

ANNOTATED TRANSLATION OF THE “PRIVATE HOUSEHOLD INSTRUCTIONS”
[*GIA ĐÌNH TƯ NGŨ* 家庭私語] OF BÙI TRỰC 裴軸 (1730-1815)

Dan T. Nguyen^a

(Received 24 November 2025; revised 25 December 2025; accepted 29 December 2025)

Abstract

Bùi Trục 裴軸 (1730-1815) was a post-Restoration Lê period Tonkinese scholar-official. The elder cousin of the famous literatus Bùi Bích 裴璧 (1744-1818), he commanded wide respect among his contemporaries for his erudition and moral integrity. Bùi Trục’s “Private Household Instructions” (*Gia đình tư ngữ* 家庭私語) is a compilation of seventy-three apophthegms in the Song–Yuan–Ming Way Learning tradition included in *Đản Trai tạp thảo* 亶齋雜藁, a collection of Bùi Trục’s miscellaneous writings. It is notable for being the clearest example of a Way Learning record of sayings (*ngữ lục* 語錄) compilation in early modern Vietnamese Confucianism. This annotated translation contains a punctuated transcription of the entire Sinitic text of the “Private Household Instructions” alongside an English translation.

Keywords: Bùi Trục, *Đản Trai công thi tập*, record of sayings, Vietnamese Confucianism

1. Introduction

Bùi Trục 裴軸 (1730-1815), styled Hy Thạc 希碩, was a Lê 黎 period (1428-1789) Tonkinese scholar-official descended from the Thanh Trì 靑池 Bùi 裴 clan. This eminent clan produced weighty statesmen as early as the Hồng Đức 洪德 period (1470-1497) and continued to exert considerable local influence in the Sơn Nam 山南 region throughout the post-Restoration period (1533-1789)¹. Indeed, the socio-political prestige of the Thanh Trì Bùi clan bridged multiple dynastic chasms, lingering well into the nineteenth

^a Ph.D. Candidate, Columbia University; Email: dtn2123@columbia.edu

¹ Regrettably, there are as yet no book-length studies on the Thanh Trì Bùi clan; the transdynastic longevity of the clan and its social prominence was comparable to that of the neighboring Thanh Oai 靑威 Ngô-Thì 吳時 clan—that the Thanh Trì Bùi clan has yet to receive serious attention from historians of the early modern period is a curious lacuna in both Vietnamese and Western scholarship. See *Thanh Trì Bùi thị gia phả* 靑池裴氏家譜 (Vhv.1343/1-3).

century before its final dissipation². Although Bùi Trục's name has been largely occulted by that of his younger cousin, Bùi Bích 裴壁 (1744-1818), his reputation among their contemporaries enjoyed equal celebrity, the extinction of his memory today being more reflective of our fragmented understanding of late eighteenth-century Tonkinese intellectuality than it is of his prominence as a purveyor of Way Learning (*đạo học* 道學) orthodoxy among his peers.

Having shared their early education under Nguyễn Bá Thủ 阮伯符 (fl. eighteenth century) and Lê Quý Đôn 黎貴惇 (1726-1784), Bùi Trục and Bùi Bích were intimate childhood companions. The two remained close for the remainder of their lives despite the opposite trajectories of their political fortune: while Bùi Bích ascended to the height of the Lê-Trịnh administration, Bùi Trục languished in poverty until the final years of the Lê period when he was promoted to office via the assiduous recommendation of the Chiêu Thống 昭統 emperor's courtiers³. Despite the eclectic intellectual and doctrinal proclivities of their teacher, Lê Quý Đôn, both Bùi Trục and Bùi Bích espoused a robust Way Learning orthodoxy drawn squarely from the Song–Yuan–Ming tradition. Both cite generously from the Northern Song philosopher Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107) and his Southern Song successor Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200); even when they do not cite or paraphrase, the formal structure of their didactic writings assumes the gnomic style of the “record of sayings” (*ngữ lục* 語錄) genre favored within the Way Learning tradition.⁴

There are no notable scholarly publications on Bùi Trục or his various literary compilations. Bùi Trục's extant works include *Bùi Dẫn Trai trích đối* 裴亶齋摘對, an

² Bùi Phở 裴溥 (1776-1836), a nephew of Bùi Bích, was the most prominent representative of his clan during the Nguyễn 阮 period (1802-1945). At the height of his political career, he held an appointment as Minister of the Board of Punishments 刑部尚書; his memory was enshrined within an official biography in the *Nguyễn Veritable Records* (*Đại Nam thực lục* 大南實錄).

³ Bùi Trục did not hold office until the 1780s, when he was promoted through the intervention of Bùi Bích who had then reached the highest echelons of Tonkinese officialdom. After the collapse of the Trịnh court, he was further recommended to office in 1787 by Phạm Đình Dư 范廷璵, Hoàng Bình Chánh 黃平政, Nguyễn Huy Trạc 阮輝濯, and Nguyễn Chính 阮整. In 1804, he declined an appointment as Vice-Education Intendant (*phó đốc học* 副督學) of Thăng Long citadel 昇龍城, a prestigious post to which he had been recommended by Phạm Đăng Hoa 范登華, a Cochinchinese official then acting as Minister of the Board of Punishments. The details of Bùi Trục's life and career can be found in the biographical essay, “A Brief Account of Lord Đan Trai” (*Đan Trai công tiểu truyện* 亶齋公小傳) in *Đan Trai công thi tập* 亶齋公詩集 (A.291), 4a-10a.

⁴ Bùi Bích's most representative collection written in the record of sayings style is his *Miscellaneous Discussions Recorded in Sojourn* (*Lữ trung tạp thuyết* 旅中雜說), compiled in 1789 during the author's flight from the Tây Sơn 西山 regime

anthology of excerpts from classical and historical corpora re-arranged into antithetical couplets (VHv.348; VHv.859; VHv.860), and *Đản Trai công thi tập* 亶齋公詩集 (A.291), an anthology of poetry and prose - all four manuscripts are stored in the archives of the Institute of Sino-Nôm Studies, Hanoi. Although grouped under a single title and call number, *Đản Trai công thi tập* actually contains three separate anthologies, some further divided into numerous fascicles (*quyển* 卷): the eponymous anthology of poetry in two fascicles; *Đản Trai công văn tập* 亶齋公文集, an anthology of prose in one fascicle; and *Đản Trai công tạp cáo* 亶齋公雜藁, a collection of miscellaneous writings in three fascicles. The volume of his literary remains, while slightly less than that of his cousin's, covers a comparable extent of pedagogical, intellectual, cultural, and historiographical topoi. Even a brief survey of these sources is enough to confirm the prominence of Bùi Trục and Bùi Bích among their contemporaries, not merely as men of letters, but as incisive thinkers whose rare eloquence on the diverse politico-cultural issues current in their day serves as a styptic corrective to many of our standing assumptions regarding early modern Tonkinese intellectuality. It is regrettable that they have remained on the margins of intellectual history for so long.

The “Private Household Instructions” (*Gia đình tư ngữ* 家庭私語) is a record of sayings compilation which occupies the first fascicle of *Đản Trai công tạp cáo*. Little information is provided regarding its compilation; we know from the biographical essay written by Bùi Phụng Nghi 裴鳳儀, Bùi Trục's youngest son, that Bùi Trục's family instructions (*huấn hối* 訓誨) had already achieved renown during his lifetime - it is implied that the compilation of “Private Household Instructions” was not completed until a later date, perhaps even post-dating Bùi Trục's death. Within the text itself, Bùi Trục briefly mentions the fall of the Lê and various circumstances related to the chaotic dynastic transition which ensued in its aftermath - it can be inferred that such passages date from between 1789 and 1815, but nothing necessitates that the remainder of the text was proper to the same period: indeed, Bùi Phụng Nghi implies that a number of his father's more pithy sayings had already become model maxims (*thành cách ngữ* 成格語) before Bùi Trục held office. The majority of the seventy-three sayings are miscellaneous maxims related to moral cultivation in the spirit of Song–Ming records of sayings. A small number are addressed to two of his sons, identified within the text as Quynh 綱 and Ước 約. An even smaller number includes anecdotes and reflections of an autobiographical nature. As a whole, the work demonstrates a thorough familiarity with various technical terms employed by the tradition, and many of Bùi Trục's sententious

dictations would be indistinguishable alongside similar apophthegmatic compilations in anthologies such as the late-seventeenth-century *Mingru xue'an* 明儒學案.

Bùi Trục promoted a program self-cultivation which was textual in focus and prioritized the sustained close reading of various curricula first devised by Zhu Xi; this embodied practice involved copying texts like the *Four Books*, memorizing their content, and reciting the teachings of the sages and worthies even amidst the drudgery of quotidian labor and peregrination. Along with sustained circumspection of thought, word, and deed, reading served as the foundation of a complicated schemata of psycho-physical askesis through which the practitioner gradually corrected the imbalances ingenerate to his or her hylic endowment (*khí chất chi tánh* 氣質之性), thereby recovering the “nature of Heaven-and-Earth” (*thiên địa chi tánh* 天地之性), achieving union with the monistic pattern-principle (*lý* 理) of the cosmos, and “becoming a sage” (*vi thánh nhân* 為聖人). In this translation, I have kept my annotations brief and to a minimum: this being the first presentation of Bùi Trục’s work in modern scholarship, I have found it fitting to let the text speak for itself and to reserve judgement on historical minutiae which can be pursued elsewhere by those so inclined. The nature of the Way Learning corpus is such that, without concrete information lacking in the case of Bùi Trục as well as most other early modern Tonkinese literati, it is impossible to ascertain the exact *loci classici* for many of passages cited and paraphrased from authors like Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi. Where relevant, I have sometimes made note of similar passages or choice of diction in *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, and *Er Cheng ji* 二程集; theses notes are far from exhaustive and do not aim to argue a definite link between the cited the passages and Bùi Trục’s text: more likely, in my opinion, Bùi Trục was citing and responding to latter-day distillations of common Way Learning tenets found in various Yuan–Ming compilations rather than the Song period originals themselves.

2. Text and Translation

1.1 從容中道，惟聖者能之。自餘力學之士，進德修業，必須反躬內省，隨事省察，孜孜向進，方有長益。若便自是，則日退矣。

To abide in the Middle Way with ease and composure is a thing which the Sage alone is able to accomplish (Zhongyong 20, as cited in Zhu, 2012, p. 31). As for those remaining who learn through intense labor, thereby advancing in virtue and perfecting their studies, they must of necessity turn inward to examine themselves, scrutinizing their

actions in every matter, and advancing with diligent application, that they may obtain lasting benefit. Those who are easily self-satisfied shall surely regress with the passing days.

1.2 一飲食，一言語，一跬步，皆當深省，慎無妄發。然須於息默時，操存涵養。否則，動時忽不知其驟出矣。

With each meal, with each utterance, with each step, however small, one ought to reflect deeply and with trepidation lest one outburst in folly. Moreover, it is necessary that in the season of quiet repose, one preserve, examine, and nourish one’s interiority. Otherwise, when moved to action, one shall suddenly find oneself proceeding with circumspection.

1.3 學者治性，以求至於善而已。若夫天地之性，氣質之性，自有聖賢餘論。力讀而潛玩之，學得一分，便識得一分，非徑教頓學可能也。

The scholar’s work in ordering his nature is simply to strive toward goodness. As for the nature of Heaven-and-Earth and the nature of hylic endowment, these are subjects upon which the sages and worthies have discoursed at length. Study these texts with diligence and savor them in quiet contemplation: if you comprehend one part, you shall know one part. This cannot be accomplished through festinate instruction or instant learning⁵.

1.4 讀書以《四書》爲主，而求之《六經》。經傳之文義既明，當著之心胸之間，以處身應世。雜書亦不必讀。若欲旁觀之，以求古今世變，人情物理，文字旨趣，亦必準之以經傳，然後可讀。如《莊》、《騷》、釋、《老》諸子、及古今文集詩集是也。若小說諸書，切不可看。不徒無益，而更有損。

⁵ “Festinate instruction” (*kính giáo* 徑教) and “instant learning” (*đốn học* 頓學) likely refer to the ideas associated with the so-called Learning of the Mind-Heart faction of Song, and especially Ming, Way Learning, particularly various ideas floated by Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139-1192) and Wang Shouren 王守仁 (1472-1529); by extension, this dictum also repudiates the concept of instant enlightenment (*đốn ngộ* 頓悟) which originated in Chan Buddhism and influenced similar formulations in Way Learning. To an extent, the language of instantaneous illumination is common also to the lexicon of Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi, the difference between Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan belonging more to the realm of rhetoric than that of content.

In textual studies, let the *Four Books* be your ruling principle; seek confirmation in the *Six Classics*⁶. When the textual meanings of the Classics and Commentaries have been made clear, let them be impressed upon your heart and mind, that you may regulate your conduct and respond to the world. There is no need to read eclectic writings⁷. If you desire to read more broadly, in order to understand the transformations of past and present ages, to comprehend the principles of men and creatures, and to appreciate literary genius, you must yet measure them by the standard of the Classics and Commentaries before reading them. Such works include *Zhuangzi*, the *Elegies of Chu*, Buddhist writings, *Laozi*, the various philosophers, and collections of prose and poetry both ancient and modern. As for frivolous writings, these must on no account be perused - they are not merely useless but positively harmful⁸.

1.5 天下古今義理，《五經》、《語》、《孟》，無餘蘊矣。讀者當求自家之所偏所短處，而取其言之切己者，以自修治。朱文公《小學》書，自經傳而發之，最為簡切。

The moral principles of all ages, past and present, are exhaustively contained in the *Five Classics*, the *Analects*, and *Mencius*. The reader ought to seek out his own partialities and deficiencies, selecting those passages which most nearly apply to his own condition, that he may thereby cultivate and regulate himself⁹. Master Zhu's *Minor Learning*, when read in continuity with the classics and their commentaries, is most concise and direct.

⁶ This is a variation on a saying by Cheng Yi included by Zhu Xi in the prolegomenal “reading methods” (độc pháp 讀法) to the *Analects* and *Mencius* (Zhu 2012, 45).

⁷ “Eclectic writings” (tạp thư 雜書) can be a general reference to any writing external to the mandated curriculum proper to the civil service examination; here, by extension, it can also be understood as imputing such texts with heterodoxy. Note, however, that Bùi Trục permits such texts to be read for their utility in understanding history, human affairs, and the literary arts.

⁸ “Frivolous writings” (tiểu thuyết 小說) here probably refers to various genres of vernacular writing as well as literary narratives of amorous or anomalous nature.

⁹ The language of “personal application” (thiết kỷ 切己) of the Sage's teachings as a corrective the shortcomings (bệnh 病) peculiar to one's person is common to Cheng Yi's instructions on reading the *Analects* as well as to Zhu Xi's comments therein (Zhu 2012, 45, 53; Li 2017, 181-183).

1.6 經傳意義無窮。今日讀而深求之，識得一分。明日讀而深求之，又識得一分。不可纔涉獵文義，便自謂了然也。

The meanings of the classics and commentaries are inexhaustible. If you read them today and plumb their depths, you shall comprehend but one portion. If you read them tomorrow and plumb their depths, you shall comprehend but another portion. You must not merely skim their phraseological significations and presume to have fully grasped them¹⁰.

1.7 應事接物有所不得於心，便有厲言遽色，與夫在窮達愛樂之際，而喜怒之發不中節，此是存養之功未至。當自深省。

In the management of affairs or in intercourse with others, you utter harsh words or precipitate countenance due to dissatisfaction, or when in moments of adversity or prosperity, sorrow or joy, your expressions of pleasure and anger exceed due measure - this indicates that your work of preservation and nourishment has yet to be perfected. You ought to examine yourself deeply.

1.8 君子心平氣和，故常見人之善。若夫指人之短，正人之失，惟父之於子，師弟朋友之最切，與執國論以平天下者為然。否則，鮮不入於輕薄。

The superior man, being of placid mind and harmonious spirit, always discerns the good in others. As for pointing out the shortcomings of others or correcting their faults, this is proper only between a father and his son, or between the most intimate of teachers and disciples, or between friends, and those who hold office and are charged with bringing peace to human society. Otherwise, such conduct seldom fails to descend into supercilious contumely.

¹⁰ The act of “skimming” (*thiếp liệp* 涉獵) is used by Zhu Xi to describe the mode of hasty and undiscerning reading prized by vulgar pedants; Cheng Yi understood proper grasp of “phraseological signification” (*văn nghĩa* 文義) as prerequisite to understanding the deeper intent (ý 意) of any given writing, but the *Analects* in particular: here, Bùi Trục warns against premature confidence of grasping even this preliminary level of meaning; this warning echoes that of Zhu Xi, see (Li 2017, 181; Zhu 2012, 45).

1.9 讀經傳，當寫貳本。一本精寫正文及大註，精思熟讀。一本簡時文舉子業所問對題目者。

When reading the classics and commentaries, you ought to prepare two copies. One should contain a carefully written version of the main text along with its major commentary. Ruminates on it with care and commit it to thorough memorization. The remaining copy should be a selection [of those passages] concerning topics and essay prompts relevant to examination studies.

1.10 《五經》、《語》、《孟》之書，無時無處可離。當手寫便本，有遠行自隨。一宿以外，携一二卷，待有思量其中意義，便取讀一二章，或一二句，甚益。

The books of the *Five Classics*, the *Analects*, and *Mencius* ought never to leave your person, at any time or in any place. You should prepare handwritten copies ready to carry along on distant journeys. Even for a single night's absence, carry one or two fascicles with you. When thoughts arise concerning their meanings, take and read a few passages, even just a sentence or two - you shall reap great benefit.

1.11 古人之能立大事成大功者，於世事亦非故有心必欲為之，亦非厭其煩亂冗而不樂於為之也。此必有所由，未易窺測。凡人當求其是，小事大事，時與位焉止耳。

Those ancients who established great enterprises and accomplished great achievements did not necessarily harbor a deliberate desire to undertake them, nor did they shrink from them on account of their vexatious discomposure. Verily, their actions had causes which are not easily fathomed. Ordinary men ought simply to seek what is right, whether in small matters or great, ceasing only when time and circumstance so dictate.

1.12 富貴自有富貴之德業，貧賤自有貧賤之德業。其理不可不深思。

Wealth and honor have their proper virtues and achievements; poverty and mean estate have theirs¹¹. This principle must be deeply contemplated.

1.13 學者立志，貧富貴賤不能移固難。於時世勢習能不移者，爲尤難。

For the scholar who establishes his purpose, it is indeed difficult that poverty or wealth, honor or disgrace should not disturb him (Mencius 3b.2, as cited in Zhu, 2012, p. 270). Yet it is still more difficult that the prevailing customs and practices of the age should not disturb him.

1.14 提躬以溫恭遜悌爲常。居行要雍容詳雅，言語要和緩簡當。至於謇諤抗直，非論朝廷大便害，不可。剛烈不回，非臨大節當大難，不可。事人主，雖不宜諂諛容悅，然格正諷諫，必便誠意以感動之。泣吏胥，雖不必假以辭色，而開實布公，最不可少。

In regulating one's conduct, let warmth, respect, humility, and brotherly deference be your constant practice. In deportment, strive for grace and dignified composure; in speech, for gentleness and appropriate brevity. To be unyielding in one's free-spoken remonstrance is impermissible save when discussing matters of vital consequence to the imperial court. Obstinate vehemence is impermissible save in matters of grave moral import or great calamity. In serving one's sovereign, though flattery and obsequious pleasure-seeking are improper, still in offering correction and admonition, one must compel through sincerity of intent. In supervising officials and clerks, though one need not feign courtesy, openness and impartial governance must on no account be wanting.

1.15 處事待人，不可先有一說橫於胸中，此人吾平夙之所好尚也，有一言一爲，未必盡善，即從而善之。此人吾平夙之所賤也，有一言一爲，未必大不善，即從而惡之。又以怒言待之，吾之過非淺。應事亦然。

¹¹ “Virtue and achievements” (*đức nghiệp* 德業) is somewhat obscure. Zhu Xi uses it as a compound to describe the achievement of the Sage, albeit infrequently. Here, Bùi Trục seems to be appropriating Buddhist terminology, i.e., *đức nghiệp* as merit or meritorious activity. This manner of usage is employed by Zhu Xi when discussing Buddho-Daoist doctrine, see (Li 2017, 503-504; 3031).

In managing affairs and dealing with men, one must not harbor prejudice. [If one thinks:] “This man is one whom I have long esteemed,” and therefore, when he speaks or acts, though his words or deeds may not be entirely good, one nevertheless approves of them; or if one thinks: “This man is one whom I have long despised,” and therefore, when he speaks or acts, though his words or deeds be without great evil, one nevertheless condemns them, and moreover treats him with wrathful words - such conduct constitutes no small fault. The same principle applies in the management of affairs.

1.16 夢卜皆至理所存，然非大聖大賢，恐未足與語。常人居家，當夜必焚香致敬其先人及灶神土神。朔望具衣冠拜謁。或有事，大疑于心，便焚香卜筮，可也。自餘惟以理之是非裁度之。

Oneiromancy and prognostication both contain within them the supreme pattern-principle, yet unless one be a great sage or worthy, one is perhaps insufficient to discourse upon them. Ordinary persons dwelling at home ought nightly to burn incense and pay reverence to their ancestors, as well as to the kitchen god and earth god. On the first and fifteenth days of the lunar month, they should don the proper caps and robes to perform obeisance. Should some matter of great dubitation trouble their minds, they may burn incense and cast divination blocks. As for all other matters, judge them solely by the standard of principle.

1.17 先聖不敢瀆。惟歲元一日早時，焚香望拜之。小子初入學，及初春開讀亦然。

The Primal Sage must not be profaned¹². Only on the first day of the year, in the early hours, should one burn incense and perform reverence from afar. When a child begins his studies, or when studies resume in early spring, the same ritual is appropriate.

1.18 世運盛衰，人生窮達，當平心淨眼以視之。不可以熱腸急性思量爾也。蓋陰陽迭運，於大化中有遲有速，自然而然。盛衰自以時至，善惡自以類應，帝亦主宰於其間。想非有心如世人之所言報應者。惟其陰陽二氣，自相感召，而人之善惡，自不能不囿於渾化之間耳。

¹² A warning against profanation of the cult of Confucius, whose worship was proper only in certain times and by certain persons.

Prosperity and decline of the age's fortunes, adversity and success in human life: such vicissitudes ought to be viewed with equanimity of heart and purity of vision. One must not dwell on them in vexation of passion or haste of temper. *Yin* and *yang* alternate in operation; within the great transformation of things, there are those which proceed swiftly and those which proceed slowly, yet all follow their natural course. Prosperity and decline arrive each in its season; good and evil correspond each according to its kind. The Thearch on High presides over these matters, yet not with deliberate intent in the manner that the vulgar speak of karmic retribution. The twin energies of *yin* and *yang* simply summon each other, and human good and evil cannot but be encompassed within the totality of their integral transformations.

1.19 處世見世事有不平，輒憤鬱欲反其道，或冀別人改爲之，汲汲必期見於日月之間。無寧悻悻。抑不思氣化往來，迭爲否泰。不當以一人一世局見觀也。通萬世言之，仰視我前，自有許多聖賢豪傑出爲宇宙之事乎。當我之世，縱無其人，亦是氣化然耳。憤鬱何爲哉。

When dwelling amidst the age, if one observes injustice in worldly affairs and immediately becomes vexed with fury and melancholy, desiring to reverse their course, or hoping that others will reform them, anxiously insisting that change be accomplished within the span of days or months, will this not produce an excess of resentment? Such a one, perhaps, has not meditated on the transformations of material energy which come and go, alternating between adversity and prosperity? One ought not to view matters through the narrow perspective of a single person or the circumstances of a single age. Speaking in terms of ten thousand generations: looking back before us, how many sages, worthies, and heroes have emerged to order the affairs of the cosmos? If such men do not grace our generation, then this, too, is simply the operation of material energy. To what end, this sore vexation!

1.20 士大夫柄用，有裊躬廉正，而反爲衙吏所騙者。其一喜怒不治，他得以乘之。其二厭煩不樂接人，而情有不通也。

When scholar-officials hold power, there are those who regulate themselves with integrity and righteousness, yet are nevertheless deceived by yamen clerks. The first cause is that they fail to govern their joy and anger, allowing others to take advantage of

this weakness. The second cause is that they tire of dealing with others and take no pleasure in receiving them, whereupon the channels of communication are blocked.

1.21 學者於術數，決不可學，亦不能學。莫若孳孳勉進於善，務其當然，窮通一付之遇，便無差失。

Scholars must on no account study divination and numerology; indeed, they are incapable of truly mastering such arts. It is better to apply oneself diligently to the advancement of goodness, attending to what ought to be done, and leaving poverty and success to fate - thus shall one avoid error.

1.22 志士無以窮達老少易其所操守，方爲有志。若其不然，一差之後，其失愈遠。譬如兩條路頭，本向此條路，行之未到，却恐其遠，反向彼條路行之。日暮途遠，何以至哉。

A man of resolve does not alter what he maintains and guards, whether in adversity or success, youth or old age - only thus can he be said to possess resolve. If not, after even one deviation his errors shall increase. It is like two roads: originally you proceed upon this road, but before reaching your destination, fearing its distance, you turn instead to that other road. When evening falls and the road is long, how shall you ever arrive?

1.23 君子明哲，雖不受人欺，而其心本不欺人。故雖不下井以援人，而象曰鬱陶思君耳。舜曰惟茲臣庶，女期于予治。象憂亦憂，象喜亦喜。彼以誠信之道來，舜奚僞喜。孔子曰不逆詐，不億不信，是也。此不獨兄弟之間，凡接人應物，莫不當然。

The superior man, being wise and discerning, though he suffers not himself to be deceived by others, yet his heart harbors no intention to deceive others. Thus, though he did not descend into the well to rescue [Shun], yet Xiang said: "I have come for I longed and worried for you." Shun replied: "These are my officers and people, you must govern them for me." When Xiang was troubled, Shun too was troubled; when Xiang rejoiced, Shun too rejoiced. If his brother Xiang approached in the way of sincerity and good faith, why should Shun feign joy? (Mencius 5a.2, as cited in Zhu, 2012, pp. 308-310). Confucius said: "Do not anticipate deceit, nor presume the absence of trustworthiness" - this is the principle (Analects 14.33, as cited in Zhu, 2012, p. 158). This applies not only between brothers but in all intercourse with men and response to affairs.

1.24 人於壯年欲樹功業，晚歲不遇，便易其操守，此是大無志氣。功名既不若人，德業又不孜孜向進，凡事皆不若人矣。

When a man in his prime years desires to establish merit and achievement, but in his later years meets with no opportunity and thereupon alters what he has maintained and guarded, this indicates a great want of resolve. If in merit and fame one already falls short of others, and moreover in virtue and achievement one does not diligently advance, then in all matters one shall be inferior to others.

1.25 古之聖賢及豪傑之士，或詘於遇，而道不行，志不伸於當時，如孔子、顏、孟，及漢諸葛。以一時言之，固爲不遇矣。然通萬世言之，曷嘗爲不遇哉。故志士亦惟盡在其已者而已。

The sages and worthies of antiquity, and men of heroic virtue, were sometimes thwarted by circumstance, so that their Way went unpractised and their aspirations were not fulfilled in their own time - such were Confucius, Yan Hui, Mencius, and Zhuge Liang of Han. Speaking of a single moment, they may indeed be considered unfortunate. Yet speaking in terms of ten thousand generations, when were they ever truly unfortunate? Therefore, the man of resolve has only to exhaust what lies within himself.

1.26 人之處世，當求諸天。天者，理也，亦數也。理者，義之當否也。數者，時之否泰也。大夫行事，祇論理之是非，而不顧事之成否。此自一道。若夫濟天下之難，拯蒼生之困，而要其有成，自當依理循數而後能。蓋悖理固爲逆天，違數亦爲反天，迄能有濟者，鮮矣。然數難明者也，視諸其人與勢而已矣。勢者，亦自當別論。

In conducting oneself in the world, one ought to seek instruction from Heaven. Heaven is pattern-principle, and also fate. Pattern-principle pertains to the propriety or impropriety of righteousness. Fate pertains to the adversity or prosperity of the times. When a great officer conducts affairs, he considers only whether their principle is right or wrong, without regard to their potential success or failure. This is one way. Yet if one would relieve the afflictions of human society and rescue the masses from distress, and thus desires to accomplish something, one must naturally follow principle and accord

with fate before success is possible. To act contrary to principle is certainly to oppose Heaven, and to contravene fate is likewise to oppose Heaven - rarely do such actions come to fruition. Yet fate is difficult to discern; one must observe the men involved and the circumstances. Indeed, circumstances ought to be discussed separately.

1.27 君子之交，肝膽相照。不惟朋友，君臣師弟皆然。然而形迹之間，亦不可不避，至於有相不足處，而姑且包涵之，彼之有不足者，固未善，此之知彼不足而姑包涵之，亦未爲善。然君子躬自厚，而薄責於人。到此情勢，不出涵容。

The friendship of superior men is one of total devotion. This is true not only of friends but also of the relations between sovereign and minister, teacher and disciple. Yet in matters of outward form and appearance, one must not fail to observe propriety. When there are mutual shortcomings, and one merely tolerates them, that the other party has deficiencies is certainly not good, yet that one knows of these deficiencies and merely tolerates them is also not truly good. Nevertheless, the superior man applies strict discipline to himself but lenient standards to others. In such circumstances, one cannot but exercise forbearance.

1.28 綱、約等。今世亂家愈貧。我年日高，深欲德有所進，庶不至於頹惰。然於應事接物，自一言一話一飲一食一跬一步之間，退而省其私，多未中度。德之進，其難如此哉。爾等不可不勉。

To Quynh and Uóc: In these times of disorder, our family is ever more destitute. As my years advance daily, I deeply desire to progress in virtue, that I may not sink into indolent decline. Yet in managing affairs and dealing with others, from each utterance to every act of reflection, each step however small - when I withdraw and examine myself in secret, I find that much fails to accord with proper measure. How difficult it is to advance in virtue! You must not fail to exert yourselves.

1.29 昔有居貧窮時，或作送窮文，逐貧賦。要之皆非善居貧窮者。夫送窮者，將以迎達乎。逐貧者，將以邀富乎。較之中庸曰素其位而行，曰居易以俟命，抑何從容乎。大抵富貴自有富貴德業，貧賤自有貧賤德業。子曰富與貴，是人之所欲也。不以其道得之，不處也。貧與賤，是人之所惡也。不以其道得之，不去也。用之不盡。

In former times, there were those who, dwelling at poverty, composed “Farewells to Poverty” or “Expulsions of Destitution.”¹³ Basically, none of these were adept in dwelling in poverty. For when one sends poverty away, does one thereby welcome success? When one expels destitution, does one thereby invite wealth? Compare this with the *Doctrine of the Mean*, which says: “Fulfill your station and act accordingly,” and “Dwell in simplicity while awaiting Heaven’s mandate” - how much more composed is this! (Zhongyong 14, as cited in Zhu, 2012, p. 24). Generally speaking, wealth and honor have their proper virtues and achievements; poverty and low station have theirs. The Master said: “Wealth and honor are what men desire; yet if obtained not by the proper way, one does not dwell in them. Poverty and low station are what men despise; yet if encountered not by the proper way, one does not depart from them.” (Analects 4.5, as cited in Zhu, 2012, p. 70). This principle is inexhaustible in its application.

1.30 安貧樂道，固是居貧之法。然安樂字亦有二義，時乎貧賤，自能安之，而不汲汲於富貴，安之良是。若止安而無向進工夫，以增德業，則亦流於頹弛。道固可樂，而以我之貧而後以道爲樂，以忘己之憂，亦是出於不聊賴，殊無滋味。

To find contentment in poverty and joy in the Way is indeed the method for dwelling in poverty. Yet the terms “contentment” and “joy” possess two meanings. In times of poverty and low station, if one can naturally find contentment therein, without anxiously pursuing wealth and honor, such contentment is truly excellent. Yet if one merely rests content without making efforts to advance and increase one’s virtue and achievement, then one shall likewise decline into laxity and negligence. The Way may certainly bring joy; yet to take joy in the Way only on account of one’s poverty, in order to forget one’s worries - this proceeds from a sense of having no recourse and is truly without savor.

1.31 綱、約等。今世亂家貧，而年凶不免假貸。其予我者，我父也，養我也。固當德之。其不與我者，我師也，教我也。教我曰欲足衣食，當自勉力也。毋生怨惡心。

To Quynh and Uoc: In these disordered times, our family grows poor, and in this year of dearth, it is unavoidable that you must borrow from others. He who lends to me is

¹³ The names of famous prose-pieces composed by Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) and Yang Xiong 楊雄 (58 BC-18 AD).

my father, who nourishes me - I ought naturally to feel gratitude toward him. He who refuses to lend to me is my teacher, who instructs me, teaching me that if I desire sufficient food and clothing, I ought to exert myself - I must not harbor resentment or hatred towards him.

1.32 涉世固不可以無智。然無權譎之謂也。灼其事之是非，知其人之高下以應接之，是之謂智。而至實以感動之，無時可無也。

In traversing the world, one certainly cannot be without wisdom. Yet this does not mean employing craft and deception. To discern clearly whether matters are right or wrong, to know whether men are noble or base, and to respond accordingly - this is what is meant by wisdom. Yet to employ utmost sincerity to move others is something which can at no time be dispensed with.

1.33 處世遇人，小事大事，毋太自任。蓋事有前如此而得，後如此而失，前如此而利，後如此而害者。天下人物才俊滿前，豈天下之事一一必需我為乃了事哉。故人之交友以至事君，遇有事時，固不可以袖手旁觀，然當隨事分量時勢以處之。若太自任，每多敗事。惟於其所當為，不可不盡吾心耳。

In dealing with the world and encountering others, whether in small matters or great, do not assume too much responsibility for yourself. For there are affairs which, conducted thus, may succeed, yet conducted later in the same manner, may fail; or which, managed thus, may bring benefit, yet managed later in the same manner, may bring harm. Talented and capable persons fill the world - how can it be that society's each and every affair requires my personal intervention so that it can be accomplished? Therefore, whether in making friends or in serving one's sovereign, when matters arise, although one certainly cannot stand idle, yet one ought to handle them according to the magnitude of the affair and the circumstances of the moment. If one assumes too much responsibility, one frequently brings about failure. Only in what you ought properly to do must you exhaust your heart.

1.34 與人當至實以接之。無惡歉心，每事輒佳。

In dealing with others, you ought to employ utmost sincerity. If your heart is free of wickedness and cause for shame, every matter shall proceed well.

1.35 儒家讀書，最不可緩。然於窮乏時，料理雜藝以爲生計，亦不可以不屑爲。如治園植菜，理柴汲水。當其爲之之時，於經書理義旨趣，思量溫讀之，詩句字機思量櫟括之事。迄浣面洗手足，開卷觀我拈筆寫文，甚妙。或有粟而盪磨之，文思此時最勝。若在窮乏，每每長歎，一付之時運，書亦不讀，雜藝亦不爲，惟思酒索食，此人大無了時。

For us classicist scholars, reading must on no account be neglected. Yet in times of want, tending to various practical tasks essential to one's livelihood must not be regarded with disdain. Tending gardens, planting vegetables, gathering firewood, drawing water - while engaged in these tasks, one may contemplate and recite the principles, significations, and implications of the classics; one may ponder the devices and mechanisms of poetry and composition. Then, having washed one's face and hands, one may open a book or take up a brush to write - this is most excellent. Or if one has grain and grinds it, literary inspiration is most abundant at such times. But if in poverty one constantly sighs, attributing everything to the times, neither reading books nor engaging in practical work, thinking only of wine and demanding food - such a person shall never achieve anything.

1.36 行路時思量文義，憇息以爲文，多得趣。

While walking along the road, contemplate the meaning of texts; when resting, compose prose - much pleasure may be found in this.

1.37 里仁爲美。擇不處仁，安得智。孟母三遷，良爲是也。男兒志四方，懷土固小人，然居鄉許多人，人情各是一般。一鄉皆善人，天下亦難得。一鄉皆惡人，天下亦未多見。況先人家廟墳墓，常人殆未易一旦遽遷之。子告子貢曰不如鄉人之善者好之，其不善者惡之。最難行而易處。

“To dwell in a neighborhood of virtue is excellence. If in one's choice one does not dwell in virtue, how can one obtain wisdom?” (Analects 4.1, as cited in Zhu, 2012, p. 69). Mencius's mother moved thrice - this was truly for this reason. A man's aspirations lie in the four quarters; attachment to one's native soil is indeed the mark of a petty person. Yet in dwelling among one's fellow villagers, human sentiments being what they

are, a village entirely composed of virtuous persons is rare indeed in the world. A village entirely composed of wicked persons is likewise not often seen. Moreover, the ancestral temples and graves of one's forebears cannot easily be abandoned by ordinary persons on short notice. The Master told Zigong: "It is better that the good among one's fellow villagers approve of one, and the not good disapprove of one." (Analects 13.24, as cited in Zhu, 2012, p. 148). This is most difficult to practice yet easy to dwell with.

1.38 與人交際，當重然諾。必審其人之高下，量其事之難易，終始於我果能踐信，然後許諾。否則，後必多悔。如今歲之往清廉，行止亦未爲當。

In forming relationships with others, one ought to value promises. One must examine carefully whether the person is noble or base, measure whether the matter is difficult or easy, and determine whether from beginning to end one can truly fulfill one's commitment - - only then should one make a promise. Otherwise, regret shall surely follow. As in this year's journey to Thanh Liêm, my conduct was not entirely appropriate¹⁴.

1.39 滿天地間皆福，滿天地間亦皆禍。福非靳於人，禍亦非有泛於人。當受者遇之而受之耳。蓋二氣往來，袞袞類從。時宜莫之間也。

Throughout Heaven and Earth, blessings abound; throughout Heaven and Earth, calamities likewise abound. Blessings are not begrudged to men; calamities are not randomly distributed to men. Those who ought to receive them encounter them and receive them accordingly. For the two energies come and go ceaselessly, following their kinds. This is seasonable and proper, with nothing intervening.

1.40 持己而不能自信，是非莫辨，當否莫決，不能自任。任重道遠，何以致之。接物與人，而自信自任，事君數斯辱矣，朋友數斯疏矣。

If in regulating oneself one cannot maintain self-confidence, being unable to distinguish right from wrong or determine what is proper, and cannot assume responsibility - when the burden is heavy and the way is long, how shall one attain one's destination? Yet in dealing with others, if one is overly self-confident and self-assuming,

¹⁴ An autobiographical reference, the context of which is unclear.

“in serving one’s sovereign, frequent intervention brings disgrace, and among friends, frequent intervention brings estrangement.” (Analects 4.26, as cited in Zhu, 2012, p. 74).

1.41 丈夫處世，天下事憚難而不爲，固非男子。至於得時任事，却欲一一由己，亦非豪傑。蓋天下事，須天下人共爲之。雖伊、傅、周、召亦然。況其下者乎。

For a man dwelling in the world, to shrink from difficulty and refuse to act is certainly not the conduct of a man. Yet when granted the opportunity to undertake affairs, to desire that every matter proceed through oneself alone is likewise not the conduct of a hero. The affairs of the realm require the collective efforts of all men in the realm. Even Yi Yin, Fu Yue, the Duke of Zhou, and the Duke of Shao conducted themselves thus. How much more so for those below them?

1.42 凡事毋狃，狃必敗事。莫教之敗於羅狃也。詩曰將叔無狃，戒其傷汝。可不慎諸。

In all matters, do not persist in complacency; complacency invariably brings failure. Let not affairs be ruined through habitual complacency. The Odes say: “O Shu, try not [such sport] again; Beware of getting hurt.” (The fourth ode in the Odes of Zheng, as cited in Legge, 1991, p. 129).¹⁵ Can one not be cautious in this?

1.43 士之處世，其無志者，何言哉。即有志矣，能知恥矣，出處大節無愧者固難，而居常言動行止能內省不疚者，爲尤難。故行己而不爲世人之所笑，未若不爲己之所自笑。余每自點檢，今日而憶往日，或自嫌其鄙，或自愧其吝，或自悔其褊。至於遷善之不力，改過之不勇，忿之未懲，慾之未窒，己所獨知而人弗及知者多矣。乃知白首紛如，古人深嘆，誠不可以不勉。

Among scholars dwelling in the world, those without resolution - what is there to say of them? Even if one possesses resolution and knows shame, to maintain integrity in great matters of conduct without reproach is certainly difficult, yet to examine oneself daily in words, actions, and behavior without self-reproach is still more difficult. Therefore, to conduct oneself without becoming a laughingstock to others is less

¹⁵ From the fourth ode in the Odes of Zheng (Legge 1991, 129)

important than to conduct oneself without becoming a laughingstock to oneself. I constantly examine myself: recalling today the conduct of yesterday, I sometimes find it base; sometimes I feel ashamed of my miserliness; sometimes I regret my narrow-mindedness. As for the want of vigor in moving toward goodness, the want of courage in correcting faults, the failure to check anger, the failure to curb desires - much that I alone know, others do not know. Thus do I understand the ancients' profound lamentation of being white-haired and in confusion - truly one must not fail to exert oneself.

1.44 無大過不若無小過之難。無顯失不若無隱失之誠。慎獨之學，志士當猛省。

To be without great faults is less difficult than to be without small faults. To be without visible errors is not greater than the sincerity of being without hidden errors. The learning of vigilance in one's interiority requires intense reflection by the man of resolve.

1.45 讀書當以公心和氣讀之，方看得聖賢意思。若以私心驕妄自忖度，自與聖賢氣象不侔，應事接物亦然。否則，鮮不失矣。

In reading books, one ought to read with an impartial heart and harmonious vital energy; only thus can one perceive the intentions of the sages and worthies. If one approaches with a selfish mind, arrogant and presumptuous in one's own estimations, one's spirit shall not accord with that of the sages and worthies. The same principle applies in managing affairs and dealing with others. Otherwise, error shall rarely be avoided.

1.46 名與利，切毋與人爭。君子疾沒世而名不稱焉，而利亦居常衣食之原。豈可或無畏教慕善而有名，勤力所事而有利。何不可之有。惟與人爭，鮮不接是非，涉禍害者。縱不見於目前，事久身後，各隨大小而至。余昔壬午應舉，名在處考第二，或嗾之以比首選者。余性退怯，不從。至己酉、庚戌之間，乃知不與他比最好。倘當日與之比，今必不安於逋播矣。然亦不獨此也。余自舉於鄉迄今，會試九科。四六落第者二，賦落第者七。以先祖功臣長孫少年，甲子、丙寅應闕。奉面傳長支各許出身。諸家功臣亦有以此進身者。丁酉年，奉傳朝士舉人。時黃公平政舉余操行學術。余納由不女考。蓋謂為此數路不免伺候丐請。事事有命在。從來事於科舉之業，縱有命於富貴科舉中，亦可僥倖一得。別而之他，恐其非所當得，

吉凶悔吝未卜何如。迨今不免饑寒，名亦非人之所不顧，利亦非人之所屬目而世無以爲意者。安於逋播，非一日矣。

Fame and profit - on no account compete with others for them. The superior man is distressed lest he pass from the world without his name being honored, and profit is likewise the source of ordinary food and clothing. How could these be dispensed with? To earn fame through encouraging others to virtue, and to obtain profit through diligent labor at one's tasks - what impropriety is there in this? It is only when competing with others that one seldom fails to encounter disputes and become involved in calamity. Even if not immediately apparent, with the passage of time, whether during one's life or after one's death, consequences arrive in proper measure. In the *nhâm ngô* [1762] year, I participated in examinations and ranked second in the provincial selection. Some urged me to challenge the first-ranked candidate. My nature inclining toward retirement and timidity, I did not comply. Between the *kỷ dậu* [1789] and *canh tuất* [1790] years, I came to realize that not competing with him was for the best. Had I competed on that day, I should not now find contentment in my wandering. Yet this is not the only instance. Since being recommended by my village to the present, I have taken the metropolitan examinations nine times - twice failing in the “four-six” essay, seven times in rhyme-prose. As the eldest grandson of a meritorious minister, in the *giáp tý* [1804] and *bính dần* [1806] years I was summoned for review¹⁶. I received an imperial decree that the eldest branch might obtain official position, and various families of meritorious ministers likewise advanced by this means. In the *đinh dậu* [1777] year, an imperial decree was issued for court officials and recommended scholars. At that time, Hoàng Bình Chánh recommended me for my conduct and learning, yet I declined and did not take the examination. For I considered that these several paths would inevitably require attendance and supplication. All matters depend on fate. Having always devoted myself to the examination system, even if fate granted wealth and honor through the examinations, it might still be obtained through chance. To pursue other paths, I feared obtaining what ought not to be obtained, with unknown consequences of fortune or misfortune, regret or remorse. To this day I cannot escape hunger and cold. Fame is not something men disregard, nor is profit - yet, as one who met with no satisfaction in this age, I find contentment in my wandering, and have done so for more than a day.

1.47 言語不可不慎。至於方人尤所當慎。非當選用人才之柄，切無有發。

¹⁶ The sequence of this narration is somewhat confusing.

發之不當，則爲妄庸。即當矣，我之所高，人或以我爲倂，我之所下，或至於招怨矣。品至高賢大人，亦不可以易於評人。一言之發，常俗以爲執據。一毫不當，謬誤必多。

In speech one cannot but be cautious. As for evaluating others, this requires particular caution. Unless one holds the authority to select and employ talented persons, one must on no account make such pronouncements. If the assessment is unmeet, one is base and vulgar. When such an assessment is meet, if I praise a man, others may regard it as flattery; those whom I rank lowly may bring resentment upon me. Even persons of the highest virtue and greatness ought not to evaluate others lightly. Once a word is uttered, ordinary people regard it as authoritative. The slightest impropriety produces manifold errors.

1.48 一凡事要在早識，早識要在熟思。熟思要在素養，素養要在居敬。

In all matters, the essential lies in early recognition; early recognition depends upon thorough thought; thorough thought depends upon fundamental cultivation; fundamental cultivation depends upon dwelling in reverence.

1.49 反常之言，多遇反常之災。反常之行，必獲反常之禍。每每見於此而成於彼，非必在於此時此事。

Abnormal speech frequently encounters abnormal calamity. Abnormal conduct invariably brings abnormal misfortune. These are often seen in one place yet come to completion in another, not necessarily in the present time or the present matter.

1.50 飲食不必豐，要潔淨。衣服不必美，要完整。容儀不必飭，要莊齊。言語不必文，要辨正。

In food and drink, abundance is not necessary - cleanliness is essential. In clothing, elegance is not necessary - completeness is essential. In demeanor, adornment is not necessary - gravity and composure are essential. In speech, refinement is not necessary - clarity and correctness are essential.

1.51 既同人之樂，必同人之苦。大事小事，無不皆然。

If one shares in others’ joys, one must share in their sorrows. This applies universally to all matters, great and small.

1.52 嫁女娶婦，只當論男女之心性，兩家之風化。貧富固所不當。

In arranging marriages, one ought only to consider the dispositions of the man and woman, and the moral influence of both families. Wealth and poverty are certainly not proper considerations.

1.53 耻不及人，猶恐不及。不耻不及人，不及人矣。功名德業皆然。故曰耻之於人大矣。

Even when one feels ashamed at not measuring up to others, there is still grounds to worry that one will not measure up. If one feels no shame at not measuring up to others - then it is certain that one shall not measure up to them. This applies equally to merit, fame, virtue, and achievement. Therefore it is said that shame is of great importance to men.

1.54 綱、約等。我自幼年，先母使之治科舉業。既壯，兩舉於鄉，才一得。九舉於南省，迄無成。黎氏革命，遂爲天下棄人。以此而修省工夫，遂至差怠。可耻深矣。

To Quynh and Uóc: From my youth, my late mother directed me to cultivate the studies proper to the civil service examination. Having reached maturity, I participated twice in provincial examinations and succeeded only once. Nine times I participated in the southern provincial examinations, yet achieved nothing. After the mandate of the Lê was removed, I became as one abandoned by human society. Through this, my work of self-examination and reflection became neglectful. How deeply shameful this is!

1.55 功名遇不遇在天。德業進不進在己。在天每每覬倖，在己却自放過。何哉。

Whether one meets with opportunity for merit and fame lies with Heaven. Whether one advances in virtue and achievement lies with oneself. In what depends on Heaven,

one constantly harbors wishful expectations; in what depends on oneself, one permits oneself to pass it by. Why is this so?

1.56 命不足道，聖者事也。常人祇當安命。然命亦有自兩端。富貴以道得之，貧賤不以道得之，此命也。固當安之。若富貴不以道得之，貧賤以道得之，亦曰此命也，而安之，則非以義合命之道矣。故君子有立命之道學焉。

Fate is not something to discourse upon - it is the concern of sages. Ordinary persons ought simply to accept their fate. Yet fate has two aspects. If wealth and honor are obtained through the Way, and poverty and low station are not obtained through the Way, this is fate, and one ought naturally to accept it. Yet if wealth and honor are not obtained through the Way, and poverty and low station are obtained through the Way, and one says "This is fate" and accepts it, then this is not the way of uniting righteousness with fate. Therefore the superior man studies the establishment of [heaven-ordained] fate (Mencius 7a.1, as cited in Zhu, 2012, p. 356).

1.57 士夫立身，固不可以不學聖賢。然亦當自知其分量。如學孔子，旦當學四勿，二如博文約禮。學孟子，旦當學知言養氣，克擴四端。學伊尹，當學耻君不及堯舜，一夫不獲，如納溝中。學箕子，當學內難而正其志。若夫環轍歷聘，就桀就湯，爲武王陳道，決未易學。蓋分量不侔，時世丕異，多易至差失。若曾子之三省，子思之尊德性、道問學，學者弗之學，其何以進德。乃其所謂彼富吾仁，彼彊吾義。所謂事之云乎。豈曰友之云乎。最當揣摩其分量時世，未易便爾輕學。

Gentlemen, in establishing themselves, certainly cannot but study the sages and worthies. Yet they ought also to know their own measure. In studying Confucius, one ought to study his four prohibitions, and also his broad learning restrained by ritual (Analects 9.10, 12.1, as cited in Zhu, 2012, pp. 111, 133). In studying Mencius, one ought to study his understanding of words and cultivation of vital energy, and his extension of the four beginnings (Mencius 2a.2, as cited in Zhu, 2012, p. 232). In studying Yi Yin, one ought to study his shame that his sovereign fell short of Yao and Shun, and his feeling that if even one man failed to find his place, it was as if he himself had thrust him into a ditch. In studying Jizi, one ought to study his maintaining of correct purpose amid internal difficulties. As for travelling extensively in diplomatic missions, serving Jie or Tang, or expounding the Way to King Wu - these are not easily studied. For one's measure may not accord, and the times may greatly differ, making error easy to

incur. As for Zengzi’s threefold self-examination, and Zisi’s honoring of the moral nature and inquiry into learning - if scholars do not study these, how shall they advance in virtue? (Zhongyong 27; Analects 1.4, as cited in Zhu, 2012, pp. 36, 48). Yet as for what they called “He may be wealthy but I am benevolent; he may be mighty but I am righteous,” and “Is it a matter of serving him? Or is it a matter of befriending him?” - one must carefully assess one’s own measure and the circumstances of the age; these are not easily or lightly studied (Mencius 2b.2, 5b.7, as cited in Zhu, 2012, pp. 244, 328).

1.58 學者操存涵養省察工夫，當於言動時，自回審其氣象如何。識其往以養其來。方爲有益。

In the scholar’s work of preservation, nourishment, and self-examination, he ought, in moments of speech and action, to turn inward and examine the state of his spirit. By recognizing what has passed, one nourishes what is to come. Only thus is there benefit.

1.59 人生於向老時，尤當孜孜動進。若或以得志而放肆，或以失志而頹墮，皆非志士。古人四世元老，克勤小物，年九十餘，猶自箴警。此何人哉。如或生平文章功名，既無一及人，及年方向老，倘不存心向進，即沒世無可錄矣。夫少年亦頗學問，理義亦頗有識，以一窮賤之故，而并隳其進修之業，可乎哉。

When a man approaches old age, he ought particularly to labor diligently and advance. If either through achieving one’s ambitions one becomes dissolute, or through failing to achieve them one becomes dejected, in neither case is he a man of resolve. The ancients who served as chief ministers through four reigns remained diligent in small matters; even at ninety years and beyond, they still admonished and cautioned themselves. What manner of men were these? If in one’s entire life one has achieved nothing in literary composition or fame, and moreover, as one approaches old age, one does not preserve the intention to advance - then one shall pass from the world without any record. For though in youth one studied to some degree, and understood moral principle to some extent, can it be acceptable that on account of poverty and low station alone, one should allow one’s work of advancing and cultivating oneself to fall into ruin?

1.60 功名際遇，富貴榮華，切不可有一毫覬倖之心。有覬倖之心，平生德業墮矣。

As for opportune encounters leading to merit and fame, or wealth and honor, one must not cherish the slightest expectation of chance. If one clings to such expectations, one's lifelong virtue and achievement shall be ruined.

1.61 天下蒼生之念，任至非凡人之所能堪，然而無蒼生之志，則身家之私起，而不足以言志矣。士在窮約，盍當念此。

To think of the masses of humanity throughout the world - the responsibility is so great that ordinary men cannot bear it. Yet if one lacks this resolve for the common people, then selfish concerns for one's person and family shall arise, and then there shall be no room to speak of resolve. When scholars dwell in poverty and want, should they not keep this in mind?

1.62 得喪窮通，貧富貴賤，以至生死壽夭，如寒暑之往來，潮汐之潤溢，人世迭有。若徒執此忽彼，便為輕薄。惟是非善惡之在我者，不可有毫髮之差謬。

Gain and loss, adversity and success, poverty and wealth, honor and disgrace, even life and death, longevity and early demise - these come and go like the alternation of cold and heat, like the ebb and flow of tides, occurring repeatedly in the human world. If one merely clings to one while neglecting the other, one becomes shallow and mean. It is only in matters of right and wrong, good and evil, as they pertain to oneself, that one must not permit the slightest error.

1.63 誠意正心之前，有格物致知，明而誠也。誠而明非聖者不能，教人必自明而誠。

Before making the intention sincere and rectifying the mind, there is the investigation of things and extension of knowledge - this is to become sincere through understanding (Daxue 1.1, as cited in Zhu, 2012, pp. 3-4). To achieve understanding through sincerity - only the sage can accomplish this. In teaching men, one must necessarily proceed from understanding to sincerity.

1.64 誠意正心而不格物致知，知人而不知天也。修身而無治國平天下，成己而不成物也。此吾儒之所以精而大，而中庸、大學之相貫也歟。

To make the intention sincere and rectify the mind without investigating things and extending knowledge is to know men but not to know Heaven. To cultivate the self without governing the state and bringing peace to the realm is to perfect oneself but not to perfect things. This is why our classicist teaching is both refined and comprehensive, and why the Doctrine of the Mean and the Great Learning are mutually connected.

1.65 惡人，人必畏之，勢也。譬之虎狼負隅之時，人無不畏。既入檻穽，人無不刺。

Wicked men - people necessarily fear them, due to circumstances of power. It is like tigers and wolves when cornered: none fail to fear them. Once they have fallen into traps and pitfalls, none fail to strike them.

1.66 名字之義有數重。如善有善名，惡有惡名，此皆易曉。陳搏謂名者國家之美器，造物深忌之。此皆浮名之過其實，所謂好名，而孟子之所深惡者也。若夫子之言疾沒世而名無稱焉，曾子言五十不以善聞，斯不聞矣，此則有其實而名之必歸。苟無可取，斯無名矣。善成名立，大人君子之公評所見取者。得名者，非有意於求之也。彼名不可有，此名不可無，二者當深辨，不可混看。

The significance of “name” comprises several meanings. As goodness has a good name, and evil has an evil name - these are easily understood. Chen Tuan said: “A name is a beautiful vessel of the state, which the Fashioner of Things deeply resents.” This refers to empty reputation exceeding reality, what is called “love of fame,” and what Mencius deeply abhorred. Yet when the Master spoke of being distressed lest he pass from the world without his name being honored, and when Zengzi said, “At fifty, if one is not heard for one’s goodness, then one shall not be heard” - these refer to possessing actual substance, whereby fame necessarily follows. If there is nothing worthy, then there is no name. When goodness is achieved and fame established through the public evaluation of great men and superior men, those who obtain fame do not deliberately seek it. That kind of name ought not to be possessed; this kind of name ought not to be lacking. These two must be profoundly distinguished and must not be confused.

1.67 饑寒固人之所苦。然而苦有甚於饑寒者。業而爲士，讀書有不能達意，作文有不能措辭，余以爲太苦，非厭溫飽。惟饑寒之苦在外，事過即休，非吾損耳也。況於立身行己而有違於理，應事接物而有悖於道者哉。

Hunger and cold are indeed hardships for men. Yet there are sufferings more severe than hunger and cold. For one whose profession is scholarship, if in reading books one cannot comprehend their meaning, or in composing essays one cannot properly arrange one's words - I consider this the greatest suffering, not because I weary of warmth and satiety. For the suffering of hunger and cold is external; when the matter passes, it ceases, and does not truly harm me. How much more so when in establishing oneself and regulating one's conduct one violates principle, or in managing affairs and dealing with others one contravenes the Way?

1.68 士君子居貧不安之，而徑營非義，固不足道。貧而自甘，以流於頹惰，至於衣冠之不理，室庭之不修，亦大非有志之士。不以其道得之不去，不以其道得之不處，聖人大訓最玩。

For scholar-gentlemen to dwell in poverty without accepting it, and straightway to pursue unrighteous means, is certainly beneath mention. Yet to dwell in poverty with complacent acceptance, declining into laxity and indolence, to the point where one's clothing and cap go unattended and one's rooms and courtyard fall into disrepair - - this too is greatly unworthy of a man of resolve. "Not to depart [from poverty] if not by the proper way; not to dwell [in wealth] if obtained by the improper way" - - this great teaching of the sage must be deeply pondered (Analects 4.5, as cited in Zhu, 2012, p. 70).

1.69 先儒云。人之情難制而易發者，惟怒爲甚。余亦曾有此病。平素常用功室過，久之，時有不覺其忽發者。近有加以誣謗，及有欠禮者，忽將發而不能自禁。既而亦悔其忿厲之未除，盍不爲此等人包容乎。今日忽省悟曰人之有此於我，我爲之容而不校，則有到不堪容時。即不能忍而復發矣。縱能忍，亦是爲人而彊閉曷。若操包養之量，以裕我中和之德，庶幾可以漸造聖賢之域。自然雍容而無彊閉之患矣。即聞人有譖愬者，亦須以此法處之。甲子（時年七十二）冬始識此。又初改曆，先母于社廟之前，旁有文筆砂在寺村地分。伊村謂其勢直射村居之後，培成曲勢。余往省墳見之怒。使家人破除之，因呼其村長責之。既而回省，此大不是。地理有神，亦必不越天理。所見如此，過溺於術家言爾。矧以我之未遇，而不能忍

如此，縱有勢位，其能以下人乎。回家坐定，再往伊村，歷見其村長，各致辭謝。仍言來日早有事往京北，期三日，即率家人爲村償築，他各因喜悅。回自京北，即命諸兒築之，如其村所作。後水潦，新土皆蕩，其砂形復如原。今伊村於村後池畔當筆砂尖所向處築一土堆以當之。余前曾所告也。

The former scholars said: “Among human emotions difficult to control yet easy to arouse, anger is foremost.” (Cheng, 2018, p. 461). I too have suffered from this affliction. Ordinarily I constantly apply myself to suppressing and checking it, yet in time there are occasions when it suddenly erupts without my awareness. Recently, when subjected to false accusations and shown want of courtesy, it suddenly threatened to erupt and I could not restrain myself. Afterwards, I regretted that my anger had not been eliminated. Why did I not exercise forbearance toward such persons? Today I suddenly awoke to understanding, saying: When others behave thus toward me, if I merely tolerate them without taking issue, then when the situation becomes intolerable, I shall be unable to endure it and it shall erupt again. Even if I can endure it, this is merely forcible suppression on account of others. If instead I cultivate an embracing and nourishing disposition, thereby enriching my virtue of equilibrium and harmony, I may gradually approach the realm of sages and worthies, naturally achieving composure without the affliction of forced suppression. Even when hearing that others slander or accuse, one must handle it by this method. In the winter of the *giáp tý* [1804] year (at age seventy-two), I first comprehended this. Moreover, at the beginning of the calendar reform, at the shrine where my late mother is commemorated, there was a geomantic feature called “writing brush sand” in the territory of the temple village. That village claimed its configuration directly pointed toward the rear of their dwellings, and they had built it up into a curved configuration. When I went to visit the grave and saw this, I became angry. I ordered my household members to demolish it, and summoned the village headman to reprimand him. Upon returning home and reflecting, I realized this was gravely wrong. If there is spiritual efficacy to geomancy, it certainly cannot transgress heavenly principle. To have viewed matters thus was to have been excessively deluded with the words of sorcerers. Moreover, given my lack of success, if I could not endure even this, how, if I possessed power and position, could I humble myself before others? I returned home and sat quietly, then went again to that village, called upon each village headman, and apologized to each. I furthermore said: “Tomorrow morning I have business in Kinh Bắc. I expect to return in three days, and shall lead my household members to rebuild it for the village as compensation.” They were all pleased. Returning from Kinh Bắc, I

immediately ordered my sons to rebuild it exactly as the village had constructed it. Later, after heavy rains, the new earth was all washed away, and the sand configuration returned to its original form. Now that village has built an earth mound beside the pond behind the village, directly opposite where the point of the brush sand is directed, to counter it. This was what I had previously advised them.

1.70 綱、約等。我園菜未必茂，而於草則我芟夷蘊崇之，可以盡闢。猶之爲善，雖未必能，而於惡則豈不可不務去之乎。

To Quýnh and Uóc: The vegetables in my garden may not flourish abundantly, yet as for weeds, I can cut them down and root them out, clearing them entirely. Similarly, though in doing good one may not necessarily succeed, as for evil, how can one not labor to remove it?

1.71 孟子曰。志，氣之帥也。氣，體之充也。夫志至焉，氣次焉。故曰。持其志，無暴其氣。又曰。我知言。我善養吾浩然之氣。蓋人能堅定其志，則氣從之，而外物舉無足以動其心。自格物致知，明夫理之自然之當然之所以然，而毅然以行之故也。《易》曰。震驚百里。不喪七鬯。楊萬里繹之以當此之時，一敬之外無餘念。一鬯之外，無餘物。雖白刃前臨，猛虎後迫，皆莫之覺。蓋此氣既足流動克滿，白刃猛虎不足以動吾矣。孟子所謂其爲氣也，至大至剛，以直養而無害，則塞乎天地之間。由此霸王而不動心也。《表記》曰。君子衰經，則有哀色。端冕，則有敬色。甲冑，則不可辱之色。皆志之定，而氣之足也。胡仁仲曰。志之所至，氣亦至焉。學者臨祭，毅然於臨祭。讀書作文，毅然於讀書作文。無他雜慮。推之事物，莫不皆然。所謂思不出其位者，此物也。夫子之發氣端，容亦此物也。綱當先於直養無害上用功。約當先於無暴其氣上用功。

Mencius said: "The will is the commander of the vital energy; the vital energy is what fills the body." The will arrives first, the vital energy follows. Therefore it is said: 'Maintain your will firm; do not do violence to your vital energy.' (Mencius 2a.2, as cited in Zhu, 2012, pp. 231-232). Again he said: "I understand words. I am skilled in nourishing my vast, flowing vital energy." When a man can establish his will firmly, then the vital energy follows it, and external things altogether lack the power to disturb his mind. From investigating things and extending knowledge, understanding the natural, the proper, and the reason why of coherence, and resolutely acting upon it - this is the reason.

The *Changes* say: “Thunder startles for a hundred li, yet the sacrificial wine is not spilled.” Yang Wanli explained this, saying: “At such a moment, beyond reverence there is no other thought; beyond the sacrificial wine there is no other thing. Though sharp blades threaten from the front and fierce tigers press from behind, one remains unaware.” For when this vital energy is sufficient, flowing and filling completely, sharp blades and fierce tigers are insufficient to disturb me. This is what Mencius meant when he said: “As for this vital energy, it is supremely great and supremely strong. If nourished uprightly and not harmed, it fills the space between Heaven and Earth.” Through this, kings and hegemony remain unmoved in heart. The *Record of Rites* says: “When the superior man wears mourning, he has an aspect of sorrow. When he wears court dress, he has an aspect of reverence. When he wears armor, he has an aspect of one who cannot be dishonored.” These all arise from the establishment of will and the sufficiency of vital energy. Hu Renzhong said: “Where the will arrives, the vital energy also arrives. When scholars attend sacrifices, they are resolute in attending sacrifices. When reading books or composing essays, they are resolute in reading books or composing essays, without other distracting thoughts. Extending this to all affairs and things, none differ.” What is called “thoughts not departing from one’s station” - this is the matter (Analects 14.28, as cited in Zhu, 2012, p. 157). The Master’s expression of vital energy and countenance - these too are this matter. Quynh ought first to apply himself to upright nourishment without harm. Uoc ought first to apply himself to not doing violence to his vital energy.

1.72 年荒食不足。許男綱夫婦之瑞英。其妻兄作令于此。告之曰。凡人言動跬步飲食，皆有桀囊。汝之此行，出於非得已。在此縱有甘肥，亦當食之不知其味，酒慎無浹唇者。近見諸亡賴嗜酒之輩，每妄言昔有北使已上關，返告其子云食鮮鱠必飲酒。此是敗家蕩子杜撰此言。毋以爲信。《酒誥》及范相公戒子詩，不可不思熟。

In this year of famine, food is insufficient. I permit my son Quynh and his wife to move to Thuy Anh to stay with her elder brother, who serves as magistrate here. I admonish them thus: “In all human speech and action, every step and every meal, there are measures and standards. This journey of yours proceeds from unavoidable necessity. Even if rich foods are available there, you ought to eat them without perceiving their flavor; as for wine, be cautious that it touch not your lips. I have recently observed various dissolute persons addicted to wine, who falsely assert that formerly there was a northern envoy who, upon crossing the pass and returning, informed his son: ‘When

eating fresh fish, one must drink wine.’ This is fabricated by profligate sons who ruin their families. Do not believe it. The Announcement on Wine and Minister Fan’s poem admonishing his sons must be pondered thoroughly.”

1.73 富貴功名猶水也，自外至者也。當常慮其太過。德業分量猶器也，自內受者也。當常慮其不及。

Wealth, honor, merit, and fame are like water - they come from without. One ought constantly to fear their excess. Virtue, achievement, and one’s measure are like a vessel - they are received from within. One ought constantly to fear their insufficiency.

References

- Bùi, Bích 裴璧. (1789). *Lữ trung tạp thuyết* 旅中雜說 [Miscellaneous Discussions Recorded in Sojourn]. Institute of Sino-Nôm Studies. VHv.1804.
- Bùi, Trục 裴軸. (n.d.). *Bùi Đản Trai trích đối* 裴亶齋摘對 [Selected Antithetical Couplets by Bùi Đản Trai]. Institute of Sino-Nôm Studies. VHv.348; VHv.859; VHv.860.
- Bùi, Trục 裴軸. (n.d.). *Đản Trai công tạp cáo* 亶齋公雜藁 [Miscellaneous Writings of Lord Đản Trai]. Institute of Sino-Nôm Studies. A.291.
- Cheng, Hao 程顥 and Cheng, Yi 程頤. (2018). *Er Cheng ji* 二程集 [Anthology of the Two Cheng Brothers] vol.1. Zhonghua shuju.
- Legge, James. (1991). *The She King or The Book of Poetry*. SMC Publishing Inc.
- Li, Jingde 黎靖德. (2017). *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 [Classified Conversations of Master Zhu] vols. 1, 2, 8. Zhonghua shuju.
- Thanh Trì Bùi thị gia phổ* 青池裴氏家譜 [Clan Genealogy of the Thanh Trì Bùi Clan]. Institute of Sino-Nôm Studies. VHv.1343/1-3.
- Zhu, Xi 朱熹. (2012). *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 [Collected Commentaries on the Four Books Divided into Chapter and Verse]. Zhonghua shuju.