

## PREFACE

Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) of the Southern Song dynasty established the Confucian canon *Four Books* (*Sishu* 四書), which was used as the basis for official examinations for over half a millennia since the Yuan dynasty up to 1905 (Chen, 2003, p. 124). Based on Zhang Zai's *Western Inscription* (*Ximing* 西銘), the concept of “one and many” (*li yi fen shu* 理一分殊) is developed wherein the Taiji 太極 is one and Qi (氣) is seen as multiplicity (Chen, 2003, pp. 130–132). The influence of this concept embedded in the depth of Chinese consciousness cannot be over-emphasized.

Based on the notion of self (*zi* 自), family (*jia* 家), state (*guo* 國) and the world (*tianxia* 天下) in the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), one of the *Four Books*, the concentric circle of influence must start from the self, that is, self-cultivation (*xiu shen* 修身), then the regulation of the family (*qi jia* 齊家), the governance of the state (*zhi guo* 治國), and the attaining of peace for the world (*ping tianxia* 平天下).

In accord with this line of thought, the Sinological Development Charitable Foundation (SDCF) aspires to spread the knowledge of 5,000 years of Chinese civilization embedded within the Classics as a fundamental basis of understanding China. We have adopted the model within the *Great Learning* by presenting droplets of Chinese thoughts to the world, where many Chinese seem to have lost their own tradition.

Fundamentally, the Chinese Classics must go beyond the ivory tower and come into the world of practice. We hope that our programs will be able to bridge this gap and emphasize the Chinese-ness of China and bring to both the West and to Chinese people all over the world a better understanding of everyday practices related to our heritage. The ripples created by the droplets of water hopefully will help bring changes to the perception and understanding of the Chinese worldview, which is often juxtaposed with a Western lens. Today, with many challenges at all fronts of social, technological, economic, environmental and political issues, we seek collaborative human interactions that will foster multilateral understanding and trust amongst us.

On a personal note, my aspiration for the SDCF journey started when I realized my own lack of knowledge of my heritage, which inspired me to make efforts to learn Chinese with foreign colleagues at Columbia University. This foundation helped enable my enrollment in Department of Philosophy at Peking University, late in life, to continue the journey to learn more about the process of Chinese thought.

At Peking University, the support of my supervisor Professor Chen Lai, as well as Professors Wang Bo, Ji Jianzhong and Wong Zongyi, was invaluable. The conceptualization of SDCF started in the last years of my studies when it became clear that, without the understanding of the Chinese Classics, the comprehension of the Chinese mode of thought cannot be complete.

## Acknowledgements

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All the members and directors of SDCF are pillars to our organization while more and more alumni participants are sharing their ventures and experiences with newcomers and youth in Hong Kong.

Last but not least, my family members and their friends are the soul of these projects. They enthusiastically promote our passion to their friends.

We are grateful to everyone for sharing our journey to reach this significant milestone.

Dr. Elizabeth WOO LI

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## References

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