

# "The thought of 'self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace'" and the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind

## Exploration of the logical coherence

YiLin Ning

Shanxi Institute of Electronic Science and Technology ,Linfen Shanxi,041000;

**Abstract:** "The Great Learning" originally appeared in the "Book of Rites". After undergoing the elevation movement in the Song Dynasty, especially after the Southern Song Dynasty thinker Zhu Xi juxtaposed "The Great Learning" with "The Doctrine of the Mean", "The Analects", and "Mencius" and compiled the "Four Books with Annotations", the academic system diverged from the Five Classics system into the Four Books system, and "The Great Learning" rose to become "the foremost among the Four Books", serving as the "gate to virtue" in the scholarly hierarchy since the Song Dynasty. Based on the ethical philosophy and political theory of "cultivating oneself, regulating the family, governing the state, and pacifying the world", this paper explores its compatibility with the logical approach to building a community with a shared future for mankind, providing a theoretical basis for inheriting excellent traditional culture and contributing to global governance.

**Keywords:** Confucianism; self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace; community of a shared future for mankind; Marxism

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## 1 Introduction

"Cultivate oneself, regulate the family, govern the state, and pacify the world" occupies a central position in the Confucian ideological system. It is a generalization of the "Way of the University," an important cornerstone of traditional cultural development concepts, and a gem of excellent traditional cultural thoughts. Since Dong Zhongshu's "exclusively advocating Confucianism" in the Han Dynasty, Confucianism has emerged from the contention among various schools of thought and become the official doctrine. It has also served as an important assessment content for government officials' selection in successive dynasties. Since the Song Dynasty, with the formation of the Four Books system, the "Great Learning" has gained an academic fundamental and fundamental status. It can be said that the ideological concepts of "cultivate oneself, regulate the family, govern the state, and pacify the world" in the "Great Learning" have shaped the fundamental view of the Chinese nation towards people and the world, thus forming a national spirit that has lasted for thousands of years.

## 2 Ethical philosophy and political theory of "self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace"

The Great Learning begins with a clear exposition, elaborating on the logical progression of the thought of "self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace":

The way of the university lies in manifesting virtue, in fostering harmony with the people, and in striving for excellence. Only after knowing where to stop can one have stability; only after stability can one be calm; only after calmness can one be at ease; only after at ease can one deliberate; only after deliberation can one achieve. Things have their roots and branches, and affairs have their beginnings and ends. Knowing the order of precedence and success brings one closer to

the way.

"Self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace" represents an evolutionary process that progresses from the small to the large and from the internal to the external, with each link interdependent. This evolutionary sequence cannot advance in leaps and bounds. The "Great Learning" defines this logical order of immutability as the relationship between the fundamental and the consequential, the beginning and the end, and the precedence and the following. This constitutes the core thread of the "Way of the Great Learning." The starting point and logical foundation of this thread is self-cultivation. Without self-cultivation, the fundamentals are in disarray, and the harmony of family, country, and the world cannot be achieved. In this sense, traditional culture contains the rudiments of egalitarian thought. Whether it is the supreme ruler of a feudal dynasty or the vast majority of the ruled, they all exhibit this immutability in the face of this thread.

The foundation of the "self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace" ideology lies in self-cultivation. The "Great Learning" further elaborates on the connotation of self-cultivation:

The so-called "attaining knowledge through investigating things" means that to attain my knowledge, one must approach things and explore their principles. The spirit of the human heart inherently possesses knowledge, and all things in the world inherently have principles. It is only when the principles remain unexplored that one realizes there is still much to learn. Therefore, at the beginning of university education, scholars must be instructed to approach all things in the world and, based on their already known principles, further explore them to their limits. When effort is sustained for a long time, a sudden breakthrough will occur. At that point, the external and internal, the superficial and profound aspects of all things will be fully understood, and the overall great function of my heart will be fully illuminated. This is called "investigating things," and this is the ultimate attainment of knowledge.

The so-called sincerity of one's intentions means not to deceive oneself, just as one abhors a foul odor and desires a pleasant appearance. This is called self-restraint. Therefore, a true gentleman must be cautious when alone

The so-called self-cultivation lies in rectifying one's mind. If one is filled with resentment, fear, pleasure, or anxiety, one cannot achieve self-cultivation. This is what we mean by self-cultivation lies in rectifying one's mind.

The above is the revised and supplemented version of the mosquito theory by the Neo-Confucian scholars of the Song Dynasty, which aims to establish the content of self-cultivation before constructing the "self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace" framework. In this way, the entire framework appears more abundant and reasonable, with a closed-loop logic and stronger practical operability. The way to achieve self-cultivation lies in the framework of "investigating things, acquiring knowledge, sincerity, and rectifying the mind". Although Neo-Confucian scholars and scholars of mind have different understandings of investigating things and acquiring knowledge, their common ground points to the harmonious unity of body, mind, will, and things, which follows the same logical approach as "self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace".

First, it is an extension of Confucian loyalty and forgiveness.

In the "Analects", Confucius summarized his ideological system by saying "My doctrine is unified and consistent", which expressed the core concept of the academic system, as Zeng Shen put it, "The doctrine of the Master is nothing but loyalty and forgiveness." The two words "loyalty and forgiveness" summarize the fundamental principles of Confucius's life. "Loyalty" means faithfulness, encompassing the meanings of loyalty, trustworthiness, and responsibility; "forgiveness" means forgiveness, including the ideas of putting oneself in others' shoes and extending one's own thoughts to others, such as "If you want to stand firm, help others to stand firm" and "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire."

Secondly, it embodies the values of propriety and righteousness.

In Confucianism, ritual serves as a crucial criterion for maintaining social order and interpersonal relationships. Both "family governance" and "state governance" must be specifically implemented and achieved through "ritual". At the family level, by adhering to family etiquette and moral norms, family harmony and stability can be maintained; at the national level, by formulating and enforcing ritual systems, national order and stability can be upheld. In ancient traditional society, ritual served as a constraint and restriction on individual and international diplomatic behavior. In Neo-Confucianism of the

Song Dynasty, ritual was connected to heavenly principles, manifesting objectively existing norms. When applied to human society, it formed the rituals that permeated all levels of social production and life.

### **3 Building a community with a shared future for mankind**

The construction of a community with a shared future for mankind can be regarded as a creative transformation and innovative development of the ancient Chinese philosophy of "self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace". It emphasizes that while pursuing their own interests, countries around the world should also take into account the interests of other countries, forming an inseparable and interconnected state of destiny, and jointly developing, cooperating, enhancing the common interests of all mankind, and jointly promoting human progress.

#### **3.1 The connotation of a community with a shared future for mankind**

The community with a shared future for mankind emphasizes the common survival and development of all mankind. With the continuous deepening of economic globalization, countries have engaged in deep cooperation in political, economic, and other fields, forming a community of shared interests, a community of shared responsibilities, and a community with a shared future. They are inseparably intertwined, and only through cooperation and joint pursuit of development and prosperity can various problems facing the world be solved, and sustainable development be achieved for mankind.

The core concept of a community with a shared future for mankind lies in the extensive common interests that exist among nations. These interests not only encompass economic prosperity and social stability but also extend to multiple dimensions such as environmental protection and resource utilization. While pursuing their own interests, nations must also recognize their interdependence and jointly safeguard and promote the development of common interests through cooperation and win-win approaches.

#### **3.2 The Path to Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind**

##### **3.2.1 Promote the common values of all mankind**

The common values of all mankind, encompassing peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, freedom, and more, serve as the foundation for building a community with a shared future for mankind. These values fundamentally differ from the "universal values" touted by the West. The common values of all mankind underscore the diversity of the world, allowing for rich expressions amidst diverse ethnic cultures, historical traditions, geographical environments, and moral constructions. Ultimately, these diverse expressions all converge to serve the goal of achieving peaceful development for all mankind.

##### **3.2.2 Strengthen international cooperation and exchange**

International cooperation and exchange are crucial avenues for building a community with a shared future for mankind. Countries should enhance cooperation and exchange in economic, political, cultural, and other fields to jointly promote global economic development and social progress. This requires a tolerant and peaceful development philosophy as the underlying value, as well as a systematic perspective as the foundation of worldview, in order to avoid the emergence of phenomena such as protectionism and truly achieve long-term international cooperation and exchange.

### **4 Logical coherence between "self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace" and the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind**

There exists a profound logical connection and inherent consistency between the "self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace" philosophy and the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind. Both aim at the comprehensive development of individuals and social harmony, emphasizing the importance of personal cultivation, family harmony, national governance, and global cooperation.

#### **4.1 The concept of loyalty and forgiveness and the cultivation of global citizenship awareness**

"Self-cultivation" is the starting point and foundation of "self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and

world peace", and it is also an important way to cultivate global citizenship awareness. Through the method of observing things, one can establish a correct worldview, understand the dialectical relationship between the individual and the world, thereby integrating the individual into society, breaking through the limitations of individualism, removing obstacles to global cooperation from a conceptual perspective, continuously cultivating one's global vision and sense of responsibility, and promoting people to continuously pay attention to global affairs and the fate of humanity, and actively participate in global governance and international cooperation.

#### **4.2 The concept of propriety and righteousness and the construction of harmonious international relations**

"Managing the family" emphasizes harmonious relationships among family members, while "governing the country" embodies unity, stability, and development within a nation. Behind them lies a correct worldview that determines one's outlook on life and values, which manifests as the behavioral norms of human society - "ritual and righteousness". In international relations, countries should respect, care for, and tolerate each other like family members, establish harmonious and stable international relations, and promote the construction of a new type of international relations through strengthening international cooperation and exchanges.

#### **4.3 Global cooperation and building a community with a shared future for mankind**

"Harmonizing the world" is the highest stage of "self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace", and it is also the ultimate goal of building a community with a shared future for mankind. By deepening international cooperation and exchanges, we jointly forge a community of shared destiny, where people of all countries share weal and woe, and contribute to the common progress and prosperity of all countries and the common interests of all mankind.

### **5 Outlook and Implementation**

"Self-cultivation, family regulation, country governance, and world peace" is not only the crystallization of ancient Confucian wisdom, but also a beacon guiding the current era. The construction of a community with a shared future for mankind is a modern interpretation of this ancient wisdom, aiming to pursue comprehensive human development and social harmony and stability. Therefore, citizens of all countries should be committed to enhancing personal moral cultivation, promoting family harmony, strengthening national governance, deepening global cooperation, and moving human society towards a more beautiful and harmonious future. This will inject continuous vitality and momentum into the community with a shared future for mankind.

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