

## The Great Learning · 大學

What the great learning teaches, is to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest excellence.

The point where to rest being known, the object of pursuit is then determined; and, that being determined, a calm unperturbedness may be attained to.

To that calmness there will succeed a tranquil repose. In that repose there may be careful deliberation, and that deliberation will be followed by the attainment of the desired end.

Things have their root and their branches. Affairs have their end and their beginning. To know what is first and what is last will lead near to what is taught in the Great Learning.

The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own states.

Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families.

Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons.

Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts.

Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts.

Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete.

Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere.

Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified.

Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated.

Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated.

Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed.

Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy.

From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.

It cannot be, when the root is neglected, that what should spring from it will be well ordered. It never has been the case that what was of great importance has been slightly cared for, and, at the same time, that what was of slight importance has been greatly cared for.

(Translated by James Legge)

大學之道，在明明德，在親民，在止於至善。

知止而後有定，定而後能靜，靜而後能安，  
安而後能慮，慮而後能得。

物有本末，事有終始，知所先後，則近道矣。

古之欲明明德於天下者，先治其國；

欲治其國者，先齊其家；

欲齊其家者，先修其身；

欲修其身者，先正其心；

欲正其心者，先誠其意；

欲誠其意者，先致其知，致知在格物。

物格而後知至，知至而後意誠，

意誠而後心正，心正而後身修，

身修而後家齊，家齊而後國治，國治而後天下平。

自天子以至於庶人，壹是皆以修身為本。

其本亂而末治者否矣，其所厚者薄，

而其所薄者厚，未之有也！

大學之道在明明德，在親民，在止於至善

What the Great Learning teaches is: to illustrate illustrious virtue; to renovate the people; and to rest in the highest excellence.

知止而后有定；定而后能靜

The point where to rest being known, the object of pursuit is then determined; and, that being determined, a calm unperturbedness may be attained to.

靜而后能安；安而后能慮；慮而后能得

To that calmness there will succeed a tranquil repose. In that repose there may be careful deliberation, and that deliberation will be followed by the attainment of the desired end.

物有本末，事有終始，知所先後，則近道矣。

Things have their root and their branches. Affairs have their end and their beginning. To know what is first and what is last will lead near to what is taught in the Great Learning.

古之欲明明德於天下者，先治其國

The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the world, first ordered well their own States.

欲治其國者，先齊其家

Wishing to order well their States, they first regulated their families.

欲齊其家者，先修其身

Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons.

欲修其身者，先正其心

Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts.

欲正其心者，先誠其意

Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts.

欲誠其意者，先致其知

Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost of their knowledge.

致知在格物

Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

物格而後知至

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete.

知至而後意誠

Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere.

意誠而後心正

Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified.

心正而後身修

Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated.

身修而後家齊

Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated.

家齊而後國治

Their families being regulated, their States were rightly governed.

國治而後天下平

Their States being rightly governed, the entire world was at peace.

自天子以至於庶人，壹是皆以修身為本

From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.

其本亂而未治者，否矣

It cannot be, when the root is neglected, that what should spring from it will be well ordered.

其所厚者薄，而其所薄者厚，未之有也

It never has been the case that what was of great importance has been slightly cared for, and, at the same time, that what was of slight importance has been greatly cared for.

[Another translation, with thanks to [East Asian Languages and Cultures, Indiana University](#)]

The Dao of great learning lies in making bright virtue brilliant, in making the people new, in dwelling at the limit of the good.

Only after wisdom reaches this dwelling does one possess certainty; only after one possesses certainty can one become tranquil; only after one becomes tranquil can one become secure; only after one becomes secure can one contemplate alternatives; only after one can contemplate alternatives can one comprehend.

Affairs have their roots and branches, situations have their ends and beginnings. To know what comes first and what comes after is to be near the Dao.

In ancient times, those who wished to make bright virtue brilliant in the world first ordered their states. Those who wished to order their states first aligned their households. Those who wished to align their households first refined their persons. Those who wished to refine their persons first balanced their minds. Those who wished to balance their minds first perfected the genuineness of their intentions. Those who wished to perfect the genuineness of their intentions first extended their understanding. Extending one's understanding lies in straightening out affairs.

Only after affairs have been straightened out may one's understanding be fully extended. Only after one's understanding is fully extended may one's intentions be perfectly genuine. Only after one's intentions are perfectly genuine may one's mind be balanced. Only after one's mind is balanced may one's person be refined. Only after one's person is refined may one's household be aligned. Only after one's household is aligned may one's state be ordered. Only after one's state is ordered may the world be set at peace.

From the Son of Heaven to the common person for all alike refining the person is the root. That roots should be disordered yet branches ordered is not possible. That what should be thickened is thin yet what is thin becomes thick: this has never yet been so.

This is called "knowing the root."

(Translated by Robert Eno)



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