

Delving into the *Daxue* (Advanced Learning) with Zhu Xi:  
The Way to Moral Perspicacity, Ethical Efficacy, and Deeper Resonance

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This study explores the proposition that Zhu Xi's focus on the inner, prior stages of advanced learning, especially his approach to the investigation of things to explore their patterns exhaustively and acquire/extend knowledge led to a deepening and widening of Confucian study, cultivation, and practice; also that it led to a deepening and broadening of the moral subjectivity sustaining ethical realization and practice.

We usually take the "things" of Zhu Xi investigation of things in concrete terms and think of the things as objects (natural and artificial), creatures, people, events, virtues, practices, traditions, and the like, to be investigated in well-defined empirical and ethical contexts. This study considers Zhu Xi's investigations of less definite, more opaque types of objects (phenomena) and the forms of investigation he deemed appropriate to their inquiry, for example his approach to the *Book of Change* and the *Songs of the South*.

Finally, this study considers Zhu Xi's reflections on performing ritual sacrifices and in a sense encountering the departed, whether cultural heroes like Confucius, and Zhou Dunyi, or Zhu's own parents and ancestors. He wanted ritual sacrifices to be occasions for recognition, remembrance, and appreciation of the departed, as well as for self-reflection, self-assessment, and at times re-charting one's course. In this way, they also could be manifestations of one's investigations of things to explore their patterns and acquire/extend knowledge. In this way, Zhu Xi's inquiries into the *Book of Change* and texts like the *Songs of Chu* and encounters with Qu Yuan deepened and opened his mind-heart, to conjure and commune imaginatively with past cultural heroes and his parents and ancestors (Chang and Huang 2010).