『A Collection of Toegye Yi Hwang’s Words and Deeds』 Series No. 2.

BOOK 2. Reading (讀書)

[2.1] The master said the other day, “I learned the *Lunyu* (論語) from my uncle Songjae (松齋) at the age of 12. He made my study schedule very strict and kept me from being lazy. I was not idle because I respected and strictly followed his guidance; whenever I learned something new, I thoroughly reviewed what came before it. When I finished Volume 1, I memorized it, word by word, and did the same thing for Volume 2. After repeating the same process again and again, I was able to understand some passages from Volumes 3 and 4 by myself without having to learn from others.

- Yi Deok-hong (李德弘)

先生嘗言“吾十二歲，受魯論於叔父松齋先生，先生嚴立課程，不使悠泛，某承教惕勵，未嘗少懈。既得新知，又必溫故，一卷既畢，通誦一卷，二卷既畢，亦通誦二卷。若此之久，漸與初學不同，讀至三四卷，間有自通解處矣.”[李德弘]

[2.2] One summer day, the master had time to read the *huziquanshu* (朱子全書) in Seoul. He then closed the door, sat, and began reading quietly, which did not stop until the end of summer. One day someone advised him that studying in the heat that way could damage his health, and the master replied, “Whenever I read this book, I suddenly have a cool feeling in my heart and do not even realize how hot it is. How can I get sick?”

1) [TN: Translator’s note] Yi U (李珥, 1469–1517). His courtesy name (字) is Myeongjung (明仲) and Songjae (松齋) is his pen name (號).
2) [TN] Yi Deok-hong (李德弘, 1541–1596). His courtesy name (字) is Goengjung (宏仲) and his pen name (號) is Ganjae (艮齋).
先生嘗得朱子全書於都下，閉戶靜觀，歷夏不輟。或以暑熱致傷為戒，先生曰：“講此書，便覺胃膈生涼，自不知其暑，何病之有?”

[2.3] The master also said, “Anyone who reads this book learns how to study, and can accordingly feel joy. If you start studying from here and dig deep into the book for a period of time, you will find that each teaching of the Four Books is meaningful and useful to you.”

[2.4] In the master’s house there was an old copy of the Zhuzidaquan (朱子大全) of which the printing had mostly faded away from repeated reading. Long after, many copies of the book had been printed and the master had a chance to borrow a new copy. Whenever he got a new one, he read it carefully comparing it with his older copy, corrected the errors in the one he had, and read the revised version again. As a consequence, he was able to thoroughly understand all the chapters and passages, and lived by the book as naturally as using his own five senses, and hands and feet. Of all the things he practices in everyday life, there was no case that did not conform to the contents of this book. If a person asked a difficult or suspicious question, the master always answered by this book, which is all in line with the principles of human life. All of these were possible because of the master’s understanding and belief in the contents of the book, which led his mind and behaviors to follow the book autonomously. Anyone who neglects practicing and only relies on reading will not be able to reach that level.

先生家,有朱子書寫本一帙。卷帙甚舊,字畫幾佚。乃讀而然也。其後人多印出。每得新

3) [TN] Gim Seong-il(金誠一): 1538-1593. His courtesy name(字) is Sasun(士純), and his pen name(號) is Hakbong(鶴峰).
4) A collection of writings by Zhu Xi. After his death, the writings he exchanged with various scholars were compiled by his literati into one book under the title “Zhuzidaquan (朱子大全).”
A disciple asked, “Which book is most important? Xiaoxue (小學), Jinsilu (近思錄), or Xinjing (心經)?”

The master answered, “The Xiaoxue is equipped with both substance (體) and function (用); the Jinsilu is profound and detailed in its meaning. Both of them are necessary to read but the Xinjing is the most important for beginners. He also said, “In my case, no book is better than the Jujaseojeolyo (朱子書節要).” Since each person, including friends and students, had different characters and problems, Zhu Xi taught them regarding their own temperament and presented solutions suitable for each of them. Therefore, people who want to find solutions for problems of their own will be able to get the right one among those many conversations in the book. If you concentrate on the book and take it seriously as if you take private lessons from Zhu Xi, you will certainly get a lot of help in self-discipline practice.

- Gim Su (金睟)

【問題之處】小學近思錄心經，何書最切？”先生曰：「小學體用俱備，近思錄義理精微，皆不可不讀，而初學用功之地，莫切於心經。」又曰：「以余觀之，無踰於朱子書。知舊門人、資質病痛，有萬不同，故因材施教，對證下藥，許多問答之中，豈不有偶合於我者乎？苟能沉潛玩繹，如承面命，則其於自脩之工，豈曰小補之哉！’’

The master used to add critical marks to the Jujaseojeolyo (朱子書節要) in

5) A book made to teach children around the age of eight to study Confucianism. It was compiled by Liu Qing-zhi (劉淸之, 1139-1195) at the instruction of his teacher Zhu Xi and completed in 1187.
6) In 1175, Zhu Xi and Lu Zu-qian (呂祖謙, 1137-1181) selected and edited both important academic topics and other issues for everyday life from the writings of four scholars, including Zhou Dun-yi (周敦頤, 1017-1073), Cheng Hao (程顥, 1032-1085), Cheng Yi (程頤, 1033-1107), Zhang Zai (張載, 1020-1077). The two scholars published the result under the title “Jinsilu (近思錄).”
7) A book compiled by Zhen De-xiu (眞德秀, 1178-1235) of the Song Dynasty. It is a collection of proverbs on moral cultivation in scriptures and writings by Confucian scholars.
8) A collection of letters compiled by Toegye from the Zhuzidaquan (朱子大全) to help beginners.
9) [TN] Gim Su (金睟, 1547-1615). His courtesy name (字) is Jaang (子盎) and his pen name (號) is Mongchon (夢村).
his youth but proofread and corrected them later for the authorized version. However, he failed to finish the task by the end of his life.

- Jo Mok(趙穆)

先生初年，批點朱書節要，晚將定本，頗有增損，尚未及終篇.[趙穆]

[2.6] Commentaries on the authorized version of the Jujaseojeolyo (朱子書節要) came from the records written by the master himself. But many of them were later revised.

- Jo Mok (趙穆)

朱書節要定本註解，出於先生手錄。然其間亦有追改者，非可以一二言也.[趙穆]

[2.7] There was no book that the master had not read. Among books he read, however, he was most interested in Neo-Confucian classics. He fully understood each chapter and passage. As if speaking his own words, the master accurately quoted and delivered the contents related with his lecture from the Neo-Confucian classics. In his later years, the master focused only on the Jujaseojeolyo which had given him insights for his entire life.

-Gim Seong-il(金誠一)

先生於書，無所不讀，而尤用心於性理之學，章章爛熟，句句融會，講論之際，親切的當，如誦己言。晚年專意朱書，平生得力處，大抵自此書中發也.[金誠一]

[2.7] The master respected and admired saints and sages as if they, in a form of deity, existed above his head. Whenever the master read books, he would avoid given names of saints or sages, and simply called them mo (某)11) in honor of them.12)

-Gim Seong-il(金誠一)

先生尊慕聖賢，敬之若神明在上。臨文，必諱名稱某，未嘗犯之.[金誠一]

10) [TN] Jo Mok(趙穆, 1524-1606). His courtesy name(字) is Sagyeong(士敬) and his pen name(號) is Wolcheon(月川).
11) Mo(某) is a letter used not to specify a person’s given name in Confucian culture, especially when s/he is honored.
12) Hui(諱): A common term that refers to the act of avoiding the name of a person who has died in honor of the name of the person who lives, or the name of the person who lives.
[2.8] When reading, the master would sit in an upright position and recite the book with solemnity. He confirmed the meaning of the Chinese characters and sentences with clarity, and did not pass by the minute parts of the characters. In that way, he would pick up cases of mis-writing 魚 as 魯, or 豕 as 亥. But he didn't erase or fix the printed Chinese characters carelessly; instead, he made a footnote on it and said, "This character should be changed to a different character." He did things in a cautious and meticulous manner.

One day, Jo Mok 趙穆, one of his disciples, was proofreading the Xinjingfuzhu 心經附註. If the shape of the character was incorrect, he dug up the wood block and corrected the part with an error; when he found that annotations were unfairly deleted, he made up for what was missing. Then the master scolded him, “How could you so quickly fix a book written by preceding scholars by the rule of your own opinion? Don't you know the old mockery of jingenche 金根車?”

- Gim Seong-il 金誠一

[2.9] The master said, “‘Before reading, I was at this level. After reading, I still remain at this level.’ These two phrases really alarm us.”

- Gim Seong-il 金誠一

[2.10] When asked a proper reading skill, the master answered, “The only way of reading is to read the book until you get used to it. What happens when

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13) [Original Note] Han Chang 韓昶, son of Han Yu 韓愈, 768–824, was a stupid and clumsy man. One day, he happened to read the Shichuan 史傳, in which he found a three-letter word 金根車. Out of ignorance, however, he insisted that 金根車 was not a word and changed the letter 根 to 銀, ended up being ridiculed by literati.
readers are not used to the details of the book, and have a superficial understanding of it? They will forget it as soon as they finish reading, and not be able to keep it in their minds. After reading a book, you always have to review and try to get used to it so that you can keep it in your mind. In this way, you will also enjoy the pleasure of being immersed in reading.”

-Gim Seong-il (金誠一)

問讀書之法，先生曰“止是熟。凡讀書者，雖曉文義，若未熟，則旋讀旋忘，未能存之於心。必也既學而又加溫熟之功，然後方能存之於心，而有浹洽之味矣。”[金誠一]

[2.11] The master told the disciples, “Yanping (延平)14) once said that he would sit quietly and make his mind comfortable and clear, and then figure out the principle of heaven. What he said above is the most important lesson for learners who are trying to read books and investigate principles.”

-Gim Seong-il (金誠一)

先生曰“延平默坐澄心，體認天理之說，最關於學者讀書窮理之法。”[金誠一]

[2.12] The master also said, “Here is the most important tip when you read: Only after you sincerely follow words and deeds of saints in the book, by reading and investigating them in silence, will you have the effect of advancing your studies. If you read books aloud, but quickly, with rough memorization, you will have a bad habit of simply hearing and memorizing without deep thinking. With that habit, there will be no benefit even though you try very hard to memorize a thousand writings and talk about Confucian classics until you have reached old age where your hair turns white.”

-Gim Seong-il (金誠一)

又曰“讀書之要，必以聖賢言行體之心，而潛求默玩，然後方有涵養進學之功。若忽忽說過，泛泛誦說而已，則不過章句口耳之末習，雖誦盡千編，白首談經，亦何益哉!”[金誠一]

14) [TN] Li Tong (李侗, 1093-1163). His courtesy name(字) is Yuanzhong (願中) and his pen name(號) is Yanping (延平). Zhu Xi was one of his disciples.
[2.13] The master also said, “In the night, you must investigate and examine what you read during the day.”

-Gim Seong-il

又曰 “晝之所讀, 夜必思繹.”

[2.14] The master said, “Whenever you read the book of saints, look back on yourself; if you still do not understand what they said, you should remind yourself that saints always teach us what we can understand and practice. If my view does not conform to what they said, maybe my effort was not good enough. It is impossible for me to believe that saints deceive us with something hard to understand and practice. All you have to do is to trust the teachings of saints more sincerely, empty your mind, and search for their true meaning with passion. Then slowly and steadily, you will understand them.”

-Gim Bu-ryun

先生曰 “讀聖經, 反諸己, 有不通曉處, 須思‘聖人垂訓, 必就人可知可行者立言,而聖賢之言如彼, 我之所見如此, 則是自我著力不精之故也. 聖賢豈以難知難行者, 欺我哉?’ 益信聖賢之言, 而虛心求之, 則將有見得處.”

[2.15] The master said, “When you read, only focus on what is written on the page instead of trying to find some unconventional views beyond its original meaning.”

-Gim Bu-ryun

先生曰 “讀書不必深求異意, 只就本文上, 求見在之義而已.”

[2.16] A disciple asked, “U Seong-jeon (禹性傳) and Yu Seong-ryong (柳成龍) argued that writings of Zhu Xi is not better than the Xinjing (心經). What

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15) [TN] Gim Bu-ryun (金富倫, 1531-1598). His courtesy name (字) is Donseo (惇敍) and his pen name (號) is Seorwoldang (雪月堂).
16) [TN] U Seong-jeon (禹性傳, 1542-1593). His courtesy name (字) is Gyongseon (景善) and his pen name (號) is Chuyeon (秋淵).
17) [TN] Yu Seong-ryong (柳成龍, 1542-1607). His courtesy name (字) is Ilhyeon (而見) and his pen name (號) is Seoae (西厓).
is your opinion?” The master answered, “It not right to bluntly say that without reading the books to the last page. Only after many years of reading with a calm mind, followed by careful research and intensive immersion in them, will you be able to experience their importance to yourself. At the same time, it is not proper for learners to prefer a simple book to a complicated one.”

問 “禹性傳柳成龍, 以爲朱子書, 不如心經之切要, 其說如何?”先生曰“未嘗讀了而遽有是說, 不可, 必沈積年, 熟讀詳味, 然後方知親切也, 且為學, 何可徑約而厭煩乎?”[金誠一]

[2.17] While studying the Yixueqimeng (易學啓蒙), Gim Seong-il (金誠一) said, “This book seems not so kind to beginners.” After a long pause, the master answered, “If you read this book repeatedly and carefully for a long time, one day the Way comes to light and you will see that everything before you is the manifestation of it; how can you say that this book is not kind?”

-Yi Deok-hong(李德弘)

金士純學啓蒙書, 曰“此書於初學工夫, 似不親切.”先生久之, 曰“若於此書, 熟讀詳味久久, 實體呈露目前, 事物無非這個, 如何不親切?”[李德弘]

[2.18] As he considered Yi Deok-hong’s (李德弘) reading of the entirety of the detailed notes as a bad habit, the master told him, “Those detailed notes are like mist rising in the valley and sand washed by the waves. You can skip them.”

-Yi Deok-hong(李德弘)

嘗病德弘盡看細註, 曰“如谷騰霧, 如波滾沙之說, 君其省之.”[李德弘]

[2.19] One day, Jeong Sa-seong (鄭士誠) was reading books with Geum-Eunghyeop (琴應夾), Geum Eung-hun (琴應壎), and Yi An-do (李安道) at a Buddhist

18) [TN] Yi Deok-hong(李德弘, 1541-1596). His courtesy name(字) is Goengjung(宏仲) and his pen name(號) is Ganjae(艮齋).
19) [TN] Jeong Sa-seong(鄭士誠, 1545-1607). His courtesy name(字) is Jamyeong(子明) and his pen name(號) is Jiheon(芝軒).
20) [TN] Geum-Eung-hyeop(琴應夾, 1526-1596) whose courtesy name(字) is Hyeopji(夾之) and pen name(號) is Ilhyudang(日休堂); Geum Eung-hun(琴應壎, 1540-1616). whose courtesy name(字) is Hunji(壎之) and
After finishing his reading, he visited the master on his way home. There the master asked, “Did you finish the Yixueqimeng (易學啓蒙)? While reading, you should not carelessly turn the pages. Why don’t you follow the example of Jo Mok (趙穆)? Only by reading in the same way as he does, will you get productive results.”

- Jeong Sa-seong (鄭士誠)

On November 3, 1568 the master gave the king his evening lecture. At that time, the king was a 17-year-old Seonjo (宣祖) who had just ascended to the throne. After lecturing on the Xiaoxue (小學), the master said: “Now we finished the Xiaoxue (小學). Considering the default order, it is better to lecture on the Xiaoxue (小學) first and then the Daxue (大學). But today, I changed the order and lectured on the Daxue (大學) first and then the Xiaoxue (小學). In terms of sage learning, however, the Xiaoxue and the Daxue should be incorporated into one. That is why Zhu Xi, at the opening of his Daxue huowen (大學或問), said that the Xiaoxue should be the basis of the Daxue. He also claimed that in order to incorporate the Xiaoxue and the Daxue into one, we should put reverence (Jing, 敬) in the center of our sage learning. Although the Xiaoxue is considered a textbook for children, it is not right to throw away the Xiaoxue study and only focus on the Daxue study, even if the Daxue study is an advanced course and you are taking it. That is why Zhu Xi described the two books as the beginning and the end of sage learning; the Xiaoxue is the beginning and the Daxue is the end.

21) The Cheongnyang mountain (淸涼山) is near Andong, the hometown of Toegye. Toegye loved Cheongnyang mountain so much that one day he even made his pen name “Man of Cheongnyangsan (淸涼山人).”

22) [TN] An introductory book on the philosophy of change written by Zhu Xi. Many different commentaries on this book were published during the Joseon Dynasty.
If we compare sage learning to building a house, the Xiaoxue study is laying the foundation for a house and preparing the building materials; the Daxue study is building a large house with many rooms on the foundation. If you lay the foundation for a house but do not build a house, you will get no result. On the other hand, if you plan to build a large house with many rooms without laying the foundation, you will never get what you want. That is why the two books are the beginning and the end of sage learning. There is an old saying in the Sohakjesa(小學題辭), “to fertilize the roots and bring the branches to their full growth.”

The Xiaoxue is for fertilizing the roots and the Daxue is for bringing the branches to their full growth. Learning books other than these two texts are needed only for decorating the house. You also have to remember and follow with all your heart the writings that I lectured you about the other day. If you always remember topics such as <Clarifying relationships (明倫)>, <Minding manners (敬身)>, <Clarifying the essential skills of dealing with inner dispositions (明心術之要)>, and <Clarifying the norms of proper decorum and dignity (明威義之則)>, then the Way will flow through your everyday life and your practice will correspond exactly to the Way at every moment. You should fill the Xiaoxue in the frame of a big building called “the Daxue.” You also have to fill the frame of the Daxue and decorate it with other Confucian classics such as the Analects (論語), the Mencius (孟子), the Doctrine of the Mean (中庸), the Classic of Document (書經). Even if the lecture is over, you should always keep this in mind.

There is an old saying which reads, “learners are not concerned about progress, but about not stepping back.” “Stepping back” does not mean to just back off and do nothing; it means to always remember and review what was learned the day before. If your reviewing of older material is at such a high level, learning new material will not deviate from this level either. It will be a great relief if you do not let your mind [wander?] all the time.”

- Danghuilgi(堂后日記)

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戊辰十一月初三日，入侍夕講[是時，宣廟新服，春秋十七.]，講小學畢，進啓曰‘小學今已畢講，以次第言之，當先講小學，而次大學，今反先講大學，而次小學矣。然其工夫，則當通小學大學而爲一。故朱子大學或問初面，以小學爲大學之根本，而其通而爲一工夫，則又以敬爲大本。小學雖釋之以小子之學，入大學後，亦不可背此而專事大學也。故曰‘聖學之所以成始成終’，小學所以成始，大學所以成終也。以作室比之，小學則如脩正基址，而備其材木也，大學則如大廈千萬間，結構於基址也。脩正基址而不構其室，則是無終也，欲構大廈千萬間，而不脩基址，則亦不能構矣。故爲聖學之始終矣。小學題辭亦曰‘以培其根，以達其支。’小學所以培其根也，大學所以達其支也。此外，雖講他書，而其工夫，皆爲大廈千萬間，修繕所入矣。前日講論之書，亦每自體念。如明倫篇及敬身篇，明心術之要，明威儀之則等處，頃刻不忘，日用之間，天理流行，支支節節，無不照管。大學規模，以此塡之，其他如語孟中庸及詩書諸書，皆當塡之於大學規模，而爲之修繕。今雖畢講，而亦常畱念，可矣。古語有之，‘爲學工夫，不患其不能進前，而患不能退步。’退步云者，非謂退而不爲也，舊日所學，反顧溫習，不忘之謂也。溫故之工，深至，則知新之工，亦不出於此矣。常不弛於聖念，幸甚。’[堂后日記]

24) Danghulgi(堂后日記) is another name of the Journals of the Royal Secretariat(Seungjeongwonilgi, 承政院日記). In Joseon, there was an organization called the Royal Secretariat(Seungjeongwon, 承政院) which holds responsible for communication between the king and the departments, organizes various documents and reports them to the king, and delivers orders issued by the king to the departments. The Journals of the Royal Secretariat is a chronicle of the events of the kings and many departments recorded by the Royal Secretariat.