

The Great Learning 大學

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A. The Text

[1] 大學之道在明明德,在親民,在止於至善。

The way of great learning consists in manifesting one's bright virtue, consists in loving the people, consists in stopping in perfect goodness.

[2] 知止而后有定

When you know where to stop, you have stability.

定而后能靜

When you have stability, you can be tranquil.

靜而后能安

When you are tranquil, you can be at ease.

安而后能慮

When you are at ease, you can deliberate.

慮而后能得。

When you can deliberate you can attain your aims.

[3] 物有本末;事有終始。 知所先後則近道矣。

Things have their roots and branches, affairs have their end and beginning. When you know what comes first and what comes last, then you are near the Way.

[4] 古之欲明明德於天下者、先治其國。

The ancients who wanted to manifest their bright virtue to all in the world first governed well their own states.

欲治其國者先齊其家。

Wanting to govern well their states, they first harmonized their own clans.

欲齊其家者先脩其身。

Wanting to harmonize their own clan, they first cultivated themselves.

欲脩其身者先正其心。

Wanting to cultivate themselves, they first corrected their minds.

欲正奇心者先誠其意。

Wanting to correct their minds, they first made their wills sincere.

欲誠其意者先致其知

Wanting to make their wills sincere, they first extended their knowledge.

致知在格物

Extension of knowledge consists of the investigation of things.

[5] 物格而后知至

When things are investigated, knowledge is extended.

知至而后意誠

When knowledge is extended, the will becomes sincere.

意誠而后心正

When the will is sincere, the mind is correct.

心正而后身脩

When the mind is correct, the self is cultivated.

身脩而后家齊。

When the self is cultivated, the clan is harmonized.

家齊而后國治。

When the clan is harmonized, the country is well governed.

國治而后天下平

When the country is well governed, there will be peace throughout the land.

[6] 自天子以至於庶人壹是皆以脩身爲本

From the king down to the common people, all must regard the cultivation of the self as the most essential thing.

[7] 其本亂而未治者,否矣。其所厚者薄而其所薄者厚,未之有也。此謂知本,此謂知之至也

It is impossible to have a situation wherein the essentials are in disorder, and the externals are well-managed. You simply cannot take the essential things as superficial, and the superficial things as essential. This is called, "Knowing the root." This is called "The extension of knowledge."