



## Undergraduate assignment feedback form

(to be completed by marker)

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| <i>Module Code:</i> SICH4004                                                              | <i>Student number:</i> 2000015 |
| <i>Module title:</i> An Introduction to the Great Learning and the Doctrines of the Means |                                |
| <i>For completion by marker:</i>                                                          |                                |
| <i>Comments:</i>                                                                          |                                |
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| <i>Marker's signature:</i>                                                                | <i>Date:</i>                   |
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# **The Regulation of One's Family Depends on the Cultivation of His Person**

**Zihan Xu**

Good afternoon, Respected Provost and Miss Wu. Good morning classmates. Today, I would like to share with you the topic : The Regulation of One's Family Depends on the Cultivation of His Person.<sup>1</sup>

This is the contents. This presentation is divided into three parts: Introduction, Text Explanations, and Personal Feelings.

First is the introduction.

It is often heard in China that: 'a family is the smallest country, and a country is thousands of families.' In ancient China, a family could be very large. there might be even more than thousands of people live in one family, such as Zhengyimen in Zhejiang Province and Zhangguying Village in Hunan Province, and both of them had long history for many hundred years . No wonder it is said that if you can run a family well, you can also run a country well, but the ancient people also told us that If the person be not cultivated, a man cannot regulate his family. In today's

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<sup>1</sup> James Legge: The Chinese Classics I-Confucian Analects • The Great Learning • The Doctrine of The Mean(Shanghai: HuaDong Shifan University Chubanshe, 2011), p.369.

society, there are so many cases of couples getting divorces. A family might be filled with arguments and fighting, and husbands and wives used decades to live together and they may still failed to handle their own relationship between two. In the past, a good Patriarch, or we could say the leader of a big family, was able to help thousands of people to live together in harmony. How could this happened? The answer would be found in self-cultivation, in 'Da Xue', the Great Learning.

Next is the text explanation:

What is meant by 'The regulation of one's family depends on the cultivation of his person' is this. Mr Xu Xingmin explained the previous sentences say that if you want to run your family well and keep everything in order, you must cultivate yourself.

Self-cultivation, this is what patriarch or family members should do, self-cultivation should be the first thing to do before asking others. The most basic structure in a family is a husband and a wife. If the husband cultivate himself first, and the wife would be influenced by him and follow what he do. In this way, other family members and their children will naturally learn to cultivate themselves. Everyone is self-cultivating, then the family will naturally be peaceful.

‘人之其所親愛而辟焉’, Taking examples from the person one loves and reflect on oneself.

The '其' in '之其所' refers to the patriarch or the leader, and every sentence after this has a character '之', a character '辟', and the character '辟' means metaphor here, take things happened around us like metaphor to reflect on ourselves. And the character '之' means 'go', go to somewhere, that is, to go there, to do it.

Taking examples from the person I have personal preference for and reflect on myself. For example, when you see someone in your family, someone you have preference, and you can '辟焉' which means you can get '譬喻' from this person. The word '譬喻' here, using a good understanding of the words, is to take the thing that how he got your favorite to reflect on yourself. For example, if you have many uncles in your family, but you particularly like and respect uncle Bob very much. Why he is so different to you? Why he could deserved more favor and respect among the other uncles? he must have some kind of qualities like he is very honest and kind to everyone that makes you have preference on him. So you could reflect: 'if I want to be loved like this by other members in my family, I also need to have these qualities .

Taking examples from the person one dislikes and reflect on oneself. Seeing that this person in the family is not good, I dislike him very much

since some of his qualities or some reasons. Then I will reflect on myself. Do I have same problems like his and my relatives did not tell me? Then I reflect on myself from the people I dislike. The bad things he did or manner he behaved should be avoided on me. On the one hand, you must avoid making the same mistakes yourself, and on the other hand, you could help those who are hated by others in your family well. This is called ‘辟’.

Taking examples from the person one respects and reflect on oneself. Just like Yanhui said, "What kind of man was Shun? What kind of man am I? He who exerts himself will also become such as he was."<sup>2</sup> also be like this. I could have these good characteristics and make people respect me too.

Taking examples from the person one feel pathetic for and reflect on oneself. Inevitably, this person might met troubles, or he did something wrong, like didn't pay attention to his health and get physically ill, or often worry about his life which he could not handle. Seeing these sad things, what I should do is to avoid from doing same things in my daily life. If I got many problems both in physical and mental aspects, I need to think : Have I not properly treated myself? The body parents gave me? That is something pathetic in other's eyes. When we see others like this,

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<sup>2</sup> James Legge : *The Works of Mencius* (Shanghai: Huadong University Publishing House, 2011 ) P.235.

we take it as an example, and when we reflect on it ourselves, we should start to pay attention on it.

Taking examples from the person one has been arrogant, and reflect on oneself. ‘傲惰’ means being arrogant and rude. In China We usually say: “我慢待你了”, means that “I am sorry for being arrogant and rude to you.”

People rarely know the disadvantages of something when they like it and the advantages of something when they hate it. '鲜' means rare. This is because everyone has a kind of prejudice. What kind of prejudice is this? Whatever he likes, of which there are bad ones, he will consider the bad ones also as good. So here, for those things or people you like or dislike, you should know their shortcomings or goodness as well, but such people are so rare in the world.

‘故諺有之曰’, Hence it is said, in the common adage. So the adage said: ‘人莫知其子之惡’, A man does not know the wickedness of his son.

In the state of Lu in the Spring and Autumn Period, there was a child who was very ugly and called 惡, which means evil, hate and ugly in Chinese. Once his father went out to see a man named Shang Duo. Shang Duo was renowned as the most handsome man in the whole country, but

when the father came back, he told his neighbors, he said, ‘Oh, that Shang Duo is not as beautiful as my child.’

So this story told us, parents should be rational to their children not partial. The result of being partial could be seen on 惡’s father. On the other hand, it is not only confined for parents and children, but could also be used when we dealing with other people. In other words, we could see and improve ourselves through anything we meet.

‘莫知其苗之碩’,he does not know the richness of his growing corn. Farmers cultivate fields, hoping the crops he cultivated could be as big and rich as they could, like the picture of watermelon. This is the opposite example of the one who doesn't know his son's wickedness. Even though his crops are huge, plump, and grow well, he is still not satisfied. These are two kinds of psychology, both of them are wrong. With these two kinds of mentality, self-cultivation is impossible for one. So Zengzi take this ancient adage as a remind to us.

Finally, my personal feelings.

When I read Mr Xu Xingmin’s explanation on ‘Taking examples from the person I feel pathetic for and reflect on myself’, he said that if one did not take good care of his body, and people would felt pathetic about him. I felt a little stunned in my heart: Is not this talking about me?

I also remembered about how my back got hurt from time to time.

Although I did not tell my parents about this, but I still feel so sorry because the body that given by parents should be cherished. What's more, it makes teachers and classmates worried about my personal health, and waste their time to take care of me from time and time.

Like when my back was hurt for the fourth time few weeks ago and could only lie on the bed, I felt as if I had become disabled, unable to do anything. Even the simple turning over had to be helped by Brother Yu Ang. I am really thankful for Brother Yuang, Brother Chuide and other brothers for their concern and care, and I am very sorry for the trouble I have brought to them. From this, I realized that self-cultivation should be cultivated both physically and mentally, both of which must be protected and cherished, so that the body can support us to help ourselves and others in a better state. I should try not to be the sympathized object, but the role that helping others.

The necessary condition for a family to be harmonious is self-cultivation. I remember teacher Zhang said that sometimes there might be more conflicts than before after learning traditional Chinese culture, because the teaching we learned from sages or books could also uses to criticize others. If what we want is to achieve the harmony by asking others to make change, then there would be no harmony. You will

demand your relatives to do something without demand yourself first, then they could demand you without listening to your request too. If everyone just look at others fault every day, even the words of ancient sages will be used as weapon to defend and hurt. I think that Sister Yi Rong has done a good job on that. She can give good suggestions to other classmates, and she is more willing to accept suggestions from others. This is the core of self-cultivation. We make improvements from cultivating ourselves, not educating others. When we improved and could be a example for others, the rest of relatives would be influenced by us. This is something I am work on it. I don't want my family to become that kind of atmosphere in the future, blame each other by using what we learned from sages.

In fact, it is not only applied in family, but the whole process from cultivate oneself to run a country and influence the world that proposed in *The Great Learning*. I realized the idea of these great ancient Chinese philosophers: no matter it is a small family with only three members, or a country with billions population, our ancestors think the external object could be changed by improving the internal, and that's why the put a man's self-cultivation as the first step before all the other things. I have improved my own and influenced the rest of the family members, and influence other families by having a peaceful and lovely family, then

influence the society and the country by having a good community or a area etc.

How can we bring peace and harmony to the world?

Confucius said, “If those who are distant will not submit, simply refine your culture and Virtue in order to attract them”, not threatened by weapon and fear, not carrying a stick, coming to other’s door and asked if they would listen to you. This is achieving peace by using force and fear, and it will not last long. The peace formed by the five kings(五霸) in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Seven kings of the Warring States Period through force quickly collapsed. We could see the importance of self-cultivation and how to bring the peace and harmony to the world through these real story happened in history.

This is the all my presentation today. Any feedback and suggestion would be appreciated, thank you!

# **bibliography**

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