

## Study of Mr. Xiangshan's View of Reading

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### Abstract

**Mr. Xiangshan is Lu Jiuyuan, a native of Jinxi, Fuzhou, Jiangxi Province, with the character Zijing. He was called Mr. Xiangshan by scholars because he used to lecture at Xiangshan Mountain in Guixi and called himself Xiangshan Jushi. He was an important thinker in the Southern Song Dynasty and an important representative of Song and Ming Confucianism. This paper focuses on Mr. Xiangshan's view of reading, and in addition to discussing his main ideas, it will also make some comparisons with Zhu Xi. Through studying Mr. Xiangshan's view of reading, we hope to provide guidance for personal study and cultivation, and to provide reference for current educational thinking and talent cultivation.**

### Keywords

**Lujiuyuan, Yi Jian GongFu, learning for truth.**

### 1. Introduction

It is widely known that Mr. Xiangshan never wrote books. When he was advised to do so, Mr. Xiangshan said, "The Six Scriptures are written about me, and I write about the Six Scriptures." He sounded a bit wild. He also said, "If you learn to know DAO, the Six Scriptures are all my footnotes." He only influenced his students in his lectures and daily conversations and letters with them. Nowadays, there is only one book of Lu Jiuyuan.

In fact, Mr. Xiangshan also had the same kind of work that Zhu Xi or Er Cheng advocated, just not as the main method and purpose, but only on the basis of that work and added the process of macro-thinking. In the face of students' misunderstanding that they should study less, he criticized, "I don't know what is wrong with reading sage books when you can practice what you preach, but now the study of XianDao can be considered strange." It is also clear that Mr. Xiangshan felt that practicing and reading sage books was a very good way to learn. However, the reason why Mr. Xiangshan is misunderstood is also related to his emphasis on practice, as he said, "If one's heart is right and one's deeds are good, even though one has never read or written, one has the ability to study. If his heart is not right and his deeds are not good, what is the use of reading, even though he has studied a lot? There is no good, but to increase the evil ear." (若其心正、其事善，虽不曾识字，亦自有读书之功。其心不正、其事不善，虽多读书，有何所用？有之不善，反增罪恶耳。)

In fact, from this passage, we can see that Mr. Xiangshan is emphasizing the work of "correcting his mind" in reading. The more one reads, the greater the harm. He also said something similar, that even women and children who do not know how to read and write can behave like a gentleman and can be the same as a sage. "The way of the gentleman, the foolishness or unworthiness of the couple, can be the same as knowing and being able to act. Therefore, Mencius said: all people can be Yao Shun." In fact, Mr. Xiangshan was emphasizing that since the pure and good moral heart is born to all equally, and the process of inventing the heart is not realized by external force but mainly by inner enlightenment, it is not only by reading and writing that one can understand the heavenly truth. Therefore, in general, reading and studying are not the fundamental means, but only the auxiliary force that enables the invention of the

mind. Mr. Xiangshan was also conveying the message that saints do not always learn from books, but that if one can invent one's own mind and protect the pure mind that belongs to one, one can be like the saints. Therefore, it is clear that the emphasis on inventing the mind and studying are not contradictory.

He is precisely the same as those who misunderstood him, who opposed the behavior of "not reading books and not looking at them, and wandering and talking without roots" The act of reading is not the same as those who misunderstood him. Reading was not useless in Mr. Xiangshan's view, but Mr. Xiangshan was emphasizing the role of inventing the mind in addition to reading, stressing that reading was only a part of the process of moral cultivation, and it helped to invent the mind but was not the only way to understand the reason.

## 2. Easy and Simple Work

Confucianism is the goal of achieving the character of a scholar as a gentleman, which is also known as "learning to be a man". On "learning to be a person". After the emphasis of Confucius and Mencius on "benevolence" and human ethics, reading began to become tasteless since the Han Dynasty, and more and more readers were relying on reading to gain merit and fame, and even when the Han Dynasty implemented the examination system and specifically selected moral people to be officials, there were many people who did not live up to their names and fame for their own selfish interests. In the Tang Dynasty, Han Yu made the "Teacher's Discourse", trying to re-explain that the purpose of education is to teach and solve problems. At that time, Mr. Xiangshan, on the other hand, believed that reading need not pursue the meaning of words and sentences in that way, saying, "A scholar must have the will to read, but to pay attention only to the meaning of the text is to have no spirit." (学者须是有志读书, 只理会文义, 便是无志。) Combined with Mr. Xiangshan's statement that "one must not read without understanding the meaning of the text, but only with understanding the meaning of the text, but as a child's study, one must see where the meaning lies." (读书固不可不晓文义, 然只以晓文义为是, 只是儿童之学, 须看意旨所在) It can be seen that Mr. Xiangshan thought that textual exegesis was only an elementary school, and that reading and understanding was only the study of adults, and that it was only the study of children, which was naturally unambitious. From another point of view, without a macroscopic grasp of the situation, from each small unit to find the big truth is also very unreliable, he criticized Zhu Xi "word to seek its training, sentence to seek its purpose", "sentence and sentence, word and discussion" The method of reading, he said: "anxious to identify and analyze, is the scholar's great disease, although if detailed, I do not know how much it tired me. Stone weighing measurement, diameter and little loss; baht and weighing, to stone will be fallacious, inch and degree, to zhang will be poor." (急于辨析, 是学者大病, 虽若详明, 不知其累我多矣。石称丈量, 径而寡失; 铢铢而称, 至石必谬, 寸寸而度, 至丈必差。) It means that it is the great disease of scholars to rush to discern the meaning of words and phrases, though it seems to be understood in detail, in fact, not knowing is rather a stumbling block. For example, if one uses the unit of stone to weigh and the unit of measure to measure length, there are few errors in using the larger units, but when one uses the smaller units of baht and inch to measure, there is bound to be a great accumulation of errors. Therefore, studying word by word in such a way is not helpful to learning, but is rather a mistake of "making a separate statement to haunt oneself" (自为支离之说以自萦缠)

The problem is that "the people's hearts cannot be killed. Moreover, "when there is a place where the human heart cannot be killed, it is a private intention, so it quotes the text and the meaning, the branches and the vines, the present and the past, as evidence for reliance" If one's heart has a private intention, if one does not eliminate it, then one will use it to interpret the meaning of words and phrases in reading, and instead use the words of the sages to support

one's private intention. These are misunderstandings of the ancient sages' approach to learning and reading, which make it difficult to grasp the heavenly truths hidden in books.

Therefore, Mr. Xiangshan believes that reading should be "self-supporting and self-respecting, not following the footsteps of others and learning from their words". He believed that one should read carefully those contents that are useful to oneself, so as to appreciate the heavenly truths contained in the book. He believes that as the truth of the qiankun is easy to know and easy to do, because easy to know people are willing to approach, easy to do people will be fruitful, people are willing to approach in order to last, with the results, slowly to have more achievements. What can last is the virtue of the sage, and what can be great is the cause done by the sage. That is, both the sage and the saint are doing what is easy and simple, and if they can be easy and simple, the truth of the world can be obtained. He uses the truth that the sages of heaven and earth are easy and simple to show that the method of learning should also be easy and simple.

In the discussion of the way to learn the meeting of the Goose Lake, Mr. Xiangshan specifically wrote a poem to attack Zhu Xi's learning method is "branching out of the cause", that "the road in the near but seek to distant, things in the easy but seek to difficult" approach to learning ultimately can not (even floating), only his direct reference to the heart Only his "easy and simple kung fu will last a long time".

### 3. Learning Is Important to Know the Essence

"The ancients taught people, but to store their hearts, to nurture their minds, to seek peace of mind ..... This is the door of learning and the place of advancing virtue." (古人教人，不过存心、养心、求放心.....此乃为学之门，进德之地。) In Mr. Xiangshan's view, the way of learning is to cultivate the mind, to nurture the mind, to seek reassurance, and to invent the best "original mind" of every human being.

Confucius said, "Things have their origin and their end, and things have their beginning and their end, and if you know the order of things, you are close to the Way." If one does not know the end of things, but uses great energy to explore its subtleties, then it will be like a very full ditch, and although the water is full at the time, it will soon dry up. Then the end result is that both the origin and the end are lost. If one does not grasp the origin, if one does not establish the origin and the will, even if one pursues knowledge, it is useless.

They also expect to make achievements in society, but they suffer from the lack of a good method. Mr. Xiangshan said, in response to their learning without knowing the origin and using their own private ideas, It is absurd to speculate with one's private mind without deeply understanding the words of the sages, which eventually leads to the original intentions of the sages being obscured, accepting wrong ideas, and hoping to change the customs of the world after a long time. Only by using one's own original heart to connect with the Divine Principle will one face the reality of things and the words of the sages with a public and righteous heart.

"The goodness of this heart, this is not outside the scintillation, but no axe catty of the felling, cattle and sheep of the shepherd, then when the day to smooth mao ..... matter not lend capital to people, people also have no effort to place, sage dictates, teachers and friends cut, but help spur ear." (此心之良，本非外烁，但无斧斤之伐，牛羊之牧，则当日以畅茂.....此事不借资于人，人亦无著力处，圣贤垂训，师友切磋，但助鞭策耳。) Mr. Xiangshan always thought that even if he did not read or read and write, it would not hinder the process of restoring the original mind of seeing the truth, and he thought, "If I do not know a single word, I must still be a person in a dignified manner." Because the purpose of learning is to be a person and to understand reason, reading is a means, and the book is only a carrier of reason; the ultimate

goal is to invent the original mind. In this way, as long as one can grasp the good end of one's heart, no form is so important and rigid, for the heart is the subject of clear reasoning.

Mr. Xiangshan cites the words of Fu-tzu and the learning of the sages to illustrate that "this" is the most important thing, not wisdom.

Mr. Xiangshan's standard of measuring books is different from that of many readers who only follow the classics. He said, "Everything should be judged by its reasoning, not by who the person is," which means that no matter who says the words or writes the book, even if it is more famous, more prestigious, there is a standard of judgment for oneself, not to be influenced by the name. "reason". This reflects the valuable independent spirit of an intellectual, which can also explain that Mr. Xiangshan, who read the Analects of Confucius since he was a child, disapproved of Yau Tzu, criticized his views, and did not blindly believe in them because they were recorded in the Analects of Confucius. Mr. Xiangshan emphasized that "one must be a man of wide strength and mastery" and that "one must be self-sufficient and self-respecting, not following the footsteps of others and learning their words."

Mr. Xiangshan said, "To learn suffers from doubt, and doubt leads to advancement." Encourage readers to have more doubts and think seriously, "Small doubts are small advances, big doubts are big advances" He advocated a bold spirit of skepticism and encouraged students to ask questions in their reading, believing that this was the only way to be good at reading.

This is a good match with Mencius' saying, "It is better to believe in a book than to have no book at all. As Mr. Xiangshan said, "I have never read, but I have read more than others."

#### 4. The Study of Truth

Mr. Xiangshan's "study of the truth" can be understood as having two dimensions: one is to seek the true truth, free from external influences, and to return to one's own heart. The other is that the purpose of learning is not just to discuss, but to apply to the world, and the method is not just to read, but to put into practice.

Regarding the first level, it is in response to the long-standing trend that many readers have lost their independence and are only following authority, not exploring and thinking, and supporting what is good for them, instead of truly interrogating their hearts, not thinking and dealing with problems from the perspective of searching for the Divine Principle, and yielding to the outside world. It is true, as Mr. Xiangshan often lamented when he understood the style of learning at that time, that "there are only two ways for scholars today: one way to be plain and one way to be argumentative." The "simple" is "the ancient people were all clear about practical reasoning and doing practical things" The "real" is the "discussion", or those opinions obtained from the scriptures and commentaries for the imperial examinations that are acceptable to the world; or strange arguments that can attract attention. Under the influence of such "idle arguments", scholars like to express their views without serious understanding of the classics, which are really deviating from the original intention of the sages, and Mr. Xiangshan, who considers himself directly under Mencius, is able to understand the fundamental meaning of the Way of Confucius and Mencius, and therefore repeatedly emphasizes the need to read the original classics seriously and to understand them seriously, instead of publishing them freely. "He criticized that "the ancient people were not so good as the ancient people. He criticized that "the ancients were all practical scholars, and later generations are not immune to the burden of discourse and rhetoric."

Mr. Mou Zongsan wrote in his book "From Lu Xiangshan to Liu Houttuynia", "Xiangshan's lecture is based only on the invention of the original heart of Mencius, and the removal of all false talk and floating arguments as well as the view of the current text, which is what Xiangshan called 'simple and real. This is what Xiangshan called 'simple and real. This is what Xiangshan called 'simple truth'. False talk floating theory, distortion and fabrication, in vain to increase the

obscurity, and enough to mislead, lost its end. The removal of this obscurity will reveal the simplicity, which is also the triumphalist simplicity. The purpose of his teaching is to practice morality, not to pursue knowledge. It has its own independent meaning, but does not have to have a direct and essential relevance to moral practice. .... But reading also has to read the book of the reasoning, archaeology also has to examine the ancient in the reasoning, if this and objective understanding of the pursuit of knowledge, is the knowledge of the righteousness of the clear reasoning, this is Zhu Zi valued and very interested, and the focus of Xiangshan lecture is not This is what Zhu Zi valued and was very interested in, but the focus of Xiangshan's lectures was not here, and he was not much interested in it. This kind of time has its independent meaning and value, but it is not related to moral practice, or at least not essentially related. The discussion of Xiangshan is not a rebuke of such knowledge itself, but a rebuke of morality according to the path of knowledge. To speak of morality according to the way of knowledge is to become 'idle discourse', not knowledge itself as 'idle discourse' and worthless." The path of simplicity is the right way, and the sages of the past also kept it simple: "The former generations were honest and did not do rhetoric, so when you look at their books, you can get their meaning"(大抵前辈质实, 不事辞语, 观其书, 当得其意可也) Mr. Xiangshan "believed in the truth alone, but did not take away from the floating falsehoods", and he pursued "a single-minded practical study, not empty words." He criticized the trend of false arguments at that time, believing that there was no progress in that way, and also showed that he was thinking and absorbing in a practical way. For Mr. Xiangshan believed that "the universe has its own real principles. If this theory is clear, then it has its own practice, there are real things. The person who practices it is said to believe without words." If one understands these principles and acts in accordance with them, one will be able to do very appropriate and proper actions. If someone acts appropriately and properly and acts like a gentleman, he will naturally be recognized by the public and will naturally become a success. Only by doing the study of truth can it be both easy and true, with the greatest value and the shortest path.

"A thousand falsehoods do not boast a single reality, and I have learned nothing else in my life but a single reality."This is a reflection of Mr. Xiangshan's style of seeking truth.

Regarding the second dimension, it is Xiangshan's concern for history and human affairs, his intention to cultivate himself, and his focus on the application of the world. He said: "Yi Lun in the people, Wei Tian was ordered to ..... school between the ziang order, the so-called cut and talk about the bright, why to give up is and other seek? The so-called material to knowledge, the material to this knowledge also, so that can be clear and virtuous in the world. He criticized the school for deviating from the direction of one's own heart, and thought that this was a reversal of the order of things at the beginning of learning, which would eventually only intensify the obscuring of the heart and make it unclear and impossible to realize the clarity of reason.

As for the understanding of reason, Mr. Xiangshan did not refuse to focus on complicated things, but on the contrary, he paid special attention to real things. "There is no matter outside the Way, there is no Way outside the matter", as he often said. Mr. Xiangshan emphasizes finding the Way in things. "The previous words and the past actions should be widely known. The rise and fall of the past and present, the right and wrong, should also be widely read and investigated in detail. If one's heart is sick, then in these undertakings, it is the deaf who think of bells and drums, the blind who measure the sun and the moon, which consumes the breath and strains the body, and loses its original heart. Not only is it useless, but it hurts a lot. The future defeat of personnel, such as the car battle in the house, Jing Gong's even loss, can be better than lament?" The meaning is that if one does not have the experience of examining in detail the rise and fall of governance, right and wrong, and gain and loss in history, then to govern the country or to look at the present cause is like a person who has never heard music trying to play music, or a blind person who has never seen trying to measure the sun and the moon, it will only be a

futile effort, a waste of energy and physical strength, and if one makes a result, it will not be a good one. "It is necessary to work on the same thing, and then there will be help with the greater and the lesser." This is also a manifestation of his truth-seeking.

He said, "When Yan Zi looked up to the high and drilled the firm, he knew that the firm and high branches and leaves were only branches and leaves after all. Learning is not only the right thing to do, but also the right thing to do." The "ten thousand micros" contain a wealth of truths, the reality of things, and learning on the basis of the "great essence is correct", or rely on the detailed examination of the ten thousand micros to achieve the real, practical sublimation.

In addition to understanding the truth in the matter, he believed that it should also be practiced in practice. Mr. Xiangshan said, "The eighteen chapters of the Book of Filial Piety are not vague words, as Confucius and Zengzi practiced them in the field." The words of Confucius and Zengzi are recorded in the Book of Filial Piety, and those words are the summation of their practice, not the false and empty words, while as a later person, even if one knows the Book of Filial Piety by heart, it is still false if one does not practice it.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. Xiangshan was emphasizing that one must be good at observing things and paying attention to the real world, not to be detached from reality and to engage in delusions. His brother asked him, "Where is my brother doing his work now?" Mr. Xiangshan replied, "I am doing some work on human conditions, situations, and physics." Mr. Xiangshan has always done work with the mind of a Confucianist who has been studying the world.

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