

George L. Israel

Professor of History, Middle Georgia State University

November 27, 2023

Draft translation of Lu Cheng's Records in the *Chuan xi lu*.

Lu Cheng's records in the *Record of Instructions for Practice*

This is an English translation of the records of Lu Cheng (*Lu Cheng lu* 陸澄錄) in the first volume (*juan shang* 卷上) of the *Record of Instructions for Practice* (*Chuan xi lu* 傳習錄). Wang Yangming's followers kept records of statements he made and conversations he held when discussing his Ruist learning with them. During and after his lifetime, these records were compiled in one or more volumes and titled *Record of Instructions for Practice* (or something similar). Many versions, each with different content, were published over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some editions included a volume with a compilation of important correspondence and pedagogical writings. Among these, the three-*juan* version included in the *Complete Works of Sir Wang Wencheng* (*Wang Wencheng gong quan shu* 王文成公全書), which was published by Xie Tingjie 謝廷傑 in 1572, is generally regarded as the most complete and authoritative. Modern editions of the *Record*, such as those published by Wing-tsit Chan and Li Yeming 黎業明, generally follow this one, albeit with slightly different arrangements and textual revision where other editions seemed to call for it. The Table of Contents (*mu lu* 目錄) for Li Yeming's edition, the one most closely followed here, reads as follows (with English added, pagination deleted, and graphs changed from simplified to traditional):

傳習錄序 Preface to the *Record of Instructions for Practice*

傳習錄上 *Record of Instructions for Practice* Volume I

徐愛錄 Xu Ai's Records

陸澄錄 Lu Cheng's Records

薛侃錄 Xue Kan's Records

傳習錄中 *Record of Instructions for Practice* Volume II

答顧東橋書 Letter in Reply to Gu Dongqiao

答周道通書 Letter in Reply to Zhou Daotong

答陸原靜書一 First Letter in Reply to Lu Yuanjing

又 (答陸原靜書二 Second Letter in Reply to Lu Yuanjing)

答歐陽崇一 Reply to Ouyang Chongyi

答羅整庵少宰書 Letter in Reply to Vice Minister of Personnel Luo Zheng'an

答聶文蔚 Reply to Nie Wenwei

二 (答聶文蔚二 Second Reply to Nie Wenwei)

訓蒙大意，示教讀劉伯頌等 Basic Principles of Children's Education: Instructions for Instructor Liu Bosong and Others
教約 Education Compact

傳習錄下 *Record of Instructions for Practice Volume III*

陳久川錄 Chen Jiuchuan's Records

黃直錄 Huang Zhi's Records

黃修易錄 Huang Xiuyi's Records

黃省曾錄 Huang Shengzeng's Records

黃以方錄 Huang Yifang's Records

Each of these three *juan* has its own history prior to the publication of the three-volume *Record*. Volume I was the first to be printed. It was published in Ganzhou 贛州, Jiangxi Province 江西省 during the eighth lunar month of 1518 by Xue Kan 薛侃, a follower of the school of Wang Yangming. Xue included his records (36 entries) as well as those recorded by two other followers, including Lu Cheng's 陸澄 (81 entries) and Xu Ai's 徐愛 (14 entries), for a grand total of 131 entries. (Some scholars place the total at 129 entries, with 80 from Lu and 35 from Xu). This Medium "Story" contains Lu Cheng's records.

For the Chinese characters, I have adhered closely to the Chinese-language editions provided by Wing-tsit Chan and Li Yeming, albeit with occasional alterations to the punctuation. I have also checked the translation against Wing-tsit Chan's *Instructions for Practical Living* and benefited a great deal from it. Furthermore, in translating particular words, I have relied on the vast corpus of English-language publications. For a study and bibliography, see my *Studying Wang Yangming: History of a Sinological Field*. Also, since Wang Yangming often cites classical sources and Song dynasty Ruists, I have tried to provide the original quotations in full beneath each entry, as well as other explanatory notes.

Lu Cheng's Records 陸澄錄

Lu Cheng 陸澄 (1485-1563), whose courtesy names were Yuanjing 原靜 and Qingbo 清伯, hailed from Huzhou Prefecture 湖州府, Guian County 歸安縣, in the province of Zhejiang. He obtained his *jinshi* in 1514, during the reign of the Zhengde emperor. He was one of Wang Yangming's earliest and most important followers. His importance has mostly to do with his role in the compilation of the first volume of the *Record*. The record begins with Xu Ai's records, which were mostly taken down between 1510 and 1512 when Wang Yangming was together with him in Beijing and they accompanied each other back to their home province of Zhejiang. Lu Cheng's records follow those, and mostly date to the years when Wang Yangming was holding office in Nanjing (1514-1516), reflecting his teaching at that time. Lu Cheng met him there in 1514 or 1515 when Wang was serving as chief minister of the Nanjing Court of State Ceremonial. Regarding Lu Cheng's records, Huang Zongxi claimed that "When friends saw these, many consequently understood [Wang]. These many records all contain pertinent questioning; had it not been for Sir [Lu] no one would have been willing to ask the right questions in this way. What is more, in addition to asking the right questions, no one would have been capable of such sophistication, thoroughness, and exhaustiveness." (Huang 2006: vol. 1, 40.295)

15: 陸澄問：「主一之功，如讀書則一心在讀書上，接客則一心在接客上，可以為主一乎？」先生曰：「好色則一心在好色上，好貨則一心在好貨上，可以為主一乎？是所謂遂物，非主一也。主一，是專主一個天理。」

Lu Cheng asked, "About the disciplined practice of maintaining stable attention, if one single-mindedly focuses on reading when reading books, for example, or single-mindedly focuses on receiving a guest when receiving guests, can this be considered maintaining stable attention?"¹

The Master said, "If one is single-mindedly focused on a lust for women because one loves women, or one is single-mindedly focused on a love of wealth because one loves wealth, can this be considered maintaining stable attention?² This is what is called chasing after things. It is not maintaining stable attention. Maintaining stable attention means concentrating on a single heavenly principle."

¹ Lu Cheng's question is based on a conversation held by Zhu Xi 朱熹, as recorded in the *Zhuzi yu lei* 朱子語類 (Classified Conversations of Master Zhu). In this conversation, the interlocutor quotes a statement made by the Song dynasty Ruist Cheng Yi 程頤 and asks Zhu Xi what it means, as follows:

問「主一無適」。「只是莫走作。且如讀書時只讀書，著衣時只著衣。理會一事時，只理會一事，了此一件，又作一件，此『主一無適』之義。」

Someone asked about "maintaining stable attention without getting distracted." [The Master said,] "Just do not let your mind wander. When you are reading just read, and when you are dressing just dress. When you are attending to a matter, just take care of that matter. After completing one thing then do another thing. This is the meaning of 'maintaining stable attention without getting distracted.'"

² 好色，好貨 (“love of women,” “love of wealth”): Referring to *Mengzi* 1B.5, where Mengzi is speaking of a true king’s governance to King Xuan of Qi and, during the discussion, the king speaks of his weaknesses, including a “a love of wealth” and “love of women.” (Eno 2016: 34)

Note: This record distinguishes focusing on books and greeting guests, as well as focusing on sensual pleasures and material gain, on the one hand, from concentrating on heavenly principle on the other. In doing so, he is also distinguishing his understanding of maintaining stable attention from Zhu Xi’s. Wang Yangming categorizes the former as chasing after or pursuing things, in this case external objects. In others passages in volume I he defines a love of sensual pleasure, material possessions, and recognition as self-centered (egoic) desires, and explains that they must be uprooted. To be driven by them is to be driven by the (all-too-) human mind. So what does concentrating on heavenly principle mean? In other passages, he explains that the mind’s original condition, its inherent reality, is heavenly principle. Heavenly principle is centeredness (equilibrium), illustrious virtue, stability, perfect goodness, and the great foundation of the world. Ultimately, the learner’s aim is to dispel with the desire to pursue external objects, to chase after things, and rather to become pure in heavenly principle, according with and conforming to its flow and operation. A mind pure in and in according with heavenly principle is a mind that has come to rest in perfect goodness. Wang also defines heavenly principle as those moments when good intentions (and thinking) are being maintained. Thus, in sum, concentrating on heavenly principle means orienting the self towards the good through the intention to do the good, and what mind manifests provides the cues, as well as our capacity to recognize those cues. It should also be noted here that in Zhu Xi’s passage, maintaining stable attention is simply explained as a form of mindfulness, that is, focusing on the present moment, whatever one may be doing, without allowing the mind to wander. This hardly seems equivalent to chasing women and wealth, behaviors driven by egocentric desire. Nevertheless, Wang Yangming is clearly elevating attention to another level of consciousness, that is, mind itself. To maintain stable attention is to sustain the identity of mind and principle.

16: 問立志。先生曰：「只念念要存天理，即是立志。能不忘乎此，久則自然心中凝聚，猶道家所謂『結聖胎』也。此天理之念常存，馴至於美大聖神，亦只從此一念存養擴充去耳。」

I asked about setting one’s aim. The Master said, “Simply in every thought remembering to sustain heavenly principle is setting one’s aim. If you are able not to neglect this, then after some time it will naturally congeal in the heart, similar to what the Daoists call ‘forming the sagely embryo.’¹ If this recollection of heavenly principle is always sustained, you will gradually attain the excellent, great, sagely, and spirit-like,² which is also no more than beginning with this one thought and cultivating and expanding it.”

¹ 結聖胎 (“forming the sagely embryo”): This is terminology belonging to Daoist alchemy. In inner alchemy the formation of the embryo in the body of the mother is analogous to the process of refining and uniting the body’s vital energies and indwelling spirits to form, internally, a single sagely embryo capable of surviving physical death and becoming an

immortal spirit. It symbolizes the culmination of the alchemical process. On the sagely (or holy) embryo see Judson, *Daoist Mysticism*.

² 美大聖神 (“the excellent, great, sagely, and spirit-like”): *Mengzi* 7B.25 states,

Haosheng Buhai asked, “What kind of a man is Yuezhengzi?”

Mencius said, “He is a good man, a faithful man.”

“What do you mean by ‘good’ and ‘faithful?’”

“A man worth having is called good. A man who possesses goodness in himself is called faithful. One who is filled with goodness is called excellent. A man whose full goodness radiates outward is called great. A great man who transforms others is called a sage. One who transforms others like a sage without their awareness is called spirit-like. Yuezhengzi’s quality lies within the first two, but below the other four.” (Eno 2016: 156–157)

Note: Renderings of *li zhi* include “fixing the determination” (Julia Ching), “establishing a commitment” (Philip Ivanhoe), and “making up the mind” (Wing-tsit Chan), among others. It is a matter of determining one’s purpose. Renderings of *nian* 念 include “thought” (most commonly), “concern” (Harvey Lederman), and “mindfulness” (Digital Dictionary of Buddhism). The Digital Dictionary of Buddhism gives a range of translations for the use of this term in a Buddhist context, including, “To recall, remember. That which is remembered. The function of remembering. The operation of the mind of not forgetting an object. Awareness, concentration. Mindfulness of the Buddha, as in Pure Land practice.” In some contexts, “intention” may be a suitable rendering.

In this record, similar to the prior one (where he counsels concentrating on heavenly principle), Wang Yangming explains the importance of making recollection of heavenly principle the main practice. By doing so, one can progress from possessing goodness to being filled with goodness to radiating that goodness outward to transforming others and, finally, to transforming others like a sage without their awareness. He compares this to the Daoist process of forming the sagely embryo. In this process, the body’s vital energies and indwelling spirits are refined and united until they form, internally, a single sagely embryo capable of attaining immortality as a spirit.

17: 日間工夫，覺紛擾則靜坐，覺懶看書則且看書，是亦因病而藥。」

If in your regular daily efforts at practice you feel agitated then sit quietly in meditation, and if you feel lazy about reading books, then go ahead and read books. This is prescribing the medicine based on the symptoms.

Note: Meditation was an important part of Wang Yangming’s program for self-cultivation, especially during the years when these conversations were held. In this case, he prescribes it as a remedy for an agitated state of mind. He often used the practice of medicine as a metaphor for pedagogical approaches to self-improvement.

18: 處朋友，務相下則得益，相上則損。

When dealing with friends, deliberately treating them with humility brings benefits, while trying to be superior to them will do harm.

Note: Wang Yangming often stressed the importance of the virtue of humility and the dangers of arrogance. *Xiang shang* 相上 and *xiang xia* 相下 indicate how people position themselves in relation to friends, either above or below (according to whatever measure), and corresponding attitudes and behaviors. Cultivating the virtue of humility and rejecting the vice of arrogance most certainly plays an important role in dispelling egocentric tendencies. Dispelling selfishness and self-centered (egoic) desire figures prominently in Volume I of the *Record*.

19: 孟源有自是、好名之病，先生屢責之。一日，警責方已，一友自陳日來工夫請正，源從傍曰：「此方是尋著源舊時家當。」先生曰：「爾病又發。」源色變，議擬欲有所辯。先生曰：「爾病又發。」因喻之曰：「此是汝一生大病根。譬如方丈地內，種此一大樹，雨露之滋，土脈之力，只滋養得這個大根，四傍縱要種些嘉穀，上面被此樹葉遮覆，下面被此樹根盤結，如何生長得成？須用伐去此樹，纖根勿留，方可種植嘉種。不然，任汝耕耘培壅，只是滋養得此根。」

Meng Yuan suffered from the flaws of being overly opinionated and craving recognition. The Master repeatedly criticized him. One day, right after the Master had finished sternly admonishing him, a friend described his own recent efforts at practice, requesting the Master's correction. From beside him, Yuan said, "With this, you have just reached my former attainments."

The Master said, "Your flaw has manifested again." Yuan's complexion changed and he was preparing to defend himself.

The Master said, "Your flaw has manifested once again." So, he instructed him, saying, "This is the root of your great lifelong flaw. For example, if you plant this large tree in a ten-foot square plot of land, the nourishment from the rain and dew and the energy from the rich soil will only be sufficient to nourish this big root. Even should you wish to plant some quality seeds on each side, they will be overshadowed by the tree's foliage above and entangled by its roots below. How can they grow to maturity? You must cut down and remove this tree, leaving not a trace of its roots. Only then can you plant quality seeds. Otherwise, regardless of how much you plow, weed, and mound up soil, you will only be nourishing this root."²

¹ Meng Yuan 孟源, courtesy name Bosheng 伯生, hailed from Chuzhou 滁州 in Anhui Province 安徽省. On December 27, 1512, Wang Yangming was promoted to vice minister of the Nanjing Court of the Imperial Stud. That assignment required him to relocate to Chuzhou, a town located to the northwest of the southern capital. Wang arrived in Chuzhou on November 18, 1513, remaining there for six months. This is surely when Meng Yuan approached him as a student. According to Qian Dehong, so substantial was the crowd around Wang Yangming that the phenomenon of "large numbers of followers accompanying him began in Chu" (Wang vol. 3, 33:1013). As for Nanjing, after Wang was appointed chief minister of the court of State Ceremonial on May 15, 1514, he traveled there and remained for twenty-nine months, until fall 1516. That is also when he met Lu

Cheng. Thus, assuming this really came from his hands, this conversation likely dates to the Nanjing years.

² In several editions of the *Record* this entry is not placed under Lu Cheng's records, but rather at the end of Xue Kan's records. (Li 2021: 59)

Note: Wang Yangming frequently speaks to the vice of the desire for recognition and renown, as it is one way in which human desire (*renyu* 人欲: egoistic or egocentric needs) manifests, and human desire obscures heavenly principle, and hence a person's ability to become pure in it and accord with its manifestation and flow. No doubt, this could be extended to what in modern times is referred to more generally as attention seeking. During his Nanjing years, Wang Yangming particularly stressed sustaining heavenly principle and ridding (dispelling) human desire (*cun tianli qu renyu* 存天理去人欲). Regarding the root metaphor, as with medicine, he often employed botanical and agricultural metaphors to explain his philosophy of mind.

20: 問：「後世著述之多，恐亦有亂正學。」先生曰：「人心天理渾然，聖賢筆之書，如寫真傳神，不過示人以形狀大略，使之因此而討求其真耳；其精神、意氣、言笑、動止，固有所不能傳也。後世著述，是又將聖人所畫摹仿騰寫，而妄自分析加增以逞其技，其失真愈遠矣。」

I asked, "I fear that the voluminous writing of later generations will cause confusion about proper learning."

The Master said, "The human heart and heavenly principle are one. When the sages and worthies wrote about this in books it was like painting a portrait to convey a person's spirit by doing nothing more than depicting for people the person's general appearance and having them seek the true likeness based on it. However, it is certainly true that it is not possible to convey entirely a person's spirit, dispositions, speech and laughter, and behavior. When later generations write they emulate and copy what sages had written and, moreover, arbitrarily pile on analysis for the purpose of putting technical ability on display. They are ever more distant from the true appearance.

Note: This passage speaks to Wang Yangming's understanding of the true purpose of learning as well as his reticence towards writing. This record explains that the identity of mind and heavenly principle cannot be understood and attained simply by studying the writings of those who had and developing the technical abilities and analytical prowess necessary to emulate and copy them. The portrait of the Way painted by them captures the Way's general likeness, but not the entirety of its true appearance. That requires an internal process of realization that imitation alone cannot achieve. A person can perform the identity without possessing it.

21: 問：「聖人應變不窮，莫亦是預先講求否？」先生曰：「如何講求得許多？聖人之心如明鏡，只是一個明，則隨感而應，無物不照。未有已往之形尚在，未照之形先具者。若後世所講，卻是如此，是以與聖人之學大背。周公制禮作樂以文天下，皆聖人所能為，堯舜何不盡為之，而待於周公？孔子刪述六經以詔萬世，亦聖人所能為，周公何不先為之，而

有待於孔子？是知聖人遇此時，方有此事。只怕鏡不明，不怕物來不能照。講求事變，亦是照時事，然學者卻須先有個明的工夫。學者惟患此心之未能明，不患事變之不能盡。」曰：「然則所謂『沖漠無朕，而萬象森然已具』者，其言何如？」曰：「是說本自好，只不善看，亦便有病痛。」

I asked, “The sage’s ability to respond to change is boundless. Is that not because he investigates in advance?”

The Master said, “How could so much be investigated? The mind of a sage is like a clear mirror. It is just a singular clarity, so it follows along with stimuli and responds, and no thing is not reflected. No reflected forms that have already passed remain present, and no forms that have yet to be reflected are contained in it beforehand. As for what later generations [of scholars] have discussed, that is indeed as you say, and therefore totally goes against the philosophy of the sages. The Duke of Zhou’s formulation of ritual and composition of music to civilize the world are all things any sage could have done, so why didn’t Yao and Shun do all of this and it had to await the Duke of Zhou? Master Kong’s editing and transmission of the Six Classics to instruct myriad generations is something any sage could have done, so why didn’t the Duke of Zhou do it first and it had to await Master Kong? From this we know that the sage only undertakes an action when he encounters the right time for doing so. Fear only that the mirror is not clear. Do not fear that when a thing comes it is unable to reflect it. Investigating changing circumstances is just a matter of the moment of reflection. However, students should indeed first have a practice for attaining clarity. They should only worry that they are unable to bring clarity to this mind and not that they are unable to respond to all changing circumstances.”

I asked, “In that case, what is referred to as ‘Empty, tranquil, and absent marks, and yet all things are already lushly present in it’—what about this statement of his?”

The Master replied, “This way of putting things is good on its own merits, but improperly understood, it can also lead to problems.”

¹ 沖漠無朕，而萬象森然已具 (“Empty, tranquil, and absent marks, and yet all things are already lushly present in it”): Citing a passage in *juan 15* of the *Er Cheng shi yi shu* 二程遺書 (Posthumous Works of the Two Chengs). This work is available at [ctext: https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&res=791](https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&res=791).

Note: This passage drives home the importance of achieving a certain type of cognitive ability and condition that Wang Yangming describes in a phenomenological sense as possessing the clarity of a mirror. The capacity to respond to changing circumstances adequately depends on the mirror’s clarity as opposed to carrying out investigative research in advance. Thus, Wang Yangming collapses the process of intellectual inquiry into the “the moment of reflection” and hence the presence of an illuminating awareness, which, as it is free of form perfectly reflects form, including what follows necessarily from that moment, the principle inherent to it. This condition is what is captured by the statement “‘Empty, tranquil, and absent marks, and yet all things are already lushly present in it.’” “Empty, tranquil, and absent marks” describes the mirror. For the mirror analogy in Lu Cheng’s records see 63 and 77.

22: 「義理無定在、無窮盡。吾與子言，不可以少有所得而遂謂止此也。再言之十年、二十年、五十年，未有止也。」他日又曰：「聖如堯舜，然堯舜之上，善無盡；惡如桀紂，然桀紂之下，惡無盡。使桀紂未死，惡寧止此乎？使善有盡時，文王何以『望道而未之見』？」

“Just principles have no fixed location and are inexhaustible.¹ When I speak with you, just because you have learned a little, you should not then claim that is all there is to it. Even if I speak about this for another ten years, or twenty years, or fifty years, there will still be no endpoint.”

On another day, he also said, “As sagely as Yao and Shun were, yet beyond Yao and Shun goodness is limitless. As wicked as Jie and Zhou were, yet after Jie and Zhou, wickedness is limitless.² If Jie and Zhou had not died when they did, is it conceivable that their wickedness would have been limited to what it was? If there is a time when the limit of the good is reached, then why is it that King Wen ‘looked for the Way as if he had never seen it’?”³

¹ Some scholars take “location” to mean “standard”: “Just principles have no certain standard . . .” (Cf. Lu 2021: 66)

² Yao 堯 and Shun 舜 were two of the five semi-legendary emperors of Chinese mythology. In Ruist traditions, they were regarded as the most exemplary of antiquity’s sage-kings. Jie 桀 and Zhou 紂 were the last kings of the Xia and Shang dynasties, respectively. Both were regarded as depraved tyrants whose wickedness led to the downfall of their dynasties.

³ 望道 (“looked for the Way as if he had never seen it”): *Mengzi* 4B.20 states in part, “Mengzi said, ‘Yu disliked strong alcohol but was fond of good teachings. Tang held to the mean. He put worthies in office regardless of their social background. King Wen looked after the people as if they had been injured. He looked for the Way as if he had never seen it. King Wu did not neglect those who were nearby, nor did he forget those who were far away.’” (Van Norden 2008: 108)

23: 問：「靜時亦覺意思好，才遇事便不同，如何？」先生曰：「是徒知養靜，而不用克己工夫也。如此，臨事便要傾倒。人須在事上磨，方立得住，方能『靜亦定，動亦定』。」

I asked, “Even though my state of mind is good when I am tranquil, just as soon as I encounter problems, things are different. Why is that?”

The Master said, “Because you only understand cultivating tranquility and do not direct effort towards overcoming yourself.¹ As such, when you encounter problems, you will fall over. People must hone themselves through engagement with the affairs of life, for only then will they be able to stand up, and only then will they be capable of being ‘stable whether tranquil or active.’”²

¹ 克己 (“overcoming yourself”): *Analects* 12.1 states, “Yan Yuan asked about the meaning of *humaneness*. The Master said, ‘To completely overcome selfishness and keep to propriety is *humaneness*. If for a full day you can overcome selfishness and keep to propriety, everyone in the world will return to *humaneness*. Does *humaneness* come from oneself, or from others?’” (Muller 2021) *Ke ji* 克己 is variously rendered as “conquer yourself” (Eno), “subdue one’s self” (Legge), and “overcoming the self” (Lau). In his

interlinear commentary, Zhu Xi interprets *ke* as *sheng* 勝 and *ji* as *siyu* 私欲, and thus as subduing or prevailing over egoic or self-centered desire (Zhu Xi 2005: 141). Muller's rendering seems closest to Zhu Xi's reading.

² 靜亦定，動亦定 (“stable whether one is tranquil or active”): In his “Reply to Master Hengqu's Letter on Calming Human Nature,” the Song dynasty Ruist Cheng Hao states, “By calmness of nature we mean that one's nature is clam whether in a state of activity or in a state of tranquility.” (Chan 1963: 525)

Note: Wang Yangming actively meditated throughout his life, practicing methods utilized by Daoists, Buddhists, and Ruists. For his students, he also recommended quietly sitting in meditation, to still the mind. However, quiet sitting itself, and the tranquil states it produces, were not the goal. First, he criticized the limits of certain meditative states by describing them as “dead wood and lifeless ashes,” warning against developing a fondness for tranquility and hence a passive stance towards the world that meditation may foster. Also, ultimately, while meditation can lead to stability, stability should not be confused with tranquil (or calm) meditative states. While such states might deepen the capacity for attaining stability, if a person is thrown off balance when active—what Wang Yangming characterizes as “excessive or insufficient” with respect to being centered, according with principle, mirroring, and abiding in perfect goodness—then they have failed to retain that stability while active. Thus, even should one have attained the state of centeredness while in repose, one still fails to realize the state of harmony while active. The route to the capacity to maintain stability while active is a much lengthier and more challenging one, requiring constant effort at moral self-cultivation, by nurturing and sustaining heavenly principle and dispelling self-centered desire, or what is here referred to as overcoming or conquering the self. This can only be achieved through engagement with life. In sum, this passage points to Wang Yangming's gradual teaching of the path to enlightenment, that is, to the Way, which culminates in according with principle as one is engaged with the affairs of life, or what Confucius described as his attainment at seventy years old, when he could follow his heart's desire without overstepping the bounds, and Cheng Hao as “stable whether tranquil or active.”

24: 問上達工夫。先生曰：「後儒教人，纔涉精微，便謂上達未當學，且說下學。是分下學、上達為二也。夫目可得見，耳可得聞，口可得言，心可得思者，皆下學也；目不可得見，耳不可得聞，口不可得言，心不可得思者，上達也。如木之栽培灌溉，是下學也；至於日夜之所息，條達暢茂，乃是上達。人安能預其力哉？故凡可用功、可告語者，皆下學，上達只在下學裏。凡聖人所說，雖極精微，俱是下學。學者只從下學裏用功，自然上達去，不必別尋個上達的工夫。」

I asked about the effort necessary to reach the higher.¹ The Master said, “When later generations of scholars taught people, just as soon as they touched upon the discriminating and subtle, they would say that it pertains to reaching the higher and that it should not be studied, and for the time being talked about lower learning. This is to divide lower learning and reaching the higher in two. What can be seen with the eyes, heard by the ears, spoken by the mouth, and thought about with the mind is all lower learning. What cannot be seen by the eyes, heard by the ears, spoken by the

mouth, or thought about with the mind is all learning that reaches the higher. For example, cultivating and watering a tree is lower learning. As for the growth between night and day, branching out and flourishing, this is reaching the higher. How can a person possibly participate in this with their efforts? Thus, anything to which one can apply oneself or which can be spoken of with others is all lower learning. All reaching the higher is found in lower learning. Whatever sages speak of, even if it is extremely discriminating and subtle, is all lower learning. Students should only apply their efforts to lower learning, and then they will naturally progress towards reaching the higher. There is no need to seek separately for a practice that reaches the higher.”

¹ 上達 (“reach the higher”): *Analects* 14.35 states, “The Master said, ‘There is no one who understands me.’ Tzu-kung said, ‘How is it that there is no one who understands you?’ The Master said, ‘I do not complain against Heaven, nor do I blame Man. In my studies, I start from below and get through to what is up above. If I am understood at all, it is, perhaps, by Heaven.’” (Lau 1979: 129)

The central focus of the question is *shang da gongfu* 上達工夫, meaning the effort, practice, training, or discipline necessary “to reach high” (Gardner 2007: 41), “get through to what is exalted” (Eno 2015: 79), or “penetrate to the top” (Muller 2021), to cite different renderings.

² 日夜之所息 (“growth between night and day”): Mencius 6A.8 states in part, “Despite the rest such a man may get between night and day, and the restorative *qi* that the morning brings, the things he does day after day destroy these effects, and in time little will he resemble other men in what he likes and hates. When this destruction is repeated, the *qi* he stores up each night will not be enough to preserve what was originally in him, and when the night *qi* can no longer preserve that, then he is not far from a beast.” (Eno 2016: 127)

Note: At first glance, this passage seems to be making a distinction between perceptible phenomena, the world given in perception and sensory experience, and higher or transcendent states of consciousness empty of content, awareness that is formless (beyond sense perception) and ineffable (inaccessible to thinking). However, Wang Yangming then says that the higher is an imperceptible process of growth or restoration, suggesting that he is not really pointing to the ineffable. Nevertheless, it is through just such an imperceptible process that objects of a transcendent nature, formless and ineffable, gradually emerge as the fundamental ground of the person. That ground is the silent and unmoving centeredness, which is the essence (original condition) of mind, and what must be recovered. Regardless, Wang Yangming counsels directing our efforts to lower learning, to the world before us and tasks at hand.

25: 持志如心痛。一心在痛上，豈有工夫說閑話、管閑事？

Holding to one’s aim is like heartache. As one is single-mindedly focused on that heartache, how could one have the time to chat idly or meddle in trivial affairs?¹

Note: As this same passage is found in record 95, some versions of the *Record* omit this record.

26: 問：「惟精、惟一，是如何用功？」先生曰：「惟一是惟精主意，惟精是惟一功夫，非惟精之外，復有惟一也。『精』字從『米』，姑以米譬之：要得此米純然潔白，便是惟一意，然非加舂簸篩揀惟精之功，則不能純然潔白也；舂簸篩揀，是惟精之功，然亦不過要此米到純然潔白而已。博學、審問、慎思、明辨、篤行者，皆所以為惟精而求惟一也。他如博文者即約禮之功，格物致知者即誠意之功，道問學即尊德性之功，明善即誠身之功，無二說也。」

I asked, “Being refined and single-minded: How does one apply this practice?”

The Master said, “Single-mindedness is refinement’s guiding aim, and refining is the practice of single-mindedness. It is not that outside of refinement there is also single-mindedness. The word *jing* 精 (“refined”) comes from *mi* 米 (“rice”). For the moment, let’s take rice as an illustration. Intending to make this rice pure white is what being single-minded means. However, without applying such refining practices as hulling, winnowing, sifting, and selecting, the rice cannot be made pure white. Hulling, winnowing, sifting, and selecting are the practices for refining. However, they are also nothing more than intending to make this rice become pure white. Studying broadly, inquiring probingly, contemplating carefully, distinguishing clearly, and practicing sincerely are all ways refining is practiced so as to pursue single-mindedness. Other instances [of paired practices]—such as that being widely versed in culture is the practice for restraining one’s conduct with ritual, rectifying matters and extending knowledge are the practices for perfecting the genuineness of one’s intentions, the path of learning and inquiry is the practice for honoring one’s virtuous nature, and clarifying the good is the practice for perfecting one’s genuineness—are not different explanations.”

¹ 惟精、惟一 (“refined,” “single-minded”): The “Counsels of the Great Yu” in the *Classic of Documents* states in part, “The mind of man is restless, prone (to err); its affinity to what is right is small. Be discriminating, be uniform (in the pursuit of what is right), that you may sincerely hold fast the Mean.” This is James Legge’s translation of *ren xin wei wei, dao xin wei wei; wei jing wei yi, yun zhi que zhong* 人心惟危，道心惟微；惟精惟一，允執厥中: “The human mind is imperiled, the moral mind is subtle. Only through being refined and single-minded can one hold fast to the mean.” It can be noted that for this passage in the *Documents*, *jing* 精 has been rendered as “refined,” “rarefied,” “pure,” and “discriminating,” while *yi* 一 has been rendered as “uniform,” “steadfast,” “undivided,” “unitary,” and “single-minded.” For record 82, Wing-tsit Chan (1963: 54) chose “refinement,” and “singleness.”

² 博學、審問、慎思、明辨、篤行 (“studying broadly, inquiring probingly, contemplating carefully, distinguishing clearly, and practicing sincerely”): The *Doctrine of the Mean* 20 states in part,

Study broadly, inquire probingly, contemplate carefully, distinguish clearly, practice sincerely. If there remain things unstudied, do not act upon what you have not mastered.

If there remain things unprobed, do not act upon what you do not understand. If there remain things un contemplated, do not act upon what you have not grasped. If there

remain aspects indistinct, do not act upon what is not clear to you. If there remain aspects unpracticed, do not act upon what you cannot sincerely do.

When others can do one, demand that you do one hundred; when others can do ten, demand that you do one thousand.

He who fully masters this Dao, though ignorant, shall surely become enlightened, though weak, shall surely become strong. (Eno 2016: 48)

³ 博文者即約禮 (“being widely versed in culture is [the practice for] restraining one’s conduct with ritual”): *Analects* 6.27 states, “The Master said, ‘The gentleman widely versed in culture but brought back to essentials by the rites can, I suppose, be relied upon not to turn against what he stood for.’” (Lau 1979: 85)

⁴ 格物、致知、誠意 (“rectifying matters,” “extending knowledge,” “perfecting the genuineness of one’s intentions”): *The Great Learning* states, “In ancient times, those who wished to make bright virtue brilliant in the world first ordered their states; those who wished to order their states first aligned their households; those who wished to align their households first refined their persons; those who wished to refine their persons first balanced their minds; those who wished to balance their minds first perfected the genuineness of their intentions; those who wished to perfect the genuineness of their intentions first extended their understanding; extending one’s understanding lies in aligning affairs.” (Eno 2016: 12)

⁵ 道問學即尊德性 (“the path of learning and inquiry is [the practice for] honoring one’s virtuous nature”): *The Doctrine of the Mean* 27 states in part, “Hence the *junzi* honors his virtuous nature and takes learning as his Dao. He extends to the broadest expanse and exhausts the essence of the minute.” (Eno 2016: 51)

⁶ 明善即誠身 (“clarifying the good is [the practice for] perfecting one’s genuineness”): *The Doctrine of the Mean* 20 states in part, “There is a Dao to perfecting your genuineness: if you are not clear about the good, you will not perfect your genuineness.” (Eno 2016: 47)

27: 知者行之始，行者知之成。聖學只一個功夫，知行不可分作兩事。

Knowledge is the beginning of action, and action is the completion of knowledge. The sage’s learning is just a single disciplined practice. Knowing and acting cannot be divided into two separate matters.

Note: The tenet of the unity of knowing and acting (*zhi xing heyi* 知行合一) is discussed throughout Wang Yangming’s writings, and in this case he is stating that knowledge and action are two aspects of one practice. In volume one, Xu Ai’s records contain the most complete discussion. Record 5 similarly states, “knowing is the beginning of acting, and acting is the completion of knowing.”

28: 漆雕開曰「吾斯之未能信」，夫子說之；「子路使子羔為費宰，子曰：『賊夫人之子』」；曾點言志，夫子許之。聖人之意可見矣。

Qidiao Kai replied, “I’m not yet prepared to fulfill this faithfully.”¹ Master Kong was pleased. “When Zilu appointed Zigao to be the steward of Bi, the Master said, ‘You are stealing another man’s son!’”² When Zeng Dian confided his personal aspirations, Master Kong praised him.³ From these, one can see the Sage’s intentions.

¹ *Analects* 5.5 states, “The Master gave Qidiao Kai leave to take up a position. He replied, ‘I’m not yet prepared to fulfill this faithfully.’ The Master was pleased.” (Eno 2015: 18)

² *Analects* 11.25 states,

Zilu appointed Zigao to be the steward of Bi. The Master said, “You are stealing another man’s son!”

Zilu said, “There are people there; there are altars of state there—why must one first read texts and only then be considered learned?”

The Master said, “This is why I detest glib talkers!”

Eno notes, “Zigao 子羔 was a junior disciple whom Confucius clearly considers unready for appointment. Zilu was acting in his role as a major officer of the Ji family, who dwelt in the capital city of Lu, but whose home fief, Bi, was an area well east of the capital. . . . Zilu seems to be invoking lessons Confucius himself taught, much like the ideas in 1.6-7, to confound Confucius himself, which is the basis of Confucius’s response.” (Eno 2015: 56)

³ *Analects* 11.26 states in part,

Zilu, Zeng Xi, Ran You, and Gongxi Hua were sitting in attendance. The Master said, “Put aside for now that I am so much as a day older than you. You are always saying, ‘My talents are unrecognized.’ If some person were to recognize and give you position, what ability could you offer?” . . .

“Dian, what about you?”

The rhythm of his zither slowed, it rang as he laid it down and rose. “My thoughts differ from the others,” he said.

“There is no harm in that,” said the Master. “After all, each of us is simply speaking his own heart.”

“In late spring,” said Zeng Dian, “after the spring garments have been sewn, I would go out with five rows of six capped young men and six rows of seven boys. We would bathe in the River Yi, and stand in the wind on the stage of the Great Rain Dance. Then chanting, we would return.”

The Master sighed deeply. “I am with Dian,” he said. (Eno 2015: 57)

29: 問：「寧靜存心時，可為未發之中否？」先生曰：「今人存心，只定得氣。當其寧靜時，亦只是氣寧靜，不可以為未發之中。」曰：「未便是中，莫亦是求中功夫？」曰：「只要去人欲、存天理，方是功夫。靜時念念去人欲、存天理，動時念念去人欲、存天理，不管寧靜不寧靜。若靠那寧靜，不惟漸有喜靜厭動之弊，中間許多病痛只是潛伏在，終不能絕去，遇事依舊滋長。以循理為主，何嘗不寧靜？以寧靜為主，未必能循理。」

I asked, “When the mind is nurtured in peace and tranquility, could that be the centeredness before [emotions] arise, or not?”¹

The Master said, “Nowadays, when people nurture their minds, they are merely stabilizing their *qi* 氣 (‘psychophysical stuff’).² When they are in a state of peace and tranquility, only *qi* is peaceful and tranquil. This cannot be taken as the centeredness before [emotions] arise.”

I said, “Even if not yet the centeredness, is this not the practice for seeking it?”

The Master said, “Only if you are ridding human desire and sustaining heavenly principle will you then have the correct practice. When you are tranquil, always remember to rid human desire and sustain heavenly principle, and when active always remember to rid human desire and sustain heavenly principle, regardless of whether you are enjoying peace and tranquility. If you are dependent on that peace and tranquility, not only will you gradually develop the malady of a preference for tranquility and aversion to activity, but herein many afflictions will just remain subconsciously present, and you will never be able to eradicate them. When you encounter issues, they will grow as before. If you make according with principle the foundation, when will you not enjoy peace and tranquility? If you make peace and tranquility the foundation, you may not necessarily be able to accord with principle.”

¹ 未發之中 (“the centeredness before [emotions] arise”): The *Doctrine of the Mean* 1 states, “Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centered; emerging by the proper rhythms they are called harmonious. *Centered*: this is the great root of the world. *Harmonious*: this is the ultimate Dao of the world. Reaching centered harmony, heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby” (Eno 2016: 37). It should be noted that other translators differ substantially in their renderings. De Bary renders the beginning of this passage as “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, is called [that state of] centrality. After these are aroused, if they preserve equilibrium (centrality) it is called [the state of] harmony” (de Bary 1999: 736). Thus, whereas Eno’s rendering suggests that *zhong* 中 in the first instance describes emotions in an inactive or quiescent state, de Bary’s suggests that *zhong* 中 is a noun describing a state or condition that precedes emotion. Other translations of *zhong* 中 include equilibrium and centeredness. Adler’s rendering seems most apt: “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are expressed (*weifa* 未發) it is called centrality. When these feeling are expressed (*yifa* 已發) and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony” (Adler 2020: 33) In other passages I have rendered this as “already arisen.” While the emphasis here is on emotions it is possible the Wang Yangming has in mind phenomena more generally, things as they appear in our experience. Thus, *centrality* before arising is ultimately a state or condition where experience has not yet arisen, manifest, or appeared.

² Depending on context, *qi* 氣 has been rendered as “matter-energy,” “ether,” “psychophysical stuff,” “vital energy,” and “material force.”

Note: Record 262 states,

一友靜坐有見，馳問。先生答曰：「吾昔居滁時，見諸生多務知解口耳異同，無益於得，姑教之靜坐。一時窺見光景，頗收近效；久之漸有喜靜厭動、流入枯槁之病，或務為玄解妙覺，動人聽聞。故邇來只說致良知。良知明白，隨你去靜處體悟也好，隨你去事上磨鍊也好，良知本體原是無動無靜的。此便是學問頭腦。我這個話頭，自滁州到今亦較過幾番，只是『致良知』三字無病。醫經折肱，方能察人病理。」

A friend was quiet sitting and experienced insight. He hurried over to ask about it. Master [Yangming] replied, “In the past, when I was staying in Chuzhou, I saw how students expended most of their efforts on discursive knowledge and passing on what they had heard of disparities and agreements and that this was of no benefit to their grasping it themselves.¹ For the time being, I instructed them to sit in meditation. They quickly caught a glimpse of the scene, obtaining some significant immediate results. Over time, they gradually developed a fondness for tranquility and aversion to activity and were drawn into the malady of withering away.² Others occupied themselves with impressing others with their esoteric explanations of subtle awakenings. Recently, for this reason, I have only been saying realize the innate knowing (*zhi liangzhi* 致良知). When *liangzhi* is evident, your seeking personal insight in quietude is okay and your polishing and tempering yourself with the affairs of life is okay as well. From the beginning, the original condition of the innate knowing (*liangzhi bentu* 良知本體) is neither in motion nor still. This is the basis for intellectual inquiry. From [my time in] Chuzhou until now, I have also weighed this argument several times. The three graphs ‘*zhi liangzhi* 致良知’ alone are flawless. Only after a doctor has gone through the experience of breaking his own forearm will he be able to examine the pathology of disease.”

¹ Wang Yangming resided in Chuzhou from the tenth month of 1513 to the fourth month of 1515.

² Referring to the practice of mental concentration leading to absorption in trance states.

Note: This record reiterates many of the same ideas as those alluded to and then explained in record 23. In this case, Wang Yangming is drawing a distinction between stabilizing or settling and hence quieting the psychophysical, on the one hand, and the centeredness prior to the arising of the emotional life on the other. The state of being centered, or simply the center or middle, cannot be accurately described as either the state of stillness (calming) or activity (motion, or actively experiencing). Hence, it is both prior to and present in both. When a person is abiding in the center he is what Wang Yangming refers to as *ding* 定 (“stable”). This term is better understood by reference to its Buddhistic meanings. The Digital Dictionary of Buddhism states, “The unification of the mind in concentration; stopping the floating of the mind and concentrating on one point. A high level of meditative concentration; mental training through meditation; the skillful unification of mind and object; the mental equanimity conducive to and derived from attention perfectly focused on its object. Meditative absorption; meditative concentration; meditative equipoise; meditatively equipoised. 禪定 meditation (in the realms of form and beyond form).” To say that centeredness (and stability), or abiding in the center, is neither active nor tranquil

is similar to saying that Chanist meditative concentration is “in the realm of form and beyond form.”

30: 問：「孔門言志，由、求任政事，公西赤任禮樂，多少實用！及曾皙說來卻似耍的事，聖人卻許他，是意何如？」曰：「三子是有意必，有意必，便偏著一邊，能此未必能彼。曾點這意思卻無意必，便是『素其位而行，不願乎其外』，『素夷狄，行乎夷狄；素患難，行乎患難』，無入而不自得矣。三子所謂『汝器也』，曾點便有『不器』意。然三子之才，各卓然成章，非若世之空言無實者，故夫子亦皆許之。」

I asked, “When Master Kong’s disciples spoke of their personal aspirations, You and Qiu wished to assume responsibility for governmental affairs, and Gongxi Chi wished to oversee rituals and music. This is so practically useful! But when Zeng Xi expressed his aspirations, it rather seemed to be an amusing matter. Yet, the sage still approved of him. What was the meaning of this?”¹

The Master said, “The three gentlemen were capricious and dogmatic. Being capricious and dogmatic means holding to one side with bias.² One can do this but not necessarily do that. Zeng Dian’s mindset, on the other hand, is neither capricious nor dogmatic. It is [what the *Doctrine of the Mean* speaks of as], ‘The gentleman simply acts according to his position; he does not long for what is outside of it. If he is naturally placed among the nomad tribes, he acts according to the norms of the nomad tribes. If he is naturally placed amidst confusion and trouble, he acts as is appropriate for times of confusion and trouble.’³ No matter where he may be, he is always self-possessed. The other three gentlemen exemplify what is referred to as ‘You are a vessel,’⁴ whereas Zeng Dian had the aura of ‘[The gentleman] is not a vessel.’⁵ Nevertheless, given their talent, these three gentlemen could each achieve remarkable success, unlike those vapid talkers of no substance in this world. Thus, Master Kong expressed his approval of all of them.”

¹ You 由 refers to Zhong You 仲由, whose courtesy name was Zilu 子路. Qiu 求 is Ran Qiu 冉求, whose courtesy name was Ziyou 自有. Gongxi Chi’s courtesy name was Zihua 子華. Zeng Xi is Zeng Dian 曾蒧. All were disciples of Confucius. *Analects* 11.26 states:

Zilu, Zeng Xi, Ran Yōu, and Gongxi Hua were sitting in attendance. The Master said, “Put aside for now that I am so much as a day older than you. You are always saying, ‘My talents are unrecognized.’ If some person were to recognize and give you position, what ability could you offer?”

Zilu boldly replied first. “Let there be a state of a thousand war chariots, wedged between great neighboring states, harassed by invading armies and plunged in famine as a consequence. If I were given authority to act, I would within three years endow that state with valor and a sense of purpose.”

The Master smiled at him. “Qiu, what about you?”

Qiu replied, “Let there be a territory sixty or seventy li square, perhaps fifty or sixty. If I had authority to act, I would within three years ensure that the people had sufficient means. As for li and music, they would have to await a junzi.”

“Chi, what about you?”

Chi replied, “I cannot say I would be able to do this, but I would like to try: At ceremonies in the ancestral temples or diplomatic meetings, wearing ceremonial cap and robes, I would wish to be a minor officer of ceremony.”

“Dian, what about you?”

The rhythm of his zither slowed, it rang as he laid it down and rose. “My thoughts differ from the others’,” he said.

“There is no harm in that,” said the Master. “After all, each of us is simply speaking his own heart.”

“In late spring,” said Zeng Dian, “after the spring garments have been sewn, I would go out with five rows of six capped young men and six rows of seven boys. We would bathe in the River Yi, and stand in the wind on the stage of the Great Rain Dance. Then chanting, we would return.”

The Master sighed deeply. “I am with Dian,” he said.

The other three disciples went out, but Zeng Xi lingered behind. Zeng Xi said, “What about the words of the other three?”

The Master said, “After all, each was simply stating his heart’s desire.”

“Why did you smile at Yóu?”

“To manage a state one needs li, and his words showed no deference, that is why I smiled.”

“As for Qiu, he was not aspiring to manage a state, was he?”

“How can one see a domain of sixty or seventy square li, or even fifty or sixty, as other than a state?”

“As for Chi, he was not aspiring to manage a state, was he?”

“Ancestral halls and diplomatic affairs – what are these if not matters of a feudal state. Moreover, if Chi were a minor officer, who would be a major one?” (Eno 2015: 56–58)

² 意必 (“capricious and dogmatic”): *Analects* 9.4 states, “The Master forbade four things: One must not act on guesses, one must not demand absolute certainty, one must not be stubborn, one must not insist on oneself” (Eno 2015: 40). Leys renders this as, “The Master absolutely eschewed four things: capriciousness, dogmatism, willfulness, self-importance.” (Leys 1997: 39)

³ The *Doctrine of the Mean* 14 states in part:

The *junzi* simply acts according to his position; he does not long for what is outside of it. If he is naturally in a position of wealth and high status, he acts according to the norms of wealth and high status. If he is naturally in a position of poverty and low status, he acts according to the norms of poverty and low status. If he is naturally placed among the nomad tribes, he acts according to the norms of the nomad tribes. If he is naturally placed amidst confusion and trouble, he acts as is appropriate for times of confusion and trouble.

There is no situation in which the *junzi* is not fully self-possessed. When in high position, do not be arrogant towards those below. When in low position, do not prevail upon those above. Make yourself upright and do not seek what you wish in others, then you will encounter no resentments. Above, do not bear resentment towards Tian; below

do not blame men. Hence the *junzi* dwells in what is simple, awaiting his destiny. The small man engages in precipitous practices in search of a lucky fortune. (Eno 2016: 41)

⁴ 汝器也 (“You are a vessel.”): *Analects* 5.4 states, “Zigong said, ‘What am I like?’ The Master said, ‘You are a vessel.’ ‘What vessel?’ ‘A vessel of ancestral sacrifice.’” (Eno 2015: 18)

⁵ 不器 (“not a vessel”): *Analects* 2.12 states, “The Master said: ‘The *junzi* is not a vessel.’” (Eno 2015: 6)

31: 問：「知識不長進，如何？」先生曰：「為學須有本原，須從本原上用力，漸漸盈科而進。仙家說嬰兒，亦善譬。嬰兒在母腹時，只是純氣，有何知識？出胎後方始能啼，既而後能笑，又既而後能識認其父母兄弟，又既而後能立能行、能持能負，卒乃天下之事無不可能。皆是精氣日足，則筋力日強，聰明日開，不是出胎日便講求推尋得來。故須有個本原。聖人到『位天地，育萬物』也只從『喜怒哀樂未發之中』上養來。後儒不明格物之說，見聖人無不知、無不能，便欲於初下手時講求得盡，豈有此理？」又曰：「立志用功，如種樹然。方其根芽，猶未有榦；及其有榦，尚未有枝；枝而後葉，葉而後花實。初種根時，只管栽培灌溉，勿作枝想，勿作葉想，勿作花想，勿作實想。懸想何益？但不忘栽培之功，怕沒有枝葉花實？」

I asked, “If my knowledge is not advancing, what shall I do?”

Master Yangming said, “Pursuing learning requires having a source. One must direct effort based in the source, gradually filling each depression on the ground before going forward. The Daoists’ discussion of the infant provides a good analogy.¹ When the infant is in the mother’s belly, it consists only of pure *qi* 氣. What knowledge does it have? Only after birth can the infant begin crying, and not long thereafter it can smile, and not long after that it can recognize its parents and siblings, and then not long after that it can stand, walk, hold things, and bear weight on its back. In the end, there is nothing in this world it cannot do. This is all because with each day the essential *qi* becomes more sufficient, physical strength grows day by day, and intelligence develops day by day. It is not that it can successfully investigate and seek things out on the day of birth. That is why there must be a source. When the sage reaches ‘heaven and earth taking their proper places and the things of the world being nurtured thereby’ he has done so simply through cultivating ‘the centeredness prior to the arising of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy.’² Later scholars did not understand the theory of *ge wu* 格物 (“rectifying matters”), and seeing that there was nothing a sage does not know and nothing a sage cannot do, they desired to strive to investigate everything at the outset. How is that reasonable?”

The Master also said, “Committing oneself to utilizing this disciplined practice is like planting a tree. When it first takes root and sprouts it does not yet have a trunk. When it first has a trunk, it does not yet have branches. After the branches come the leaves and after the leaves come the flowers and fruit. When you first plant the seedlings just attend to cultivating and watering. Don’t be thinking about branches, don’t be thinking about leaves, don’t be thinking about flowers, and don’t be thinking about the fruit. What benefit is conjuring things up in one’s mind? So long as you don’t forget about the work of cultivating, why fear that there will be no branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit?”

¹ 盈科而進 (“filling each depression on the ground before going forward”) *Mengzi* 4B.18 states:

Xuzi said, “Confucius repeatedly praised water, saying ‘Oh, water! Oh, water!’ What analogy did he mean to draw?”

Mencius said, “Water pours bubbling from its wellsprings, never ceasing night and day. It fills each depression in the ground before it goes forward, flowing on until it reaches the Four Seas. This is what it means to be rooted in a source: that was his analogy. And if one is not properly rooted, it is like the bursts of rain that come in the seventh and eighth months: the water collects, filling the ditches that line the fields, but we can stand waiting and watch it dry. This is why the *junzi* is ashamed if his reputation exceeds his actual accomplishments.”

² The *Doctrine of the Mean* 1 states, “Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centered; emerging by the proper rhythms they are called harmonious. *Centered*: this is the great root of the world. *Harmonious*: this is the ultimate Dao of the world. Reaching centered harmony, heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby” (Eno 2016: 37). It should be noted that other translators differ substantially in their renderings. De Bary renders the beginning of this passage as “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, is called [that state of] centrality. After these are aroused, if they preserve equilibrium (centrality) it is called [the state of] harmony” (de Bary 1999: 736). Thus, whereas Eno’s rendering suggests that *zhong* 中 in the first instance describes emotions in an inactive or quiescent state, de Bary’s suggests that *zhong* 中 is a noun describing a state or condition that precedes emotion. Other translations of *zhong* 中 include equilibrium and centeredness. Adler’s rendering seems most apt: “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are expressed (*weifa* 未發) it is called centrality. When these feeling are expressed (*yifa* 已發) and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony” (Adler 2020: 33) In other passages I have rendered this as “already arisen.”

Note: This passage explains that to pursue learning, one must have a source. The source is the origin and basis of existence. In Buddhism, this basis usually means the innately pure mind and, for Mengzi, as Wang Yangming understood it, it is our innately good nature mandated by Heaven. Here, he explains that the source is the centeredness prior to the arising of experience, of manifestation. It is the equilibrium and middle, and hence the original condition (essence) of mind. Thus, he is speaking to a specific kind of development, one that emerges from what is inherent to mind itself. To cultivate the source, one must be committed, setting one’s aim, while also not forcing development, only paying attention to the task of self-cultivation before one as opposed to anxiously awaiting a future outcome. The goal of this development is to reach a horizon of knowledge, the perfected realm of the sage, the sage’s highest attainment, described as “heaven and earth taking their proper places and the things of the world being nurtured thereby.” To explain this process, Wang Yangming turns to what he saw as analogous in Daoism and agricultural metaphors.

32: 問：「看書不能明，如何？」先生曰：「此只是在文義上穿求，故不明。如此，又不如為舊時學問。他到看得多，解得去。只是他為學雖極解得明曉，亦終身無得。須於心體上用功。凡明不得、行不去，須反在自心上體當，即可通。蓋四書、五經，不過說這心體。這心體即所謂道。心體明即是道明，更無二。此是為學頭腦處。」

I asked, “If I am reading a book and unable to understand it, what shall I do?”

The Master said, “This happens because you are just searching for the meaning in the letter of the text, so you don’t understand. Doing things like this is not as effective as the old way of doing scholarship. Instead, they read over and over until they achieved comprehension. However, even though they achieved a perfectly clear understanding through their method of study, they still failed to benefit from it throughout their lifetime. You must direct effort to the essence of mind. Whatever you are unable to understand or put into practice should be personally grasped in your own mind by turning within. Then, you will be able to comprehend it fully. The Four Books and Five Classics simply address this essence of mind. This essence of mind is what we refer to as the Way. If the essence of mind is understood then the Way will be understood, as they are by no means two separate matters. This is the essential starting point for pursuing learning.”

¹ The Four books are the *Great Learning*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, *Mengzi*, and *Analects*. The Five Classics are the *Classic of Poetry*, *Classic of Documents*, *Classic of Rites*, *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and *Classic of Changes*.

Note: When Wang Yangming states that the basis of learning is the essence of mind or mind-in-itself (*xinti* 心體), he means the original condition of mind (*xin zhi bentu* 心之本體), mind in its root or natural state. For knowledge to be meaningful it must be knowledge realized and grasped by mind in its original, natural, and root state. Otherwise, meaning will remain elusive.

33: 虛靈不昧，眾理具而萬事出。心外無理，心外無事。

Void, intelligent, and unobscured, the multitude of principles are contained therein and the myriad events come from it. Outside mind, there are no principles; outside mind, there are no affairs.

¹ Citing Zhu Xi’s *Daxue zhang ju* 大學章句 (Commentary on the Great Learning in chapters and sentences), which states,

明德者，人之所得乎天，而虛靈不昧，以具眾理而應萬事者也。

Illustrious virtue is what people receive from Heaven. Void, intelligent, and unobscured, as it contains the multitude principles it responds to the myriad affairs.

The Chinese text is available at the Chinese Text Project. See <https://ctext.org/si-shu-zhang-ju-ji-zhu/da-xue-zhang-ju1/zh>.

Note: Wang Yangming is citing this passage from Zhu Xi's commentary to explain attributes of the essence of mind.

34: 或問：「晦庵先生曰：『人之所以為學者，心與理而已。』，此語如何？」曰：「心即性，性即理，下一『與』字，恐未免為二。此在學者善觀之。」

Someone asked, “Master Huian (=Zhu Xi) said, ‘What people take as their object of learning is just mind and principles.’ What do you think of this claim?”

The Master said, “Mind is the nature and the nature is principle. I am afraid that adding the word *yu* 與 (“and”) inevitably divides [mind and principle] in two. This requires skillful observation on the part of students.”

¹ Huian is a style (art) name for Zhu Xi 朱熹. The statement can be found in his *Daxue huowen* 大學或問 (Questions and answers concerning the *Great Learning*), which states,

人之所以為學者，心與理而已。

What people take as their object of learning is only mind and principles.

Note: One of Wang Yangming's central tenets is the identity of mind and principle (*xin ji li* 心即理). Thus, in response to the question, he substitutes *ji* 即 (“is”) for *yu* 與 (“and”), indicating his concern over what he saw as a dualistic rendering of the two in Zhu Xi's philosophy.

35: 或曰：「人皆有是心，心即理，何以有為善、有為不善？」先生曰：「惡人之心，失其本體。」

Someone asked, “If everyone possesses this mind, and mind is identical to principle, why do some do good while others do wrong?”

The Master said, “The mind of the immoral person has lost its original condition.”

Note: For the mind to lose its original condition means that the original condition has been concealed or obstructed. As the original condition (=the essence) of mind is principle and perfect goodness, these too are lost. In the sagely realm, where mind is unconcealed and unobstructed, in its original condition, identical with principle and perfect goodness, the person enjoys a natural goodness, automatically acting morally, doing good deeds. This is also the condition of centered harmony, where emotion and, by extension, experience more generally, arises in due measure and degree, according with heavenly principle, consonant with its flowing forth and along. Whereas, on the other hand, the immoral or, more strongly stated, wickedness and evildoing, is a distortion brought about by the concealing and obstructing power of human (egoic, self-centered, or selfish) desire, the human mind, which is not metaphysically intrinsic. (Cf. Lu 2023: 80-81)

36: 問：「『析之有以極其精而不亂，然後合之有以盡其大而無餘』，此言如何？」先生曰：「恐亦未盡。此理豈容分析？又何須湊合得？聖人說精一，自是盡。」

I asked, “When we analyze it we have what is necessary to reach its essence without confusion. After that, when we synthesize it, we have what is necessary to exhaust its greatness without leaving anything out.”¹ What do you think of this explanation?”

The Master said, “I am afraid this is not yet complete. How can this principle permit of analysis? And what need for synthesis is there? The sage’s statement concerning refinement and singlemindedness has always been complete.”

¹ The statement comes from Zhu Xi’s *Daxue huowen* 大學或問 (Questions and answers concerning the *Great Learning*). He is referring to the opening section of the *Great Learning*.

37: 省察是有事時存養，存養是無事時省察。

Self-examination means sustaining [mind] and nurturing [nature] when one is engaged with matters, sustaining and nurturing means self-examination when one is not engaged with matters.¹

¹ 存養 (“sustaining and nurturing”): *Mengzi* 7A.1 states, “Mencius said, ‘He who exhausts his mind knows his nature; to know one’s nature is to know Tian. The way to serve Tian is to preserve the mind and nourish the nature. The way to stand waiting for Tian’s commands (*ming*) is this: never waver for fear of death, just cultivate your person and await them.’” (Eno 2016: 140) *Cun* 存 is usually translated as “to preserve,” but as it also suggests maintaining the presence of something uninterrupted, sustain and maintain both render well the intended meaning, as opposed to preserve, which suggests holding on to what one has already achieved. What is to be sustained is mind in its original condition, which is stable through activity and tranquility. Thus, this cryptic record means that when one is engaged with matters one should seek to maintain mind in its original condition or root state. To do so is to engage in self-examination, which can also be rendered as introspective investigation. Introspective investigation is a form of mindfulness through which the essence of mind (=the nature) remains present through all changing states of consciousness, regardless of whether a mental object is present.

38: 澄嘗問象山在人情事變上做工夫之說。先生曰：「除了人情事變，則無事矣。喜怒哀樂，非人情乎？自視聽言動以至富貴貧賤、患難死生，皆事變也。事變亦只在人情裏。其要只在『致中和』，『致中和』只在『謹獨』。」

[L.] Cheng once inquired about Xiangshan’s teaching on directing effort to human emotions and life’s changing circumstances. The Master said, “Aside from human emotions and life’s changing circumstances, there are no other affairs. Are not pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy all human emotions? From seeing, listening, speaking, and acting to wealth and high status, poverty and low status, adversity and hardship, and life and death—these are all life’s changing circumstances. Life’s changing circumstances happen within the horizon of human emotions. The important point is just to ‘attain centered harmony,’ and attaining centered harmony depends only on ‘being cautious of one’s solitude.’”¹⁻²

¹ 致中和 (“attain centered harmony”) The *Doctrine of the Mean* 1 states, “That which is ordained by Tian is called our nature; to lead by our nature is called the Dao; to cultivate the Dao is called the teaching. One may not deviate from the Dao for so much as an instant; that from which one may deviate is not the Dao. Thus the *junzi* is alert and cautious about what he does not see, is fearful about what he does not hear. Nothing is more visible than the obscure, nothing is plainer than the subtle. Hence, the *junzi* is cautious of his solitude. Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centered; emerging by the proper rhythms they are called harmonious. *Centered*: this is the great root of the world. *Harmonious*: this is the ultimate Dao of the world. Reaching centered harmony, heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby.” (Eno 2016: 37)

² 謹獨 (“cautious in solitude”): The *Great Learning* states, “Making the intentions perfectly genuine means being without self-deceit. It is the same as when we hate a bad odor or like a beautiful color. It describes a process of perfect inner correspondence. For this reason, a *junzi* is inevitably cautious of his solitude. The small person will do bad things when at his ease; there is nothing he may not do. When he is observed by a *junzi*, however, he will cover up the bad things that he has done and exhibit any good ones. But the *junzi* casts upon him a glance that sees through as to his very lungs and liver – of what use is concealment? This is why it is said that when one is perfectly genuine within it may be seen externally. For this reason, a *junzi* is inevitably cautious of his solitude. Zengzi said, ‘Ten eyes see and ten hands point: how austere!’” (Eno 2016: 17–18) *Jin du* 謹獨 is the same as *shen qi du* 慎其獨, a phrase found in both the *Great Learning* and *Doctrine of the Mean*. Eno renders this as “cautious of his solitude.” However, throughout the *Record* *shen* is rendered as “vigilant.” In record 324 Wang Yangming also says, “To rectify matters (*ge wu* 格物) is to exercise vigilance in solitude.” In his “Letter to Huang Mianzhi (*Yu Huang Mianzhi* 與黃免之),” which was written in 1524, he says that “being cautious of his solitude is the same as realizing the innate knowing (*zhi liangzhi* 致良知)” (Wang 2012: vol. 1, 5:165). However, Lu Cheng’s record predates his elaboration of his tenet of *zhi liangzhi*. Regardless, it should be clear that the introspective investigation of the moral tone of one’s mental or psychological life applies to all these practices, as well as what is requisite of the knowledge acquired thereby, and that this is to be carried out whether one is alone or in a relational setting. Thus, the solitary can mean being alone in a physical sense but also the aloneness, and hence independence, and therefore transcendence, of the essence of one’s mind, that is, one’s innate knowing, which is free even if not separate from life itself. Realizing the innate knowing is how centered harmony is attained.

39: 澄問：「仁義禮智之名，因已發而有？」曰：「然。」他日，澄曰：「惻隱、羞惡、辭讓、是非，是性之表德邪？」曰：「仁義禮智也是表德。性一而已，自其形體也，謂之天；主宰也，謂之帝；流行也，謂之命；賦於人也，謂之性；主於身也，謂之心；心之發也，遇父便謂之孝，遇君便謂之忠。自此以往，名至於無窮，只一性而已。猶人一而已，對父謂之子，對子謂之父。自此以往，至於無窮，只一人而已。人只要在性上用功，看得一性字分明，即萬理燦然。」

[I,] Cheng asked, “The names humanity, righteousness, ritual, and wisdom¹—do we have these because of what has already manifest?”²

The Master said, “That is correct.”

On another day, [I,] Cheng asked, “Are [the senses of] commiseration, shame, deference, and right and wrong expressions of our nature?”

The Master said, “Humanity, righteousness, ritual, and wisdom are expressions [of our nature] as well. The nature is just one. As physical form it is called the cosmos (*tian* 天). As the master-governor, it is called the Lord. With respect to its flow and circulation, it is called the mandate. With respect to its bestowal on people, it is called the nature. As master of the person, it is called the mind. As for what mind manifests, when encountering the father, it is called filial piety and when encountering the ruler, it is called conscientiousness. Moving along from here, the names reach to infinity, yet it is just one nature and no more. This is like a person being just one person. In relation to his father, he is called son and in relation to his son he is called father. Moving along from here, the names reach to infinity, yet it is just one person and no more. So long as people direct their efforts to the nature, seeing this one word clearly, then the myriad principles are crystal clear.”

¹ 仁義禮智 (“humanity, righteousness, ritual, and wisdom”): *Mengzi* 2A.6 states in part, “The sense (*xin*) of commiseration is the seed of humanity (*ren*), the sense of shame is the seed of righteousness (*yi*), the sense of deference is the seed of ritual *li*, and the sense of right and wrong is the seed of wisdom (*zhi*). Everyone possesses these four moral senses just as they possess their four limbs. To possess such seeds and yet claim to be unable to call them forth is to rob oneself; and for a person to claim that his ruler is incapable of such moral feelings is to rob his ruler.” (Eno 2016: 50)

² 已發 (“already manifested”): The *Doctrine of the Mean* 1 states, “Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centered; emerging by the proper rhythms they are called harmonious. *Centered*: this is the great root of the world. *Harmonious*: this is the ultimate Dao of the world. Reaching centered harmony, heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby.” (Eno 2016: 37)

It should be noted that other translators differ substantially in their renderings. De Bary renders the beginning of this passage as “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, is called [that state of] centrality. After these are aroused, if they preserve equilibrium (centrality) it is called [the state of] harmony” (de Bary 1999: 736). Thus, whereas Eno’s rendering suggests that *zhong* 中 in the first instance describes emotions in an inactive or quiescent state, de Bary’s suggests that *zhong* 中 is a noun describing a state or condition that precedes emotion. Other translations of *zhong* 中 include equilibrium and centeredness. Adler’s rendering seems most apt: “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are expressed (*weifa* 未發) it is called centrality. When these feeling are expressed (*yifa* 已發) and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony” (Adler 2020: 33). In other passages I have rendered this as “already arisen.”

40: 一日，論為學工夫。先生曰：「教人為學，不可執一偏。初學時，心猿意馬，拴縛不定，其所思慮多是人欲一邊，故且教之靜坐息思慮；久之，俟其心意稍定，只懸空靜守，如槁木死灰，亦無用，須教他省察克治。省察克治之功，則無時而可間，如去盜賊，須有個掃除廓清之意。無事時，將好色、好貨、好名等私，逐一追究搜尋出來，定要拔去病根，永不復起，方始為快。常如貓之捕鼠，一眼看著，一耳聽著，纔有一念萌動，即與克去；斬釘截鐵，不可姑容與他方便，不可窩藏，不可放他出路，方是真實用功，方能掃除廓清。到得無私可克，自有端拱時在。雖曰『何思何慮』非初學時事，初學必須思省察克治，即是思誠；只思一個天理，到得天理純全，便是『何思何慮』矣。」

One day, we were discussing the effort necessary to pursue learning. The Master said, “When teaching someone how to pursue learning, one cannot cling to one side. When he is first learning, his mind is like a wild monkey and thinking is like a galloping horse; they can’t be tied up and settled down. The object of his thinking and worrying mostly lies on the side of human (self-centered) desire. Hence, for the time being, teach him quiet sitting to quell thinking and worrying. After some time, having waited until his mind is somewhat stabilized, should he be merely maintaining tranquility in a vacuum, like dead wood and lifeless ashes, this is also useless. He should be taught self-examination and self-mastery.

At no moment should the disciplined practice of self-examination and self-mastery be interrupted. As with driving out robbers and thieves, you must have the intention to sweep away and eradicate them. When nothing is going on, one by one, investigate and seek out such self-centered desires as a lust for women and love of material possessions and recognition, removing the root of the ailment with determination so that it never again manifests, as only then will you feel pleased. Always be like a cat catching a mouse, eyes attentively watching, ears attentively listening. Just as soon as one [immoral] thought emerges, immediately subdue and eliminate it, with the decisiveness and resolution necessary to cut a nail or slice iron. Do not tolerate it for a time or grant it any consideration. Do not harbor it and do not give it a way out. Only then will this count as truly applying disciplined practice. Only then can you sweep away and eradicate. When you reach the point where there is no longer any ego to subdue, you will naturally possess the occasion when [the sovereign] sits upright hands folded. Although you can say that ‘what thinking and deliberation is there?’ is not something that applies to the initial stage of learning, when first learning you must contemplate how to engage in self-examination and self-mastery. This is contemplating genuineness. Only contemplating a single heavenly principle until the purity and fullness of heavenly principle is reached is ‘what thinking and deliberation is there?’”

¹ *Mengzi* 4A.12 states in part, “There is a Way for making oneself Genuine. If one is not enlightened about goodness, one will not make oneself Genuine. For this reason, Genuineness is Heaven’s Way. Reflecting upon Genuineness is the human Way.” (Van Norden 2008: 95)

Note: This record explains the practices necessary to pursue learning, that is, learning to achieve sagehood through moral self-cultivation. Wang Yangming begins by pointing out that the beginning learner should not hold to one side. What he means by this is that different students may need to apply different practices depending on their mental condition. The mind of the beginning learner may indeed require meditative practice because his or her mind is simply too restless, characterized by random thinking and

deliberation and driven by egocentric desires. This is a mind lost in external objects, what he often describes as one desirous of recognition (attention), sensual pleasures, or material possessions. This is the all-too-human mind in search of realizing itself through what is external to it, and which will be notoriously unstable because such seeking always invariably fails. To stabilize the unstable mind, Wang first proposes quiet-sitting, although he does not give any specific instructions as to how to conduct such meditation.

41: 澄問：「有人夜怕鬼者，奈何？」先生曰：「只是平日不能『集義』，而心有所慊，故怕。若素行合於神明，何怕之有？」子莘曰：「正直之鬼不須怕；恐邪鬼不管人善惡，故未免怕。」先生曰：「豈有邪鬼能迷正人乎？只此一怕，即是心邪，故有迷之者，非鬼迷也，心自迷耳。如人好色，即是色鬼迷；好貨，即是貨鬼迷；怒所不當怒，是怒鬼迷；懼所不當懼，是懼鬼迷也。」

[I, Lu] Cheng asked, “There is someone who, during the night, feels afraid of spirits. What can be done?”

Master Yangming said, “This only happens because he is unable to ‘accumulate acts of right’ in his daily life and in his heart he feels remorse.¹ Hence, he has fears. If his routine conduct is in harmony with spiritual clarity, what is there to fear?”

[Ma] Zixin said, “Righteous spirits need not be feared, but I am afraid that evil spirits do not care whether a person is good or bad, so one cannot but feel afraid.”²

The Master said, “How could an evil spirit possibly deceive a righteous person? Just this singular fear is indicative of an immoral mind, so something can deceive it. It is not spirits that deceive it but rather mind deceiving itself. For example, a person addicted to sensual pleasure has been beguiled by a spirit of lust, a person who covets wealth has been beguiled by a spirit of wealth, a person who gets angry over something for no reason has been beguiled by a spirit of anger, and a person who becomes afraid of something for no reason has been beguiled by a spirit of fear.”

¹ Regarding *ji yi* 集義 (“accumulate acts of right” or “accumulating righteousness”), *Mengzi* 2A.2 states, “Gongsun Chou asked, ‘What do you mean by ‘flood-like *qi*?’ ‘It is hard to describe,’ said Mencius. ‘This is a *qi* that is as vast and firm as can be. If one nurtures it by means of straightforward action and never impairs it, then it will fill all between heaven and earth. It is a *qi* that is a companion to righteousness and the Dao. Without these, it will starve away. It is generated through the long accumulation of acts of right. It is not something that can be seized through a single righteous act. If in your actions there is any sense of inadequacy in your heart, it will starve away.’” (Eno 2016: 40)

² Zixin 子莘 is the courtesy name for Ma Mingheng 馬明衡. His hometown was Putian County 莆田縣 in Fujian Province and he received his *jinshi* in 1514. He became a follower Wang Yangming and is said to have been the first to introduce his school of thought to Fujian.

Note: In this passage, Wang Yangming explains that although both good and evil spirits (or ghosts) exist, their ability to exercise influence over the individual is a function of that individual’s moral integrity. A fear of spirits is essentially a form of psychological

projection, an exterior manifestation of one's own moral failings, a failure to maintain ethical consistency. The solution to these fears is moral self-cultivation, through what Mengzi called accumulating acts of right or accumulating righteousness. In record 82, Wang states that through this practice the individual can restore the mind to its original condition. Mind in its original condition is unmoving, imperturbable, still. After 1520, when Wang Yangming set forth his tenet of extending, or realizing, the innate moral knowing, he also equated this tenet with accumulating righteous acts. (Wang 2012: vol. 1, 5.168)

42: 定者，心之本體，天理也；動靜，所遇之時也。

Stability is the mind's original condition.¹ It is the principle of Heaven. [Mental] activity and tranquility [depend on] what is encountered at the moment.

¹ Wing-tsit Chan (1962: 36) translates *ding* 定 as “calmness.” In using this term, Wang Yangming has in mind Cheng Hao's “Reply to Master Hengqu's Letter on Calming Human Nature” which states, “By calmness of nature we mean that one's nature is calm whether in a state of activity or in a state of tranquility” (Chan 1963: 525). However, by definition, calm means tranquil or still, and indeed others have translated *ding* as still or stilling. Saying that one is calm or still while tranquil is somewhat repetitive and fails to capture the meaning in this context, whereas “stable,” in the sense of “steadfast” or “enduring” does. On the one hand, the mind's original condition is indeed “still” or “calm” regardless of circumstances, that is, regardless of “what is encountered” and stilling and calming play an important role in Wang Yangming's practices. Furthermore, heavenly principle is fundamentally “still” insofar as it is true regardless of circumstances. But here the emphasis is on what endures over time, and what endures over time through changing states of movement/tranquility occasioned by moment-to-moment encounters is a transcendent stability grounded in heavenly principle.

43: 澄問《學》、《庸》同異。先生曰：「子思括《大學》一書之義為《中庸》首章。」

[I, Lu] Cheng asked about the *Great Learning* and *Doctrine of the Mean*'s similarities and differences. The Master said, “Zisi encapsulated the gist of the *Great Learning* in the first chapter of the *Doctrine of the Mean*.”¹

¹ In traditional China, authorship of the *Great Learning* was generally attributed to Zeng Shen 曾參 (c. 505–436 BCE), a disciple of Master Kong (Confucius), while authorship for the *Doctrine of the Mean* was attributed to Zisi 子思 (c. 483–402 BCE), Master Kong's grandson. Modern scholarship, however, sees these attributions as “inventions devised to justify the prestige that the texts acquired” (Eno 2016: 1). They originally appeared in the *Li ji* 禮記 (Classic of Rites) as chapters 42 and 31 respectively. But this classic was assembled during the second century BCE. During the Tang and especially the Song dynasties, Ruists drew attention to these texts and began to single them out as uniquely important to the Ruist tradition. First Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi and then Zhu Xi extracted them for special treatment and edited them, producing critical editions. As Eno explains, “He incorporated them as parts of a set of unified commentaries on what he called ‘The

Four Books,' combining them with the *Analects* and *Mencius* to create a new canonical core of the most authoritative works of early Confucianism. Zhu's commentaries to these works, which particularly acknowledged his debts to Cheng Yi, reframed them in terms of Neo-Confucian ethical and metaphysical theory, enhancing the credibility of this approach with rigorous philological scholarship. When Zhu's Neo-Confucian approach was endorsed by the Imperial Yuan Dynasty rulers as a new orthodoxy in the 14th century, his commentary editions of the Confucian canon became the standard basis of the civil service examinations, which formed the gateway to official position, wealth, and social status for the next half millennium. The Four Books became the gateway into that syllabus. In this way, *The Great Learning* and *The Doctrine of the Mean* came to be treated as seminal Confucian texts." (Eno 2016: 2)

44: 問：「孔子正名，先儒說『上告天子，下告方伯，廢輒立郢』，此意如何？」先生曰：「恐難如此。豈有一人致敬盡禮，待我而為政，我就先去廢他？豈人情天理？孔子既肯與輒為政，必已是他能傾心委國而聽。聖人盛德至誠，必已感化衛輒，使知無父之不可以為人，必將痛哭奔走，往迎其父。父子之愛，本於天性，輒能悔痛真切如此，蒯聩豈不感動底豫？蒯聩既還，輒乃致國請戮。聩已見化於子，又有夫子至誠調和其間，當亦決不肯受，仍以命輒。群臣百姓又必欲得輒為君。輒乃自暴其罪惡，請於天子，告於方伯諸侯，而必欲致國於父。聩與群臣百姓亦皆表輒悔悟仁孝之美，請於天子，告於方伯諸侯，必欲得輒而為之君。於是集命於輒，使之復君衛國。輒不得已，乃如後世上皇故事，率群臣百姓尊聩為太公，備物致養，而始退復其位焉。則君君、臣臣、父父、子子，名正言順，一舉而可為政於天下矣。孔子正名，或是如此。」

I asked, "Regarding Master Kong's rectification of names, a former scholar said, 'Above, announcing it to the son of Heaven, below, announcing it to the regional patriarchs, depose Zhe and establish Ying' What does this mean?"¹⁻²

The Master said, "I am afraid that it would be difficult to do it like this. How could there be a [situation] where a person extends his respect and fulfills all the ritual etiquette while waiting for me to administer the affairs of the state and I then immediately proceed to depose him? How could this count as human sentiment and heavenly principle? Since Master Kong was willing to administer the affairs of the state under Zhe, it must have already been the case that Zhe could entrust his heart to him, delegating the affairs of the state to him and listening to his advice. The sages' abundant virtue and perfect sincerity had surely already exerted an influence on and changed Zhe of Wei, giving him to understand that one cannot be a man in the absence of a father, and that he must cry his heart out and run off to greet his father. The love between a father and son is rooted in the Heaven-mandated human nature. If Zhe could really and truly feel deep regret like this, how could Kuaikui not feel moved and delighted? After Kuaikui returned, Zhe then entrusted the state to him and asked to be executed. Since Kui would have already been changed by his son and, furthermore, Master Kong, with his perfect sincerity, would have reconciled them, Kuaikui would most definitely not have been willing to accept and still commanded Zhe [to govern]. All the ministers and common people would surely have wanted to have Zhe as their ruler, but Zhe would then have revealed his own crimes and evil deeds, petitioned the son of Heaven and informed the regional patriarchs and many lords, insisting that he must entrust the state to his father. Kui and all the ministers and common people would have commended the moral excellence of Zhe's remorse, humanity, and filial piety, petitioned the son of Heaven and informed the regional patriarchs and

many lords, insisting that they must have Zhe as their ruler. At this point, a mandate would have gathered for having Zhe return as the ruler of the state of Wei. He would then have had no choice but to proceed as with the story of the grand emperor of a later age, by leading all the ministers and people to honor Kui as the grand duke, preparing ample provisions and providing support, and only then withdrawing and resuming his position.³ Thus, the ruler is a ruler, ministers ministers, fathers fathers, and sons sons, and names are rectified and speech is compliant.⁴ With this one act the affairs of all the world can be administered. Master Kong's rectification of names is perhaps like this.”

¹ *Analects* 13.3 states, Zilu said, “If the ruler of Wei were to entrust you with governance of his state, what would be your first priority.” The Master said, “Most certainly, it would be to rectify names.” Zilu said, “Is that so? How strange of you! How would this set things right?” The Master said, “What a boor you are, You! A junzi keeps silent about things he doesn't understand. “If names are not right then speech does not accord with things; if speech is not in accord with things, then affairs cannot be successful; when affairs are not successful, li and music do not flourish; when li and music do not flourish, then sanctions and punishments miss their mark; when sanctions and punishments miss their mark, the people have no place to set their hands and feet. “Therefore, when a junzi gives things names, they may be properly spoken of, and what is said may be properly enacted. With regard to speech, the *junzi* permits no carelessness.” (Eno 2015: 66–67) Duke Zhuang of Wei (d. 478 BCE) was a ruler of the state of Wei. His given name was Kuaikui and his son was Zhe, the future Duke Chu of Wei (d. 469). For attempting to kill his *Di* mother, Kuaikui was forced to flee the state even as his son remained. He later attempted a coup against his son and eventually ousted him for a time.

² According to Wing-tsit Chan, “This is the opinion of Hu Hong (1100-55), quoted by Zhu Xi in his commentary on the above passage of the *Analects* in his *Lunyu ji zhu*, ch. 7.” (Chan 1963: 37).

³ Referring to the story of Emperor Gaozu of the Han dynasty honoring his father with the title of Grand Emperor in 201 BCE. (Chan 1963: 38)

⁴ *Analects* 12.11 states, “Duke Jing of Qi asked Confucius about governance. Confucius replied, ‘Let the ruler be ruler, ministers ministers, fathers fathers, sons sons.’ The Duke said, ‘Excellent! Truly, if the ruler is not ruler, ministers not ministers, fathers not fathers, sons not sons, though I possess grain, will I be able to eat it?’” (Eno 2015: 62)

45: 澄在鴻臚寺倉居。忽家信至，言兒病危，澄心甚憂悶 不能堪。先生曰：「此時正宜用功。若此時放過，閒時講學何用？人正要在此等時磨鍊。父之愛子，自是至情，然天理亦自有個中和處，過即是私意。人於此處多認做天理當憂，則一向憂苦，不知己是『有所憂患，不得其正』。大抵七情所感，多只是過，少不及者。才過便非心之本體，必須調停適中始得。就如父母之喪，人子豈不欲一哭便死，方快於心，然卻曰『毀不滅性』。非聖人強制之也，天理本體自有分限，不可過也。人但要識得心體，自然增減分毫不得。」

[I], Cheng, was residing in a storehouse in the Court of State Ceremonial when a letter unexpectedly arrived from home stating that my son was critically ill. I was very worried and

depressed and couldn't bear it. The Master said, "This is the right time to apply effort. If you let this moment pass, what use is discussing learning during leisurely moments. It is precisely at times like this that people should steel themselves. A father's love for his son is naturally the utmost sentiment. However, heavenly principle has its own locus of centered harmony. Exceeding it is [the workings of] self-centered inclinations. Under these circumstances, most people believe that according to heavenly principle one ought to worry, so they are constantly anxious and distressed, without realizing they are [what the *Great Learning* describes as] 'If one is anxious and fretful one's mind will not be right.'¹ In general, for most people the experience of the seven emotions is excessive while for a few it is lacking. Once they are excessive, this is not the mind in its original state, and they must be regulated to attain moderation, and then one will be okay. For example, in the matter of the loss of a father or mother, would not a son or daughter wish immediately to cry to death, only then feeling contented in their hearts. However, [the *Classic of Filiality*] nevertheless says that 'damage [to one's body] should not lead to the extinction of life.'² This is not a sage imposing this requirement, but rather the appropriate limits inherent to heavenly principle itself, which cannot be exceeded. So long as people really understand the essence of mind, naturally, they will be unable to add to or subtract from it in the slightest."

¹ 有所憂患，不得其正 ("If one is anxious and fretful one's mind will not be right"): The *Great Learning* states, "If one possesses anger and resentment one's mind will not be fully balanced. If one is in fear one's mind will not be balanced. If one takes pleasure in delights one's mind will not be balanced. If one is anxious and fretful one's mind will not be balanced." (Eno 2016: 18) Other translations render *zheng* 正 as "correct," and that seems to be the most common choice, but given the emphasis on abnormal, altered mental states produced by excessive emotion using "right" seems apt here. As a result of excessive emotion, one is not in one's right mind. Nevertheless, in this case

² The *Classic of Filiality* 18, "Mourning One's Parents," states, "The Master said, 'In mourning for his parents, the filial child weeps but does not wail, speaks without adorning his words, does without splendid raiment, hears music without taking any joy in it, and eats without relish—all these are feelings natural to one who grieves. After three days one again takes food, in order to show people that death should not be allowed to harm life and that destruction [of one's body] should not lead to the destruction of [another] life. These are how the sages regulated things. . .'" (de Bary 1999: 329)

Note: In this record Wang Yangming is addressing Lu Cheng's grief, and explains how a person is to handle the emotional life (and feelings). Emotions can be excessive or lacking or adequate. What governs a person's emotional response to a set of circumstances is the Way mind (principle) and the human mind, the latter manifesting as selfishness or self-centered (egoic) desires or inclinations. When the human mind is interfering, emotional responses become distorted (biased) and the mind in its original state fails to function naturally. The natural functioning of mind in its original state is the flow of heavenly principle, and what is here described as being in a state of centeredness and harmony or, more simply, centered harmony. With practice, the state of centered harmony remains stable through all emotional states, such that they arise adequately and appropriately.

46: 不可謂「未發之中」常人俱有。蓋「體用一源」，有是體即有是用；有「未發之中」，即有「發而皆中節之和」。今人未能有「發而皆中節之和」，須知是他「未發之中」亦未能全得。

It cannot be said that the ordinary person possesses “the centeredness before arising.”¹ The statement “essence and function are of one source” means that if you have this essence then you have this functioning.² If you possess “the centeredness before arising” then you will enjoy “the harmony of [emotions] arising, all in due measure and degree.” People should know that the reason people nowadays are incapable of enjoying “the harmony of [emotions] arising, all in due measure and degree” is that they are yet incapable of attaining “the centeredness prior to arising” in its entirety.

¹ 未發之中/發而皆中節之和 (“centeredness before arising”/“the harmony of [emotions] arising, all in due measure and degree”): The *Doctrine of the Mean* 1 states, “That which is ordained by Tian is called our nature; to lead by our nature is called the Dao; to cultivate the Dao is called the teaching. One may not deviate from the Dao for so much as an instant; that from which one may deviate is not the Dao. Thus the *junzi* is alert and cautious about what he does not see, is fearful about what he does not hear. Nothing is more visible than the obscure, nothing is plainer than the subtle. Hence, the *junzi* is cautious of his solitude. Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centered; emerging by the proper rhythms they are called harmonious. *Centered*: this is the great root of the world. *Harmonious*: this is the ultimate Dao of the world. Reaching centered harmony, heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby” (Eno 2016: 37). It should be noted that other translators differ substantially in their renderings. De Bary renders the beginning of this passage as “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, is called [that state of] centrality. After these are aroused, if they preserve equilibrium (centrality) it is called [the state of] harmony” (de Bary 1999: 736). Thus, whereas Eno’s rendering suggests that *zhong* 中 in the first instance describes emotions in an inactive or quiescent state, de Bary’s suggests that *zhong* 中 is a noun describing a state or condition that precedes emotion. Other translations of *zhong* 中 include equilibrium and centeredness. Adler’s rendering seems most apt: “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are expressed (*weifa* 未發) it is called centrality. When these feeling are expressed (*yifa* 已發) and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony.” (Adler 2020: 33)

Note: Wang Yangming is speaking to the spiritual status of individuals who have not yet attained centeredness and harmony because the center has been *hun* 昏 (darkened) and *bi* 蔽 (concealed). Thus, he is not suggesting that some people do not possess the center. As record 77 explains, everyone possesses this originally. Yet, true to his early teaching, as reflected in volume I of the *Record*, Wang indicates that as a first step towards attaining harmony the individual does need to eliminate desire, and quiet the mind, with a view to attaining the state here referred to as “the centeredness prior to arising.” This is mind returned to its original condition, that is, mind itself, or the essence of mind, which ideally appears as a result of his recommended disciplined practices, and initially as a silent and

unmoving presence that remains stable through all states, whether described as tranquil or active (in motion). (See Lu 2021: 95-6; Chan 2017: 67)

47: 《易》之辭，是『初九，潛龍勿用』六字；《易》之象是初畫，《易》之變是值其畫，《易》之占是用其辭。

The line statement [for line 1 of the *qian* hexagram 乾卦] in the *Classic of Changes* is the six words ‘9 at the beginning: Hidden dragon. Do not use.’¹ The *Changes*’ [hexagram] image means the beginning line. Fluctuation in the *Changes* means encountering the [hexagram] pictures. Divination in the *Changes* means utilizing its [line and hexagram] statements.

¹ Obviously, the English translation for *chu jiu qian long wu yong* 初九潛龍勿用 exceeds six words. For translation, see Adler 2020: 54.

48: 「夜氣」是就常人說。學者能用功，則日間有事無事，皆是此氣翕聚發生處。聖人則不消說「夜氣」。

“‘Night *qi*’ concerns the ordinary person. If learners can apply themselves to practicing, then throughout the day, whether some matter is at hand or not, the entire time will be the occasion for the gathering and growth of this [night] *qi*. For sages, there is no need to speak of the ‘night *qi*.’”

¹ 夜氣 (“night *qi*”): Regarding the night *qi*, Mencius 6A.8 states in part, “Despite the rest such a man may get between night and day, and the restorative *qi* that the morning brings, the things he does day after day destroy these effects, and in time little will he resemble other men in what he likes and hates. When this destruction is repeated, the *qi* he stores up each night will not be enough to preserve what was originally in him, and when the night *qi* can no longer preserve that, then he is not far from a beast.” (Eno 2016: 127)

Note: Mengzi’s discussion of the night *qi* and the restorative *qi* of the morning describes the conditions under which a person returns to or restores original mind in its genuineness, such that conscience and the sense of right and wrong become clear. It is this condition that is lost during the hectic day, leaving us without our humanity and hence not so distant from becoming beasts. Looking ahead, in record 268, Wang Yangming states,

良知在夜氣發的方是本體，以其無物欲之雜也。學者要使事物紛擾之時，常如夜氣一般，就是『通乎晝夜之道而知』。

Because it is unmixed with a desire for things, the innate knowing (*liangzhi* 良知) that manifests amid the night *qi* 氣 is the original condition (*benti* 本體). Learners should always make those times when one is disturbed by matters resemble the night *qi*. This is the meaning of “he penetrates the Way of day and night and understands it.”

Thus, here too, Wang Yangming explains that our nighttime psychophysical state, undisturbed by desire, pure and clear, brings us near to mind as it is in its primordial or root

state, and hence to the natural functioning of the innate knowing (*liangzhi* 良知), which is, of course, an elaboration of Mengzi's original mind and its inborn sense of right and wrong. He also says that bringing this to fruition during the day penetrates the Way of day and night. Hence, in this passage, he reiterates what he had said earlier, albeit before he had elaborated his tenet of *liangzhi*. Thus, he is suggesting that through his recommended practices as of this point in time, a learner should be able to sustain mind in its original condition or natural (true) state throughout the day and night. The most important practice would be ridding egoic desire and sustaining heavenly principle (*cun tianli qu renyu* 存天理去人欲). Sustaining such a unified state, of course, is something the sage can achieve naturally, and with ease. Thus, he says that discussion of the night *qi* concerns the ordinary person, not the sage.

49: 澄問「操存舍亡」章。曰：「『出入無時，莫知其鄉』，此雖就常人心說，學者亦須是知得心之本體亦元是如此，則操存功夫始沒病痛。不可便謂出為亡，入為存。若論本體，元是無出無入的。若論出入，則其思慮運用是出。然主宰常昭昭在此，何出之有？既無所出，何入之有？程子所謂腔子，亦只是天理而已。雖終日應酬而不出天理，即是在腔子裏；若出天理，斯謂之放，斯謂之亡。」又曰：「出入亦只是動靜。動靜無端，豈有『鄉』邪？」

[L.] Cheng asked about the “grasp it and you will preserve it; let it go and it will vanish” chapter [in the *Mengzi*].¹

The Master said, “Its goings and comings have no fixed time. No one knows its home’: Although this speaks to the mind of the ordinary person, a student should also know that the mind’s original condition has always been like this. Only then will the disciplined practice of grasping and preserving it be flawless. One cannot just hastily say that going means the mind vanishes and coming means it is preserved. If we are talking about the [mind’s] original condition, then originally it neither comes nor goes. If we are talking about its goings and comings, the activity of its thinking and deliberating is going. However, the master is always clearly present, so how can there be going? As there is no going, how can there be coming? What Master Cheng called the cavity is simple nothing more than heavenly principle. Although you may be engaged in social interaction all day long, so long as you do not deviate from heavenly principle, it takes place in the cavity. If you depart from heavenly principle, this is what is meant by letting it go, and this is what is meant by its vanishing.

He also said, “Goings and comings is also activity and tranquility. Activity and tranquility have no beginning. How could they have a ‘home’?”

¹ *Mengzi* 6A.8 states,

Mencius said, “There was once a time when the woods of Ox Mountain were lovely. But because they lay close beside the capital of a great state, the ax and adze hacked away at them – could they remain lovely long? By dawn and evening they were nourished by the rains and the dew, and surely there was no lack of shoots springing up. But then cattle and sheep came to graze, and thus the mountain remains barren. When people observe how it is barren, they assume it could never have been covered with woods, but how could that possibly be the nature of a mountain?”

“And could what exists within people possibly be without humanity and righteousness? That a man may have let go of his original heart is indeed like taking the ax and adze to the mountain’s woods – hacking at them dawn after dawn, how can any beauty remain? Despite the rest such a man may get between night and day, and the restorative *qi* that the morning brings, the things he does day after day destroy these effects, and in time little will he resemble other men in what he likes and hates. When this destruction is repeated, the *qi* he stores up each night will not be enough to preserve what was originally in him, and when the night *qi* can no longer preserve that, then he is not far from a beast. Others see that he has become a beast and they assume he never possessed a human endowment, but how could that possibly be what is intrinsic to the person?”

“There is nothing that does not grow when it receives its proper nourishment, and there is nothing that does not shrivel when it loses that which it was nourished by. Confucius said, ‘Grasp it and you will preserve it; let it go and it will vanish; when it comes and where it goes, no one knows.’ Was it not the heart that he meant?” (Eno 2016: 127)

Bryan W. Van Norden renders the statement attributed to Confucius as follows: “Kongzi said, ‘Grasped then preserved; abandoned then lost. Its going and comings have no fixed time. No one knows its home.’” (Van Norden 2008: 152)

¹ 腔子 (“cavity”): Citing a term in *juan 7* of the *Er Cheng yi shu* 二程遺書 (Posthumous Works of the Two Chengs). This work is available at [ctext: http://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&res=791](http://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&res=791). Wing-tsit Chan renders this as “the body.”

50: 王嘉秀問：「佛以出離生死誘人入道，仙以長生久視誘人入道；其心亦不是要人做不好。究其極至，亦是見得聖人上一截，然非入道正路。如今仕者，有由科、有由貢、有由傳奉，一般做到大官，畢竟非入仕正路，君子不由也。仙、佛到極處，與儒者略同，但有了上一截，遺了下一截，終不似聖人之全；然其上一截同者，不可誣也。後世儒者，又只得聖人下一截，分裂失真，流而為記誦、詞章、功利、訓詁，亦卒不免為異端。是四家者，終身勞苦，於身心無分毫益，視彼仙、佛之徒，清心寡慾，超然於世累之外者，反若有所不及矣。今學者不必先排仙、佛，且當篤志為聖人之學。聖人之學明，則仙、佛自泯。不然，則此之所學，恐彼或有不屑，而反欲其俯就，不亦難乎？鄙見如此，先生以為何如？」先生曰：「所論大略亦是。但謂上一截、下一截，亦是人見偏了如此。若論聖人大中至正之道，徹上徹下，只是一貫，更有甚上一截、下一截？『一陰一陽之謂道』，但『仁者見之，便謂之仁；知者見之，便謂之智』，『百姓又日用而不知，故君子之道鮮矣』。仁、智豈可不謂之道？但見得偏了，便有弊病。」

Wang Jiaxiu asked, “Buddhist teachings entice people to enter the path [to enlightenment] by promising departure from life and death. Daoist teachings entice people to enter the Dao (“Way”) by promising a long life and lasting vision.¹ Their intentions are also not for people to do something immoral. Investigating their ultimate reach, they have also seen the sage’s upper tier. However, this is not the proper path for entering the Way. Nowadays, for example, when people enter officialdom, some do so through examination, some do so as tribute students (through recommendation), and some do so through direct appointment by the emperor. All can similarly

become high officials, but [direct appointment] is, after all, not a regular route to entering officialdom, and the gentleman does not take it. At their highest reach, the Daoists and Buddhists are roughly like the scholars (=Ruists), but they possess the upper tier and have abandoned the lower tier. In the end, they don't resemble the sage's wholeness. Nevertheless, that their upper tier is the same cannot be misrepresented. Later generations of scholars only learned the sage's lower tier, splitting [the upper and lower] and distorting the original teaching, so that it developed into rote memorization and recitation, literary composition, the pursuit of meritorious recognition and emoluments, and exegesis, in the end unavoidably becoming heterodox as well. Those taking these four approaches toil their whole lives without the slightest benefit to their bodies and minds. Compared to followers of Daoism and Buddhism, who purify the heart, lessen desire, and detach themselves from worldly troubles, they rather seem to be comparatively lacking. Nowadays students should not exclude Daoism and Buddhism. Rather, they should sincerely devote themselves to pursuing the learning of the sages. Once the learning of the sages has been clarified, Daoism and Buddhism will naturally die out. Otherwise, with respect to what we study, I fear that they may look upon it with disdain. Yet, we expect that they will deign to accept our way. Is that not impossible? Such is my humble opinion. Sir, what do you think of it?"

The Master said, "What you have explained is generally correct. However, what you refer to as the upper tier and lower tier are as you say in consequence of people's skewed viewpoints. If we are discussing the sage's Way of great centrality and perfect rightness, then there is just one thread penetrating the upper and lower, so how could there yet be some upper tier and lower tier? 'The alteration of *yin* and *yang* is called the Way,' but 'the humane person sees it and calls it humanity; the wise person sees it and calls it wisdom. Common people practice it daily but do not understand; therefore the Way of the superior person is rare.'² Humanity and wisdom—how could these not be called the Way? It is just that if it is understood partially there will be trouble."

¹ Citing the *Dao de jing* passage 59.

² Citing the *Classic of Changes*' "Treatise on the Appended Remarks," part A, section 5. (Adler 2020: 269)

Note: This record is simply explaining that the Ruist path both contains and better explains the contemplative insights attained through Buddhist and Daoist practices. Most importantly, ultimately, there is no higher and lower tier, just one thread, which is the great centrality and perfect rightness penetrating all horizons of knowledge.

51: 蓍固是《易》，龜亦是《易》。

[Divination with] yarrow [stalks] is of course the *Changes*; [divination with] turtle [shells] is also the *Changes*.

Note: Shi 蓍 ("yarrow" or "milfoil") are common names for the plant species *Achillea millefolium*. Yi 易 (*Changes*) refers to the *Zhou yi* 周易 (*Zhou Changes*) or to the *Yi jing* 易經 (*Classic of Changes*), the latter consisting of the *Zhou yi* and commentaries. Yarrow stalks and turtle shells were used for divination. Stalks were used to generate numbers and shells to generate images. Numbers are the basis for generating the lines of which trigrams and hexagrams are composed, and which serve as the foundation for the *Yi jing*. The

passage is simply stating that the principles of the *Yi jing* are to be found in the yarrow stalks and turtle shells, as they are what are used for the divination process.

52: 問：「孔子謂武王未盡善，恐亦有不滿意？」先生曰：「在武王自合如此。」曰：「使文王未沒，畢竟如何？」曰：「文王在時，天下三分已有其二。若到武王伐商之時，文王若在，或者不致興兵，必然這一分亦來歸了。文王只善處紂，使不得縱惡而已。」

I asked, “Master Kong said that [the music of] King Wu was not perfectly good. I fear that he also disapproved of King Wu in some way.”¹

The Master said, “Naturally, where King Wu is concerned, that is the case.”

I said, “Had King Wen not passed away, how would things have turned out in the end?”

The Master said, “When King Wen was still living, he already controlled two-thirds of the empire. Had King Wen still been around when King Wu attacked the Shang, he might not have mobilized for war, and even this one-third would surely also have come to him and submitted. King Wen would only have needed to deal skillfully with [King] Zhou [of the Shang], preventing him from giving free rein to his wickedness, and no more.”²

¹ *Analects* 3.25 states, “The Master said of the Shao music, ‘It is thoroughly beautiful and thoroughly good.’ Of the Wu music he said, ‘It is thoroughly beautiful, but not thoroughly good.’” (Eno 2015: 13)

² *Analects* 8.20 states, “Shun possessed five ministers and the world was ordered. King Wu said, ‘I have ten ministers to curtail the chaos.’ Confucius commented, ‘Talent is hard to find, is it not! In the times of Yao and Shun it was most abundant. And of the ten, one was a woman: it was merely nine. The Zhou controlled two-thirds of the empire, yet continued to serve the Yin. The virtue of the Zhou may be said to be the utmost of virtue.’” (Eno 2015: 54)

Note: King Wen 文王 (or King Wen of Zhou 周文王) was a posthumous title for Ji Chang 姬昌, a noble of the late Shang dynasty (c. 1600-1050 BCE). It was given to him by his son, King Wu of Zhou 周武王. Ji Chang received noble titles from the Shang, but according to traditional histories the last Shang ruler, King Zhou, was tyrannical. Over time, Ji Chang’s power and reputation among regional rulers rose, and he expanded his control over territories to the west of the Shang royal domain. He died, however, before finishing his conquests. King Wu conquered the Shang dynasty and proclaimed the Zhou, bestowing the title of king on his father.

In this record, Wang Yangming is discussing the meaning of perfect goodness as it pertained to the historical events surrounding the conquest of the House of Shang by the House of Zhou. That King Wu had to defeat the Zhou through military conquest suggests that he was not perfectly good, or that he had not exhausted the good. He believes that King Wen would have been able to achieve the same goal by skillfully handling King Zhou of Shang, as opposed to resorting to mobilizing the military instrument. It seems likely that his study of the military classics, for which he had written his own commentary, influenced his judgment here. The *Sunzi bingfa* 孫子兵法 (*Sunzi’s Art of War*) states that the acme of skill is the ability to subdue the enemy without fighting, and thus to take territory without shattering it. Also, from the perspective of the learning of mind, achieving this goal reflects

upon the moral self-cultivation and virtue of the ruler. Ideally, the enemy willingly comes to his court and submits, having recognized the rightness of that ruler's cause. Insofar as King Wen was according with principle, even the remaining one-third of the empire would surely have come to him and submitted. (Cf. Lu 2021: 103)

53: 問：「孟子言『執中無權猶執一』」。先生曰：「中只是天理、只是易，隨時變易，如何執得？須是因時制宜，難預先定一個規矩在。如後世儒者要將道理一一說得無罅漏，立定個格式，此正是執一。」

I asked, “Mengzi said, ‘If you insist on holding to the middle without considering the balance of circumstances it is really no different from grasping one extreme.’”¹

The Master said, “The middle is just heavenly principle, it is just change, transforming and changing as the time requires, so how can one hold it fast? One must devise methods suited to current circumstances, as it is difficult to predefine a fixed rule. This is like the scholars of later times who sought to explain each rationale without any omissions, establishing and fixing a single pattern. This is precisely grasping one extreme.”

¹ 執中無權猶執一 (“if you insist on holding to the middle without considering the balance of circumstances”): *Mengzi* 7A.26 states, “Mencius said, ‘Yangzi’s motto is ‘act for oneself.’ If he could profit the world by plucking out a single hair he would not do it. For Mozi the motto is ‘universal love.’ If it would profit the world, he would scratch his head bald and walk his heels off. Zimo advocates holding to a middle course. Holding to the middle comes near to it, but if you insist on holding to the middle without considering the balance of circumstances it is really no different from grasping one extreme. What is detestable about grasping one extreme is that it cuts down the Dao, raising up a single part and casting off hundreds.” (Eno 2016: 146)

Note: In this record Wang Yangming defines several kinds of knowledge. On the one hand, at one level, he points to abstract reasoning through which a set of principles are generated that establish a pattern. Presumably he means ethical principles and norms that establish a pattern for individual and social action and conduct. The concern here is that such principles would seem to presuppose an unchanging and unambiguous reality and that they cannot entirely account for the nuances of what is requisite to each moment. More personally, Wang Yangming is clearly criticizing people who are rigid in their thinking. In record 30 and elsewhere in his writing, to criticize what he sees as intellectual flaws, he cites *Analects* 9.4, which states, “The Master forbade four things: One must not act on guesses, one must not demand absolute certainty, one must not be stubborn, one must not insist on oneself” (Eno 2015: 40). The demand for absolute certainty and stubbornness resemble what he has in mind here. Rather, he proposes a way of thinking that is contextually sensitive and situationally responsive, one that is in accord with heavenly principle, here understood as the unfolding (the flow and operation) of the natural order, what he calls change, referring to the *Changes*. In doing so, he redefines the meaning of the middle, which is no longer defined as a set of rules to be applied to emerging circumstances but rather as rules intrinsically true to unfolding circumstances. Such knowledge appears to be more direct and unmediated, pointing to a unity of knowing and

acting as well as a unity of the very essence of mind and practice. In other passages, he uses the mirror as a metaphor for this cognitive ability.

54: 唐詡問：「立志是常存個善念，要為善去惡否？」曰：「善念存時，即是天理。此念即善，更思何善？此念非惡，更去何惡？此念如樹之根芽，立志者長立此善念而已。『從心所欲不踰矩』，只是志到熟處。」

Tang Xu asked, “Does not setting one’s aim mean always maintaining a good intention, to endeavor to do good and rid evil?”

The Master said, “When a good intention is being maintained that is heavenly principle. As this intention is good, what other good is there to contemplate? As this intention is not evil, what more in the way of evil is there to rid? This intention is like the root and sprout of a tree. Setting one’s aim is simply standing for long on this good intention. ‘[At seventy] I follow the desires of my heart and do not overstep the bounds’² just means one’s aim has reached a mature stage.” ‘

¹ Little is known about Tang Xu 唐詡. His hometown was probably Xin’gan County 新淦縣 in Linjiang Prefecture 臨江府, Jiangxi Province.

² *Analects* 2.4 states, “The Master said: When I was fifteen I set my heart on learning. At thirty I took my stand. At forty I was without confusion. At fifty I knew the command of Tian. At sixty I heard it with a compliant ear. At seventy I follow the desires of my heart and do not overstep the bounds.” (Eno 2015: 5)

Note: Renderings of *li zhi* include “fixing the determination” (Julia Ching), “establishing a commitment” (Philip J. Ivanhoe), “making up the mind” (Wing-tsit Chan), while translations of *nian* 念 include “thought” (most commonly), “concern” (Harvey Lederman), and “mindfulness” (Digital Dictionary of Buddhism). The Digital Dictionary of Buddhism gives a range of renderings for the use of this term in a Buddhist context, including, “To recall, remember. That which is remembered. The function of remembering. The operation of the mind of not forgetting an object. Awareness, concentration. Mindfulness of the Buddha, as in Pure Land practice.” While thought is an appropriate rendering in other places and, as well, intention here is clearly mental and conscious, containing a cognitive dimension, nevertheless, the emphasis is on the determination to act for the purpose of achieving an aim—to do good and rid evil, a central practice taught by Wang Yangming during the time when the conversations in volume I took place. Also, he says that this good intention is the foundation for setting one’s aim. One aims for the good, and aiming is primarily intentional. At a mature stage, one’s aim accords with principle, and hence the Way. This is what is meant by “I follow the desires of my heart and do not overstep the bounds.”

55: 精神、道德、言動，大率收斂為主，發散是不得已。天地人物皆然。

The foundation of mental functioning, morals, speech, and action should by and large be collecting and focusing oneself. Being diffuse and scattered should only happen when circumstances make it unavoidable. Heaven, earth, people, and things are all the same in this regard.

56: 問：「文中子是如何人？」先生曰：「文中子庶幾『具體而微』，惜其蚤死。」問：「如何卻有續經之非？」曰：「續經亦未可盡非。」請問。良久，曰：「『更覺良工心獨苦』。」

I asked, “What kind of man was Master Wenzhong.”¹

The Master said, “Master Wenzhong more or less ‘resembled the Master in full, but at a lesser level.’² Sadly, he died at a young age.”

I asked, “Then why did he make the mistake of writing the *Continued Classics*?”³

The Master said, “The *Continued Classics* cannot be entirely rejected.”

I asked him what he meant. After some time, the Master said, “‘I further realized how the fine artisan used singular effort here.’”⁴

¹ Master Wenzhong is a posthumous honorific title for Wang Tong 王通 (ca. 584–617). He was a classics scholar who lived during the Sui dynasty (581–618). After the Sui court ignored the proposals he submitted, Wang Tong withdrew to a private life of scholarship.

² *Mengzi* 2A.2 states in part,

Gongsun Chou said, “I have heard it said of Zixia, Ziyou, and Zizhang that each was like the Master in one respect, while Ran Niu, Minzi, and Yan Yuan each resembled the Master in full, but at a lesser level. May I ask which of these fits you?”

“Let us put that aside for now.” (Eno 2016: 47)

³ According to Ding Xiang Warner,

Born around 584 in Longmen 龍門 of southwestern Shanxi 山西, Wang Tong made a career for himself not in official service but as a teacher of classical studies. He devoted his life to lecturing on his rigidly conservative interpretations of the Confucian canon and composing supplements to the six texts that are traditionally thought to have been edited by Confucius himself. These supplements Wang Tong titled the *Li lun* 禮論 (Discussions on Rites), *Yue lun* 樂論 (Discussions on Music), *Xu Shu* 續書 (The Continued Book of Documents), *Xu Shi* 續詩 (The Continued Book of Songs), *Yuanjing* 元經 (The Primal Classic), and *Zan Yi* 讚易 (Elucidation of the Book of Changes), each modeled after one of the six classics of the hallowed Confucian canon. Collectively these texts were known to Wang Tong’s contemporaries as the *Wangshi liu jing* 王氏六經 (Wang’s Six Classics) or the *Xu jing* 續經 (Continued Classics). Together, they encapsulated Wang Tong’s understanding of the “true teachings” of Confucius and constituted the basic curriculum at his academy until his death in 617. (Warner 2014: 3–4).

He notes that all these works had been lost by the ninth century.

⁴ 更覺良工心獨苦 (“I further realized how the fine artisan used singular effort here.”): This is a line from a poem written by Du Fu 杜甫, the famed Tang dynasty poet. Here is the poem, as translated by Stephen Owen:

“Song on His Reverence Li’s Screen with Pines”

In the clear dawn this old fellow was combing his white hair,
a Daoist from Dark Metropolis Lodge came to pay me a visit.
I wrung out my hair, called my boy and invited him in the door,
in his hand he held a new painting, a screen with green pines.

The pine forest on the screen was tranquil, faint and dark,
as I leaned on the rail it suddenly seemed that this was no painting at all.
Shadowy slopes, drawing back, received trunks of frost and snow,
from leafy canopies rushed away bough-forms of serpents and dragons.

All my life this old fellow has loved rare and ancient things,
facing this, my elation joins me to the hosts of ethereal spirits.
I already knew that my immortal guest was like-minded,
I further realized how the fine artisan had used singular effort here.

The men under the pines wear the same turbans and sandals,
sitting in pairs they seem to be the old men of Mount Shang.
Sadly gazing, I’ll sing for the while the song “Purple Mushrooms,”
the times are troubled and gloomily there comes a mournful wind.

57: 許魯齋謂儒者『以治生為先』之說，亦誤人。

Xu Luzhai’s theory that scholars should ‘prioritize securing a livelihood’ has misled people.¹

¹ Xu Heng 許衡 (1209–1281), *hao* 號 Luzhai 魯齋, *zi* 字 Zhongping, was born in Huaizhou 懷州 (now Qinyang 沁陽, Henan Province 河南省). His early life in north China during the thirteenth century spanned the final decades of the Jin dynasty (1115-1234), which originated as a northern conquest dynasty that had defeated the ethnically Chinese Song dynasty and taken control of the north in 1126, forcing the Song court to relocate south. The Mongol conquest of the Jin dynasty began in 1215 under Chinggis Khan and was completed in 1234 under his son Ogödei, and it was Chingghis’s grandson Khubilai that completed conquest of the Southern Song dynasty in 1279. Already, by 1266, Xu Heng had become an advisor to Khubilai. Xu Heng was a Ruist in the tradition of the Cheng-Zhu School of Principle (*Cheng Zhu lixue* 程朱理學). (Klein 2018)

Note: Looking at this record, scholars have considered both precisely what Xu Heng meant, situating his statement in the historical context of the violence and turmoil of the thirteenth century, as well as why Wang Yangming criticized his ranking of life’s priorities. In the preceding record (56), Wang Yangming’s praises Wang Tong, who withdrew from the Sui court for a private life of classics scholarship, indicating that one’s life mission should be given priority over careerism. Since Wang Tong could not serve the court according to his principles, he rather promoted the Way through teaching and scholarship. More generally, in Ruism, adhering to principle, or rightness, is elevated over the pursuit of profit or narrow self-interest (Lu 2021: 108). Thus, it seems that Wang Yangming is interpreting the

meaning of “securing a livelihood” in one of these senses. That said, Xu Heng was simply referring to providing for oneself or making ends meet during a time when China was wracked by warfare and hence disruption. Also, when Xu was speaking to students at the National Imperial University about securing a livelihood, he said, “The very first task of those who are engaging in learning is to secure a livelihood. If basic needs are not met, then the path to learning will be impeded” (Chen 2021). Such circumstances can compel people to compromise for the purpose of making ends meet. However, Wang Yangming was likely speaking to specific circumstances where he would expect a scholar to place principle over securing a livelihood. In fact, in memorials to the Ming court, he sometimes drew connections between people turning to crime and banditry and their socioeconomic circumstances, with the expectation that it was the responsibility of the governing class to ameliorate social unrest by addressing these root causes. (Wang 2011: vol. 2, 13.361-366)

58: 問仙家元氣、元神、元精。先生曰：「只是一件。流行為氣，凝聚為精，妙用為神。」

I asked about the Daoists’ Original Pneuma, Original Spirit, and Original Essence.¹ The Master said, “These are just one phenomenon. In terms of its flowing forth and along it is pneuma, in terms of its congealing it is essence, and in terms of its wondrous functioning it is spirit.”

¹ Lu Cheng is asking about the Three Primes (*san yuan* 三元) in inner alchemy. *Jing* 精, *shen* 神, and *qi* 氣 are three terms central to Daoism, and often referred to as the Three Treasures (*san bao* 三寶). According to the Encyclopedia of Taoism (2008: vol. 1):

The common translations of *jing* as “essence,” *qi* as “breath,” “pneuma,” or “energy,” and *shen* as “spirit” capture some of their respective features but are not entirely satisfying. In its broadest meaning, *jing* (a word that originally refers to bleached rice) is said to represent the life germ contained in the Dao, as stated for instance in *Daode jing* 21 (“Vague and indistinct! But in it there is an essence”). In the human being, it is a form of energy that mainly derives from food and nourishes the body, especially the five viscera (**wuzang*). This is the most usual sense of the term in the context of gymnastics (**daoyin*) and breathing techniques. In an even more restricted sense, *jing* designates the energy attached to sexuality (semen in men, menstrual blood in women). This meaning applies for instance to the expression “returning the essence to replenish the brain” (**huanjing bunao*). *Qi* is positioned between essence and spirit and therefore at the intersection point between matter and mind. Whereas *jing* is a carrier of life and has a nourishing function, *qi* is a dynamic force and has a transforming function. The term originally means “vapor.” *Shen* evolved from the original sense of “divinity” and outer and inner “spirits” into the designation of a single force, whose connotations include those of psychic essence and even of “soul.” To some extent, *shen* applies to anything that exists within the cosmos but has no material aspect, such as deities and human thought.

Precelestial and postcelestial. An important distinction found in *neidan* and elsewhere (e.g. in *Shao Yong and other Neo-Confucian thinkers) is between two aspects of *jing*, *qi*, and *shen*, respectively related to the states “prior to Heaven” and “posterior to Heaven” (**xiantian* and *houtian*). Essence exists both as “precelestial

essence” (*xiantian zhi jing* 先天之精), also known as Original Essence (*yuanjing* 元精), and as ordinary essence, called “postcelestial essence” (*houtian zhi jing* 後天之精). Whereas ordinary essence, which is derived from desire, is produced and kept in the kidneys, Original Essence, which issues from the appeasement of mind and the stabilization of breath, is associated with the Gate of the Vital Force (**mingmen*), located in the right kidney or between the two kidneys. Similarly, *qi* exists as “precelestial breath (or pneuma)” (*xiantian zhi qi* 先天之氣), also called Original Breath or Original Pneuma (**yuanqi*), and as “postcelestial breath (or pneuma)” (*houtian zhi qi* 後天之氣). These different aspects are represented by two different forms of the word *qi*: the graph for precelestial *qi* (炁) is explicated as breath or pneuma “without the fire (of desire).” At the level of the human being, the distinction between the two *qi* develops at birth: with its first cry, the newborn child enters the postcelestial state through the ingestion of outer air. Original Breath or Original Pneuma reaches fullness at puberty, then progressively decreases before disappearing at the age of forty-nine for women and sixty-four for men. Some alchemical schools even quantify the precelestial breath that a person has at birth but progressively loses during life. One of the alchemical processes consists of compensating for this loss with the help of postcelestial breath. *Neidan* also distinguishes between an outer breath (also called Martial Fire or *wuhuo* 武火), which is common breath, and an inner breath (also called Civil Fire or *wenhuo* 文火), which corresponds to thought and the Intention (**yi*). The distinction between “precelestial spirit” (*xiantian zhi shen* 先天之神), also called Original Spirit (*yuanshen* 元神), and “postcelestial spirit” (*houtian zhi shen* 後天之神) follows along similar lines. In *neidan*, the transition from the latter to the former occurs by means of precelestial breath, i.e., through the progressive development of a subtle and tenuous form of breathing (so-called “embryonic breathing”) that allows one to reach a luminous state. Thus, one progressively develops a “Yin spirit” (*yinshen* 陰神), a process that is accompanied by a feeling of luminosity in the region of the head. The *shen* rises to the upper Cinnabar Field (the **niwan*), from which it leaves the body through the sinciput in an experience known as “egress of the Spirit” (**chushen*). The mind realizes a state in which time, space, and material limits disappear, and is transmuted into “Yang spirit” (*yangshen* 陽神).

(Note: The asterisks were provided in the original text for cross-referencing.)

Note: According to some scholars, Wang Yangming is referring to three states of *liangzhi* (the innate knowing), even if he had yet to fully formulate his tenet of *liangzhi* by this time. See the “Letter in Reply to Lu Yuanjing” in Volume II, especially record 154. (Chan 2017: 74)

59: 喜怒哀樂本體自是中和的。纔自家著些意思，便過、不及，便是私。

The original condition of the emotions of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy is naturally one of centered harmony.¹ But just as soon as one attaches the slightest of one’s own purposes, they will be excessive or inadequate. This is self-centeredness.

¹ The *Doctrine of the Mean* 1 states, “That which is ordained by Tian is called our nature; to lead by our nature is called the Dao; to cultivate the Dao is called the teaching. One may not deviate from the Dao for so much as an instant; that from which one may deviate is not the Dao. Thus the *junzi* is alert and cautious about what he does not see, is fearful about what he does not hear. Nothing is more visible than the obscure, nothing is plainer than the subtle. Hence, the *junzi* is cautious of his solitude. Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centered; emerging by the proper rhythms they are called harmonious. *Centered*: this is the great root of the world. *Harmonious*: this is the ultimate Dao of the world. Reaching centered harmony, heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby.” (Eno 2016: 37)

It should be noted that other translators differ substantially in their renderings of the underlined sentences. De Bary renders the beginning of this passage as “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, is called [that state of] centrality. After these are aroused, if they preserve equilibrium (centrality) it is called [the state of] harmony” (de Bary 1999: 736). Thus, whereas Eno’s rendering suggests that *zhong* 中 in the first instance describes emotions in an inactive or quiescent state, de Bary’s suggests that *zhong* 中 is a noun describing a state or condition that precedes emotion but yet remains after they arise. Other translations of *zhong* 中 include equilibrium and centeredness. Adler’s rendering seems most apt: “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are expressed (*weifa* 未發) it is called centrality. When these feeling are expressed (*yifa* 已發) and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony” (Adler 2020: 33). That said, “centered harmony” as a rendering of *zhong he* 中和 suggests a state where equilibrium (centrality) is preserved as emotions arise, that is, of harmony as it is defined here. Wang Yangming is suggesting that our emotional life can emerge naturally, in which case emotions will be neither excessive nor insufficient. When the emotional life emerges naturally, one experiences “centered harmony,” or what might otherwise be understood as maintaining the state of centeredness while emotions and, more generally, experience manifests or arises. However, for the emotional life to emerge harmoniously, retaining centeredness therein, we must be free of self-centeredness, of egocentric purposes, or what might be called our own selfish concerns and inclinations and more generally a life in service to our egoistic or egocentric self, so that we are according with heavenly principle. Heavenly principle is the center, which is both prior to and amidst all manifestation.

60: 問「哭則不歌」。先生曰：「聖人心體自然如此。」

I asked about [the record in the *Analects* stating], “[If on a certain day the Master] cried, he did not on that day sing.”¹ The Master said, “The sage’s state of mind (*xinti* 心體) is naturally like this.”

¹ 哭則不歌 (“cried, he did not on that day sing”): *Analects* 7.10 states, “If on a certain day the Master cried, he did not on that day sing.” (Eno 2016: 31)

Note: In translating *xinti* 心體 as “state of mind” the emphasis is on Confucius’s natural way of being or condition. However, spelled out, Wang Yangming is referring to what he calls *xin zhi bentu* 心之本體 which, with respect to its interpretation as a state, can be

translated as “the mind’s original condition” or “the mind’s root state.” Should one restore the mind to its original condition or root state, when one should cry one does so and when one should sing one does so, as appropriate to emerging circumstances. Hence, Wang Yangming is speaking to the natural functioning of the essence of mind, of mind in its original condition. Since Confucius is a sage, naturally, his state of mind is mind in its natural state.

61: 克己須要掃除廓清、一毫不存方是。有一毫在，則眾惡相引而來。

Overcoming yourself requires sweeping out and eradicating [self-centered (egoic) desire], until the slightest bit no longer remains. Only then have you done so. If the slightest bit remains, then the myriad evils will attract each other and come.¹

¹ 克己 (“overcoming yourself”): *Analects* 12.1 states, “Yan Yuan asked about the meaning of *humaneness*. The Master said, ‘To completely overcome selfishness and keep to propriety is *humaneness*. If for a full day you can overcome selfishness and keep to propriety, everyone in the world will return to *humaneness*. Does *humaneness* come from oneself, or from others?’” (Muller 2021) *Ke ji* 克己 is variously rendered as “conquer yourself” (Eno), “subdue one’s self” (Legge), and “overcoming the self” (Lau). In his interlinear commentary, Zhu Xi interprets *ke* as *sheng* 勝 and *ji* as *siyu* 私欲, and thus as subduing or prevailing over egoic or self-centered desire (Zhu 2005: 141). A. C. Muller’s rendering seems close to Zhu Xi’s reading. Regardless, the absolute prerequisite to becoming pure in heavenly principle and hence coming to rest in the perfect goodness that is one’s very nature is winding down the egoic self.

62: 問《律呂新書》。先生曰：「學者當務為急。算得此數熟，亦恐未有用，必須心中先具禮樂之本方可。且如其書說『多用管以候氣』，然至冬至那一刻時，管灰之飛，或有先後，須臾之間，焉知那管正值冬至之刻？須自心中先曉得冬至之刻始得。此便有不通處。學者須先從禮樂本原上用功。」

I asked about the *New Book on Pitch Pipes*.¹ The Master said, “Scholars should prioritize what needs to be done as the most pressing matter. [Otherwise,] even if you have proficiently calculated the system of musical scales and tuning it may still be of no use. In our mind we must first possess the fundamentals of ritual and music, and then we will be okay. For example, the book says, ‘always use pitch pipes to await the *qi* 氣.’² However, when that time for the winter solstice arrives, and the ashes fly out, some do so earlier or later, in an instant, so how do we know which pipe corresponded precisely with the moment winter solstice arrived? It is necessary for us first to know in our own minds that moment when the winter solstice arrives and then we can. There is something [in the book] that does not make sense here. Students must first direct their efforts to the fundamentals of ritual and music.”

¹ According to Chinaknowledge.de:

Lülü xinshu 律呂新書 “New book on the pitch pipes” is a Book on Music compiled by the Song Period 宋 (960-1279) scholar Cai Yuanding 蔡元定 (1135-1198), courtesy

name Jitong 季通, who hailed from Jianyang 建陽 (modern Jianyang, Fujian). The Neo-Confucian master Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) called his method of tuning very exact.

The 2-juan long book is divided into two parts with 23 chapters. The first part (*Lülü benyuan* 律呂本原) describes the basics of musical tuning, while the second (*Lülü zhengbian* 律呂證辨) discusses particular problems of the production of pitch pipes (*lülü* 律呂).

Cai Yuanding describes the method of the Han Period 漢 (206 BCE-220 CE) scholar Jing Fang 京房 (77-37 BCE) to derive the pitch pipes of a whole gamut from the basic Yellow Bell Pipe (*huangzhong* 黃鐘) with determined measures by alternatively subtracting and adding a third of the dimension of a pipe to produce the next in the series. Cai adds to this method the possibility to deviate from this method and to create “changed pipe tones” (*bianlü* 變律) with tone steps lesser than a full tone, but only for six of the twelve pipes, so that his gamut consists of eighteen tones.

He stressed that it was important to check that the diameter of the pipes was always equal, which is not very easy in a natural product like bamboo tubes. For the calculation of the length of the pipes he made use of an old method of the “progressing nine” (*jiujin zhi* 九進制), meaning that it was necessary to deduct one tenth of each digit to exactly meet the correct tone. He therefore also commented on the treatise on the pitch pipes, *Lu shu* 律書, in the history *Shi ji* 史記. His chapter on the musical modes is particularly interesting to understand the concept of harmony and musical mode during the Song Period 宋 (960-1279). (Chinaknowledge.de, accessed November 3, 2023. <http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Science/lvlixinshu.html>)

² The *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (History of the later Han Dynasty) states, “The *qi* of Heaven manifests through light and shadow, while the *qi* of Earth manifests through vibrations—that is, pitch [*lü*].... At the winter solstice the *yang qi* begins to move, the musical pitches are high and clear, the shadows are long, the *huangzhong* pitch is penetrating, and the dusts [*hui*] of the earth begin to rise.... The method for awaiting the [seasonal] *qi* requires building a room with three concentric walls, doors closed, crevices thoroughly sealed, and heavy felt blankets laid all around. Within the room are wooden stands with a pipe for each pitch, arranged in accordance with the points on the compass, outsides raised and insides low [sitting in the earth]. Reed ashes [*hui*] are poured to fill the inner ends of the pipes, which are observed for their correspondence with the calendar. When the *qi* [of a particular season] arrives the ashes fly out of the corresponding tube. If moved by the *qi*, the ashes disperse, but if moved by wind or human hand they collect. In the palace twelve pipes of jade were used and the waiting only carried out for the two solstices. At the Spirit Terrace [royal observatory] sixty pipes of bamboo were watched according to the dates of the calendar.” (Wang and Schoenberger 2019: 446–447)

Note: Depending on context, *qi* 氣 has been variously translated as “matter-energy,” “ether,” “psychophysical stuff,” “vital energy,” or “material force.”

63: 曰仁云：「心猶鏡也。聖人心如明鏡，常人心如昏鏡。近世格物之說，如以鏡照物，照上用功，不知鏡尚昏在，何能照？先生之格物，如磨鏡而使之明，磨上用功，明了後亦未嘗廢照。」

[Xu] Yueren said, “The mind is like a mirror. The sage’s mind is like a shiny mirror and the mind of the ordinary person is like a dull mirror. When drawing an analogy with the theory of investigating things (*ge wu* 格物) in recent times to using a mirror to reflect things, effort is directed towards the reflection without realizing that the mirror is still dull.¹ So how can it [accurately] reflect? The Master’s [interpretation of] *ge wu* 格物 (“rectifying matters”) is analogous to polishing the mirror to make it shine. Effort is directed towards the polishing, and after it shines it never fails to reflect [accurately].”²

¹ 近世格物之說 (“the theory of investigating things in recent times”): Wang Yangming is referring to Zhu Xi’s interpretation of *ge wu*. In his *Daxue zhang ju* 大學章句 (Commentary on the *Great Learning* in chapters and sentences), Zhu Xi explains *zhi zhi zai ge wu* 致知在格物 as follows,

致，推極也；知，猶識也。推極吾之知識，欲其所知無不盡也。格，至也；物，猶事。窮至事物之理，欲其極處無不到也。

Zhi 致 means to extend to the utmost. *Zhi* 知 is like *shi* 識 (“knowledge”). Extend my knowledge to the utmost, desiring that nothing that this knowledge comprehends is not exhaustive. *Ge* 格 (“to investigate”) means to reach. *Wu* 物 (“things”) is like affairs. Exhaustively arriving at the principles of affairs and things, desiring that no utmost place has not been reached.

64: 問道之精粗。先生曰：「道無精粗，人之所見有精粗。如這一間房，人初進來，只見一個大規模如此；處久，便柱壁之類，一一看得明白；再久，如柱上有些文藻，細細都看出來。然只是一間房。」

I asked what is fine or coarse about the Way. The Master said, “The Way has no [distinction of] fineness or coarseness. What people discern is fine or coarse. Take, for example, one room. When people first enter, they only notice that the overall size is such and such. After staying for some time, one by one, things like columns and walls will be clearly distinguished. After staying for even longer, things like some decorative motifs on the columns can all be distinguished in detail. Nevertheless, it is just one room.”

Note: Wang Yangming states that the Way cannot be described as fine or coarse. Rather, he suggests that what one sees of the Way is analogous to walking into a room. What one notices about the room varies in terms of its completeness. However, over time, discernment improves, and one can see the room more clearly. Likewise with the Way, one’s personal understanding of it, especially with the correct mental discipline, will deepen, becoming finer, ever more real. This is to awaken to the Way, to what is objectively the case, as it was always the same Way.

65: 先生曰：「諸公近見時少疑問，何也？人不用功，莫不自以為已知為學，只循而行之是矣。殊不知私欲日生，如地上塵，一日不掃，便又有一層。著實用功，便見道無終窮，愈探愈深，必使精白無一毫不徹方可。」

The Master said, “Lately, gentlemen, when we meet up you have few questions. Why is that? No one who fails to put in the effort does not believe that he already understands how to pursue learning, that just following precedent in what one does will do. They scarcely realize that selfish desires grow every day. Like the dust on a floor, if for one day you fail to sweep, then yet another layer will accumulate. If you truly put in the effort, you will see that the Way is limitless, and that the more you explore it the more profound it becomes. It must be made fine and pure, with nothing left incomplete. Only then will your efforts be acceptable.”

Note: The spirit of inquiry and insistence that you should never remain satisfied with yourself and always seek moral improvement, so as to become purified of egoic desire, and pure in the heavenly principle, is notable in Wang Yangming’s philosophy.

66: 問：「知至然後可以言誠意。今天理人欲知之未盡，如何用得克己工夫？」先生曰：「人若真實切己用功不已，則於此心天理之精微，日見一日；私欲之細微，亦日見一日。若不用克己工夫，終日只是說話而已，天理終不自見，私欲亦終不自見。如人走路一般，走得一段，方認得一段；走到歧路處，有疑便問，問了又走，方漸能到得欲到之處。今人於已知之天理不肯存、已知之人欲不肯去，且只管愁不能盡知、只管閒講，何益之有？且待克得自己無私可克，方愁不能盡知亦未遲在。」

I asked, “Only after knowing has been fully extended can one speak of perfecting the genuineness of one’s intentions.¹ If knowledge of heavenly principle and human desire remains incomplete, how can we apply ourselves to the task of conquering the self?”

The Master said, “If a person truly and intimately applies himself to this practice nonstop, what is fine and subtle about this mind’s heavenly principle will become more evident with each passing day, and the most minutely subtle of egoic (self-centered) desires will also become clearer day by day. If you fail to apply yourself to the task of conquering yourself, you will be doing nothing more than merely talk all day. In the end, heavenly principle will not reveal itself and, as well, self-centered desire will never reveal itself. It’s like a person walking a path. Only after he has walked a distance does he recognize that distance. When he comes to a crossroads and is uncertain [of the way] he asks for directions, and after he asks, he continues walking. Only then is he able eventually to arrive at his desired destination. Nowadays, people are unwilling to sustain heavenly principle they already recognize, and unwilling to dispel self-centered desire they already recognize. Instead, they only concern themselves with worrying over being unable to know everything, only bothering to engage in idle talk. What benefit is there to that? For the time being, wait until you have conquered yourself to the point where there is no more self to conquer, and only worry that you are unable to know everything after that. It won’t be too late.”

¹ Citing the *Great Learning*, which states, “Only after affairs have been aligned may one’s understanding be fully extended. Only after one’s understanding is fully extended may one’s intentions be perfectly genuine. Only after one’s intentions are perfectly genuine may one’s mind be balanced. Only after one’s mind is balanced may one’s person be refined.

Only after one's person is refined may one's household be aligned. Only after one's household is aligned may one's state be ordered. Only after one's state is ordered may the world be set at peace.” (Eno 2016: 12)

67: 問：「道一而已。古人論道，往往不同，求之亦有要乎？」先生曰：「道無方體，不可執著。卻拘滯於文義上求道，遠矣。如今人只說天，其實何嘗見天？謂日月風雷即天，不可；謂人物草木不是天，亦不可。道即是天。若識得時，何莫而非道？人但各以其一隅之見認定，以為道止如此，所以不同。若解向裏尋求，見得自己心體，即無時無處不是此道。亙古亙今，無終無始，更有甚同異？心即道，道即天，知心則知道、知天。」又曰：「諸君要實見此道，須從自己心上體認，不假外求始得。」

I asked, “There is only one Way and no other.¹ When the ancients expounded on the Way, they always held different opinions. Is there a key to seeking it?”

The Master said, “The Way has no location or form. It cannot be rigidly held to a certain idea. Indeed, seeking the Way by miring oneself in the meaning of words is distant from it. For instance, people today only talk about Heaven, but when have they really seen Heaven? One cannot say that the sun, moon, wind, and thunder are Heaven. Nor can one claim that people, things, grass, and trees are not Heaven. The Way is Heaven. If there is a point at which you recognize it, will there be anything that is not the Way? People just each define it from their limited perspectives, believing that the Way is only like this. This is why their opinions differ. If you understand looking for and seeking it introspectively, and discern the essence of your own mind, then there will be no time or place that are not this Way. Having existed from time immemorial, with no beginning or end, what similarities or differences could there yet be? The mind is the Way, and the Way is Heaven. Thus, if you know mind you will know the Way and know Heaven.”

He also said, “Gentlemen, if you wish truly to witness this Way, you must do so by personally realizing it in your own mind, without relying on external seeking. Only then will you get it.”

¹ 夫道一而已 (“There is only one Way and no other”): In *Mengzi* 3A.1, Mengzi states, “There is only one Dao and no other.” (Eno 2016: 63)

Note: In this powerful passage Wang Yangming points to ultimate reality and says that the path to ultimate reality is mind itself, as it is the inherent reality of mind. He explains that the Way transcends location, is formless, and not amenable to discovery through conceptualization, a hermeneutical enterprise, or a perspective. That Heaven is the cosmos but not the cosmos speaks to why these approaches fail. A series of identities and paradoxes follow, but these can only be discerned from within, through an interior turn, a transcendent shift to the formless. Here, the “interior” does not refer to fluctuating psychophysical states but rather to that which transcends location and form. Heaven is the Way, and the Way is the essence of mind, mind as it is originally, in its root state. That they have existed from time immemorial, without a beginning or end, and yet that no time or place are not them means that nothing exists outside these ultimate realities even as all such determinations cannot determine mind, the Way, and Heaven. They are transcendent and hence free. In sum, Wang Yangming is speaking to the independent reality and self-evident truth of a nonlocal, timeless, and formless awareness. That is the essence of mind, mind in its original, natural, and root state, the silent and unmoving, the shining mirror. This is Heaven, and this is the Way, where everything happens.

68: 問：「名物度數亦須先講求否？」先生曰：「人只要成就自家心體，則用在其中。如養得心體果有未發之中，自然有發而中節之和，自然無施不可。苟無是心，雖預先講得世上許多名物度數，與己原不相干，只是裝綴，臨時自行不去；亦不是將名物度數全然不理，只要知所先後，則近道。」又曰：「人要隨才成就。才是其所能為。如夔之樂、稷之種，是他資性合下便如此。成就之者，亦只是要他心體純乎天理。其運用處，皆從天理上發來，然後謂之才。到得純乎天理處，亦能『不器』，使夔、稷易藝而為，當亦能之。」又曰：「如『素富貴行乎富貴，素患難行乎患難』，皆是『不器』。此惟養得心體正者能之。」

I asked, “Names, objects, measurements, and numbers—should these be investigated in advance, or not?”

The Master said, “So long as a person succeeds in realizing the essence of his own mind, then its functioning will exist amidst it. If you cultivate this essence of mind and truly possess the centeredness prior to arising then naturally you will possess the harmony of arising [all] in due measure and degree, and naturally there is nothing that cannot be implemented.¹ If you do not possess this consciousness, even if you discuss beforehand the many names, objects, measurements, and numbers in this world, they will have originally had nothing to do with yourself, just ornamentation, and when the time comes, naturally, they can’t be carried out. This is not to entirely disregard names, things, measurements, and numbers, just that so long as one knows what comes first and what comes after one is near to the Way.”

He further added, “One should attain what one can based on one’s abilities. Abilities are what one is capable of doing. For example, Kui’s abilities in music and Ji’s abilities in agriculture were the result of their natural endowments being originally as such. Attaining it just means their minds must be pure in heavenly principle, and then their locus of functioning is all manifested from heavenly principle. After that it can be called ability. When one has reached the realm of purity in heavenly principle, one is able not to be a vessel. Were Kui and Ji to exchange their skills and perform them they should also be able to do so.”

He further stated, “Like [the *junzi* in the *Doctrine of the Mean*], ‘If he is naturally in a position of wealth and high status, he acts according to the norms of wealth and high status. [If he is naturally in a position of poverty and low status, he acts according to the norms of poverty and low status. If he is naturally placed among the nomad tribes, he acts according to the norms of the nomad tribes.] If he is naturally placed amidst confusion and trouble, he acts as is appropriate for times of confusion and trouble.’² In all these cases he is ‘not a vessel.’³ Only those who nurture the mind to its correctness are able to do this.”

¹ The *Doctrine of the Mean* 1 states, “That which is ordained by Tian is called our nature; to lead by our nature is called the Dao; to cultivate the Dao is called the teaching. One may not deviate from the Dao for so much as an instant; that from which one may deviate is not the Dao. Thus the *junzi* is alert and cautious about what he does not see, is fearful about what he does not hear. Nothing is more visible than the obscure, nothing is plainer than the subtle. Hence, the *junzi* is cautious of his solitude. Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centered; emerging by the proper rhythms they are called harmonious. Centered: this is the great root of the world. Harmonious: this is the ultimate Dao of the world. Reaching centered harmony, heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby.” (Eno 2016: 37)

It should be noted that other translators differ substantially in their renderings of the underlined sentences. De Bary renders the beginning of this passage as “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, is called [that state of] centrality. After these are aroused, if they preserve equilibrium (centrality) it is called [the state of] harmony” (de Bary 1999: 736). Thus, whereas Eno’s rendering suggests that *zhong* 中 in the first instance describes emotions in an inactive or quiescent state, de Bary’s suggests that *zhong* 中 is a noun describing a state or condition that precedes emotion. Other translations of *zhong* 中 include equilibrium and centeredness. Adler’s rendering seems most apt: “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are expressed (*weifa* 未發) it is called centrality. When these feeling are expressed (*yifa* 已發) and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony” (Adler 2020: 33). That said, “centered harmony” as a rendering of 中和 *zhong he* suggests a state where equilibrium (centrality) is preserved as emotions arise, that is, of harmony as it is defined here.

² The *Doctrine of the Mean* 14 states in part:

The *junzi* simply acts according to his position; he does not long for what is outside of it. If he is naturally in a position of wealth and high status, he acts according to the norms of wealth and high status. If he is naturally in a position of poverty and low status, he acts according to the norms of poverty and low status. If he is naturally placed among the nomad tribes, he acts according to the norms of the nomad tribes. If he is naturally placed amidst confusion and trouble, he acts as is appropriate for times of confusion and trouble.

There is no situation in which the *junzi* is not fully self-possessed. When in high position, do not be arrogant towards those below. When in low position, do not prevail upon those above. Make yourself upright and do not seek what you wish in others, then you will encounter no resentments. Above, do not bear resentment towards Tian; below do not blame men. Hence the *junzi* dwells in what is simple, awaiting his destiny. The small man engages in precipitous practices in search of a lucky fortune. (Eno 2016: 41)

³ 不器 (“not a vessel”): *Analects* 2.12 states, “The Master said: ‘The *junzi* is not a vessel.’” (Eno 2015: 6) Eno notes that “vessel” “connotes limited capacity, fit for only designated uses.” By extension, this means that the *junzi* is not narrowly specialized.

69: 「與其為數頃無源之塘水，不若為數尺有源之井水，生意不窮。」時先生在塘邊坐，傍有井，故以之喻學云。

“Rather than becoming like the stagnant waters of a pond of several *qing* 頃, it is better to become like the water of a well several *chi* 尺 deep with a source.¹ The vitality is inexhaustible.” At the time, Master Yangming was seated by a pond, with a well nearby, which is why he used them as metaphors for learning.

¹ One *qing* 頃 equals one hundred *mu* 畝, or about 6.7 hectares. A *chi* 尺 was a unit of length in ancient times. It is roughly equivalent to the forearm (about thirty centimeters), but the precise length varied over time. Thus, we have the contrast between a large, stagnant

pond and small well tapped into groundwater. Wang Yangming frequently used water as a metaphor for mental attributes. The source is the essence of mind.

70: 問：「世道日降。太古時氣象，如何復見得？」先生曰：「一日便是一元。人平旦時起坐，未與物接，此心清明景象，便如在伏羲時遊一般。」

I asked, “The ways of the world are deteriorating every day. How can we witness anew the atmosphere of the age of remote antiquity?”

The Master said, “One day is equivalent to one *yuan*.¹ Early in the morning, when one arises and takes a seat, and has yet to come into contact with things, this mind’s pure and clear scene is just like traveling through the age of Emperor Fu Xi.”²

¹ Here, one *yuan* is a unit of time equivalent to 129,600 years.

² Ulrich Theobald writes, “Fu Xi 伏羲, also written 伏犧 or 伏戲, also called Mi Xi 宓羲 (also written 宓犧), or Pao Xi 包犧, (also written 包羲, 炮犧, or 庖犧), is one of the Three Augusts 三皇 or Five Emperors 五帝 of Chinese mythology. He is therefore known as Xi Huang 犧皇 or Huang Xi 皇羲 ‘August Shepherd.’ His cognomen is Tai Hao 太皞 (also written 太昊) ‘Great Brightness’, his tribal name Huang Xiong 黃熊氏.” (ChinaKnowledge.de, accessed December 6, 2022)

Note: Wang Yangming’s most complete statement on the correlation between mental states (of consciousness) and historical devolution can be found in record 311:

[Master Yangming said,] “In a single day, people traverse the history of the world from ancient times to present, just that they are unaware of it. When the nighttime atmosphere (*qi* 氣) is pure and clear and one does not see or hear, one does not think or act, and one is detached and calm, this is the world of Emperor [Fu] Xi. Early in the morning, when one’s spirits are fresh and psychophysical energy (*qi* 氣) is clear, and one feels harmonious and serene, that is the world of [the emperors] Yao and Shun. Before noon, when people observe ritual etiquette and ceremony in their interactions and the atmosphere is orderly, that is the world of the three dynasties. After noon, when one’s spirit and *qi* gradually fade, and dealings are complicated and troubling, that is the worlds of the Spring and Autumn [Period] and Warring States [Period]. As it gradually darkens with nightfall and the myriad things come to rest, and the scene becomes still and desolate, this is the world where people vanish and things perish. If a learner can trust in the innate knowing (*liangzhi* 良知), remaining undisturbed by [habitual] *qi* 氣, then he can always be a person from time immemorial (lit.: a person who lived before Fuxi).” (Israel 2023: 113)

71: 問：「心要逐物，如何則可？」先生曰：「人君端拱清穆，六卿分職，天下乃治。心統五官，亦要如此。今眼要視時，心便逐在色上；耳要聽時，心便逐在聲上。如人君要選官時，便自去坐在吏部；要調軍時，便自去坐在兵部。如此，豈惟失卻君體，六卿亦皆不得其職。」

I asked, “If my mind has the inclination to chase after things, what can I do that is acceptable?”

The Master said, “When the ruler sits upright hands folded, serene and solemn, and the six ministers attend to their respective duties, only then will the world be properly governed. The mind should also govern the five sensory organs in this manner. Now, however, when the eyes are inclined to look, the mind goes in pursuit of attractive colors. When the ears are inclined to listen, the mind goes in pursuit of pleasant sounds. This would be like the ruler, when he needs to select officials, going in person and taking a seat in the Ministry of Personnel or, when he needs to transfer an army, going in person to take a seat in the Ministry of War. In this way, not only is the status proper to a ruler lost, but the six ministers will all be incapable of fulfilling their functions as well.”

Note: In records 119 and 123, Wang Yangming states that the mind is the master of the body (or person), but only insofar as the mind is in its natural state. As the mind is serene and solemn, properly composed, stable through tranquility and activity, in equilibrium, life proceeds harmoniously, as it should, and the heavenly principle flows and circulates. Otherwise, the world will be in control, and the senses lost in desire, in pursuit of exteriorized objects. But this requires setting one’s aim and remaining steadfast.

72: 善念發而知之，而充之，惡念發而知之，而遏之。知與充與遏者，志也，天聰明也。聖人只有此，學者當存此。]

When a good intention arises, identify it and enlarge it. When a bad intention arises, identify it and check it.¹ Identifying, enlarging, and checking are the acts of will, they are the intelligence of Heaven.² The sage has only this, and the learner should nurture this.

¹ Wing-tsit Chan renders *shan nian* 善念 and *e nian* 惡念 as “good thought” and “evil thought.” Thought or thinking are common renderings of *nian*. However, in this case, Wang Yangming appears to have in mind thought this is becoming morally committed or directed, and hence which inclines or intends towards action. He subsequently asks that the emerging inclination or intention be recognized or identified (*zhi* 知), pointing to the cognitive function of knowing. As for *zhi* 志, here rendered as “will,” as does Chan, elsewhere, with *li zhi* 立志, it is rendered as “aim,” with its sense as purpose and commitment. In this passage, with both *zhi* 知 and *zhi* 志, Wang Yangming is looking ahead to attributes he will ascribe to the “innate knowing,” when he begins to elaborate upon this tenet from 1520. The unity of knowing and acting are also implicit in this passage.

² Satō Issai says that the intelligence of Heaven (*tian* 天: “Heaven”) is the innate knowing (*liangzhi* 良知) (Li 2021: 115). Hence, in his translation Wing-tsit Chan renders this as “it is intelligence (that is, innate knowledge of the good) endowed by Heaven.” (Chan 1963: 49) However, it should be noted that the compilation and printing of the first volume predated Wang Yangming’s elaboration of his theory of the innate knowing. Nevertheless, this passage speaks to a mental discipline central to Wang Yangming’s conception of Ruist moral self-cultivation, another version of a tenet central to his pedagogy during the time reflected by this volume: *cun tianli qu renyu* 存天理去人欲 (“sustain heavenly principle and dispel human desire”). To sustain means to keep in mind, or to preserve in one’s

thoughts. Thus, it is a form of recollection and should be regarded as one of Wang Yangming's contemplative techniques.

73: 澄曰：「好色、好利、好名等心，固是私欲。如閒思雜慮，如何亦謂之私欲？」先生曰：「畢竟從好色、好利、好名等根上起，自尋其根便見。如汝心中決知是無有做劫盜的思慮，何也？以汝元無是心也。汝若於貨、色、名、利等心，一切皆如不做劫盜之心一般，都消滅了，光光只是心之本體，看有甚閒思慮？此便是『寂然不動』，便是『未發之中』，便是『廓然大公』。自然『感而遂通』，自然『發而中節』，自然『物來順應』。」

[Lu] Cheng said, “Such propensities as a love of women, material gain, and recognition are certainly selfish desires. But as for idle and scattered thoughts and worries, why are these also called selfish desires?”

The Master said, “After all, these are caused by the roots of a love of women, material gain, recognition, and so on. Search for their roots yourself and you will see. For example, if in your heart you know for certain that you have never considered being a thief, why is that? Because you have never had this propensity. If every single one of those propensities for wealth, women, recognition, and material gain are all extinguished such that they are all like having no propensity to be a thief, there only remains bare mind in its original condition. See what idled and scattered thoughts and worries there are. This indeed is the ‘silent and unmoving,’ ‘the centeredness prior to arising,’ and the ‘open, great impartiality,’ which, naturally, ‘when stimulated it penetrates [connects] all circumstances under Heaven,’ naturally, ‘[when emotions] arise each and all attain due measure and degree,’ and naturally, ‘harmoniously responds to things as they come.’”¹⁻³

¹ 寂然不動/感而遂通 (“silent and unmoving”/“when stimulated it penetrates [connects] all circumstances under Heaven”): The *Classic of Changes*, “Treatise on the Appended Remarks,” part A, section 10, states, “The *Yi* is without thought and without action; silent and unmoving, when stimulated it penetrates [connects] all circumstances under Heaven” (Adler 2020: 279). In his *The Classic of Changes*, “Commentary on the Appended Phrases,” part one, section 10, Richard John Lynn translates this as, “The *Changes* is without consciousness and is without deliberate action. Being utterly still it does not initiate movement, but when stimulated it is commensurate with all the causes for everything that happens in the world” (63). “Acted on” has been translated as “stimulated” and “aroused.”

² 未發之中/發而中節 (“the centeredness prior to arising”/“[when emotions] arise each and all attain due measure and degree”): The *Doctrine of the Mean* 1 states, “That which is ordained by Tian is called our nature; to lead by our nature is called the Dao; to cultivate the Dao is called the teaching. One may not deviate from the Dao for so much as an instant; that from which one may deviate is not the Dao. Thus the *junzi* is alert and cautious about what he does not see, is fearful about what he does not hear. Nothing is more visible than the obscure, nothing is plainer than the subtle. Hence, the *junzi* is cautious of his solitude. Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centered; emerging by the proper rhythms they are called harmonious. *Centered*: this is the great root of the world. *Harmonious*: this is the ultimate Dao of the world. Reaching centered harmony, heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby” (Eno 2016: 37). It should be noted that other translators differ substantially in their renderings. De Bary renders the beginning of this passage as “Before the feelings of

pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, is called [that state of] centrality. After these are aroused, if they preserve equilibrium (centrality) it is called [the state of] harmony” (de Bary 1999: 736). Thus, whereas Eno’s rendering suggests that *zhong* 中 in the first instance describes emotions in an inactive or quiescent state, de Bary’s suggests that *zhong* 中 is a noun describing a state or condition that precedes emotion. Other translations of *zhong* 中 include equilibrium and centeredness. Adler’s rendering seems most apt: “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are expressed (*weifa* 未發) it is called centrality. When these feeling are expressed (*yifa* 已發) and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony.” (Adler 2020: 33)

³廓然大公/物來順應 (“open, great impartiality”/“harmoniously responds to things as they come”): Citing the Song dynasty Ruist Cheng Hao’s “Reply to Zhang Zai’s Letter on the Stabilizing of Human Nature,” which states, “The constant principle of Heaven-and-Earth is that their mind is in all things, yet of themselves they have no mind; and the constant principle of the sage is that his feelings are in accord with all creation, yet of himself he has no feelings. Therefore, for the training of the gentleman there is nothing better than to become broad and impartial and to respond spontaneously to all things as they come” (de Bary 1999: 693).

Note: In this record, Wang Yangming speaks to the pinnacle of human development, the attainment of which is dependent on uprooting the roots of desire and hence becoming desireless in the sense defined in this passage. Absent desire and absent ego, the self becomes still, unmoving, centered, open, and impartial, and hence capable of responding to the flow of experience in clear awareness, harmoniously, and according to the circumstances themselves. One is according with heavenly principle. This passage presumes that the individual is capable of waking to a higher reality that is otherwise concealed and obscured by the distortions of the desirous human mind.

74: 問志至氣次。先生曰：「『志之所至，氣亦至焉』之謂，非極至、次貳之謂。『持其志』，則養氣在其中；『無暴其氣』，則亦持其志矣。孟子救告子之偏，故如此夾持說。」

I asked about the will leading and *qi* 氣 following.¹ The Master said, “This is saying that ‘wherever the will leads the *qi* 氣 follows.’ It is not saying that [the will] is paramount and [*qi*] is secondary to it. If you ‘persist in your will,’ then *qi* will be cultivated along with it. If you ‘do not dissipate your *qi*’ then you will also ‘persist in your will.’ Mengzi was rectifying Gaozi’s bias, and he therefore considered both sides and explained it like this.”

¹ *Mengzi* 2A.2 states in part,

Gongsun Chou said, “May I inquire about the formulas that you and Gaozi used to attain an unmoving heart?”

Mencius replied, “Gaozi’s rule was, ‘If you cannot find sanction for a course of action in the teachings, do not search for it in your heart. If you cannot find sanction for a course of action in your heart, do not search for it in your *qi*.’ I agree to the formula,

‘If you do not find it in the heart, do not search for it in the *qi*.’ But it is unacceptable to say, ‘If you do not find it in the teachings, do not search for it in your heart.’

The will is the leader of the *qi*, and *qi* is something that fills the body. Wherever the will leads the *qi* follows. Thus there is a saying, ‘Grasp your will and do not dissipate your *qi*.’”

Gongsun Chou said, “On the one hand you have said, ‘Wherever the will leads the *qi* will follow.’ But you have also said, ‘Grasp your will and do not dissipate your *qi*.’ Is there not an inconsistency?”

Mencius answered, “When the will is unified, it moves the *qi*. But when the *qi* is unified, it can move the will. For example, when you see a man stumble or rush about, this is the action of his *qi*. In such cases, it has turned back upon the heart and moved it.”

Gongsun Chou said, “May I presume to inquire how you, Sir, excel?”

“I can interpret what speech means,” replied Mencius, “and I nurture well my flood-like *qi*.”

Gongsun Chou asked, “What do you mean by ‘flood-like *qi*’?”

“It is hard to describe,” said Mencius.

“This is a *qi* that is as vast and firm as can be. If one nurtures it by means of straightforward action and never impairs it, then it will fill all between heaven and earth. It is a *qi* that is a companion to righteousness and the Dao. Without these, it will starve away. It is generated through the long accumulation of acts of right. It is not something that can be seized through a single righteous act. If in your actions there is any sense of inadequacy in your heart, it will starve away.” (Eno 2016: 45)

75: 問：「先儒曰：『聖人之道，必降而自卑。賢人之言，則引而自高。』如何？」先生曰：「不然。如此卻乃偽也。聖人如天，無往而非天，三光之上，天也，九地之下亦天也，天何嘗有降而自卑？此所謂『大而化之』也。賢人如山嶽，守其高而已。然百仞者不能引而為千仞，千仞者不能引而為萬仞。是賢人未嘗引而自高也，引而自高則偽矣。」

I asked, “A former scholar said, ‘The path of the sage is necessarily to humble and lower himself. The words of a worthy are for calling attention to and elevating himself.’¹ What do you think?”

The Master said, “That is not correct. If this were the case then it would be a sham. The sage is like Heaven. There is no place one can go that is not Heaven. Above the sun, moon, and stars lies Heaven. Below the nine levels of existence also lies Heaven. When has Heaven ever humbled and lowered itself? This is what is meant by ‘a great man who transforms others [is called a sage].’² The worthy is like a lofty mountain. He merely maintains his high elevation. However, a mountain measuring one hundred *ren* 仞 in height cannot extend itself and become one thousand *ren*, and a mountain measuring one thousand *ren* in height cannot extend itself and become ten thousand *ren*.³ The worthy has never engaged in calling attention to and elevating himself. To call attention to and elevate oneself is a sham.”

¹ Paraphrasing a statement made by the Song dynasty Ruist Cheng Yi in the *Er cheng ji* 二程集.

² *Mencius* 7B.25 states, “Haosheng Buhai asked, ‘What kind of a man is Yuezhengzi?’ Mencius said, ‘He is a good man, a faithful man.’ ‘What do you mean by [good] and [faithful?].’ ‘A man worth having is called good. A man who possesses goodness in himself is called faithful. One who is filled with goodness is called excellent. A man whose full goodness radiates outward is called great. A great man who transforms others is called a sage. One who transforms others like a sage without their awareness is called spirit-like. Yuezhengzi’s quality lies within the first two, but below the other four.’” (Eno 2016: 136–137)

³ One *ren* 仞 is approximately three meters.

76: 問：「伊川謂不當於喜怒哀樂未發之前求中，延平卻教學者看未發之前氣象，何如？」先生曰：「皆是也。伊川恐人於未發前討個中，把中做一物看，如吾向所謂認氣定時做中，故令只於涵養省察上用功；延平恐人未便有下手處，故令人時時刻刻求未發前氣象，使之正目而視惟此，傾耳而聽惟此，即是『戒慎不睹，恐懼不聞』的工夫。皆古人不得已誘人之言也。」

I asked, “Yichuan said that one should not seek the centeredness before the arising of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy.¹⁻² Yanping, on the other hand, taught students to observe the condition of what comes before when emotions have yet to arise.³ How is this?”

The Master said, “Both are correct. Yichuan worried that people would seek a center in what comes before when emotions have yet to arise, treating centeredness as a thing. This is like what I’ve mentioned in the past about regarding the moment when *qi* 氣 is stabilized as centeredness, on account of which I told people only to apply themselves to the practice of ethical self-cultivation and self-examination. Yanping worried that people did not yet have a place to begin; consequently, he told people constantly to seek the condition of what comes before when emotions have yet to arise, so that when they fix their gazes and look there is only this, and when they lend their ears and listen there is only this. This is the practice of being ‘alert and vigilant about what one does not see, apprehensive about what one does not hear.’¹ Both are teachings the ancients brought up out of necessity so as to guide people.”

¹ The *Doctrine of the Mean* 1 states, “That which is ordained by Tian is called our nature; to lead by our nature is called the Dao; to cultivate the Dao is called the teaching. One may not deviate from the Dao for so much as an instant; that from which one may deviate is not the Dao. Thus the *junzi* is alert and cautious about what he does not see, is fearful about what he does not hear. Nothing is more visible than the obscure, nothing is plainer than the subtle. Hence, the *junzi* is cautious of his solitude. Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centered; emerging by the proper rhythms they are called harmonious. *Centered*: this is the great root of the world. *Harmonious*: this is the ultimate Dao of the world. Reaching centered harmony, heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby.” (Eno 2016: 37) It should be noted that other translators differ substantially in their renderings. De Bary renders the beginning of this passage as “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, is called [that state of] centrality. After these are aroused, if they preserve equilibrium (centrality) it is called [the state of] harmony.” (de Bary 1999: 736) Thus, whereas Eno’s

rendering suggests that *zhong* 中 in the first instance describes emotions in an inactive or quiescent state, de Bary's suggests that *zhong* 中 is a noun describing a state or condition that precedes emotion. Other translations of *zhong* 中 include equilibrium and centeredness. Adler's rendering seems most apt: "Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are expressed (*weifa* 未發) it is called centrality. When these feeling are expressed (*yifa* 已發) and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony." (Adler 2020: 33)

² Yichuan (1032–1085) is an art (style) name for Cheng Yi. He was an important Song dynasty Neo-Confucian philosopher. The statement is based on a conversation recorded in *juan* 18 of the *Henan Cheng shi yi shu* 河南程氏遺書 (Posthumous works of the Chengs of Henan), which is available at the Chinese Text Project. See <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=704165>.

³ [Master] Yanping (*Yanping xiansheng* 延平先生) was a popular sobriquet scholars used to refer to Li Tong 李侗 (1093–1163), a Ruist who lived through the transition from the Northern Song to the Southern Song dynasty.

77: 澄問：「喜怒哀樂之中和，其全體常人固不能有。如一件小事當喜怒者，平時無有喜怒之心，至其臨時，亦能中節，亦可謂之中和乎？」先生曰：「在一時一事，固亦可謂之中和，然未可謂之『大本』、『達道』。人性皆善，中和是人人原有的，豈可謂無？但常人之心既有所昏蔽，則其本體雖亦時時發見，終是暫明暫滅，非其全體大用矣。無所不中，然後謂之『大本』；無所不和，然後謂之『達道』。惟天下之至誠，然後能立天下之大本。」曰：「澄於中字之義尚未明。」曰：「此須自心體認出來，非言語所能喻。中只是天理。」曰：「何者為天理？」曰：「去得人欲，便識天理。」曰：「天理何以謂之中？」曰：「無所偏倚。」曰：「無所偏倚是何等氣象？」曰：「如明鏡然，全體瑩徹，略無纖塵染著。」曰：「偏倚是有所染著。如著在好色、好利、好名等項上，方見得偏倚；若未發時，美色名利皆未相著，何以便知其有所偏倚？」曰：「雖未相著，然平日好色、好利、好名之心原未嘗無；既未嘗無，即謂之有；既謂之有，則亦不可謂無偏倚。譬之病瘡之人，雖有時不發，而病根原不曾除，則亦不得謂之無病之人矣。須是平日好色、好利、好名等項一應私心，掃除蕩滌，無復纖毫留滯，而此心全體廓然，純是天理，方可謂之喜怒哀樂未發之中，方是天下之『大本』。」

[I.] Cheng asked, "The centered harmony of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are certainly not something the ordinary person can possess in its entirety.¹ Take, for example, a minor matter that ought to elicit pleasure or anger. Although one normally does not have the inclination to feel pleased or get angry, right when the matter arises, if one can also attain due measure and degree, can that also be called centered harmony?"

The Master said, "[Attaining due measure and degree during] a particular situation at a certain moment can certainly be called centered harmony. However, it cannot be called 'the great root' or 'the ultimate Way.' Human nature is wholly good, and centered harmony is something everyone originally possesses. How could one say people don't? Nevertheless, the mind of the ordinary person already suffers from darkening and concealment. Hence, although his [mind's] original condition (=essence) manifests from time to time, ultimately it is clear one moment and extinguished the next. This is not the great functioning of the entirety of the mind. Only after there

is no situation where one is not centered can it be called ‘the great root’ and only after there is no situation where one is not in harmony can it be called ‘the ultimate Way.’ Only the most perfectly genuine in all the world can plant the great root of the world.”²

I said, “[I,] Cheng, am still unclear as to the meaning of the word *zhong* 中 (‘center’).”

The Master replied, “This must be grasped in your own mind through personal realization. It is not something that can be explained with language. The center is just heavenly principle.”

I asked, “What is heavenly principle?”

The Master replied, “Dispel self-centered (egoic) desire and you will discern heavenly principle.”

I asked, “Why is heavenly principle called the center?”

The Master replied, “Because it lacks any bias.”

I asked, “What kind of condition is the absence of bias?”

The Master replied, “It is like a clear mirror, completely transparent, unstained by the slightest speck of dust.”

I asked, “To be biased is to have afflicting attachments, such as attachment to a love of women, profit, recognition, and so forth, such things. Only then can one see the bias. But if they have yet to appear, and there are still no afflicting attachments to women, profit, recognition, and so forth, how can we know that the mind suffers from bias?”

The Master replied, “Although there are not yet any afflicting attachments, nevertheless in one’s everyday existence the motivation to love women, profit, and recognition has never been absent. As it has never been absent, it can be said to exist. As it can be said to exist, then it also cannot be said that bias is absent. Compare this to a person with recurring fever. Even though that person might have periods of time without fever, yet the root of the disease has not been eradicated, so it cannot be said that this is a person free from disease. One must sweep away and cleanse oneself of all such selfish desires as a love of women, profit, and recognition, and so forth, so that even the slightest is no longer retained, and then the entirety of the mind will be open, purely heavenly principle. Only then can it be called the centeredness prior to the arising of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy, and only then is it the great root of the world.”

¹ The *Doctrine of the Mean* 1 states, “That which is ordained by Tian is called our nature; to lead by our nature is called the Dao; to cultivate the Dao is called the teaching. One may not deviate from the Dao for so much as an instant; that from which one may deviate is not the Dao. Thus the *junzi* is alert and cautious about what he does not see, is fearful about what he does not hear. Nothing is more visible than the obscure, nothing is plainer than the subtle. Hence, the *junzi* is cautious of his solitude. Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centered; emerging by the proper rhythms they are called harmonious. *Centered*: this is the great root of the world. *Harmonious*: this is the ultimate Dao of the world. Reaching centered harmony, heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby” (Eno 2016: 37). It should be noted that other translators differ substantially in their renderings. De Bary renders the beginning of this passage as “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, is called [that state of] centrality. After these are aroused, if they preserve equilibrium (centrality) it is called [the state of] harmony” (de Bary 1999: 736). Thus, whereas Eno’s rendering suggests that *zhong* 中 in the first instance describes emotions in an inactive or quiescent state, de Bary’s suggests that *zhong* 中 is a noun describing a state or condition that precedes emotion. Other translations of *zhong* 中 include equilibrium and centeredness.

Adler's rendering seems most apt: "Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are expressed (*weifa* 未發) it is called centrality. When these feeling are expressed (*yifa* 已發) and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony."

² The *Doctrine of the Mean* 32 states,

Only the most perfectly genuine man in all the world can thread together all the great constant norms of the world, plant the great roots of the world, and understand the nurturing transformations of heaven and earth. How would he rely on any other than himself? How sincere he is in his humanity! Depthless – like the abyss! Vast – like Tian!

Apart from one who is keen of hearing and sight, sage in wisdom, and fulfilled in Tian-like virtue, who could understand this? (Eno 2016: 53-54)

78: 問：「『顏子沒而聖學亡』，此語不能無疑。」先生曰：「見聖道之全者惟顏子，觀喟然一嘆可見。其謂『夫子循循然善誘人，博我以文，約我以禮』，是見破後如此說。博文約禮，如何是善誘人？學者須思之。道之全體，聖人亦難以語人，須是學者自修自悟。顏子『雖欲從之，末由也已』，即文王望道未見意。望道未見，乃是真見。顏子沒，而聖學之正派遂不盡傳矣。」

I asked, "‘After Yanzi died the learning of the sages went extinct.’ This statement cannot but be questioned."¹

The Master said, "Only Yanzi was able to understand the Way of the sage in its entirety. You can see this from his having ‘heaved a heavy sigh.’ He said ‘The Master skillfully entices people forward, step by step. He broadens me with culture and constrains me with the rites.’² He could speak in this way only after he had thoroughly understood. How are broadening with culture and constraining with ritual skillfully enticing people forward? Students should reflect upon this. Even the sage finds it difficult to tell others about the Way in its entirety. A student must study and attain insight into it for himself. Yanzi’s [statement that] ‘[He stands before me as though towering high,] and though I wish to follow, I can find no route up’ means the same thing as King Wen gazing towards the Way as if he had never seen it.³ Gazing upon the way as if one has never seen it is indeed an accurate view. After Yanzi’s death, the correct school of the learning of the sages was no longer passed down completely intact."

¹ 顏子沒而聖學亡 ("after Yanzi died the learning of the sages went extinct"): Lu Cheng is citing Wang Yangming's *Bie Zhan Ganquan xu* 別湛若甘泉序 (Wang 2012: vol. 1, 4.194).

² *Analects* 9.11 states, "Yan Yuan heaved a heavy sigh. 'When I look up, it grows taller, when I bore into it, it grows harder. I see it before me and suddenly it is behind. The Master skillfully entices people forward, step by step. He broadens me with patterns and constrains me with *li* – I want to stop, but I cannot until my abilities are exhausted. He stands before me as though towering high, and though I wish to follow, I can find no route up.'" (Eno 2015: 41-42)

³ *Mengzi* 4B.20 states,

Mencius said, “Yu hated fine wine and loved fine advice. Tang held to the mean and set no fixed criteria in appointing worthy men. King Wen regarded his people as though he were treating their wounds, and gazed towards the Dao as though first glimpsing it. King Wu never took those close to him for granted nor forgot those who were distant.”

“The Duke of Zhou aspired to join the greatness of all three dynasties in carrying out these four principles. When in some respect he did not match up, he would raise his head in thought, all day and into the night, and then, chancing to grasp the solution, he would sit awaiting the dawn.” (Eno 2016: 82–83)

Van Norden renders “*wang dao er wei zhi jian* 望道而未之見” as “He looked for the Way as if he had never seen it.” (Van Norden 2008: 108)

79: 問：「身之主為心，心之靈明是知，知之發動是意，意之所著為物，是如此否？」先生曰：「亦是。」

I asked, “The master of the body is the mind. The mind’s intellectual clarity is knowing. What knowing initiates is intention. That to which intention is affixed is a thing. Is this correct, or not?” The Master said, “In general, yes.”

80: 只存得此心常見在，便是學。過去未來事，思之何益？徒放心耳。

Just sustaining this mind so that it is always present is indeed learning. What benefit is there to thinking about past and future matters? That is just to lose one’s mind.¹

¹ 放心 (“lose one’s mind”): *Mengzi* 6A.11 states, “Mencius said, ‘Humanity is the heart of man, and right is man’s path. How woeful it is when a man turns from his road and does not follow it, and lets his heart go without realizing he needs to find it. When people let their chickens and dogs roam away they know to go find them, but when their heart has wandered off it is different. The *dao* of learning is none other than this: it is a search for one’s lost heart.’” (Eno 2016: 128) To sustain the mind is to maintain the presence of original mind, or mind in its original condition. Mind sustained in its original condition is like a shiny mirror that is perpetually perfectly reflecting. As record 21 states, “No reflected forms that have already passed remain present, and no forms that have yet to be reflected are contained in it beforehand.” Thus, there is no benefit to thinking about past and future matters.

81: 言語無序，亦足以見心之不存。

Disorderly speech is sufficient to discern a mind that is not being maintained.

Note: To maintain the mind means to maintain it as it is originally or in its root state. As speech gives expression to mind, reflecting its condition, the passage concerns the unity of knowing and acting. (Lu 2021: 134)

82: 尚謙問孟子之『不動心』與告子異。先生曰：「告子是硬把捉著此心，要他不動。孟子卻是集義到自然不動。」又曰：「心之本體原自不動。心之本體即是性，性即是理。性元不動，理元不動。集義是復其心之本體。」

[Xue] Shangqian asked how Mengzi and Gaozi's [conception of the] "unmoving mind" differed.¹⁻² The Master said, "Gaozi forcefully took hold of this mind, wanting to make it unmoving. Mengzi, on the other hand, accumulated acts of right to the point where the mind is naturally unmoving."

[The Master] also said, "The mind's essence is in origin naturally unmoving. The mind's essence is the nature, and the nature is principle. The nature is originally unmoving and principle is originally unmoving. Accumulating acts of right means restoring the mind to its original condition."

¹ Shangqian 尚謙 is a courtesy name for Xue Kan 薛侃 (d. 1545). He hailed from Jieyang County 揭陽縣, Chaozhou Prefecture 潮州府, Guangdong Province, and obtained his *jinshi* in 1517. For more information, see Xue Kan's records, beginning with record 96.

² 不動心 ("unmoving mind") Eno's rendering is "unmoving heart." *Mengzi* 2A.2 states in part,

Gongsun Chou said, "May I inquire about the formulas that you and Gaozi used to attain an unmoving heart?"

Mencius replied, "Gaozi's rule was, 'If you cannot find sanction for a course of action in the teachings, do not search for it in your heart. If you cannot find sanction for a course of action in your heart, do not search for it in your *qi*.' I agree to the formula, 'If you do not find it in the heart, do not search for it in the *qi*.' But it is unacceptable to say, 'If you do not find it in the teachings, do not search for it in your heart.'

The will is the leader of the *qi*, and *qi* is something that fills the body. Wherever the will leads the *qi* follows. Thus there is a saying, 'Grasp your will and do not dissipate your *qi*.'"

Gongsun Chou said, "On the one hand you have said, 'Wherever the will leads the *qi* will follow.' But you have also said, 'Grasp your will and do not dissipate your *qi*.' Is there not an inconsistency?"

Mencius answered, "When the will is unified, it moves the *qi*. But when the *qi* is unified, it can move the will. For example, when you see a man stumble or rush about, this is the action of his *qi*. In such cases, it has turned back upon the heart and moved it."

Gongsun Chou said, "May I presume to inquire how you, Sir, excel?"

"I can interpret what speech means," replied Mencius, "and I nurture well my flood-like *qi*."

Gongsun Chou asked, "What do you mean by 'flood-like *qi*'?"

"It is hard to describe," said Mencius.

"This is a *qi* that is as vast and firm as can be. If one nurtures it by means of straightforward action and never impairs it, then it will fill all between heaven and earth. It is a *qi* that is a companion to righteousness and the Dao. Without these, it will starve away. It is generated through the long accumulation of acts of right. It is not something

that can be seized through a single righteous act. If in your actions there is any sense of inadequacy in your heart, it will starve away.” (Eno 2016: 45)

Note: Wing-tsit Chan (1963: 53) and Bryan W. Van Norden (2008: 36) translate *bu dong xin* as “unperturbed mind” and “unperturbed heart,” respectively. *Benti* 本體 is rendered both as “essence” and “original condition.” Essence refers to mind-in-itself or the inherent reality of mind while original condition refers to it more descriptively, as mind’s fundamental or root or primordial state, where it is unmoving and unperturbed. It is unmoving and unperturbed because it is correct, right. Here, Wang Yangming states clearly that the path to restoring mind to its root state and hence to sustaining an unmoving heart and mind over time is accumulating acts of right, that is, acting virtuously, by according with principle, and hence the natural order in all its perfection. What is unique to Wang Yangming, perhaps, is the degree to which he identifies the awakened state with rightness and his stress on purifying the self through acting morally. Mind in its original condition is identical to the nature and principle, all of which are intrinsically determined, not subject to external force or action, making them the causal basis. Mind that is not in its original condition is darkened mind, or what Wang refers to as concealed and obstructed mind, mind that follows things, and hence mind that is externally determined. This is the realm of human (egoic, or self-centered) desire, which should be conquered.

83: 萬象森然時，亦沖漠無朕；沖漠無朕，即萬象森然。沖漠無朕者，一之父；萬象森然者，精之母。一中有精，精中有一。

The moment when all things in the universe are lushly present is also empty, tranquil, and absent marks; emptiness, tranquility, and the absence of marks is identical to the lush presence of all things in the universe. “Emptiness, tranquility, and the absence of marks” is the father of the unitary and “the lush presence of all things in the universe” is the mother of discrimination. Discrimination exists amidst the unitary and the unitary exists amidst discrimination.

¹ 萬象森然時，亦沖漠無朕 (“the moment when all things in the universe are lushly present is also empty, tranquil, and absent marks”) refers to a passage in *juan 15* of the *Er Cheng shi yi shu* 二程遺書 (Posthumous Works of the Two Chengs): 沖漠無朕，而萬象森然已具 (Empty, tranquil, and absent marks, and yet all things are already lushly present in it).” This work is available at ctext: <https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=gb&res=791>.

² 精、一 (“discrimination,” “unitary”): The “Counsels of the Great Yu” in the *Classic of Documents* states in part, “The mind of man is restless, prone (to err); its affinity to what is right is small. Be discriminating, be uniform (in the pursuit of what is right), that you may sincerely hold fast the Mean.” This is James Legge’s translation of *ren xin wei wei, dao xin wei wei; wei jing wei yi, yun zhi que zhong* 人心惟危，道心惟微；惟精惟一，允執厥中: “The human mind is imperiled, the moral mind is subtle. Only through being refined and single-minded can one hold fast to the mean.” It can be noted that for this passage in the *Documents*, *jing* 精 has been rendered as “refined,” “rarefied,” “pure,” and “discriminating,” while *yi* 一 has been rendered as “uniform,” “steadfast,” “undivided,” “unitary,” and “single-minded.” For record 82, Wing-tsit Chan (1963: 54) chose

“refinement,” and “singleness.” Clearly, Wang Yangming has in mind a kind of nonduality of emptiness (or vacuity) and phenomena (all things, the myriad images, events), of silence and activity, and formlessness and form. As well, for him, as for Cheng Yi, the essence and functioning of mind derive from one source (*ti yong yi yuan* 體用一源).

84: 心外無物。如吾心發一念孝親，即孝親便是物。

Outside mind there are not things. For example, when my mind gives rise to a thought of being filial towards my parents, then being filial towards my parents is the thing.

Note: This passage explains the relation between mind, principle, and things. For Wang Yangming mind is identical to principle. In this case, the principle is filial piety and the thing is the mental object that appears in consciousness as a manifestation of principle on a particular occasion. Principle here is essentially the rules or moral laws governing intersubjective experience. This principle is not separate from mind insofar as it manifests as a mental event wherein one is mindful of or remembers one’s parents. Wing-tsit Chan translates *yi nian* 一念 as “a thought.” Other definitions include “a determined purpose” and “the time of a thought.” Also, considered alone, in addition to its common rendering as thought or thinking, *nian* can also mean “mindful,” “to remember,” or “to recollect,” especially in a pious or religious sense. Here, this moment of mindful remembrance of our parents, of care for them, which is naturally inclusive of the impetus to actualization, is principle manifesting, or what Wang Yangming refers to as the flowing forth and along of the principle of Tian (Nature/Heaven). More generally, for Wang Yangming, mind in its original condition is fundamentally humaneness. Humaneness is the essence of mind, and mind naturally expresses itself according to certain principles in certain settings. Thus, the single thought mentioned here contains the sense of being an original intention generated by original mind.

85: 先生曰：「今為吾所謂格物之學者，尚多流於口耳。況為口耳之學者，能反於此乎？天理人欲，其精微必時時用力省察克治，方日漸有見。如今一說話之間，雖口講天理，不知心中倏忽之間已有多少私欲。蓋有竊發而不知者，雖用力察之，尚不易見，況徒口講而可得盡知乎？今只管講天理來頓放著不循，講人欲來頓放著不去，豈格物致知之學？後世之學，其極至只做得個『義襲而取』的工夫。」

The Master said, “Nowadays most of those who pursue what I call the learning of *ge wu* 格物 (“rectifying matters”) yet remain with merely talking and listening. And even more so for those students who pursue learning through verbal exchange—how can they return to this? Heavenly principle and human desire—what is refined and subtle about them requires constantly making a determined effort to examine oneself introspectively and exercise self-mastery. Only then will you gradually, with each day, possess more discernment. As for today, just as soon as one speaks, even if you are discussing heavenly principle with the mouth, without realizing it, already so much self-centered desire has suddenly appeared in your mind, for it furtively emerges without our knowing. Even if you make a determined effort, still, it will not be so easy to discern it, let alone, merely discussing it with the mouth, can full knowledge of it be acquired? If you now merely talk about heavenly principle and set it aside without abiding by it and talk about human desire and set it

aside without dispelling it, how does that count as the learning of rectifying matters and extending knowledge? The pinnacle of learning in later generations has only reached exercising a practice of ‘seizing [it] through an incidental righteous act.’”

¹ 義襲而取 (“seizing [it] through an incidental righteous act”): *Mengzi* 2A.2 states, “Gongsun Chou said, “May I presume to inquire how you, Sir, excel?” “I can interpret what speech means,” replied Mencius, “and I nurture well my flood-like *qi*.” Gongsun Chou asked, “What do you mean by ‘flood-like *qi*’?” “It is hard to describe,” said Mencius. “This is a *qi* that is as vast and firm as can be. If one nurtures it by means of straightforward action and never impairs it, then it will fill all between heaven and earth. It is a *qi* that is a companion to righteousness and the Dao. Without these, it will starve away. It is generated through the long accumulation of acts of right. It is not something that can be seized through a single righteous act. If in your actions there is any sense of inadequacy in your heart, it will starve away.” (Eno 2016: 39) Van Norden renders the entire sentence (非義襲而取之也) as “It cannot be obtained by a seizure of righteousness.” (Van Norden 2008: 39)

86: 問格物。先生曰：「格者，正也，正其不正，以歸於正也。」

I asked about *ge wu* 格物. The Master said, “*Ge* 格 means to rectify, to rectify what is incorrect so that it returns to being correct.”¹

¹ Note: Wang Yangming says that *ge* 格 means *zheng* 正 (“to correct,” “to rectify,” “to set right”) while *wu* 物 (“thing”) is usually treated as a mental or intentional object. Thus, he defines *wu* 物 as *shi* 事, which can be rendered “matters” or “affairs” and, on occasion, “events” or “tasks.” Thus, *shi* should not be regarded as something separate from the experiencing person, from subjective awareness or intersubjectivity, while *ge* in its sense as “to correct” or “to rectify” means realizing the good inherent to consciousness of an object or an intersubjective occasion, that is, self-consciously conscientiously realizing the good. That is why, as he told his student Xu Ai (record 6), “rectifying matters is the practice of coming to rest in perfect goodness.” Furthermore, to come to rest in (abide in) perfect goodness is to perfect the rightness of one’s original condition. Thus, in record 7, Wang Yangming explains that rectifying matters is akin to what Mengzi had in mind when he said that “only a great man can set right the flaws in a ruler’s heart.” To rectify means to reject what is not right in one’s heart for the purpose of perfecting the rightness (correctness) of the mind in its original condition. Mind in its original condition, of course, responds naturally and harmoniously to circumstance as they arise, and hence brings to realization the perfect goodness inherent to those circumstances. But for this to occur, the mind must be free of the obscurations and concealments of egoic mind, in the sense of selfishness, self-centeredness, and egocentricity. To rectify then is like polishing the mind, so that its inherent moral capacities can function naturally. Clearly, then, where Wang Yangming is concerned, rendering *ge* as “to investigate” could be misleading insofar as it lacks reference to the knowing moral subject. However, given that a “thing” can include a matter of concern or an affair, as a mental or intentional object, it seems reasonable to use it as a literal rendering so long as its meaning is properly understood. It is worth noting that in his

translation of the *Great Learning*, Robert Eno renders *ge wu* as “aligning affairs” (Eno 2016: 11-12).

87: 問：「知止者，知至善只在吾心，元不在外也，而後志定？」曰：「然。」

I asked, “Knowledge coming to rest means that only after I understand that perfect goodness is located only in my mind and was never located outside does my purpose becomes certain.”¹
[The Master] said, “That is the case.”

¹ 知止 (“Knowledge coming to rest”): The beginning of the *Great Learning* states, “The Dao of Great Learning lies in making bright virtue brilliant; in making the people new; in coming to rest at the limit of the good. Only after wisdom comes to rest does one possess certainty; only after one possesses certainty can one become tranquil; only after one becomes tranquil can one become secure; only after one becomes secure can one contemplate alternatives; only after one can contemplate alternatives can one comprehend.” (Eno 2016: 11) A. C. Muller writes, “The way of great learning consists in manifesting one's bright virtue, consists in loving the people, consists in stopping in perfect goodness. When you know where to stop, you have stability. When you have stability, you can be tranquil. When you are tranquil, you can be at ease. When you are at ease, you can deliberate. When you can deliberate you can attain your aims.” (A. C. Muller 2018)

88: 問：「格物於動處用功否？」先生曰：「格物無間動靜，靜亦物也。孟子謂『必有事焉』，是動靜皆有事。」

I asked, “Should the practice of *ge wu* 格物 be directed to the locus of [mental] activity, or not?”
The Master said, “Setting things right (*ge wu*) applies regardless of whether one is active or tranquil. Tranquility is also a thing. Mengzi’s statement that ‘the task must always be before you’ means that both activity and tranquility are your task.”¹

¹ 必有事焉 (“your task must always be before you”): *Mengzi* 2A.2 states in part,

Gongsun Chou said, “May I presume to inquire how you, Sir, excel?”

“I can interpret what speech means,” replied Mencius, “and I nurture well my flood-like *qi*.” Gongsun Chou asked, “What do you mean by ‘flood-like *qi*?’”

“It is hard to describe,” said Mencius. “This is a *qi* that is as vast and firm as can be. If one nurtures it by means of straightforward action and never impairs it, then it will fill all between heaven and earth. It is a *qi* that is a companion to righteousness and the Dao. Without these, it will starve away. It is generated through the long accumulation of acts of right (*yi*). It is not something that can be seized through a single righteous act. If in your actions there is any sense of inadequacy in your heart, it will starve away.

“This is why I say that Gaozi never really understood righteousness. He looked for it in external standards other than the heart. But your task must always be before you and you must not go making small adjustments. The task of nurturing this *qi* must never be forgotten by the heart, but you must not meddle and try to help it grow. Don’t be like the man from the state of Song.

“There was a man of Song who was concerned that the sprouts in his field were not growing well, so he went and tugged at each one. He went home utterly exhausted and said, ‘Oh, I’ve made myself ill today! I’ve been out helping the sprouts to grow.’ His sons rushed out to look and found the stalks all shriveled up. There are few in the world who do not ‘help their sprouts grow.’ There are those who do not ‘weed’ – they have simply given the whole task up as useless. But the ones who tug on the sprouts to help them grow, they are worse than useless, for they do harm!” (Eno 2016: 46)

Note: Wang Yangming says that *ge* 格 means *zheng* 正 (“to correct,” “to rectify,” “to set right”) while *wu* 物 (“thing”) is usually treated as a mental or intentional object. Thus, he defines *wu* 物 as *shi* 事, which can be rendered “matters” or “affairs” and, on occasion, “events” or “tasks.” Thus, *shi* should not be regarded as something separate from the experiencing person, from subjective awareness or intersubjectivity, while *ge* in its sense as “to correct” or “to rectify” means realizing the good inherent to consciousness of an object or an intersubjective occasion. That is why, as he told his student Xu Ai (record 6), “rectifying matters is the practice of coming to rest in perfect goodness.” Furthermore, to come to rest in (abide in) perfect goodness is to perfect the rightness of one’s original condition. Thus, in record 7, Wang Yangming explains that rectifying matters is akin to what Mengzi had in mind when he said that “only a great man can set right the flaws in a ruler’s heart.” To rectify means to reject what is not right in one’s heart for the purpose of perfecting the rightness (correctness) of the mind in its original condition. Mind in its original condition, of course, responds naturally and harmoniously to circumstance as they arise, and hence brings to realization the perfect goodness inherent to those circumstances. But for this to occur, the mind must be free of the obscurations and concealments of egoic mind, in the sense of selfishness, self-centeredness, and egocentricity. To rectify then is like polishing the mind, so that its inherent moral capacities can function naturally. Clearly, then, where Wang Yangming is concerned, rendering *ge* as “to investigate” could be misleading insofar as it lacks reference to the knowing moral subject. However, given that a “thing” can include a matter of concern or an affair, as a mental or intentional object, it seems reasonable to use it as a literal rendering so long as its meaning is properly understood. It is worth noting that in his translation of the *Great Learning*, Robert Eno renders *ge wu* as “aligning affairs” (Eno 2016: 11-12). Here, Wang Yangming is equating *ge wu* with Mengzi’s statement that the task must always be before you. What this means is that one must always be accumulating righteousness. Thus, Wang is defining a constant practice, one that runs through activity and tranquility, as a form of mindfulness, where one is present in righteousness, as the solitary foundation of the knowing self.

89: 工夫難處，全在格物致知上，此即誠意之事。意既誠，大段心亦自正，身亦自修。但正心修身工夫，亦各有用力處。修身是已發邊，正心是未發邊。心正則中，身修則和。

The difficult aspect of our practice lies entirely in rectifying matters and extending knowledge. This is a matter of perfecting the genuineness of your intentions.¹ Once your intentions are genuine your mind will for the most part naturally correct itself, and your person will also naturally become cultivated. However, the practice of correcting your mind and cultivating your person each has a place where effort is to be directed. Cultivating your person lies on the side of what has already

arisen while correcting your mind lies on the side of what is prior to arising.² When your mind is corrected you are centered and when your person is cultivated you attain harmony.

¹ The *Great Learning* states, “In ancient times, those who wished to make bright virtue brilliant in the world first ordered their states; those who wished to order their states first aligned their households; those who wished to align their households first refined their persons; those who wished to refine their persons first balanced their minds; those who wished to balance their minds first perfected the genuineness of their intentions; those who wished to perfect the genuineness of their intentions first extended their understanding; extending one’s understanding lies in aligning affairs.” (Eno 2016: 12)

² The *Doctrine of the Mean* 1 states, “That which is ordained by Tian is called our nature; to lead by our nature is called the Dao; to cultivate the Dao is called the teaching. One may not deviate from the Dao for so much as an instant; that from which one may deviate is not the Dao. Thus the *junzi* is alert and cautious about what he does not see, is fearful about what he does not hear. Nothing is more visible than the obscure, nothing is plainer than the subtle. Hence, the *junzi* is cautious of his solitude. Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy: before they emerge they are called centered; emerging by the proper rhythms they are called harmonious. *Centered*: this is the great root of the world. *Harmonious*: this is the ultimate Dao of the world. Reaching centered harmony, heaven and earth take their proper places and the things of the world are nurtured thereby.” (Eno 2016: 37) It should be noted that other translators differ substantially in their renderings. De Bary renders the beginning of this passage as “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are aroused, is called [that state of] centrality. After these are aroused, if they preserve equilibrium (centrality) it is called [the state of] harmony.” (de Bary 1999: 736) Thus, whereas Eno’s rendering suggests that *zhong* 中 in the first instance describes emotions in an inactive or quiescent state, de Bary’s suggests that *zhong* 中 is a noun describing a state or condition that precedes emotion. Other translations of *zhong* 中 include equilibrium and centeredness. Adler’s rendering seems most apt: “Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, and joy are expressed (*weifa* 未發) it is called centrality. When these feeling are expressed (*yifa* 已發) and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony.” (Adler 2020:

90: 自「格物」、「致知」至「平天下」，只是一個「明明德」。雖「親民」，亦「明德」事也。「明德」是此心之德，即是仁。「仁者以天地萬物為一體」，使有一物失所，便是吾仁有未盡處。

From “rectifying matters” and “extending one’s knowledge” to “setting the world at peace”—this is just a single “illumination of illustrious virtue.”¹ Even “loving the people” is also a matter of “illustrious virtue.” “Illustrious virtue” is this mind’s virtue. It is humaneness. “The humane person regards heaven, earth, and the myriad things as one body.”² If one thing loses its proper place, then a dimension of my humanity has yet to be fully realized.”

¹ The *Great Learning* states, “In ancient times, those who wished to make bright virtue brilliant in the world first ordered their states; those who wished to order their states first aligned their households; those who wished to align their households first refined their

persons; those who wished to refine their persons first balanced their minds; those who wished to balance their minds first perfected the genuineness of their intentions; those who wished to perfect the genuineness of their intentions first extended their understanding; extending one's understanding lies in aligning affairs. Only after affairs have been aligned may one's understanding be fully extended. Only after one's understanding is fully extended may one's intentions be perfectly genuine. Only after one's intentions are perfectly genuine may one's mind be balanced. Only after one's mind is balanced may one's person be refined. Only after one's person is refined may one's household be aligned. Only after one's household is aligned may one's state be ordered. Only after one's state is ordered may the world be set at peace.” (Eno 2016: 12)

² 仁者以天地萬物為一體 (“The humane person regards heaven, earth, and the myriad things”): Wang Yangming is referring to the Song dynasty Ruist Cheng Hao's essay “On Understanding the Nature of Humanity,” which begins with, “The student must first of all understand the nature of humanity (*ren*). The humane man forms one body with all things comprehensively. Rightness, decorum, wisdom, and trustworthiness are all [expressions of] humanity. [One's duty] is to understand this principle and preserve humanity with sincerity (*cheng*) and reverent seriousness (*jing*), that is all” (de Bary 1999: 694). Wang Yangming here explains an essential attribute of the mind (and heart), what it is that makes the mind and heart essentially virtuous. Mind is essentially virtuous because it is fundamentally humane. Humanity is the essence of mind, its most illustrious attribute. To illuminate is to clarity and manifest, or what Cheng Hao spoke of as regarding the cosmos as one body. To regard the cosmos as one body is to form of the cosmos one body in the very act of illuminating the mind's most illustrious of virtues. All is one in humanity. As the mind is by its very nature humane, for one thing to lose its proper place becomes unbearable, for the one body has been divided, and one's humanity remains incompletely realized, and the person remains unfulfilled. Hence, illuminating illustrious virtue is inclusive of all the steps in the *Great Learning*.

91: 只說「明明德」而不說「親民」，便似老、佛。

Merely saying “illuminating illustrious virtue” without saying “loving the people” resembles Daoism and Buddhism.¹

¹ 明明德 (“illuminating illustrious virtue”): The *Great Learning* states, “The Dao of Great Learning lies in making bright virtue brilliant; in making the people new; in coming to rest at the limit of the good” (Eno 2016: 11). *Ming ming de* 明明德 has seen a wide range of translations, including “manifesting one's bright virtue” (A. C. Muller), “enlighten one's inherent splendid virtue” (Vincent Poon), and “manifesting the clear character” (Wing-tsit Chan), among others. *Qin min* 親民 has seen an even wider range of translations because its original meaning was contested. Eno explains,

“Making the people new” is a contested reading. The Chinese text reads “*qin min*” 親民, which means “stay close to the people,” or “treat the people as family,” the word *qin* meaning “parent” or “father.” There is no inherent difficulty with this reading, and it can easily be understood as following from the conventional idea that the ruler should

serve as “the father and mother of the people.” However, if one accepts Zhu Xi’s reordering of the text, the Commentary that corresponds to this Guideline does not use the word *qin*, but repeatedly uses the word *xin* 新: “new.” Moreover, it quotes the “Kang gao” chapter of the *Book of Documents*, which uses the phrase, *zuo xin min* 作新民: “make a new people.” (In the *Liji* version of the text, there is no obvious relation between the text string that embeds these instances of *xin* and the Guideline.) In ancient texts, the graphs 親 and 新 are frequently used interchangeably, the underlying words being near homophones (*tshin and *sin). Zhu Xi, accepting an argument by Cheng Yi, reasoned that in the case of the received text of the second Guideline, the graph 親 was used to represent the word *xin*. This interpretation so directly illuminates the passage that Zhu identified as the Commentary corresponding to second Guideline that most subsequent scholars have acknowledged it as correct. However, some scholars, such as the Ming Neo-Confucian Wang Yangming, have argued for reading the text in its original sense. In his influential English translation, Wing-tsit Chan followed Wang in rendering the phrase as “love the people.” (Eno 2016: 11)

92: 至善者，性也。性元無一毫之惡，故曰至善。止之，是復其本然而已。

Perfect goodness is the nature. Originally, the nature is devoid of the slightest evil, so it is said to be perfect goodness. Coming to rest in it means no more than recovering it as it originally is.¹

¹ 至善/止之 (“perfect goodness”/“coming to rest in it”): The *Great Learning* states, “The Dao of Great Learning lies in making bright virtue brilliant; in making the people new; in coming to rest at the limit of the good.” (Eno 2016: 11) *Zhi shan* 至善, translated by Eno as “the limit of the good,” has also been rendered as “ultimate goodness,” “summum bonum,” “the highest good,” and “highest excellence.” *Zhi* 止 means abiding, resting, or staying.

Note: Wing-tsit Chan translates *benran* 本然 as nature’s “original state.” (Chan 1963: 56) Original also implies natural and unadulterated. This passage simply and powerfully states that the nature is perfect goodness, devoid of evil. If *benran* is interpreted as a state or condition to be recovered, restored, or returned to (*fu* 復), this means that Wang Yangming is speaking to the most noble goal of philosophical inquiry and disciplined practice. In record 34, he also states, “Mind is the nature and the nature is principle.” Thus, in an ultimate sense, mind, the nature, principle, and perfect goodness are identical. However, in the following passage, he further unpacks the relationship between mind, nature, and the highest good.

93: 問：「知至善即吾性，吾性具吾心，吾心乃至善所止之地，則不為向時之紛然外求而志定矣。定則不擾擾而靜，靜而不妄動則安，安則一心一意只在此處，千思萬想，務求必得此至善，是能慮而得矣。如此說，是否？」先生曰：「大略亦是。」

I asked, “Knowing that perfect goodness is my nature, that my mind contains my nature and hence that my mind is the place where perfect goodness stays, I will no longer, as in the past, seek externally in perpetual confusion, and my purpose will become certain. When [my purpose is]

certain I won't be confused, and I can therefore become tranquil. As I am tranquil, I won't act recklessly and thus I can be at ease. As I am at ease, I will be wholeheartedly focused on this place.² In every thought I will strive to ensure that this perfect goodness is attained, which is to be able to contemplate and get it. Is this way of putting it correct, or not?"¹

The Master said, "Generally speaking, yes, it is."

¹ The beginning of the *Great Learning* states, "The Dao of Great Learning lies in making bright virtue brilliant; in making the people new; in coming to rest at the limit of the good. Only after wisdom comes to rest does one possess certainty; only after one possesses certainty can one become tranquil; only after one becomes tranquil can one become secure; only after one becomes secure can one contemplate alternatives; only after one can contemplate alternatives can one comprehend." (Eno 2016: 11) A. C. Muller translates this as, "The way of great learning consists in manifesting one's bright virtue, consists in loving the people, consists in stopping in perfect goodness. When you know where to stop, you have stability. When you have stability, you can be tranquil. When you are tranquil, you can be at ease. When you are at ease, you can deliberate. When you can deliberate you can attain your aims." (Muller 2018)

² That is, perfect goodness.

Note: Wang Yangming and his followers often asserted that for true learning to happen one must have the correct basis and starting point. That basis and starting point is the fundamental truth of the inherent reality of mind. The fundamental truth of the inherent reality of mind is that it is perfect goodness. When one knows that the essence of mind is perfect goodness then confusion dissipates and one's purpose becomes nothing other than certain. One becomes undivided as external seeking subsides, and the calming effect is most certainly palpable. Now, tranquil and at ease, what other locus is there to contemplate? Wholeheartedly focused on just this, such is the heavenly principle.

94: 問：「程子云：『仁者以天地萬物為一體。』何墨氏兼愛，反不得謂之仁？」先生曰：「此亦甚難言，須是諸君自體認出來始得。仁是造化生生不息之理，雖瀰漫周遍，無處不是，然其流行發生，亦只有個漸，所以生生不息。如冬至一陽生，必自一陽生而後漸漸至於六陽；若無一陽之生，豈有六陽？陰亦然。惟其漸，所以便有個發端處；惟其有個發端處，所以生；惟其生，所以不息。譬之木，其始抽芽，便是木之生意發端處；抽芽然後發幹，發幹然後生枝、生葉，然後是生生不息。若無芽，何以有幹、有枝葉？能抽芽，必是下面有個根在；有根方生，無根便死。無根何從抽芽？父子、兄弟之愛，便是人心生意發端處，如木之抽芽。自此而仁民，而愛物，便是發幹、生枝、生葉。墨氏兼愛無差等，將自家父子、兄弟與途人一般看，便自沒了發端處；不抽芽便知得他無根，便不是生生不息，安得謂之仁？孝、弟為仁之本，卻是仁理從裏面發生出來。」

I asked, "Master Cheng said, 'The humane person regards heaven, earth, and the myriad things as one body.'¹ Why is it that Master Mo's universal love cannot, to the contrary, be called humane?"²

The Master said, "This is quite difficult to explain. It is necessary, gentlemen, for you first to recognize it for yourself through personal experience before you can understand it. Humaneness

is the principle of nature's unceasing life and growth. Although it is pervasive everywhere, and there is no place that it does not exist, nevertheless, the emergence of its flow and circulation has a sequence. That is why it can unceasingly live and grow. This is like the birth of one *yang* at winter solstice. It is necessary to begin with the birth of one *yang* before gradually advancing to the sixth *yang*. Without the birth of the first *yang* how could there be a sixth *yang*? The same goes for *yin*. Because there is a sequence, so there is a starting point. Because there is a starting point, so there is life. Because there is life, it is therefore unceasing. Take, for example, a tree. It begins with sprouts emerging, which is the starting point of the tree's vitality. After the sprouts emerge, the trunk grows, and after the trunk grows branches and leaves come forth, and after that there is unceasing life and growth. Should there be no sprouts, how can you have a trunk and have branches and leaves? The ability to grow sprouts is necessarily due to the existence of roots underneath. Only because there are roots can it grow. Without roots it will die. Without roots how can it grow sprouts? The love between a father and son and between elder and younger brother is the starting point for the vitality of the human heart, like the sprouting of a tree. From here one treats people with humanity and cherishes things, which is the trunk growing and branches and leaves coming out.³ Mozi's universal love lacks gradations. One's own father, son, elder brother, and younger brother are regarded in the same way as roadside strangers, so it has no starting point. As it does not grow sprouts, we know that it lacks roots and consequently that this is not unceasing life and growth, so how can it be called humanity. Filial piety and fraternal respect are the roots of humanity. They are the principle of humanity growing from within."

¹ 仁者以天地萬物為一體 (“The humane person regards heaven, earth, and the myriad things”): Wang Yangming is referring to the Song dynasty Ruist Cheng Hao's essay “On Understanding the Nature of Humanity,” which begins with, “The student must first of all understand the nature of humanity (*ren*). The humane man forms one body with all things comprehensively. Rightness, decorum, wisdom, and trustworthiness are all [expressions of] humanity. [One's duty] is to understand this principle and preserve humanity with sincerity (*cheng*) and reverent seriousness (*jing*), that is all” (de Bary 1999: 694).

² On Mozi (“Master Mo,” flourished c. 430 BCE) and universal love, see the entry by Chris Fraser in the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mohism/>.

³ *Mengzi* 7A.45 states, “Mencius said, ‘The *junzi* cherishes things but does not treat them with humanity. He treats people with humanity but not like parents. He loves his parents and treats people with humanity, treats people with humanity and cherishes things.’” (Eno 2016: 150)

95: 問：「延平云：『當理而無私心』，『當理』與『無私心』如何分別？」先生曰：「心即理也。無私心，即是當理；未當理，便是私心。若析心與理言之，恐亦未善。」又問：「釋氏於世間一切情欲之私都不染著，似無私心。但外棄人倫，卻似未當理。」曰：「亦只是一統事，都只是成就他一個私己的心。」

I asked, “[Master] Yanping said, ‘Conforming to principle and having no selfish intentions [is humaneness].’ How does one distinguish ‘conforming to principle’ from ‘having no selfish intentions?’”¹

The Master said, “Mind is principle. To have no selfish intentions is to conform to principle. If one has yet to conform to principle, that is having selfish intentions. If you separate mind and principle when speaking of them, I am afraid that this is improper.”

I also asked, “The Buddhists are undefiled by any worldly private passions, so it seems that they have no selfish intentions. However, discarding interpersonal relationships would certainly seem not to conform to principle.”

The Master said, “This is just the same situation, it is all just fulfilling one’s own self-interest.”

¹ Master Yanping (*Yanping xiansheng* 延平先生) was a popular sobriquet scholars used to refer to Li Tong 李侗 (1093–1163), a Ruist who lived through the transition from the Northern Song to the Southern Song dynasty. The *Yanping da wen* 延平答問 (Yanping’s replies to questions) states,

仁只是理，初無彼此之辨，當理而無私心，即仁矣。

“Humaneness is simply principle, from the beginning, devoid of a distinction between self and other. Conforming to principle and being without selfish intentions is humaneness.”

Reference Works

- Adler, Joseph A. *Reconstructing the Confucian Dao: Zhu Xi's Appropriation of Zhou Dunyi*. Albany: SUNY, 2014.
- Chen Rongjie 陈荣捷. *Wang Yangming "Chuan xi lu" xiang zhu ji ping* 王阳明“传习录”详注集评. Chongqing: Chongqing Chubanshe, 2017. [Note: This edition uses simplified graphs.]
- De Bary, William Theodore and Irene Bloom, eds. *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*, vol. 1. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Eno, Robert. *The Analects: An Online Teaching Translation*. 2015. Accessed November 25, 2022. [https://chinatxt.sitehost.iu.edu/Analects_of_Confucius_\(Eno-2015\).pdf](https://chinatxt.sitehost.iu.edu/Analects_of_Confucius_(Eno-2015).pdf).
- Eno, Robert. *The Great Learning and the Doctrine of the Mean: An Online Teaching Translation*. 2016. Accessed July 28, 2021. <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/23422>
- Eno, Robert. *Mencius: Translation, Commentary, and Notes*. May 2016. Accessed July 7, 2023. <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/23423>
- Henke, Frederick G. *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*. LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1916.
- Hutton, Eric L. *Xunzi* 荀子: *The Complete Text*. Translated with an Introduction by Eric L. Hutton. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.
- Kern, Iso. “The ‘Wirkungsgeschichte’ of Wang Yangming’s ‘Teaching in Four Propositions’ up to Liu Zongzhou and Huang Zongxi.” In *Concepts of Philosophy in Asia and the Islamic World*, Vol. 1: China and Japan, 273-323. Leiden: Brill, 2018,
- Klein, Esther S. “Spreading the Word of Zhu Xi: Xu Heng’s Vernacular Confucianism under Mongol Rule and Beyond.” *Parergon* 35, no. 2 (2018): 91-118.
- Lau, D. C. *Confucius: The Analects*. Translated by D.C. Lau. New York: Penguin Books, 1979.
- Lynn, Richard John. *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Lynn, Richard John. *Zhuangzi: A New Translation of the Sayings of Master Zhuang as Interpreted by Guo Xiang*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2022.
- Muller A. C. *The Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸. July 8, 2018. Accessed January 31, 2023. <http://www.acmuller.net/con-dao/docofmean.html>
- Murray, Judson. “Daoist Mysticism.” In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2019. Accessed November 21, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.136>.
- Owen, Stephen. *The Poetry of Du Fu*. Translated and edited by Stephen Owen. Boston/Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016.
- Pregadio, Fabrizio. *The Encyclopedia of Daoism*. 2 vols. Routledge, 2008.
- Wang Xiaodun and Casey Schoenberger; “The Ancient Chinese Arts of the Ear: Etymology, Meteorology, Musicology.” *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* 1, vol. 6, no. 2 (November 2019): 432–460. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/23290048-8042003>.
- Wang, Yangming 王阳明. *Chuan xi lu (quan ben quan zhu quan yi)* 传习录：全本全注全译. Edited by Li Yeming 黎业明. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2021. [Note: This edition uses simplified graphs.]

- Wang Yangming 王陽明. *Wang Yangming quan ji* 王陽明全集. 3 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012.
- Wang Yangming. *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings*. Translated by Wing-tsit Chan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963.
- Warner, Ding Xiang. *Transmitting Authority: Wang Tong (ca. 584–617) and the Zhongshuo in Medieval China's Manuscript Culture*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Van Norden, Bryan W. *Mengzi: With Selections from Traditional Commentaries*. Translated by Bryan W. Van Norden. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2008.
- Zhu Xi. *The Original Meaning of the Yijing: Commentary on the Scripture of Change*. Translated and edited by Joseph A. Adler. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.
- Zou Shouyi 鄒守益. *Zou Shouyi ji* 鄒守益集. 2 vols. Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2007.