

LEARNING TO BE A
SAGE

Selections from the
Conversations of Master Chu,
Arranged Topically

By CHU HSI
TRANSLATED WITH A COMMENTARY BY
DANIEL K. GARDNER

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY LOS ANGELES OXFORD

Portions of Part One appeared in Daniel K. Gardner, "Transmitting the Way: Chu Hsi and His Program of Learning," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 49, no. 2 (June 1989): 141-172, and are reprinted here with the permission of the journal.

University of California Press
Berkeley and Los Angeles, California

University of California Press, Ltd.
Oxford, England

© 1990 by
The Regents of the University of California

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Chu, Hsi, 1130-1200.
[Chu-tzu yü lei. English. Selections]
Learning to be a sage: selections from the Conversations of
Master Chu, arranged topically/by Chu Hsi; translated with a
commentary by Daniel K. Gardner.

p. cm.

Selected translation of: Chu-tzu yü lei.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-520-06524-7 (alk. paper).—ISBN 0-520-06525-5
(pbk.: alk. paper)

I. Philosophy—Early works to 1800. I. Gardner, Daniel K., 1950—

II. Title.

B128.C52E5 1990

181'.11—dc20

89-39348
CIP

Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National
Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials,
ANSI Z39.48-1984. ∞

Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
Abbreviations	viii
Preface	ix
<i>Part One: Introduction</i>	1
A Brief Biography of Chu Hsi	3
Chu Hsi and the Crisis of the Way in the Twelfth Century	10
Restoring the Way: Chu Hsi's Educational Activities	23
Chu Hsi's Program of Learning for Followers of the Way	35
Chu Hsi and the Transformation of the Confucian Tradition	57
<i>Part Two: Selections from the Conversations of Master Chu, Arranged Topically—The Chapters on Learning</i>	83
Note on Text and Translation	85
1. Lesser Learning (Chapter 7)	88
2. The Method of Learning, General Discussion (Chapter 8)	96
3. A Discussion of Knowledge and Action (Chapter 9)	116
4. On Reading, Part 1 (Chapter 10)	128

5. On Reading, Part 2 (Chapter 11)	143
6. Holding On to It (Chapter 12)	163
7. Energetically Putting It into Practice (Chapter 13)	180
Glossary	197
List of Works Cited	203
Index	211

Acknowledgments

It is perhaps fitting in a book on learning to begin by acknowledging those people who were so important in teaching me the pleasures of studying China's past; were it not for Willard J. Peterson of Princeton University and Benjamin I. Schwartz of Harvard University this book would surely never have been written.

The study of Sung China involves deciphering sometimes indecipherable Chinese texts. Yüan-chu Lam of Wellesley College and Tao-chung Yao of Mount Holyoke College were untiring in their efforts to keep me from going too far astray; both gave hours of their time in reading over drafts of translations. Their ears and eyes were especially helpful in making sense of some of the more colloquial and idiomatic passages in the records of Chu Hsi's conversations with disciples.

Every writer should be as fortunate as I have been to have a reader with patience, unerring good judgment, and a sense of humor. Cynthia J. Brokaw of the University of Oregon has been subjected to countless drafts of this book: her reading of the last draft was as fresh and insightful as that of the first. Whatever value this book may have owes much to her.

Of course, without time no book can be written. I would like to thank the National Endowment for the Humanities for a grant that gave me the time to do the research for this book, particularly Part One.

Finally, this book is dedicated to Claudia, who on the good days helped me to feel the joy of discovery and progress and on the worst encouraged me to be mindful of the cosmic insignificance of it all. Her understanding and companionship have meant everything.

Four

On Reading, Part 1
(Chapter 10)

- 4.1. Book learning is a secondary matter for students. (10.1a:4/161:4)
- 4.2. Book learning is of secondary importance. It would seem that moral principle is originally complete in man; the reason he must engage in book learning is that he hasn't experienced much. The sages experienced a great deal and wrote it down for others to read. Now in book learning we must simply apprehend the many manifestations of moral principle. Once we understand them, we'll find that all of them were complete in us from the very beginning, not added to us from the outside. (10.1a:5/161:5)
- 4.3. Learning is to focus on what is of vital importance to our selves (i.e., moral principle)—book learning itself is of secondary importance. Moral principle is complete in us, not something added from the outside. Thus when sages tell people that they must engage in book learning, it's because even though they might possess moral principle they must experience it if it is to have any effect. What the sages speak about is what they have experienced of it. (10.1a:9/161:8)
- 4.4. In teaching others, the sages and worthies explained the way of learning quite clearly. Generally speaking, in their reading students should probe to the limit. "The pursuit of learning"¹ is an

1. The term *tao wen-hsüeh* is from *Chung-yung* 27/6.

important matter, for one has to understand moral principle to become fully human. Ordinarily, in reading a book we must read and reread it, appreciating each and every paragraph, each and every sentence, each and every word. Furthermore, we must consult the various annotations, commentaries, and explanations so that our understanding is complete. In this way moral principle and our own minds will be in perfect accord. Only then will our reading be effective. In reading, our own moral principle must extend everywhere. Tu Yüan-k'ai [222-284] said: "Put it [the mind] at ease, and you will get it. Keep it satisfied, and you will grasp it. It's as if [the mind], having been immersed in the rivers and seas and soaked in the beneficial rains, had been thoroughly dispelled of its doubts; happily, principle will be understandable. After all this you'll have truly got it."² (10.1b:5/162:1)

- 4.5. Read books to observe the intentions of the sages and worthies. Follow the intentions of the sages and worthies to observe natural principle. (10.2a:3/162:8)
- 4.6. It's best to take up the books of the sages and read them so that you understand their ideas. It's like speaking with them face to face. (10.2a:4/162:9)
- 4.7. You must frequently take the words of the sages and worthies and pass them before your eyes, roll them around and around in your mouth, and turn them over and over in your mind. (10.2a:5/162:10)
- 4.8. When you begin reading, you become aware that you're unlike the sages and worthies—how can you not urge yourself on? (10.2a:6/162:11)
- 4.9. There is layer upon layer [of meaning] in the words of the sages. In your reading of them, penetrate deeply. If you simply read what appears on the surface, you will misunderstand. Steep yourself in the words; only then will you grasp their meaning. (10.2a:7/162:12)
- 4.10. When men read a text, they merely read one layer; they don't try to get at the second layer. (10.2a:9/162:13)

2. This quote is from Tu's preface to the *Ch'un-ch'iu ching-chuan chi-chieh* 2a.

4.11. In reading, you must look for an opening in the text; only then will you find the moral principle in it. If you do not see an opening, you'll have no way to enter into the text. Once you find an opening, the coherence of the text will naturally become clear. (10.2a:10/162:14)

4.12. When scholars first look at a text, they see only a confused mass. In the course of time they come to see two or three chunks. But only when they see ten or more chunks will they make progress. It's like Butcher Ting cutting up the ox—it was best when he no longer beheld the whole ox.³ (10.2b:2/163:1)

4.13. In reading a text, you must be full of vigor. Arouse your spirits, keep your body alert, and don't let yourself grow weary—as if a sword were at your back. You must pierce through each passage. "Strike the head, the tail responds; strike the tail, the head responds."⁴ Only then have you read it right. You cannot open a book and fix your mind on it then close it and forget about it. Nor can you when reading the commentary forget about the text or when reading the text forget about the commentary. You must pierce through one passage and only then go on to later ones. (10.3a:3/163:10)

4.14. Here's what is necessary: one blow with a club, one scar; one slap on the face, a handful of blood. Your reading of what other people write should be just like this. Don't be lax! (10.3b:1/164:1)

4.15. The reading of texts should be like a tall or large vessel, going with the wind, its sail hoisted, covering a thousand *li* per day. Then it will be successful. Nowadays, just as [these tall and large vessels] are leaving the small harbor, they run aground—which is of no use at all. When you don't understand a text, such has been your reading. (10.3b:11/164:7)

3. Butcher Ting explained the art of butchering to Lord Wen-hui: "When I first began cutting up oxen, all I could see was the ox itself. After three years I no longer saw the whole ox. And now—now I go at it by spirit and don't look with my eyes." The story of Butcher Ting is found in *Chuang-tzu*, pp. 7–8, and Watson, *Chuang Tzu*, pp. 46–47. The passage here is from Watson's translation, p. 46.

4. I.e., by reading one part vigorously, the other parts will make sense too. This line, with slight modification, is found in *Sun-tzu chi-chu* 11.26b, where it describes the lightning-like response of crack fighting troops. Cf. Griffith, *Sun Tzu*, p. 135.

4.16. In reading, to understand moral principle the mind must be open, unobstructed, and bright. You mustn't be calculating beforehand the gain you'll get from the reading. For once you think about gain, you'll become distressed. And if you're distressed, trivial things will gather in the mind and won't leave. Now you should put aside unimportant matters, stop engaging in idle thought, and concentrate the mind in order to get a real sense of moral principle. In this way the mind will become sharp, and once the mind's sharp, it'll become intimately familiar with moral principle. (10.4a:1/164:9)

4.17. In reading, open wide the mind and moral principle will appear. If the mind is anxious and under pressure, moral principle ultimately will have no way of appearing. (10.4a:5/164:12)

4.18. Your reading will be successful only if you understand the spot where everything interconnects—east and west meet at this pivotal point. Simply dedicate yourself to what you're doing at the moment, don't think about the past or the future, and you'll naturally get to this point. But now you say that you've never been able to do it (i.e., read properly), that you fear you're too slow, or fear that you're not up to doing it, or fear that it is difficult, or fear that you're stupid, or fear that you won't remember what you've read—all this is idle talk. Simply dedicate yourself to what you're doing at the moment, don't be concerned whether you're slow or fast, and soon you will naturally get there. Because you have never done it before, exert the right effort now, and make up for past failures. Don't look to your front or back, don't think about east or west, or soon you'll have wasted a lifetime without realizing that you've grown old. (10.4a:7/164:13)

4.19. There are a great many books in the world. If you just read them as you have been, when will you finish with them? You must expend a great deal of effort, for there's nothing in the world that can be done with little effort. But now those texts you should have been reading, you haven't yet read. How much less other texts! (10.4b:1/165:1)

4.20. Read little but become intimately familiar with what you read; experience the text over and over again; and do not think

about gain. Keep constantly to these three matters and nothing more. (10.4b:8/165:5)

4.21. Generally, in reading, students should keep to these three [dicta]: (1) read little but become intimately familiar with what you read; (2) don't scrutinize the text, developing your own far-fetched views of it, but rather personally experience it over and over again; and (3) concentrate fully, without thought of gain. (10.4b:9/165:6)

4.22. Best to read less but to become intimately familiar with what you read. That children remember what they've read and adults frequently don't is simply because children's minds are focused. If in one day they are given one hundred characters, they keep to one hundred characters; if given two hundred characters, they keep to two hundred characters. Adults sometimes read one hundred pages of characters in one day—they aren't so well focused. Often they read ten separate pieces when it would be best to read one part in ten. Extend the time you give to your reading; limit the size of your curriculum. (10.4b:11/165:8)

4.23. In reading, keep the curriculum small but the effort you make on it large. If you are able to read two hundred characters, read only one hundred, but on those one hundred make a truly fierce effort. Understand them in every detail, recite them until you are intimately familiar with them. In this way those with weak memories naturally will remember and those without the power of comprehension will be able to comprehend. If you read a great deal, but race through what you read, it will be of no benefit at all. In reading one text, you cannot simultaneously look at those you haven't yet read; you should, however, simultaneously look at those you've read already. (10.5a:7/165:14)

4.24. In reading, don't strive for quantity. Instead become intimately familiar with what you do read. If today you are able to read a page, read half a page; read that half page over and over with all your strength. Only if you read both halves of the page in this manner will you become intimately familiar with the page. And only if you read for the meaning of the ancients will your reading be right. (10.5a:11/166:1)

4.25. In reading, don't strive for quantity. Make sure that you always have a surplus of strength. Cheng-shun⁵ said: I wish to read around in the various books. Chu replied: You can't read like that. You must read one book thoroughly, and only then the next. If you read around chaotically in two books at the same time, you will experience great difficulty. It's like shooting a bow. If you have five pecks of strength, you should use a four-peck bow—you can draw it completely and still have strength remaining. Students nowadays don't think about their own strength when reading. I fear that we are not able to handle the reading we set out for ourselves. (10.5b:5/166:5)

4.26. You mustn't want to do everything at once. In a day a man can eat only three bowls of rice; he can't eat ten or more days worth of rice at one sitting. In a day you can read only so much, and your efforts have a limit as well. You mustn't want to do everything at once. (10.6a:1/166:10)

4.27. In your studies read just one text at a time. And only if you read just one paragraph per day will the text begin to become part of you. If you read this text and that, even though they might pass before your eyes, in the end you will not be intimately familiar with them. (10.6a:4/166:12)

4.28. I especially don't want people to skip around as they read. It's essential to focus on each and every paragraph, each and every sentence. (10.6a:9/167:1)

4.29. Reading is one way of apprehending the principle in things. Now we must carefully consider each and every paragraph, over and over again. If in one day or two days we read just one paragraph, this paragraph will become part of us. After gaining a solid understanding of this paragraph, we should read the next one. If we go on like this from paragraph to paragraph, after a while we will understand moral principle in its entirety. What's required here is that we never stop thinking, occasionally turning over and over in our minds what's already become clear to us; then, enlight-

5. Wan Jen-chieh, a disciple of Chu's who earlier had studied under Lu Chiu-yüan, Chu's philosophic rival. See *SJCC*, vol. 4, p. 3227, and Ch'en Jung-chieh, *Chu-tzu men-jen*, pp. 248-249.

enment may occur, without our specially arranging for it. For though the writing and the meaning of a text may have been explained in a certain way, each reading of it will produce its own understanding; thus, with some texts, each reading will lead to a revised understanding. As for those works that have already been definitively explained, with each reading our understanding will become still sounder, and much clearer. Hence I have said: "In reading, don't value quantity, value only your familiarity with what you've read." In our efforts to understand what we read, therefore, it's best to advance boldly and not think about retreating. (10.6a:10/167:2)

4.30. In your studies you should read for the meaning of the passage itself. You needn't complicate matters. Read each passage over and over again until you are thoroughly familiar with it. Only then will you understand its meaning; only then will you feel pleased. And only if you're not too eager to proceed to other paragraphs will you get something out of it. People often race ahead without ever turning back and reflecting. They simply want to read the next day's material that they haven't yet read; they won't go back and investigate what they've read already. It's essential to ponder matters over and over. Only then will you understand. If your effort is great, your understanding will be superb. And if your understanding is superb, benefits are assured. He also said: You can't speak nebulously or too broadly. What's necessary is that the mind be clear. (10.6b:6/167:7)

4.31. Generally, in reading, you must become intimately familiar with what you read. Intimate familiarity naturally will lead to complete mastery. And once you master what you read, principle naturally will become clear to you. It's like eating a piece of fruit. When you first bite into it, you don't yet know the taste. Then you eat it. You have to chew it thoroughly, and the taste naturally emerges. Then and only then do you appreciate whether it is sweet or bitter—and for the first time you know its taste. He also said: A gardener waters gardens. One who is good at watering them will water each vegetable, fruit, and tree according to its needs. Soon the watering will be sufficient, and the water and soil will be well mixed; each vegetable, fruit, and tree will be well nourished and grow naturally. One who isn't good at watering gardens will rush

matters. With bucketfuls of water he'll saturate the vegetables in the gardens. Others might think that he's tending the gardens well, but the vegetation in them won't be properly watered. He also said: As to the way to read, the more you exert yourself, the more far-reaching will be the results. At first you'll find it difficult, but later you will get it. At first it will be a real undertaking, but later you will grasp it. Everything you read is of the same principle. He also said: As to the method of reading, you must exert yourself as you read. If at first you expend a great deal of effort on a text, later not much effort will be necessary: if you expend 100 percent effort on a text at the beginning, later you'll expend 80 to 90 percent, later 60 to 70 percent, and finally 40 to 50 percent. (10.6b:12/167:11)

4.32. At the beginning you think you're able to do a hundred different things; in the end you're unable to do even one. (10.7b:9/168:9)

4.33. Generally speaking, in reading, we must first become intimately familiar with the text so that its words seem to come from our own mouths. We should then continue to reflect on it so that its ideas seem to come from our own minds. Only then can there be real understanding. Still, once our intimate reading of it and careful reflection on it have led to a clear understanding of it, we must continue to question. Then there might be additional progress. If we cease questioning, in the end there'll be no additional progress. (10.7b:11/168:11)

4.34. Books must be read to the point of intimate familiarity. A so-called book is just a book, but our tenth reading of it is different from our first reading, and our hundredth reading, likewise, is naturally different from our tenth. (10.8a:3/168:13)

4.35. To be a man is just to be a man, to read a book is just to read a book. Ordinarily, if a man reads a book ten times and doesn't understand it, he'll read it twenty times. If he still doesn't understand it, he'll read it thirty times. With the fiftieth reading there's sure to be some understanding. If with the fiftieth reading he's still in the dark and doesn't understand, it's that his psychophysical stuff is no good. Nowadays people have yet to read a book ten times, and they say they can't understand it. (10.8a:5/168:15)

4.36. You cannot keep track of the number of times you read a book. When the number's sufficient, stop. (10.8a: 11/169:3)

4.37. In a response to a student, Wen-kung⁶ explained the way of learning, citing Hsün-tzu's four lines, "[The superior man] recites texts [*sung shu*, literally, "recites number"] in order to penetrate [*kuan*] the Way, ponders in order to understand it, associates with men who embody it in order to make it part of himself, and shuns those who impede it in order to sustain and nourish it."⁷ Hsün-tzu's explanation is pretty good. As for the term *sung shu* [literally, "recites number"], I believe that when the ancients recited a text [*sung shu*, literally, "recites a text"] they kept track of the number of times. The character *kuan* means *shu*, "to be intimately familiar with" as in "what we're accustomed to [*hsi-kuan*] becomes second nature to us."⁸ It also means *t'ung*, "to understand thoroughly." Only if we're read to the point of intimate familiarity are we able to understand thoroughly. And if we haven't read to the point of intimate familiarity, there is nothing we can possibly ponder. (10.8b:3/169:6)

4.38. In a note to Li Chi-chung,⁹ Shan-ku¹⁰ said: "I don't know which of all the Classics and all the histories I'm most intimately familiar with. In general, students are fond of breadth but often lack detailed understanding. They spread themselves over a hundred different books, which isn't as good as having a detailed understanding of one—and if they still had the strength afterward, they could turn to other books. In this way, even if they were to wade and hunt through numerous works, they'd still get the gist. It seems that if our reading of books is based on our capabilities we will benefit from each and every passage, but if the books overwhelm us, even when we're finished with them we'll still be vague

6. Ssu-ma Kuang.

7. See *Hsün-tzu*, p. 3; the translation is from Watson, *Hsun Tzu*, p. 22, with some modification.

8. This phrase, *hsi-kuan ju tzu-jan*, is from *K'ung-tzu chia-yü* 9.7a. This passage may appear puzzling at first to the reader since the transliteration *shu* here is used to represent three different Chinese characters, "number," "text," and "to be intimately familiar with."

9. I can find no biographical information on him.

10. Huang T'ing-chien (1045-1105), a scholar-official best known for his poetry and calligraphy.

about their meaning."¹¹ The Master took great delight in this comment and felt it would be helpful to his students. (10.8b:7/169:9)

4.39. In reading, to comprehend a passage, you should have a detailed understanding of it. If you don't understand it in detail, your reading of other passages will be muddled too. If you understand one passage in detail, others will be easy to understand. Shan-ku's note¹² explains the method of reading extremely well. (10.8b:11/169:12)

4.40. Students who are overzealous don't understand in detail the meaning of what they read. In reading, you have to be very careful; it's essential that you understand every sentence and every character with certainty. If your effort is lax and you're not given to reflection, you'll simply conclude that there's nothing in your understanding of it that need be doubted; it isn't really that there's nothing to be doubted, but since your understanding isn't complete you just don't realize it. In learning, there's generally a distinction between young and old. When we're young, we have excess energy; it's essential that we leave nothing unread and that we analyze fully the meaning of what we read. By contrast, as we approach old age, we must select out what's important and devote our efforts to it; in reading a particular book, we're aware that later on it will be difficult to summon up the effort to look at it again. We must ponder it deeply and analyze it to its limits, and we'll understand its meaning. It would seem that in the moral principle of the universe there's nothing but right and wrong. Right is right, wrong is wrong, and once we're certain about which is which, though we may not reread a text, the principle in it will naturally infuse us. We'll see it once and never forget it. This may all be compared to eating and drinking. If we chew slowly, the flavor lasts. If we take big bites and big gulps, in the end we don't know the flavor. (10.9a:1/169:14)

4.41. The value of a book is in the recitation¹³ of it. By reciting it often, we naturally come to understand it. Now, even if we ponder

11. I have not located this letter in any of the editions of Huang's writings available to me.

12. See the preceding passage.

13. It is clear from context that throughout this passage Chu means by *tu*, "to recite," and not just "to read." Of course, *tu* commonly carries the meaning of "to read aloud."

over what's written on the paper, it's useless, for in the end it isn't really ours. There's value only in recitation, though I don't know how the mind so naturally becomes harmonious with the psychophysical stuff, feels uplifted and energized, and remembers securely what it reads. Even supposing we were to read through a text thoroughly, pondering it over and over in our minds, it wouldn't be as good as reciting it. If we recite it again and again, in no time the incomprehensible becomes comprehensible and the already comprehensible becomes even more meaningful. But if the recitation doesn't reach the point of intimate familiarity, it won't be so meaningful at all. At the moment I'm not even speaking about the recitation of commentaries; let's simply recite the classical texts to the point of intimate familiarity. Whether we are walking or at a standstill, sitting or lying down, if our minds are always on these texts, we'll naturally come to understand them. It has occurred to me that recitation [*tu*] is learning [*hsüeh*]. The Master said: "Learning [*hsüeh*] without thinking is a waste; thinking without learning is dangerous."¹⁴ Learning is reciting. If we recite it then think it over, think it over then recite it, naturally it'll become meaningful to us. If we recite it but don't think it over, we still won't appreciate its meaning. If we think it over but don't recite it, even though we might understand it, our understanding will be precarious. It's just like hiring somebody else to guard our home: because he isn't one of the family, in the end he can't be used as we would use a family member. Should we recite it to the point of intimate familiarity, and moreover think about it in detail, naturally our mind and principle will become one and never shall we forget what we've read. I used to find it hard to remember texts. Then I simply recited them aloud. What I remember now is the result of recitation. Old Su¹⁵ simply took the *Book of Mencius*, the *Analects*, the *Han Fei-tzu*, and the writings of the various sages and for seven or eight years sat quietly reciting them. Afterward he wrote a number of things that were very good. To be sure, his natural abilities couldn't be matched, but still it was essential that he recite as he did. And yet, reciting the texts, he merely wanted to pattern his writing on what was written there. Now if we were to turn our minds and his sort of

14. *Lun-yü* 2/15.

15. Su Hsün (1009–1061), the father of Su Shih and Su Ch'e.

natural ability to the investigation of moral principle, we'd find it right there in the text. Thus we know that the value of a text is in the intimate recitation of it. There is no other way. (10.9a:9/170:3)

4.42. The method of reading is to recite a text, then ponder it over; to ponder it over, then recite it. Oral recitation of a text helps us to think about it. For our minds then hover over the words. If it's just a matter of the mouth doing the reading but the mind doing no thinking, what'll our understanding be like? We won't remember what we've read in any detail. He also said: Because nowadays the number of printed texts is large, people don't put their minds to reading them. As for the Confucians of the Han period, in instructing one another in the Classics, they just recited them from memory. Hence, they remembered them well. But as a result the passages they cited would often contain mistaken characters. For example, in his citations from the *Book of History* and *Book of Poetry*, Mencius was often mistaken. This was because he had nothing to base himself on—he was simply recalling them from memory. (10.10a:1/170:13)

4.43. The reason people today read sloppily is that there are a great many printed texts. The ancients all used bamboo strips to copy out their texts, so only a powerful person could have it done. How could a person of little account manage it? Thus as Wu Hui of the Later Han was about to prepare bamboo strips in order to copy down the *Han History*, his son, Wu Yu, pleaded with him: "If this book is completed, it'll have to be carried about in a cart. Formerly, Ma Yüan was slandered on account of pearl barley. And Wang Yang hoped his pouched clothing would bring him fame."¹⁶ Wu

16. On one of his military expeditions to the south, General Ma Yüan (14 B.C.—A.D. 49) discovered that pearl barley was effective in overcoming malaria, and when he returned north he brought back a cartload with him, intending to cultivate it there. The people of the north saw the cartload of pearl barley and believed the barley to be precious pearls from the south. Consequently, they suspected Ma of accepting bribes; see *Hou Han shu*, vol. 3, 24.846. Wang Yang was fond of carriages and horses and enjoyed wearing new clothes. But when he moved, he took nothing with him but his clothing, which had one pouch in it. The people thus came to believe that Wang was able to manufacture gold. See *Han shu*, vol. 10, 72.3068. Wu Yu's point here is that his father should not incite people's suspicion, such was the labor and expense involved in copying out a text. Wu Yu's comment is from *Hou Han shu*, vol. 8, 64.2099.

Yu's comment makes the point precisely [i.e., that the ancients had to copy out their texts and to do so was difficult]. Huang Pa received the *Book of History* from Hsia-hou Sheng in prison.¹⁷ Only with the passing of two winters was it transmitted. It would seem that the ancients had no written texts, so only if they had memorized a work from beginning to end would they get it. Those studying a text would memorize it completely and afterward receive instruction on it from a teacher. Tung-p'o¹⁸ wrote "An Account of the Collection in Mr. Li's Studio";¹⁹ at that time books were still difficult for one to acquire.²⁰ Ch'ao I-tao²¹ once wanted to get hold of the Kung and Ku commentaries;²² he searched everywhere for them but came up empty-handed. Later he found one copy of them, and only then was he able to copy them out for his own use. For people today even copying down a text has become bothersome. Therefore, their reading is sloppy. (10.10a:7/171:1)

4.44. When students today read a text, it's just as if they had never read it. When they haven't read it, it's just as if they had. (10.11a:1/171:14)

4.45. Since coming from T'an-chou,²³ I have spoken about nothing else. I haven't stopped telling people to read extremely carefully. (10.11a:10/172:6)

4.46. In reading, simply take what you already understand and read it again and again. (10.11b:11/172:16)

4.47. Nowadays in reading a text, people have yet to read to this point here, and their minds are already on some later passage. And

17. Hsia-hou Sheng was a master of the *Book of History* in the Former Han. Huang Pa held various important official positions. They were both imprisoned for protesting Emperor Hsüan's (r. 74-49 B.C.) decision to honor his great grandfather, Emperor Wu (r. 141-87 B.C.).

18. Su Shih. See above, Part One, "Chu Hsi and the Crisis of the Way in the Twelfth Century" and "Chu Hsi and the Transformation of the Confucian Tradition."

19. Found in Su Shih, *Su Tung-p'o ch'üan-chi*, vol. 1, pp. 388-389. Mr. Li is a reference to Li Ch'ang (1027-1090); see *SJCC*, vol. 2, pp. 869-870.

20. Su Shih argues this point in the essay.

21. Ch'ao lived from 1059 to 1129 and wrote a book entitled *Ch'ao-shih k'o-yu*; see Hervouet, *Sung Bibliography*, p. 279.

22. The *Kung-yang* and *Ku-liang* commentaries on the *Ch'un-ch'iu*.

23. Chu was prefect of T'an-chou (modern Hunan) in 1194.

as soon as they do read what's here, they wish to put it aside [and move on]. This sort of reading doesn't aim for a personal understanding of the text. We must linger over what we read, longing to understand it. Only if we don't wish to put it aside will we come to a personal appreciation of it. He also said: Reading a text is like looking at this house here. If you view the house from the outside, then say that you have finished seeing it, there'll be no way to understand it. You must go inside and look around at each and every thing. What's the size and layout of the structure? What's the extent of the latticework? Look through the house once, then again and again. Remember everything, and you'll have understood it. (10.11b:12/173:1)

4.48. Be sure to ponder what you read. Then you'll see the meaning²⁴ leap right out from the text. (10.12a:8/173:7)

4.49. In reading, you must behold the style and coherence of the writing. (10.12a:10/173:9)

4.50. In reading, don't be obsessed with finishing. For as soon as you are, your mind will simply fix itself on the blank page at the end of the book, which will be of no benefit. (10.12b:4/173:14)

4.51. A man reading is like a man drinking wine. A man who loves drinking will finish one cup and want still another. A man who doesn't love it will force his way through one cup and stop. (10.12b:9/174:1)

4.52. In reading, you must set a limit beforehand. Managing your reading is like farm work; in farming there are boundary lines. Learning is the same. Beginning students today don't appreciate this principle. At the outset they are extremely zealous, but gradually they become more and more indolent. And in the end they pay no attention at all. This is simply because they don't set limits at the outset. (10.12b:11/174:2)

24. Without much context here it is difficult to know whether to translate *i-li* "meaning" or "moral principle." Chu uses the term in both senses in his works, though, to be sure, much more frequently in the sense of moral principle; I would argue, however, that in the end the "meaning" of the sages' texts was nothing but "moral principle," and thus the two possible translations—at least when Chu is talking about the *i-li* of texts—amount to the same thing. The reader should note that this is not the only passage in these selections that poses this problem.

4.53. These days those who truly read are few, the reason being the pernicious influence of the examination essay. Men make up their minds to seek the unusual in the texts even before they read them—and pay no attention whatsoever to the original meaning. Having got the unusual from them, they imitate it in their examination essays; in the end they're accomplished only at using the unusual in the texts. Even if there were some great ritual at court, they'd still incautiously pick out the unusual from the texts and use it, without realizing that one false move results in a hundred broken pieces. Our elders read these texts too. I once met the elder Tung-lai's²⁵ older brother. He fully understood the Six Classics and the Three Commentaries²⁶ and punctuated them himself. In the commentaries [to the Six Classics and Three Commentaries], moreover, he used small circles for punctuation; and where the meaning of the commentaries wasn't adequate, he would write subcommentary in the clerical style using vermilion punctuation. No punctuation or stroke was made in haste. I saw only his *Book of Rites*, and it took this form; so did [his work] on all the other Classics. Previously, the Lüs had been wealthy and honorable. And even though they had held official positions, in most cases they had not presented themselves for the examinations; they had been able to delight in the reading of books. The family pattern that had thus evolved was broken by Po-kung.²⁷ Since then the Lüs have written the examination essay; and rarely have there been those willing to read in the manner of the elder Tung-lai's older brother. (10.14a:7/175:8)

4.54. People beyond mid-life shouldn't read much; they should simply turn the little they do read over and over in their minds. Then they'll naturally understand moral principle. (10.14b:5/175:15)

25. The "elder Tung-lai" refers to Lü Pen-chung (1084–1145), a noted poet and scholar. See *SJCC*, vol. 2, pp. 1199–1201, and Franke, *Sung Biographies*, vol. 2, pp. 729–735.

26. I.e., the *Kung-yang*, *Ku-liang*, and *Tso* commentaries on the *Ch'un-ch'iu*.

27. Lü Tsu-ch'ien, Pen-chung's nephew. See above, Part One, "Restoring the Way: Chu Hsi's Educational Activities."

Five

On Reading, Part 2
(Chapter 11)

5.1. As for learning, people strongly desire to acquire it in their minds and embody it in their persons. But if they don't read books, they won't understand what it is their minds are to acquire. (11.1a:4/176:4)

5.2. The books you read, the principle you probe, should be embodied in your person. I don't know whether what you routinely study and probe is on your mind at all times or not. But if it isn't, you're just hurrying through the texts, reading for their literal meaning and taking little pleasure in them. This, I fear, will be of no benefit to you in the end. (11.1a:6/176:5)

5.3. If a person reads constantly, he can pretty much control his mind and thereby keep it constantly preserved. Heng-ch'ü said: "Books are the way to maintain the mind. The moment you put them down is the moment your virtuous nature grows lax."¹ How then can one neglect reading? (11.1a:9/176:7)

5.4. The beginner is sure to have lapses in his inner mental attentiveness. But as soon as he's aware there's been a lapse, he'll arouse his mind. Awareness of the lapse then leads to the resumption of inner mental attentiveness. What I hope is that people, in reading, will grasp moral principle for themselves. If they read all day long,

1. *Chang Tsai chi*, p. 275; cf. Kasoff, *Thought of Chang Tsai*, p. 88.

their minds won't become reckless, but if they get involved in affairs and things, their minds will easily become submerged. If you understand this, then in reading you'll grasp moral principle for yourselves, and you can return [to the right path]. (11.1a:11/176:9)

5.5. When one's original mind has been submerged for a long time, and the moral principle in it hasn't been fully penetrated, it's best to read books and probe principle without any interruption; then, the mind of human desire will naturally be incapable of winning out, and the moral principle in the original mind will naturally become safe and secure. (11.1b:3/176:12)

According to Chu Hsi, the distinction between the original or ontological mind (*pen-hsin*, *tao-hsin*) and the human mind (*jen-hsin*) was first made by Shun in the *Book of History*: "The human mind is precarious, the ontological mind is almost imperceptible. Be discriminating, be undivided, that you may sincerely hold fast the mean."² In his "Preface to the *Doctrine of the Mean in Chapters and Verses*, Chu explains what Shun meant by this statement: "The mind—unprejudiced, spiritual, and conscious—is one. But that there is a distinction between the 'human mind' and the 'ontological mind' is because of this: the mind at times arises in the self-centeredness of the psychophysical stuff and at times originates in the perfect impartiality of the moral nature decreed by heaven, so the resulting consciousnesses are different. Hence the mind can be precarious and unsettled, or abstruse and almost imperceptible. Yet all men have a psychophysical form, so even the very wisest will always have a human mind; and all men have a moral nature, so even the very stupidest will always have an ontological mind. If the human mind and the ontological mind become mixed in the heart and one does not know how to control them, the precarious will become even more precarious, the imperceptible will become even more imperceptible, and the impartiality of the heavenly principle in the end will be unable to overcome the selfishness of human desires. 'Be discriminating' means to distinguish between the human and ontological minds so that they do not become mixed. 'Be undivided' means to protect the perfect impartiality of the original mind so that it does not take leave of one. Should one devote oneself without interruption to these matters, making certain that the ontological mind always acts as master of the body and the human mind always obeys its orders, the precarious will become set-

2. *Shang shu* 4.8b; the second sentence of this translation is from Legge, *Chinese Classics*, vol. 3, pp. 61–62.

tled and the almost imperceptible will become manifest. And in activity and tranquillity, in words and actions, one will not err in going either too far or not far enough" (preface to *Chung-yung chang-chü* 1a:7).

5.6. It's essential that preserving the mind and reading books constitute one matter; only then will you succeed. (11.1b:5/177:1)

5.7. In reading, you must keep your mind glued to the text. Only when every sentence and every character falls into place have you done a good job of thinking through the work. In general, the student should collect his mind so that it's completely tranquil and pure and in its normal activity and tranquillity doesn't run wild or become confused. Only then will he understand the text in all of its detail. Reading like this, he'll understand the essentials. (11.1b:8/177:3)

5.8. Formerly, Mr. Ch'en Li³ was distressed that he had no [power of] memory. One day he read the *Book of Mencius*: "The great end of learning is nothing else but to seek for the lost mind."⁴ Suddenly, he was enlightened and said: "If my mind is not retrieved, how will I be able to remember a book?" Thereupon he shut his door and engaged in quiet-sitting; for more than a hundred days he didn't look at a book and thereby retrieved his lost mind. He then went to read, and with one glance he absorbed everything. (11.2a:2/177:7)

5.9. It's often because their minds are not present as they read that students don't understand moral principle. The words of the sages and worthies were originally clear of themselves. Simply give a little attention to them and you'll see the moral principle in them. If you were to concentrate, you'd certainly see it. (11.2a:5/177:9)

5.10. When the mind isn't settled, it doesn't understand principle. Presently, should you want to engage in book learning, you must first settle the mind so that it becomes like still water or a clear mirror. How can a cloudy mirror reflect anything? (11.2a:7/177:11)

5.11. If your will is not firmly fixed, how are you going to read? (11.2a:9/177:12)

3. For a brief biography see *SJCC*, vol. 4, p. 3463.

4. *Meng-tzu* 6A/11; translation from Legge, *Chinese Classics*, vol. 2, p. 414.

5.12. There is a method to book learning. Simply scrub clean the mind, then read. If you don't understand the text, put it down for the moment, wait until your thoughts have cleared, then pick it up and read it again. Now we speak about the need to open up our minds. The mind, how can we open it? We just have to take it and keep it focused on the text. (11.2a:10/177:13)

5.13. In reading, you want both body and mind to enter into the passage. Don't concern yourself with what's going on elsewhere and you'll see the principle in the passage. Take the case of "one who studies widely and with set purpose, who questions earnestly, then thinks for himself about what he has heard"; why is it said that "such a one will incidently achieve goodness"?⁵ It would seem that if we're able to preserve our minds at all times, not letting them run wild, we'll naturally come to understand principle. Nowadays people think about other matters at the same time that they're reading. This is just a waste of time; better to put the text aside, wait until the aroused thoughts have quieted down, then read. (11.2b:1/177:15)

5.14. I'm afraid that students often read recklessly because their efforts basically aren't well regulated. It's simply that they read with confused and disordered minds, not clear, settled ones. It would be better if they first nurtured the source. They should turn the moral principle with which they're already intimate over and over in their minds, until it permeates their entire person, and afterward go read the text. Then naturally they'd understand it. This is simply how it is. Old Su⁶ described his learning to write, saying: "I took the writings of the ancients and read them. When I first saw the words and ideas of the ancients, I found them so different from mine. With time I read them in greater detail, and my mind suddenly became clear." His words are certainly apt; that the effort he made learning to write led to insight can instruct us on how texts are to be read today. The effort should be very much like this. He also said: After reading a paragraph or two, you should relax the mind so that it is free from anxiety. Don't strive for

5. *Lun-yü* 19/6; translation from Waley, *Analects*, p. 225.

6. Su Hsün.

quantity. He also said: Lu Tzu-ching⁷ once talked about the way others read. It can indeed be just as he said.⁸ (11.2b:6/178:3)

5.15. You can't think about a text for an entire day. To do so, fear, would be forcing the mind to chase after it. You need to rest while and nurture your mental energy, and then return to your reading. (11.3a:7/178:11)

5.16. Generally speaking, in reading a text, we must recite it aloud. We can't just think about it. If our mouths recite it, our minds will feel calm, and its meaning will naturally become apparent. When I first began my studies, this is just what I did. There's no other way (11.3b:3/179:1)

5.17. In reading, students must compose themselves and sit up straight; look leisurely at the text and hum softly; open their minds and immerse themselves in the words; and make the reading relevant to themselves, closely examining their own conduct. He also said: In reading a sentence of text, we must ascertain for ourselves where we might sometime put that sentence into practice. He also said: Right words we absolutely must read; wrong ones too we must read. Refined words we absolutely must read; vulgar ones too we must read. (11.3b:5/179:3)

5.18. In our reading, it's essential to open our minds and to make the reading relevant to our selves. Only by opening our minds are we able to understand the meaning of the sages and worthies. And by making the reading relevant to our selves, the words of the sages and worthies will not be empty. (11.3b:8/179:5)

5.19. In reading a text, you must open your mind. Don't come to the text with preconceived ideas—you'll commit many mistakes in no time at all. He also said: Open the mind and make the reading relevant to yourself. If you open your mind, you'll understand moral principle clearly. If you make the reading relevant to yourself, you'll naturally grasp its meaning for yourself. (11.3b:10/179:6)

7. Chu's philosophic rival, Lu Chiu-yüan.

8. This last comment by Chu about Lu Chiu-yüan is too brief to make much sense of.

5.20. Every word of the sages is heavenly principle and as it should be. Basically, it's easy to be clear about their words, but people don't read them with open minds; they do nothing more than apprehend them superficially. Not understanding the words of the sages, they express their own common ideas and take them as those of the sages. (11.3b:12/179:8)

5.21. Generally speaking, to get moral principle, you must open your mind and read for the true meaning of the classical text. (11.4a:10/179:16)

5.22. Someone asked: In reading, what do you do when you become confused by a multitude of views? The Master replied: You have to open your mind and read through each and every view. Read one view, then another. Read them over and over again, and the right and the wrong, the good and the bad, will all naturally become clear. This can be compared to a person wanting to know if a certain man is good or bad. He should keep his eye on him wherever he goes, following him here and there, observing his words and deeds, and then he'll know whether he's good or bad. He also said: You simply must open your mind. He also said: Wash away the old opinions to bring forth a new understanding.⁹ (11.5a:6/180:13)

5.23. To read, you should calm the mind. Generally, you can't bore right through the text you're looking at; you have to proceed from the intelligible passages, not from the obscure ones. The words of the sages and worthies often take the form of conversations with others. If they were lofty and hard to follow, how would the people of that time have understood them? (11.5a:11/180:16)

5.24. Depend on the text to read the text, depend on the object to observe the object. Don't come to the text or the object with preconceived ideas. (11.5b:4/181:4)

5.25. Reading must be an experience meaningful to the self. You can't merely read through the words, nor can you "help them to grow."¹⁰ (11.5b:5/181:5)

9. This is a slight rewording of a statement first made by Chang Tsai. See 3.26.
10. I.e., force them to grow. From *Meng-tzu* 2A/2; see 3.37.

5.26. In reading, we cannot seek moral principle solely from the text. We must turn the process around and look for it in ourselves. Since the Ch'in-Han period, no one has spoken about this; people simply have sought it in the text, not in themselves. We have yet to discover for ourselves what the sages previously explained in their texts—only through their words will we find it in ourselves. (11.5b:9/181:8)

5.27. In learning, we have to read for ourselves, so that the understanding we reach is personally meaningful. Nowadays, however, people read simply for the sake of the civil service examinations. And once they pass the examinations, they read for the sake of [learning to] compose miscellaneous prose. As for the eminent among them, they read for the sake of [learning to] compose ancient-style prose.¹¹ In all these instances they're reading not for themselves but for other reasons. (11.6b:7/182:7)

5.28. Among the ways to read, there is concentrating on the essentials and the main points; there is coming to an understanding of each and every matter; and then there is explaining the meaning of the words. (11.6b:9/182:9)

5.29. Someone asked about not understanding the importance of what's been read. The Master replied: How is it that one may understand the importance of what one reads? Recently, there's been a kind of student who discards the text, hoping to discover the moral principle in one word or half a sentence. There's another kind who reads widely in the texts without understanding their gist. Neither of these types knows how to learn. One must read intimately and reflect intimately, and after a while one will naturally understand moral principle perfectly. In so doing, one will naturally come to understand what you call the "importance of what's been read." (11.6b:12/182:11)

11. *Ku-wen*, or ancient-style prose, had developed, beginning in the T'ang dynasty, as a reaction to the highly stylized prose of the day (*shih-wen*). It was supposed to allow the writer the freedom to concentrate primarily on cultivating the Way, not literary style, in his writing. As this comment suggests, Chu Hsi believed that many of his contemporaries practiced *ku-wen* principally as a means of furthering their reputations.

5.30. In reading, don't force your ideas on the text. You must get rid of your own ideas and read for the meaning of the ancients. In his explanation of "straight, square, and great" [from the *Book of Changes*], Master Ch'eng cited Mencius.¹² It may have been Master Ch'eng's explanation, but in the end it was right on target. (11.9a:7/185:1)

5.31. Whenever you read a text, first come to an understanding of its words, and then read to see if its views accord with principle or not. If they do, they're right, and if not, they're wrong. Nowadays people usually have an idea in their own minds first, then take what other men have said [in the texts] to explain their idea. What doesn't conform to their idea they forcibly make to conform. (11.9a:12/185:5)

5.32. Students mustn't compromise the words of the sages with their own ideas. (11.9b:3/185:7)

5.33. The problem students have with reading is simply that they wish to advance and are unwilling to retreat and reread. The more they advance, the more their reading lacks understanding. It'd be better if they were to retreat but fully comprehend what they read. In general, the problem is that they stick to their opinions and are unwilling to give them up. It's just like hearing litigation: if beforehand the mind supports proposition B, it will simply search for the wrongs in A; and if beforehand it supports A, it will simply discover the wrongs in B. Better to put aside one's views toward A and B and slowly examine them both. Only then will one be able to distinguish right from wrong. Heng-ch'ü said: "Wash away the old understanding and bring forth new ideas."¹³ This statement is

12. In explaining the passage in *Chou i*, p. 3, which reads, "Six in the second place means: Straight, square, great. Without purpose, yet nothing remains unfurled" (translation from Wilhelm, *I ching*, p. 13), Ch'eng I said, "Because it is straight, square, and great, it's without purpose and yet nothing remains unfurled. 'Without purpose' means that it's natural. In the way of *k'un*, nothing activates it, yet it's active; in the sage it effortlessly attains to the Way. 'Straight, square, great' (*chih fang ta*) is what Mencius referred to as 'exceedingly great, exceedingly strong, and straight (*chih-ta chih-kang i chih yeh*).'" Mencius used these words in *Meng-tzu* 2A/2 to describe the "flood-like *ch'i*." For Ch'eng I's comment see *I-ch'uan I-chuan* 1.9b-10a.

13. *Chang Tsai chi*, p. 321.

extremely apt. If one doesn't wash away the old understanding, where will the new ideas arise? Students today have two kinds of flaws: one is that they let themselves be ruled by personal prejudices; the other is that they embrace received theories. Even if they wished to shake free of these, they'd still naturally be troubled by them. (11.10a:3/185:16)

5.34. Students can't simply hold on to what they previously believed. They must get rid of it, and only then will new ideas occur to them. It's like discarding dirty water; afterward clear water will appear. (11.10a:10/186:5)

5.35. When you get to a passage you don't comprehend, you ought to "wash away the old understanding and bring forth new ideas."¹⁴ Still, you should simply follow the text. (11.10a:12/186:6)

5.36. In reading, if you have no doubts, encourage them. And if you do have doubts, get rid of them. Only when you've reached this point have you made progress. (11.11a:1/186:15)

5.37. The problem with men is that they feel the views of others alone may be doubted, not their own. Should they try to reproach themselves as they reproach others, they may come to realize their own merits and demerits. (11.11a:4/187:2)

5.38. Thereupon someone entreated him to transmit it in lectures and discussions. Chu replied: The words of the sages and worthies are luminous, like the sun and the moon [i.e., lectures and discussions are unnecessary]. He also said: People are afflicted with a desire to speed through [what they read]. I once read a collection of poetry with another man. He routinely skipped over the titles of the poems. Not even to read the titles of the poems—what kind of reading of poetry is that? I once saw the inside of Kung Shih-chih's¹⁵ sedan chair. There was but one text to read, which shows he was focused and calm. He added: Normally when a person goes out, he places three or four texts in his sedan chair. He reads one book, and when he gets bored he reads another. What kind of effort is this? (11.11a:6/187:4)

14. Chang Tsai's comment. See 5.33.

15. Kung Mou-liang (1121-1178). See *SJCC*, vol. 5, pp. 4504-4505.

5.39. Someone asked about the various methods of reading the Classics. The Master replied: There is no method. Just read calmly and with an open mind. (11.11b:7/187:13)

5.40. In learning, don't skip steps, and don't be careless. It's a waste of energy. You should follow the proper sequence. And if by following the prescribed method you come to understand one Classic intimately, other texts will be easy to read. (11.11b:8/187:14)

5.41. When we read the Six Classics, it should be just as if there were no Six Classics. We're simply seeking the moral principle in ourselves—this principle is easy to understand. (11.12a:3/188:3)

5.42. In learning, we must first establish the great base: at the outset learning should be concerned largely with what's essential; in the middle stage, largely with breadth; and in the end, with what is essential again. Mencius said: "Learn widely and go into what you have learned in detail so that in the end you can return to the essential."¹⁶ Thus we must first read the *Analects*, the *Book of Mencius*, the *Greater Learning*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean* in order to examine the intentions of the sages and worthies; we must read the histories to examine the traces of dynastic preservation and ruin, order and disorder; and we must read the thinkers of the hundred schools to observe their various faults. There is a proper sequence to these steps; we can't skip over any of them. Nowadays scholars often find pleasure in what is essential but never pursue broad knowledge. I don't know how they can examine what is essential without having first pursued broad knowledge. If a certain person is fond of what's essential, he'll just become a Buddhist priest, concerned with understanding himself alone. There are also scholars who concentrate only on broad knowledge and never return to what's essential. Today they examine one institution, tomorrow another. They merely exert themselves on what's of practical application—their problem is even more severe than that of the essentialists, who ignore broad knowledge. In the end neither type benefits. (11.12a:12/188:10)

5.43. Reading the Classics is different from reading the histories. History is superficial stuff, not important. You can take notes on it

16. *Meng-tzu* 4B/15; translation from Lau, *Mencius*, p. 130.

then ask others about it. But should you have questions about a Classic, the affliction will be keen; you'll be like a person who is in pain and wants to alleviate it quickly but can't. It's not at all like reading the histories, where if you happen to have a question you just jot it down on a piece of paper. (11.13b:6/189:14)

5.44. Hao¹⁷ said: Clerk Chao¹⁸ stated, "Once you've come to an understanding on your own, read the Six Classics, the *Analects*, and the *Book of Mencius*. As for the rest, the histories and the miscellaneous writings, there's no need to read them." The idea here is that when you buy gold you must seek out a gold merchant. Where are you going to find gold in a general store?—there's no need to inquire there. Chu replied: Such is the case. But if you have no understanding of the successes and failures, both of antiquity and the present, your learning will be the learning of Ching-kung.¹⁹ There are no books that shouldn't be read. I fear only that we won't have the great strength to read through them all. The Six Classics are the works of the Three Dynasties and earlier and passed through the hands of the Sage—in every respect they are heavenly principle. Post-Three Dynasties texts have strengths and weaknesses, yet heavenly principle inheres in them just the same. Adhering to the standard, we should examine these texts, for they all constitute learning. (11.13b:9/189:16)

5.45. Once principle is clear to you, you will even get something out of reading the works of Shen [Pu-hai] and Han [Fei-tzu].²⁰ (11.14a:11/190:9)

5.46. To come, through reading, to an understanding of moral principle, we must endure daily hardship, quitting only when we've

17. Kuo Hao, a disciple of Chu's. See *SJCC*, vol. 3, pp. 2115–2116, and Ch'en Jung-chieh, *Chu-tzu men-jen*, pp. 205–206.

18. I have not been able to identify him.

19. I.e., Wang An-shih; see above, Part One, "Chu Hsi and the Transformation of the Confucian Tradition." Wang was deeply devoted to the classical texts, in particular the *Shih ching*, the *Shu ching*, and the *Chou li*, and showed little interest in history or historical texts. Wang, of course, is best known for his program of governmental reforms, which was derived, in part, from his understanding of the *Chou li*. This reform program, in the end, largely failed. Chu's comment here is no doubt intended to be a criticism of both Wang's learning and his reforms, which had not demonstrated the necessary historical sensitivity.

20. Two of the most prominent members of the Legalist school, who lived during the fourth and third centuries B.C., respectively.

grasped it [i.e., moral principle]. Even King Wen worked hard. How much harder should those of little virtue work! There's a kind of talk going around these days that makes the younger students lax. People say things like, "I wouldn't dare criticize my elders," or "I wouldn't dare engage in reckless talk"—all of which suits the fancy of those who are lazy. To be sure, we wouldn't dare criticize our elders recklessly, but what harm is there in discussing the rights and wrongs of what they did? And to be sure, we mustn't engage in idle talk, but some parts of our reading pose problems while some parts are clear, so we have to discuss it. Those who don't discuss it are reading without dealing with the problems. Let's compare the essential meaning of a text with the different explanations of it to find out which explanations are correct. Naturally, some will accord with the essential meaning and some won't. (11.14b:2/190:11)

5.47. Thereupon he spoke about the method of reading a text, saying: You should read it ten or more times. Once you've understood 40 to 50 percent of the meaning, look at the annotation. Having understood another 20 to 30 percent, read the classical text again and you'll understand yet another 10 to 20 percent. Previously, I didn't comprehend the *Book of Mencius* because its paragraphs were so long. Then I read it in the manner just described, and although at first its paragraphs were long its meaning nevertheless cohered from beginning to end. Someone further inquired: In reading, the mind often becomes confused. The Master said: It's that the mind is difficult to hold on to. Those who understand this problem are few. Previously, I cited the line from the *Doctrine of the Mean*, "Truthfulness is the beginning and end of all things; without truthfulness, you have nothing,"²¹ and explained it to Chih-ch'ing:²² "Suppose that you're reading a text of ten lines, and you're intent on memorizing the first nine of them. If the mind doesn't go astray, it will fix on these nine lines. This is to be 'truthful' to them; this is 'to have them.' As a result, these nine lines, from beginning to end,

21. *Chung-yung* 25/2; translation based on Legge, *Chinese-Classics*, vol. 1, p. 418.

22. Huang Kan (1152-1221), Chu's disciple and son-in-law; see *SJCC*, vol. 4, pp. 2865-2866, and Ch'en Jung-chieh, *Chu-tzu men-jen*, pp. 261-262.

will be of benefit to you. As for the final line, your mind hasn't fixed on it—here you'll be 'without truthfulness' and 'have nothing.'" (11.14b:8/190:15)

5.48. In reading, as a general rule, people should keep their minds open and read the classical text²³ with a singleness of purpose, until they've become intimately familiar with it. They mustn't come to it with their own ideas about what it will say. They should read it through, then ponder it deeply. Once they've become intimately familiar with it, its words will be their own. Only if they read it in this manner will they understand it. Among today's students one type wants to engage in reading solely that he might learn to compose prose; another type wants his speech to be unusual so that what others say won't compare with what he says. These are serious flaws in the students. The situation may be compared to listening to another person. You should follow every word he utters; don't cut him off and substitute what he's saying with your own ideas. If you do so, you won't understand in the least whether what he's saying is right or wrong. For what is said will merely be your own words. In the end this will be of no help at all. After a while he continued: You must take the classical text and read it till you've become intimately familiar with it. Savor each and every word until you know its taste. If there are passages you don't understand, ponder them deeply, and if you still don't get them, then read the commentaries—only then will the commentaries have any significance. It's like a man who is hungry and then eats or who is thirsty and then drinks—only then does the food or drink have any flavor. If he is not hungry or thirsty and he forces himself to drink or eat, in the end it will be of no benefit to him. He also said: The explanations in my collected commentaries on the *Analects* have all been done carefully. Now I'd like others to read each and every word with the same care I have given them—to ponder them fully. They shouldn't just read through the words mindlessly. He also said: In reading, first and foremost don't come to the text with preconceived ideas. And don't become impatient and stop just as you get the general idea. (11.15a:4/191:5)

23. In contrast to the commentaries and explanations of it.

5.49. In reading, students must first read the classical text, keeping the commentary in mind, until they can recite the text with complete mastery. As for what appears in the commentary—the explanations of words, the designations and definitions of affairs and things, the elucidations of the Classic's gist, and the passages tying things together—students are to understand it all, as if they themselves had written it; only then will they be able to appreciate the full flavor of the Classic and advance in their learning, experiencing a breakthrough. If they don't read in this manner, the words will be hollow and learning will not be for their own sake, as is now the case with those preparing for the examinations. Once I met a man who was explaining the *Book of Poetry*. I asked him about the "Kuan-chü" poem.²⁴ Without any understanding at all of the commentary's explanation of the line or its designations of things, he said: "There is joy without licentiousness, sorrow without self-injury."²⁵ I continued to speak with him, saying: "You, sir, in speaking now about the *Book of Poetry* needed only these eight characters. Add to them the three characters, 'Having no depraved thoughts,'²⁶ and with a total of eleven characters you'll have described the whole of the *Mao Book of Poetry*; the three hundred poems [in your hands] become mere dregs." Along the same lines I remember that not many years ago I met Wang Tuan-ming,²⁷ who said: When Ch'en Yüan-yung²⁸ asked Ho-ching²⁹ which passage in I-ch'uan's *Commentary on the Changes (I-ch'uan I-chuan)* is the most crucial, Yin responded: "Substance and function have one source, the manifest and hidden are inseparable."³⁰ This is the most crucial passage." Later I reported this to Master Li,³¹ who said: "Yin's

24. The first poem in the *Book of Poetry*.

25. In *Lun-yü* 3/20 we read: "The Master said, 'In the "Kuan-chü" there is joy without licentiousness, sorrow without self-injury.'"

26. From *Lun-yü* 2/2, where we read: "The Master said, 'In the *Book of Poetry* are three hundred pieces, but the design of them all may be embraced in one sentence—"Having no depraved thoughts."'" Translation from Legge, *Chinese Classics*, vol. 1, p. 146.

27. Wang Ying-ch'en (1118-1176). See *SJCC*, vol. 1, pp. 727-728.

28. Ch'en Hui (1084-1149). See *SJCC*, vol. 1, pp. 679-680.

29. Yin T'un (1071-1142), one of Ch'eng I's foremost disciples. See *SJCC*, vol. 1, pp. 94-97.

30. *I-ch'uan I-chuan*, preface 3a.

31. Li T'ung, Chu Hsi's teacher.

response is certainly good. But one can utter such words only if one has read through the sixty-four hexagrams and the 384 lines and understood them all. If a student didn't yet understand the book in detail and you were to make this statement to him, it would only mislead him." When I heard this, I shuddered. For the first time I realized that my empty and substanceless words up to that point were of no use; and from then on in reading I was ever more thorough.³² (11.15b:4/191:12)

5.50. Generally, in reading a text, if a person probes to the point where moral principle becomes clear, his mind will be greatly uplifted. Should there be a passage that leaves him in doubt, he must compare the various explanations of it; and when he finds discrepancies among these, the passage ultimately won't rest comfortably in his mind, but he mustn't put it aside. (11.16a:5/192:5)

5.51. Generally, in reading a text, you should examine most closely those passages for which there are differing explanations. Supposing explanation A puts it one way; take firm hold of it, and probe its words through and through. Supposing explanation B puts it another way; take firm hold of it, and probe its words through and through. Once you have probed each of the explanations fully, compare them critically, analyzing them inside and out. Invariably the truth will become clear. (11.16a:8/192:6)

5.52. Because we have commentaries to the Classics, we understand the Classics. Once we have understood the Classics, there's naturally no need for the commentaries. We rely on the Classics simply to understand principle. Once we have grasped principle, there is no need for the Classics. Now if we get stuck on these [the Classics and commentaries], when will we free ourselves from them and reach a thorough understanding [of principle]? Furthermore, "valuing simplicity" doesn't mean we hope the words will be few; rather it refers to whether the words are on target or not. If every sentence is to the point, though there may be a lot of them, what harm can they cause? But if they aren't to the point, the fewer

32. The editors have added the following comment at the end of this passage: "This passage the Master personally wrote out and showed to the students at the school." Cf. *Wen-chi* 71.15b.

there are, the less penetrating they'll be. I once said that in reading a text we must fully understand its meaning, and afterward we needn't bother at all with the commentaries. We must concern ourselves only with the words of the classical text. (11.16a:11/192:8)

5.53. Search for the inner meaning of the line. (11.16b:9/192:15)

5.54. Generally, in reading, we must look at the meaning of the surrounding text. We mustn't fixate on the individual character alone. For example, the *Model Sayings of Master Yang* [*Yang-tzu fa-yen*] [says]: "in being *jen* [benevolent] he is yielding, in being *i* [righteous] he is unyielding";³³ but in the *Book of Changes*, unyielding is equated with *jen* and yielding with *i*. For another example, in the *Analects* "to learn without flagging" is *chih* [knowledge] and "to teach without growing weary"³⁴ is *jen* [benevolence]; but in the *Doctrine of the Mean* it's said that "to bring completion to oneself" is *jen* and "to bring completion to things" is *chih*.³⁵ In these instances it is essential that we read according to the sense of the original text itself, then there'll be no problems. (11.16b:10/192:16)

5.55. Someone asked how one is to read a word that can be both shallow and profound, trivial and significant. Chu said: You must read the surrounding text. (11.17a:2/193:3)

5.56. In reading, you should look into the meaning of the text and next read the commentaries. People nowadays, however, search outside the meaning of the text. (11.17a:3/193:4)

5.57. Of the commentaries only the ancient ones are not independent essays; they're good to read. They just explain the lines of the Classic, without parting from their intent. This is best. The same can be said of the subcommentaries. Nowadays in explaining texts people attempt to write independent essays; in them they present their own arguments and raise all sorts of questions. Thus what they write, though readable, is a far cry from the intent of the Classics. Master Ch'eng's *Commentary on the Changes* is just such an inde-

33. *Yang-tzu fa-yen* 12.1a.

34. From *Lun-yü* 7/2.

35. From *Chung-yung* 25/3.

pendent essay, with much discussion. Thus when people today look at it, they don't read the original Classic with it; they simply study the commentary—which doesn't stimulate them to think [about the Classic]. (11.17a:4/193:5)

5.58. The classical texts of the sages are like the master, the commentaries like the slave. Nowadays people are unacquainted with the master and turn to the slave for an introduction to him. Only thus do they become acquainted with the master. In the end it's not like [turning to] the classical texts themselves. (11.17a:9/193:9)

5.59. Accord with the text in explaining its meaning. (11.17a:11)

5.60. The classical texts contain passages that can't be explained. The only alternative is to offer no explanation; if you insist on offering one, it'll be unintelligent and mistaken in places. (11.17b:1/193:13)

5.61. Those who discuss the Classics these days are usually guilty of one of four vices: raising up what's originally lowly so that it becomes lofty; reading meaning into what's originally shallow so that it becomes profound; pushing away what's originally near at hand so that it becomes remote; and invariably making what's originally clear obscure. These are the great evils plaguing current discussions of the Classics. (11.17b:2/193:14)

5.62. In explaining a text, you must first restore its [original] sentences, next restore its meaning. It doesn't matter if you add unimportant words to it, but don't add repetitious ones. What people nowadays add is precisely these repetitious words. (11.17b:7/194:2)

5.63. The words spoken by the sages and worthies are naturally coherent, each arranged in its proper place—they're nothing like the reckless speech of later men. You need to ponder their meaning; therefore, you can't but discuss them. And in this discussion it's essential that you get the general principles right. Thus you can't but discuss the detail behind these principles as well. It's only because your initial discussion isn't detailed that you don't understand the ideas of the sages and worthies and that later you recklessly hold to certain views, thinking they're right. You'll just go on explaining things recklessly. (11.17b:9/194:4)

5.64. Generally, you mustn't let a student look at a text while he's explaining it. For if he looks at the text, his mind will die right there. Just have him go on explaining it, and his mind will be alive with it. Moreover, he won't forget what he's explained. (11.18a:4/194:10)

5.65. People nowadays have yet to read much in the Classics or thoroughly understand moral principle before they begin reading historical texts, inquiring into the order and disorder of the past and present and studying institutions and the laws. This can be compared to building a dike to irrigate the fields: a dike should be full of water before you open it, then the water will rush out, nourishing all the crops in the field; if you hastily open the dike to irrigate the field just when the dike has accumulated little more than a ladleful of water, not only will this be of no benefit to the field but you'll no longer have even the ladleful of water. Once you've read a lot in the Classics and you've thoroughly understood moral principle, your mind will be completely clear as to the standard of measure; if you don't then turn to the historical texts, inquiring into the order and disorder of the past and present and studying institutions and the laws, it's like having a dike full of water and not opening it to irrigate the field. If you've yet to read much in the Classics or thoroughly understand moral principle but eagerly make reading the histories your first order of business, it's like opening a dike with a ladleful of water to irrigate the field. You can stand there and watch³⁶ [the water] dry up. (11.18b:5/195:3)

5.66. First read the *Analects*, the *Book of Mencius*, and the *Doctrine of the Mean*. Then read one of the Classics.³⁷ Then read the histories, which, at that point, will be easy to understand. Read the *Records of the Grand Historian*³⁸ first. As the *Records of the Grand Historian* and the *Tso Commentary*³⁹ are mutually inclusive, read the *Tso Commentary* next. Then read the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*.⁴⁰ And

36. Literally, "wait for."

37. I.e., one of the Five Classics, in contrast to the Four Books.

38. The *Shih chi*, the first great history of China, written by Ssu-ma Ch'ien (145-86 B.C.) of the Han dynasty.

39. One of the so-called Thirteen Classics, the *Tso chuan* is one of the three classical commentaries on the *Ch'un-ch'iu* (*Spring and Autumn Annals*).

40. This annalistic account of China from 403 B.C. to A.D. 959 written by Ssu-ma Kuang was thought to be the most important historical work since the *Shih chi*.

if you still have strength remaining, read the dynastic histories. Simply to read through the histories is not so good as reading through the twists and turns in them with an eye to the present,⁴¹ observing that this is what order and disorder are, this is what victory and defeat are, and that "following the path of orderly government is certain to lead to prosperity, while following the path of disorder is certain to lead to ruin."⁴² Do this and you'll understand the sequence of historical events. (11.19a:2/195:8)

5.67. In reading history, you should examine the great moral principles, the great opportunities, and the periods of great order and disorder, success and failure. (11.20b:2/196:15)

5.68. Generally, in reading the Classics and histories,⁴³ focus on the right and the wrong. As you read the right, look for the wrong. As you read the wrong, look for the right. Afterward you'll understand moral principle. (11.20b:3/196:16)

5.69. In reading a historical text, a person must memorize certain parts of it to understand it. For example, when reading the *Han History*, he should memorize the passage where Kao-tsu declines the Lordship of P'ei, the one where Emperor I [i.e., the King of Huai] sends the Lord of P'ei [i.e., Liu Pang] through the [Han-ku] pass, the one where Han Hsin for the first time persuades the King of Han [to head east],⁴⁴ and other things like the historical eulogies and the "Faults of Ch'in."⁴⁵ If he simply races through the text, his mind will seem to have it at one moment, and not at the next. Of what use is that? In reading, he must keep his mind on the text at

41. The Chinese of this line is awkward; I suspect that characters have dropped out or been misrecorded.

42. From *Shang shu* 8.23a; cf. Legge, *Chinese Classics*, vol. 3, p. 210.

43. Many of the surrounding passages talk about *shih shu*, "historical texts"; it may be that *shu shih* (the Classics and histories), here has been mistakenly transposed.

44. The three passages Chu is referring to here may be found in *Han shu*, vol. 1, 1.9-10, 1.16-17, and 1.30, respectively. These passages deal with important episodes in Liu Pang's struggle with Hsiang Yü for control of the Chinese empire after the fall of the Ch'in dynasty.

45. Pan Ku (A.D. 32-92), the author of the *Han shu*, would record his personal opinions at the end of chapters and introduce them with the stock phrase *tsan yüeh*, "in eulogy we say." "Kuo-Ch'in lun" (The Faults of Ch'in), an essay analyzing the reasons for the downfall of the Ch'in dynasty, was written by the poet and statesman Chia I (201-169 B.C.) and copied into the *Han shu*, *chüan* 31.

all times in order to master it thoroughly from beginning to end. What's the meaning of this statement? What's the meaning of that statement? What are the similarities between the statements? What are the dissimilarities? If he reads it like this, how can he not make progress? If people today simply did ten days of reading, lowering their heads and ignoring all unrelated matters, I guarantee that they'd become transformed people. Even if they were to read for only a day—no need to speak of ten—they'd see results. And if they managed to do more than ten years of reading, they'd leave no text in the world unread. Now you, I'm sure, in an entire year don't spend even a day giving your whole mind to a text. He also said: A person must concentrate on whatever he does. Take, for example, Chang Hsü and his study of cursive calligraphy. He watched Lady Kung-sun perform the sword dance and became enlightened [about calligraphy];⁴⁶ if he hadn't been giving his whole mind to it, how could he have become enlightened? (11.21a:7/197:10)

46. Chang Hsü and Lady Kung-sun lived in the eighth century. Chu probably has the lines from Tu Fu's (712–770) preface to his poem “Kuan Kung-sun taniang ti-tzu wu-chien-ch'i hsing” (A Poem on Seeing the Sword Pantomime Dance of the Pupil of Lady Kung-sun) in mind here. Hung, *Tu Fu*, p. 251, translates these lines: “Formerly, Chang Hsü of Wu district, well known for skill in cursive calligraphy, saw frequently in Yeh District the West River Pantomime and the Sword Pantomime dances of Madame Kung-sun First, and from then on his cursive calligraphy made rapid progress.” Chu's remark is similar to one found in the Ch'eng brothers' *I-shu*, p. 207.

Holding On to It (Chapter 12)

6.1. Since antiquity, sages and worthies have all considered the mind to be the root. (12.1a:4/199:4)

6.2. The myriad words of the sages and worthies ask only that people not lose their original minds. (12.1a:5/199:5)

The original mind (*pen-hsin*) refers to the mind man is born with; it is one with the mind of heaven. On the relationship between this mind and the so-called human mind, see 5.5.

6.3. If the mind is not preserved, your entire person will be without a master. (12.1a:7/199:7)

“The mind is the dwelling of intelligence and the master of the whole body” (*YL* 98.9a:6/vol. 7, 2514:10).

6.4. As soon as you leave your gates, there's a host of twists and turns. If you are without a master, how will you find your way? (12.1a:8/199:8)

6.5. If the mind is present, your recklessness will naturally recede and fall into line with its orders. (12.1a:9/199:9)

6.6. Man simply has a mind. But if he doesn't control it, what sort of man will he be? (12.1a:10/199:10)

6.7. Man's spirit flies about, like dust. If the mind be not present in his body,¹ harm will result. (12.1a:12/199:12)

1. Literally, “inside the shell.”