dinglun xu" 朱子晚年定論序 [Preface to *Master Zhu's final conclusions arrived at late in life*], 7.240-41; Chan 1963, 266.

¹⁵⁷ Tu 1976, 157-63, esp. 161.

¹⁵⁸ Wang Shouren 1992, "Yu Lu Yuanjing" 與陸原靜 [To Lu Yuanjing], 4.166.

¹⁵⁹ Wang Shouren 1992, "Ji Zhengxian nan shoumo erjuan" 寄正憲男手墨二卷 [Letters to my son Zhengxian, in two rolls], 26.990.

compositional skills until they apprehended the meaning of the Classics. Pondering the textual meaning of the Classics was assigned priority in their programme,¹⁶⁰ after which the sons were asked to experience meaning personally in order to make their thoughts sincere. Argument and writing were not encouraged before the achieving of sincere thoughts, as Zhu had proposed.¹⁶¹

The goal of reading books, Wang reiterated, should not be to win examination degrees or official titles but to become a man of virtue. Yet, he was pleased when his family sons had good examination results in the Confucian school.¹⁶² In fact, in his early years, Wang did not give up preparing for the examinations until he received the *jinshi* degree in 1499. His first discussion concerning the priority of Neo-Confucian learning over civil examinations was thus an afterthought. In his preface to an old textbook of literary models newly published in Guizhou, Wang lamented the disconnection of preparation for the examinations from the pursuit of Confucian learning. Neither Ancient Prose nor the civil examinations, for him, encompassed the original intention implied in the Classics. Unless they understood the Classics and made his thoughts sincere, Wang insisted, successful examination candidates could not serve the government as the ancient worthies had. Thus preparing for examinations by learning literary skills alone were not helpful in cultivating virtue.¹⁶³ This combination was exactly the one that Zhu had proposed in his programme of study (see Chapter One).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., "Shang daren shu" 上大人書 [To my father] (1512), 32.1209.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., "Yu Kezhang taishu" 與克彰太叔 [To my grand-uncle Kezhang], 26.983.

¹⁶² Ibid., "You yu kezhang taishu" 又與克彰太叔 [Another letter to my grand-uncle Kezhang], 26.989; "Ganzhou shushi sizhi Zhengsi deng" 贛州書示四侄正思等 [Letter to Zhengsi and other three nephews, from Ganzhou], 26.987.

¹⁶³ Ibid., "Chongkan Wenzhang guifan xu" 重刊文章軌範序 [Preface to the republished *Model Ancient Prose*], 874-75.

Since his enlightenment experience, Wang had fruitfully combined philosophy and statecraft. Perhaps inspired by this success, he suggested in 1524 that the pursuit of (his) Neo-Confucian learning could accommodate taking the civil examinations. The former could facilitate the latter, in addition to enlarging and enriching one's mind.¹⁶⁴ So far, taking into consideration his encouragement of his family's sons to read the Classics intensively, Wang eventually recognized and accepted the ideal of the combined pursuit of Classical Learning, knowledge of principle, and success in the civil examinations, as Zhu and Cheng Duanli had suggested, even though he and Zhu had different interpretation of these three endeavors, especially the first two. In 1528 he established the Confucian School of Nanning County and set up regulations for it. He expected the schoolboys to learn to answer questions on the Classics and politics, to read following a schedule, and to ponder the textual meaning of the Classics, so that they could cultivate Neo-Confucian learning and be prepared for civil examinations.¹⁶⁵

This recognition of the ideal combination of pursuits largely explains his late enthusiasm for local schools, where he gave instructions for reading rather than holding philosophical conversations, as he had tended to do with his disciples in both yamen and military camp. His extant instructions resonated with some of Zhu's rules for reading. He favored diligent and modest students, who learned gradually and cumulatively, over artful and quick-witted ones, who were easy to attain sudden enlightenments. Even though his philosophy emerged with his sudden enlightenment, Wang tended to describe the pursuit of learning as a gradual and accumulative process, as Zhu had suggested. To keep the mind open, to experience personally, and to apply what one read to practices

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., "Nianpu," 35.1292.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 35.1316-17.

were what he expected from students.¹⁶⁶ An open mind, in his theory, could be obtained through critical introspection.¹⁶⁷ This rule, proposed by Zhu, became the first of Wang's instructions since the reader's sufficient receptivity enabled him to make his thoughts sincere, the first step towards learning in Wang's epistemology.

In Wang's regulations for Confucian schools, Zhu's *Elementary Learning*, intended to train schoolboys in proper social and ritual manners, played a leading role. Even in 1509, one year after his enlightenment, Wang educated himself through quiet-sitting, the effort of keeping mind open suggested in the *Elementary Learning*.¹⁶⁸ After finishing those introductory efforts as proposed by Zhu and Cheng Duanli, schoolboys were permitted to take up advanced learning, that is, to read the Four Books and Five Classics. Wang gave them instructions for reading, as follows,

In reading, the value does not lie in the amount but in learning the material well. Reckoning the pupil's natural endowments, if one can handle two hundred words, teach him only one hundred so that he always has surplus energy and strength and then he will not suffer or feel tired but will have the beauty of being at ease with himself. While reciting the pupils must be concentrated in mind and united in purpose. As they recite with their mouths, let them ponder with their minds. Every word and every phrase should be investigated and gone over again and again. The voice and rhythm should go up and down and their thoughts should

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., "Jiaotiao shi Longchang zhusheng" 教條示龍場諸生 [Instructions to show the students in Longchang], 26.974.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., "Yu Chuyang zhusheng shu bing wenda yu" 與滁陽諸生書並問答語 [Letter to my students in Chuyang, with questions and answers], 26.982.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., "Nianpu," 33.1230-31.

be relaxed and empty. In time they will be in harmony with propriety and righteousness and their intelligence will gradually unfold.¹⁶⁹

Evidently this cited regulation contained almost all of Zhu's reading methods. Even the phrase "self-acquisition," which represented Wang's idea of "learning for one's self," was interpreted by Zhu in a similar way. Evidential reading of the Classical texts was particularly suggested, although Wang philosophically rejected it (see Chapter One).

IV.3.6. The Loss of Books: An Episode after Wang Yangming

As an approach to sagehood, Wang's idea of innate knowledge sounded simpler and more direct than Zhu's theory of investigating things. And yet, Wang did not develop his idea more fully. Its simplicity and ambiguity, together with its inherent tensions, contributed to dissension within his immediate circle of disciples.¹⁷⁰ Despite their divergent assumptions, these later scholars had to answer the same question: How was one to extend innate knowledge in the mind to attain sagehood?¹⁷¹

In terms of reading concepts, Wang's followers did not introduce any new ideas, but were content to compromise between the teachings of Wang and Zhu. Given that the revolutionary philosopher Wang and the classically trained real-reader Wang had contradictory attitudes towards Zhu's theory of reading, Wang's intellectual descendants selected from among his sayings and made their own interpretation. Before trying to answer the above question, a serious philosopher of mind could not avoid assessing the role of book learning and reading in self-cultivation, since printed books prospered as one

¹⁶⁹ Wang Shouren, "Jiaoyue" 教約 [Regulations of studies], in Chen Rongjie 1983, 279; Chan 1963, 185.

¹⁷⁰ Qian Ming 2002, 106-31.

¹⁷¹ Tang 1970, 108.

of the main sources of learning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Different evaluations of reading were made among Wang's disciples after his death. Because of the complicated intellectual interrelations among different groups, it is more practicable to illustrate the diversity within the school when it came to conceptualizing reading by analyzing a few leading disciples' ideas.

Wang's radical disciples, such as Wang Gen (1483-1541) and Wang Ji (1498-1583), tended to deny a role for book-learning in cultivating the moral mind. Emphasizing the realization of one's nature (*xing* 性) in daily activities and relationships as the approach to the Way, Wang Gen asserted that it was unnecessary to read books or to associate with the learned because principle lay in practice.¹⁷² In popularizing Wang's idea of innate knowledge among common people, Wang Gen and his disciples tended to utilize an oral channel apprehensible to most of their audiences, as Wang Yangming had done. Writing, for them, was less effective than face-to-face communication in both teaching and learning.¹⁷³ The Four Books and Five Classics were the only titles that Wang Gen mentioned in his conversations with disciples. He admitted that reading the Classics was crucial since Confucius was also a reader.¹⁷⁴ On the other hand, all the Classics represented nothing but innate knowledge in the mind. If oral discussions clarified learning and made thoughts sincere, he suggested, both the Classics and their commentaries could be dispensed with.¹⁷⁵

Wang Ji interpreted the original substance of mind as nothing and the extension of innate knowledge in the mind as the direct apprehension of nothingness. Thus he

¹⁷² Okada 1970, 138.

¹⁷³ Cheng 2009, 56-57.

¹⁷⁴ Wang Gen 1568, 1:7b.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:4b, 10a, 20a-b; Lee 1990, 115-17.

preferred sudden enlightenment based on innate knowledge to intellectual understanding attained through reasoning. Like Wang Gen, Wang Ji also suggested cultivating oneself in daily activities to achieve enlightenment. Objective knowledge acquired from external sources could not be perfectly internalized.¹⁷⁶ With his personal interpretation of innate knowledge, Wang Ji was more straightforward than Wang Gen in criticizing Zhu's theory of reading. It was impracticable, he felt, to read all books or investigate all things in the world in order to apprehend the Way, but an inward appeal to one's innate knowledge would facilitate the attainment of sagehood.¹⁷⁷ Reading books to apprehend principle following Zhu's rules was too time-consuming and could lead to an addiction to "old pages," to the neglect of realizing innate knowledge inherent in the mind.¹⁷⁸ For Wang Ji, Zhu's theory of reading altered the Cheng brothers' philosophical orientation. Although the Classics were indispensable for pursuing learning, reading was nothing but a "trap for fishing" and dedicating oneself to this tool meant "losing one's purpose" of cultivating virtue, as Cheng Yi had warned. Wang Ji therefore subtly removed Zhu from his lineage of the Way by not mentioning his name.¹⁷⁹ Wang Ji's reading methods also differed from Zhu's. For instance, unlike Zhu who suggested that readers draw general meaning from details, Wang Ji expected them to grasp the general meaning before devoting attention to words and sentences.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Okada 1970, 130-35.

¹⁷⁷ Wang Ji 1587, "Huayang Minglun tang huiyu" 華陽明倫堂會語 [Lectures in the Confucius Temple at County School of Huayang], 7:20b.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., "Yu Tao Nian'an" 與陶念庵 [To Tao Nian'an], 9:37a-b, 38a-b; "Shu Zhensu juan xu" 書貞俗卷序 [Preface to the *Scroll of Zhensu*], 13:35b.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., "Da Wu Wuzhai" 答吳悟齋 [Reply to Wu Wuzhai], 10:21b-23a; "Zeng Yibo Zhu Yuangang qian Jingwang fu jiaoshou xu" 贈邑博諸元崗遷荆王府教授序 [Presented to Zhu Yuangang of Yibo, who is about to take up the tutorship of Prince Jing], 14:14a. Another disciple, Nie Bao (1487-1563), also removed Zhu from the lineage of the Way in his general evaluation of the Song Neo-Confucian tradition; see Nie Bao 1564, 5:7b-8a.

¹⁸⁰ Wang Ji 1587, "Fahua dayi tici" 法華大意題詞 [Note to the *Outline of the Lotus Sutra*], 15:17b-18a.

The above-noted emphasis on innate knowledge and neglect of book learning raised concerns among some of Wang Yangming's other disciples, who suggested that this oversimplified extension of innate knowledge could not yield worthy insights but only insubstantial discussions. In their view, few fellow disciples obtained scholarly and philosophical results.¹⁸¹ This concern stimulated some of Wang's admirers to adopt some points from Zhu's philosophy and ultimately return to his theory of reading, as I shall discuss below.

IV.4. Return to Zhu Xi's Theory of Reading

Although they saw book learning as secondary to the cultivation of mind, most of Wang's immediate disciples and later admirers regarded reading the Classics as necessary. Because the Yangming school did not develop an educational programme as systematic and practicable as Zhu's, some followers emphasized the compatibility of Zhu's theory with Wang's when it came to teaching. They followed Zhu's rules for the White Deer Grotto Academy in their teaching practices, as Wang had suggested,¹⁸² and downplayed literary arts and history. Their aim remained the same as Zhu's, to help students obtain spiritual advancement and prepare for the civil examinations. In their own intellectual practices, most of these teachers specialized in one or two Classical texts.¹⁸³ Reading books, at least the Classics, still played a crucial role in the formation of their learning.

¹⁸¹ Wang Shouren 1992, "Nianpu," 33.1232.

¹⁸² E.g. *ibid.*, "Ziyang shuyuan ji xu" 紫陽書院集序 (1515), 7.239-40; "Wansong shuyuan ji" 萬松書院記 (1525), 7.252-54.

¹⁸³ Hauf 1987, 64-79.

Much work needs to be done to demonstrate whether or not Wang's disciples and admirers employed Zhu's art and, if so, how they utilized it in their reading practices. Unless we can demonstrate that they managed to camouflage their criticism of imperially sanctioned Zhu's orthodox philosophy, we should assume their attempts to reinterpret Zhu once they realized the tension between their own intellectual ideas and practice were sincere. There is no reason to be suspicious of their academic honesty and philosophical pursuits. Indeed, Wang's followers of later generations attempted to resolve this tension by revising their theories.

IV.4.1. Return to the Investigation of Things

In their interpretation of Wang's theory of innate knowledge, some of his disciples recognized objective knowledge to be as significant as subjective knowledge and adopted Zhu's idea of investigating things. Among the first to deviate was Chen Jiuchuan (1494-1562), who disagreed with Wang Gen and Wang Ji's emphasis on the role of mind over the intellectual understanding of things. For Chen, Wang Yangming had intended to begin the extension of innate knowledge with the investigation of things. Chen thus attempted to rectify his master's controversial reading of the *Great Learning*, even though he accepted that efforts to investigate things, extend knowledge, make thoughts sincere, and rectify the mind were simultaneous, as Wang had proposed.¹⁸⁴ Investigation of things, Chen argued, was the substance of innate knowledge to be extended through daily activities.¹⁸⁵ When things were neglected because they were external, innate

¹⁸⁴ Chen Jiuchuan 1558, "Jian Wei Shuizhou" 簡魏水洲 [Letter to Wei Shuizhou], 1:41b; "Da Wei Yifang" 答危裔芳 [Reply to Wei Yifang], 1:67b-68a.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., "Da Nie Shuangjiang" 答聶雙江 [Reply to Nie Bao of Shuangjiang], 1:70a-b; "Jian Zhang Jian xuexian" 簡章介庵學憲 [Letter to Zhang Jian, the Provincial Educational Commissioner], 1:67a.

knowledge would be insubstantial.¹⁸⁶ Chen's emphasis on investigating things, however, did not lead him to advocate broad learning, as Zhu had suggested. Indeed, Chen decried broad learning as harmful to the realization and practice of innate knowledge. Thus like Wang Gen, Chen also excluded Zhu from the lineage of the Way and considered his master to be the true transmitter of the Cheng brothers' philosophy.¹⁸⁷

Chen's emphasis on the investigation of things was echoed by his fellow disciple Ouyang De (1496-1554). Ouyang in general insisted that extending innate knowledge was prior to investigating things, but for him things were catalysts whereas innate knowledge was the arbiter of what was obtained from investigations. Without things, the realization of innate knowledge was not possible.¹⁸⁸ Ouyang illustrated his idea of investigating things using analogies to farming and weeding. Through such activities the farmer could apprehend the principles governing the growth of grains and rules for planting. Investigating in this way, he could make his thoughts sincere and rectify his mind, as scholars and merchants could do through their everyday practices.¹⁸⁹ Ouyang thus encouraged students to learn from specialists and books that which they had not yet mastered. His interpretation was thus much closer to Zhu's idea than to that of his master. Since innate knowledge was realized by investigating things and reading books, he asserted, neither the Classics nor commentaries were external to mind but instead could

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., "Jian Pan Luojiang ershou" 簡潘羅江貳守 [Letter to Vice Magistrate Pan of Luojiang], 1:79b-80a.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., "Ningdu xianxue mingluntang ji" 寧都縣學明倫堂記 [Record of the Hall of the Confucian Temple in the County School of Ningdu], 2:5a-6a; "Song xuexian Shaohu Xu xiansheng rubu xima xu" 送學憲少湖徐先生入補洗馬序 [Essay to present to Mr. Xu Shaohu who is about to take up the librarianship for the Heir Apparent from his current post as educational commissioner](1539), 7:21a-b.

¹⁸⁸ Ouyang De 1558, "Da Luo Zheng'an xiansheng ji Kunzhiji" 答羅整庵先生寄困知記 [Reply to Mr. Luo Zheng'an, who sent me a copy of his *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*] (1534), 1:21a-b; cf. 1:15a.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., "Da Xiang Oudong" 答項甌東 [Reply to Xiang Oudong], 5:21a-b.

be unified with mind in Wang's philosophy.¹⁹⁰ Respecting his master's philosophy, however, Ouyang upheld the goal of learning and reading as being to realize innate knowledge. With good receptivity and dedication in mind, this goal would ensure a proper orientation for a wide reading of numerous ancient texts.¹⁹¹

Among Wang's admirers of the second generation, some explicitly recognized Zhu's idea of investigating things. A good example was Zhang Yuanbian (1538-88), one of Wang Ji's disciples. Zhang was a sincere admirer of Wang Yangming,¹⁹² but he adopted Zhu's approach to realizing innate knowledge. Unlike the abovementioned immediate disciples of Wang Yangming, Zhang recognized Zhu's place in the lineage of the Way and his contribution to the theory of mind cultivation by means that differed from those of Wang.¹⁹³ Zhang proposed things as the object of learning and advocated sincere personal practices.¹⁹⁴ Although like Wang Yangming he disagreed with Zhu's idea of investigating all things and learning broadly in relation to cultivating the mind, Zhang stressed that without things neither learning nor moral cultivation was possible.¹⁹⁵ Therefore he admitted that while sudden enlightenment was possible in theory cultivation nonetheless was accumulative in practice.¹⁹⁶ Realization of innate knowledge in the mind ultimately depended on studying extensively and following the rules of propriety (in

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., "Da Luo Zheng'an...", 1:16b-17a; "Da Feng zhoushou" 答馮州守 [Reply to Magistrate Feng], 4:38a, 40a.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., "Da Luo Zheng'an...", 1:22a-b; "Da Shen Siwei siyu" 答沈思畏侍御 [Reply to Censor Shen Siyu], 5:8a.

¹⁹² Araki Kengo 1972, "Minju Chō Yōwa ron" 明儒張陽和論 [On Ming Confucian Zhang Yuanbian], 186-236.

¹⁹³ Zhang Yuanbian 1602, "Zhuzi zhaibian xu" 朱子摘編序 [Preface to Extracts from Master Zhu], 4a-5b; "Chongke Yi Luo yuanyuan xu" 重刻伊洛淵源序 [Preface to the republished *Origins of Yi and Luo schools*], 4:6a-7b; "Xiufu Zhu Wengong ci ji" 修復朱文公祠記 [Record of the restoration of the Shrine to Master Zhu], 4:17a-19a.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., "Ji Zhou Jishi" 寄周繼實 [To Zhou Jishi], 2:42a; "Fu Xu Jing'an" 復許敬庵 [Reply to Xu Jing'an], 2:11b.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., "You da Tian Wenxue" 又答田文學 [Another reply to Academician Tian], 2:19a-b.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., "Da Zhou Haimen" 答周海門 [Reply to Zhou Haimen], 3:45b.

Zhu's interpretation).¹⁹⁷ Zhang admitted that his insistence on sincere practices and things as the proper objects of learning was stimulated by Zhu.¹⁹⁸ Thus Zhu provided the framework with which he interpreted Wang's idea of innate knowledge.

As opposed to his master Wang Ji, who devalued efforts and rules of the propriety, Zhang asserted that efforts should be taken in order to realize the substance of mind (i.e. innate knowledge).¹⁹⁹ Although not intended, his assertion paralleled the assumption of the Donglin philosopher Shi Menglin 史孟麟 (1559-1623). For Shi, the substance of mind could not be separated from efforts— “Without effort there is no original essence [of mind],” “virtue does not exist apart from activity.”²⁰⁰ The Donglin literati commonly were propagandists of Zhu's philosophy. They introduced the concept of effort to the academic field (i.e., intellectual advancement). Following Zhu's *Rules for the White Deer Grotto Academy*, Gu Xiancheng (1550-1612) established regulations for discussion meetings in his Donglin Academy. His philosophical was based upon the unity between the substance (i.e., the original essence) of learning and effort, although, in his view, substance was not the innate knowledge of mind but the nature (*xing* 性) of human relationships stipulated in Confucianism.²⁰¹ The Classics were esteemed as the foundation of Donglin learning. In reading these texts, Gu's academy members should understand each word and sentence in the evidential style with the goal of apprehending nature by experiencing meaning personally and applying it to the cultivation of mind in an accumulative process. Gu alerted members to the wrong reading methods that Zhu had

¹⁹⁷ Cited in Huang Zongxi 2008, 15.328-29.

¹⁹⁸ Zhang Yuanbian 1602, "Ji Feng Weichuan" 寄馮緯川 [To Feng Weichuan], 2:31a-b; Huang Zongxi 2008, 15.323-24.

¹⁹⁹ Araki Kengo 1972, "Minju Chō Yōwa ron," 193-97.

²⁰⁰ Wakeman 1972, 46-47.

²⁰¹ Gu Xiancheng 1698, "Donglin huiyue" 東林會約 [Constitution for the discussion meeting at the Donglin Academy], 6a; cf. Tsurunari Hisaaki 1996.

criticized, and expected them to perpetuate Cheng-Zhu Classical exegesis.²⁰² The discussion meeting, he assumed, would allow members to enrich their knowledge from the “hearing and seeing” that Wang decried. At the meeting, they could cultivate their mind and, more importantly, study the Classics and history and discuss government policies, local charities, and other practical issues,²⁰³ things that Wang largely neglected in his learning regime but Zhu advocated.

Gu stood by Zhu but appreciated Wang’s theory of intuition.²⁰⁴ According to Gu’s regulations, the texts discussed in the Donglin meeting were the Four Books, but, following Wang’s regulation, Gu also demanded that his members sing a couple of pieces from the *Songs* after the meeting so that they could refresh their minds.²⁰⁵

This shared unity of effort and substance, however, marked a change in the Ming world of scholarship. External things including books, which Wang and his radical admirers tended to neglect, had returned to scholars’ field of vision as the objects of their investigations. Cultivation of virtue remained as the ultimate goal, but the theoretical stress on the effort entailed in investigating things anticipated the reincarnation of substantive learning (*shixue* 實學), which was to characterize the late Ming intellectual world and include followers of both Zhu and Wang.²⁰⁶

IV.4.2. Return to Reading Books

In terms of reading habits, the return to things meant a return to books, the main source of learning in Zhu’s theory. Among philosophers of mind, Liu Zongzhou

²⁰² Gu Xiancheng 1698, “Donglin huiyue,” 8a-8b.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 10b.

²⁰⁴ Wakeman 1972, 45-46.

²⁰⁵ Gu Xiancheng 1698, “Donglin huiyue,” 14a, 15a; Chan 1963, 182-83, 184-85.

²⁰⁶ Yamanoi Yū 1980.

theorized this return by appealing to the theory of reading that Zhu had proposed and that the Yangming school had rejected. As a revisionist, Liu developed his philosophy with the intent to dispute with Wang's radical followers and improve this Ming master's doctrine.²⁰⁷ Liu successively invented his theories of vigilant solitariness (*shendu* 慎獨) and sincere thought (*chengyi* 誠意), as supplements to Wang's idea of innate knowledge. Both theories were proposed as approaches to the effort of achieving sagehood.²⁰⁸ He also advocated reading books as a part of these efforts, something that Wang's radical followers neglected, in theory at least. In response to the moral and intellectual scepticism popular among Wang's radical followers, Liu prescribed Zhu's theory of "reading books to apprehend principle." Without an understanding of books, Liu argued, any moral or intellectual pursuit lacked substance. Reading books would enable readers properly to conduct themselves in their daily activities.²⁰⁹

In Liu's theory, Zhu enjoyed the same stature as Confucius in the Confucian tradition. He viewed both men's editing and writings as enduring instructions for human society, whereas neither Daoist scepticism nor Lu Jiuyuan's idea of the priority of mind over the Classics were helpful for ordering the world. Reading Confucius, Mencius, and Cheng-Zhu philosophy rather than simply turning inward in one's mind was the main path to the Way. As had Zhu, Liu also maintained that books conveyed the earlier words and actions of the sages and worthies. He encouraged scholars to enrich their hearing and seeing, from which they could refine their ideas and achieve enlightenment. His reading

²⁰⁷ Wong & Sciban 1999; Pan 2010.

²⁰⁸ Tu 1993, 114; Naka Sumio 2002.

²⁰⁹ Liu Zongzhou 1781, "Da Ye Runshan minbu" 答葉潤山民部 [Reply to Ye Runshan, Minister of Revenue], 6:23b; "Yingshi shuo" 應事說 [On response to things], 11:25a-b; "Da Li sheng Mingchu" 答李生明初 [Reply to student Li Mingchu], 6:15b-16a.

list imitated those of Zhu and the early Ming Confucians, starting with Zhu's *Elementary Learning* and following with the Four Books and the Five Classics. Liu then required students to read the Song masters (Zhou Dunyi, the Cheng brothers, Zhang Zai and Zhu Xi) before turning to Wang Yangming, so that they could grasp the development of Confucianism. The *Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror* was the only work of history that he recommended. Other philosophies were not strongly recommended but students could browse through them, while Daoism and Buddhism should be rejected. Citing the *Mean* and the *Great Learning*, Liu encouraged "extensive study" of the Way through reading—"accurate inquiry about it, careful reflection on it, clear discrimination of it, and earnest practice of it"—followed by realization of the moral, social and political ideals that Confucianism proposed. Reading is "the Confucian's main profession."²¹⁰ This rationale of reading accorded more with Zhu's theory than with Wang's philosophy.

Indeed, Liu declared it to be a criticism of Wang and his radical followers. For him, these followers were not good readers, but rather brought chaos into the scholarly world. He attributed the chaos to Wang's doctrine of "pulling up the root and stopping up the source," which he interpreted as moral and intellectual scepticism. Reading the Classics and their commentaries could "shore up" people's mind against evil.²¹¹

In terms of the philosophical goal of reading, Liu oriented his reading concept and practices to his stance with Wang rather than with Cheng-Zhu philosophy. He was first a philosophical rival of Zhu and then a reviser of Wang. Regarding reading methods, on the other hand, Liu clearly accepted Zhu's instructions. Cultivation of mind remained the ultimate goal of reading. Books containing the sages' and worthies' intentions could

²¹⁰ Ibid., "Dushu shuo shi Zhuo'er" 讀書說示灼兒 [On reading books, to my son Zhuo], 11:12b-15b; "Shuxue xiaoxu" 書學小序 [Brief preface to Palaeography], 9:43b-44a.

²¹¹ Ibid., "Dushu shuo shi Zhuo'er," 11:16a-b.

teach the reader about mind, but he should cultivate his own mind and improve his moral level by experiencing personally what he read. Otherwise he would obtain nothing from books in a moral or intellectual sense.²¹²

This ultimate goal to be achieved through Zhu's approach was emphasized in Liu's reading practices and lectures. In 1631 he established the Society for Realizing Humanity (*Zhengrenhui* 証人會), whose purpose was to improve individual and social morality through scholarly discussion and social involvement. Despite some philosophical disputes among its members, their shared preference for concrete learning and social concerns contrasted with the individualism and scepticism of Wang's radical followers.²¹³ In the Society's constitution, Liu confirmed the importance of book learning by citing Zhu's theory:

The earlier Confucian (i.e. Zhu Xi) took reading as the key of the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge, whereas the later Confucian (i.e. Wang Yangming) concealed this key with his idea of innate knowledge. He said, "To do good and eliminate evil is just to investigate things." This saying reaches the original essence of mind. Even so, can reading books be dismissed? I would like to reply, "How can it be dismissed?" Innate knowledge is not limited in hearing and seeing, and it cannot be separated from hearing and seeing. Book learning is the essence of hearing and seeing...It is also reasonable to take reading as an effort to realize innate knowledge.²¹⁴

²¹² Ibid., "Dushu shuo" 讀書說 [On reading books], 11:29b-31a.

²¹³ Wu Zhen 2008; Pan 2010, 36-39.

²¹⁴ Liu Zongzhou 1831, 1b-2a; part of translation modified from Pan 2010, 41-42.

Liu believed that Wang's concern about the negative consequences of wide reading and broad learning and consequent theoretical neglect of book learning did not mean that reading should be discarded. Reading books could even enhance the realization of innate knowledge.²¹⁵ This meant that, for Liu, Wang's approach and Zhu's method could be compatible. In respect of how to read books and pursue learning, Liu adopted without question two of Zhu's rules—to experience personally textual meaning and to keep one's mind open. In Liu's words, “Even with insight achieved, [the scholar] should reexamine his practice, experience personally [what he has read] and expel insubstantial words, so that he can improve his learning.”²¹⁶ It was also crucial for the learner to “overcome his preconceived ideas and not isolate himself in his inquiries” if he needed advice and help from others.²¹⁷

IV.4.3. Return to the Intellectual Goal of Reading

After Liu's death in 1645, intellectual divisions emerged among his followers. In editing and selecting his manuscripts, some disciples who were sympathetic to the Cheng-Zhu school attempted to conceal his disagreements with Zhu. Meanwhile, Huang Zongxi struggled to keep his master's writings intact and undistorted, and thus he came to be viewed as an authority on Liu's Learning of Mind.²¹⁸ Huang also carried on Liu's legacy in the Society of Realizing Humanity. In 1668 Ningbo, Huang established an academy of the same name, at which he and his disciples promoted evidential reading and study of the Classics and history and the acquisition of concrete knowledge such as

²¹⁵ Liu Zongzhou 1831, 2b.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6b-7a.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7a.

²¹⁸ Wang Fansen 2004, 250-89; Struve 1991; Mabuchi Masaya 2001.

statecraft. His academy thus was viewed as introducing evidential scholarship to Jiangnan scholars.²¹⁹ Liu did not himself engage in evidential studies of the Classics and history,²²⁰ but as noted above he anticipated the theory by advocating a return to both things and books when pursuing learning. This advocacy was confirmed and developed by Huang, whose epistemological concept was an imitation of Zhu's theory of reading, rather than an invention by Wang.

In general, Huang proposed wide reading and broad learning as a way of acquiring concrete knowledge that was helpful in ordering the world. He so prescribed with the intent to correct the late Ming intellectual trend that he characterized as “non-study” and “non-practice.” As Zhu had done, Huang based broad learning on Classical exegesis and rooted concrete world-ordering knowledge in historical studies. Wide reading and broad learning, in Huang's view, were the foundation and point of departure for concrete knowledge.²²¹ To establish an institutional ground for his views concerning knowledge, Huang also proposed a transformation in the civil examination system following Zhu Xi's “Personal Proposals.” He kept unchanged his belief in Zhu's proposals throughout his life.²²² Given the well-known opposition between Huang and Zhu, however, we shall elaborate this general assessment by noting practical affinities while acknowledging philosophical differences.

It should be noted that in his epistemological narrative Huang employed the term “learning” (*xue* 學) or “scholarship” (*xueshu* 學術) as his core concept and ultimate

²¹⁹ Namba Yukio 2003; Kimbara Taisuke 1996.

²²⁰ In his practice, Liu also took up some textual criticism of the Classics; see Huang Zongxi 1985-1994, “Zi Liuzi xingzhuang” 子劉子行狀 [A biography of Master Liu], 1:254-55.

²²¹ Yamanoi Yū 1980, 270-73; Yamanoi uses the phrases “non-study” (*J. fugaku* 不學) and “non-practice” (*J. muyō* 無用).

²²² *Ibid.*, 273, 287n.11.

standard, rather than “principle” or “Way” favored by Zhu. As evident in his *Records of Ming Scholars*, Huang did not emphasize the Transmission of the Way, which the Song Neo-Confucian masters had elaborated to legitimize their innovations within the pre-Qin Confucian tradition. Instead he grouped Ming Confucians into different *intellectual* lineages according to the actual transmission of theories through face-to-face teaching and learning.²²³ Thus Confucian orthodoxy and heterodoxy coexisted and were in dialogue in his *Records*. Huang based this intellectual tolerance on his philosophy of mind. Since the fluid mind was the original essence of things, the forms of the Way were various and its understandings infinite, which meant that learning was diverse. It was hard to weigh the *pros* and *cons* between the Cheng-Zhu and Lu-Wang schools, and Zhu’s philosophy should not be the only description and interpretation of the Way.²²⁴ Genuine learning, Huang asserted, meant that which was helpful in practice and self-acquired.²²⁵ Huang recognized that the learning of the Cheng brothers and Zhu was self-acquired with mental effort (i.e. mind) and genuine, but he harshly criticized subsequent pedagogy that adhered to Zhu’s commentaries on the Four Books, since they subsequently had been designated as the textbooks for the civil examinations.²²⁶

With his pluralism of learning, Huang obviously intended to attack the orthodox status of Zhu’s philosophy. For his definition of learning Huang proposed practicality,

²²³ Huang Zongxi 2008, "Fafan" 發凡 [Principles for editing], 5.

²²⁴ Huang Zongxi 1985-1994, "*Mingru xuean xu*" 明儒學案序 [Preface to the *Record of Ming Scholars*], 10:74; "*Mingru xuean xu* (gaiben)" 明儒學案序改本 [... revised], 10:75.

²²⁵ Ibid., "Chen Shuda Sishu shu xu" 陳叔大四書述序 [Preface to Chen Shuda's *Studies of the Four Books*], 10:42; Huang Zongxi 2008, "Fafan," 5.

²²⁶ Huang Zongxi 1985-1994, "*Mengzi shishuo*" 孟子師說 [Interpretation of the *Mencius*, following my master's philosophy], 1:48; "Chen Qianchu xiansheng muzhi gaiben" 陳乾初先生墓誌改本 [Tomb inscription for Mr. Chen Qianchu, revised], 10:364-65.

self-acquisition, and thus originality as the criteria, as he had done in his *Records*.²²⁷ An extreme example was his reading of the *Changes*. Unlike Zhu, who insisted that this Classic was originally a manual of divination, Huang argued that the ancient sages edited it with the intention of ordering the world.²²⁸ The ideas of self-acquisition and originality, Huang himself admitted, were actually borrowed from Zhu.²²⁹ As for the idea of practicality, Zhu had so proposed in his theory of reading, as discussed above. To be pluralist and original, Huang suggested that students understand thoroughly (*huitong* 會通) the Classical texts and different *scholia*. Zhu's commentaries should not be the student's preconceived idea of learning.²³⁰ This meant that Huang subtly accepted Zhu's rule of keeping the mind open in reading, even though the result turned out to be opposed to the orthodoxy of Zhu's philosophy.

Evidential reading of the Classics and histories was practiced in both Huang's early and late years. When teaching himself and his younger brother the Classics, he recalled, they devoted much time to the etymological understanding of words and sentences and evidential study of ancient institutions and objects.²³¹ In his late teaching, he expected his students to read the Classics following the Han-Tang tradition, while cultivating their virtue following Wang's instructions.²³² He also employed the very same style in his

²²⁷ Huang Zongxi 2008, "Fafan," 5.

²²⁸ Huang Zongxi 1985-1994, "Huachuan xiansheng *Yisi xu*" 畫川先生易俟序 [Preface to Mr. Huachuan's *Studies of the Changes*], 10:97.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, "*Yun Zhongsheng wenji xu*" 惲仲昇文集序 [Preface to the *Collection of Yun Zhongsheng*], 10:4; Huang Zongxi 2008, "Fafan," 5.

²³⁰ Huang Zongxi 2008, 52.1222.

²³¹ Huang Zongxi 1985-1994, "Qian xiang jinshi Zewang Huang jun kuangzhi" 前鄉進士澤望黃君壙誌 [Tomb inscription for Mr. Huang Zewang, former metropolitan graduate], 10:293.

²³² Xie Guozhen 1932, 9-10.

reading of the standard histories in 1628-1629, with colourful marks and evidential comments in every fascicle he read.²³³

Corresponding to the practicality of learning, Huang redefined the goal of learning and reading to be becoming a hero (*haojie* 豪傑) rather than becoming a sage as his Confucian predecessors had suggested. Opposed to the hero was the ordinary person (*fanmin* 凡民), who vigilantly adhered to the Cheng-Zhu Classical interpretation but lacked creativity.²³⁴ Instrumental in ordering the world, heroes were highly skilled and intellectually independent.²³⁵ Their ambition and spirit might be channeled into various activities ranging from philosophical writing to poetry, from music to drama. They could be Confucians, but equally likely Daoists, Legalists, historians, Classicists, essayists, poets, playwrights and naturalists.²³⁶ Although the Classics remained fundamental for learning, in Huang's view, other branches of knowledge were of equal intellectual autonomy and significance. His view was clearly a challenge to the existing knowledge hierarchy, in which natural studies, philosophy and arts were considered inferior to Classical Learning and were removed from most lists of recommended readings.

Huang proposed this goal of reading and view of knowledge while harshly criticizing the reading habits that the declining examination culture had brought about. He observed that reading habits had begun to deteriorate in the late sixteenth century, when more and more civil examination candidates competed for a limited number of

²³³ Huang Zongxi 1985-1994, "*Bu lidai shibiao xu*" 補歷代史表序 [Preface to the *Supplementary tables through ages*], 10:77.

²³⁴ Ibid., "Mengzi shishuo," 1:151.

²³⁵ Ibid., "Chen Kuixian wushi shouxu" 陳夔獻五十壽序 [Celebration for Chen Kuixian's fiftieth birthday], 10:662.

²³⁶ Ibid., "Jin Xiongfeng shixue" 靳熊封詩序 [Preface to the Collected poems of Jin Xiongfeng], 10:59.

official appointments.²³⁷ Huang characterized as hypocrites readers who simply prepared for the examinations. Such readers stuck to the Cheng-Zhu teachings and limited what they read to the Four Books, Zhu's conversations, other Song Neo-Confucian writings, the *Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror*, and those Tang-Song pieces of Ancient Prose that were considered helpful in passing the examinations, but ignored the socio-political issues with which Confucians traditionally had been concerned.²³⁸ Huang lamented that these readers neglected the Classics and histories as repositories of skill and ability, let alone texts past and present other than the orthodox ones. As a consequence, even those who fruitfully cultivated their virtue were unable effectively to serve the state and society.²³⁹ Although Zhu's doctrine dominated the examination culture, Huang here focused his criticism, as had Wang Yangming, not on Zhu's philosophy or theory of reading but on habits of reading common among Ming students who used the Classics and commentaries in an expedient way to seek for examination titles and official ranks.

Huang attributed the decline of reading habits to the dominance of the examination culture over intellectual life. "With the prosperity of the examination culture," he wrote, "nobody in the world knows what the book is any more." Thus both the ancient tradition and concrete knowledge disappeared as so much "wild smoke and grass" from students' view.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Ibid., "Fan mu Li taifuren qishi shouxu" 凡母李太夫人七十壽序 [Celebration for the seventieth birthday of Lady Li, mother of the Fan family], 10:668.

²³⁸ Ibid., "Mengzi shishuo," 1:165; "Poxie lun" 破邪論 [On the elimination of evil], 1:204-05; "Zeng bianxiu Bianyu Wu jun muzhiming" 贈編修弁玉吳君墓誌銘 [Tomb inscription for Mr. Wu Bianyu, an honoured academician], 10:421.

²³⁹ Ibid., "Jiang wanwei muzhiming" 蔣萬為墓誌銘 [Tomb inscription for Jiang Wanwei], 10:479-80; "Jiang Ding'an xiansheng xianzhuan" 姜定菴先生小傳 [Brief biography of Mr. Jiang Ding'an], 10:607.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., "Chuanshilou cangshuji" 傳是樓藏書記 [Record of the collection in the Chuanshi Library], 10:130; "Yun Zhongsheng wenji xu," 10:4; "Zhenhuan Zhang fujun muzhiming" 振寰張府君墓誌銘 [Tomb inscription of Zhang Zhenhuan], 11:40-41.

In his scheme for the civil examination system (1662), Huang adopted from Zhu an ideal knowledge framework (with minor modifications) that he hoped would be instructive for the student's reading practices when preparing for the examinations. Huang preferred Ancient Prose to the eight-legged essay, but like Zhu he suggested that talents not be recruited based on their compositional skills alone. As Classical exegeses were fundamental for learning, mastery of both the Han-Tang and Song traditions must be among the requirements for examination candidates. While Zhu had emphasized the "tradition of a school" (*jiafa*), Huang devalued continuity within schools and stressed instead the candidate's original thinking.²⁴¹ Classical Learning would be tested in the first session in Huang's scheme. In the second session, the candidate could select his area of specialization from Song Neo-Confucianism, the art of war, non-orthodox Confucianism, Legalism and Daoism. Notably, both Zhu and his philosophical rival Lu Jiuyuan were proposed as subjects for testing. In the third session, the candidate would be expected to write two research essays on history. He could select his field from historical writings ranging from the *Grand Scribe's Records* to the *Ming Veritable Records*. Political affairs would be tested in the fourth session.²⁴² More than thirty years later, Huang revised his 1662 scheme, reducing the number of sessions from four to three. Classical Learning remained the subject for testing in the first session, but he substituted applied writings and political affairs for philosophy (including Neo-Confucianism) and historical studies. The intent was clearly to put the weight on the candidate's skills in administration, but Huang also insisted on the effectiveness of Zhu's "Personal Proposals" in rectifying

²⁴¹ Ibid., "Mingyi daifang lu" 明夷待訪錄 [Waiting for the dawn: a plan for the prince], 1:15.

²⁴² Ibid., "Mingyi daifang lu," 1:17.

examination culture and reading habits.²⁴³ His general acceptance of Zhu's proposals for the civil examination system meant that he recognized the approach to learning elaborated in Zhu's theory of reading.

In terms of the knowledge framework, Huang went even further. He knew natural studies well and suggested that specialists be recruited in these fields and treated as equal to examination candidates who took the orthodox route. Identification with Confucian teachings was not necessary in such recruitments.²⁴⁴ In apprehending principle through investigating things, Huang suggested, the scholar should examine the internal cause and logic that shaped a thing rather than follow earlier masters' routines.²⁴⁵ Thus Huang's knowledge framework was more open than Zhu's. In his view, it was not the representation of principle but the internal rationale of a theory and its implementation that would determine whether a branch of knowledge was legitimate.

Huang's goal of reading, which was not to be a sage but a hero of great skill, was to reverse a tendency to moralize reading, which had strengthened and remained unchallenged during the whole course of the Ming. A heroic personality, concerned with action more than with abstract philosophical discussions, had been considered attractive among late Ming Confucians, especially a few followers of Wang Yangming. The hero might be inferior to sages and worthies when it came to self-cultivation, but his practical skills were more needed than moral didactics in the midst of the late Ming chaos.²⁴⁶ For common scholars, to learn a skill was more practicable than to achieve sagehood. Huang theoretically restored the intellectual goal of reading, which had been neglected in the

²⁴³ Ibid., "Poxie lun," 1:205.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., "Mingyi daifang lu," 1:19; Li Mingyou 1994, 155-67.

²⁴⁵ Huang Zongxi 1985-1994, "Huolin fu" 獲麟賦 [On the capture of a unicorn], 10:621.

²⁴⁶ Zhao Yuan 2004.

elite Confucian world since the early Ming. He did not rediscover this goal until decades after the collapse of the Ming dynasty, but the late-Ming philosophical turn from mind to things anticipated his rediscovery. Huang discussed the heroic personality in the philosophical context of the Learning of Mind, but his approach resonated with the intellectual aspect of Zhu's theory of reading.

Huang is representative of East Zhejiang scholarship. His school is conventionally traced back to Zhu's intellectual rivals Lu Jiuyuan and Chen Liang. Despite their philosophical differences, as Huang's admirer Zhang Xuecheng admitted, this school eventually shared the approach to learning that Zhu had systematized and that his admirers such as Gu Yanwu had developed.²⁴⁷ The Song tradition, including the Cheng-Zhu school and its rivals, was not removed from but rather incorporated into Huang's scholarship.²⁴⁸ Huang ended the Ming confusions concerning the goal of reading and approaches to that goal.

IV.5. Conclusion

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed not only the emergence and domination of the philosophy of mind, but also deviations in this philosophy and an eventual return to Zhu Xi's theory of reading as a programme for elite reading practices. Despite their doctrinal discrepancies, Ming philosophers of mind from Chen Xianzhang and Wang Yangming to Liu Zongzhu followed in their own ways the art of reading proposed by Zhu. Although they emphasized the role of mind in moral cultivation and

²⁴⁷ Zhang Xuecheng 1922a, "Zhedong xueshu" 浙東學術 [Scholarship of East Zhejiang], 2:23a-b; Nivison 1966, 271, 278-79.

²⁴⁸ Quan Zuwang 2000, "Lizhou xiansheng shendaobei wen" 梨洲先生神道碑文 [Stele inscription in the divine path to Master Lizhou's tomb], 11.220.

learning, book learning remained crucial in their intellectual practices and in the formation of their philosophies. Some of Wang's radical disciples underrated reading, but this neglect was eventually corrected in Liu Zongzhou's revisionist theory. With an appeal to things and books in their pursuit of learning, most philosophers of mind confronted the same question: how to extract meaning from texts. To this question, Zhu had already provided an answer, one that was available to all Ming scholars through official ideology and educational institutions. As such, philosophers of mind did not invent their own practical rules but adopted and adapted them from the very Song master with whom they sought to break. In the Learning of Mind discourse, the acquisition of learning sounded mysterious, but actual approaches to learning in essence consisted of imitations of and correspondences to Zhu's theory.

Before concluding this chapter, we shall briefly discuss the archaist literary movement of Old Phraseology that emerged in Wang Yangming's time, a movement that Gu Yanwu also criticized, together with Wang's doctrines, for eroding the application of Zhu's theory to reading practices. In his early literary pursuits, Wang had once been part of this movement,²⁴⁹ which advocated the prose style of the Qin-Han and the poetic style of the High Tang. Its leading figures confined their recommended reading list to pre-Qin, Han and Tang classical writings and suggested that readers "not read anything after the Tang."²⁵⁰ Given this archaism, they criticized Zhu's devaluation of literary composition.²⁵¹ Their advocacy stimulated an increase in the number of imprints of pre-Qin texts. In terms of reading habits and practices, however, they were not as revolutionary as might be thought, but still adhered to Zhu's theory. A good example was

²⁴⁹ Tu 1976, 28-31.

²⁵⁰ Yoshikawa 1989, 137-38.

²⁵¹ Bryant 2008, 398, 422-23.

He Jingming (1483-1521), one of the leaders of this movement. In 1519-1521, He prepared a curriculum for a local school in Shanxi. He expected students in the local Confucian schools to finish reading the designated Classical, philosophical, and historical texts within three years. Those who did not win the licentiate degree should read these texts in a sequence from the Classics to the Song Neo-Confucian philosophers and a few historians. He Jingming expected the students to read the Classics through every year. Until they finished the texts of these three genres, they would not be permitted to read the recommended Qin-Han prose models. This is exactly the main point we have noted in Zhu's theory and Cheng Duanli's curriculum. He Jingming's instructions for reading these texts emphasized both apprehension of principle and its application to practice.²⁵² As his Song and early Ming predecessors had done, He insisted on the moral goal of study rather than professional or literary objectives.²⁵³ Although he underrated contemporary pedagogy for its emphasis on earning "career capital," he expected the student to incorporate moral cultivation into his preparations for the civil examinations by pondering the ancient sages' words, seeking the Way, and cultivating it in practice.²⁵⁴ Evidently this accorded with Cheng Duanli's pedagogical goal of combining Classical Learning and knowledge of principle into the civil examinations, a goal that Zhu had initiated. In practice, therefore, the literary archaists did not challenge but followed Zhu's reading methods and knowledge hierarchy, despite possibly different explanations of the Classics.

²⁵² He Jingming 1778, "Xueyue guwen xu" 學約古文序 [Preface to Ancient Prose for the Curriculum], 34:9a-b; translation in Bryant 2008, 490-91.

²⁵³ Bryant 2008, 489.

²⁵⁴ He Jingming 1778, "Shi wen" 師問 [An inquiry into teaching], 33:9a-11a; Bryant 2008, 487-89.

Thus far I have surveyed three aspects in Ming intellectual life: the curriculum of the civil examinations, the Learning of Mind, and the Old Phraseology Movement. Gu Yanwu believed that these three elements had undermined Ming scholarship (see the Introduction) and, following him, intellectual historians have viewed them as a Ming break from the Song tradition consummated by Zhu. In terms of *intellectual ideas*, we shall recognize, Ming scholars developed their philosophical theories in ways different from if not opposed to Zhu's doctrine. Their *intellectual practices* and approaches to learning acquisition, however, had in general remained under the sway of Zhu's theory of reading. Unlike the early Ming Confucians, who had been concerned whether the goal of reading was moral or intellectual and concluded that it was moral, Wang Yangming and his followers focused on the path towards moral cultivation as the goal of learning. Their philosophy originally promoted cultivation of mind to the neglect of reading, but finally returned to things and books as the source of both moral and intellectual advancement. Their confrontation with books pulled them back to Zhu's theory for reading.

CHAPTER FIVE

KNOWLEDGE LANDSCAPE AND READING HABITS IN MING IMPRINTS

INSIDE the philosophical world, as discussed in the previous two chapters, it took Ming Confucians around two centuries to rediscover the intellectual goal of reading and to recognize theoretically the applicability of Zhu Xi's theory to intellectual practices. I have also suggested that Zhu's rules, which are inclusive and flexible, programmed the reading practices of leading philosophers and fertilized the formation of their theories, despite their attempts to break with the Song tradition. This chapter will outline how Zhu's theory shaped reading habits and the knowledge landscape as reflected in extant Ming imprints.

The Ming perpetuation of Zhu's theory in reading concepts and practices is contrary to intellectual historians' assumption of a Ming break from the Song tradition. This intellectual apostasy has been taken as a theoretical presumption in studies of late imperial book culture. Book historians and other historians interested in publishing history support this assumption in various ways, confirming the view of Ming challenges to the Cheng-Zhu tradition. For instance, Inoue Susumu proposes that the publication of pre-Qin and Han philosophical writings was the first sign of a transformation of the book industry to a classical (J. *seidai* 正大) culture in the second half of the fifteenth century. These imprints were distributed not just to the top levels of elite readers but also to ordinary scholars (J. *ippan shijin* 一般士人) and promoted as alternative views of the Way. Therefore, according to Inoue, mid-to-late Ming literati readers considered those

heterodox writings philosophically worthy reading.¹ Another example is the so-called “democratization of knowledge” that Angela Leung identifies in her studies of Ming and Qing medicine. Leung means by this the replacement of the state by gentry society when it came to establishing criteria for medical theories and practices. She bases her hypothesis on a state-society opposition and an analysis of genres and texts rather than the reader’s appropriation.² The significance Inoue and Leung find may be applicable to an imagined few Ming elite readers, but does not necessarily represent actual uses that the majority of Ming elite readers made of the texts in question. The actual Ming elite uses of texts, I will argue, were not as revolutionary as has been thought, but instead represented a continuity of the Cheng-Zhu tradition. Both the Ming knowledge landscape and reading habits witnessed some changes, but these changes occurred within the framework that Zhu delineated in his theory of reading. Book learning and reading was still highly valued in Ming intellectual practices and the evidential style of reading was carried on. The Neo-Confucian paradigm implied in Zhu’s knowledge hierarchy comprised the elite reading strategy, by which they distinguished themselves from common readers in their appropriation.

My exploration of the Ming knowledge landscape and reading habits is undertaken through “bibliographic reconstruction”—Ming imprints will be located in a classification scheme (also a classification of knowledge) and then a statistical survey will indicate what branches of knowledge were stressed in those publications. I will analyze the extant Ming imprints collected in Du Xinfu’s bibliography and identified by province and county (*Quan Ming fen sheng fen xian keshu kao*. Beijing, 2002). I have categorized all

¹ Inoue Susumu 2002, 215-26.

² Leung 1987, 154.

items in it using the fourfold classification scheme employed in the 1781 *Annotated Bibliography of the Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*). Ming bibliographers and bibliophiles did not establish a widely accepted classification scheme, but, as we shall see, instead tended to categorize their holdings by particular systems to meet their own needs and reflect the features of their collections. Even so, the conventional subdivisions in the fourfold classification system subtly remained predominant in the formation and criticism of a Ming scheme. This chapter begins with the applicability of this Qing scheme to the Ming classification of knowledge. What follows are some observations about Ming epistemic features and reading habits in extant Ming imprints.

In my statistics of extant Ming imprints, nearly half are belletristic works that were traditionally classified by genre (poetry, prose, songs, etc.). Even in individual and general collections, genres were determinant of subdivisions. Knowledge construction in *belles-lettres*, therefore, was manifested in ways more multifarious than was the case for the branches of Classics, History and Philosophy, which for the most part were subdivided by content rather than genre. For the sake of convenience, I will thus survey only the branches of Classics, History, and Philosophy.

V.1. Ming Bibliographers' Classifications of Knowledge

Zhu did not provide any classification scheme of knowledge, although he did compile a county school library catalogue.³ In his collected conversations, his detailed discussions on reading were arranged according to the conventional branches of Classics, History,

³ Zhu Xi 1532b, "*Quanzhou Tongan xianxue gushumu xu*" 泉州同安縣學故書目序 [Preface to the *Catalogue of the Old County School Library of Tongan, Quanzhou Prefecture*], 75:1a-b.

Philosophy, and *Belles-lettres*,⁴ but no conversations indicate that he proposed further subdivisions. However, his knowledge hierarchy, in which Learning of the Way was superior and Classical Learning fundamental, shaped the main principles for classifying books and knowledge in the Ming period. The ideological orthodoxy of his philosophy undergirded various Ming classification schemes.

Before undertaking a bibliographic reconstruction of extant Ming imprints within the 1781 fourfold classification scheme, we should answer the question of how theoretically and historically practicable such a reconstruction is in the Ming epistemic context. Its theoretical practicability lies in a close affinity between the classification scheme for bibliography and that for knowledge, and its historical feasibility can be framed in terms of a question of how printed knowledge was organized in Ming elite society.

The Chinese bibliographic norm was scholarship oriented. Bibliography was conventionally viewed as a history of scholarship, and the classification of books as the organization of knowledge. This close affinity between bibliography and the history of scholarship legitimates the application of bibliographies into studies of scholarly schools: their origins, transmission and development. Whether a title was listed or not, and how it was categorized, illustrate its place in the related field, and cross-references or comparisons between different bibliographies can help reveal historical changes in scholarship.⁵

This bibliographic approach is also helpful for historical studies of scholarly knowledge, which focus on the way knowledge is acquired and innovated upon. The

⁴ E.g. Li Jingde 1986, 11.187, 11.195.

⁵ Kogachi Ryūichi 2006, 3-9.

Chinese equivalent for scholarship is *xueshu* 學術. This is a modern usage, which refers to the academic attainments of a scholar or group of scholars. Originally this compound word consisted of *xue* (sciences) and *shu* (arts). The former term is concerned with theoretical truth and the conscious application of principles, and the latter with methods for achieving some result, especially traditional rules and skills. Thus *xueshu* traditionally referred to all branches of knowledge, scholarly and non-scholarly, theoretical and practical. The origin of these concepts remains unclear, but Liu Xiang (77-6 BC) had already used them to organize all knowledge prior to the first century AD. As imperial librarian, Liu Xiang, who was succeeded by his son Liu Xin (ca. 50 BC-AD 23) after his death, edited and categorized the copies of ancient texts collected in the Palace Library.⁶ Liu himself collated books on the Six Arts (*liuyi* 六藝), Philosophers (*zhuzi* 諸子), and Poetry and Rhapsodies (*shifu* 詩賦), while other specialists did the same for books on Military Science (*bingshu* 兵書), Science and Occultism (*shushu* 數術), and Medicine (*fangji* 方技).⁷ The first three branches were conventionally labeled *xue*, while the last three were designated as *shu*, and this division was commonly followed in subsequent bibliographies.⁸ In the twelfth century Zheng Qiao (1104-1162) combined these two characters to mean all knowledge contained in books.⁹

Thanks to such a usage of the term *xueshu*, the history of knowledge shares with the history of scholarship a bibliographic foundation, but while interrelated, these two fields are not identical. Historians of scholarship are concerned with the internal rationale for systematizing learning and the historical context in which this rationale was

⁶ van der Loon 1952, 358-66.

⁷ Ban Gu 1962, 30.1701.

⁸ Kuraishi Takeshirō 1979, 19-20.

⁹ Zheng Qiao 1859, 71:4a.

developed and carried on by a group of scholars as authors in the long term, while I shall investigate what printed branches of knowledge were reached by scholarly readers in a literate society like Ming China, whereby book learning was one of the main means of knowledge acquisition and innovation. The unprecedented publishing boom that started in the sixteenth century did not completely alleviate book shortages, nor did it do away with the use of manuscripts in Ming China.¹⁰ Readers definitely acquired their knowledge through reading both printed books and manuscripts. The expansion of imprints, however, still prompts us to investigate how the flourishing of publishing shaped the book learning available to Ming readers.

In their efforts to characterize the book industry, book historians have employed a statistical approach in their analyses of bibliographic categories of imprints.¹¹ This approach is also helpful in describing uses of the book. Book collecting was facilitated by block printing, but library holdings, as Inoue argues, were largely shaped by reading habits, which in turn were formed by styles of scholarship. Inoue's explorations of reading habits and the knowledge landscape are firmly based on his general description of Ming book culture.¹² The correlations he draws between publishing, book collecting, reading habits, and academic knowledge suggest another promising line of inquiry: A statistical survey of both the topics covered in imprints and the genres of printed texts will shed more light on historical changes in book learning.

¹⁰ McDermott 2006, 70-78.

¹¹ E.g. Chia 2002; Inoue Susumu 2002.

¹² Inoue Susumu 1990; Inoue Susumu 2005.

V.1.1. Statistical Model Adapted from the Fourfold Classification Scheme

I adopt the fourfold classification scheme used in the Emperor's Four Treasuries in my classification of Ming imprints, with minor modifications. With the completion of the *Annotated Bibliography of the Emperor's Four Treasuries* in 1781, this fourfold classification scheme was eventually standardized in spite of controversies and modifications made to it.¹³ Since then the divisions and subdivisions established in this imperial bibliography predominated in traditional bibliography, despite intellectual bias (i.e. Han and Song learning) and political prejudice (which took the forms of editing and censorship).¹⁴

To the four traditional branches in the 1781 scheme I add a fifth "Collectanea" branch, which characterized Ming book publishing. Originally compiled to preserve independent short articles and rare items in a single edition, the collectanea arose in the early thirteenth century and became particularly popular from the last quarter of the sixteenth century onward.¹⁵ Most collectanea contain a variety of subjects, and they have been viewed as anomalies within the fourfold classification scheme in both bibliographic theories and practices.¹⁶ Qi Chenghan was the first to list collectanea as a separate category under the Philosophy branch in his bibliography (1620). In another Qi family bibliography, Qi Chenghan's grandson, Lisun (1625-1675) elevated this kind of collection as one branch of *Sibuhui* 四部彙 (lit. "mixture of the four branches"), a

¹³ Tsien 1952, 313-14.

¹⁴ Chu 1987; Guy 1987, chap. 5 and 6.

¹⁵ Hummel 1931; Wu 1943, 248-49.

¹⁶ For a recent discussion of classifying collectanea, see Liu 1996.

classification that paralleled the traditional four.¹⁷ Not until 1875, however, was this elevation of collectanea officially recognized in an instrumental bibliography.¹⁸

Collectanea listed in Du Xinfu's bibliography are limited in number. In my statistical survey grounded upon the fourfold classification scheme, the general topic and genre of the collectanea are highlighted. A collection of works by the same author on different subjects is listed under the category of collectanea by an author (ColAut). A collection of literary writings by different authors is listed under the category of "general collections" in the *Belles-Lettres* branch (BelGen); a collection of writings with a particular content (e.g. the Classics, geography, anecdotes, etc.) is listed under the corresponding category in the fourfold classification scheme. With such a recategorization, I intend to promote the reliability of my statistics on topics and genres and reduce the impact of a rough and rigid classification scheme on the historical description of knowledge. Regarding other collectanea, it is impractical here to subdivide them into separate works that are classified by the traditional scheme. Instead I place them under the category of collectanea of various subjects (ColVar).

I arrange my historical statistics by categories (*lei* 類) rather than the four branches (*bu* 部) of the 1781 imperial fourfold scheme. These categories are suitable for such a statistical survey, as Chia points out, largely because they "[allow] for great flexibility in regrouping works for any particular purpose."¹⁹ Their fitness is also legitimated by the historical development of classification schemes in the Chinese bibliographic tradition. A sevenfold scheme, and yet other classification systems, are virtually the same as the

¹⁷ Qi Chenghan; Qi Lisun 1978, 5.155-74.

¹⁸ Zhang Zhidong 1876, chaps. 91-92.

¹⁹ Chia 2002, 310.

fourfold one in terms of the categories under the seven or four branches. Since the turn of the Christian era, the Chinese bibliographic story has been one of re-grading categories in different schemes: a category might be reassigned from one branch to another or elevated to the level of branch.²⁰ Different combinations of categories comprised different classification systems. That is to say, in either the sevenfold or fourfold scheme were included roughly unvarying categories despite different numbers and names of branches. In my statistical survey, the traditional four branches of Classics, History, Philosophy, and *Belles-Lettres* are subdivided into forty-six categories, basically following the 1781 imperial scheme but with some minor modifications. Under the *Belles-Lettres* branch, I have added the category of novels (BelNov), which were ignored by the editors of the Emperor's Four Treasuries but published in large runs for a huge market. Under the History branch, I have relabeled the category of standard history as "annals-biographies" (HisAbi), so that more titles can be included. Under the Philosophy branch I have added a category of general collections of philosophy (PhiGen). These categories under the four traditional branches and the branch of collectanea are listed in *Table 5.1.1*.

The question then becomes to what extent these forty-six categories represent Ming classification systems of diverse structures. In Ming bibliographies, the fourfold scheme coexisted with other systems. It was common for Ming bibliographers to abandon it, and they also tended to directly list the categories rather than introduce the conventional four branches as the first level of arrangement. One feasible way of examining the representativeness of the 1781 scheme is to compare these forty-six categories with Ming ones.

²⁰ E.g. Yu Jiaxi 2007, 171-72; Yao Mingda 1971, 99-103.

V.1.2. Classification of Knowledge in Ming Bibliographies

Before examining the representativeness of the 1781 system in the Ming context, we should realize the particularity of Ming bibliography. In addition to three catalogues of the imperial library, most extant Ming bibliographies were compiled by bibliophiles based on their own collections. In those catalogues, both public and private, imperial writings including edicts and pronouncements were categorized as a separate division preceding others. Contemporary histories, together with guidebooks for the civil examination in some cases, were also highlighted. To represent his collection, the bibliophile tended to create his own classification scheme into which his holdings could well fit. In order to stabilize and propagate his family's cultural tradition, the bibliophile might even group the works of family members under a separate division in his catalogue.²¹ Political correctness, bibliophilistic orientation, and familial glorification, however, should be distinguished from the traditional concern of scholarly bibliography, upon which my statistical approach to the knowledge landscape is based.

Based on their actual collections, Ming bibliographers modified preexisting classification systems by creating, canceling, combining, and dividing categories. A few bibliographers set up less than twenty categories, most established between fifty and eighty, and some even classified their holdings into more than one hundred categories.²² In terms of a classification system of knowledge, however, no bibliography was more orthodox than Jiao Hong's. Following the scholarly tradition of illuminating the schools and evolution of scholarship by enumerating titles, Jiao adopted and adapted Zheng

²¹ Wang Guoqiang 2000, 154-79, 201-02.

²² Ibid., 187-88, 203-05. Dong Qichang 1994 sets up one hundred and three categories and Qian Zeng 1958 catalogued his collection into one hundred and forty-eight categories.

Qiao's classification system.²³ In an attempt to compile a universal and retrospective bibliography, he did not examine real books but copied titles from previous bibliographies. He was seriously criticized for disregarding whether a book was extant or lost.²⁴ Even though his inclusions can be questioned, Jiao's bibliography had circulated widely since its appearance in 1589, with at least nineteen imprints and manuscripts produced in the Ming and Qing periods.²⁵

Esteem for Jiao's bibliography was largely owing to his implementation of the scholarly bibliographic tradition established by the Lius and propagated by Zheng Qiao, and to his classification system as well. Jiao was much concerned with how to assign a title to the appropriate division and subdivision. Following Zheng, he held that books would be lost if not appropriately categorized, and attributed the continuance of Buddhist and Daoist scriptures to the systematization of categories that had functioned to preserve the texts. He believed in the importance of classification and thus questioned previous bibliographic works that neglected it.²⁶ No one subsequently questioned Jiao's classification scheme as a whole. In the early Qing, an imperial compiler in the Bureau for the Ming History considered Jiao's system both reasonable and orderly, suggesting that his principle of classification be adopted for the planned bibliographic section of the *Ming History*.²⁷ In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Zhang Xuecheng still praised Jiao's system as "clearly arranged in the correct pattern" (*zhengqi youfa* 整齊有

²³ Jiao Hong 1602; Wang Guoqiang 2000, 119-22; Ch'ien 1986, 55-56.

²⁴ Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 87.1478-79.

²⁵ Li Wenqi 1991, 85-96.

²⁶ Jiao Hong 1602, 3:90b and chap. 6.

²⁷ Jin Menzhao 1891, xu 序:1b; Jin Menzhao 1776, "Ming shi jingji zhi" 明史經籍志 [The bibliographical section of the Ming History], chap. 1.

法), although he questioned some of Jiao's questions concerning the bibliographic section of the *History of the Former Han*.²⁸

In his bibliography, Jiao Hong incorporated Zheng Qiao's twelve divisions of knowledge into the traditional fourfold scheme. By his system, Zheng Qiao intended to precisely outline various branches of knowledge. He broke up his twelve divisions into one hundred sections, which in turn were subdivided into 432 subsections. Jiao Hong, however, based his general outline on the traditional fourfold scheme, although he preceded the four branches with "Imperial Records" (*zhishu* 制書). Jiao assigned each of Zheng's sections and subsections to an appropriate place in the conventional four branches and included all of Zheng's entries, although with minor modifications in categorization.²⁹ Jiao's system was largely adopted by two other influential bibliographers: Qi Chenghan and Huang Yuji. His fourfold scheme with two further subdivisions also provided a model for the editors of the Emperor's Four Treasuries, who compiled the 1781 imperial bibliography.³⁰

V.1.3. Ming Rationale for Classifying Knowledge

Despite the affinity between Jiao Hong's classification system and that of the Qing editors, Ming bibliographers had their own rationale for classifying knowledge. In his bibliography, Jiao summarized the development and schools of scholarship at the end of each category (subdivision). These brief abstracts sketch the state of scholarly knowledge up to his time and explain the establishment of a category. The logic of classification,

²⁸ Zhang Xuecheng 1922b, "Jiao Hong wujiao Han zhi" 焦竑誤校漢志 [Jiao Hong made some mistakes in his collation of the bibliographical section of the *History of the Former Han*], 11:8b-14a; citation from 9a.

²⁹ Tsien 1952, 314, 315; Li Wenqi 1991, 138-55.

³⁰ Li Wenqi 1991, 156-71.

however, was more concisely described by his predecessor Lu Shen 陸深 (1477-1544), a scholar-official, belle-lettrist of note, prolific writer, and connoisseur of antiques.³¹ Lu was also a bibliophile. In his preface to the catalogue of his library, he explained his principle of categorizing his holdings:

No texts are superior to the Classics, which are [ancient] sages' works. All late writings correspondent to those works should belong to this category. Thus I enumerate the category of the Classics as the first. [Neo-Confucian] books on the Principle and Nature originated and proliferated in the Song dynasty, but were degenerate relative to the Classics. Thus I enumerate the category of the Principle and Nature as the second. There is a saying: "The Classics embody the Way, and histories record events." Thus I enumerate the category of history as the third. All those writings that fall between the Classics and histories but lack any allegiance to either of these two categories are called "ancient texts." Thus I enumerate the category of ancient texts as the fourth. With the receding of the sages' teachings, schools of philosophy competed with one another. Thus I enumerate the category of philosophers as the fifth. A simple style gradually surrendered to a resplendent one, and consequently prose collections prospered. Thus I enumerate the category of prose collection as the sixth. Since Confucius edited the *Book of Songs*, more genres of poetry were created; in order to examine their dates and investigate their advantages and disadvantages, I enumerate the category of poetry collections as the seventh. Comprehensive, practical, but uneven are encyclopedias. Thus I enumerate

³¹ Goodrich 1976, 999-1003.

the category of encyclopedias as the eighth. All that records experience and knowledge and collects contemporary events, but not in the capacity of the official, also can be called history. Thus I enumerate the category of miscellaneous history as the ninth. Topographical books and local gazetteers elaborate dangerous passes and level land and describe tribute and revenue, representing royal policies. Thus I enumerate the category of gazetteers as the tenth. The way of the tone corresponds with Heaven and Earth and from it ritual and music were derived. Thus I enumerate the category of guides to rhyming as the eleventh. Without elementary education, a man will not be able to obtain any great achievement; without being cured promptly, a patient cannot quickly recover from illness. The two share the same Way, thus I enumerate the category of Classical philology and medicine as the twelfth. Mantic arts and techniques are also presented in books. Confucius said, “Even in inferior studies and employments there is something worth looking at.”³² Thus I enumerate the category of miscellaneous writings as the thirteenth. Imperial conduct has been witnessed by all creatures and has enlightened an era. Confucius tended to follow the Zhou dynasty because he esteemed unification. Thus I set up a special category in which imperial writings and decrees are listed to show that I dare not commit sacrilege; this category is named “imperial records.”³³

This preface was written in 1508, emphasizing political and ideological correctness with the superiority of the Ming court and Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism. Around eighty years later, Lu’s rationale was criticized by encyclopedist Hu Yinglin (1551-1602). Lu

³² *The Analects* 19.4, in Legge 1960, I:340-41.

³³ Lu Shen, “*Jiangdong cangshu mulu zixu*” 江東藏書目錄自序 [Self-preface to the *Catalogue of the Jiangdong Library*], cited in Hu Yinglin 1896a (1589), 2:8b-7a.

did not mention Buddhist and Daoist literature at all. Excepting the category of imperial records, which Hu viewed as indispensable, Lu's other categories had been arranged in the conventional sequence of the four categories, albeit in a subtle way. For Hu, Lu's category of Principle and Nature should be incorporated into the category of Confucianism under the Philosophy branch; his gazetteers essentially should be historical works; all miscellaneous techniques should belong to the Philosophy branch and guides for rhyming to the Classics branch—it was unnecessary to establish them as independent categories. Materials for elementary education were of a piece with guides for rhyming, while medicine was a kind of art; these two were not correlated with each other at all and could not be assembled under one category. As for ancient texts (e.g. *The Bamboo Annals* excavated in AD 281), they should not comprise a separate category but be assigned to the branches of Classics, History and Philosophy as appropriate.³⁴

Hu's criticism and his contemporary Jiao Hong's system illustrate the dominance of the fourfold scheme of knowledge classification in late sixteenth and early seventeenth China. This dominance was ultimately stabilized in the 1781 imperial catalogue. By emphasizing the continuity of classification schemes from Ming to Qing, I do not neglect the variety of systems employed in particular catalogues, but highlight the determinacy of the fourfold scheme for both framing and criticizing a specific classification system in an implicit or explicit way, as we have seen in Lu's system and Hu's criticism.

Lu's system may have been based on his own collection, but his rationale can be used as our point of departure for the exploration of the printed knowledge landscape in the early sixteenth century, when the ascendancy of imprints and prosperity of publishing came to the fore. Lu's statement brought to our attention some categories perhaps striking

³⁴ Ibid., 2:7a.

in his age: Principle and Nature, ancient texts, philosophy, prose and poetry collections, encyclopedias, miscellaneous history, local gazetteers, guides for rhyming and Classical philology, medicine, and miscellaneous writing. In the 1781 fourfold classification scheme employed in my study, we can find rough equivalents for most of Lu's categories. As we can find in *Table 5.1.2*, Lu broke up the Philosophy branch and listed its subdivisions as separate categories in his system. He divided histories into the standard and the miscellaneous. The Classics were not subdivided. In the *Belles-Lettres* branch, he highlighted individual and general collections only, without mentioning literary criticism, *ci* poetry, drama, or novels (the elegies of *Chu* were grouped into the category of general collections in some cases). His accentuating of a category such as Principle and Nature sounds reasonable because of the establishment of the Cheng-Zhu school of Neo-Confucianism as orthodox in Ming China.

More serious criticism of Lu's classification came from Qi Chenghan, who firmly maintained the traditional fourfold scheme. Qi disagreed with Lu that the category of imperial records preceded other categories. He also criticized Lu's scheme of thirteen categories for its triviality.³⁵ Qi's criticism, however, was technical rather than ideological. He set up much more categories under the four branches, not because he had an ideology different from Lu's but because he had a huge collection to arrange.

V.1.4. Ideological and Epistemic Assumptions in the Rationale

It is impossible to estimate the relative number of imprints and manuscripts in Lu Shen's library since his catalogue is lost, yet the rationale he gives for his classification

³⁵ Qi Chenghan 1640s, "Cangshu xunlue" 藏書訓畧 [Brief instructions for book collecting], 14:17b-18a; "Zhengshu lilue size" 整書例略四則 [Four general principles for arranging books], 14:35b-36b.

scheme is interesting for the history of knowledge. If we embed his rationale in the history of publishing, we can ask the question: To what extent does his statement reflect Ming publishing? Or, can we find any evidence from Ming publishing history to support, contradict, or supplement his system?

To examine how Lu's system corresponded with Ming publishing, a simple approach is to check his categories against the enumeration of categories in a bibliography of Ming imprints like Du Xinfu's. For example, if the number of Ming editions of Song Neo-Confucian works reflected in it is striking, Lu's highlighting of the category of Principle and Nature resonates with that part of the classification scheme. Yet, there is a dilemma posed by the temporal gap between Lu's preface of 1508 and Du's counting of imprints, including those that came afterwards. We need to keep in mind temporal variations in how Ming imprints were categorized and the role of Lu's individual experience in his statement. It is evident that some classification schemes were favored in some periods, and that a period in turn might feature some schemes more than others. Lu's scheme could reflect the imprints of his age only and much remains unknown about the periods before and after him, but his classification scheme implied ideological and epistemic assumptions that other bibliographers also employed.

I have categorized all 9,666 editions of Ming imprints actually enumerated in Du Xinfu's bibliography using the slightly modified 1781 imperial fourfold scheme, and the enumeration of those categories is listed in *Table 5.1.3*. The four branches can be sequenced according to the sum of their editions: *Belles-lettres* (4416 editions), Philosophy (2824), History (1578), and the Classics (759). This sequence demonstrates the hierarchy between the four branches. Constituting the core of the Confucian

knowledge framework, the Classics branch was most ideologically constraining for both authors and readers while *Belles-lettres* was the least, as Ming China witnessed the prosperity of publishing individual and general collections.³⁶ Among the four branches, Philosophy was the most inclusive. Its large number of editions resulted not from an increase in pure philosophical writings but from an increase in the number of books on practical knowledge and skills (see below). History remained auxiliary to Classical Learning. Despite the Ming state's withdrawal from the compilation of historiography and unofficial historians' increasing involvement, the court controlled almost all archives, closing them to private readers (see V.3.2.).

In the Classics branch, the category of Classical philology (Claphl, 200 editions) far outnumbers other categories. That of geography in the History branch (HisGeo, 272) is also notable, being next in number to the category of biography (HisBio, 304). The category of medicine has the greatest number of editions in the branch of Philosophy (PhiMed, 577), and that of encyclopedias is also notable (PhiEnc, 387). The categories of individual and general collections under *Belles-Lettres* (BelInd, BelGen) comprise nearly 38.5 percent of all Ming editions (with 2805 and 914 editions, respectively). These numbers support Lu's argument for the separate categories for poetry and prose collections, encyclopedias, gazetteers, rhyme guides, Classical philology, and medicine. Just as Lu Shen had observed, those categories had begun to flourish in the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-centuries.

Classical Learning enjoyed uncontested superiority in the traditional Chinese knowledge hierarchy that the elite reader was requested to master. Even when editions of the Classics were far fewer than those of other three branches, Lu still listed this group

³⁶ Dai (forthcoming).

first and alongside the category of philosophers in his catalogue, as had other bibliographers before him. His separation of standard histories from other kinds of historical writing betrays his orthodox attitude towards historical studies. Only 129 editions in the category of Annals-biography (a genre employed in all standard histories; HisAbi) are collected in Du's bibliography, and in quantitative terms it makes little sense to list them apart from several other categories such as biography and annals in the same branch.

This orthodox bias, according to Hu Yinglin, explained Lu's exclusion of Buddhist and Daoist works from his classification scheme.³⁷ This ideological tendency is further underscored by the prominence Lu conferred upon Song and Ming writings on Neo-Confucian Principle and Nature. His establishment of this category appears misleading in that such imprints were actually much fewer in number than his system might suggest. In *Table 5.1.4*, Ming imprints of Song and Ming Confucian texts (71 and 220 editions, respectively) far surpassed Confucian works of other dynasties. Up until 1508 when Lu created this category, the increase in Song and Ming editions of Confucian works had been very modest and the published texts were mainly from the Song. From 1518 onward, such editions began to increase strikingly and reached their climax in the Wanli era; meanwhile Ming texts for the first time outnumbered Song ones. This means that Ming Neo-Confucian works had not begun to flourish until the first quarter of the sixteenth century when Wang Yangming's philosophy formed and became popular. Given that Zhu Xi's philosophy had been esteemed as orthodox since the fourteenth century, Lu's category of Principle and Nature, which emphasized the importance of Neo-Confucianism in the contemporary knowledge landscape, was also the result of his

³⁷ Hu Yinglin 1896a, 2:7a.

orthodoxy ideology. His experience in government service, successively as Chancellor of the Directorate of Education, Participant in the Classical Colloquium with the Zhengde emperor, and Academician Reader-in-waiting in the Hanlin Academy, obviously engendered his epistemic orthodoxy.³⁸ Already in the first catalogue of the Ming imperial library (1441), Song Neo-Confucian works were grouped into the category of the Nature and Principle.³⁹ Lu clearly followed this imperial example.

Lu's orthodox bias was typical and in later generations was perpetuated in the classification scheme of the Philosophy branch. Unlike the branches of Classics and History, the subdivisions of which had remained relatively stable, the Philosophy branch experienced some important changes in terms of what was included. In Liu Xin's classification system, which was later adopted and modified by Ban Gu in his *History of the Former Han*, "philosophers" (*zhuzi*) referred to pre-Qin philosophical schools including Confucianism, while "military science," "science and occultism," and "medicine" were juxtaposed to "philosophers" as categories of the first level.⁴⁰ The important change occurred in AD 656 with the compilation of the *History of the Sui*. In its bibliographic section, pre-Qin philosophical schools, military science, science and occultism, and medicine were all categorized under the Philosophy branch (*zibu*).⁴¹ Daoist and Buddhist titles were not grouped into this branch as they would be in late dynastic bibliographies, but instead were enumerated in the appendices.⁴² The 656 classification scheme marked an alteration in what was included in the Philosophy branch and the knowledge landscape implied therein. Henceforth the Philosophy branch

³⁸ Zhang Tingyu et al 1974, 286.7358; Goodrich 1976, 999-1003.

³⁹ Yang Shiqi 1937, 4.45-52.

⁴⁰ Ban Gu 1962, 30.1724-46, 1756-81.

⁴¹ Wei Zheng and Linghu Defen 1973, 34.997-1051.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 35.1091-99.

contained all titles excluded from the Classics, History and *Belles-Lettres* branches, and consequently became the most inclusive and complex collection of knowledge. In *Table 5.1.6*, the number of titles in the Philosophy branch dramatically increased in the six centuries that separated the Han and Sui dynasties. This increase mainly resulted from the growth in numbers of works on military science, astronomy, chronology, five elements, and medicine. Among the philosophical schools established in the pre-Qin period, only Confucianism, Daoism, and miscellaneous writings continued to flourish, while the other schools declined or disappeared. In the Philosophy branch, therefore, books on practical and technological knowledge were produced and accumulated on a larger scale than those on philosophy.⁴³ Literati in the Ming and Qing period maintained their interest in the occult, both in their daily life and scholarly world.⁴⁴ This increase in practical knowledge continued from the first to the seventeenth centuries.

This decline in purely philosophical learning and rise of practical and technological knowledge (together with Daoism and Buddhism) was observed by Hu Yinglin.⁴⁵ In his response to these historical changes in the knowledge landscape, Hu recategorized texts in the Philosophy branch that were accessible to him. In his classification system, four categories were devoted to practical and technological knowledge (military science, agriculture, and applied sciences and arts), and two to religious imprints (Daoism and Buddhism). Hu kept the category of anecdotes since they had remained popular among readers both common and elite, and grouped under the category of miscellaneous schools

⁴³ Kōzen Hiroshi and Kawai Kōzō 1995, "Kaisetsu" 解説 [Introduction], 33-43; Kōzen calls these books as "*gijutsukei no sho*" 技術系の書.

⁴⁴ Gōyama Kiwamu 1994.

⁴⁵ Hu Yinglin 1896b [1589], 1:1b-2a.

the works of pre-Qin schools such as the Legalists, Logicians, Mohists, and Diplomats. However, Confucian works preceded these categories by virtue of Confucianism's status as the official orthodoxy in intellectual life.⁴⁶ Hu's principles were followed with modifications by Huang Yuji, who subdivided the categories of applied science and arts and set up the category of encyclopedias.⁴⁷ Huang was in turn imitated with further modifications by the editors of the Emperor's Four Treasuries in their 1781 annotated bibliography, whose main modifications were to restore (and redefine) the category of Legalism (*fajia*) and create a new category of manuals (*pudie*).⁴⁸

Despite these modifications, the Ming-Qing rationale for classifying knowledge subsumed under the Philosophy branch remained largely unaltered: (1) practical and technological knowledge was emphasized in the classification system and accorded more space than other categories; (2) Confucian works always began the branch, even though they were far fewer in number than other works; and (3) the category of miscellaneous schools contained the works of declining and lost pre-Qin philosophical schools as well as miscellaneous writings of later periods. These unchallenged principles prompt us to reassess the place of practical and technological knowledge in the traditional epistemic framework, to reevaluate Ming knowledge of pre-Qin philosophical schools, and to rethink the relationship between Classical Learning and studies of non-Confucian texts, from an interdisciplinary perspective of bibliography, the history of reading, and the history of knowledge. It also should be noted that with modifications, the Philosophy branch in the bibliographical tradition contained, in various forms, all works on the Way

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1:2a-3a; 3:3b-4a for the popularity of anecdotes among readers.

⁴⁷ Huang Yuji 2001, 12.323-16.438.

⁴⁸ Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 91.1802.

and its application to practical living, beyond the Confucian Classics *per se*.⁴⁹ Therefore my survey of Ming imprints in the Philosophy branch is grounded in the existing bibliographic classification rather than being confined to purely philosophical works.

Lu's category of ancient texts was the product of his literary experience and antiquarian interests. According to Hu, who had seen Lu's catalogue, his ancient texts were mainly those composed in the Pre-Qin and Han periods. As *Table 5.1.5* shows, printed ancient texts were very rare before 1508. They began to increase in 1518 and reached a climax in the Wanli period, but even so their number remained rather low. Lu's category of ancient texts, according to Hu, included fewer editions than might be thought. Bibliographically speaking, this category was difficult to justify.

In sum, Lu Shen's classification system was not only the outcome of print culture, but also the representation of his ideological orthodoxy, and of epistemic assumptions that agreed with his own reading habits. For my statistical survey in this chapter, Lu's rationale for knowledge classification, which appears to be more historical than Jiao Hong's system, will help us to narrow down the scope of analysis—Among the forty-six categories that I employ (*Table 5.1.1*), I shall pay attention to those that Lu emphasized in his statement (*Table 5.1.3*) and also to other remarkable phenomena subsequent to his age, which perhaps we can uncover in further statistics.

V.2. Some General Observations about Ming Reading Habits

A rudimentary survey of Lu Shen's categories in extant Ming imprints first directs us to some general assumptions about reading and knowledge among Ming literati. The evidential style was employed in reading practices, since numerous philological

⁴⁹ Ibid.

dictionaries were published. In terms of reading concepts, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four, a deteriorating examination culture eroded reading habits and thus narrowed down the scope of scholars' knowledge. This oft-decried state of affairs, however, does not mean that the role of examination culture was determinative of reading practices. The examination market was not the only impetus for commercial and household publishing. As the circulation of imprints tended to be uncontrollable, we must rethink the author-reader gap in reading practices and highbrow/lowbrow relationship in knowledge repertoires (see Introduction). The following general observations will stimulate a reassessment of currently received ideas about changes in Ming reading habits and the knowledge landscape.

V.2.1. Lingering Sparks of Evidential Reading

The evidential style of reading that Zhu proposed was clearly reflected in the Classics branch of Ming imprints. Both commercial and household publishers stressed the production of philological books, which were indispensable for both elite and common readers. Both types of publishers produced the same proportion of imprints about the *Changes* (15%), whilst the commercial proportion was a little higher (3%) than that for households in the case of the *Documents* and *Spring and Autumn*. While commercial publishers valued potential readers of the Four Books and the *Poetry*, household publishers devoted more resources to publishing books in the categories of *Rituals* and sacred music for performance at rituals and ceremonials.

In March 1384, Zhu Yuanzhang issued the schedule of the civil examinations, both provincial and metropolitan, requiring that the Four Books annotated by Zhu Xi be

covered in the first session.⁵⁰ Subsequent to the compilation of the *Complete Compendium of the Four Books* in 1415, voluminous works expounding on the Four Books were edited and printed for students, and as a result the Four Books became the basis of Ming students' scholarly knowledge.⁵¹ The role of the Four Books in the construction of the Ming epistemic repertoire was further enhanced when the quality of the answer to the question on the Four Books became the main criterion for ranking candidates. Meanwhile, the *Poetry*, which for students was easy to memorize and understand, enjoyed a popularity comparable to that of the *Changes* among Ming examination candidates.⁵² Unsurprisingly commercial publishers had their share in the market for the Four Books and the *Poetry*.

Despite the dominance of Song Learning in the Classical imprints produced for the examination market, Ming knowledge of sacred music and the *Rituals* retained more elements of the Han-Tang tradition. Such imprints were overwhelmingly household publications. Sacred music, which was based on ancient rituals and musicology, was highly specialized and graspable by only a few of the most learned. Regarding imprints on the *Rituals*, commercial editions included those with commentaries by Chen Hao 陳澹 (1260-1341) and Wu Cheng 吳澄 (1249-1333) of the Yuan, those extracted from the *Complete Compendium of the Five Classics*, and a few Ming studies. Among household editions were a few with Yuan commentaries, Zhu's family rituals, and more Ming studies of this Classic. It is remarkable that Zheng Xuan's (127-200) commentary to the *Rituals*, which was removed from the imperially commissioned edition of the *Complete*

⁵⁰ *Ming shilu*, "Taizu shilu" 太祖實錄 [Veritable records of the Taizu emperor], 160.2467.

⁵¹ Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 36.742.

⁵² Tsurunari Hisaaki 2000, 211-12.

Compendium of the Five Classics, was included in at least eight household editions. The Han text of the *Rituals* edited by Dai De (fl. 43-33 BC) was also published at least twice as a household publication. Given the publication of Zheng Xuan's *scholia* on the *Rituals*, we need to reconsider the conventional impression that Ming scholars ignored Han commentaries to the Classics.

Compared to previous dynasties and the Qing, it is conventionally believed, the Ming witnessed a marked nadir in Classical scholarship. Few students reportedly knew well pre-Song and even Song commentaries to the Classics.⁵³ This decline, Gu Yanwu observed, was the academic price paid for the rigid literary requirement of the civil examinations (i.e., the eight-legged essay) and canonization of the *Compendia of Commentaries of the Four Books and the Five Classics*. In their preparations for examinations, Gu rebuked, most Ming students read only Song and Yuan *scholia* on the Classics rather than the original texts or the Han and Tang commentaries to them.⁵⁴ The two compendia, intended to define the sources to which examination candidates could appeal in their preparations and answers to questions, were compiled in haste. Both were attacked in the late Ming and early Qing, even though they were ideologically esteemed as orthodox in the Ming and imitated and refined in the Qing.⁵⁵

Ming Classical scholarship could be comparatively superficial, but Classical Learning of the Han-Tang tradition had not vanished. The Han-Tang Classical exegeses remained available for readers through commercial publishing in Fujian.⁵⁶ As early as Zhu Yuanzhang's reign, some Song commentaries to the Classics were questioned. In the

⁵³ Pi Xirui 1906, 54a-57b.

⁵⁴ Gu Yanwu 1834, 16:10a-11b, 18:13b.

⁵⁵ Elman 2000, 113-24.

⁵⁶ Cited in Lin Qingzhang 1983, 23.

mid-Ming, the Han tradition of Classical Learning was highly esteemed while the Song commentaries were seriously criticized. Consequently in the late Ming Classical scholarship following the Han tradition more or less revived.⁵⁷ As a branch of knowledge, therefore, Classical Learning was still taught and learned according to a Han-Tang paradigm.

Philology was the foundation of Classical Learning and both originated in the Han period. Based on them, Zhu developed his style of evidential reading. Thus the Han-Tang tradition of Classical exegesis, together with philosophy as its linguistic crystal, can be viewed as an indicator of evidential reading. Ming scholars remained enthusiastic about Classical philology and household publishers tended to print philological works as an aid for reading the Classics and other texts. Of these, works authored by Ming philologists are notable.⁵⁸ The high quantity of philological imprints, both commercial and household, reflected the importance of understanding words in reading practices for increasing numbers of readers. It was words (or the textual meaning based on words) rather than the reader's mind that determined his understanding of the text. Philological works told students the pronunciation and meaning of the word in an evidential style. Ming students obviously needed to refer to these books when reading.

V.2.2. Beyond the Examination Market

In the Classics branch, next to Classical philology (ClaPhl, 200 editions) is the category of the *Changes* (ClaCha, 110), which is followed by the categories of the *Book of Rituals* (ClaRit, 107), the *Spring and Autumn* (ClaSpa, 97) and the Four Books (ClaFrb,

⁵⁷ Lin Qingzhang 1994, "Mingdai de Han Song xue wenti," 12-24; "Wan Ming jingxue de fuxing yundong" 晚明經學的復興運動 [The reviviation of Classical scholarship in the late Ming], 79-145.

⁵⁸ Hanato Masahiro 2004.

69). Included in the category of Classical philology were rhyme guides, lexicons, and works on phonology, paleography and etymology. As reference books helpful in reading the Classics and other texts, they were naturally in great demand. The increase in their imprints resulted from the growing number of Ming readers who needed to know the pronunciation and meaning of characters.⁵⁹ As one of the shortest Classics (25,000 characters) and thus relatively easy to memorize, the *Changes* became the first choice in the examination market of the mid-Ming and remained highly popular even in the Qing. This Classic also provided philosophical language essential for theory on the natural world and unusual phenomena, which topics were commonly covered in the Ming examinations.⁶⁰ Therefore, books on the *Changes* attracted more readers than those on other Classics.

To relate imprints of the Classics and their exegeses to a specialization in the Classics in the Ming civil examinations appears plausible for explaining the growing number of editions in the *Changes* category, but this logic is not necessarily applicable to the cases of other Classics. For instance, the *Book of Rituals* and *Spring and Autumn* were the least popular with examination candidates, less popular than the *Poetry* or the *Documents*.⁶¹ Since the Ming reinstatement of examinations in 1384-85, moreover, the Four Books had taken priority over the Five Classics in session one, and the quality of eight-legged essays on the former was used as the main criterion by which the examiner ranked candidates.⁶² This superiority means that imprints on the Four Books should have

⁵⁹ Hanato Masahiro 2003. He lists 354 Ming imprints on Classical philology with more bibliographical sources than Du Xinfu referred to.

⁶⁰ Elman 2000, 74-75, 280-83, 464-85, 466-76.

⁶¹ Ibid., 74-75, 282-83.

⁶² Ibid., 85, 425-27; Sano Kōji 1988, chap. 7.

outnumbered those on the Five Classics in the examination market. As we have noticed, however, this is not the case.

We encounter a similar dilemma when analyzing the statistics for imprints in the History and Philosophy branches. Knowledge of history was crucial to handling the policy questions in session three of the provincial, metropolitan and palace examinations. Most policy questions were historical; even when some of them were not, candidates were expected to prepare a historical account of the non-historical topic.⁶³ Dynastic histories of two dominant genres (annals-biography [HisAbi] and annals [HisAnl]) were printed in various editions, and were ideal historical readings for examination candidates. Collections of imperial edicts and memorials (HisEdm) were also inspiring for examination candidates who had to prepare policy questions. Examination candidates, however, by no means were the only users of books in the historical category. Guidebooks on government institutions taught officials and clerks how to survive in the official world.⁶⁴ Ming observers decried the desire for examination titles for causing a deterioration of reading habits, but this does not mean that companions designed for the civil examinations were the only remarkable imprints that readers could access.

V.2.3. Gap between Text Production and Reading

When analyzing the statistics of Ming imprints, we should keep in mind a disjunction between text production and reading, or between the implied reader and the real. What literati actually printed, read, and wrote in the Ming could be more complex than might be thought. In my statistics, we can observe the flourishing of printed

⁶³ Elman 2000, 487-88.

⁶⁴ Will 2003; Will 1999.

biographies. That they were of high quantity (HisBio, 304 editions) does not mean that the Ming dynasty was a period of biography. The ritual and symbolic values of this genre, as we witnessed in our own age, were of more concern for producers than for most potential readers.

The significance of both text production and reading for a sketch of reading habits and any branch of knowledge can be further demonstrated in the case of geographical publications. Ming readers' knowledge of geography was mainly derived from local gazetteers and other geographical writings. Route books, i.e. travelers' handbooks of water and land routes, were available in the bookstore for scholars, merchants and other readers, who relied on these textual resources when traveling around the country.⁶⁵ Along with the flourishing of local histories, lots of topographical and institutional gazetteers were produced and circulated widely in the Ming. Production of these gazetteers first becomes noticeable in the sixteenth century and peaks in the first half of the seventeenth century. This surge in gazetteer production resulted from the expansion of gentry society and overpopulation of degree-holders. To involve oneself in local affairs rather than seek bureaucratic appointment became the gentry's main goal after winning an examination title. They compiled local gazetteers as a way of elevating the prestige of their localities.⁶⁶ Ming gazetteers were collected and used by readers within and outside the locality.⁶⁷ Some scholars also recognized and used them as sources of unique information such as biographical and topographical details.⁶⁸ But much remains unknown about the transmission of geographical knowledge from author or producer to actual readers. To

⁶⁵ Brook 2002, 2-8.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 31-35.

⁶⁷ Dennis 2004, chaps. 4 and 5.

⁶⁸ E.g. Ma 2008; Ma 2009, 99.

expose such transmission, a distinction and then comparison between the author's intention in compiling the gazetteer and his readers' uses of it could be a feasible approach.

V.2.4. Knowledge across the Socio-Cultural Boundary

Within the Philosophy branch, which contains various arts, sharing of knowledge among readers of different socio-cultural statuses is evident. Here I prefer “commonality” of knowledge to “democratization” of knowledge when describing the epistemic result of appropriation by different groups of readers in their practices. Democratization of knowledge is hypothetical, based on a state-society opposition and an analysis of genres and texts rather than real readers, and relying on a present reading imposed on imagined readers of the past. It tells us little about the uses made of texts by their readers but, implicitly and explicitly, assumes a correspondence between genre and text (and knowledge contained therein) and imagined readers' socio-cultural status. Following this hypothesis, the elite reader would prefer highbrow genres and texts over lowbrow ones in his construction of a knowledge repertoire. Such a hypothesis means a unidirectional transmission of knowledge, elite to common, rather than a reciprocal one.

The Classical texts and standard histories, if not adapted and popularized, reflected the world of elite readers, yet many texts in the Philosophical branch were shared by both lowbrow and highbrow readers. For instance, it is hard to come up with a reasonable sociological explanation for Daoist publications in the Ming (PhiTao, 137 editions), since traditional bibliographers tended to lump texts of religious Daoism and philosophical Daoism into the same category (PhiTao). Philosophical Daoism denotes a specific

intellectual frame represented in the *Daodejing* and a few other philosophical writings by a handful of authors scattered through history, while religious Daoism commonly refers to social groups who had special scriptural traditions, objects of worship, and spiritual genealogies.⁶⁹ Regarding the high quantity of Buddhist imprints (PhiBud, 152), this may reflect a growing interest in Buddhism among the gentry from the mid-sixteenth century onward,⁷⁰ but popular editions of Buddhist scriptures were also published for and sponsored by illiterate commoners. Books on arts (PhiArt, 147), catalogues of painting and clothing, and guides for collecting antiques (PhiMnl, 35) were printed and circulated among the Ming literate elite from the middle of the sixteenth century to 1644, a period when luxury objects were favoured by the gentry, merchants, and even small landlords as commodities for consumption.⁷¹ Coincident with the flourishing of these publications on connoisseurship was a boom in the publishing of encyclopedias, which comprised a large portion of Ming imprints (PhiEnc, 387). Encyclopedias for daily use served common readers as a means of knowledge acquisition and were effectively used in real life, as represented in works of fiction.⁷² Literary encyclopedias were also compiled and published as scholarly compendia for students preparing for the civil examinations.⁷³ Miscellaneous works in this branch included those that could not be properly entered under other established categories. Accordingly, we can find a striking number of editions in this category (PhiMis, 475), which is too inclusive to reveal details about contents without further exploration. Who read them is also difficult to define sociologically.

⁶⁹ Sivin 1995b, "On the Word 'Taoist!'" (1978), VI.304-06.

⁷⁰ Brook 1993, 178-82.

⁷¹ Clunas 2004, chap. 1, esp. 34-35.

⁷² Sakai Tadao 1958; Ogawa Yōichi 1995.

⁷³ Wu 1943, *passim*.

The categories calling for attention are those of medicine (PhiMed, 577), astronomy and mathematics (PhiAst, 146), and mantic arts (PhiMan, 116), all of which demonstrate the importance of medicine and other arts in daily life for both Ming elite and common readers. Commercial, government, and household publishers all printed medical texts, and of these household publications were the most numerous. Household publishers also produced books on astronomy, mathematics and mantic arts. Mantic arts are considered lowbrow and most of their authors were anonymous or used pseudonymous or fraudulent names, but the prevalence of household editions of these texts suggests that they were also used by the literate elite.

This general statistical approach, which focuses on text production only, is employed to sketch the development of the book industry and even uses of books,⁷⁴ but is obviously ahistorical and not useful for exploring the knowledge landscape derived from publications. Without a chronological description of the bibliographic subdivisions of Ming imprints, it is not possible to disclose the historical vicissitudes of printed knowledge. We should appropriately contextualize these categories, dating their historical changes and describing them in the historical context so that we can sketch the secular trend in epistemic development.

Given that commercial, household, and government publications were defined by the social identities of the respective publishers and that commercial and household publishers determined the panorama of Ming imprints,⁷⁵ I shall next explore the disparity in categories between commercial and household imprints. While household publications conventionally served gentry society, commercial ones were tailored to meet the needs of

⁷⁴ Chia 2002, Chs. 5-6, 312-15 Tables C.2 and C.3.; Chia 2007.

⁷⁵ Dai (forthcoming).

various readers who could pay for them. Therefore, an analysis of the categories of household imprints as compared to those of commercial imprints will shed light on the sociological make-up of Ming readers: How did the gentry elite distinguish themselves from other readers when publishing? What knowledge did they share with others or appropriate into their own culture?

V.3. State and Society in Reading Histories for Statecraft

Zhu Xi's epistemic tradition consisted of statecraft, Classical Learning and history, philosophy and literature, all of which were firmly based on book learning and reading. This framework was employed by Gu Yanwu in his encyclopaedic *Rizhi lu* (Records of daily knowing), in which he divided his knowledge into the same three branches and treated statecraft as his academic goal.⁷⁶ After the early Ming Confucians of Jinhua, whom we have discussed in Chapter Three, the idea of statecraft revived among Ming elite readers from the second half of the fifteenth century onward. Ming scholars of statecraft grounded their ideas on book learning and reading as perpetuated from Zhu Xi and Zhen Dexiu (see Chapter Two). Intellectual scepticism, advocated by Wang Yangming's radical followers, did not hinder the recognition of book learning within elite reading practices.

The Ming statecraft tendency is fully demonstrated in the ecology of Ming historiography. In this ecology, Ming unofficial historians were preoccupied with narratives of the present dynasty's history, since the state failed to take the role traditionally assumed in historiography. For them, to understand the present state was

⁷⁶ Qian Mu 1971, "Zhuzi xue tigang" 朱子學提綱 [Outline of Studies of Master Zhu], I:221; Gu Yanwu 1834.

more important and practical than to study the past. Thus society, not the state, determined Ming readers' acquisition of historical knowledge.

V.3.1. Statecraft and Understanding the Present

In their historical studies, Ming scholars witnessed the statecraft tendency and trend of “understanding the present” (*tongjin* 通今), both of which Zhu anticipated in his theory of reading. Statecraft was originally a part of the tradition of Classical Learning. Confucian scholars and officials tended to apply principles from the Classics, e.g. the *Rituals of Zhou*, to their civil administrative practices and political and social theories.⁷⁷ This tradition expanded from the state level to the local and voluntary levels in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Despite their emphasis on internal self-cultivation, Neo-Confucians of the Song were no less ardent when it came to political and social programmes, even after their loss of faith in central state activism. Local infrastructure, such as the private academy and community granary, was established at their behest and served local society under their supervision.⁷⁸ These institutions continued to have a distinct significance in the society of Ming and Qing China.

The Song idea of statecraft developed into a movement of concrete learning in the early- to mid-sixteenth century, when the state encountered threats from Japanese pirates along its coastline (and from nomadic tribes in the Mongolian Plateau along its entire course). Political crises aroused concern among scholars with “solid” and practical knowledge, as opposed to the impractical and purely metaphysical Neo-Confucian discourse on mind and human nature, especially the moral and intellectual scepticism

⁷⁷ Elman and Kern 2010.

⁷⁸ Hymes and Schirokauer 1993, “Introduction.”

popular among radical followers of Wang Yangming. For these scholars of concrete learning, knowledge was ultimately of practical utility. Accordingly, their concerns went beyond traditional Classical Learning and reached out to the fields of natural studies, water control, agriculture, crafts and techniques, and civil administration, as exemplified by Xu Guangqi's (1562-1633) intellectual life.⁷⁹

Although its meaning and scope deserve further exploration, the movement of concrete learning characterized the intellectual history of the late Ming and early Qing.⁸⁰ It was conventionally described with the slogan “ordering the world and promoting utility” (*C. jingshi zhiyong* 經世致用; *J. keisei chiyō* 經世致用).⁸¹ Applied to historical studies, this idea renewed the subject of historiography, the structuring of the historical branch of knowledge, and reading habits. Agriculture, irrigation, grain transport, taxation, levy and *corvée*, international trade, famine relief, salt administration, granary and frontier defense, and the like were historically investigated to draw precedents and learn lessons useful for civil administration and military practices. Thus Feng Yingjing (1555-1606) titled his historical study of Ming institutions “Practices of ordering the world in the August Ming” (*Huang Ming jingshi lu*). In Feng's view, both words and mind were “empty” while movement and action were “solid;” without the solid, the empty could not come into being. Literary arts for talent recruitment, titles and regulations for official appointments, standard paperwork in administration and unsubstantial lectures in academies, he

⁷⁹ Jami et al 2001.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 13-14; Chen Guying et al 1994.

⁸¹ Yamanoi Yū 1980, 223-38.

maintained, were all impractical. Thus he intended his historical writing as a guide to “civil administration and learning.”⁸²

Among imprints under the History branch, as we can find in *Table 5.3.1*, those about geography (17%) and government institutions (11%) stand out. These two fields of study shed more light on the Ming idea of statecraft, since they were closely related to military defense and civil administration.⁸³ Conventional Ming geographical sources, represented by the *Gazetteer of the Unified Great Ming* (*Da Ming yitongzhi* 大明一統志) published in 1461 under imperial auspices, were essentially literary. In them literary descriptions of the local scenery and customs and cultural relics were collected from earlier *belles-lettres* and arranged under the related entry. A purely geographical concern did not emerge among Ming scholars until 1557, when Zhang Tianfu (1513-1574) published his *Investigation of the Imperial Territory* (*Huangyu kao* 皇輿考) to correct the 1461 gazetteer by providing accurate topographical details. At the end of the sixteenth century, administrative features were added to geographical texts, and thus geographical books became of more use to local officials and clerks than to literary readers.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, geographical information from route books and encyclopedias for daily life was integrated into texts on government institutions and bureaucracy. As a result, those guide books became more local in orientation and detailed.⁸⁵ Such cross-referencing between geographical sources and books on civil administration demonstrated and fostered their popularity with readers, in particular literati, officials, and merchants.

⁸² Feng Yingjing 1604, “*Jingshi shiyong bian xu*” 經世實用編敍 [Self-preface to *Practices of ordering the world*], 1b; Dai Ren 戴任, “*Shiyong bian zuanxiu xingshi xuyou*” 實用編纂修姓氏敍由 [The cause for the list of editors involved in the compilation of *Shiyong bian*], *ibid.*, 2a.

⁸³ Wang Yong 1956.

⁸⁴ Ōsawa Akihiro 1993.

⁸⁵ Ōsawa Akihiro 1996.

The above idea of statecraft is commonly viewed as a product of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when political turmoil called for practical knowledge and the publishing boom amidst economic prosperity made its wide circulation possible. It is hard to demonstrate the existence of a statecraft school in the Ming because scholars of statecraft held various philosophical stances. Yet, scholars in the Yuan-Ming transition, mainly those from Zhejiang who contributed their prestige and learning to Zhu Yuanzhang's regime, devoted themselves to problems of the institutional framework for government, both local and central. Most of them were well-trained jurists and bureaucrats, and their approach to government was utilitarian and historical rather than moralistic, as traditional Confucian officials tended to be.⁸⁶ Their skills and learning were about statecraft and "solid," while concrete learning in the Ming context appeared in the second half of the fifteenth century or earlier. In 1487 Qiu Jun presented to the throne his *Supplement to Zhen Dexiu's Extended Meaning of the Great Learning (Daxue yanyi)*. It was intended as a handbook in statecraft for Ming emperors and officials, and written from an historical and empirical perspective to address the political and social issues of his age. Unlike his predecessor Zhen, who stressed the emperor's morally uplifting influence on governance, Qiu concerned himself more with institutional problems and the functions of the Ming central government that were helpful in "ordering the state and pacifying the world." His intellectual orientation anticipated statecraft writings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and his *Supplement* was printed in various editions and adapted, abridged and incorporated into other works for specific uses.⁸⁷ As I have discussed in Chapter Three, Qiu was a sincere admirer of Zhu's theory of reading. In his

⁸⁶ Langlois 1981; Dardess 1983.

⁸⁷ Chu 1986; de Bary 1981, 180-85.

Supplement five chapters were devoted to reading the Classics with the help of the rules that Zhu proposed. Other Song and Yuan Confucian masters were cited to support those rules.⁸⁸

Qiu's utilitarian and historical concern with Ming institutional problems was, implicitly or explicitly, echoed by Zhang Tianfu and unofficial historians in their own ways, as I shall discuss below. Unofficial historians stressed the significance of Ming state history for civil administrative and military practices, particularly for the resolution of contemporary political and socio-economic problems.

Although they had been part of the civil examinations since the third quarter of the fourteenth century, it was only in the 1540s that Ming state history and institutional problems began to be of concern as subjects for historical study rather than as materials to be prepared for the examinations.⁸⁹ For these scholars, "understanding the present" was as crucial as "studying the past," and both were more significant than insubstantial discussions of mind or human nature.⁹⁰ Unless he knew well the state institutions, an aspiring official could not obtain political or administrative achievements or undertake his responsibilities.⁹¹ Among the earliest products of this practical concern was a collection of Ming memorials compiled in 1551 by Zhang Han (1510-1593), a pioneering work that was supplemented with at least two later selections.⁹² Zhang designed this collection as a reference tool for scholars and officials, most of whom he regarded as slaves to ancient traditions who were ignorant of present peoples, events and institutions.

⁸⁸ Qiu Jun 1781, chaps. 73-77.

⁸⁹ Zheng Xiao 1984 [1566], 1.40.

⁹⁰ Ibid., "Xu"; He Liangjun 1959 [1569], 5.43.

⁹¹ Zhu Dashao 朱大韶, "Chukeben xu" 初刻本序 [Preface to the first printed edition], in He Liangjun 1959, 7; Gao Dai 1565, "*Hongyou lu xu*" 鴻猷錄序 [Preface to the *Record of grand strategies*](1557), 1b.

⁹² Zhang Han 1551; Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 56.1251.

This contrast in approach to statecraft reveals the lopsidedness of the average Ming scholars' epistemic framework. Trained in classical education, they knew more about antiquity from books than the circumstances of their present. Consequently, in Zhang's view, scholars so trained could not effectively take up their administrative responsibilities. Providing rich precedents and the experiences implicit in memorials submitted by his Ming predecessors, Zhang aimed to enhance his readers' administrative skills.⁹³ This approach, which emphasized the history of the current dynasty rather than the ancient sages' models, distinguished Zhang's work from traditional statecraft, which applied Confucian Classics such as the *Rituals of Zhou* to real political reforms.

Despite this difference, Zhang and his colleagues attempted to justify their approach by citing ancient Confucian precedents. They learned this device from their classical education, in which Classical Learning was the core of their knowledge framework. Although studies of antiquity were a prerequisite to entering officialdom, as one king of Zhou had observed, deliberation about state affairs should be based on current institutions and officials should apply the regular statutes of the dynasty to their measures.⁹⁴ In support of this approach, unofficial historians of the state after Zhang Han also appealed to the attitude of Confucius (551-479 BC) towards the Zhou dynasty and his editing of the *Spring and Autumn*. For Xue Yingqi (1500-1575), among ancient texts attributed to Confucius the *Spring and Autumn* was the most practical and concrete. Its principles of comment, reward and punishment, for Xue, were firmly grounded in the historical events and institutional framework of the Lu state. Following Confucius's model, Xue, who regarded himself as a patriot and an admirer of Wang Yangming,

⁹³ Yang Xuan 楊選, "Huang Ming shuyi jilue xu" 皇明疏議輯略序 [Preface to the *Collected memorials of the August Ming*], Zhang Han 1551, 1b-3a.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 1a. The allusion is from the *Documents*; see Legge 1960, III:531-32.

compiled an annalistic history of the Ming from 1368 to 1521 that emphasized precedents and institutions.⁹⁵ Xue's history was extended to 1572 by Wu Ruideng. Just like Xue, Wu also kept Confucius in mind when compiling the supplement—although he traced his moral and political principles back to the legendary emperors Yao and Shun, Confucius turned to the regulations established by Kings Wen and Wu of Zhou as his model, since they founded the dynasty in which he lived.⁹⁶

Behind this model of Confucius, however, we find also Ming unofficial historians' utilitarian idea of the distinctness of their dynasty from previous periods or antiquity. One of Zhang Han's collaborators, Chao Li, emphasized the institutional specificity of the Ming's founding and maintenance. According to him, institutions and precedents from the early Ming emperors were more useful and practicable than those excavated from previous dynasties, and the investigation of ancient institutions was unnecessary. Only when institutions were perpetuated was continuity of governance and rulership possible.⁹⁷ Radical advocates of statecraft even denounced the uselessness and insubstantiality of ancient sages' models in the Ming context, pointing out that the regulations left from the ancient times were too illusory to be apprehended.⁹⁸

Statecraft was a concern exclusive to the literati. Although both commercial and household publishers produced historical books that enjoyed a huge market, such as the *Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror*, a concern with statecraft and concrete learning largely characterized household publishing in the History branch and distinguished it

⁹⁵ Xue Yingqi 1574, "Xianzhang lu xu" 憲章錄序 [Preface to the *Record of previous examples to learn*], 1a-b.

⁹⁶ Li Shihua 李時華, "Liangchao xianzhang lu xu" 兩朝憲章錄序, in Wu Ruideng 1594, 1a-b.

⁹⁷ Chao Li 晁璠, "Huang Ming shuyi jilue xu," in Zhang Han 1551, 2b-5b.

⁹⁸ Li Youzi 李幼滋, "Huang Ming liangchao shuchao xu" 皇明兩朝疏抄序 [Preface to the *Selected memorials from the preceding two reigns of the August Ming*], in Gu Erxing 1578, 2a-3a; Jiang Jizeng 姜繼曾, "Huang Ming liangchao shuchao xu," *ibid*, 5b.

from commercial publishing, especially in the Ming's last century (Tables 5.1.3 and 5.3.1).

V.3.2. State and Society in Knowledge Transmission through Reading

The ideal of statecraft made possible multiple sources from which Ming readers acquired and innovated knowledge. As they involved themselves in society, elite scholars produced and transmitted knowledge beyond the court. Society took up the role that the state traditionally had assumed in programming what to read and learn. This has been described as a democratization of knowledge, but differences in reading habits were carefully maintained between elite and common readers.

As demonstrated in Table 5.3.1, both commercial and household publishers were interested in annalistic-biographical histories (HisAbi), which were largely composed from standard histories. Remarkable distinctions between commercial and household publishing can be found, however. Clearly the household publisher preferred publications of biographies (HisBio) and edicts and memorials (HisEdm). These imprints crystallized the gentry family's social, cultural and political privileges and achievements and were more appreciated by elite readers than by common ones. Both bureaucratic guides (HisBur) and books on government institutions (HisGvi) were produced by commercial and household publishers, yet the latter published them much more than the former. In fact, in the Ming these two types of publications were mainly targeted at officials and clerks in government service, for whom they were indispensable reference books. They

were rarely available in bookshops or as highly valued by Ming collectors as other books were.⁹⁹

In the categories of historical excerpts (HisExc), historiography (HisHis) and miscellaneous history (HisMis), the distinction between commercial and household publishing is too slight to be conveyed by numbers. The percentages tell us that commercial publishers stressed these three types of historical publications among their products more than household ones did. An examination of the topics covered and targeted readers of their imprints, however, reveals more.

Among commercial publications, the excerpted histories were mainly Sima Qian's (ca. 145-ca. 86 BC) *The Great Scribe's Records* and Ban Gu's *History of the Former Han*. Historiography largely comprises collected comments on dynastic histories (e.g. a genre called "*lichao jielu*" [lit. "shortcut to dynastic histories"]) and historical essays derived from the *Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror*—the purpose of both types being to help examination candidates prepare historical topics. Miscellaneous histories such as *Zhanguoce* (Intrigues of the Warring States) and *Guoyu* (Discourse of the states) were commented upon and adapted. Commercial interest in pre-Qin and Han historical texts was more literary than historical: commentaries aimed to teach the reader rhetorical strategies for composing prose in the Qin-Han style. Commercial publishers were also interested in unofficial Ming history and excerpted histories other than those of Sima Qian and Ban Gu, but editions of these were far fewer than those of pre-Han and Qin works.

Meanwhile, household publishers enjoyed a wider scope of historical works. Their excerpted histories ranged from those of Sima Qian and Ban Gu to the *History of the*

⁹⁹ Hu Yinglin 1896a, 4:2a.

Yuan. They printed miscellaneous histories more than *Zhanguoce* and *Guoyu*, works such as *Wu-Yue chungiu* (The annals of Wu and Yue), *Yuejue shu* (Yue's destruction of Wu), Chang Qu's (fl. 265-316) *Huayang guozhi* (The state gazetteer of Huayang), and unofficial histories of the Ming and pre-Yuan dynasties. Household publishers printed works of historiography as academic studies more than as literary guides to the civil examinations. In addition to scholarly discussions of some dynastic histories, historiographic works—in particular Liu Zhiji's *Shi tong* (Understanding history) and its imitations—were produced in various editions. Works such as these seemed not to have been a commercial venture. Bibliographies (HisBib), inscriptions (HisIns), topically-arranged histories (HisTop), and unorthodox dynastic histories (HisUno) appear to be specific to household publishing. They were not considered helpful in preparing for the civil examinations, but were of interest to the minority of elite readers who were capable of collecting books and antiques and who were concerned with unusual styles of historical narrative.

The abovementioned diversity of categories between commercial and household publications reflects a difference in the goals of reading history between common and elite readers. The examination market and economic interests motivated commercial publishing of historical texts for common readers, while historical studies continued to thrive among literati, who found in household and government publishing significance other than the success in the civil examinations.

A good example is the category of annals in the History branch (HisAnI). In general, commercial publishers favoured abbreviations, summaries and adaptations of Sima Guang's (1019-1086) massive chronicle *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*

(*Zizhi tongjian*), in particular the *Outline of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* (*Zizhi tongjian gangmu*) that Zhu Xi planned and one of his disciples edited.¹⁰⁰ Among household editions, more annals of the Ming and other dynasties were published than summaries or adaptations of Sima Guang.

The difference in reading habits between elite and common can be further illustrated with the publication of the *Outline*. Although highly moralistic, the *Outline* was read more widely than Sima Guang's original text in Ming and Qing China, mainly because of its brevity and growing ideological significance.¹⁰¹ Its Neo-Confucian orientation and didacticism placed it among the textbooks designated for examination candidates seeking knowledge of history. Zhu Xi and his disciples recommended the *Outline* as an introductory exposure to Sima Guang's original, but it was not until 1315 that Cheng Duanli listed it as part of a curriculum he designed for students fifteen years old or older.¹⁰² In the 1440s Xue Xuan memorialized that the *Outline* should be thoroughly expounded upon in the emperor's Classics Colloquium, on the grounds that from this book the emperor could learn self-cultivation and the art of ruling.¹⁰³ It was only in 1473 that the imperial promotion of the *Outline* took place, when the Chenghua emperor ordered his Hanlin academicians to reedit it for publication. In his preface to this new edition, the emperor eulogized the *Outline* for "being compiled in the style of the *Spring and Autumn*, clarifying Nature and Principle, correcting human relations, and praising the good and blaming the evil with meticulous phrases and essential ideas."

¹⁰⁰ For Sima Guang's chronicle, see Pulleyblank 1961, 151-59.

¹⁰¹ Schirokauer 1993, 200-06.

¹⁰² Cheng Duanli 1335, 2:1a-3a; Elman 2000, 271-76 ignores the detail on Zhu Xi's *Outline* in his quotation from Cheng.

¹⁰³ Xue Xuan, "Shang jiangxue zhang" 上講學章 [Memorial on the Classics colloquium], in Chen Zilong 1962 [1638], 32:4b-5a.

Three years later a continuation to the *Outline* was completed under the emperor's auspices, strictly following the Song style and principles.¹⁰⁴ Imperial imprints of the *Outline* and its continuation were bestowed upon some princes in later years.¹⁰⁵ In 1584, an imperial edict ordered that a new set of woodblocks for the *Outline* be engraved.¹⁰⁶ The Ming imperial edition was also conferred upon state school libraries as one of their core holdings.¹⁰⁷ Considered historically as embodying the orthodox learning of the Way, the *Outline* had been a main source for policy questions and answers in the civil examinations since the 1510s.¹⁰⁸ In 1579 an imperial edict reiterated that all students should read and even memorize this text.¹⁰⁹

The imperial model was imitated in different ways by commercial and household publishers, who anticipated that their readers would respond differently to the *Outline's* ideological ascendancy. For commercial publishers, the imperial designation of the *Outline* as a core text in the educational curriculum meant a large market for this text; for household publishers, the imperial favour bestowed on this text and its continuation engendered a sort of historiographic genre and set standards for historical writing as well. Qiu Jun compiled his *Shishi zhenggang* (Orthodox outline of human history) following Zhu's model.¹¹⁰ Thus commercial and household editions in the category of annals appeared in different scenerios, indicating that common and elite readers used these imprints in different ways. This does not mean that all commercially printed texts were

¹⁰⁴ *Ming shilu*, "Xianzong shilu" 憲宗實錄 [Veritable records of the Xianzong emperor], 113:2195-97, 159:2909-11.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, "Xiaozong shilu" 孝宗實錄 [Veritable records of the Xiaozong emperor], 119:2146; "Wuzong shilu" 武宗實錄 [Veritable records of the Wuzong emperor], 37:892.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, "Shenzong shilu" 神宗實錄 [Veritable records of the Shenzong emperor], 146:2730.

¹⁰⁷ Brook 2005, 109 Table 5.1.

¹⁰⁸ Elman 2000, 488-99.

¹⁰⁹ Shen Shixing 1587, 78:17b-18a.

¹¹⁰ Lee 2005, esp. 138-40.

lowbrow or household ones highbrow, but that common and elite readers had distinct ways of reading even the same text.

The above-mentioned imperial intervention in editing and publishing the *Outline* appears to have been rare in Ming China. In my statistics, commercial and household publication of historical works far surpassed that by the government. The official retreat from Ming historiography was largely compensated for by unofficial and private histories inspired by the the idea of learning statecraft and understanding the present. Ming unofficial historians authored far more historical works than their predecessors did, in various forms. Their narratives of Ming history, when printed and widely circulated, challenged the imperial monopoly of the historical record. The flourishing of unofficial and private history thus functioned as the main source of Ming elite readers' historical knowledge, whilst court historians and the government became less authoritative.

The Ming government did compile and publish works of historiography, but their circulation was rather limited. In both the Ming and the Qing, local governments played a crucial role in the compilation of local gazetteers, cooperating and negotiating with the local gentry.¹¹¹ The Ming court was also a publisher. More than half of its publications (about two hundred titles) were compiled and produced during its first sixty years, when the founding Hongwu emperor and his son, the Yongle emperor, urgently established regulations, including control over historical discourse, to secure their rule.¹¹² Among these imperial publications, books in the History branch (116 titles) outnumbered those in other branches, but 74 titles (63.8%) were compiled and published as statutes, guides to

¹¹¹ Dennis 2001; Ba Zhaoxiang 2004, 50-51; Kobayashi Yukio 2007 and 2009.

¹¹² Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, "Xu" [Preface], in Li Jinhua 1932, ii.

government institutions, rituals, and collections of decrees, with only three standard histories of preceding dynasties, three annalistic histories, one daily record, nine gazetteers, and one work of historical criticism, in addition to fourteen veritable records.¹¹³ These imperially approved works, because of their limited circulation, could not offset the growing number of unofficial and private histories, especially when the Ming court rarely compiled or published works on historical studies from the second half of the fifteenth century onward. The traditional institution for writing official histories still operated in the Hanlin Academy and was responsible for collecting documentary materials, but it was unable to monopolize the production and distribution of works of historiography, as had been true in earlier periods. Unofficial historians, although they shared historical materials with state institutions, were recognized as more accessible sources for historical knowledge by most Ming readers since the second half of the sixteenth century.

This change in the way of acquiring historical knowledge was more evident in the history of the Ming state.¹¹⁴ Among the earliest Ming private histories was Chen Jian's (1497-1567) *Huang Ming tongji* (General annals of the August Ming, 1555), an annalistic history covering the period 1351-1521. Perhaps the first published general history of the present dynasty, it anticipated later Ming unofficial histories.¹¹⁵ Its general descriptions of historical events were also considered helpful for examination candidates when preparing their policy questions.¹¹⁶ From 1555 to the early Qing it was published in various editions under different titles, supplemented, excerpted, and outlined, with dozens

¹¹³ Ibid., 77-80.

¹¹⁴ Franke 1998, 736-60.

¹¹⁵ Xie Guozhen 1981, 38.

¹¹⁶ Meng Sen 1959, "Shu Ming shi chaolue" 書明史鈔略 [A note on the *Excerption of the Ming history*], 142-43.

of commercial and household editions of both the original and the adapted texts extant.¹¹⁷ Even elite historians who despised and attacked it had to recognize its popularity with scholars.¹¹⁸ The Ming court disliked Chen Jian's work, however. In October of 1571, the Longqing emperor decreed the burning of its woodblocks and prohibited the Bureau of Historiography from citing it. Since Ming *Veritable Records* and historiography conventionally were compiled by officials at the behest of the emperor and their work was collected only in the palace, Chen Jian was condemned as a common and unreliable historian who had arrogated this privilege. Wide circulation of his unauthorized accounts, for the Ming court, could badly harm the state and public opinion if not banned.¹¹⁹ Confronted with challenges from unofficial historians, the Ming court in 1593 finally launched a project of compiling the history of its dynasty. This project was terminated in 1597 because of bureaucratic conflicts between the officials involved.¹²⁰ The Ming state irretrievably retreated from the field and surrendered the arena to unofficial historians as an alternative source elaborating its own history. Elite readers could access biography, geography, government institutions, Ming state history, and other genres of historical writings, acquiring and updating their historical knowledge with a variety of texts, even though the availability of an individual book to readers is hard to demonstrate.

For late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries historians engaged in contemporary history, unofficial historical works were their main sources of materials. The *Veritable Records* of Ming reigns had been accessible only to their compilers and the emperors, as imperially required. They were hand copied and circulated beyond the Forbidden City,

¹¹⁷ Aramiya Manabu 2005 and 2006; Qian Maowei 2008.

¹¹⁸ Shen Defu 1959, 25.638.

¹¹⁹ *Ming shilu*, "Muzong shilu" 穆宗實錄 [The veritable record of the Muzong emperor], 61.1491; Shen Defu 1959, 25.638. Cf. Qian Maowei 2003, 222-36, esp. 227; Qian Maowei 2008, 48.

¹²⁰ Li Xiaolin 1999, 34-40; Qian Maowei 2003, chap. 13.

first perhaps in 1534 and then becoming more accessible from 1588 onward to a few scholars-officials, when the Jiajing and the Wanli emperors ordered that they be copied for imperial perusal. They were referred to in some late Ming and early Qing unofficial historical narratives, but were never printed for Ming common readers.¹²¹ In the transmission of historical knowledge, therefore, these imperial archives remained less determinative, although more “authentic,” than printed unofficial histories. In writing his *General Annals*, Chen Jian could not get access to the *Veritable Records*, only to a few government publications of Ming institutions and a few more unofficial historical works, which he found less systematic but complementary to those produced under official auspices.¹²² In 1557, when the *Veritable Records* was reported to have been circulating among officials for dozens of years, Gao Dai, an official in the Ministry of Justice, still complained about the inaccessibility of these primary materials. He based his history of the Ming on earlier officials’ writings.¹²³ Until the end of the sixteenth century, the *Veritable Records* remained inaccessible to most historians, but private historical books were available in bookstores in Nanjing. In editing his father’s record of the Jiajing and Longqing reigns (1521-1572), Shen Chaoyang could only rely on private histories, circulated memorials, *belles-lettres*, and local gazetteers.¹²⁴ The same difficulty continued unabated in the early seventeenth century, even though a few unofficial historians could access hand-copied versions of the *Veritable Records*.¹²⁵ Thus official histories and archives remained hard to access for elite readers and would have been

¹²¹ Mano Senryū 1979, “Min jitsuroku no kenkyū” 明實錄の研究 [A study on the Ming *Veritable Records*], 99-101; Xie Guian 2003, 39-49.

¹²² Chen Jian 2008, “Fanli” 凡例 [Principles for editing], 22-23.

¹²³ Gao Dai 1565, “Hongyoulu xu” 鴻猷錄序 [Preface to the *Record of grant strategies*], 1b.

¹²⁴ Shen Yue 1599, “Huang Ming Jia Long liangchao wenjian ji xu” 皇明嘉隆兩朝聞見紀叙 [Postscript to...] by his son Shen Chaoyang 沈朝陽, 1b-4b; “Caiju shumu” 採摭書目 [Reference matter], 3a-b.

¹²⁵ Guo Zhengyu 郭正域, “Huang Ming dazheng ji xu” 皇明大政紀序 [Preface to...], in Lei Li 1602, 4a-b.

inaccessible to common readers. Their historical knowledge was shaped by unofficial historians rather than the court, as had been true in earlier dynasties.

The Ming state's retreat from historiography did not hinder the flourishing of historical works or the transmission of historical knowledge to readers. In the midst of the publishing boom, society and individual writers were taking on the role that the state traditionally had assumed, of programming habits of reading history through its monopoly of historical knowledge production.

Challenges to the state's monopoly also appeared in other branches of knowledge, those practical and technical in particular. In late imperial China, neither bureaucratic nor academic control was exerted over medical learning and practice. As a result, diverse introductory medical publications made a reasonable amount of medical knowledge accessible for literate readers.¹²⁶ On the other hand, the Ming state intended to exercise a near monopoly on astronomical publications. In *Table 5.3.1*, the number of government editions on astronomy, astrology and mathematics (PhiAst, 108) far surpassed those of commercial and household publishers (10 and 28 respectively). Mathematical astronomy and observational astrology provided the disciplinary foundation for almanacs, which encompassed all heavenly events including planetary phenomena and eclipses. Their predictive function endowed these disciplines with significance in the solemn ceremonies that legitimized the emperor's authority. Therefore the imperial institution was established to monopolize such knowledge. Over the course of the Ming dynasty, it was illegal for private readers (other than imperial astronomers) to practice astronomy and astrology or even to collect books in these two fields without official authorization.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Leung 2003b, 130-31, 149.

¹²⁷ Jiang 2005, 114, *Article 184*.

The Ming official system of mathematical astronomy was established in 1384 and subsequently underwent reformations of its computational method. The calendar based on it regularly failed by the seventeenth century.¹²⁸ In the sixteenth century, Western mathematics and mathematical astronomy were introduced into China. In quick response, a few Chinese scholars began to study Western knowledge and rethink the Chinese tradition, and traditional astronomy revived in concert with the imported ideas. Thus, according to historians of science, it was only with the loosening of bureaucratic control in the late Ming that mathematics and astronomy became favorite topics with some important Neo-Confucian scholars.¹²⁹

The above policy-oriented observation, however, is in contrast to the actual transmission of such institutionally monopolized knowledge within the gentry family's scholarly tradition. Zhang Han's Hangzhou family maintained its tradition of astronomy, astrology, and mathematics from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-eighteen centuries without any break. The Zhangs based this scholarly tradition on their exegesis of the *Changes*, which was another part of their family learning (*jiaxue* 家學). This Classic was the main specialization of those of its sons who attended the civil examinations. As for practical knowledge, its most prolific practitioner was imperially recognized in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, when the Qianlong emperor appointed a Zhang to serve as an Erudite in the Directorate of Astronomy. No scholarly activities in these fields were described in the Zhang family history of the Ming, but voluminous professional books were collected in their family library and a few practitioners were trained in every

¹²⁸ Sivin 1995a, "Wang Hsi-Shan," V.6.

¹²⁹ Sivin 1995a, "Wang Hsi-Shan," V.13-14; "Why the Scientific Revolution Did Not Take Place in China--Or Didn't It?" VII.62-64.

generation.¹³⁰ While the Confucian Classics were the foundation of Zhang family learning, of more interest to us is the textual base that made possible the transmission of technological knowledge within this family. Examples such as this suggest that the state could not directly control the reader's particular reading practices. When the production and transmission of knowledge are based on widely circulating texts, the state's involvement in learning atrophies and its monopoly becomes fragile.

V.4. Elite Distinctions in Commonality of Knowledge

Like commercial editions, household editions would ultimately circulate in the book market, even though they were originally produced as non-commercial or altruistic items. With particular reading publics (common and elite) in mind, however, commercial and household publishers employed various paratexts in their products—literary devices and physical forms—to meet the needs of a segmented market. The physical form of imprints undoubtedly delineated the social range of reading publics. As Robert Hegel argues, affluent readers favoured the expensive edition of high quality, while the poor sought the cheap edition of low quality.¹³¹ This material approach to the reader's world, however, amounts to a simple equating of reading habits with the physical forms of books and, eventually, with economic status.

In a culture where reading was a main method of knowledge acquisition, such an approach will mislead us into making a superficial identification of epistemic construction with economic status. In the formation of the reader's knowledge repertoire, the text itself is the final determinant rather than its material form, although the physical

¹³⁰ Wang Shizhen 1689, 29:7b-8a; Ding Shen 1957, 43; Dai (forthcoming).

¹³¹ Hegel 2005, 235-37.

form could impact the process of reading and drawing meaning from the text. With the circulation of texts across social, cultural and economic boundaries, and with the concomitant intellectual interaction between social and cultural groups, some knowledge was shared by people of various backgrounds. Epistemic commonality, however, does not erase the social and cultural stamp of reading habits preferred by readers, as is evident in the variations of categories between commercial and household imprints (see *Table 5.3.1*). As household publishing largely served elite readers while commercial publishing was open to all who were literate, the difference in categories between these two types of imprints is indicative of diversities in reading habits between elite and common readers.

V.4.1. Textual Tradition in Knowledge Transmission

In the Cheng-Zhu tradition, the canonized texts, including the Classics and the Song interpretation of them, were supposed to legitimate the transmission of the Way. While the social and political cohesion among fellow disciples determined the formation of a Neo-Confucian school,¹³² their common use of the shared and designated texts produced a textual tradition that consolidated the master-disciple lineage and distinguished it from other social and intellectual unions. This Neo-Confucian device provided a model of transmitting knowledge for other secular societies in Yuan and Ming China.

An imitation of the Neo-Confucian mold finally occurred in the world of medicine under Mongol rule. As institutions related to medicine as an occupation were established, the court endorsed a fictive transmission of the medical Way that politically and socially

¹³² E.g. Ichiki Tsuyuhiko 2002.

differentiated literati physicians (*ruyi* 儒醫) from shamanist healers, thaumaturges, and Daoist and Buddhist masters. The imperial institutions also converted medicine from an art to a science that could be transmitted through the circulation of texts.¹³³ Thus Jin and Yuan medical masters, following their Song Confucian counterparts, designated their canon so that scholarly medicine could be textually based, hence intellectually authentic and socially acceptable. They claimed that the *Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* was the only origin of medical learning.¹³⁴ As the earliest medical text in ancient China, this classic connected the elite physician with antiquity. For Zhu Zhenheng (1282-1358), the last and greatest of the Jin and Yuan masters, the *Yellow Emperor's Classic* was comprehensible only to Confucian scholars like himself because of its “simple phrases of profound meaning... [and] textual corruptions and misplacements” that occurred in its transmission. He held that this classic provided the fundamental discourse (*lun* 論) for medical practice (while *materia medica* prepared the reservoir of fixed prescriptions).¹³⁵ Yet, at least by the publication of his collected prescriptions in 1482, according to one observer, Zhu's work circulated only among a few interested Confucian scholars. Most physicians in their practice referred to the fixed prescriptions for their convenience rather than reading his theory, let alone the *Yellow Emperor's Classic*.¹³⁶ Zhu's views about the textual base of medicine, however, were followed and supplemented in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

¹³³ Shinno 2002.

¹³⁴ Goldschmidt 2009, 131-34; Wu 1993, 40-41.

¹³⁵ Zhu Zhenheng 1936, "Gezhi yulun xu" 格致餘論序 [Preface to the Extra discussion of investigating things and extending knowledge]; Song Lian, "Gu Danxi xiansheng Zhu gong biaoci" 故丹溪先生朱公表辭 [Tomb epigraphy to late Mr. Zhu, the Danxi Master], and Dai Jiuling 戴九靈, "Danxi weng zhuan" 丹溪翁傳 [A biography of Danxi the Elder], in Zhu 1939, 427-29, 431-39, respectively; Furth 2006; Goldschmidt 2009, 131-34.

¹³⁶ Cheng Minzheng 程敏政, "Danxin Xiansheng Xinfu xu" 丹溪先生心法序, in Zhu Zhenheng 1939, 1-2.

Thus, a textual tradition in knowledge transmission was implicitly or explicitly emphasized. For Ming elite physicians, without recorded ideas and practices medical knowledge could not be implemented, nor could the continuance of a lineage be sustained. The *Yellow Emperor's Classic* and other classics were expected to be read as the theoretical bases for medicine, with the understanding of the Confucian classics as prerequisite.¹³⁷ Books either printed or hand-copied were more valued than was interpersonal contact through traditional apprenticeship.

This textual basis of medical knowledge intellectually differentiated literati physicians from the *hoi polloi*. With their legitimate readings of medical classics, literati readers who had been conventionally trained in the Confucian curriculum could grasp both basic Confucian teachings and medical theories. This mastery enabled literati physicians to keep their Confucian identity and with it superiority over other practitioners.¹³⁸ This is not to say that the world of literati physicians was closed. Actually, both a Confucian scholar who taught himself medical arts and a non-scholarly practitioner who learned Confucian teachings could declare themselves to be “literati physicians.”¹³⁹ Reading the canons, both Confucian and medical, was a basic capacity that literati physicians should have.

V.4.2. Elite Bearings of Reading Habits in the Commonality of Knowledge

Transmitting knowledge through the circulation of readings, both printed and hand-copied, made possible commonality of knowledge across social groups in a literate

¹³⁷ Zhu Pingyi 2006, 423-43; Wu 1993, 56-63.

¹³⁸ Li Chan (fl. the 16th century) divided secular physicians through ages into five types, sequencing the literatus physician only after the legend sage and worthy of the ancient time; see Li Chan 1995, "Lidai yixue xingshi" 歷代醫家姓氏 [Brief biographies of eminent physicians through ages], 9-24.

¹³⁹ Leung 2003a, 386; Zhu Pingyi 2006, 420.

society like Ming China. Abstruse texts were printed exclusively for highbrow readers, while easy texts might be intended to serve any reader, either highbrow or lowbrow. As the case of medical knowledge illustrates, however, commonality of knowledge based on texts did not remove but rather strengthened the social and cultural marks of knowledge. In their encounters with a shared text, some readers tended to distinguish themselves from others by drawing particular meanings and focusing on special genres and topics.

In terms of reading habits, elite readers were careful to keep their socio-cultural bearings so as to distinguish themselves from common ones when it came to sharing some branches of knowledge. The Philosophy branch demonstrates well the sociological differences in reading habits, which in turn show up in some categories of commercial and household publishing (*Table 5.3.1*). Commercial publishers preferred encyclopedias and mantic books, which enjoyed a huge market. Meanwhile Confucian, miscellaneous, and agricultural works and various manuals of gentry life were largely the exclusive domain of household publishers. Both produced anecdotal works and works on arts, astronomy and mathematics, legalism, military science, Buddhism, and Daoism, an indication that both common and elite readers were interested in those categories, although much remains to be known about how these products were designed in different genres and physical forms to meet particular needs. In addition to Buddhist and Daoist works, those on practical knowledge clearly enjoyed a readership ranging from the elite to the less educated. This commonality of knowledge among reading publics can be illustrated with commercial and household publications of medical texts, in which we also find a diversity of reading habits between common and elite readers.

In the distribution of medical knowledge, Ming publishers produced lots of introductory texts and manuals that were simple in language and content. Practical knowledge of medicine was collected in encyclopedias for daily life and even scattered through vernacular fiction.¹⁴⁰ For students and other beginners, medical primers and textbooks were produced to popularize the classics and the Jin-Yuan scholarly tradition. In the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, these texts began to introduce a pragmatic and clinical approach to medicine.¹⁴¹ Following the hypothesis of democratization of medical knowledge and given the bifurcation of medical knowledge between the medical canon and fixed prescriptions, elite readers would prefer ancient medical texts over introductory texts adapted from the former, on the grounds that the original seemed more reliable and effective than its recent adaptations.¹⁴² Thus it could be further reckoned that household publishing favoured original ancient texts, while commercial publishing favoured the adaptations and practical prescriptions of the larger market. A statistical survey, however, generates a different outline.

In my database of commercial editions of medical texts, the number of imprints of medical classics, theories, and *materia medica* is far surpassed by that for imprints of practical and clinical knowledge (i.e. methods of diagnosis, techniques, fixed prescriptions, and various specialized fields). It is also worth noting that the percentage of the editions of medical classics and *materia medica* among commercial publications (about 35%) was no less remarkable, as canonized and theoretical texts were always a minority. Access to medical books, however, remained low when Yin Zhongchun (fl. the

¹⁴⁰ Sakade Yoshinobu 1998; Idema 1977; Schonebaum 2004.

¹⁴¹ Leung 2003b, 131, 134-45.

¹⁴² Yang Shen 2002a [1606], "*Nannü maiwei tushu xu*" 男女脈位圖說序 [Preface to the *Illustrated pulses of men and women*], 24.1083.

late 16th century) compiled his bibliography of medicine in 1618. Yin was a literati physician, though he shaped his classification system with inspiration from Buddhism. After hunting books for many years, his own medical library was still too small to support his bibliographic project, which did not become possible until he was invited to use two richer collections in Ningguo, Jiangxi.¹⁴³ Yin's work is the earliest and only medical bibliography extant from the Ming, but enumerates just a small portion of Ming medical imprints, far fewer than those imported into Tokugawa Japan and listed in Taki Mototane's (1789-1827) annotated bibliography *Iseki kō* (1826).¹⁴⁴

Yin's lack of access to medical books and the incompleteness of his catalogue illustrated the deficiency and geographical imbalance of medical sources in Ming China, a problem that had remained unresolved since the Song.¹⁴⁵ Concerned Ming literati responded to this problem in various ways, either for the public health or for that of their families'. According to Zhang Shiche (1500-1577; *jinshi* 1523), a scholar-official interested in medicine, the official medical institution did not function in public health at all in the Ming period. The wealthy could afford medicine, while the poor and those in isolated places could not. Medical materials were much more available in urban areas, and most people had to rely on quack doctors.¹⁴⁶ It was this deficiency and geographical imbalance that led to an abrupt increase in publishing of medical texts and the favouring by commercial publishers of practical and clinical knowledge over theories and the Classics. These how-to-do manuals contained fixed prescriptions and were expected to

¹⁴³ Yin Zhongchun 1656, "Zixu" 自序 [Self-preface], 2b-3a; Yin Guanguo 殷觀國, "Chongke Yizang mu xiaoba" 重刻醫藏目小跋 [Brief postscript to the Bibliography of the medical canon, with its woodblocks recarved], 1a.

¹⁴⁴ Zhou Ji 周濟, "Xu" 序 [Preface], in Taki Mototane 2007, 680.

¹⁴⁵ For the deficiency of medical sources in the Song, see Chen Yuanpeng 1997, chap. 2.

¹⁴⁶ Zhang Shiche 1550, "*Jijiu liangfang xu*" 急救良方序 [Preface to *Good prescriptions for emergency*], 1b.

help the reader figure out how to self-heal without seeing a doctor. This very same intention was also implicit in household medical imprints. The widely recognized ideal of *ruyi* did not alter the gentry's use of medical texts or elite habits of reading them, as might be thought. Elite readers could try to understand the medical classics as their literati physicians should, but as potential patients they preferred clinical manuals and fixed prescriptions over the *Yellow Emperor's Classic* and other abstruse texts. Among Ming household editions of medical texts, editions on fixed prescriptions, clinical manuals, and life nourishment far surpassed those offering theories, as we find in commercial publishing.

However, household publishers' partaking of practical medical knowledge originated from a purpose that was distinct from that of the commercial publishers. Some publishers of medical texts were literati physicians by profession who attempted to promote "theoretical and clinical ideas while deriding those of others," or record extraordinary things.¹⁴⁷ Most other household publishers of medical texts were simply interested and pragmatic literati. The majority of their publications were collections of fixed prescriptions. In Ming China, medical relief was mainly provided by the local government and gentry, who were joined by a few organized private charities in the late-sixteenth century.¹⁴⁸ The increasing recognition of the local community and involvement in local affairs aroused concern in the elite with public health policy. Collecting, editing, publishing, distributing, and reading prescriptions served as a means of self-care and medical relief.

¹⁴⁷ Grant 2003, 54-60, quotation from 54.

¹⁴⁸ Leung 1987a; quotation from 135.

It was common for Ming gentry families to collect and preserve prescriptions.¹⁴⁹ Some literati readers concerned with nourishing life often noted down prescriptions they encountered while reading books. A constant attention to the study of hygiene, they believed, could keep them in good health and spare them being exposed to the quack doctor's mediocre skills and mistakes.¹⁵⁰ Physically feeble readers appeared to have an even stronger motive for collecting prescriptions helpful in promoting their health or that of others. This tended to be a slow process, since prescriptions scattered in various books had to be analyzed before being confirmed as effective for most patients and published.¹⁵¹ A good example was Zhang Shiche. Zhang had suffered indispositions since his youth and took medicine quite often. He wrote down and collected prescriptions for himself and other patients, which many years later became sufficiently numerous to be published as a booklet.¹⁵²

As a form of concrete knowledge, medicine was viewed as useful for officials as part of statecraft, to relieve famine and control disease following natural calamities and wars.¹⁵³ For individual literati collectors, on the other hand, publishing and circulating prescriptions meant practicing Confucian benevolence and Buddhist universal salvation.¹⁵⁴ As referring to fixed prescriptions was much easier than studying medical

¹⁴⁹ Zou Yuanbiao 鄒元標 (1551-1624), "Renwen shuyuan ji yanfang yin" 仁文書院集驗方引 [Preface to *Effective prescriptions collected in the Academy of Renwen*](1621), cited in Taki Mototane 2007, 481.

¹⁵⁰ He Tang 何塘 (1474-1543), "Yixue guanjian tici" 醫學管見題詞 [Brief introduction to *Humble opinions of medicine*] (1534), *ibid.*, 438.

¹⁵¹ It had taken Zheng Ze 鄭澤 thirty years to collect and test several hundreds of prescriptions before he thought safe and sufficient to publish them; see "Mobaozhai ji yanfang zixu" 墨寶齋集驗方 [Self-preface to the effective prescriptions collected in the Studio of Ink Treasure], *ibid.*, 472-73.

¹⁵² Zhang Shiche 1569, "Shesheng zhongmiaofang xu" 攝生眾妙方序 [Preface to...](1550).

¹⁵³ He Mengchun 何孟春 (1474-1536), "Xu Qunshu chaofang xu" 續群書抄方序 [Preface to the *Continuity of the Prescriptions copied from various books*], cited in Taki Mototane 2007, 426-27.

¹⁵⁴ Leung 1987a, 149.

classics, reading classics was so neglected that even professional physicians knew little about the *Yellow Emperor's Classic*.¹⁵⁵

As I have mentioned, Song-Jin-Yuan medical masters, particularly Zhu Zhenheng, completed the canonization of the *Yellow Emperor's Classic*, which was then imperially endorsed. The formation of this new paradigm directly shaped the development of medicine as a field of study in late imperial China, but did not alter the literati's way of acquiring and innovating upon their medical knowledge. Reading various books besides medical classics and extracting desirable information from them had long been practiced by literati as a means of constructing repertoires of practical knowledge.

In the transmission of medical knowledge, elite and common readers were interactive. They shared interest in and use of fixed prescriptions. Despite the reciprocity between these two groups, the elite distinguished themselves from commoners by their purposes for acquiring medical knowledge through wide reading of both medical canons and non-medical books. This difference cannot be reduced to that between knowledge producers and consumers but encompasses that between two types of readers pursuing knowledge with different reading habits. As elite readers, literati tended to adopt exclusively elite presumptions, such as the idea of statecraft, the better to highlight their identity in their encounters with texts.

V.5. Non-Confucian Philosophers as Literary Companions or Intellectual Stimuli

Knowledge of pre-Qin and Han philosophers in the Ming and Qing periods is of significance for intellectual historians because, in a Confucian context, it indicates how

¹⁵⁵ Wu Kun 吳昆, "Yifang kao zixu" 醫方考自序 [Self-preface to the *Investigation of medical prescriptions*], cited in Taki Mototane 2007, 462; Qian Qi 錢琦, "Mingyi huiyao xu" 明醫會要序 [Preface to the *Collected essentials for wise physicians*], *ibid*, 452.

dominant and omnipresent Neo-Confucianism was, to the extent that the heterodox was condemned, tolerated or integrated into the orthodox. The increasing number of Ming imprints of pre-Qin and Han philosophical texts, however, did not indicate that a revival of philosophical studies of pre-Qin non-Confucian philosophers (*zhuzixue* 諸子學) was underway among Ming elite readers. Their uses of these texts were essentially more literary than philosophical. In the philosophical sense, Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism remained dominant in the Ming reception of non-Confucian philosophers.

Among Ming imprints of pre-Qin and Han philosophical writings, household editions far outnumbered commercial ones, and the former covered more titles and schools than the latter. This means that elite readers whom household publishing served were more interested in those ancient texts than common readers. In terms of philosophical schools, Confucian writings were published in more editions, both commercial and household, than those of other schools. The number was even larger than the totals for the miscellaneous writings category, where most pre-Qin and Han philosophical writings were enumerated by Ming bibliographers. Therefore, the circulation of pre-Qin and Han writings such as *Mozi* and *Lunheng* 論衡 (Doctrines evaluated) among Ming scholars was not as broad as might be thought, nor access to them as great. The intellectual significance of publishing these texts remains an open question, as far as real readers' uses and publishers' intentions are concerned.

When compared to their Tang and Song counterparts, in Hu Yinglin's view, early Ming philosophers were much closer to their pre-Qin and Han predecessors in terms of both literary style and philosophical theory. To a greater or lesser extent, for Hu, they carried on the traditions of pre-Qin miscellaneous writings and the Diplomatist, Legalist,

and Confucian schools.¹⁵⁶ Hu may simply have been singing the praises of his present dynasty and his home prefecture of Jinhua, of which several early Ming philosophers whom he applauded were natives. Yet, his commendations suggest two approaches to pre-Qin and Han philosophical writings that had been employed since the sixth century. One was literary and entailed the copying of beautiful and profound sentences and passages from ancient texts into a dictionary of quotations; the other was philosophical and entailed discussions of the implied Way and its metaphysical purposes.¹⁵⁷ Both approaches are represented in the Ming imprints, but the literary one overshadowed the philosophical. Moreover, with the emerging ideal of concrete knowledge, some pre-Qin and Han texts were published because the knowledge imputed to them was felt to have practical applications.

V.5.1. Philosophical Blame and Literary Praise

Song Lian initiated studies of pre-Qin and Han philosophers as a field for Ming scholars in 1358, and his studies were still respected by the end of the sixteenth century.¹⁵⁸ Song ended his discussions with the Neo-Confucians Zhou Dunyi, Cheng Hao, and Cheng Yi, in order to illustrate the orthodoxy of Neo-Confucianism as the ultimate goal of philosophical pursuits. For Song, only Confucianism, in particular Neo-Confucianism, contained the Way as truth; other heterodox philosophical books were harmful and should be destroyed.¹⁵⁹ With his Neo-Confucian presumption, Song maintained that he could not even understand the Logician *Gongsun Long zi* (Master

¹⁵⁶ Hu Yinglin 1896b, 1:15a, 2:10b-11a.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., "Jiuliū xulun yin" 九流緒論引 [Introduction to the *Introduction to the nine schools*](1589), 1a.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 1:9a; Song Lian 1928.

¹⁵⁹ Song Lian 1928, 47-48.

Gongsun Long). For him, this book should be burned because its phrases were not rectifiable or in accordance with the truth of things—the basic criterion for a text’s worth as suggested by Confucius in the *Analects*.¹⁶⁰ This imputed superiority of orthodox Confucian writings over other philosophical explorations was emphasized by scholars of later generations like Xue Xuan and even incorporated into theories of reading, as I have discussed in Chapter Three. Among other early Ming Confucians, Xue Xuan recognized the literary value of pre-Qin philosophical writings only for readers studying ancient prose. The compositional techniques found in the *Zhuangzi*, he suggested, were helpful for examination candidates, but only those techniques, not the principles or theories they conveyed, were of value.¹⁶¹

After Fang Xiaoru, who philosophically discussed pre-Qin philosophers (see Chapter Three), the philosophical approach was not taken seriously until the first half of the sixteenth century. Among the scholars to do so was Yang Shen (1488-1559). Yang commented on and made notes to about sixty-three titles among pre-Qin and Han philosophical texts, and those editions he approved were so popular that some commercial publishers used his name as a selling point without his permission.¹⁶² He believed in the ubiquity of the Way and its wide application, and derided scholars who demeaned ancient philosophical texts as having only literary value:

People do not understand the Way at all, but wrongly censure worthies of the past in terms of words only....Alas! Can writing be randomly classified as ancient or modern simply by virtue of a single character or a few words in it? The ancients

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 30.

¹⁶¹ Xue Xuan 1781, 1:15b, 4:25a.

¹⁶² Wang Wencai 1988, 300-07.

established their words for the Way rather than measuring the Way with words. Considered in terms of the Way only, the more humble the author's words, the more transcendent his essential thoughts... While reading such a book, the reader should only ponder whether or not its meaning is on the right track [to the Way]...¹⁶³

Yang Shen did not define his ubiquitous Way here. It should be the Confucian Way (not the Neo-Confucian Way, as Yang harshly criticized Zhu Xi's philosophy), by which he tended to evaluate other pre-Qin philosophers such as Laozi and Zhuangzi. For him, Zhuangzi did not slander Yao, Shun, or Confucius at all but condemned those who used their names to distort the Way. There were, moreover, some unintended areas of agreement between the *Zhuangzi* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* (among other Confucian teachings).¹⁶⁴

The Neo-Confucian Way was esteemed as the only criterion for evaluation in Hu Yinglin's studies of philosophers. Unlike Han Yu (768-824) or Song Lian, who praised Mo Di's (ca. 468-ca. 376 BC) agreements with Confucius,¹⁶⁵ Hu stressed the Mohist disagreements with the Confucians. Mo Di, Hu wrote, was the first pre-Qin philosopher who particularly defamed Confucius, "perhaps with an intention to establish [his teachings] firmly and compare them to Confucianism and to connect his school with the lineage of the Way that the ancient emperors shaped, using reckless words to move the

¹⁶³ Yang Shen 2002b, "*Kangcangzi xu*" 亢倉子序 [Preface to *Master Kangcang*], 2.107.

¹⁶⁴ E.g. Yang Shen 1582, "Zhuangzi fenshi" 莊子憤世 [Zhuangzi's misanthropy], 46:6a-b; "[Shao] Kangjie lun *Zhuangzi*" [邵]康節論莊子 [Shao Yong (1011-1077) on *Zhuangzi*], 46:7b; "*Zhuangzi yu anhe Zhongyong*" 莊子語暗合中庸 [Unintentional agreements between *Zhuangzi* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*], 46:7b-8a.

¹⁶⁵ For Han Yu's essay, see Johnston 2010, lxxvii-lxxviii; Song Lian 1928, 20-23.

world.” Thus Mohism was more “harmful” than Daoism and Buddhism toward the Confucian Way.¹⁶⁶ As for *Zhuangzi*, Hu disagreed with Yang Shen, though both appreciated the work’s literary eminence. For Hu, *Zhuangzi* did intend to backbite Confucius as “a mean man without dread” of gentleman. Hu also conceded that his opinion on the *Zhuangzi* was “vulgar,” not as shocking as Yang Shen’s.¹⁶⁷ Clearly, Hu meant his view was common in his times.

Hu Yinglin published his studies of philosophers in 1589, several decades after the publication of the *Mozi* and the *Zhuangzi* in the mid-sixteenth century, in both commercial and household editions.¹⁶⁸ Despite minor differences in their comments on some pre-Qin and Han philosophical writings, Ming scholars from Song Lian of the fourteenth century to Hu Yinglin of the late sixteenth century situated ancient philosophers’ thoughts within a Confucian paradigm.

To find parallels to the Confucian Way among other philosophical explorations was viewed as heresy, as Li Zhi’s (1527-1602) destiny illustrates. Li endowed Daoism and Buddhism with the same philosophical value as Confucianism, although he was essentially a Confucian. Those Three Teachings, for Li, were essentially identical, in that they all originated in the expectation of “hearing the Way.” This expectation directed their adherents’ “transcendence of the world” as the only goal. Li insisted that other philosophical schools, including Neo-Confucianism, did not consider “hearing the Way” to be the “heart” of their pursuits, even though they all devoted themselves to “learning;” thus they were unable to keep consistently to the Way while seeking wealth and

¹⁶⁶ Hu Yinglin 1896b, 1:7b-8a, 9a.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:5a-b, 7a-b.

¹⁶⁸ Inoue Susumu 2002, 215-26.

honour.¹⁶⁹ Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, Li upheld, shared the same Way and heart-mind, as neither the Way nor the heart-mind could be divided or differentiated.¹⁷⁰

It was only in the early Qing that the textual hierarchy between the Confucian Classics and pre-Han philosophical writings began to break down. Fu Shan (1607-1684) was a poet, medical physician, and Buddhist Daoist who had been trained as a Confucian scholar. He derided as “heartless scholars” those who neglected Buddhist scriptures and pre-Han philosophical writings,¹⁷¹ and claimed that Confucianism was completely “useless and discouraging.”¹⁷² Thus disputation about the superiority of the Confucian Classics over other philosophical writings, in Fu’s view, was trivial and insignificant. Confucianism originally was just one among many pre-Qin philosophical schools, and the conventional opinion that these other philosophical texts were inferior to the Confucian Classics was “rustic.”¹⁷³ Both Li Zhi and Fu Shan represent subversive intellectual uses made of non-Confucian philosophers in the late Ming and early Qing. Their denial of the superiority of the Confucian Classics over other philosophical texts, and of the inferiority of the latter to the former, was radical and individual. Li Zhi’s popularity in publishing was magnified through mass communication,¹⁷⁴ but it is hard to say that he and Fu Shan were typical real readers of those printed ancient texts. The constraints set up by Song Lian, Xuan Xue, and Hu Yinglin to reading those texts within the Confucian paradigm remained determinative for real readers.

¹⁶⁹ Li Zhi 1599, “Sanjiao gui Ru shuo” 三教歸儒說 [The Three Teachings converge in Confucianism], 2.77-78; for an intellectual critique of Li, see de Bary 1991, “Li Chih: Arch-Individualist,” 203-70.

¹⁷⁰ Li Zhi 1590, “*Sanjiao pin xu*” 三教品序 [Preface to *Comments on the Three Teachings*], 10:22b-23b.

¹⁷¹ Fu Shan 1911, “Chongke Shijia chengdaoji xu” 重刻釋迦成道記敘 [Preface to the *Record of Sākyamuni's enlightenment*, with woodblocks recarved], 16:10b.

¹⁷² Ibid., “Du Guanzi” 讀管子 [A brief reading note to *Master Guan*], 26:9a-b.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 38:10b-11a.

¹⁷⁴ Ōki Yasushi 2004, 12-34.

In the encounter with non-Confucian philosophers, therefore, intellectual subversion was rare, prohibited, and unrealized, while literary uses were common, proposed, and accepted. Such a real use, together with the pursuit of practical knowledge in some cases, can be further illustrated by investigating the publishing history of those pre-Qin and Han texts in the late Ming.

The identity of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, as Li Zhi proposed, is represented in a seventeenth-century collection of philosophical writings entitled *Zhuzi baoyi*. Its compiler believed that Buddhist scriptures, secular philosophical explorations, and the Confucian Classics were the same in terms of literary composition. More than half of his inclusions turn out to be Buddhist scriptures and treatises.¹⁷⁵ We know nothing about the compiler or publisher of this collection as yet, but I am sure that such a compilation strategy is really rare among the collections/selections of philosophical writings that I have examined.

Confucian orthodoxy remained commonly respected in the compilation of these collections. Li Yaoqing (*jinsi* 1493; fl. the early sixteenth century) and Shen Jin (fl. mid-late sixteenth century) were the only two Ming compilers to whom Hu Yinglin referred in his studies of philosophers up to 1589.¹⁷⁶ Li Yaoqing selected passages and proverbs from philosophical writings through the ages, and hoped his digest could inspire examination candidates in both intellectual and literary terms.¹⁷⁷ Li divided his sources into four classes: orthodoxy (*zhengzong* 正宗), lingering effects (*yuxiang* 餘響), wings (*yuyi* 羽翼), and collateral branches (*pangliu* 傍流). The Song Neo-Confucians Zhou

¹⁷⁵ Cheng Zhengxun 程正巽, "Zhuzi baoyi xu" [Preface to the *Praised variants in philosophical writings*], in Wang Dingguo (ca. the 17th century), 3b; Zhang Yuansheng 張元聲, "Zhuzi baoyi xu" [Preface...], *ibid.*, 4b; Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 132.2616.

¹⁷⁶ Hu Yinglin 1896b, "Jiuli xulun yin" (1589), 1a.

¹⁷⁷ Yongrong and Ji Yun 1933, 131.2592.

Dunyi, Zhang Zhai (1020-1077), the Cheng brothers, and Zhu Xi were grouped under the class of orthodoxy. He cited Han Yu's praise of the *Mozi* as Song Lian had done, and considered the *Laozi* to be heresy as had Xue Xuan.¹⁷⁸ This Confucian stance was maintained in Shen Jin's selection (1567), wherein the purpose of reading philosophical writings was elaborated more clearly. According to the collection's two prefaces, Shen Jin's selection was intended to broaden the reader's vision: philosophical schools other than the Confucian were also devoted to learning, since the knowledge they developed was not only literary but practical and useful for political and daily life. Hence they were worthy of study, and students should not ignore these writings until after they had achieved success in the civil examinations.¹⁷⁹ He excluded the Song Neo-Confucian masters from his selection on the grounds that they were superior by default and could not be matched by other philosophers in one's pursuit of the Way. Those Neo-Confucian texts, for him, should therefore be read in a distinctive way.¹⁸⁰ When assembling his collection, however, Shen Jin disregarded passages and words that he thought contradicted the Confucian Way.¹⁸¹ With his firm Confucian stance, Shen perceived the Mohist misrepresentation of Confucius and thus he did not include "Against the Confucians" (*Fei Ru* 非儒) and other sections contradictory to Confucius' teachings in his selection of the *Mozi*.¹⁸² Shen Jin's attitude towards the *Mozi* was same as that of Zhou Ziyi. For his collection (1576-1577), Zhou selected passages and sections of literary

¹⁷⁸ Li Yaoqing (the early 16th century), 3:1a.

¹⁷⁹ Shen Jin 1567, the prefaces by Zhang Shiche and Zhang Sizhong 張思忠, respectively.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., "*Baijia leizuan fanli zongxu*," 3b.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., "*Baijia leizuan fanli zongxu*" 百家類纂凡例總敘 [General rules of compiling the *Philosophical writings collected by school*], 2b, 4b.

¹⁸² Ibid., chap. 25, esp 25:1a-b.

eminence but removed those that defamed Confucius or contradicted the Confucian Classics.¹⁸³

The literary value of philosophical writings was implicitly recognized in Shen Jin's collection. This became the only motive for publishing such selections in the late sixteenth century. In 1591 Chen Shen published his selections from pre-Qin and Former Han philosophical writings, explicitly declaring that it was intended as a collection of literary models for examination candidates. Marks were made between the lines to illustrate those composition techniques that he considered applicable to the eight-legged essay.¹⁸⁴ For Chen Shen, pre-Qin and Former Han writings were worthy of emulation, while those after the Song were over-devoted to the Way to the neglect of literary technique. Thus it would be ideal to convey the Neo-Confucian Way using compositional techniques borrowed from ancient texts.¹⁸⁵ The examination market was so huge that some selections of philosophical writings were compiled and published as counterfeit under the names of famous scholars.¹⁸⁶

Publications of ancient philosophical texts were actually used in the civil examinations. For example, in 1568 citations from the *Zhuangzi* were allowed in the metropolitan examination. Over the next fifty years, according to Gu Yanwu, citations from Buddhist and Daoist texts became more common in examination answers. Answers that were wayward either because of their literary style or an ideological orientation contrary to the Confucian Classics were prohibited by imperial decree at least twice, in 1602 and 1606, and some candidates were suspended and lost their stipends for using

¹⁸³ Zhou Ziyi 1577, "*Mozi*" 墨子 [The selection of the *Mozi*], qian 前: 1a.

¹⁸⁴ Chen Shen 1591, "Fanli" 凡例 [Principles of compilation], 1a, 5b-6a.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., "*Zhuzi pinjie xu*" 諸子品節序 [Preface to the *Evaluation of selected philosophical writings*], 1a-b.

¹⁸⁶ E.g. Gui Youguang 1624; Chen Weishun 2006.

improper citations and allusions. These attempts to prohibit references to Daoist and Buddhist texts failed because candidates were trained using model eight-legged essays that contained those citations and allusions and had been taught for several generations. Moreover, to protect the candidate, examiners were hesitant to reveal such deviations or fail those who wrote answers in a learned way.¹⁸⁷ Soon after the Chongzhen emperor promulgated the earlier prohibitions around 1629, new commercial selections of philosophical writings other than strictly Confucian ones were edited and published for examination candidates. Candidates who referred to philosophical writings and standard histories reportedly had passed the 1622 and 1625 metropolitan examinations. Accordingly, one commercial publisher had a new collection of such selections from the philosophers edited, of course with a declaration that only those passages consistent with the sages and the Confucian Classics were included.¹⁸⁸

This discussion of literary uses is mainly based on the commercial publications of pre-Qin and Han philosophy, but the same can also be expected with regard to most of the household publications, even though some household publishers promoted their editions as intellectual stimuli. Another notable use that elite readers made of these ancient texts was epistemic. They tended to treat their publications as a repertoire of concrete knowledge useful in statecraft more than as a philosophical stimulus to subversion.

While commercial publishing favoured selections of philosophical writings, which could have a huge market because of their comprehensiveness, household publishing

¹⁸⁷ Gu Yanwu 1834, "Poti yong *Zhuangzi*" 破題用莊子 [Citing the *Zhuangzi* when broaching the theme in the answer], 18.22a-b, and "Kechang jinyue" 科場禁約 [Prohibitions in the civil service examination], 18.23a-24b; Gu 1983, "Fuping Li jun muzhiming" 富平李君墓誌銘 [Inscription to Mr. Li of Fuping], 5.118-19.

¹⁸⁸ Guo Wei 1630s, "Fanli" 凡例 [Compilation rules], 1b, 2a.

tended to produce separate editions of individual texts. Serious scholarly concerns naturally played a role in producing household editions of these pre-Han texts. The publication of the *Mozi*, again, is a good example. Mohist ideas were attacked by Mencius but highly praised by his admirer Han Yu, as mentioned above. These contending attitudes caused confusion among Ming scholars. Hu Yinglin supported Mencius, but his initial hostility gave way to amiable, if not ambiguous, criticism by the mid-sixteenth century. The earliest Ming edition of the *Mozi*, as Inoue Susumu points out, was a household publication of 1553, which was based on an edition previously collected in the Palace. Prior to the appearance of this edition, most Ming scholars had not read the whole text. For its first Ming readers, Mo Di could not have appeared to be as selfish or immoral as Mencius had declared, and his ideas might well have seemed politically and morally suggestive in positive ways. Thus they could arrive at a compromise between the views of Mencius and Han Yu, neither of which they would completely deny: Mencius could not have been attacking Mo Di himself but rather his admirers of later generations, and Mo Di's ideas could be convergent with those of Confucius, as had Han Yu noted.¹⁸⁹ The complete text of the *Mozi* was considered crucial for clarifying the controversy with Confucians and therefore was republished shortly after as another household edition to be circulated among interested scholars.¹⁹⁰ Han Yu's brief reading note to the *Mozi* was kept in Mao Kun's 茅坤 (1512-1601) edition of the text (1581).¹⁹¹ It also appeared in Li Zhi's selections from the *Mozi*. Li largely seemed to agree with Han Yu, and in his comments he disputed Mencius's defamation of Mo Di.¹⁹² With these household editions, the

¹⁸⁹ Lu Wen's 陸穩 preface to the 1553 edition, in Guoli Zhongyang Tushuguan 1993, 2.351-52.

¹⁹⁰ Bai Bennen's 白賁柎 preface to the new issue of the 1553 edition, *ibid.*, 2.351.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.352.

¹⁹² Li Zhi 1575, "Xu 序":6a-b for Han Yu's note; 1:28b, 1:30b-31a, and 2:3a for the disputation of Mencius.

discussion could be kept within a small scholarly circle without altering the impression of Mohism imposed by Mencius upon common readers.¹⁹³ As one of the Four Books, the *Mencius* enjoyed a much greater reading public than did the works of Han Yu in Ming China.

V.5.2. Pragmatic Explorations of Concrete Knowledge

Among pre-Qin and Han philosophers, not all works were as controversial as that of Mo Di in the Confucian scholarly world. A kind of methodological and descriptive pluralism in inquiries into the Way was proposed in the last quarter of the sixteenth century: Confucius could be regarded as the ultimate paragon of the Way, but other pre-Qin philosophers were also commendable in spite of their imperfections. Such tolerance, however, was not at all subversive but rather pragmatic. Readers were expected to master the Confucian Way as a prerequisite to reading and using those non-Confucian philosophers; without this precondition, heretical ideas could be useless and burdensome.¹⁹⁴ Such a pragmatic attitude was clearly represented in household editions of pre-Han philosophical texts such as *The Annals of Lü Buwei* (*Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋) and *The Book of the Prince of Huainan* (*Huainan zi* 淮南子). These texts were published to meet antiquarian tastes, to increase practical knowledge, to widen scholars' vision, and to teach literary techniques;¹⁹⁵ the first two of these purposes largely distinguished household editions from commercial ones.

¹⁹³ Cf. Wang Ao 1781, "Du *Mo*" 讀墨 [Reading the *Mohists*], 34:9b-10a.

¹⁹⁴ Shen Maoshang 慎懋賞, "Shenzi xu" 慎子序 [Preface to *Master Shen Dao*](1578), cited in Guoli Zhongyang Tushuguan 1993, 2.355.

¹⁹⁵ For examples, see *ibid.*, 2.356-77.

The Annals of Lü Buwei was attributed to Lü Buwei (ca. 290-235 BC) and *The Book of the Prince of Huainan* to Liu An (179-122 BC), and both texts were condemned as rebellious in the standard histories. Ming household publishers and their readers, however, were concerned with the contents only and disregarded the works' political destinies and ideological preferences. Confucian Fang Xiaoru was among the first Ming readers who appreciated the political and social thought elaborated in *The Annals of Lü Buwei* and considered it useful for rulers;¹⁹⁶ his criticism was followed by the publisher of a 1528 edition.¹⁹⁷ In the case of *The Book of the Prince of Huainan*, household publishers emphasized its sections on mathematical harmonics (*lü lü* 律呂), mathematical astronomy, and geography as indispensable sources of practical knowledge, and other sections on politics and society that incorporated pre-Qin philosophical schools as instructions for statecraft.¹⁹⁸

Originally these two works consisted of the collected writings of scholars from various backgrounds who were under the patronage of Lü Buwei and Liu An. For Ming household publishers, the diverse branches of knowledge that they encompassed in encyclopedic fashion would surely be illuminating for scholars who heretofore were limited to a designated set of Confucian texts and ignorant of other writings.¹⁹⁹ Examination candidates trained in the conventional curriculum were the main reading public for these rediscovered pre-Han philosophical texts.²⁰⁰ Because the archaists of Old

¹⁹⁶ Fang Xiaoru, "Du Lü shi chunqiu" 讀呂氏春秋 [Reading note of the *Annals of Lü Buwei*], *ibid.*, 2.363.

¹⁹⁷ Xu Zonglu's 許宗魯 preface to his 1528 edition, cited in *ibid.*, 2.361-62.

¹⁹⁸ See Liu Ji's 劉績 postscript to a 1501 edition and Huan Chao's 黃焯 preface to a 1530 edition, cited in *ibid.*, 2.376 and 2.377, respectively.

¹⁹⁹ Zhang Cunxin's 張存心 preface to a Chongzhen edition of *Huainan honglie jie* 淮南鴻烈解, cited in *ibid.*, 2.373.

²⁰⁰ Zhu Dahui 朱大輝, "Heguanzi xu" 鶡冠子序 [Preface to *Master Crossbill-Feather-Cap*], cited in *ibid.*, 2.356-57.

Phraseology advocated the literary style of these ancient writings, Ming household publishers recommended these compilations to both examination candidates and essayists.²⁰¹ Meanwhile, some publishers published ancient texts with the intent to foster inquiry of Neo-Confucian principle (*li*) through investigating things—reading books being an effective method of investigation as Zhu Xi suggested.²⁰² An elite publisher esteemed pre-Qin philosophers for their independence, single-mindedness and establishment of their own schools, yet he recognized that he and his publication would be attacked for “misleading people.”²⁰³

Such intellectual adventurism in publishing the entire texts of pre-Qin and Han philosophy was discouraged in most of elite society, but imitating the ancient literary style of the ancient philosophers was deemed more acceptable. Whatever the intent (intellectual, literary, or epistemic), the materials we have cited here suggest that household publishers of them imagined only erudite gentlemen or learned persons of antiquarian taste as their readers. This means that they anticipated a limited circulation of their household publications. Publication of the *Mozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and other pre-Qin and Han philosophical texts in the mid-sixteenth century was thus intended as a rediscovery of knowledge (including compositional techniques) to be used within given ideological constraints rather than to overthrow those constraints. The intellectual influence of publishing such ancient texts should not be exaggerated, as some intellectual historians have done.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 2.362-63 for Wang Shizhen's recommendation of *Lü shi chungiu* (the mid-sixteenth century), 2.364-65 for Li Mingchun's 李鳴春 recommendation of *Lü shi chungiu* (1627), 2.371-72 for the recommendation of *Huainan zi* (1591).

²⁰² Mao Yigui 茅一桂, "Chongjiao yin" 重校引 [Introduction to the recollated (*Huainan honglie jie*)], cited in *ibid.*, 2.370.

²⁰³ See Zhu Yangchun's 朱養純 note to his edition of the pre-Qin *Heguangzi*, cited in *ibid.*, 2.358.

V.6. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined only some of the notable features of Ming reading habits. Ming classification schemes of knowledge were various, but Ming bibliographers and bibliophiles followed the principles of the traditional fourfold scheme and its subdivisions in a subtle way. The 1781 classification scheme thus is applicable to a survey of Ming imprints and classification of the knowledge covered in them. On the other hand, Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism provided ideological and epistemic assumptions to diverse Ming classification schemes. These schemes were the bibliographical representation of the orthodoxy of Zhu Xi's philosophy of Principle and Nature in Ming intellectual life.

The huge examination market did not determine the Ming knowledge landscape and elite reading habits. That landscape, as extant imprints reflect, acknowledged the pragmatism of Zhu Xi's approach to reading. Such pragmatism was represented as the idea of statecraft in elite socio-political service and as the increase in practical and technological knowledge shared by elite and common readers. Following the Song Neo-Confucian model, Ming specialists in other fields such as medicine established their fictive lineages of knowledge transmission and canonized a few professional texts. The reading of these designated texts became the main method of acquiring specialized knowledge. Elite readers kept the style of evidential reading. They also witnessed the replacement of the state by gentry society in programming habits of reading historical and philosophical writings, though following a strategy of reading that did not go against Zhu Xi.

Comparing elite reading habits with common ones by noting the differences between commercial and household imprints, this chapter has shown that even in the branches of knowledge they shared with common readers, elite readers drew new distinctions that set their expectations, concerns, and methods apart, though without abandoning Zhu Xi's theory. In the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century publishing boom, commercial publishers appropriated some of what the elite read and published unprecedented numbers of popular titles. As a result, a society of "mass communication" (in Ōki Yasushi's words) and popular reading public emerged in late Ming China.²⁰⁴ Although much remains unknown about the highbrow-lowbrow interrelationship, we can assert that a popular readership emerged in the Ming period that was different from the elite readership. In response, elite readers drew new distinctions by applying Zhu Xi's theory to separate themselves from common readers.

²⁰⁴ Ōki Yasushi 2009.

CONCLUSION

ZHU Xi remained present in Ming intellectual practices even though philosophers of mind challenged his philosophy in their attempts to break with the Song tradition of learning. Despite some deviations and distortions, Ming elite readers applied Zhu's theory of reading to their practices of knowledge acquisition. His three fundamental hypotheses were perpetuated. (1) Book learning and reading were the main sources of both intellectual and moral improvements. (2) Books should be read in an evidential style, whereby the etymological understanding of words was the basis of literary and philosophical interpretations. (3) In the textual/knowledge hierarchy, the Four Books and Five Classics were treated as the core texts and the Learning of the Way was superior to other branches of knowledge. The civil examination system was the institutional vehicle of Zhu's theory of reading, designed to incorporate Classical Learning and knowledge of Neo-Confucian principle into the examinations. The orthodox curricula proposed for the civil examinations reflected such an ideal combination, though many students failed in their preparations to achieve both the intellectual and moral goals that Zhu envisioned.

These twin goals had become the central topic of Ming discussions on reading by 1500. Early Ming Confucians were concerned with a confusion over whether the ultimate goal of reading was intellectual or moral. In their theories, moral improvement overshadowed intellectual advancement. Accordingly both their reading concepts and practices were moralized, though their theorizing of this moral goal was mainly derived from Zhu's theory rather than their own inventions. To attain moral achievement, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century philosophers of mind prescribed the cultivation of

mind but downgraded book learning. In their intellectual practices and the formation of their ideas, reading nonetheless remained determinant as the source of their knowledge repertoires. Their philosophical categories related to reading concepts reflected intellectual affinities and parallels to Zhu's theory. Consciously or unconsciously, Ming Confucians also applied Zhu's theory in their instructions for reading. Not until the mid-seventeenth century did philosophical recognitions of Zhu's hypothesis appear among Wang Yangming's rational followers, who first adopted Zhu's theory of investigating things to extend knowledge, then recognized book learning as the source of intellectual and moral achievements, and finally reinstated the goal of reading as intellectual, having priority over moral programmes of knowledge.

Zhu's theory of reading, as I have discussed, is one of rational organicism, in which readers are instructed to achieve a balance between seemingly opposite categories in their pursuit of learning. These opposite categories anticipated topics that came up in later controversies over reading. Amidst an emerging commonality of knowledge, his theory also provided late Ming elite readers with a brush they could use to redraw their reading habits as distinct from common ones. The orthodoxy of his philosophy anchored the Ming-Qing classification of knowledge, and his pragmatism of reading informed Ming uses of books and branches of knowledge apart from the Cheng-Zhu tradition of Neo-Confucianism. As reading remained the main means of knowledge acquisition, indispensable etymological skills implied in Zhu's evidential style delineated elite reading habits, and the pursuit of principle was used to legitimate elite distinctions in reading practices.

So, what concerned Wang Qiao and Gu Yanwu when they prescribed Zhu's art of reading, as mentioned in the Introduction? Both were admirers of Zhu and spoke of reading in the context of the deteriorating civil examination culture that prevailed at the time when the Learning of Mind became dominant in the Confucian intellectual world. They decried the decline of reading habits among students preparing for the civil examinations and the theoretical challenges that the Yangming school posed to the Cheng-Zhu tradition. One of their philosophical concerns, however, was the role of book learning and reading in effecting intellectual improvement as the precondition for moral cultivation. Radical philosophers of mind denied this role in their intellectual and moral scepticism, but Zhu and his admirers emphasized it in both their intellectual ideas and practices.

This concern with the role of book learning has been examined by Yu Yingshi in his hypothesis concerning the seventeenth-century revival of intellectualism. For Yu, intellectualism as an inner logic of the Confucian tradition was the bridge between Song learning and Qing evidential scholarship. The late-Ming and early-Qing rediscovery of the role of book learning, according to Yu, anticipated the rise of evidential scholarship. Leading Qing evidential scholars such as Dai Zhen (1724-1777) and Zhang Xuecheng actually elucidated Zhu's tradition of "constant inquiry and study," imparting to it a breadth and greatness (*daowenxue* 道問學).¹ Meanwhile, Yu finds the dominant Ming intellectual tradition to be as anti-intellectual as the Song and Qing traditions were, although he notes that mid-Ming evidential scholarship preceded the Qing counterpart.² The competition between intellectualism and anti-intellectualism within the Neo-

¹ Yu Yingshi 2000, 18-23, 31-34, 322-56.

² *Ibid.*, 296-321.

Confucian world, as Yu has pointed out, was a theoretical controversy lurking inside the intellectual ideas.³ Yu's interpretation was advanced in terms of intellectual concepts, as were Wang Qiao and Gu Yanwu's concerns.

Intellectualism, however, was at work in Ming intellectual practices, implicitly or explicitly. The key lies in the common application of Zhu's theory of reading by the Ming elite to both intellectual and moral advancement. Even with a mature philosophy distinct from its early formulations, book learning and reading rather than mind cultivation remained determinant of elite intellectual practices. The controversy between the Cheng-Zhu and Lu-Wang traditions ultimately should be examined against the textual meaning of the Classics and the sage's original intention inherent in them. For Ming Confucians, their attitudes towards and readings of the Classics determined the philosophical legitimacy of those Classics within the Confucian tradition. In order to find textual support for his philosophy, even Wang Yangming himself returned to the exegetical tradition of the *Great Learning*, although his attempt was controversial.

Since book learning and reading were valued, Zhu's evidential style of approaching texts remained indispensable. With this style, Zhu recognized the Han-Tang tradition of Classical exegesis. Textualism was not the ultimate orientation of Neo-Confucian reading, but the etymological tradition was preserved in the application of Zhu's art to reading practices. Such an application in the Ming was the practical background from which Qing evidential scholarship developed, as we can find in Gu Yanwu's evidential studies. For Gu, reading the Classics, and pre-Qin philosophical writings as well, should begin with textual studies, which in turn were launched with a knowledge of phonology.⁴ Evidential

³ Ibid., 307.

⁴ Gu Yanwu 1983, "Da Li Zide shu" 答李子德書 [Letter to reply Li Zide], 4.73.

reading of the Classics, he suggested, made possible the apprehension of principle and its application to social and government service.⁵ Gu's idea, widely recognized, preceded Qing evidential studies, but evidently originated from Zhu Xi's theory of reading.

The relationship between Song Learning and Qing evidential scholarship has been explored in the past three centuries. Emphasizing either an apostasy of the latter from the former or a continuity between them, intellectual historians have tended to neglect Ming evidential practices, although some have traced the Qing style of scholarship back to the mid-Ming. The evidential style practiced in elite reading habits and the actual recognition of book learning, or the continuity of intellectualism throughout the Ming period, thus mediated the gap between Song learning and the Qing scholarship, not in terms of evidential scholarship or intellectual affinity, but in terms of intellectual practices in the form of reading.

Zhu's theory of reading programmed Ming elite reading habits and anticipated Qing evidential scholarship, I shall further reckon, because it provided a paradigm for Neo-Confucian learning. To be learned, in his theory, meant to be encyclopedic through wide reading. Thus his theory actually aimed to tell readers how to develop and organize knowledge and skills within a Neo-Confucian frame.

A well known paradigmatic trinity implied in his theory directly anticipated the Qing classification of Confucian learning. The late imperial Chinese scholarly world was characterized by a long transformation "from philosophy to philology," a revolution in the content and social context of academic studies that finally crystallized in the

⁵ Cf. Bartlett 2009; Watanabe Dai 2007.

seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries.⁶ Philosophical principles (*yili* 義理), evidential studies (*kaoju* 考據), and literary arts (*cizhang* 詞章), all fundamental branches of traditional scholarly knowledge emphasized in the eighteenth century, had been implied and required in Zhu's theory.

Zhu's theory of reading implied another paradigmatic trinity. For his Song predecessors, Confucian learning consisted of three categories: substance (*ti* 體), function (*yong* 用), and literature (*wen* 文):

The emperor-minster and father-son relationships [and other moral relationships], benevolence and righteousness [and other virtues], rituals and sacred music [and other rites and institutions], all constant through ages, are what can be called substance. The *Songs*, the *Documents*, histories, philosophical writings, and belles-lettres, all created to pass models down to later generations, are what can be called literature. All established and executed under Heaven to benefit people and represent the rules of emperorship are what can be called function.⁷

Among these three categories, both substance and function are fundamental while literature was considered superficial and even harmful to social customs. Students thus should completely understand substance and apply it to socio-political practices (i.e. function). Zhu's theory of reading perfectly corresponded with these three categories. He expected students pursuing learning through reading to explore substance in the Classics, to apply principle learned from the Classics and histories to statecraft, and to broaden

⁶ Elman 1984.

⁷ Huang Zongxi and Quan Zuwang 1986, 1:25.

their learning through approaching more philosophical and literary writings. Statecraft, Classical Learning and historical studies, and literature and knowledge of philosophers, were all incorporated into his Neo-Confucian epistemic tradition and encompassed in his theory of reading.⁸ Under the supremacy of Learning of the Way, Zhu endowed the apprehension of principle (i.e. substance) with core significance, set up as an ideal its application to socio-political practices, and downgraded literature. Despite the prospering of literature in later ages, the core and fundamental place of the Classics and Classical Learning remained inviolate. Even when Zhu's philosophy was challenged, his Ming rivals in their own ways also explored substance and its function as their central concerns, superior to knowledge of compositional skills.

Did Zhu's paradigm hinder or promote the development of knowledge in late imperial China? Although the Neo-Confucian orientation is exclusive, the mechanism implied in his theory actually encouraged readers to develop their sense of problems and make their explorations and reading lists inclusive. An ideal reader should improve his knowledge and skills rather than allow them to stagnate.

In Thomas Kuhn's definition of paradigm, "some accepted examples of actual scientific practice—examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together—provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research." Paradigms are the firm base upon which normal science is formed; by studying shared traditions, the student becomes qualified for membership in a particular scientific community and, as a corollary, acceptance or denial of a paradigm affects the structure of the group that practices the field.⁹ The methodological and sociological duality of Kuhn's

⁸ Qian Mu 1971, I:221.

⁹ Kuhn 1996, 15-16, 18-19; quotation from 10.

definition was modified by Nakayama Shigeru into a sociological and historical combination in his description of the Chinese scientific tradition. Unlike Kuhn, Nakayama refers by paradigm to a “constitutive principle of scientific groups”, which he elaborates in two senses: (1) a paradigm “*provides its supporters and their successors with a point of departure that assures the development and resolution of the several types of problems with which they are confronted,*” and (2) it denotes “*canonical codifications of classical texts that set scholarly style, legitimate the specialized, professional activities of intellectual groups, and lay out a course of subsequent development for what has come to be normatively defined as scholarly activity.*” In both senses, he elaborates the significance of paradigm as a “way of thinking, of raising questions, and of framing answers.” Nakayama made it possible to apply this concept to fields other than the natural sciences and academic traditions in various fields.¹⁰

For paradigm’s sociological scheme, Nakayama constructed a play staffed in succession by individual pioneer, advocate group (group of disciples), and professional group (disciples of later generations). Following his script, four scenes will unfold towards the final establishment of a paradigm: “paradigmatic achievement, selection, codification, and acquisition of a mechanism for group replenishment.” Whether or not an academic tradition can survive is determined not by its founding master but by generations of successors, who make the selection and codification of the paradigmatic achievement and professionalize the transmission of the teaching.¹¹

The tradition that Nakayama’s paradigm describes, in the Chinese context, encompasses the social and intellectual bond between the master and his successors, a

¹⁰ Nakayama 1984, 18, 19, 20; author's italics.

¹¹ Ibid., 28-31; quotation from 30.

connection that was carefully maintained in knowledge transmission. Its Chinese equivalent has been known as “*jiafa*” (lit. the principle of a school or family) or “*shifa*” (lit. the principle inherited from the master), an epistemic tradition not only defended in academic study and technical learning but also highly esteemed in the art of reading.

The notion of *jiafa* initially referred to a textual system and its explanatory framework, passed down as a tradition within an academic or professional group. *Jiafa* also stipulated a set of rules about chapter organization, punctuation, and commentary in particular, all correlated to a reading strategy and practice. As a pattern of knowledge transmission extending from ancient times to the late imperial period, *jiafa* endeavored to guarantee the legitimate use of the physical book and the proper interpretation of its text in any field of traditional Chinese book learning from medicine to philosophy,¹² covering both *ars* (“practice”) and *scientia* (“theory”). Founders and their successors pioneered, selected, codified, and replenished their own paradigms, and those principles and traditions were transmitted from fathers to sons or from masters to disciples. Blood, academic, and professional bonds between those practitioners conferred on their paradigms some genealogical features, to which the character *jia* refers. An innovation of the principle and tradition could begin a new school with a reconfigured paradigm, but the disciple’s veneration of the canonized text and his filial piety to his master were both valued, theoretically or practically, as fundamental to the survival of his tradition and school.¹³

The notion of *jiafa* provided a foundation for organizing knowledge and thus characterized traditional Chinese bibliographical theories and practices from the first

¹² Sivin 1995b, esp. 186-88.

¹³ Yu Jiaxi 1958, 11.600, 601.

century BC and after. The conservative scholarly bibliographer tended to assign each title a bibliographical place corresponding to its academic pedigree; those titles sharing a paradigmatic achievement would be chronologically arranged by the dates of their first appearances under the same category or subcategory. Such a bibliographical alignment, although sometimes idealized, displayed the *jiafa* of a text and its author, that is, its intellectual or academic pedigree in the school of scholarship to which it belonged.

The notion of *jiafa* was officially recognized around 136 BC, when five Erudites were designated in the National University to lecture on the five Confucian Classics, strictly following the old principles and traditions they inherited from their own masters. In Zhu's age, the Han tradition of *zhangju* (lit. "paragraphs and sentences," etymological interpretation), if not quite abandoned, was considered insignificant and inferior to the Neo-Confucian achievement of revealing the Way implied in the Classical text.¹⁴ The Han tradition's underling status did not mean it lacked efficacy when reading the Classics, and in 1189 Zhu himself made his commentaries to the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* in the Han way. Philosophically, however, this method of reading lay beyond Zhu and his associates' intellectual goals. They considered themselves orthodox and embraced the authentic tradition inherited from Confucius and Mencius rather than from Han and Tang Confucians. Thus, the revived tradition of pre-Qin Confucianism was esteemed as the Neo-Confucian *jiafa*, a tradition or set of traditions that Zhu himself expected his disciples and examination candidates to master and follow strictly in their reading. The examination candidates should follow the *jiafa* that he chose in his written answers to the Classical questions in the examinations.

¹⁴ Lin Qingzhang 1994, "Mingdai de Han Song xue wenti" 明代的漢宋學問題 [The issue of Han Learning/Song Learning in the Ming period], 6-12.

The notion of *jiafa* was also emphasized and enriched in other arts implicitly or explicitly descending from Zhu. These arts valued paradigmatic achievements in various fields and expanded the notion of *jiafa* to philosophies other than Confucianism, as well as to history and literature. A comprehensive understanding of these paradigmatic examples and their evolution was the prerequisite for properly assessing and reading any other texts in related fields.¹⁵

Given the constraints exercised by *jiafa* over intellectual practices, China and Europe have had different epistemic traditions and knowledge structures, some perhaps unique to each. Therefore, the assessment of Chinese knowledge traditions should be undertaken “on their own terms,” as Benjamin Elman has done in his recent cultural-historical study of science in late imperial China from 1550 to 1900.¹⁶ It is within China’s historical frame of knowledge that Elman finds in Ming and Qing intellectual life a longstanding interest in natural knowledge. Late imperial China, he argues, had its own science as a concept and sciences as specific natural studies, all expressed in classical Chinese, represented on their own terms, and practiced in the Chinese way. Elman challenges both Needham’s view of “bureaucratic feudalism” as obstacle to the development of science in post-1600 China and Derk Bodde’s theory that written Chinese has hindered more than helped the development of scientific ways of thinking in China.¹⁷ This ongoing interest in natural studies, according to Elman, was maintained among the literati, not in the context of Wang Yangming’s Learning of Mind, which was too mysterious to be practiced in natural studies, but employing Zhu’s philosophy of

¹⁵ Chen Zhongfan 1933, 47-50; Sun Deqian 1936, 113-25.

¹⁶ Elman 2005.

¹⁷ Needham 1969; Bodde 1991.

investigating things to extend knowledge.¹⁸ In this sense, I tend to assume, Zhu's investigation-extension theory actually encouraged elite readers to investigate things that they encountered and provided them a set of *mentalités* that legitimated information on printed pages. Zhu's theory of reading based on this philosophy, as well as the paradigm he advocated in it, functioned to promote knowledge acquisition and innovation by readers. With Confucian principle as the ultimate standard, readers were encouraged to approach as many branches of knowledge as they could, even heterodox ideas. The application of Zhu's theory of reading by his philosophical rivals in their intellectual practices illustrates that it is a paradigm of sufficient openness and tolerance.

In sum, the perpetuation of Zhu's theory of reading in intellectual practices demonstrated the continuance of intellectualism in late imperial China. In this sense, the scholarly traditions that intellectual and cultural historians have identified in twelfth- to eighteenth-century China actually shared and were subject to one origin: Zhu's Neo-Confucian intellectualism, an epistemic tradition characterized by his theory of reading as rational organicism.

As far as reading habits are concerned, Zhu's theory of reading represented the pre-Modern East Asian tradition. In both Yi Korea (1392-1910) and Tokugawa Japan, his theory forged the curricula designed for elite readers in these two cultures.

Yi Korean students witnessed the triumph of Zhu's theory of reading. His curriculum was endowed with a relatively stable character by being perpetuated in the Royal Lecture of the Yi dynasty, given that dynasty's commitment to Neo-Confucianism

¹⁸ Elman 2005, 6-10, 28, 33-36, 226.

in general and the Cheng-Zhu school in particular.¹⁹ This officially sanctioned ideology arrived at its full maturity on the peninsula with Yi Hwang's 李滉 (T'oegye 退溪, 1501-70) exposition and integration of Zhu's thought. At the same time, Zhu's theory of reading was echoed among Korean Neo-Confucian scholars. After his Chinese predecessor, Yi Hwang also emphasized book learning as complementary to the process of self-cultivation; the book mediated a process by which the reader could access and appropriate the truths discovered by sages and wise men.²⁰ Stipulating that Zhu's *Rules for the White Deer Hollow Academy* be written on the wall of his own Isan Academy (K. *Isan Sŏwŏn*), Yi Hwang taught his students Zhu's attitude and method of reading books.²¹ In his own instructions for reading, Yi Hwang even directly borrowed some expressions from Zhu, e.g., reading books as the key to the investigation of principle, keeping an open mind free of preconceived notions while reading, paying attention to each word and phrase, and regular rereading until one penetrates and understands the Classical text.²² Yi Hwang's disciple Yi I 李珥 (Yulgok 栗谷, 1536-84) had the same faith in book learning, saying, "One should first read books. This is because examples of how the sages used their minds, and what should be emulated or avoided in goodness and evil, are all contained in books."²³ Yi I's proposals concerning the order in which books were to be read and the periodic achievements of reading were largely adapted from Zhu's suggestion.²⁴

¹⁹ Haboush 1985.

²⁰ Yi Hwang 1988, 91, 108-10, Kalton's commentary.

²¹ Ibid., 107, Kalton's commentary; Yi Hwang 1977, "Isan wongyu" [Rules for the Isan Academy], I.647.

²² Yi Hwang 1977, II.535-38.

²³ Cited in Haboush 1985, 189.

²⁴ Ibid., 192-93.

As in Yi Korea, ever since its introduction into Tokugawa Japan, Zhu's theory of reading was predominant among most elite Japanese reading activities. In Tokugawa Japan the native book industry blossomed while numerous books were imported from China. The inflow of Chinese books and texts in particular called for the appearance of guides to reading. Introductory books intended for various readers of Chinese learning (J. *Shinagaku* 支那學) were adapted from their Chinese sources.²⁵ Among those adapting Chinese arts of reading were Amano Sadakage 天野 信 景 (1663-1733) and Kaibara Ekiken 貝原益軒 (1630-1714), both of whose works had far-reaching influence. Zhu's theory of reading was duplicated, almost word for word, by Amano in his *Shogaku dokushohan* 初学読書範 (Rules of reading for beginners, 1699), a guide practiced and imitated since its first publication. The Japanese domestication of Zhu's theory was completed by Kaibara, whose *Yamato zokkun* 大和俗訓 (Common instructions of Yamato, 1708) was designed for common readers who did not know any Chinese characters. Despite their different target readers, both Amano and Kaibara advocated Zhu's concept of reading as the way of investigating things and understanding principles in things, as revealed by the Confucian sages in their surviving texts. They both recommended what Zhu had done before adding native Japanese literature to their lists of reading.²⁶

Until the nineteenth century at least, Peter Kornicki powerfully argues, most books printed in Japan were in Chinese rather than Japanese and Sinology dominated intellectual life of the Tokugawa period.²⁷ Did Japanese elites read Chinese texts and

²⁵ Nagasawa Kikuya 1987.

²⁶ Nagatomo Chiyoji 1987, 31-33, 380-407; Nagatomo Chiyoji 2002, 160-64.

²⁷ Kornicki 1998, 16-19.

books in the same way that the Chinese literati did? Did they apply Zhu's theory of reading to their reading practices? Regarding this question, Kornicki is cautious in his anecdotal descriptions of readers and reading in Japan after 1600. After analyzing Amano and Kaibara as two examples, Kornicki states, "Zhu Xi was widely read in Japan in the Tokugawa period but there are few echoes in Japanese Confucian writings of his theory of reading and it is not evident why this should be so," while also admitting that "more work is needed on this area."²⁸ His reservations may challenge the abovementioned representativeness of Zhu's theory. However, in addition to neglecting a systematic examination of actual reader's practices, as Nagatomo Chiyoji has carried out, Kornicki in his study has paid little attention to two historical phenomena related to Japanese reading habits. (1) In the Tokugawa period, the Japanese elite's preoccupation with Sinology elicited the appearance of guides to Chinese studies. Compiled for readers ranging from schoolboys to adults, these guides contain instructions about how to read Chinese texts, including the Confucian Classics and Chinese histories. Nagasawa Kikuya has made an annotated bibliography of twenty-four of them.²⁹ (2) Derived from Chinese examples but largely indigenized, theories of reading enjoyed a continuous history in traditional Japan. Deguchi Kazuo's work on the art of reading in pre-modern Japan has laid the foundation for further investigations of rules and principles for reading Chinese texts in Tokugawa Japan.³⁰ Before undertaking further explorations, I shall follow Nagatomo and assume the representativeness of Zhu's theory of reading in East Asian traditions.

²⁸ Ibid., 259-63; quotation from 263.

²⁹ Nagasawa Kikuya 1987.

³⁰ Deguchi Kazuo 1994a; 1994b.

Reading strategies and their applications to knowledge acquisition and innovation deserve further exploration. Predominant among reading habits, Zhu Xi's theory of reading determined the tradition of secular elite intellectual practices and the knowledge landscape in late imperial China (and even pre-Modern East Asia). Elite readers of different philosophical stances in Ming China were trained to read following Zhu's rules, to conduct their knowledge practices with the paradigm provided in Zhu's theory, and to construct their knowledge frameworks within Zhu's intellectualist tradition. As my discussion has unfolded for the most part inside the intellectual world, more actual readers and their activities should be examined in future projects.

APPENDIX

Table 2.1.1, Extant Collections/Selections of Zhu Xi's Writings and Conversations Published in the Ming (1368-1644)

Year	Title	Publisher
[1265]	晦菴先生朱文公文集一百卷目錄二卷續集十一卷別集十卷	Jian'an Academy 建安書院
1435	晦菴先生[文鈔七卷]五言詩鈔一卷/吳訥	Qian Xuan 錢宣
1460	朱子大全一百卷目錄二卷續集十卷別集十卷	He Shen 賀沈 & Hu Ji 胡緝
1470[1302]	晦菴先生語錄類要十八卷/葉士龍	Han Yan 韓儼
1473[1270]	朱子語類一百四十卷/黎靖德	Chen Wei 陳焯
[1473]	朱子語類一百四十卷/黎靖德	
1482	晦菴文鈔七卷詩抄一卷/吳訥	Lou Qian 婁謙 & Zhou Feng 周鳳
1491	朱子語略二十卷/楊與立	Guozijian 國子監 in Nanjing
1506	晦庵先生朱文公文集一百卷續集十一卷別集十卷目錄二卷	Shouyuantang 壽 元堂
1532	晦菴先生朱文公集一百卷續集十一卷別集十卷	Surveillance commission 按察 司 of Fujian
1540	晦庵先生文鈔六卷續鈔四卷/吳訥崔銑	Rong Cha 榮察
1553	朱子大全私抄十二卷/王宗沐	
Jiajing	晦菴朱先生文公別集十卷續集十一卷	Shu Ao 舒鏊
[Jiajing]	朱文公文集十五卷首一卷/唐順之	
1604	朱子語類一百卷/黎靖德	Zhu Chongmu 朱 崇沐
1605	晦菴先生朱文公文集八十八卷目錄二卷續集十一卷別集十卷	Zhu Chongmu
1605	重輯朱子錄要/馮應京	Zhu Chongmu
1612	朱文公語錄類要述十八卷/范涑	Zhang Guangbi 詹光陛
1634[1604]	晦菴先生朱文公文集八十八卷續集十一卷別集十卷	Li Yinbin 李寅賓
1640	朱子語類大全集十一卷經說十四卷/陳龍正	
Chongzhen	朱子語類一百四十卷/黎靖德	Liu Qian 劉潛

SOURCE: Du and Du 2002; Naikaku Bunko 1956; Morohashi 1930; Guoli zhongyang tushuguan 1967; Shum 1999; Zhongguo guji shanben shumu lianhe daohang xitong 中國古籍善本書目聯合導航系統, URL: <<http://202.96.31.45/shanBenDir.do?method=goToIndex>>.

Table 2.1.2, Ming Compilations of Zhu Xi's Conversations (1368-1644)

Compiler	Stance*	Title	Note
Zhu Lian 朱廉(fl. 1354-1378)	Zhu	<i>Lixue zuanyan</i> 理學纂言 [Collections sayings of Learning of Principle]	Selecting essentials from Li Jingde's version of Zhu Xi's conversations.
Peng Xu 彭勳(jinshi 1415)	Zhu	<i>Dushu yaofa</i> 讀書要法	Collected reading rules suggested by Zhu Xi and later Confucians.
Wu Xu 吾昇(1431-1504)	Zhu	<i>Zhuzi dushufa</i> 朱子讀書法	
Qiu Jun 丘濬(1421-1495)	Zhu	<i>Zhuzi xuedi</i> 朱子學的 [Principles of Master Zhu's learning]	Consisting of twenty sections of Zhu Xi's conversations, in the style of the <i>Analects</i> .
Yu Hu 余祐(1465-1528)	Zhu	<i>Wengong jingshi daxun</i> 文公經世大訓十六卷 [Zhu Xi's instructions of ordering the world, of sixteen chapters]	A selection of Zhu Xi's writings and conversations.
Huang Nan 黃楠(fl. the late 15 th -early 16 th centuries)	Zhu	<i>Wuzi chaoshi</i> 五子鈔釋二十一卷 [Selection of the Five Masters with commentaries, of twenty-one chapters]	Nine chapters allocated to Zhu Xi's conversations.
Sun Yingkui 孫應奎 (jinshi 1529; d. 1553)	Wang	<i>Zhuzi chao</i> 朱子鈔十卷 [Selection of Zhu Xi, of ten chapters]	
Wang Zongmu 王宗沐 (1523-91)	Wang	<i>Zhuzi daquan sichao</i> 朱子大全私鈔十二卷 [Private selection from the Complete collection of Zhu Xi]	
Fan Lai 范涑 (ca.1560-1610)	Zhu	<i>Zhuzi yulu shuyao</i> 朱子語錄述要 [Listed essentials from Zhu Xi's conversations]	
Feng Yingjing 馮應京 (1555-1606)	Wang	[<i>Chongji</i>] <i>Zhuzi luyao</i> [重輯]朱子錄要十五卷 [Recompiled essentials of Zhu Xi's conversations, of fifteen chapters]	
Gao Panlong 高攀龍 (1562-1626)	Zhu	<i>Zhuzi jieyao</i> 朱子節要十四卷 [Selected essentials of Zhu Xi, of fourteen chapters]	
Chen Longzhen 陳龍正(1585-1645)	Wang	<i>Canding Zhuzi yulei</i> 參定朱子語類[十一卷] [Reedited collection of Zhu Xi's conversations]	

SOURCE: Huang Yuji 2001, chap. 11.

* Stance here refers to follower of the Cheng-Zhu school or admirer of Wang Yangming.

Table 2.2.1. Ming Publications of Zhen Dexiu

Year	Title	Publisher
1434	大學衍義四十三卷/真西山讀書記乙集上	
1492	心經附註四卷/程敏政	程敏政
1502	大學衍義四十三卷	邵寶
1504	真文忠公續文章正宗二十卷	南京國子監
1520	西山先生真文忠公文集五十一卷/黃鞏 張文麟	建寧府署
1520	西山先生真文忠公文章正宗二十六卷/唐順之	
1520	西山先生真文忠公文章正宗二十四卷	馬卿
1525	大學衍義節略二十卷/楊廉 朱寔昌	
1527	大學衍義四十三卷	司禮監
1532	真文忠公續文章正宗二十卷	孫衡
1536	西山先生真文忠公文章正宗二十四卷	朱鴻漸
1542	真文忠公續文章正宗二十卷	胡松
1544	集錄真西山文章正宗三十卷	孔天胤
1544	西山先生真文忠公續文章正宗二十卷	孔天胤
1556	大學衍義四十三卷	吉澄
1559	大學衍義輯要/江文武	
1560	集錄真西山文章正宗	范惟一
1561	西山先生真文忠公文章正宗二十六卷 /唐順之	歸仁齋
1562	大學衍義節畧十卷 大學衍義補畧二十一卷/楊廉 王諍	
1564	西山先生真文忠公文章正宗二十四卷	山東布政司
1564	西山先生真文忠公文章正宗二十四卷	杜陵蔣氏家塾
1564	西山先生真文忠公續文章正宗二十卷	杜陵蔣氏家塾
1564	西山先生文章正宗二十四卷	曹三暘
1564	大學衍義通略三十卷/王諍	
1565	西山先生真文忠公文章正宗二十四卷續集二十卷	鍾沂
1565	文章正宗二十六卷	楊先春
1566	心經附註四卷/程敏政	
1570	真西山先生心經一卷政經一卷	高文薦
1575	文章正宗鈔四卷/胡汝嘉	歸德府署
1576	大學衍義四十三卷	吳情
1579	文章正宗選要四卷	李時成
1598	西山先生真文忠公文集五十五卷 目二卷	金學曾景賢堂
1598	集古評釋西山真先生文章正宗二十四卷/唐順之	沈與文
1605	大學衍義四十三卷 補一百六十四卷 首一卷	
1618	集古評釋真西山文章正宗二十四卷/唐順之	俞思沖
1621	西山先生真文忠公文章正宗二十四卷	
1632	大學衍義四十三卷/陳仁錫	陳仁錫
1632	大學衍義四十三卷	南城翁少麓
1635	大學衍義/丁辛	楊鳴 真文望

1636	真西山文忠公文集選一卷/葛鼎	
1638	西山先生真文忠公文集五十五卷	
1638	大學衍義四十三卷	楊鶻 真文望
1643	大學衍義四十三卷	毛氏汲古閣
Jiajing	西山先生真文忠公文章正宗二十四卷續文章正宗二十四卷	李倫
Jiajing	文章正宗二十六卷	劉志千
Jiajing	西山先生真文忠公文章正宗二十四卷真文忠公續文章正宗二十卷	
Wanli	集古評釋西山先生文章正宗二十四卷/唐順之	容與堂
Chongzhen	真西山文集	葉聚甫周交甫
Chongzhen	西山先生真文忠公文章正宗二十四卷/李開鄴 盛符升	
Chongzhen	西山先生真文忠公續文章正宗二十卷/李開鄴 盛符升	
Song-Ming	西山先生真文忠公讀書記甲集三十七卷乙集下二十二卷丁集二卷	湯漢

SOURCE: Du and Du 2002; *Zengoku Kanseki Deitabeisu* 全國漢籍データベース [Database of Chinese books in Japan], URL: <http://kanji.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/kanseki/>; WorldCat; Guojia Tushuguan guancang mulu chaxue xitong 國家圖書館館藏目錄查詢系統 [National Central Library Online Catalog], URL: <http://192.83.186.63/F?RN=39649509>.

Table.2.3.1, The Core Texts Required to Read in Cheng Duanli's Curriculum

Age (<i>sui</i>)	Text to read
<8	<i>Xingli zixun</i> 性理字訓 [Glossary of Nature and Principle]
8	<i>Xiaoxue shu zhengwen</i> 小學書正文 [Elementary Learning, text proper]
9-15	<i>Daxue jingzhuan zhengwen</i> 大學經傳正文 [Great Learning and commentaries]
	<i>Lunyu zhengwen</i> 論語正文 [The Analects, text proper]
	<i>Mengzi zhengwen</i> 孟子正文 [The Mencius, text proper]
	<i>Zhongyong zhengwen</i> 中庸正文 [The Mean, text proper]
	<i>Xiaojing kanwu</i> 孝經刊誤 [The Classic of Filial Piety, corrected]
	<i>Yi zhengwen</i> 易正文 [The Changes, text proper]
	<i>Shu zhengwen</i> 書正文 [The Documents, text proper]
	<i>Shi zhengwen</i> 詩正文 [The Songs, text proper]
	<i>Yili Liji zhengwen</i> 儀禮禮記正文 [The Etiquette and Ceremonial, and the Classic of Rites, text proper]
	<i>Zhouli zhengwen</i> 周禮正文 [Rites of Zhou, text proper]
	<i>Chunqiu jing bing sanzhuang zhengwen</i> 春秋經并三傳正文 [The Spring and Autumn, with three commentaries]
16-19	<i>Daxue zhangju huowen</i> 大學章句或問 [Parsing of phrases in the Great Learning; Questions on the Great Learning]
	<i>Lunyu jizhu</i> 論語集註 [Collected commentaries to the Analects]
	<i>Mengzi jizhu</i> 孟子集註 [Collected commentaries to the Mencius]
	<i>Zhongyong zhangju huowen</i> 中庸章句或問 [Parsing of phrases in the Mean; Questions on the Mean]
	<i>Lunyu huowen</i> 論語或問 [Questions on the Analects]
	<i>Mengzi huowen</i> 孟子或問 [Questions on the Mencius]
	<i>Yi benjing zhuanzhu</i> 易本經傳注 [The Changes, with the (sub)commentary]
	<i>Shu benjing zhuanzhu</i> 書本經傳注 [The Documents, with the (sub)commentary]
	<i>Shi benjing zhuanzhu</i> 詩本經傳注 [The Songs, with the (sub)commentary]
	<i>Liji benjing zhuanzhu</i> 禮記本經傳注 [The Classic of Rites, with the (sub)commentary]
<i>Chunqiu benjing zhuanzhu</i> 春秋本經傳注 [The Spring and Autumn, with the (sub)commentary]	
[<i>Xingli zhushu</i> 性理諸書 Neo-Confucian philosophical writings]	
19-22	<i>Tongjian</i> 通鑑 [The comprehensive mirror for aid in government]
	<i>Gangmu</i> 綱目 [The outline of the Comprehensive mirror]
	<i>Han wen</i> 韓文 [Han Yu's writings (in Wenzhang zhengzong)]
	<i>Chuci</i> 楚辭 [Elegies of Chu]
	[<i>Zhidu shu</i> 制度書 Books on institutions]
	[<i>Zhidao shu</i> 治道書 Books on governance]
22-25	<i>Hanyu quanji</i> 韓愈全集 [The collection of Han Yu]
	<i>Ouyang Xiu</i> 歐陽修 [The selection of Ouyang Xiu]
	<i>Zeng Gong</i> 曾鞏 [The selection of Zeng Gong]
	<i>Wang Anshi</i> 王安石 [The selection of Wang Anshi]
	<i>Liu Zongyuan</i> 柳宗元 [The selection of Liu Zongyuan]
	<i>Su Xun</i> 蘇洵 [The selection of Su Xun]

Table 5.1.1, The Classification Scheme of Books Employed in This Current Study, Alphabetically Arranged

Bel	Belles-lettres	jibu 集部 (6 subdivisions)
BelChu	Bel: Elegies of <i>Chu</i>	<i>jibu: Chuci</i> 集部: 楚辭
BelCri	Bel: Literary criticism	<i>jibu: shiwen ping</i> 集部: 詩文評
BelGen	Bel: General anthology	<i>jibu: zongji</i> 集部: 總集
BelInd	Bel: Individual collection	<i>jibu: bieji</i> 集部: 別集
BelNov	Bel: Novels	<i>jibu: xiaoshuo</i> 集部: 小說
BelPdr	Bel: <i>Ci</i> Poetry and Drama	<i>jibu: ci qu</i> 集部: 詞曲
Cla	Classics	jingbu 經部 (10 subdivisions)
ClaCha	Cla: <i>Book of Changes</i>	<i>jingbu: Yi</i> 經部: 易
ClaDoc	Cla: <i>Book of Document</i>	<i>jingbu: Shu</i> 經部: 書
ClaFlp	Cla: <i>Book of Filial Piety</i>	<i>jingbu: Xiaojing</i> 經部: 孝經
ClaFrb	Cla: <i>Four Books</i>	<i>jingbu: Sishu</i> 經部: 四書
ClaGen	Cla: General exegeses	<i>jingbu: Wujing zongyi</i> 經部: 五經總義
ClaMus	Cla: Sacred Music	<i>jingbu: Yue</i> 經部: 樂
ClaPhl	Cla: Classical philology	<i>jingbu: xiaoxue</i> 經部: 小學
ClaPoe	Cla: <i>Book of Poetry</i>	<i>jingbu: Shijing</i> 經部: 詩
ClaRit	Cla: <i>Book of Rituals</i>	<i>jingbu: Li</i> 經部: 禮
ClaSpa	Cla: <i>Spring and Autumn</i>	<i>jingbu: Chunqiu</i> 經部: 春秋
Col	Collectanea	congbu 叢部 (2 subdivisions)
ColAut	Col: Author's collection	<i>congbu: zizhu congbu</i> 叢部: 自著叢書
ColVar	Col: Various works	<i>congbu: huibian congbu</i> 叢部: 彙編叢書
His	History	shibu 史部 (15 subdivisions)
HisAbi	His: Annals-biographies	<i>shibu: jizhuan</i> 史部: 紀傳
HisAnl	His: Annals	<i>shibu: biannian</i> 史部: 編年
HisBib	His: Bibliographies and epigraphy	<i>shibu: mulu</i> 史部: 目錄
HisBio	His: Biographies	<i>shibu: zhuanji</i> 史部: 傳記
HisBur	His: Bureaucracy	<i>shibu: zhiguan</i> 史部: 職官
HisEdm	His: Edicts and memorials	<i>shibu: zhaoling zouyi</i> 史部: 詔令奏議
HisExc	His: Historical excerpts	<i>shibu: shichao</i> 史部: 史鈔
HisGeo	His: Geography	<i>shibu: dili</i> 史部: 地理
HisGvi	His: Government institutional handbooks	<i>shibu: zhengshu</i> 史部: 政書
HisHis	His: Historiography	<i>shibu: shiping</i> 史部: 史評
HisIns	His: Inscriptions	<i>shibu: jinshi</i> 史部: 金石
HisMis	His: Miscellaneous history	<i>shibu: zashi</i> 史部: 雜史
HisTim	His: Regulations of times	<i>shibu: shilling</i> 史部: 時令
HisTop	His: Topically arranged history	<i>shibu: jishi benmo</i> 史部: 紀事本末
HisUno	His: Unofficial history	<i>shibu: bieshi</i> 史部: 別史
Phi	Philosophy	zibu 子部 (15 subdivisions)

PhiAgr	Phi: Agronomist	<i>zibu: Nongjia</i> 子部: 農家
PhiAne	Phi: Anecdotist	<i>zibu: Xiaoshuojia</i> 子部: 小說家
PhiArt	Phi: Arts	<i>zibu: yishu</i> 子部: 藝術
PhiAst	Phi: Astronomy and mathematics	<i>zibu: tianwen suanfa</i> 子部: 天文算法
PhiBud	Phi: Buddhism	<i>zibu: Shijia</i> 子部: 釋家
PhiCon	Phi: Confucianism	<i>zibu: Rujia</i> 子部: 儒家
PhiEnc	Phi: Encyclopedias	<i>zibu: leishu</i> 子部: 類書
PhiGen	Phi: General	<i>zibu: zonglei</i> 子部: 總類
PhiLeg	Phi: Legalism	<i>zibu: Fajia</i> 子部: 法家
PhiMan	Phi: Mantic arts	<i>zibu: shushu</i> 子部: 術數
PhiMed	Phi: Medicine	<i>zibu: Yijia</i> 子部: 醫家
PhiMil	Phi: Military science	<i>zibu: Bingjia</i> 子部: 兵家
PhiMis	Phi: Miscellany	<i>zibu: zajia</i> 子部: 雜家
PhiMnl	Phi: Manuals	<i>zibu: pulu</i> 子部: 譜錄
PhiTao	Phi: Taoism	<i>zibu: Daojia</i> 子部: 道家

Table 5.1.2, Lu Shen's Categories and Their Equivalences in the 1781 Imperial Scheme

Lu Shen's category	The 1781 classification	Abbreviation
Classics	Categories except that of Classical philology in the branch of Classics	ClaCha, ClaDoc, ClaFlp, ClaFrb, ClaGen, ClaMus, ClaPoe, ClaRit, ClaSpa
The principle and nature	Confucianism in the branch of philosophy, particularly Neo-Confucian writings of the Song and the Ming.	*PhiCon
History	Standard histories in the branch of history	*HisAbi
Ancient Texts	N/A	N/A
Philosophers	Pre-Qin schools of philosophy in the branch of philosophy	*PhiAgr, *PhiAne, *PhiCon, PhiLeg, PhiMil, *PhiMis, *PhiTao
Prose and poetry collections	Individual and general collections in the branch of belles-lettres	BelInd, BelGen
Encyclopedia	Encyclopedia in the branch of philosophy	PhiEnc
Miscellaneous history	Historical narratives in the branch of history by non-imperial historians, excluding bibliography, edicts and memorials, government institutional guidebooks, works on bureaucracy, inscriptions, and regulations of timing	*HisAbi, *HisAnl, HisBio, *HisCon, HisExc, HisHis, HisMis, HisTop, HisUno
Local gazetteers	Geography in the branch of history	HisGeo
Rhyme guides and classical philology	Philosophy in the branch of the Classics	ClaPhl
Medicine	Medicine in the branch of philosophy	PhiMed
Miscellaneous writings	Practical knowledge in the branch of philosophy, excluding agronomists, anecdotists, Buddhism, encyclopedia, Confucianism, legalism, medicine, military, Taoism	PhiArt, PhiAst, PhiMan, PhiMnl
Imperial records	N/A	N/A

*Partly overlap between Lu Shen's category and the category in the 1781 imperial scheme.

Table 5.1.3, Ming Imprints by Category (1368-1644)

								Grand Total: 9666 editions	
ClaCha	110	HisAbi	129	PhiAgr	19	BelChu	46	ColAut	20
ClaDoc	47	HisAnl	180	PhiAne	122	BelCri	99	ColVar	69
ClaFlp	5	HisBib	17	PhiArt	147	BelGen	914		
ClaFrb	69	HisBio	304	PhiAst	146	BelInd	2805	Collectanea	89
ClaGen	46	HisBur	22	PhiBud	152	BelNov	143		
ClaMus	14	HisCon	1	PhiCon	348	BelPdr	409		
ClaPhl	200	HisEdm	148	PhiEnc	387				
ClaPoe	64	HisExc	70	PhiGen	14	Belles-Lettres	4416		
ClaRit	107	HisGeo	272	PhiLeg	43				
ClaSpa	97	HisGvi	171	PhiMan	116				
		HisHis	104	PhiMed	577				
Classics	759	HisIns	12	PhiMil	106				
		HisMis	118	PhiMis	475				
		HisTim	6	PhiMnl	35				
		HisTop	16	PhiTao	137				
		HisUno	8						
				Philosophy	2824				
		History	1578						

Table 5.1.4, Editions of Confucian Works Published in the Ming, Numerated by the Dynasty When the Work First Appeared

Year	Three			Sui	Tang	Song	Yuan	Ming	Grand Total
	Han	Kdms	NS Div						
1388-1397	1								1
1398-1407	1								1
1408-1417	1							2	3
1418-1427								1	1
1428-1437	1					1		1	3
1438-1447								1	1
1448-1457						1		2	3
1468-1477						6	1	3	10
1488-1497						4		5	9
1498-1507	5					6		1	12
1508-1517	5					5		4	14
1518-1527	4	1	1	1		4	1	9	21
1528-1537	1					1		20	22
1538-1547	1	1				1	1	6	10
1548-1557	3	1				1	2	19	26
1558-1567	2					1		16	19
1568-1577			1		1	7	1	15	25
1578-1587	3					1		13	17
1588-1597	1					4		16	21
1598-1607						8		17	25
1608-1617						5		20	25
1618-1627	7					1		12	20
1628-1637	1	1				3		4	9
1638-1644						1		1	2
Grand Total	37	4	2	1	1	61	6	188	300

Reign	Three			Sui	Tang	Song	Ming	Grand Total
	Han	Kdms	NS Div					
Zhengtong						1		1
Zhengde						1		1
Jiajing					1	2	4	7
Longqing	2					1	2	5
Wanli	1			1		4	24	30
Tianqi			1					1
Chongzhen						1	2	3
Grand Total	3	1	1	1	1	10	32	48

Table 5.1.5, Ming Editions of Pre-Tang and Tang Texts

Year	Pre-Qin	Qin	Han	Three Kdms	Jin	NS Div	Sui	Tang	Grand Total
1368-1377								1	1
1378-1387								1	1
1388-1397			1						1
1398-1407			1						1
1408-1417			1						1
1418-1427						1		1	2
1428-1437			1					2	3
1438-1447					1			2	3
1448-1457					1			4	5
1458-1467			1						1
1468-1477	1		1		4	2		7	15
1478-1487	1					1		2	4
1488-1497	5		1			1		8	15
1498-1507	1	1	10	1	5	2		19	39
1508-1517			13	4		5		22	44
1518-1527		1	26	6	11	7	1	21	73
1528-1537	2	1	15	3	4	5		29	59
1538-1547	1		5	5	7	3	1	21	43
1548-1557	2		14	1	6	6		17	46
1558-1567	1	1	6		4	1	1	10	24
1568-1577	2		7	1	11	8		17	46
1578-1587	7	3	19	2	6	14		20	71
1588-1597	5	1	11	1	3	9		31	61
1598-1607	1	1	7	1	6	11		46	73
1608-1617	2	1	4	1	4	11		26	49
1618-1627	8	2	21	5	7	7		15	65
1628-1637	2	1	7	2	2	5	1	15	35
1638-1644	1		3		1			13	18
Grand Total	42	13	175	33	83	99	4	350	799

(To next page)

(Continue)

Reign	Pre-Qin	Qin	Han	Three Kdms	Jin	NS Div	Sui	Tang	Grand Total
Hongwu								1	1
Zhengtong						1		2	3
Tianshun								1	1
Chenghua								1	1
Hongzhi			1			1		1	3
Zhengde			2	2				6	10
Jiajing	2		14	6	9	13		28	72
Longqing			3	1					4
Wanli	10	4	26	7	16	25	2	49	139
Tianqi	2		2	1	2	3		7	17
Chongzhen	3	1	8	1	3	8		12	36
Grand Total	17	5	56	18	30	51	2	108	287

Table 5.1.6, Classification Schemes of the Philosophical Branch in the *History of the Former Han* and the *History of the Sui*

<i>The History of the Former Han</i>	<i>The History of the Sui</i>
Philosophy (<i>zhuzi lue</i> 諸子略, total 189 titles)	Philosophy (<i>zibu</i> 子部, total 853 titles)
Confucianists (<i>Ru</i> 儒, 53)	Confucianists (62)
Taoists (<i>Dao</i> 道, 37)	Taosists (78)
Astrologists (<i>Yinyang</i> 陰陽, 21)	/
Legalists (<i>Fa</i> 法, 10)	Legalists (6)
Logicians (<i>Ming</i> 名, 7)	Logicians (4)
Mohists (<i>Mo</i> 墨, 6)	Mohists (3)
Diplomatists (<i>Zongheng</i> 縱橫, 12)	Diplomatists (2)
Miscellanists (<i>Za</i> 雜, 20)	Miscellanists (97)
Agriculturalists (<i>Nong</i> 農, 9)	Agriculturalists (5)
Anecdotalists (<i>Xiaoshuo</i> 小說, 15)	Anecdotalists (25)
Military Science (<i>bingshu</i> 兵書, total 53)	Military Science (133)
Strategy (<i>quanmou</i> 權謀, 13)	
Terrain (<i>xingshi</i> 形勢, 11)	
Negative and Positive principles (<i>yinyang</i> , 16)	
Skills (<i>jiqiao</i> 技巧, 13)	
Science and Occultism (<i>shushu</i> 數術, total 190)	/
Astronomy (<i>tianwen</i> 天文, 21)	Astronomy (97)
Chronology (<i>lipu</i> 曆譜, 18)	Chronology (<i>lishu</i> 曆數, 100)
Law of five elements (<i>wuxing</i> 五行, 31)	Law of five elements (272)
Divination (<i>shigui</i> 蓍龜, 15)	
Miscellaneous superstitions (<i>zazhan</i> 雜占, 18)	
Geomancy (<i>xingfa</i> 形法, 6)	
Medicine (<i>fangji</i> 方技, total 36)	Medicine (<i>yifang</i> 醫方, 256)
Medical classics (<i>yijing</i> 醫經, 7)	
Pharmacology (<i>jingfang</i> 經方, 11)	
Sexology (<i>fangzhong</i> 房中, 8)	
Longevity (<i>shenxian</i> 神僊, 10)	

SOURCES: Ban Gu 1962, 30.1724-46, 1756-81; Wei Zheng & Linhu Defen 1973, 34.997-1051.

Table 5.3.1, Commercial, Government, and Households Editions of Ming Imprints by Category

Category	Commercial	Government	Household	Entire Ming
ClaCha	37 15%	4	63 15%	110 14%
ClaDoc	20 8%	2	23 5%	47 6%
ClaFlp	0%	1	3 1%	5 1%
ClaFrb	33 14%	3	28 7%	69 9%
ClaGen	10 4%	4	32 7%	46 6%
ClaMus	0%	3	10 2%	14 2%
ClaPhl	56 23%	5	111 26%	200 26%
ClaPoe	28 12%	3	31 7%	64 8%
ClaRit	19 8%	9	77 18%	107 14%
ClaSpa	36 15%	6	51 12%	97 13%
Classics in Total	239 100%	40	429 100%	759 100%
HisAbi	21 7%	43	61 6%	129 8%
HisAnl	93 30%	13	67 6%	178 11%
HisBib	2 1%		14 1%	17 1%
HisBio	38 12%	14	238 22%	304 19%
HisBur	4 1%	3	15 1%	22 1%
HisCon	0%		1 0%	1 0%
HisEdm	9 3%	12	124 11%	148 9%
HisExc	22 7%	2	43 4%	70 4%
HisGeo	14 5%	13	241 22%	272 17%
HisGvi	31 10%	29	106 10%	171 11%
HisHis	45 15%	3	55 5%	104 7%
HisIns	1 0%		10 1%	12 1%
HisMis	24 8%	1	90 8%	118 7%
HisTim	2 1%		3 0%	6 0%
HisTop	0%	1	16 1%	18 1%
HisUno	0%		8 1%	8 1%
History in Total	306 100%	134	1092 100%	1578 100%
PhiAgr	4 0%	3	12 1%	19 1%
PhiAne	37 4%	3	82 5%	122 4%
PhiArt	44 5%	2	93 6%	147 5%
PhiAst	10 1%	108	28 2%	146 5%
PhiBud	16 2%	6	72 5%	152 5%
PhiCon	63 7%	23	244 15%	348 12%
PhiEnc	229 25%	6	148 9%	387 14%
PhiGen	5 1%	1	8 1%	14 0%
PhiLeg	9 1%	1	32 2%	43 2%
PhiMan	69 8%	2	42 3%	116 4%
PhiMed	253 28%	27	280 18%	577 20%
PhiMil	29 3%	4	73 5%	106 4%
PhiMis	94 10%	11	365 23%	475 17%
PhiMnl	3 0%		30 2%	35 1%
PhiTao	34 4%	5	88 6%	137 5%
Philosophy in Total	899 100%	202	1597 100%	2824 100%

BelChu	6	1%		38	1%	46	1%
BelCri	22	3%		73	2%	99	2%
BelGen	298	34%	15	581	17%	914	21%
BelInd	166	19%	43	2520	75%	2805	64%
BelNov	135	15%	1	7	0%	143	3%
BelPdr	246	28%	1	152	5%	409	9%
<i>Belles-Lettres</i> in Total	873	100%	60	3371	100%	4416	100%
ColAut	4	22%		14	21%	20	22%
ColVar	14	78%	2	53	79%	69	78%
Collectanea in Total	18	100%	2	67	100%	89	100%
Grand Total	2335		438	6556		9666	

REFERENCE MATTER

- CSJCCB=*Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan)
- GJZBCK=*Beijing Tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe)
- MDSMTB=*Mingdai shumu tiba congkan* 明代書目題跋叢刊 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe)
- SBCK=*Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊 (Shanghai/Taibei: Shangwu yinshu guan)
- SKCM=*Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書 (Ji'nan: Qi Lu shushe)
- SKCMBB=*Siku quanshu cunmu congshu bubian* 四庫全書存目叢書補編 (Ji'nan: Qi Lu shushe)
- SKJH=*Siku jinhui shu congkan* 四庫禁燬書叢刊 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe)
- SKQS=*Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 影印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taibei: Shangwu yinshu guan)
- SKWS=*Siku weishoushu jikan* 四庫未收書輯刊 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe)
- SYFZ=*Song Yuan fangzhi congkan* 宋元方志叢刊 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju)
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