

## Exemplifying the Virtues of Substance and Function

— Chung Chedu's Views on the *Great Learning*

Lee Cheuk Yin, National University of Singapore

### Abstract

Chung Chedu 郑齐斗 (Hagok 霞谷, 1649-1736) was an eminent Korean Confucian scholar recognized as a leading proponent of the Chosen Wang Yangming school of thought and a key founder of the Kanghwa Yangming School.

In his annotations to the *Great Learning*, Chung explained the meaning of "investigation of things" in term of sincerity of the will and suggested that the process of adult learning starts with the sincerity of the will. His understanding of the doctrine of substance and function is also very different from scholars of the Song and Ming dynasties. Chung Chedu followed the Yang-ming school that self-cultivation is of utmost importance. However, he did not ignore the functioning of the Confucian ideology and proposed that substance and function should not be separated and they belong to one thing.

This paper examines Cheng Chedu's views and interpretations of the *Great Learning* and his departure from Zhu Xi and Song-Ming Cheng-Zhu scholars' annotations of the classic.

## Introduction

Chung Chedu 郑齐斗 (Hagok 霞谷, 1649-1736) was an eminent Korean Confucian scholar recognised as a leading proponent of the Chosen Wang Yangming school of thought.<sup>1</sup> He came from an aristocratic family whose ancestor was the founder of Neo-Confucianism in Korea and was enshrined in the Confucian Temple.<sup>2</sup> However, with little interest in politics, Chung Chedu turned down the opportunities to serve the government and led a reclusive life in Kanghwa 江华 Island contributing to the establishment of the Kanghwa Yangming School. This paper examines Cheng Chedu's views and interpretations of the *Great Learning* and his departure from Zhu Xi and Song-Ming Cheng-Zhu scholars' annotations of the classic.

## The *Great Learning* in Song-Ming Confucian Tradition

The *Great Learning* is a brief essay of some 1,750 words but the importance of this short classic is far greater than its size would suggest. Originally it was the forty-second chapter of the *Book of Rites* and little attention had been paid to it before the time of Sima Guang 司马光 (1019-1086), who wrote a commentary on it entitled *Daxue Guangyi* 大学广义, treating it for the first time as a separate work. Later, its status in Confucian teaching was enhanced when Cheng Hao 程颢 and his younger brother Cheng Yi 程颐 both rearranged the text to emphasise its importance. Cheng Yi said "The *Great Learning* is a surviving work of the Confucian

- 
- 1 Mark Setton, *Chong Yagyong: Korea's Challenge to Orthodox Neo-Confucianism*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997, p.44.
  - 2 For details, see the biography by Li Suping 李甦平, "Xiagu Zheng Qidou" 霞谷郑齐斗, in Li Suping ed., *Dongfang zhuming zhexuejia pingzhuan* 东方著名哲学家评传, Jinan: Shandong renmin chubanshe, 2000, pp.410-445; Chung In-chai, "Chung Chedu (Hagok): The Father of Yang-ming School in Korea", in Chong Hae-chang and Han Hyong jo eds., *Confucian Philosophy in Korea*, Kyonggi-do: Academy of Korean Studies, 1996, p.169.

school and is the gate through which the beginners may enter into the realm of virtue. It is only due to the preservation of this book that the order in which the ancients pursued their learning may now be seen. The *Confucian Analects* 论语 and the *Works of Mencius* 孟子 stand next to it. A student should by all means include this work in his course of study, and then he will probably be free from mistakes.”<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, it was not until Zhu Xi 朱熹 combined the text of *Great Learning* together with the *Confucian Analects*, the *Works of Mencius* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* to form the so-called *Four Books* that it was elevated to a position of prime importance in Confucian literature. Zhu also wrote commentaries on these works, known as the *Sishu Jizhu* 四书集注 (Collected Annotations on the Four Books).<sup>4</sup>

Amongst the Four Books, Zhu Xi gave priority to the *Great Learning*. In his *Daxue huowen* 大学或问 (Questions on the *Great Learning*), he asserted that this text was essential for interpreting the *Confucian Analects* and the *Works of Mencius* and similarly, that the *Doctrine of the Mean* could not be fully understood without it. He also stated “Hence, those who discuss learning cannot but start with the *Four Books*, and of the *Four Books*, they cannot but place the *Great Learning* first.”<sup>5</sup> Clearly, both Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi spoke highly of *Great Learning* and attached the greatest importance to it. The reasons behind this were perhaps the simplicity and systematic

---

3 This was cited by Zhu Xi at the beginning of this Commentary to the *Great Learning*. For the original text, see Zhu Xi, *Sishu Zhangju Jizhu* 四书章句集注, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983, p.3. Translation refers to Chan Wing-tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963, pp.85-86.

4 For a critical discussion of the *Sishu Jizhu*, see Qiu Hansheng 邱汉生, *Sishu Jizhu jianlun* 四书集注简论 (Peking: Chinese Social Sciences Press, 1980).

5 Zhu Xi, *Daxue huowen* 大学或问 (*Kinsei Kanseki sōkan* 近世汉籍丛刊 edition, Kyoto: Chūbun shuppansha, 1972), pp.2, 18-19.

arrangement of this text, as well as its highly ideological condensation of the Confucian teaching, which made it an ideal introduction enabling beginners to “enter into [the realm of] virtue”.<sup>6</sup> Also, the rise of *Great Learning* was closely related to the Song Confucians’ search for canons of learning, for which they thought the “old” Classics were either insufficient or unsuitable.

It should be mentioned here that the canons of learning which the Song Confucians sought were not only basic textbooks for common students, but also for emperors. Bearing in mind that the officials at the court were also Confucian scholars, there can be no doubt that Confucianism had long been employed by scholar-officials to influence the emperor in establishing a good government. The promotion of *Great Learning* by the Song Confucians, to a large extent, pursued the same aim, that of the application of the orthodox tradition to the art of government. As a matter of fact, scholars recently pointed out that the *Great Learning* was a particularly suitable text for the education of emperor.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, we should not ignore the possibility it was for this very reason that Zhu Xi spoke so highly of this work, which he regarded as the essence of Confucian political philosophy. Furthermore, we know that Zhu Xi, during his time at the court, frequently made use of quotations from it during lectures to the emperor. At the same time, the *Great Learning* was also frequently quoted in Zhu’s memorials as the moral authority for extorting the emperor to abstain from extravagant desires and for correcting the mistakes of his government.

In the Song dynasty, the application of the theories of *Great Learning*

---

6 For a detailed discussion of the promotion of the *Great Learning* in Sung dynasty, see Tado Toyosaburo 戸田置三郎, “Sōdai ni o keru Daigakuhen pyoshō no shimatsu” 宋代における大学篇表彰の始末, in *Tōhōgaku* 东方学, Vol.21 (Mar. 1961), pp.46-56.

7 For example, see Zhao Zehou 赵泽厚, *Daxue yanjiu* 大学研究 (Taipei, 1972), Conclusion, pp.389-392.

to statecraft was a common feature of the Confucian scholars. For example, the Song scholar Zhen Dexiu 真德秀(1178–1235), who's illustrious work on *Great Learning* entitled *Daxue yanyi* 大学衍义 (Extended Meaning of the *Great Learning*) was completed in 1229. In his preface, Zhen said:

When I first read the *Great Learning*, I found that the steps it suggests, from the investigation of things, the extension of knowledge, making the will sincere, rectifying the mind, cultivation of the self, regulating the family, ordering the state, to the pacification of the world, surely has an order of importance and sequence of priorities among them. As I fondly perused its contents I exclaimed to myself: He who would be a ruler among men must not fail to understand the *Great Learning*. He who would be a minister among men must not fail to understand the *Great Learning*. The ruler who fails to understand the *Great Learning* lacks the means to arrive at a clear understanding of the source of governance. The minister who fails to understand the *Great Learning* lacks the means to fulfil his duty of correcting the ruler. Only when I inquired into the governance of the emperors and kings of antiquity and found that they invariably took the self as its basis and extended it to the world, did I realise that this book is indeed an essential text. It transmits the mind of the hundred sages, and is not just the personal utterance of Confucius alone.<sup>8</sup>

Judging from Chen's preface, there is no doubt that his *Daxue yanyi* was compiled not for the purpose of academic achievement but for the

---

8 Zhen Dexiu, *Daxue yanyi* 大学衍义 (*Zhen Wenzhong gong quanji* 真文忠公全集 edition), Preface by Zhen, pp.1a-b.

edification of the emperor. On the one hand the book displays the Neo-Confucian's application of Confucian tradition to the problem of government. On the other hand, it reveals the actual value and importance which the Sung Neo-Confucians attached to the *Great Learning*, and the ultimate purpose for which those scholars took it out from the *Record of the Rites*.

Zhen's motives can be deduced from the last lines of the passage he cites from the *Great Learning* — "From the emperor down to the common people, all, without exception, must consider cultivation of the individual character as the root. If the root is in order, it is impossible for the branches to be in good order." It is clear that this view represents the main theme of this section; the sayings he cites and comments he makes relate, without exception, to this theme. For example, Zhen's citation from Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (前179-前104) reads "The ruler rectifies his mind in order to rectify the court; he rectifies the court in order to rectify the hundred officials; he rectifies the hundred officials in order to rectify the myriad people; he rectifies the myriad people in order to rectify [people of] the four directions."<sup>9</sup> Zhen comments:

Since Mencius, no one has expressed it as well as [Dong] Zhongshu. The court is the basis of the empire, the ruler the basis of the court, and the mind (*xin* 心) the basis of the ruler. If the ruler can rectify his mind, his mind will be clear and bright and not affected by external things, thus, none of the commands he makes is not right, and hence, the court is rectified. The court being rectified, the worthies and the unworthies [at court] will be differentiated, the position of the noblemen and petty men will not be transposed, and hence the hundred officials are rectified.

---

9 *Daxue yanyi*, 1/13a. For the original text, see Dong Chongshu, *Dongzi wenji* 董子文集 (*Jifu congshu* 畿辅丛书 edition), 1/5b.

... The basis of everything goes back to this one mind of the ruler.  
Alas! Can the ruler be not careful about his mind?<sup>10</sup>

This comment illustrates how Zhen developed his argument from the quotation. This order of priorities in governing, beginning with the rectification of the mind and ending with the rectification of the world became the central theme in this work. In the second part, Zhen affirmed these teachings of the *Great Learning* by citing examples of rulers such as Yao 尧, Shun 舜, Yu 禹, Tang 汤, Wen 文, and Wu 武, whose governments, he believed, were the purest reflection of the principles expressed in the *Great Learning*. He also cites examples from the Han and Tang dynasties to show how the government of worthy rulers correspond with the teaching of the *Great Learning* and how the unworthy rulers whose government ran counter to the teaching of the *Great Learning* could not but fall into serious error. Nevertheless Zhen shows how the steps in the *Great Learning* are related to issues such as the ruler's personal comportment, the selection of consorts, the appointment of an heir apparent, the judgement of talent at court, and the formulating of government policies. That is, how they are related to the art of government.

The work received similar popularity in the Ming dynasty. The Ming eminent scholar Qiu Jun 丘濬 (1421-1495) regarded the *Great Learning* as the most important work among the Five Classics and the *Four Books*.<sup>11</sup> In a discussion of the process of study, he made the following comments:

Students should first study the *Four Books* and then they may proceed to the Six Classics. And those who study the Four Books,

---

10 *Daxue yanji*, 1/13a-b

11 For the biography of Qiu Jun, see Lee Cheuk Yin, *Qiu Jun Pingzhuan* 丘濬评传, Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2005.

again, should begin with the *Great Learning*. Master Cheng [Yi] said that it (i.e. the teachings of the *Great Learning*) was the gate through which the beginners enter into the realm of virtue. Master Zhu [Xi] said that it was the way by which the advanced education (*Daxue*) of the ancients could be communicated to the people. Master Zhen [Dexiu] said that it was the origin of the Learning of the Sage, the foundation on which order, and the laws and rules for governing the world could be established. It is thus, evident that among the books of the Confucians, there is not one that has the same importance as the *Great Learning*. Elementary education begins with it for entering [the gate of] virtue; advanced education is based on it for learning. Neither the Way of the sages nor the order of emperors and kings could depart from its teachings. Therefore, the *Book of Changes*, the *Book of Documents*, the *Book of Odes*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and the *Book of Rites*, the *Confucian Analects*, the *Work of Mencius* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*, all aim at amplifying the *Great Learning*. Today, [students] study at school as a means for achieving the investigation of things and the extension of knowledge. At another time, when they become officials, they employ it as a means for ordering the state and pacifying the world.<sup>12</sup>

In the eyes of Qiu Jun, the teachings of the *Great Learning* were

---

12 *Daxue yanyi bu* 大学衍义辅, *Qiu Wenzhuang gong congshu* 丘文莊公丛书 reprint of Ming edition, 77/11b-12a. The Six Classics mentioned here referred to the *Book of Songs*, the *Books of Documents*, the *Book of Rites*, the *Book of Changes*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and the *Book of Music*. But the latter is believed not extant after the Qin dynasty, or not exists in the Confucian texts. Therefore, the later scholars usually speak of Five Classics instead of six.



beneficial both for the cultivation of the self and for the governing of the state, and embraced the Way followed by the sages and the ancient kings for maintaining order. He was of the view that the *Confucian Analects*, the *Work of Mencius*, the *Doctrine of the Mean* and the Five Classics were not comparable to the *Great Learning*, and were merely a development of the latter. On another occasion, he also stated that the learning of the Confucians did not go beyond the teachings of the *Great Learning*. He said “All that we refer to as the Six Classics, the Nineteen Histories, [the writings of] various philosophers of the hundred schools, and all the classical works in the world, would not go beyond [the teachings] of this work. It was with this book that the Learning of the Confucians reached its peak and [scholars] do not have to seek [the truth] elsewhere.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, he maintained that all the principles in the world did not go beyond the Three Leading Principles 三纲领 — that is, manifesting the illustrious virtue 明明德, re-educating the people 新民/ loving the people 亲民, and resting in the highest excellence 止于至善 — and the Eight Items 八條目 — that is, investigation of things 格物, extension of knowledge 致知, making the will sincere 诚意, rectifying the mind 正心, cultivating one’s self 修身, regulating the family 齐家, bringing the state to order 治国, and pacifying the world 平天下 — of the *Great Learning*.<sup>14</sup>

Although Zhu Xi’s commentaries on the Classics was accepted by the state as the orthodox interpretation of the Confucian tradition in the Ming dynasty, the school had lost much of its vigour by the late fifteenth century. The school of the Mind represented by Wang Yangming 王阳明 (1472-1529) elicited a wide response from thinking men and provided the inspiration for intellectual transformation in the later Ming period. Yet the importance of the *Great Learning* was not affected with Wang Yangming himself written the

---

13 *Ibid.*, 71/16a-b.

14 *Ibid.*, p.16a.

*Inquiry on the Great Learning* 大学问 to promote the work as the learning of the great man. The views on the importance of the *Great Learning* in Confucian tradition is shared by Korean scholar Chung Chedu who said the *Great Learning* represents “the full substance of sage learning and the mind-doctrine of the thousand years” (圣学全体、万世心法).

### **The Framework of the *Great Learning* as explained by Chung Chedu**

The Chinese title, *Daxue*, literally means education for the adult. In contrast to the education for the young that consisted of mainly good manners, daily behaviour, etc., education for the adult involves moral cultivation and social order. It means, therefore, education for the gentleman or the “great” man.<sup>15</sup> The little Classic gives the Confucian education, moral and political programmes in a nutshell, neatly summed up in “three guiding principles” 三纲领 and “eight steps” 八条目。

W.T. de Bary explains that the central theme of the work is self-cultivation. It seeks first of all to establish the value of self-cultivation in terms of accepted social ends, showing its relevance to the problem of good government which underlies much of the thinking of this age. Not only does good government depend upon the proper conduct of men on the various levels of social organization, and thus upon their individual moral perfection, but also self-cultivation on the part of the ruler must proceed on essentially the same lines as it does for the individual. Before a man can regulate and discipline others he must learn to regulate and discipline himself.<sup>16</sup>

Judging from the steps recommended the book put forward a learning

---

15 For reference, see Chan Wing-tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963, pp.85-86.

16 W.T. de Bary, Chan Wing-tsit & Burton Watson, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1960, p.128.

process for the attainment of perfection, beginning with the “investigation of things”. However, Confucians have never agreed on how to learn, and the different interpretations of the investigation of things in this Classic eventually created bitter opposition among Neo-Confucians. To Zhu Xi, *gewu* 格物 meant to investigate things, both inductively and deductively, on the premise that principle (*li*), the reason of being, is inherent in things. He believed that only with a clear knowledge of things can one’s will become sincere. He therefore rearranged the ancient text of the Classic to have the sections on investigate of things appear before those on the sincerity of the will. Wang Yangming, on the other hand, believing that principle is inherent in the mind, took *ge* 格 to mean “to correct”, that is, to correct what is wrong in the mind. To him, sincerity of the will 诚意, without which no true knowledge is possible, must come before the investigation of things. Therefore, he rejected both Zhu Xi’s rearrangement of the text and his doctrine of the investigation of the things, and based his whole philosophy on the *Great Learning*, with sincerity of the will as its first principle, which is summed up in his work “Inquiry on the *Great Learning*”.<sup>17</sup>

Chung Chedu in his annotations to the *Great Learning*, follows Wang Yangming’s arguments and attached special attention to the “sincerity of the will”, Relating the three guiding principles of the *Great Learning* to the concept:

When the virtue is illustrious, the people will be loved. The effort of exemplifying the illustrious virtue is none but sincerity of the

---

17 *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, pp.84-85. For a discussion of Wang Yangming’s *Inquiry on the Great Learning*, see Lee Cheuk Yin 李焯然, “Wang Yangming *Daxue Wen yu rujia de daren zhi xue*” 王阳明《大学问》与儒家的大人之学, in Lee Cheuk Yin ed., *Hanxue Zhongheng* 汉学纵横, Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 2002, pp.91-110.

will. When the will is sincere, then it will be resting in highest perfection. (德明而民亲也。明明德之功，即诚意是也。意诚则为止至善矣。) <sup>18</sup>

Investigation of things and extension of knowledge are the main substance of the sincerity of the will. (格物致知者，诚意之本体。) <sup>19</sup>

The Way of the *Great Learning* is the Way of the sages, the Way of the sincere people. (大学之道，即圣人之道也，诚者之道也。) <sup>20</sup>

He also explained the meaning of “investigation of things” in term of sincerity of the will by saying that “sincerity within and manifestation without, this is called investigation of things.” <sup>21</sup> And he suggested that the process of the adult learning starts with the sincerity of the will: “Those below the sincerity of the will are called exemplifying the illustrious virtue; those below regulating the family are called loving the people.” (诚意之下，明明德之谓也；齐家之下，亲民之谓也。) <sup>22</sup>

In another occasion, Chung also employed Wang Yangming's concept of “innate knowledge 良知” to expound the principles of the *Great Learning*. When annotating the third guiding principle of the *Great Learning*, “resting in highest perfection”, Chung said: “The steps for attaining highest perfection are investigation of things and extension of knowledge. The discovery of

---

18 Chung Chedu 郑齐斗, *Hagok Ji* 霞谷集, Seoul: Association for the Promotion of National Culture 民族文化推进会, 1997), 13/351.

19 *Hagok Ji*, 13/355.

20 *Hagok Ji*, 13/358.

21 *Hagok Ji*, 13/361.

22 *Hagok Ji*, 13/364.

highest perfection relies on innate knowledge and the function on affairs and things.” (至善者，其目为格物致知。至善之发见者，良知也，所用者，事物也。) <sup>23</sup>

Regarding the concepts of root and branches, Chung says that “the illustrious virtue is the root 本, loving the people the branches 末, resting in highest perfection the substance 体.” <sup>24</sup> In another occasion, Chung elaborates the beginning section of the *Great Learning* with his remarks:

The Way of the *Great Learning* consists in clearly exemplifying illustrious virtue (Root: the gist of knowledge), in loving the people (Branches: the exist of things), and in resting in the highest perfection (the substance of knowledge and things). Only when one knows where one is to rest (Beginning) can one have a fixed purpose. Only with a fixed purpose can one achieve calmness of mind. Only with calmness of mind can one attain serene repose. Only in serene repose can one carry on careful deliberation. Only through careful deliberation can one have achievement (End: illustrious virtue and loving people, the fullest substance of extension of knowledge and investigation of things; Highest perfection and achievement, the main substance of extension of knowledge and investigation of things). Things have their roots and branches; affairs have their beginning and end. He who knows what comes first and what comes last comes himself near the Way. <sup>25</sup>

Here the root and branches, beginning and end, are explained in term of

---

23 *Hagak Ji*, 13/354..

24 *Hagak Ji*, 13/350.

25 *Hagak Ji*, 13/362.

knowledge and things. Knowledge is the root, things the branches; knowing is the beginning, perfection and achievement the end. Whereas the full substance and main substance comprise both the extension of knowledge and investigation of things. In other words, extension of knowledge and investigation of things cannot be separated and are the integral parts of the substance.

His explanation of the *gewu*, is also different from that of Zhu Xi and the Cheng-Zhu scholars. He said, "Sincerity, rectification, cultivation, regulation, ordering and pacification are nothing but so called investigation of things. In a nut shell, the effort of exemplifying the illustrious virtue is only the one investigation of things." (诚正修齐治平，无非所谓格物者也。要之，明其明德之功夫，又只是一格物者耳。) <sup>26</sup>

Chung Chedu also separated the teachings of the *Great Learning* into two parts: "Those above self-cultivation, the affairs of exemplifying illustrious virtue; those below regulating the family, the affairs of loving the people." (修身以上，明明德之事；齐家以下，亲民之事。) <sup>27</sup> This is also in line with his discussions on root and branches of the *Great Learning*. The division of the steps into two parts has been generally adopted by Song-Ming scholars in China, such as Zhen Dexiu and Qiu Jun. The division will be further elaborated when we look into Chung Chedu's views on substance and function in the next section.

### **Substance and Function in the *Great Learning***

Substance and Function are two important concepts in Chung Chedu's elaboration of the *Great Learning*. A comparison with Song-Ming scholars' explanation will reveal his characteristics. For example, when Zhen Dexiu elaborated the importance of the *Great Learning* in its relation to the art of governing, he stated:

---

<sup>26</sup> *Hagak Ji*, 13/350.

<sup>27</sup> *Hagak Ji*, 13/354.

Your minister has heard that in the Way of the sages there is substance (*ti*) and function (*yong*). To base it in the self is substance; to extend it to the world is function. Yao, Shun, and the Three Kings' conduct of government, the Six Classics and Confucius' and Mencius' conduct of teaching did not go beyond this. And [the teaching of] the *Great Learning*, which proceeds from the "substance" to the "function", is most clear and complete in its presentation of their order of importance and sequence of priorities. Therefore, former scholars (i.e. the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi) have said, "It is merely due to the preservation of this work that the ancients' order of priority in learning can be perceived today. And the *Analects* and *Mencius* are inferior to it. What the *Great Learning* refers to as the "investigation of things", "the extension of knowledge", "making the will sincere", "rectifying the mind", and the "cultivation of the self", are the substance. What the *Great Learning* refers to as "regulating the family", "ordering the state" and "pacifying the world", are the function. The learning of the ruler must be based on these if he is to understand the fullness of substance and function."<sup>28</sup>

Here Zhen relates the eight items of the *Great Learning* to the doctrine of substance and function in Confucian philosophy, interprets the first five items as aspects of "substance", and the last three as aspects of "function". This separation of the eight items of the *Great Learning* embraces the necessary processes or steps for acquiring the fullness of substance and function. The above passage also reaffirms the importance of the doctrine of substance and function in the Way of the sages and, going even further, relates this concept to the question of rulership for the

---

28 *Daxue yanji*, pp.7a-8a.

achievement of a humane world order.

Qiu Jun of the Ming dynasty in his supplement to the *Daxue yanyi* says that “the *Great Learning*, [consists of] the learning of complete substance and full function of the Confucians. [This learning], originates from the heart of one man (i.e. the ruler), embodies the principles of the myriad matters, and is of vital importance to the livelihood of countless people. Its root lies in the self, its standard the world. The sages establish it for the purpose of educating the rulers. The rulers of men take it as their base for the purpose of learning, and employ it to assist their sovereign. This book could be regarded as the collected essentials of the Six Classics, the great canon through all ages. It is living tradition of governance handed down from mind to mind, since the Two Emperors and Three Kings.”<sup>29</sup> In this passage, Qiu explicitly expresses his understanding of the value of the *Great Learning*. He relates the teachings of the *Great Learning* to the Confucian concept of “complete substance and full function” and maintains that this learning relates not only to one person or one family, but also to the livelihood of countless people. In his preface to the *Daxue yanyi bu* 大学衍义补, Qiu states his reasons for compiling a supplement to Zhen's work :

It is your minister's humble view that in the learning of the Confucians there is substance (*ti*) and function (*yung*). Although substance is based on one principle, function as scattered throughout myriad matters. [Function] should be elaborated in full detail without confusion, then [substance and function] can be combined to the utmost effect without deficiency. Therefore the teaching of the *Great Learning*, as well as giving the main outlines, also enumerates the items in details. And these items,

---

29 *Daxue yanyi bu*, Preface, pp.1a-b.



too, all have their own order and sections. The order [of these items] should not be confused and the effort employed [to these items] should not be deficient. One effort to few would, then, mean the omission of one matter and the absence of one item, and make it impossible to accomplish the fullness of function. And substance being substance would also be incomplete. However the way that the function is fulfilled is not by the synthesis of numerous small [items]. How can it be accomplished then? It is thus obvious that the great is the accumulation of the small. It may be compared to a net, united, and then the net cannot be spread. It may be compared to a house, for although a house has more than one beam, if one beam of the house is omitted, then the house cannot stand. This is the reason why your minister disregarded his ignorance and humbly imitated the style of Master Zhen's work to supplement the essentials for the ordering of the state and pacification of the world following the regulation of the family.<sup>30</sup>

It is clear that Qiu thought that the *Daxue yanyi* elaboration of the "function" of the *Great Learning* was incomplete. He maintained that a failure to implement even one item would make it impossible to fulfil "function". Qiu's compilation was intended to correct deficiencies in Zhen's work so that the "function" of the *Great Learning* might be actualised. There is a basic difference in the understanding of the "substance and function" concepts between the two men, particularly with regards to the application of the concepts to Confucian political philosophy as reflected in the *Great Learning*.

The Song Confucians' account of "substance" and "function" may be

---

30 *Ibid.*, pp.2a-3a.

examined here to give us a better idea. Cheng Yi considered substance and function as continuity in two modes: “Substance and function come from the same source and there is no gap between the manifest and the hidden.”<sup>31</sup> Cheng Hao defines the dichotomy as “Principle and righteousness are substance and function respectively.”<sup>32</sup> Quite similar ideas are to be found in the writings of Zhu Xi. For example, when he discusses Zhang Zai’s 张载 idea of the mind governing nature and feelings, in respect to substance and function, he says:

“The mind governs the nature (*xing* 性) and the feelings (*qing* 情).” The nature and the feelings both follow the mind and subsequently make it manifest; when the substance is manifested externally, it is called function. Mencius said, “Humanity (*ren*) is the mind of man”, and also spoke of “the mind of compassion” ... “Humanity is the mind of man”, explains substance; “the mind of compassion” explains function. There must be substance and subsequently function so that the significance of “the mind governing the nature and feelings” will become apparent.<sup>33</sup>

---

31 See *Er Cheng quanshu* 二程全书, *Sibu beiyao* 四部备要 edition, Preface, p.3a. That substance and function come from the same source is a persistent theme in both Chinese Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism. For example, in the writings of Seng-chao (384-414), a disciple of Kumārajīva (334-413) and a forerunner of Chinese Buddhist philosophy, we find the view that substance and function are identical, and activity and tranquillity are the same. For details, see Chan Wing-tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, pp.343-356.

32 Cheng Hao, *Yishu* 遗书, 11/12a.

33 *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子语类, 98/6b-7a. For the original text of Zhang Zai’s saying, see his *Zhang Zai quanji* 张载全集 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1935), p.290.

Here Zhu Xi considers nature as substance and the feelings as function. These examples show that the term “function” was employed to describe the external manifestation of the mind.<sup>34</sup> Substance is equivalent to principle, while the concrete things that actualise principle are function.

Zhen’s view that once the person of the emperor is cultivated then the state and the world will be ordered is derived from the *Great Learning*, which regards cultivation of the self as the root of all things and maintains that there has never been a case when the root was in disorder and yet the branches were in order. In keeping with this concept, Zhen confined his imperial text on matters closely relating to the ruler and held that institutional problems would take care of themselves if the primary problem of the emperor’s personal attitude towards government had been dealt with.

Chung Chedu in his “Discussions on the *Great Learning*” 大学说, relates a different understanding of the doctrine of substance and function. At the beginning of the passage, he says:

---

34 There is another example which reveals Zhu Xi’s concept of substance and function in respect to mind. In his remarks to Chapter 5 of the *Great Learning*, Zhu says, “The meaning of the expression ‘The perfection of knowledge depends on the investigation of things’ is this: If we wish to extend our knowledge to the utmost, we must investigate the principles of all things we come into contact with, for the intelligent mind of man is certainly formed to know, and there is not a single thing in which its principles do not inhere to. But so long as all principles are not investigated, man’s knowledge is incomplete. For this reason, the first step in the education of the adult is to instruct the learner, in regard to all things in the world, to proceed from what knowledge he has of their principles, and investigate further until he reaches the limit. After exerting himself in this way for a long time, he will one day achieve a wide and far-reaching penetration. The qualities of all things, whether internal or external, refined or coarse, will all be apprehended, and the mind, in its complete substance and full function, will be perfectly intelligent. This is called the investigation of things. This is called the perfection of knowledge.” See Zhu Xi, *Daxue zhangju*, Chapter 5, in *Sishu jizhu* 四书集注, pp.4b-5a.

Exemplifying the virtue and loving the people in the *Great Learning*, is to exemplify the virtues of substance and function, and rest in the Way of the highest perfection. (大学之明德亲民，明体用之德也，而至之以至善之道。) <sup>35</sup>

Comparable to the ideas of Song-Ming scholars, Chung also viewed the illustrious virtue and loving people as the substance and function and mentioned that “illustrious virtue and loving people are the substance and function of the *Great Learning*, and the latitude of the book; resting in highest perfection, the main substance of the *Great Learning*, and the longitude of the book. These three are the principles of the *Great Learning*” (明德亲民，大学之体用，为经者也；止至善，大学之本体，为纬者也。三者大学之纲。) <sup>36</sup>

However, this process of exemplifying is not only confined to the substance but also includes the function of loving the people. In another occasion, Chung further elaborates the two concepts:

To exemplify the illustrious virtue is to exemplify this substance. To love the people, is to attain this function. To rest in the highest perfection, is to rest in where to rest. These three are the principle of things and the Way of the *Great Learning*. (在明明德者，明是体也。在亲民者，达是用也。在止于至善者，止于止也。三者为物之经也，大学之道也。) <sup>37</sup>

The messages Chung Chedu wanted to deliver were different from those of Chen Dexiu and Qiu Jun. Exemplifying the substance and putting what you learn into practice cannot be separated. In others words, substance

---

35 *Hagak Ji*, 13/373.

36 *Hagak Ji*, 13/377.

37 *Hagak Ji*, 13/377.

and function, though belong to two different concepts, are indeed should be combined treated as the two sides of a coin. Loving the people is to exemplify one's virtue and thus both substance and function are involved:

To loving the people is to exemplify one's virtue, thus substance and function are indeed one. When the extension of the substance, from near to afar, to both things and the individual, are fulfilled, then all things in this universe will be one. (亲民以明其德，体用一焉。其体之致，由近而远，物我以尽，则天地万物为一体矣。)<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

The *Great Learning* gave impetus to the belief that self-cultivation alone, especially on the part of the ruler, could solve all political problems and usher in the perfect society and orderly state.<sup>39</sup> In his emphasis, Chung remained true to central theme of the *Great Learning*. The *Great Learning* does not place emphasis on the state and the world but on the individual's cultivation of his own spiritual and intellectual self, in order to make his personality the instrument which brings tranquillity to the family, the state and the world. Its central purpose is to tell how the individual can deal with social and political matters. In this process, the family, the state and the world are put into perspective as elements, which in the ideal social order must respond to the influence of the cultivated individual personality.<sup>40</sup> The central

---

38 *Hagak Ji*, 13/379.

39 Cf. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, p.128.

40 Cf. F.W. Mote, "China's Past in the Study of China Today", in *Journal of Asian Studies*, 32:1 (Nov. 1972), pp.116. For further discussion of this point, see Chan Wing-tsit, *A Source Book in Chinese in Chinese Philosophy*, pp.84-85, 95; W.T. de Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, pp.127-128; Fung Yu-lan, *Zhongguo jixue shi xinbian* 中国哲学史新编 (Beijing: People's Press, 1964), Vol.2, pp.61-67.

theme of *Great Learning* is self-cultivation. In other words, before a person can regulate and discipline others, or bring order to the state and peace to the world, he must learn to regulate and discipline himself. To accomplish this, the *Great Learning* outlines a system or program, which became famous for its “eight items” or “eight steps”. The first five steps pertain to personal cultivation and the last three to social functions.

Chung Chedu followed the Yang-ming school that self-cultivation is of utmost importance when he said:

The world, the state, the family, the self and the mind, are all belong to that self-cultivation. (天下国家身心，总是一修身也。) <sup>41</sup>

The Way of governing the state can be accomplished without leaving the family. (治国之道，不出家而可成。) <sup>42</sup>

However, he did not ignore the functioning of the Confucian ideology and proposed that substance and function should not be separated and they belong to one thing. In conjunction with this discussion, Chung also expounds the *Great Learning's* doctrine of the internal and the external, the fundamental and the secondary, and though they must be clearly distinguished, they should not be neglected.

(责任编辑：严家建)

---

41 *Hagak Ji*, 13/350.

42 *Hagak Ji*, 13/370.