

“THE GREAT LEARNING” OF CONFUCIUS

translation by Christopher Kiely

大學之道在明明德，在親民，在止於至善。知止而后有定；定而后能靜；靜而后能安；安而后能慮；慮而后能得。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。物格而后知至。知至而后意誠。意誠而后心正。心正而后身修。身修而后家齊。家齊而后國治。國治而后天下平。自天子以至於庶人壹是皆以修身為本。其本亂而未治者，否矣；其所厚者薄，而其所薄者厚，未之有也。

The way of great learning is to clarify the understanding of virtue. It is to be in touch with the needs of the people and their families. It is to be able to stay at the peak of all that is good.

Once you know where to stay then you can settle. Once settled you will be able to calm down. Once calm you will be able to find peace. Once at peace you will be able to think things over. Once you've thought things over you will be able to find what you seek.

Every thing has a cause and a result. Every action has a beginning and an end. Know what is before and what is after and you will be close to the way.

Accordingly, if you truly want to clarify the understanding of virtue in the world then the first thing you need to do is justify your nation. But if you want to justify your nation then first you need to put your home in order. If you want to put your home in order then first you need to cultivate your self. If you want to cultivate your self then first you need to right your heart. If you want to right your heart then first you need to verify your intentions. If you want to verify your intentions then first you need to develop your knowledge.

The development of knowledge comes from direct observation of the patterns in things.

Study the patterns in things and knowledge will arrive. Once knowledge has arrived you will be able to trust your intentions. Once your intentions can be trusted you will be able to right your heart. Once your heart is right you will be able to cultivate your self. Once your self is being cultivated you will be able to put your home in order. Once your home is put in order you will be able to be justify your nation. Once your nation is justified the world will finally have equality.

From the Emperor down to the commoner the cultivation of the self is the very foundation.

If the problem is in the cause then any attempt to justify the result will inevitably be frustrated. Or if what is important is neglected and what is insignificant is indulged then as well there will be issues.