

MORAL CULTIVATION BY WU KANGZHAI: A Mentalism Pioneer in Ming Dynasty

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Abstract: Wu Kangzhai, an educator in Ming Dynasty of China (AD 1368-1644), expressed his philosophical thoughts through various literary forms such as poetry and journal. An analysis of his works shows that his moral cultivation in different periods reflected his wisdom and sensitivity. However, his theory of moral cultivation and the 'heart-mind' duality has been given little to no due attention within the academia. Most scholars regard Wu Kangzhai as a scholar of 'learning of the principle' rather than a scholar of 'learning of the heart'. His learning and understanding about 'heart-mind' duality may have manifested in his progress of moral practice. This study aims to show Wu's important role in encouraging learning of the 'heart-mind' by Chen Baisha and Wang Yangming. Wu Kangzhai's learning of the 'heart-mind' duality was not only enlightenment and guidance for Wang Yangming's theory, but also inspired literary schools in Ming Dynasty such as the Tang-Song school, the Gongan school, and later the Ming prose. His observation of self-cultivation and subtle inspection of moral development over the years, parallels the sentimentalism and spiritual writing in the middle and later Ming Dynasty literary works.

Keywords: Chen Baisha, learning of the heart-mind, literary ethics, moral criticism, theory of cultivation, Wang Yangming.

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1. Introduction

The Mentalism in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) was introduced and refined by Tutor Wu Kangzhai (Wu Yubi, referred to as Wu 1392-1469, named Kangzhai, born in Chongren, Fuzhou City, Jiangxi Province)). Later, it was further promulgated and evolved with the efforts of Chen Baisha and Wang Yangming represented usually as the booster and the peak of the Mentalism in Ming Dynasty respectively. Finally, it was with the efforts of Xinzhai and Longxi that the Yangming Conscience Learning Style became popular in the country. In his early years, Wu featured his moral practice as 'Cultivating Conscience' (*yang liangxin*) (Wu 522). He engaged himself in activities such as reading books in tranquil studies, engaging himself in farm work and going out to give lectures and thereby he came in pace with the thought of benefiting both body and mind, which was illustrated in *the Four Books (sishu) - Analects, Mencius, Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean*. Thus, he came to master the mental state of the sages, like 'Reason in Harmony' and 'the Whole Universe in a Small Heart' (Wu 368). His idea of cultivating conscience in his early years paved the way for further ideas during his interim and later years, such as 'Cultivating a Clever Mind' (*yang lingtai*), 'Cultivating Spirit' and 'Cultivating Clever Character' (*yang xingling*), however those were not systematically formed during his early years. His thoughts, like 'Praying the Spirit to the Sky' and 'A Clever Heart Knowing Well by a Small Hint', essentially evidenced that he "had mastered the essence of Mentalism" in his early years before he turned forty years old. His moral cultivating of 'Cultivating Conscience' in his early years was directly connected or accorded with Chen Baisha's *Tranquil Cultivation* and Wang Yangming's *Conscience* (Van Norden 461).

Wu already found the importance of the tranquil cultivation of a clever mind in the process of cultivating conscience. Expressing his state of mind as a sage, he wrote, "A clever mind brightens like a flawless jade. It stands alone in the east wind. How spring tiptoes into the night? Two or three peach buds bloom right" (Wu 367). The phrase "it stands alone in the east wind" manifests his responsibility for his pursuit alone for the cultivation of sagehood. Another phrase "a clever mind brightens like a flawless jade" clearly shows his pure heart at

that time and his pursuit of an unconventional state of mind, a novel academic form that had never shown up in any of the previous moral cultivation theories. Moreover, these mental feelings of 'wisdom' appear to be the fruits of his strenuous travel. His life was hard, for Wu was one of the philosophers that worked most laboriously in Chinese history; he had no office work and had been farming for his whole life. He was a farmer philosopher. Wu had been cultivating conscience over some decades. In his phrase "the whole universe in a small heart" exudes the 'sensitivity' of a clever mind and the way he felt the concept of Mentalism, a boost of cultivating a clever mind in years.

When he was in his late thirties, he said, "wash away the selfness in the clever mind", "a pure clever mind ponders on nothing else", "a clever mind needs tranquil cultivation" (Wu 382). These words expressed his aim of realizing a society devoid of selfish consideration, by reading books in tranquil environment to clear the mind. The constancy and restraint in the detailed mind made his thoughts coincide with Wang Yangming's Conscience. He also said, "as soon as a selfish mind emerges, a big wave follows on" (Wu 377). This statement paints his worry about the evil mind while cultivating conscience; so he encouraged that those who cultivated conscience need to constantly struggle against the evil within the mind. Thus, they may realize a peaceful state of mind, "deeply understanding the essence of Mentalism". Around the time he was forty years old, Wu believed that cultivating a clever mind to its penultimate strata was one of the ways to get a kind of special pleasure, he wrote in his poem, "reading books into the heart is my pleasure; I would pray the spirits would fly into the sky" (Wu 386). This telepathy found within the phrase is called 'spirit', which was in accordance with Wang Yangming's Conscience. His sensory feeling of 'spirit' is intermittent, which meant that feeling was not fixed, and was far from Wang Yangming's theoretical and systematic understanding of conscience spirits. This might be attributed to the fact that his source of knowledge was books and daily work, rather than being respectful cultivation or deadly sufferings (Israel 651).

2. Wu's Youth Ages: Cultivating Conscience

Wu Kangzhai, at the age of 12, went to the capital Nanjing with his uncle to visit his father Bo Wu. It was during the year of Jingnan, a year of the power struggle and political turmoil within the emperor's family in Nanjing. He saw the cruel war with his own eyes and witnessed how the turmoil twisted humanity and destroyed the society and economy. Under these circumstances rose the new emperor Zhu Di and his rise subsequently ensued a bloodbath of the former ruler's followers. Young Kangzhai's enthusiasm in politics was doubtlessly influenced by the incident. After the new emperor seized the throne, young Kangzhai stayed by the side of his father, who worked in the Imperial College, to study couplet and poetry.

At the age of nineteen, he happened to read *The Origin of Yiluo* (*Yiluo Yuanyuan Lu*) and got to know how the learning of Song and Yuan Dynasties were passed down. A fact that confounded Mingdao Cheng, one of the most distinguished scholars, during his youth about the way to being a sage. Later, he became a sage due to his consistent endeavor and industrious work. Kangzhai was excited at these findings, and eventually burned the works of the scholars in the Imperial Examinations and resolved to be a sage. This exactly coincided with the way that Chen Baisha asked his students to burn the book so as to find the right direction for them.

The following year Kangzhai formally began his study of *The Book of Changes* and the Study of Mind to complete the journey to be a sage better and faster. He was determined to achieve his supreme aim of perfect ethics cultivation, namely, full conquest of his selfish desires and complete purity of the Heavenly principle. Surely, it was at a high political risk that Kangzhai refused to participate in the Imperial Examination, particularly during a period when the society was under great political pressure in the reign of the new emperor. He clearly knew that even the greatest sage also made mistakes at a young age, which could be changed by later learning. It was this sense that had woken up his inner desire to be a sage; and he was determined to be the morally cultivated individual as well as a great scholar. Thereupon, Kangzhai committed himself to build up a genuine self, and his theory of moral cultivation was getting close to Yichuan Cheng's theory of setting up Moral Subjectivity.

Kangzhai had given up his promising political career in the early years and devoted himself in self-cultivation in the remote countryside, which distinguished him from the other contemporary Confucians, and told why he initiated the Study of Reason in Ming Dynasty. Later when he turned thirty-five, he discovered in his journey of moral cultivation that Li Yanping, the great Confucian Zhu Xi's teacher, was actually bold and heroic, but came to be a great Confucian through his self-cultivation in morality. Therefore, when Kangzhai was confronted with frustrations and difficulties in his moral practice, he would be inspired by Mingdao and Yanping's endeavour.

In the winter of 1411 when he was twenty-one years old, Kangzhai left the bustling city and began his 60-year-long journey of being a sage, with his longing and dreams of “being pure-hearted and having no selfish thoughts” (Wu 575). He was doubtlessly the best example of morality in his era because his moral practice cared for no fame, no wealth, no title of nobility, but success. In addition, his spirit of calm mind and inner peace was of great significance that enlightened the Study of Mind in Ming Dynasty. Actually, Cao Yuechuan (1376-1434), a predecessor in the Study of Mind in early Ming Dynasty and a master in education in Northern China, had unconsciously noticed moral cultivation through a calm mind and inner peace. Cao Yuechuan was confined in the moral practice of Song Dynasty (960-1279), but Kangzhai inherited the essence of the study of the former dynasty and initiated the Study of Mind in Ming Dynasty.

Even at a young age, he was determined to continuously walk ahead with moral practice and into the land of sages via the Study of Mind, and he finally arrived at a state of mind of the sages. When he reported his moral journey to Zhong Xue, a respectable scholar of his father generation, he mentioned that he was persistent in moral cultivation via reading books recently, but he had some senses about the ‘Clever Mind.’ As he put it “how many stages I have gone through in the cultivation of Clever Mind?” (Wu 359). It meant that at that moment he was not quite sure about how far he had gone in the cultivation. On the other hand, however, this question indicated that he had begun to sense the importance of the moral cultivation of the Clever Mind. Since then, ‘Cultivation of a Clever Mind’ became an important orientation of Kangzhai's ‘Cultivation of Conscience.’

Like many other youths, Kangzhai also felt confused and self-abased, and he was even resigned to his backwardness, usually expressing his desires that he expected the teachers' or friends' assistance in cultivating a Clever Mind. In 1419, aged twenty-nine, he preferred to inner conscience cultivation rather than the constant pursuit for the objective reasons. In his view, cultivating conscience would be more precious than the pursuit of reasons, which indicated his opposition against the social environment in which most people were running after fame, wealth, and titles of nobility. Conscience and Reason changed place in his heart, thus implying Kangzhai's passion for the Study of Mind. Laying special emphasis on conscience cultivation, he cared a lot for Mencius and his heritage of the mind study. So he told Hu Jiuzhao, a student in his early years, that he should take Mencius as an example of the Study of Mind, discard the study of couplet and poetry, and focus on cultivation of removing the selfish desires in the mind. In addition, he also told his student to cultivate dignity and honor, and step into the journey of being a sage together. With the study of Mencius, Kangzhai learned by heart *the Four Books* and *the Five Classics* and mastered the mind cultivation as well as the sages' words. Being increasingly confident, Kangzhai understood that people differ in inner talent, so he cast off his dependence on the teachers and friends, and consciously noticed the dark side in human heart. From then on, he started his individual journey towards being a sage. As his inner telepathy was between existence and non-existence, he sensed the state of mind of a sage and realized the way to be a sage.

In the process of reaching the Mentalism in tranquility, Kangzhai found it necessary and significant to ponder on things, watch things, and pursue reasons in tranquility. Also, he found the self-sense ability of a Clever Mind towards material desires. In his decades-long journey toward sagehood, he came to clear off the interruption of the worldliness and gained a state of mind that he was happy together with everything in the world. At the age of thirty-one, he also sensed that the state of mind was temporary that all things were united as one, and further inner cultivation was needed. When he finally found sagehood, he felt an obligation to divulge his ways of cultivation to his father, relatives, friends, and students, to push forward the study of sagehood

together. In a letter to his father that was written in a boat in Wuchang City on June 4th, 1421, he excitedly and modestly conveyed that after reading *the Four Books* repeatedly, he gained a lot both physically and mentally, and found a way of working on sagehood.

In a letter to Xu Xiren, an intimate colleague in academics, he confessed his pity about his self-abasement for sagehood, opposing the worldliness, and his inadequacy in hard working. But when he began to work hard, reading brought him both physical and mental health, and gave him a lot of confidence in the journey of sagehood. Also, it helped him with moral cultivation, so he could achieve his goal by keeping inner peace and tranquility while simultaneously keeping his mind pure and clear in a world of material desires. In another letter addressed to Hu Jiushao, Kangzhai states that his mind became even stronger after reading many books in spring and that they gave him encouragement. Kangzhai realized the significance of mind cultivation via his understanding of Mentalism after reading various books. He also understood that mind cultivation was helpful for moral cultivation. In so doing, the trueness and effectiveness of the Confucian moral practice was fully proved. In the following years, he shouldered more responsibilities of raising children and more pressure of earning a life when he did the moral practice of cultivating conscience. Beside reading and teaching, he also needed to do some farming work. This was also akin to seeking a Confucian state, the topmost spiritual state of mind for Chinese scholars.

Surely, his notion of ‘mind and action’ was less systematized than Wang Yangming’s theory in the coming years. His thought of pursuing conscience in a reversed way was a stage of ‘cultivating morality,’ which brought about some change in temperament via reading classic Confucian books. As he said to Yang Dequan, a scholar who took the same boat with him during the journey of learning, the pursuit of kindheartedness, justice, and etiquette in a reversed way was actually searching for human inner conscience that was proposed by Mencius. Kangzhai thought that cultivating one’s inner conscience was the most powerful weapon against the worldliness as he sensed that human innate conscience was the origin and logical starting point of moral cultivation. Unlike Wang

Yangming's thoughts, Kangzhai advocated conscience to be achieved via verbal behaviors, and the study of conscience was experienced and relished via reading books of sages. What he said to Dequan Yang reflected the path to moral cultivation via understanding the Reason.

His pursuit of conscience in a reversed way was his personal experience over ten years' reading and cultivating as well as his thoughts in reading classic Confucian books. This differed from Wang Yangming's idea that "one learns a little while when sitting in tranquility" and one got the sense of conscience upon life and death in remote and deserted areas. Kangzhai's pursuit of conscience in a reversed way still followed the Mentalism of Song Dynasty, advocating gradual cultivation in the origin of mind and finally achieving a senior self via day-to-day accumulation. The biggest difference between his thought and Wang Yangming's is in gradual understanding and instant understanding, naturally reversed pursuit and in-thought pursuit, books, and practice. Therefore, Kangzhai was in pursuit of the happiness of nature like mountains and water, as was expressed in the poem: "a moon stood in the firmament center; that is when the wind met the surface of the water" (Wu 528). However, Wang Yangming held that creativity was more important than transcendence, so there was also difference between them.

3. Wu's Middle Ages: Cultivating a Clever Mind

Wu proceeded with his moral practice of 'cultivating a clever mind' from 41 to 70 years old. He focuses himself on cultivating wisdom and sensitivity, and by means of musing and pondering alone in tranquil places, he abstains from the worldly troublesomeness in heart and pursued a no-self mind state, in which his heart follows the nature spontaneously (Wu 390). For him, the inner heart was like still water. Diverting from the vigorous 'cultivating conscience' in his early years, Wu in his middle ages kept a kind of natural and growing-up state of mind in reading and mind cultivation, reflecting a *no-self* spirit that cultivation might be out of self-complacency. At the age of forty-four, he wrote, "a pure heart thinks no lucre" and "in a satisfactory state of mind, I achieve no-self" (Wu 391), which

manifested his temperament of no-self in a vast open space, representing a kind of free and unattached state.

In order to "cultivate a clever mind," Wu put forward some moral cultivation methods, like "dislodge delusion" (*chuwangxiang*) and "cultivate senior tranquillity" (*yangtaihe*), the supreme state of mind for Chinese Mentalism which was mainly revealed with the cognition of a soundless and smell-less world, like an in-depth cognition of Taiji. He kept his inner heart tranquil and peace via an easy-going attitude. He even thought about taking "dislodge delusion" as the Study of Investing Things (*gewu*), which was in accordance with Wang Yangming's "correction of thoughts" (*zhengniantou*). Wu said: "Those who can distinguish genuineness and delusion in thoughts are real people of the Study of Matters," and "once delusions are dislodged, one's heart becomes peaceful, and accordingly he gets tranquillity" (Wu 392). With these poems, he pointed out that one should dislodge the 'evil thoughts' as soon as one began to think, so as to keep a 'true character' and get an inner peace, a doctrine of self-discipline learning. If his 'dislodge delusion' was an introspective ability, 'cultivating senior tranquillity' could be a kind of 'temperament' capability through which one was able to achieve a thinking of 'mind-worldliness-together' by watching the whole universe as a whole. A moral subject, standing in front of the broad world, had to follow a state of mind dictating that the "mind went obedient with everything and became merciless," in order to achieve a world-broad mind. In addition, to get a purely peaceful state of mind as "no wave at sea", he continued with the method of "no forgetting and no assisting" (*wuwang wuzhu*)¹, a method he previously put forward (Wu 388). At the age of fifty-one, he put forth a notion that one should dislodge his selfish desire "everywhere" to "cultivate tranquillity" and keep a clever mind. He said in a poem: "Evilness stems from self-indulgence. Everywhere is a place to battle against the selfish desires. From today on, you should sign yourself a contract. Be prudent to cultivate tranquillity" (Wu 396). This was a manifesto that he

¹This is an expression from *Mencius*: 2A.2. It means that on the one hand, one shall not forget the heart; one the other hand, one shall not over-assist its growth.

would take a steady and slow natural way to dislodge all his selfish desires inside and achieve a state of senior tranquillity.

This idea, to some extent, matched Zhan Ganquan's idea. Both of them advocated that a selfless and contented state of mind could be achieved in the process of moral cultivation by the "no forget no boost" natural way of self-cultivation. Eight years later at the age of fifty-nine, he got new knowledge by reading books, and truly understood Cheng's natural theory that "reason lies flat;" "not a single selfishness" (Wu 415) in mind corresponding with heavenly principle (*tianli*). Without any doubt, it was a herald for Zhan Ganquan's thoughts. To better comprehend the natural theory, he himself built a "Self-Content" pavilion the following summer. He imitated Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of the dynasty during the time he lived. He learnt from Emperor Zhu's thoughts that "on the day of fasting, one sat solemnly in the pavilion; the mind was where the body was. One concentrated in mind, without being distracted by anything; there was almost no regret." He walked from the worldliness-free state of mind like "self-content" and "self-give" in his thirties to a heavenly natural state in his sixties like "a little cleverness in mind got to know the universe" (Wu 419). Through his moral cultivation over three decades, he realized an elegant state of mind: there is a unity between the object and the self, and between the matter and the heart.

In his life journey of "time went on and off by nature," Wu, at the age of sixty-three, sensed the magic of the universe where everything had been well arranged by the nature (Wu 420). He looked at the worldly matters in "no mind", as he expressed his surprising happiness in the poem, "I doubted I was in a dream everywhere I was" (Wu 427), which presented his broad state of mind with profound cultivation of a Confucian in early Ming Dynasty. As he sensed that the heavenly reason lied flat in a natural state of mind between the sky and the earth, he had another dream at the age of sixty-six, in which he visited Zhuzi with other three scholars, where he debated on the learning. This dream indicated that a scholar cultivating for a long time would surely get into his sub-consciousness and dreams where one could sense gods, a reflection that the Mentalism was "intention-oriented" (Wu 427). At the age of sixty-seven, Wu found that both

his body and mind were tending to be peaceful, so he had a deeper understanding of "how one feels in tranquillity," as he wrote "incidentally nothing was in the mind, so I got to ponder on the life process in such tranquillity" (Wu 439). Thus, the inner mind in the tranquil atmosphere reached a transparent and clear state with wisdom and sensitivity. One might gasp in admiration when he looked around the mountains in tranquillity, as Wu put in the poem, "Looking into the endless mountains, I only chanted my heart" (Wu 440).

4. Wu's Late Years: Cultivating Clever Characters

In the chaos of the Year Tianshun (1457-1464) of Ming Dynasty, Wu could not do anything for the central government, as he put it in the poem: "Let everything go with nature; we should not haggard in these years" (Wu 461). He left the political whirlpool of capital city and went back to Chongren, his hometown. He restarted his reading there as "learning grew with the ages," and "future went with situation" (Wu 461). He also began to read and cultivate simultaneously, like his poem saying: "draw back the mind and fold it in loneliness; hidden in the piles of books was the life" (Wu 462). With real estate at hand, he had got more freedom in his life. He went frequently out on hikes without any consideration for his age, in order to learn from his teacher Yang Pu, Zhu Xi, and other great Confucians. In the autumn of the year he turned seventy-one, he set out to Shishou, Hubei Province to sweep the tomb of his teacher Yang Fu; subsequently in the spring of the year he turned seventy-two he went to Jianyang, Fujian Province to visit the relics of Zhu Xi. Later in the spring of the year he turned seventy-five, he started off again and set his feet in the cities in Jiangxi Province, like Boyang, Jingdezhen, Qimen, where he visited his students such as Xie Fu (Wu 490). Moreover, after seeing the sceneries of Zhu Xi's hometown, he expressed his hope that he was sincerely keen on learning the thoughts of Zhu Xi and would be his apprentice even at his senior age. It is worth mentioning that on his journey to Hubei, the hometown of his teacher at the age of seventy-one, he achieved a breakthrough in the moral practice as he put forward a new doctrine, namely "cultivating clever characters" (Wu 472). At that time, he lived alone in a small boat along the Jinshajiang river; with "rare

desires" and "forgetting the time," he pondered deeply and comprehended the world (Wu 499).

Actually, at the age of sixty-eight, he had an overall thinking about the way of doing Mentalism, as he sensed the clever sensory mind's manipulating power over mind, heart, and matter. We must cultivate and develop the clever mind to start a great business. An inner clever character means the sensation for kindness, particularly for the accuracy and cognition of daily kind behaviours. Wu's sense of inner clever character (*xingling*) was a response and a boost of his sense of a "clever mind" in his early years, and a literary expression "the taste of tranquillity," "the meditation in tranquillity" and "a mind in tranquillity." At the age of seventy-five, he "cultivated his clever character in the Meditation Abode" (Wu 489); while at the age of seventy-six, he "sought the cultivation in tranquillity" and "found a remote tranquil place to cultivate clever characters" (Wu 495). All these were "tranquillity work," which had realized a state of mind that everything under the sky was in harmony. This was in accordance with Zhu Xi's state of mind. Furthermore, Wu was more confident in the methods of cultivating clever characters, as he had recognized the deepest part of mind and entered a state of Mentalism. Moreover, he had come to the paramount state of pure mind by constant practicing (Lukas 298).

In Wu Kangzhai's late years, when "cultivating clever characters", he preferred to getting "the senses of spring" in "practicing tranquillity" (Wu 495). In this way, he followed a kind of natural way of cultivating, and then reached the second level of state that "after the tranquillity, everything looked like spring in the eyes," which was different from the concept of Zen Buddhism that "in tranquillity exists nothing" (Wu 503). In his happy journey of cultivation of "iron mind" (*tieshixin*), a strong and brave heart for kindness, Wu was indulged in "the great book of the sages" and "acquiring profound knowledge and following the etiquette," so as to get the learning of life in the vast universe; in so doing, he came to be able to be in a flowing state of mind "in anywhere," "at any time," "in any place," "in any situation," "in free mind" and "in any destiny." "Any" and "free" were the essence of Wu's and Chen Baisha's mentalism; however in life, it was a kind of spirit of endurance in the practice of moral

cultivation. This, we might say, was a kind of state of mind that the Confucian kept in his seventies that "one could do whatever he wanted to without disobeying the etiquette" (Wu 495). In his activities like travelling, singing poems, reading books, appreciating sceneries, taking a rest, doing socializing work, meditating, and accepting the fate, Wu kept a free and open state of mind that everything goes with destiny; by this way, he "cultivated clever characters" with natural learning, which started Chen Baisha's Mentalism and opened the gate of Mentalism of Ming Dynasty, which since then entered a stage of profound learning.

Wu aimed to cure the illness and strengthen the body via cultivating in tranquillity. He consciously distinguished cultivating in tranquillity and sitting in Zen Buddhist way. Wu's way was a kind of persistence in morality, and the other, on the contrary, erased the moral norms. Therefore, cultivating in tranquillity does no harm to Confucian cultivation, while sitting in Zen Buddhist way might, to some degree, misled the Confucian cultivation. At the age of seventy-six, he said, "merely the day of cultivating in tranquillity was like Zen Buddhist" and "improving one's ability in practice could enhance his morality," definitely clarifying that cultivating in tranquillity was just a kind of expedient method of "practice" (Wu 495). As he wrote in the poem at the age of seventy-two, "while you know how it feels in tranquillity, you begin to know the Zen Buddhists are the busiest" (Wu 474), which expressed the differences between the doctrine of tranquillity of Confucians and the sitting in tranquillity of Zen Buddhists. At the age of seventy-seven, he said "peace would come when one had the sense of crisis. On the contrary, when one took things too easy, failure might come. Therefore, the utmost rule was that everything must be respected rather than be ignored," which expressed his concerns about the simplicity of the doctrine of tranquillity.

In the late years, he was in pursuit of a state of supreme tranquillity and peace where there was no sound or smell, to prolong his "cultivating a clever mind" of his middle ages. When he turned seventy-three, he made a plan for the purpose of cultivating reflected in his poem: "we should keep an open and clear state of mind and never stop learning; particularly in our late

years, we should also get to the uppermost state of mind of tranquillity and peace" (Wu 478). Thus, he achieved his goal set at the age of seventy-two that "I would devote the rest of my life to senior tranquillity". In the state of mind of the sages by "cultivating senior tranquillity" and "achieving a state of mind as still as water," he acquired the sense of senior tranquillity (Wu 494). His "profound cultivation" in moral practice in his late years was a kind of natural state of mind. In his poem, he wrote "where dusts fell still on the ground and when not every sound could be heard," which proves that he had returned to a sincere world (Wu 506).

5. Conclusion

In Wu's theory and practice for more than fifty years, he shows the great character as a distinguished educator, philosopher, and writer, and further demonstrates his experiential verification of a perfect virtue. This shows how he illuminates his ethical virtue as a pioneer. In his beautiful literary poetry that expressed cosmic philosophy, subtle heart and nature. Wu continuously poured his understanding from his learnings about the heart into his poems and essays. By reading his works once and again, we discover the neglected aspects of him. We not only start the learning of the heart in Ming Dynasty, but it also supplies an epistemology background for the prosperity of the sentimentalist literature in the middle and later Ming Dynasty.

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