

**Western Sociological Theory And The Chinese Cultural  
Tradition: An Assessment**

by

Ka-ying Timothy Wong

A thesis  
presented to the University of Manitoba  
in fulfillment of the  
thesis requirement for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in  
Sociology Department

Winnipeg, Manitoba

© copyright symbol Ka-ying Timothy Wong, 1988

Permission has been granted to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author (copyright owner) has reserved other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her written permission.

L'autorisation a été accordée à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur (titulaire du droit d'auteur) se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation écrite.

ISBN 0-315-48000-9

WESTERN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY AND THE CHINESE CULTURAL  
TRADITION: AN ASSESSMENT

BY

KA-YING TIMOTHY WONG

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

© 1988

Permission has been granted to the LIBRARY OF THE UNIVER-  
SITY OF MANITOBA to lend or sell copies of this thesis, to  
the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this  
thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and UNIVERSITY  
MICROFILMS to publish an abstract of this thesis.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the  
thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or other-  
wise reproduced without the author's written permission.

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis.

I authorize the University of Manitoba to lend this thesis to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

Ka-ying Timothy Wong

I further authorize the University of Manitoba to reproduce this thesis by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

Ka-ying Timothy Wong

The University of Manitoba requires the signatures of all persons using or photocopying this thesis. Please sign below, and give address and date.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempted to assess the validity of Western sociological theory in explaining the Chinese cultural tradition. Consequently, this research focused on the analysis of three classical social thinkers' theoretical works about China - Hegel, Marx and Weber. In order to achieve this goal, these three persons' theoretical interpretations of China were systematically analyzed and subsequently contrasted with the Chinese empirical reality.

The study found that although the theories of Hegel, Marx and Weber were different from one another in their interpretations of the Chinese cultural tradition, they shared something in common. There were discrepancies between their theoretical interpretations of China and the Chinese socio-cultural reality. The study also found that the existence of these discrepancies were mainly a result of their Eurocentric reductionism utilizing theoretical categories developed in Western societies and relegating China to a residual category. In investigating the causes of this Eurocentric reductionism, the study further discovered that it was deeply rooted in the Western philosophical-scientific tradition which always tended to "absolutize" a subjective stand point and approached the

external world as an object from the perspective of this "absolutized" subjective stand point.

In order to avoid the mistake that Hegel, Marx and Weber committed in their treatments of the Chinese cultural tradition, the study proposed a new approach that viewed tradition as an intentional subject having its own logic of development. In the light of this new approach, the Chinese cultural tradition was seen as a tradition of familism naturalizing a familistic order at various levels of human life where social harmony depended upon the individual's ability to harmonize the whole realm of familistic relationships. In addition, it was shown that Chinese society had been historically moving toward its own historical end rather than following the historical path abstracted from the Western socio-cultural experiences.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express his gratitude for the guidance, impetus, and support provided by his advisor, Dr. J. Kwong, of the Department of Sociology. In addition, thanks are extended to Dr. S. Moon of the Department of Sociology and Prof. E. Blum of the Department of Social Work for their critical reviews of the thesis.

Besides, the author would like to express his special appreciation to Dr. D. Rennie for both his vigorous effort to help the author carry out this thesis properly, and his extensive, insightful comments, suggestions, and editings on the content and the style of the thesis. Without him, the author believes that the production of this thesis would have been impossible. Of course, despite all these people's helpful contributions, the author accepts responsibility for all of the shortcomings of the thesis.

Finally, special thanks also go to the author's parents, who sparked his love of Chinese culture, introduced him to the world of thinking, and have provided both financial and spiritual supports for his entire course of study in Canada; to his brother, Yu-Lung Wong, for his constant stimulation and encouragement in his Chinese study; to his sister, Faye Lum, and her family, for their unfailing support since his



study in Canada; and, lastly, to his wife, Joanna Sin, who has kept him going through it all by her assistance and encouragement.

**CONTENTS**

<b>ABSTRACT</b> . . . . .	<b>iv</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> . . . . .	<b>vi</b>
<u>Chapter</u>	<u>page</u>
<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
The Problem: Discrepancy Between Western Sociological Theories And The Chinese Reality . . . . .	1
Similar Shortcoming: The Sinicization Movement in Chinese Sociology in Study of The Chinese Cultural Tradition . . . . .	12
Objectives of Study . . . . .	19
Significance of Study . . . . .	23
Method . . . . .	24
<b>II. HEGEL: THE THEORY OF ORIENTAL DESPOTISM</b> . . . . .	<b>30</b>
Introduction . . . . .	30
Hegel's Conception Of History . . . . .	34
Oriental Despotism in China . . . . .	44
Discrepancy Between Hegel's Theory of Oriental Despotism And The Chinese Socio-cultural Reality . . . . .	54
<b>III. MARX: THE ASIATIC MODE OF PRODUCTION</b> . . . . .	<b>69</b>
Introduction . . . . .	69
Marx's Conception Of History . . . . .	73
The Asiatic Mode Of Production . . . . .	84
Discrepancy Between Marx's Theory of AMP And The Chinese Socio-cultural Reality . . . . .	97
<b>IV. WEBER: THE CONFUCIAN ETHIC</b> . . . . .	<b>106</b>
Introduction . . . . .	106
Weber's Conception Of History . . . . .	107
Chinese Society And The Confucian Ethic . . . . .	111
Discrepancy Between Weber's Theory of The Confucian Ethic And The Chinese Socio- cultural Reality . . . . .	129

<b>V.</b>	<b>SUGGESTED REASONS FOR DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN HEGEL'S, MARK'S AND WEBER'S THEORIES AND THE CHINESE SOCIO-CULTURAL REALITY . . . . .</b>	<b>138</b>
	Introduction . . . . .	138
	Reasons For Discrepancy Between Hegel's Theory of Oriental Despotism and The Chinese Socio-cultural Reality . . . . .	140
	Reasons For Discrepancy Between Marx's Theory of AMP and The Chinese Socio- cultural Reality . . . . .	148
	Reasons For Discrepancy Between Weber's Theory of The Confucian Ethic and The Chinese Socio-cultural Reality . . . . .	158
	Eurocentric Reductionism in Hegel, Marx and Weber . . . . .	166
	Eurocentric Reductionism In The Western Philosophical-Scientific Tradition . . . . .	169
<b>VI.</b>	<b>A NEW SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE CHINESE CULTURAL TRADITION . . . . .</b>	<b>174</b>
	Introduction . . . . .	174
	The Flaw In The Western Sociological Approach To Cultural Tradition: Tradition As Object . . . . .	175
	A New Sociological Approach To Cultural Tradition: Tradition as Intentionality . . . . .	177
	The Method of Identifying Intentionality Of Tradition: Tradition As Partial Institution . . . . .	186
	Chinese Cultural Tradition As Familism: A Theoretical Outline . . . . .	191
	The Chinese Cultural Tradition: A Historical Interpretation . . . . .	195
	The Superiority Of The Tradition-As- Intentionality Approach Over Hegel's, Marx's and Weber's Approaches To The Chinese Cultural Tradition . . . . .	201
	Conclusion and Suggestions . . . . .	204

<u>Appendix</u>		<u>page</u>
<b>A.</b>	<b>THE GENESIS OF FAMILISM IN CHINA . . . . .</b>	<b>207</b>
	Introduction . . . . .	207
	The Nature Of Familism . . . . .	207
	Familism And Confucianism . . . . .	210
	Familism and The Five Chinese Classics . . . . .	213
	Familism and Ancient Chinese Social Development . . . . .	225

B.	THE CHINESE DYNASTIES: CHRONOLOGICAL SCHEME OF CHINESE HISTORY . . . . .	236
	BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	238

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 THE PROBLEM: DISCREPANCY BETWEEN WESTERN SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES AND THE CHINESE REALITY

This thesis is an assessment of the validity of Western sociological theory for interpreting the Chinese cultural tradition. Basically, it is motivated by the author's dissatisfaction with the fact that, despite the many sociological theories formulated to explain the Chinese socio-cultural phenomenon, they have continuously been invalidated or challenged by recent developments in China.<sup>1</sup> Some obvious examples include: 1) the patriarchal nature of the Chinese government (both Taiwan and Mainland China) remains unchanged regardless of its establishment of a modern state government, and this fundamentally questions G.W.F. Hegel's theory of Oriental despotism, which implies that the development of the state will leave patriarchalism behind;<sup>2</sup> 2) Marx's developmental scheme of history is

---

<sup>1</sup> See Yau-Ke Kim (金耀基), The Selected Sociological Papers Of Kim Yau-Ke (金耀基社會學文選), Taipei,: Young Lion Cultural Company Ltd., 1985, pp.257-280; and Ying-Zi Yu (余英時), The Religious Ethics And The Merchants' Spirit In Late China (中國近世宗教), Taipei: Luen King Publishing Company Ltd., 1987.

<sup>2</sup> See Lung-Ke San (孫隆基), The Deep Structures Of Chinese Culture (中國文化的深層結構), Hong Kong: I-San Publishing Company Ltd., 1983; and G. W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy Of history, New York: Dover Publications, Inc.,

embarrassed by the sudden historical movement of China from a pre-capitalist society into a socialist world;<sup>3</sup> and 3) the rapid economic developments in Eastern Asia have provoked numerous challenges to Max Weber's Confucian-ethic thesis which argues that the Confucian ethic is not compatible with capitalism.<sup>4</sup> All these discrepancies between theories and empirical reality inevitably force one to ask: what is wrong with the existing sociological theories? Or more radically, can they really explain the Chinese cultural reality<sup>5</sup> which appears to be so different from that of the West?<sup>6</sup>

---

1956.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx, The Marx-Engel Reader, edited by Robert Tucker, New York: W. Norton & Company, 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Max Weber, The Religion Of China, New York: The Free Press, 1951.

<sup>5</sup> The term "Chinese cultural reality" carries a double meaning in the way the author uses it. It refers to both the unchanged cultural tradition that gives meaning and order to Chinese socio-cultural development and the actual historical phenomena of this society. To avoid confusion, the author usually distinguishes these two meanings by calling the former Chinese cultural tradition and the latter Chinese socio-cultural reality, unless it is specified otherwise.

<sup>6</sup> The terms "West," "Western," and "European" are used interchangeably throughout the entire thesis to refer to the area covering Western Europe and North America. The author recognizes that such a concept is analytically imprecise and would be accused of "reductionism," in the sense that it fails to account for the internal cultural variations in the "West." Nevertheless, the author believes that conceptually this concept is both adequate

To answer such questions, however, is not easy, since it involves a larger epistemological problem in sociology - that is, on what ground can sociology claim to be universal and scientific? Insofar as science is concerned, it is generally held that "the biases and values of the observer can be relatively controlled so that a reasonable degree of objectivity is possible."<sup>7</sup> In other words, in order to be scientific, sociology must free itself from cultural and value preferences and understand the social or cultural phenomenon being investigated in its own right.

But as we all know, sociology was developed in a particular cultural context in response to a particular experience of socio-cultural transformation. More specifically, it emerged at a time when Western society was experiencing prodigious socio-cultural disorganizations brought about by a complex phenomenon of the rise of

---

and valid by itself on two grounds: 1) the purpose of this study is to identify the unchanged tradition behind the dynamic cultural development, and therefore internal cultural variations are not the concern of this study; and 2) Western Europe, and North America as well, is a relatively open cultural system in which different political entities openly share a similar larger cultural background which views free, individualistic development as the highest human value (see the Introduction of Chapter 5 for more elaboration). Hence, although England, Germany, France, Canada and the United States are different from one another in many socio-cultural practices, they consistently share at a deeper level a similar cultural consciousness, i.e., the belief in individualistic development. And it is in this sense that they are "Western."

<sup>7</sup> See George A. Theodorson, Modern Dictionary Of Sociology, Card: Appollo Editions, 1969, p.369.

industrial capitalism.<sup>8</sup> Its task was to study this continental-wide societal transformation of the so called "traditional Europe" into the "modern world" - to find the laws that govern this transformation and to explain how this transformation leads to other institutional, behavioral and psychological vicissitudes. Now, the question is: what does "modern" mean? Does it really represent a break with the traditional - a displacement of particularity by universality? Or merely a peculiar development of a particular tradition, consisting of its culturally bounded values and culturally structured way of thinking?

For those who insist on the universality of Western culture and the incompatibility between the traditional and the modern, this question may seem irrelevant and thus must be dropped. But for those who are seriously concerned with the essence of cultural plurality and cross-cultural communication and understanding, this question is naturally necessary and of intrinsic importance. It is simply because if the so-called "modern society" of the West is merely a historical product of its particular cultural peculiarities, the sociological theories developed therefrom to explain such a society represents, at its best, a knowledge of this cultural society but no more. A simple example is when Western egalitarianism and individualism encounter the

---

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Giddens, The Constitution Of Society, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, p.xvii; Sociology: A Brief But Critical Introduction, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Javanovich Publishers, 1987, pp.3-13.



Indian hierarchy and caste system. What makes us competent to conclude that the latter is a denial of human rights and therefore is traditional and must be abolished?<sup>9</sup> Cultural value or scientific truth?

If viewed from its failure to rid itself of its Eurocentrism as well as from its achieved understanding of non-Western cultures, sociology, in spite of its recognition as a "scientific" discipline for more than a century, is actually still in a pre-scientific stage. Behind its scientific mask, it reflects, to the uttermost, the cultural ideology of the West from which it has arisen. Many sociologists (especially the Western ones), of course, would not accept this kind of heavy criticism and might even ask in return: has sociology in the past century not developed many theories about non-Western cultures? This is undoubtedly an uncontestable truth if only the number of theories is considered. However, we should not forget that there is no logical equivalence between number and quality, or more correctly, between number and scientific quality. Insofar as the knowledge these theories produce is concerned, one suspects they have provided no more scientific understanding about non-Western cultures than Western inner cultural and value judgements. For example, when the "archaic communities" of New Guinea, the Wegro tribe of Africa, and the old civilizations of India and

---

<sup>9</sup> Louis Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.

China are homogeneously reduced to a single category, such as "traditional society,"<sup>10</sup> "mechanical solidarity," "gemeinschaft," "Oriental despotism" or "Asiatic mode of production," which must chronologically precede the so-called "modern society" of the West, what does this reduction - including both its manifest unidirectional historical presupposition and monistic orientation - tell? A scientific understanding of these non-Western societies? Or a mere reflection of Western ethnocentrism in which all these cultures are not studied in their own right but as residual categories of Western society? Here comes our ultimate question: how are non-Western societies to be understood? By their own inner cultural logic or by superimposing on their historical processes the so-called universal sociological laws derived from the experiences of a particular cultural tradition as the standardized "scientific" explanation?

The essential problem in the present sociology of cultural tradition is that it reduces the plurality of cultural universes and rationalities to a single type of society, i.e., the Western one which is regarded as the only society that contains universality,<sup>11</sup> and therefore fails to

---

<sup>10</sup> Raymond Aron, The Industrial Society, London: Oxford University Press, 1974, p.30.

<sup>11</sup> Although some sociologists, especially the Marxian ones, view the Western capitalist society as transitional, as having internal contradictions, they hold that it is still the only society endowed with the element of rational and universal development. See the chapter on Marx.

realize that different cultural traditions may have different types of rationality as well as different ends in their historical developments. As a result, traditionality and modernity are treated as a pair of antonyms constantly opposing and negating one another.<sup>12</sup> But if we drop this traditional-modern dichotomy and resume the pluralistic nature of cultural reality, i.e., if we consider modernity not in terms of the Western consumerist type of society<sup>13</sup> in which materialistic production and consumption are elevated to the natural and therefore necessary end of life,<sup>14</sup> but instead in terms of a technologically assisted system of production<sup>15</sup> around which different cultural traditions may rationally organize their socio-cultural activities differently to serve some extra-economic ends specific to

---

<sup>12</sup> This kind of conceptual polarization between traditionality and modernity in the contemporary sociological treatment of social history is in a large part a result of Max Weber's influence, who attributed rationality and science to the nature of the new rising Western industrial society while irrationalities and superstitions to the foundation of the traditional authorities (e.g. capitalism versus gerontocracy, patriarchalism, patrimonialism, etc.). Since then, traditionality has become used by most sociologists as the opposite concept of modernity, of modernization - e.g., "to modernize, to destroy tradition" was exactly the slogan of the May-Fourth Movement (1919) in China. For more detail about the discussion on the traditional/modern dichotomy, see the chapter on Max Weber.

<sup>13</sup> Theoretically, modernism and consumerism seem to differ from one another in what they mean. While the former is characterized by its unreserved belief in human beings' unlimited potential power in material production through the application of science and technology, the latter emphasizes material consumption as the driving force of socio-economic progress and therefore as intrinsically and necessarily good. But in the West, these two concepts or beliefs are significantly merged into one, in

their own cultural traditions, then traditionality and modernity may not necessarily be incompatible but can be compatibly mingled together without losing any of their own traditional-cultural integrity. As a matter of fact, some contemporary social scientists have already noticed the continuity and vitality of traditions in the so-called modernization process. In her study of Japan, Ruth Benedict observes that the traditional Japanese hierarchical social relations not only have not posed any barrier to Japan's economic modernization, but instead have served as the inner stimulation of its rapid expansion and intensification as the Japanese people identify with their cultural image of loyalty and hierarchal unity.<sup>16</sup> In the same vein, Louis Dumont also finds in his study of India that, despite the

---

the sense that consumerism is seen as the inner momentum of modernism, of releasing human beings' unlimited power in material production.

<sup>14</sup> Chris Youngdall, Television Commercials As Cultural Texts, M.A. Thesis, Winnipeg: The University Of Manitoba, 1985, pp.121-124.

<sup>15</sup> See Herman Kahn, World Economic Development, Boulder: Westview Press, 1979, pp.113-116. Modernity is a controversial term which is often referred to culturally rather than conceptually and empirically. In order to distinguish modernity conceptually from other particular cultural attributes, Herman Kahn defines modernity in terms of the degree of industrialization, of a technologically assisted system of production. Basically, the author agrees with Kahn's definition, because it can stay away from the endless discussion of whether modernity should include such things as political rights, parliamentary institution, individualistic psychology, etc., and yet points to the prime phenomenon that every country shares and struggles for, no matter by what means. Hence, the Soviet Union should be considered modern, even though it does not have the kind of democratic system characteristic of the West. So is Japan.

tremendous change in the outlook of contemporary India under the process of modernization, the principal traditional hierarchical social structure, i.e., the strictly defined caste system, has largely remained intact under a modern mask in that the traditional caste leaders become the leaders of the modern politico-economic organizations.<sup>17</sup> Another study carried out by Lloyd Rudolph and Suzanne Rudolph arrived at the similar finding that traditionality and modernity in India are intricately, though not necessarily harmoniously, mixed; with the former serving as an inner stimulation to the latter.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the most striking discovery is David Zilberman's study of the relationship between Orthodox ethics and Soviet communism, in which he uncovers the original totalitarian features of the Russian Orthodox tradition fully objectified in the communist practice.<sup>19</sup>

Even though not all the studies mentioned above have in them an articulated pluralistic view of cultural tradition, what can still be inferred from them is that: as far as the nature of socio-cultural life is concerned, we do not have any so-called universal modern society as a model toward

---

<sup>16</sup> Ruth Benedict, Chrysanthemum And The Sword, New York, 1946.

<sup>17</sup> Dumont, 1980.

<sup>18</sup> Lloyd Rudolph and Suzanne Rudolph, The Modernity Of Tradition - Political Development In India, Chicago: The Chicago University Press, 1967.

<sup>19</sup> See David Zilberman's "Orthodox Ethics and The Matter Of Communism," in Studies in Soviet Thought, Vol.17, 1977.

which all societies must inevitably move. Rather, what we have are different cultural traditions constantly developing in response to the interplay of changing forces in their environments, but nevertheless guided by distinctly traditional aspirations<sup>20</sup> (e.g., modernism or Westernism for all present day societies, Buddhism for China from the seventh to tenth century, Confucianism for Japan from the tenth to the nineteenth century, etc.). This enduring and creative role of tradition in socio-cultural development can best be demonstrated with reference to Hajime Nakamura's remarkable study of the relation of Eastern peoples' ways of thinking to the transplantation among them of Buddhism.<sup>21</sup> In this study, Nakamura shows that, in the process of transplanting Buddhism, a religion developed in India, the Eastern peoples kept their traditional ways of thinking principally unimpaired. And quite surprisingly, what was changed instead was Indian Buddhism itself, whose values and ways of thinking were either rejected or adapted to suit local socio-cultural needs.

The contemporary inter-cultural exchange should be understood from this angle. "Modernism," as a product of Western culture, inevitably carries in itself the way of thinking and values typical of the Western cultural

---

<sup>20</sup> David Zilberman, "Understanding Cultural Tradition Through Types of Thinking," unpublished manuscript.

<sup>21</sup> Hajime Nakamura, Ways of Thinking Of Eastern Peoples: India, China, Tibet and Japan, Honolulu: East-West Centre Press, 1964.

tradition which may not be congenial to other societies and therefore will necessarily be transformed or rejected in accordance with their socio-cultural needs. In other words, the function of "modernism" as a product of the West is no more than the raw materials for the socio-cultural adaptation of these societies. What remain transcendent in the course of consumption are their traditions, which play an active role in digesting and transforming these Western materials into something suitable for their healthy socio-cultural development.

In this sense, the present Western society should not be seen as the result of a break with its cultural tradition. Likewise, India, the creator of Buddhism, cannot be labelled non-traditionalistic. Two thousand years ago, India had its own way of organizing, developing and even abandoning Buddhism, which was definitely not universal in character and was different from that of any Oriental society adopting it. This is also true of Western society. Neither its historical development nor its cultural experience of the present-day production and consumption, or more correctly, of the socio-cultural attitude toward such production and consumption, is of universal character. On the contrary, they merely represent particular cultural values on which a particular type of rationality is based, i.e., the upholding of the image of free individuality with the emphasis on the rationally calculative orientation toward economic goals as

an end in itself.<sup>22</sup> There is no point in insisting that other societies must adopt the same cultural attitudes in order to "modernize" (if this is the appropriate term) their socio-economic life. The several studies just mentioned have already proved this point.

On the general basis of the above interpretation, it is safe to say that the proper way of understanding cultural traditions is not to impose on them the "sociological laws" derived from the Western world, but to recognize the inner cultural logic by which their socio-cultural life is organized. In other words, to bring the discussion back to the subject matter of this thesis, the proper sociological understanding of the Chinese cultural tradition must consist of the identification of China's socio-cultural uniqueness and the corresponding theoretical reconstruction of its historical experiences on the basis of the former.

#### 1.2 SIMILAR SHORTCOMING: THE SINICIZATION MOVEMENT IN CHINESE SOCIOLOGY IN STUDY OF THE CHINESE CULTURAL TRADITION

In recent years Chinese sociological circles have begun to reflect on the same problem of the universal validity of existing sociological theories in understanding cultural traditions. This reflection has finally developed into an important sociological movement called "the sinicization of sociological study" which is still on its way to

---

<sup>22</sup> David Zilberman, "A Study Of Tradition," unpublished manuscript, p.14.



development. The sinicization movement originated in Taiwan in the late 1970's and later spread to Hong Kong and Singapore. Its principal goal was to understand (sociologically) the unique nature of Chinese society so as to orient the current Chinese (Taiwanese) socio-political development to its right direction. At the same time, in order to broaden the horizon of Chinese sociology, the sinicization leaders purposefully introduced (and translated as well) into Taiwan many important Western original sociological works, especially works from the Marxian perspective (e.g., by Jurgen Habermas, Herbert Marcuse, Eric Fromm, Immanuel Wallerstein, etc.). This flood of Marxian ideas, though it might not necessarily lead to the understanding of the uniqueness of Chinese society (it certainly did not), has created a quite liberal atmosphere of intellectual discussion on the current Taiwanese socio-political development. Prior to this, Taiwanese sociological circles were overshadowed by functionalism and the Nationalist Party's political ideology.

On the surface, this movement's objective is very similar to what the author proposes to undertake in this thesis - to study the Chinese cultural tradition from its internal, logical position (see pages 19-22). However, a thorough examination of the ideology behind this movement reveals a great discrepancy between its proposed objective and the problems actually addressed by the leaders of the movement.

Their symposium, published in 1982,<sup>23</sup> explicitly shows that their theoretical interests are not grounded on any particular understanding of the Chinese socio-cultural uniqueness but are only borrowings from the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory, or a combination of both. "Sinicization" was only mentioned in such superficial ways as: "to criticize the ideologies and values hidden behind the Western sociological theories,"<sup>24</sup> "to be epistemologically conscious and reflective,"<sup>25</sup> "to return to the Chinese historical-cultural tradition,"<sup>26</sup> "to go back to the analysis of the cultural and historical conditions specific to the tradition of the Chinese social and intellectual thoughts,"<sup>27</sup> etc.. Nothing concrete about the theoretical approach to the uniqueness of

---

<sup>23</sup> Kwok-she Yang & Sung-i Man (楊國樞 文榮 ~), The Sinicization Of Social And Behavioral Studies (社會及行為科學研究的中國化), Taipei: The Chinese National Research Centre, 1982.

<sup>24</sup> Kai-ching Yip (葉啓政), "A Discussion of the Sinicization of Sociological Studies From the Viewpoint of the Existing Character of Chinese Sociology" (從中國社會學既有性格論社會學研究中國化), The Sinicization of Social And Behavioral Studies, Kwok-she Yang & Sung-i Man ed., Taipei: The Chinese National Research Centre, 1982, p.47.

<sup>25</sup> Yau-kee Kim (金耀基), "The Sinicization of Sociology" (社會學的中國化), The Sinicization of Social And Behavioral Studies, Kwok-she Yang & Sung-i Man ed., Taipei: The Chinese National Research Centre, 1982, p.113.

<sup>26</sup> Sing-shui Ko (高敏哲), "The Possibility And Meaning Of The Sinicization of Social Sciences" (社會科學中國化之可能性及其意義), The Sinicization Of Social And Behavioral Studies, Kwok-she Yang & Sung-i Man ed., Taipei: The Chinese National Research Centre, 1982, p.48.

the Chinese cultural tradition was discussed or mentioned.

Taken by itself, this movement can be considered no more than an extended consequence of the anti-functionalism movement in the West in the 1960's and 1970's. Although its leaders did advocate a purge of the ideology inherent in Western sociological theories, they never succeeded in achieving this purpose in practice (otherwise they would not have identified themselves entirely with the ideologies of the critical school and world-system theory, both of which carry a strong Marxist orientation).<sup>28</sup> Owing to this fact, the destiny of the movement is predictable and should be considered a failure, despite the fact that its leaders are still carrying it through - they simply miss the point.

---

<sup>27</sup> Yip, 1982, p.147.

<sup>28</sup> Dominating American sociology for more than two decades, functionalism began to crumble as social unrest emerged and became widespread in the 1960's in American society which used to be seen by the functionalists as a functionally integrated social system. Since then, the conflict perspective with a strong Marxist implication had risen as a challenging alternative to the worsening social situation and hence further accelerated the decline of functionalism. The sinicization movement in Taiwan, as examined thoroughly, carried in itself an extraordinary Marxist ideology in its theoretical makeup as well as a heavy legacy of the American anti-functionalism movement, although it was seriously conditioned by the dominant political bourgeois ideology of the Taiwanese government. That was why its leaders easily identified themselves with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and Wallerstein's world-system theory. While the former is mainly a Marxist critique of the ideological distortion inherent in the Western capitalist society, the latter condemns the evils that the world-capitalist expansion has brought to the third world nations. Though both of them have different emphases, they undoubtedly share the same Marxist legacy, i.e., believe the necessity of transforming the entire

The reason for the failure of the movement and its subsequent absorption by another upcoming sociological ideology is not an accident; it can be traced back to the historical character of Chinese sociology itself. Although the study of the problems of society and culture by the Chinese intellectuals is coextensive with their civilized history,<sup>29</sup> the formal establishment of sociology in China as an independent discipline only came after the Sino-Western contact in the 19th century.<sup>30</sup> To speak more correctly, sociology in China in a formal sense is entirely a foreign transplantation. As can be traced historically, most, if not all, of the Chinese sociologists received their sociological training in the West, even up to the present time.<sup>31</sup> The problem of this phenomenon is devastating, primarily because what the Chinese sociologists initially learned was not the essence of their socio-cultural

---

world into a humanist society in which universal freedom of individuals is realized (see Max Horkheimer, Critical Theory, New York: Continuum, 1972; and Immanuel Wallerstein, The Capitalist World-economy, London: Cambridge University Press, 1979). No doubt, as their symposium shows, the sinicization leaders had not gone that far to claim themselves Marxist; their consciousness was nevertheless overshadowed by this theoretical position which ultimately blocked their independent understanding of Chinese society from the inside.

<sup>29</sup> In fact, all the five Chinese classics (the five most ancient books), in one way or another, deal with the tripartite problem of man, society and culture.

<sup>30</sup> Yip, 1982, p.115.

<sup>31</sup> Sun-wang Siao (蕭新煌), "The Structural Problem in the Sinicization of Sociology" (社會學中國化的結構問題), The Sinicization of Social And Behavioral Studies, Kwok-she Yang and Sung-i Man ed., Taipei: The Chinese National Research Centre, 1982, p.82.

problems, but the Western sociological viewpoints and, more importantly, the Western value judgements on these problems. That is to say, the way they looked at the Chinese cultural tradition was at the very beginning influenced and structured by the Western values and way of thinking. As a result, even though at the historical-cultural level they might "intuit" a necessity to sinicize Chinese sociology, at the practical level of theory construction they were still unable to get rid of the structural influence of Western sociological thinking and cultural values which were deeply inscribed in their consciousness. Even though some of them did realize the theoretical limitations of Western sociology, they were unwilling to reflect on it fundamentally in terms of its theoretical presuppositions, owing to their unreserved belief in the scientific nature of sociology. Before they started their sociological analyses, they already accepted the sociological formula of the universality of Western culture and the particularity of Chinese culture. Hence, the Chinese cultural tradition was considered by them outdated and to be transcended or abandoned, regardless of whether from the Marxist, neo-Marxist (like the critical and world-system theories) or modernization perspective. This is precisely the reason why an initially conscious intellectual movement with a clear aim at sinicization has in consequence been assimilated into the current sociological ideology of the West, so contradictory in principle to its original objective.

To truly achieve the purpose of the sinicization of Chinese sociology, the first step is still to reflect upon the validity of Western sociological theories in explaining the Chinese socio-cultural experiences. Obviously, the sinicization movement itself represents a negation of such a validity. This negation, however, does not necessarily imply any deep theoretical insight into the problem inherent in Western sociological theories. That is, it does not presuppose any understanding of the theoretical limitations of the Western sociological explanations about the Chinese socio-cultural experiences. It can be based on ethnocentric sentiment or historical intuition (the rise of the sinicization movement was more or less a result of this kind of sentiment and intuition, and this factor alone can largely explain the necessary failure of the movement: it has not captured the essence of the problem it intended to overcome).<sup>3 2</sup>

---

<sup>3 2</sup> In this regard, some contemporary Chinese cultural philosophers have achieved an understanding of the Chinese cultural tradition far more insightful and much deeper than any Chinese sociologist of this area, even though they tend to elevate the Chinese cultural tradition to a superior position over other cultural traditions owing to their cultural identity. This is basically because their way of thinking is less influenced by the Western cultural ideology (most of them did their study in China and have a thorough command of Chinese history, philosophy and literature), and therefore they are more able to comprehend China internally from the Chinese cultural position rather than externally from any naturalized (i.e., absolutized, made natural) perspective. See Kuan-Ngai Tang (唐君毅): The Reconstruction of The Humanist Spirit (人文精神之重建), Taipei: Student Publishing Co. Ltd., 1984; and The Spiritual Value Of Chinese Culture (中國文化之精神價值), Taipei: Ching Chung Publishing Co. Ltd., 1979; Sau-Ming Leung (梁漱溟), The Cardinal

Taken as a whole, to truly sinicize Chinese sociology without missing the point of cross-cultural understanding - to achieve the proper sociological understanding of the Chinese cultural tradition - involves in the implementation of two necessary tasks. They are: (1) to reveal how Western sociological theories fail to explain the Chinese socio-cultural experiences; and (2) to identify the socio-cultural uniqueness of the Chinese cultural tradition for the purpose of theoretical and historical reconstruction. Without the former, the latter is, at best, no more than one of many sociological perspectives; without the latter, the sociological understanding of the Chinese cultural tradition is still obscure. In other words, in the absence of either one of these two tasks, it cannot be said that the true sinicization of Chinese sociology is on its feet.

### 1.3 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The present study is precisely an attempt to implement the program of sinicizing Chinese sociology on a concrete workable basis. Basically, its objectives are twofold: 1) to demonstrate the discrepancy between Western sociological theories as represented by Hegel, Marx and Weber and the empirical Chinese cultural reality; and 2) to suggest a

---

Meaning Of Chinese Culture ( 中國文化意義 ), Taipei: Ching Chung Publishing Co. Ltd.; and Fou-Kuan Tsui (徐復觀) Between Academia And Politic ( 學術與政治之間 ), Taipei: Student Publishing Co. Ltd., 1980.

theoretical outline of a more adequate explanation of the the Chinese cultural tradition.

The reason for choosing Hegel, Marx and Weber as the focus of analysis in this thesis is primarily based on the ground that, despite other massive studies done on the understanding of the Chinese cultural tradition,<sup>33</sup> only their works contain a kind of theoretical completeness and intellectual depth that has generated long-term influences on the study of the Chinese cultural tradition.<sup>34</sup> In a theoretical sense, their works on China represent three major theoretical approaches in classical sociology which continue to shape, in one way or another, the sociological analyses of the Chinese cultural tradition. This thesis, in

---

<sup>33</sup> See Perry Anderson, Lineages Of The Absolutist State, London: New Left Books, 1974; Robert Bellah, Tokugawa Religion, Glencoe: Free Press, 1957; N. Eisenstadt, The Political Systems Of Empires, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1968; Marion Levy, "Contrasting Factors In The Modernization Of Japan And China," in Economic Growth: Brazil, India and Japan, edited by S. Kuznets, Durham: Duke University Press, p.1955; Barrington Moore, The Social Origins Of Dictatorship And Democracy, Boston: Beacon Press, 1963; Karl Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957; and Ying-Zi Yu, The Religious Ethics And The Merchants' Spirit In Late China, Taipei: Luen King Publishing Company Ltd., 1987.

<sup>34</sup> Hegel's study of China which culminates into his theory of Oriental despotism has been the major theoretical source for understanding China since his time. Many important thinkers, though might not accept his philosophical presuppositions of human nature, agreed on his treatment of the Chinese despotic power as originated from the lack of institutional development of Chinese individuality. Marx's concept of Asiatic mode of Production, though not a specific study of China, is a general theory of the typological nature of the East from a perspective of the basic economic relations and has attracted considerable attention to the role of the



order to avoid the unnecessary discussion of the entire voluminous sociological literature about China, therefore limits itself only to a discussion of the works of Hegel, Marx and Weber on China. Owing to their theoretical importance, the author believes that the discussion of them alone is sufficient to reveal the general theoretical structures (and deficiencies as well) involved in Western (especially classical) sociological approaches to the Chinese cultural tradition.

In addition, the author wants to point out that in their analysis of China, Hegel, Marx and Weber all treat China as a stagnant society. Therefore, when they refer to China, they always mean China in the general sense, i.e., China as a whole and China throughout the centuries. In this study, the author uses the term "China" with the similar meaning. Nevertheless, such use is not because the author shares the

---

Chinese economic characteristics in its entire socio-cultural development. The theoretical issues it involves have generated numerous debates and researches about the Asiatic socio-economic phenomena in general and the Chinese social development in particular. Weber's Confucian-ethic thesis presented in his book Religion of China has long been regarded in the American sociology as the authority of Chinese study both in terms of method and in terms of the Chinese issues it touches. Since then, most of the sociological studies about China have been predominantly Weberian - have followed principally Weber's comparative method and examined Weber's outlined issues - though with some new historical materials and in different depth. In brief, these three persons' works respectively constitute the three major sociological approaches to China - political, economic and cultural. Each of them represents the author's theoretical tendency to single out a particular aspect of social life - be it political, economic or cultural - as the single structuring factor of the Chinese cultural tradition.

similar stagnant view of China. The conceptualization of China as historically stagnant is precisely one of the important points to be criticized in the thesis. The real reason for treating China as both wholistic and ahistorical is based on the recognition that there is an internal logic governing Chinese socio-cultural development which is the Chinese cultural tradition. It is believed that because of their long socio-cultural history, the Chinese have developed, both emotionally and rationally (in the sense of self-awareness), a strong sense of Chineseness.<sup>35</sup> This "Chineseness" enables them to identify themselves as Chinese and, at the same time, drives them continuously to uphold their Chinese identity, especially in times of inter-cultural confrontation. Hence, it logically follows that the Chinese cultural tradition is the ultimate existence of Chinese society, the "metaphysics" of Chinese culture, which transcends both Chinese political and social developments. The latter, if viewed from the inner Chinese cultural perspective, is nothing but the objectification of this Chinese "metaphysics" (see Appendix A for more elaboration on the Chinese cultural tradition).

---

<sup>35</sup> Brian Hook, The Cambridge Encyclopedia of China, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp.31-34.

#### 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study is a result of the author's dissatisfaction with the discrepancy between Western sociological theory and the Chinese socio-cultural experience. This discrepancy, the author believes and will show in this thesis, is somehow closely connected with the Western sociological tradition of culture which attempts to formulate, on the basis of a single cultural fact (i.e., the European one), universal sociological laws of cultural development that are applicable to both European and non-European societies. In the author's perspective, if this Eurocentrism<sup>36</sup> in sociology continues, it will be impossible to have true scientific understanding (i.e., in their own right) of non-European cultures, since Eurocentrism negates the subjective aspect of their existence or distorts it from the European cultural perspective. Sociological theory of culture must admit the fact of the plurality of cultural developments and develop a multi-positional approach to it. That is, it must be based on the understanding of the cultural logic of each society and the study of it in relation to that cultural logic, instead of reducing the

---

<sup>36</sup> Eurocentrism has a special methodological meaning in the way the author uses it. It refers to the utilization of theoretical categories developed in Western societies to interpret non-Western societies. Eurocentrism reflects an inability to appreciate the viewpoints of non-Western societies which, for example, have a different cultural content. As a result, it displays an unconsciousness of a different humanity, condition, and problem facing people in non-Western societies and methodologically treats these societies from the European perspective.

plurality of cultural universes to a single cultural background. In this sense, the sociology of culture should not be seen as universalistic or timeless, but is particularly and historically associated with the development of each cultural tradition. It is under this conception of the sociology of culture that the present thesis is written. The author hopes that this study will, by demonstrating the discrepancy between Western sociological theory and the Chinese socio-cultural experience, suggest a possible sociological direction for the study of culture in general and a possible adequate theoretical outline for interpreting the Chinese cultural tradition in particular.

### 1.5 METHOD

The study is based on library research and the analysis and interpretation of secondary data - principally, of the works of Hegel, Marx, and Weber on China and available historical materials about Chinese society and culture. As far as the availability of data is concerned, the works of Hegel, Marx, and Weber and the scholarly works about them at the libraries of the Universities of Manitoba and Winnipeg are quite adequate to serve the aim of the study. But the materials about Chinese society and culture are very limited at both of the libraries. Nevertheless, the author's personal possessions acquired from Taiwan and Hong Kong in

the past few years compensate for this inadequacy. With regard to the quality of these sources, they are all written by reputable Chinese scholars and specialists of this area and therefore should be reliable. However, since many of these sources are written in Chinese and there are no available English translations, the author is obliged to make his own translations whenever direct quotation is necessary. Still, if there is any doubt concerning the author's translations, the original Chinese sources are the ultimate ground for reference. Finally, because James Legge's translation of the five Chinese classics is considered the authority by most Chinese scholars, even though there are other translations available at the library of the University of Manitoba, the author decided to use James Legge's translation in spite of its archaic style.

In the actual analysis, the author sets out systematically what he understands to be Hegel's, Marx's, and Weber's conceptualizations of the nature of Chinese society and culture, and compares their theoretical classifications and explanations with the Chinese socio-cultural experience. Then he critically examines the methodological structures of these theories and their relations to the discrepancy between these theories and the Chinese socio-cultural reality. The terms "theory" and "methodology" are two important concepts that run through the entire thesis and are distinguished as follows: while

theory refers to the substantive theory that makes truth claims concerning socio-cultural reality, methodology means the basic assumptions of that substantive theory involved in the process of theory construction. To put it differently, methodology is not concerned with building substantive knowledge, but rather deals with the underlying principles by which a particular kind of knowledge is made.<sup>37</sup> This definition of methodology postulates that no substantive theory can avoid making assumptions and that substantive theory is always innerly determined by its methodology, i.e., by the validity of the assumptions particularly set forth before the construction of that substantive theory.

In respect of the present study, the author's basic methodological position is that we cannot scientifically prove (at least up until now) any cultural tradition to be the only meaningful cultural tradition that other societies must adopt. Therefore, we must admit (i.e., assume) that the plurality of cultural universes is the elementary fact of human life and that the study of any cultural tradition must be grounded on the study of its internal cultural logic (rationality), rather than reduce it to a residual category of other cultural traditions. This methodological position, the author must acknowledge, is inspired by the work of a

---

<sup>37</sup> It is apparent that the term "methodology" is used here very different from the conventional sociological use of it. Since the latter mainly deals with the general elaboration of the procedures of data collection and analysis, the author calls it method instead of methodology in order to distinguish their difference.

Russian scholar, David Zilberman, and owes a great deal to his Ph.D. thesis "A Study Of Tradition"<sup>38</sup> and his posthumous publication The Birth Of Meaning in Hindu Thought.<sup>39</sup> In fact, the critique of Hegel, Marx and Weber and the alternative approach to the Chinese cultural tradition suggested by the author in this study are principally stimulated by Zilberman's cultural study. Although Zilberman did not deal with the Chinese cultural tradition specifically, his suggested multi-positional approach to cultural tradition is instructive and revolutionary. Without the stimulation of this multi-positional approach, there would not have this study. Of course, if David Zilberman were alive, whether he would agree with the author's interpretation of his work is another question.

The entire study is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 presents, as what has been done so far, a general introduction to the study. Chapter 2, 3 and 4 respectively discuss the theoretical works of Hegel, Marx and Weber on China, and contrast the Chinese reality to show their inadequacies for explaining the Chinese cultural tradition. Chapter 5 suggests reasons for these inadequacies. In the final chapter, an outline of a possible adequate interpretation of the Chinese cultural tradition is

---

<sup>38</sup> David Zilberman, "A Study Of Tradition," unpublished manuscript.

<sup>39</sup> David Zilberman, The Birth Of Meaning in Hindu Thought, edited by Robert Cohen, Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1988.

attempted.

Since Hegel, Marx, Weber and Zilberman employ many terms different from established usage, the following list is intended to provide definitions of some of them which may be helpful for the understanding of this thesis.

### **Hegel**

1. Subjectivity: the highest stage of individual development in which the individual comes to realize that the state is the ultimate ground for his personal development and therefore adopts principles tending to the good of all.
2. Substantiality: the central power that the state represents.
3. Particularity: the quality that represents personal interests.
4. Will: the desire of conscious individuals.

### **Marx**

5. Free Individuality: the final stage of human development in which man is free from both natural and social domination.
6. Natural Relations: relations characterized by the domination by some over the others.
7. Social Relations: relations characterized by equal and free interaction of independent individuals.

### **Weber**



8. Rational Action: behaviour characterized by the attainment of calculated ends on the basis of knowledge.
9. Traditional Action: behaviour characterized by ingrained habituation.

**Zilberman**

10. Partial Institution: the social institution whose principle alone dictates the developmental direction of the whole social system.
11. Intentionality: the kind of cultural quality that constitutes a specific orientation or attitude toward the external world.
12. Naturalize: absolutize or make natural (something or some idea) from one perspective without reflecting from the other perspectives.
13. Sublate: negate.

Finally, the author wants to acknowledge that there is no sexist implication in using such terms as "man," "he," or "him" to refer to human beings in general in the thesis. The reason for using these terms is simply that the author could not find any better replacement of them. Therefore, in order to avoid using such clumsy terms as "he or she," "him or her," or "man or woman," he decided to follow the convention of using masculine terms to refer to both sexes.

## Chapter II

### HEGEL: THE THEORY OF ORIENTAL DESPOTISM

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Born in 1770 in Germany and died there in 1831, Hegel was the culmination of the historicist tradition in German philosophy which, heavily influenced by Christianity, viewed human history as being moved toward a particular end.<sup>40</sup> This tradition was recently carried through by Kant, Fichte and Schelling, who lived slightly earlier than Hegel.<sup>41</sup> Throughout his life Hegel was a patriotic Prussian, a loyal

---

<sup>40</sup> See Robert Nisbet, History Of The Idea Of Progress, New York: Basic Books, 1980. In this book, Robert Nisbet gives a thorough discussion of the genesis and development of Western historicism from the early Christian era down to the present century. He even argues that historicism, or in his own words, the belief in progress, is the soul of Western civilization, and that if this belief dies, there would not be much left in the West. Nisbet is certainly correct. Nevertheless, in emphasizing "the idea of progress" as the inner motion of Western civilization, Nisbet seems to underestimate the destructive effect that this idea has on other civilizations as well as on human existence as a whole.

<sup>41</sup> See R. G. Collingwood, The Idea Of History, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946, p.117. According to Collingwood, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel all believed that history was only the process of putting the presumed historical forms on the presumed content or essence of Being. Therefore, in their conception, historical process was not a creative process: it was merely a unification of the two abstract entities, form and content. Collingwood's interpretation is basically correct. Hegel's historical conception, as will be shown in this chapter, basically falls into such a typical historicism.

servant of the German state, who comfortably enjoyed his recognized philosophical pre-eminence.<sup>42</sup> His patriotism can easily be seen in his philosophy of history, in which he considered the German state to be the highest achievement in all human history (for more detail about Hegel's conception of history, see further on). Hegel's major philosophical invention is his dialectical logic, a logic that presupposes a time schematism in the form of a continuous process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. By this logic, Hegel synthesized all different intellectual thoughts into a single historicist system which has profoundly affected Western intellectual history in general and social thought in particular.

However, partly because of its philosophical abstractness and partly because of the dominant positivist tendency in Western sociology, Hegel's work is rarely treated seriously in sociology in spite of its tremendous sociological relevance in the analysis of Western society. His contribution to sociology can be better appreciated if we pay some attention to his influence on certain prominent social thinkers such as Karl Marx, Karl Wittfogel, Max Horkheimer, Georg Lukacs, T. W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Jurgen Habermas and G. Stevenson.<sup>43</sup> Without him, we suspect

---

<sup>42</sup> Bertrand Russell, History Of Western Philosophy, London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1982, p.701.

<sup>43</sup> Marx, Lukacs, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas were heavily influenced by Hegel's dialectical logic. As a matter of fact, they were made known by their application of Hegelian logic to social analysis, especially the analysis

we would not have the others. Nevertheless, since the present work is not an independent treatment of Hegel's work, the following few pages will be confined mainly to Hegel's analysis of the Chinese cultural tradition with specific reference to his political theory of the state. His other concepts, though they may carry good sociological insights, will not be discussed here unless such is necessary for clarification.

Hegel's analysis of the Chinese cultural tradition is guided by his particular understanding of the Orient which is usually characterized as the "theory of Oriental despotism," whose origin is traceable to Aristotle.<sup>44</sup> On the shoulders of this philosophical giant as well as other philosophers before him, Hegel developed the theory of the

---

of Western consciousness under the impact of capitalism. See Karl Marx, Germany Ideology, in The Marx-Engels Reader, edited by Robert Tucker, New York: W Norton & Company, 1978; Gerog Lukacs, History And Class Consciousness, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985; Max Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno, Dialectic Of Enlightenment, New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1972; Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, Boston: Beacon Press, 1964; and Jurgen Habermas, Toward A Rational Society, Boston: Beacon Press, 1970. Hegel's influence on Karl Wittfogel is mainly in his conception of the East. One of Wittfogel's most famous books even uses Hegel's concept "Oriental Despotism" as its title. See Karl Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957. G. Stevenson's analysis of issues of Canadian politics and government is principally based on Hegel's conception of the state in capitalist society. See G. Stevenson, "Federalism And The Political Economy Of The Canadian State," in The Canadian State, edited by L. Pantitch, Toronto: University Of Toronto Press, 1977, pp.71-100.

<sup>44</sup> Aristotle, The Politics Of Aristotle, edited and translated by Ernest Barker, New York: Oxford University Press, 1962, p.138.

Orient into a systematic totality in which the Oriental political appearance, that is, despotism, is emphasized and theorized from a particular perspective of freedom understood by him in a very narrow, institutional way. Since then, the theory has significantly captured the Western consciousness and greatly shaped its view of China in particular and the Orient in general. Many social thinkers since Hegel, including Marx - the one we will discuss in detail later, have shared the basic ideas outlined in the theory, though they might emphasize one or other in relation to their particular larger theoretical positions.<sup>45</sup>

Taken by itself, Hegel's theory of Oriental despotism, quite different from those of his predecessors,<sup>46</sup> is not merely a general theory about the Orient - about China,<sup>47</sup> but a special theoretical brick in his larger philosophical

---

<sup>45</sup> Some examples are: Marx connected the phenomenon of Oriental despotism to a result of the interplay between the isolation and patriarchalism of Asiatic agricultural communes and climatic and geographical conditions; Karl A. Wittfogel emphasized the exclusive role of the Chinese natural settings in the emergence of the Chinese despotic empire.

<sup>46</sup> Hegel was the philosopher who first depicted a unilinear scheme of world history. His theory of the Orient was therefore not a theory of the Orient as such, but an attempt to integrate the Orient into his unitary world historical scheme. See D. M. Lowe, The Function of China in Marx, Lenin and Mao, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, p.5.

<sup>47</sup> Strictly speaking, Hegel sees China as the ideal prototype of Oriental despotism, whereas other cultural traditions such as India and Persia are merely derivatives of it.

structure of world history. Because of that, before we move on to the discussion of his theoretical analysis of China, a brief overview of his general notion of world history is necessary in order to get a fuller picture of the former.

## 2.2 HEGEL'S CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

World history, as Hegel understands it, is the progressive realization of the "unity of essence and existence,"<sup>48</sup> of a special ideal - the European ideal, in which man is able to act freely and consciously, to realize his potentialities and so to be truly himself.<sup>49</sup> It is the development of man from his unreflected, instinct dominated animal life to a (ethically) rational, conscious, free individual. The end of world history is the absolute realization of this European ideal, the complete development of man in which his historical existence is entirely identical with his essence - both moral and free.

This European ideal, however, does not occur in individual isolation as Kantian morality conceives of it.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> G. W. F Hegel, Science of Logic, New York, 1929, p.160.

<sup>49</sup> W. H. Walsh, "Principle and Prejudice in Hegel's Philosophy of History," in Hegel's Political Philosophy, edited by Z. A. Pelczynski, Cambridge, The University Press, 1971, p.183.

<sup>50</sup> Kant's philosophy of freedom views freedom as freedom of the transcendental consciousness which can be attained through individual enlightenment, or in Kant's own words, "man's release from his self-incurred tutelage" (Immanuel Kant, Kant On History, edited by L. W. Beck, New York: Free press, 1963, p.3). For Hegel, this view fails to see the phenomenological nature of consciousness and, in

Rather, it is historically developing and institutionally bound and can only be realized in the development of group life, or more precisely, of political (i.e., state) life. Indeed, the state, for Hegel, is but the foundation of morality and freedom. It liberates man from both his individual limitations and environmental constraints and opens opportunities to the individual will. Its historical beginning, therefore, marks the dawn of true human life, and its historical end signifies the absolute concretization of human essence. In other words, world history can be rephrased as the progressive objectification of the state, in which human beings coherently and harmoniously live together and at the same time realize the different sides of their personality.

However, Hegel's conception of the state is distinctly unique and is exclusively determined by his absolute identification with the modern German world, a typical political development generally shared by most European nations at that time.<sup>51</sup> More specifically, it is both a philosophization of the historical necessity of the German political monarchy and, a fundamental rejection of the traditional utilitarianism which sees the state merely as a voluntaristic means to satisfying individual needs. In doing so, Hegel locates the state in an entirely new light -

---

consequence, the historical development of freedom of this phenomenological consciousness in relation to the developing socio-political environment.

<sup>51</sup> Walsh, 1971, p.184.

he treats it as an independent entity having its ontological existence, or to use Durkheim's sociological terms, as a social fact distinct from its individual manifestations.<sup>52</sup> For Hegel, the state is something more than a means, something of external necessity and of independent meaning, an end of its own. As he openly says,

The state is the universal spiritual life...in which they (individuals) have their existence and reality.<sup>53</sup>

In Hegel's view, the state is the universal spiritual reality to which the individual's meaning of life is attached. It is only in and by the state that the individual gains his true reality, for it is only in and by it that he raises himself from his primitive spontaneous selfishness to the universality of state life.<sup>54</sup> In other words, the state constitutes a final end for the individual who finds in it the truth of his existence, his duty and his satisfaction.

---

<sup>52</sup> Emile Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method, New York: A Division Of Macmillan Publishing Co, Inc., 1966, p.7. In this sense, Hegel can be considered to be the forerunner of Durkheimian sociology which sees society, similar to the way Hegel sees the state, as moral conscience, the principal source of social solidarity, which exists independent of individual will and which every social member shares and conforms to.

<sup>53</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, The Philosophy of History, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956, p.104).

<sup>54</sup> Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, History of Political Philosophy, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973, p.686.



However, the state's relation to the individual is not merely an external necessity or a higher authority. Rather, it is essentially reciprocal and mutually interdependent. This is because the state is the end "immanent within them (individuals), and its strength lies in the unity of its own universal end and aim with the particular interest of individuals, in the fact that individuals have duties to the state in proportion as they have right against it."<sup>55</sup> That is to say, the individual is conscious that the existence of the state is but his liberation and satisfaction, the concrete ground of his personal freedom and individuality, and that his participation in the state is therefore a fuller development of his self-interest and particularity.

The state is the actuality of concrete freedom. But concrete freedom consists in this, that personal individuality and its particular interests not only achieve their complete development and gain explicit recognition for their right but, for one thing, they also pass over of their own accord into the interest of the universal, and, for another thing, they know and will the universal; they even recognize it as their own substantive mind; they take it as their end and aim and are active in its pursuit. The result is that the universal does not prevail or achieve completion except along with particular interests and through the cooperation of particular knowing and willing; and individuals likewise do not live as private persons for their own ends alone, but in the very act of willing these they will the universal in the light of the universal, and their activity is consciously aimed at none but the universal end. The principle of modern states has prodigious strength and depth because it allows the principle of subjectivity to progress to its culmination in the extreme of self-subsistent personal particularity, and yet at the same time brings it back to the substantive

---

<sup>55</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy of Right, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, p.161).

unity and so maintains this unity in the principle of subjectivity itself.<sup>56</sup>

Since the satisfaction of the individual's interests depends upon his cooperation with other individuals, the active maintenance of this cooperation, of the substantive unity of the state, is nothing but the maintenance of the individual interest and therefore the universal end every individual must necessarily pursue. It is only through the implementation of the state principle that the individual's particularity, the principle of subjectivity, can be secured. In other words, any attempt to satisfy individual interest at the expense of the state principle is not freedom nor individuality but a destruction of them, since it destroys the objective ground on which both concrete freedom and individuality rely for development. It is in this sense that the state is understood by Hegel as a harmonious organic unity of universality and particularity, of ethical life and concrete freedom.

It is on the basis of this conceptualization of the state that Hegel understands different cultural traditions. As has been mentioned, the state for Hegel is not ahistorically pre-given; nor does the individual raise himself to the level of concrete freedom in isolation. Instead, both the state and freedom develop dialectically hand in hand with one another in world history. Different cultural traditions merely reveal differently the same process of the historical

---

<sup>56</sup> Georg W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy of Right, London: Oxford University Press, 1971; pp.160-161).

development of the state. To speak more directly, the concern with the development of the state is Hegel's central guide to his analysis of the Chinese cultural tradition, as well as of the others. It gives Hegel an absolute position to make sense of - to give order to - the disorderly world in which different cultural universes seem to live unrelated to each other. Hence, the seeming absurdity of the plurality of cultural traditions is resolved: plurality is not a sign of human chaos, but a necessary phenomenon of the universal development of the state. Plurality does not really mean pluralistic developments; rather it reflects the different stages of a single historical process of the state moving itself toward its completion - the self-determining state in which man is absolutely free and moral.

By means of his dialectical logic which interprets the universal as the abstract generality of the state, i.e., the state in abstraction as having an ontological existence by which the individual's existence is determined,<sup>57</sup> Hegel characterizes different cultural societies into four major successive political forms (stages): despotism, democracy, aristocracy and monarchy. Each of these political forms represents an antithesis to, and a higher development over, the preceding ones, with the monarchy, i.e., the idealized German world, at the final end in which both the state and human freedom are absolutely identical and fully

---

<sup>57</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy Of Right, London:Oxford University Press, 1971, pp.155-157.

concretized.

The despotic state (e.g., China) is the beginning form of the state, a "rigid unity,"<sup>58</sup> to which the subject's will first sustains a relation in the form of faith, confidence and obedience. In this despotic state, the patriarch is the only one who is free; he stands at the head to uphold the moral and essential ordinances which are already established, while the subjects are unreflectively grouped by custom and habit and revolve around him, the centre, without a separate existence.<sup>59</sup> In Hegel's words, the individual only has "substantial" or objective freedom (i.e., he is free as a physical object, but is unfree subjectively in the sense that he has not advanced to the self-consciousness of his objective existence), an "unreflected consciousness," and is therefore a "mere accident."<sup>60</sup> "Where there is merely substantial freedom, commands and laws are regarded as something fixed and abstract, to which the subject holds himself in absolute servitude. These laws need not concur with the desire of the individual, and the subjects are consequently like children, who obey their parents without will or insight of their own."<sup>61</sup> In other words, differentiation between the

---

<sup>58</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy of History, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956, p.144.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp.104-105.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.104-105.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.104.

political unity and individuality in this stage is still absent, and individual consciousness has not developed.

The democratic state(e.g., ancient Greece) is an antithesis to the despotic state and in it individualities begin to form. That is, the individual's unquestioning obedience to the moral requirements that characterizes the despotic state is overcome.<sup>62</sup> The individual advances from substantial freedom to subjective freedom, in which personal will first takes its appearance in the form of aesthetic morality which is based on the "graceful caprice" or personal taste of the individual.<sup>63</sup> It is in this phase that conscious differentiation between the political unity and individuality begins to emerge. However, "these distinct principles (political unity and individuality) are only immediately in unity, and consequently involve the highest degree of contradiction."<sup>64</sup> Since the individual is still unconscious of the social good as the universal end for his being itself, the reflection of the individual on the political unity and the subsequent realization of it as the necessary universal good are still nonexistent. Aesthetic morality, which characterizes this phase, has not been purified to the standard of "free subjectivity" - has not come to realize the ethical essence of the political unity -

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.144.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.106.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p.107.

and therefore still distances itself from true morality.<sup>65</sup>

The aristocratic state (e.g., Rome) represents an antithesis to the democratic state. It is the realm of abstract universality in which the state's aim absorbs all individual aims.<sup>66</sup> In contrast to both despotism and democracy, it "acts neither in accordance with the caprice of a despot, nor in obedience to a graceful caprice of its own; but works for a general aim, one in which the individual perishes and realizes his own private objective only in that general aim."<sup>67</sup> In his service of the general aim, i.e., of the universal, the individual receives his definite rights as citizen, as individual. However, this universality and individuality, though they exist, remain abstract, because the service of the general aim by the individual comes in the form of a severe demand for the national objectives and the individual's rights are externally defined by the state. As a result, the concrete form of individuality is destroyed in this abstract universality and incorporated with it as a homogeneous and indifferent mass.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.106.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.107.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.107.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.107.

Only in the monarchic state (e.g., Germany), the final phase of the development of the state, is the abstract universality of the aristocratic state transcended. In this final phase, the historical development of the state comes to its absolutely harmonious unity, an absolute, final end in itself.<sup>69</sup> The individual begins to see the state not merely as a means to his particular interests, but also as a universal end essential for his being. Put more specifically, this stage represents the real organic unity of the universal and the particular, a complete expression of concrete subjectivity in which human form and content are entirely identical.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, it is the highest stage of freedom, i.e., absolute freedom, which, instead of following its own capricious choice, is purified and elevated into universality and adopts principles tending to the good of all.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy of Right, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, p.156.

<sup>70</sup> This is an important Hegelian concept which, simplistically expressed, views human history as a history of an internal aim (he always compares it to a genetic cell which contains in itself the essential elements of its full development) in which different stages of history are but different historical forms expressing this internal aim, i.e., the content. And only in the full development of this internal aim, the final stage of its natural history are form and content truly representing each other with a self-determining subjectivity.

<sup>71</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, The Philosophy of History, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956, p.108. Thus, it is obvious that Hegel's conception of freedom is very different from the common use of it. It is not freedom from the individualistic point of view, but freedom from a wholistic perspective. That is, it is not something to be achieved directly by the free activity of the

### 2.3 ORIENTAL DESPOTISM IN CHINA

The theoretical classification of different cultural societies into a series of successive stages in the worldwide historical development of the state as outlined above is the general theoretical background against which Hegel's analysis of China is given. According to his central contention, the entire Chinese cultural tradition, regardless of all its material and institutional achievements, has been stagnant for thousands of years since its first establishment; it still remains in the initial stage of development as a state, i.e., the stage of despotism. Hegel's general reasoning, taken as a whole, is that: although in China there has, since ancient time, been a rational unity of the substantial (the central power that represents the universal will) and the individual in the form of a massive empire, it remains immediate (natural, unreflected) because all its subjects have not developed from objective freedom into subjective freedom. In such a unity, the head of the empire, the emperor, stands as the universal will and rules what each individual does, while the latter complies and obeys, renouncing reflection and

---

individual; rather, it is obtained through the complete objectification of the larger whole, the state. Individual freedom only comes after this objectification; it is this objectification. In other words, it is not something to be practised as **value**, but something to be understood as **idea**, as the genuine knowledge of the ethical whole of which human beings are a part. Hence, it is not the individual axiological practice in an unhindered sense, but a necessary outcome of the individual's awareness of, and corresponding action toward, the good of all.



personal independence. In other words, the element of subjectivity - the reflection upon itself of the individual will, in antithesis to the substantial, or the recognition of it as one with its own essential being in which it knows itself free, - is lacking in China. Correspondingly, what prevails is a complete state, the one central power, into which all its elements are absorbed without any independent separate existence. This makes the Chinese empire the model of an absolute monarchy; individual morality ("moralitat") is totally undifferentiated from political ethics ("sittlichkeit"),<sup>72</sup> and the rulers do not respect any particular interests or opinions.<sup>73</sup> Outside this one central power is only revolting caprice or ceaseless conflict which brings on periodic destruction of the empire. This periodic destruction, in consequence, marks the essence of the Chinese cultural tradition - that is, a purely atemporal existence, an unhistorical history of dynastic cycle. This history, as Hegel sees it,

is only the repetition of the same majestic ruin. The new element, which in the shape of bravery, prowess, magnanimity, occupies the place of the previous despotic pomp, goes through the same circle of decline and subsidence. This subsidence is therefore not really such, for through all this

---

<sup>72</sup> Hegel distinguishes individual morality from political ethics in such a way that the former is determined by the individual's conscious free choice, while the latter is connected with and oriented toward sets of relationships with other human beings which are not by themselves a product of free will. Hegel's conception of ethics is a comprehensive unity of both, i.e., of individual morality and political ethics.

<sup>73</sup> Shlomon Avineri, Hegel's Theory of The Modern State, Cambridge: The University Press, 1972, p.224.

restless change no advance is made.<sup>74</sup>

Generally speaking, Hegel's entire reasoning about the Chinese cultural (political) development (or he would say, undevelopment) lies in his recognition of the very structure of the Chinese political state as founded on family relationships which are characterized by the objective of familial piety. According to him, these family relationships, in which the individual is still unconcious of his independent will, would usually give way in the natural course of human history to a higher stage of development (e.g., democratic and aristocratic states - the civil society),<sup>75</sup> in which the principle of individual personality is realized.<sup>76</sup> But because of some peculiar reason (Hegel did not say),<sup>77</sup> the transformation of family relations - the liberation of individual personality - did not occur in China. Instead, these relations extended themselves to the uttermost and crystalized entirely into

---

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p.106.

<sup>75</sup> In The Philosophy of Right, Hegel, by using his dialectical logic, discusses the development of the state in a purely theoretical manner in which the concepts of family and civil society are introduced as the two abstract progressive metamorphic forms of the state in its historical realization, quite different from his concrete historical-philosophical analysis of the development of the state in The Philosophy of History.

<sup>76</sup> Hegel, The Philosophy of Right, p.122.

<sup>77</sup> Here underlines Hegel's failure to understand the Chinese unique historical end which is no more natural as he thinks, but represents the Chinese conscious recognition of the latent universality of this end and their subsequent cultural practice of it as the realization of their universal essence (for more detail, see further on).

the formal structure of the state which was nothing but a nation-wide extended family. The principle of Chinese family ethics - the patriarchal prototype of familism<sup>78</sup> - appeared as the essential element in the formation of the Chinese state. The parallel between the family and the state, Hegel observes, is apparent:

The Chinese regard themselves as belonging to their family, and at the same time as children of the state. In the family itself they are not personalities, for the consolidated unity in which they exist as members of it is consanguinity and natural obligation. In the state they have as little independent personality; for there the patriarchal relation is predominant, and the government is based on the paternal management of the emperor who keeps all departments of the government in order.<sup>79</sup>

This "familization" of the state, i.e., the expression of the state's relation to the individual as a parental relation, has a prodigious impact in Chinese history - it structures in a unique way the entire Chinese cultural tradition, including its historical stagnancy. Familization rules out the ground on which the individual relies to realize his subjectivity in antithesis to the substantial state. This inevitably results in the absence of

---

<sup>78</sup> Although Hegel did not explicitly use the term "familism" to refer to the Chinese cultural tradition, he did recognize that the development of the Chinese family institution was something more than natural institutional development, something that expressed a certain kind of cultural belief or orientation unique to Chinese culture, the belief that a natural familistic order of metaphysical imperative exists at various levels of human life as well as of the cosmos (for more discussion of Chinese familism, see Chapter 6 and Appendix A).

<sup>79</sup> Hegel, The Philosophy of History, p.121.

constitution, the laws that define the independent rights of individuals and corporations in respect of their particular interests and of the entire state. Such is said to exist only when there is a conscious antithesis between the substantial state and the individual and its eventual transcendence in an objectified recognition of one another as both independent and mutually complementary in the same unified whole. In China the place of constitution is still retained in the family (paternal) relation as a result of its failure to create grounds for subjectivity. Consequently, such deficiency of subjectivity and subsequent displacement of constitution by paternalism, Hegel discerns, are interwoven and intricately induce at least four major drawbacks characteristic of the Chinese cultural tradition. They include: paternal despotism, equality in administration, state-religion, and lack of scientific spirit, in none of which the individual has choice and which altogether are said to constitute the general features of this tradition's millenary stagnation.

According to Hegel, the absence of constitution naturally eliminates the sharing of power by individuals and therefore directly leads to the concentration of power in one centre, the emperor. However, in China the emperor does not appear merely as a capricious monarch but as the patriarch, the paternal despot, as a result of the dominant paternalism.<sup>80</sup> This can be found in that although the emperor has the

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.123.

rights of a monarch, he exercises it paternally. Assisted by a hierarchy of officials, the emperor gives out paternal care, admonition, and discipline, which altogether form the general spirit of the empire.<sup>81</sup> He intentionally keeps his subjects like children, who do not advance beyond the ethical principle of the family, and who can gain for themselves no independent and civil freedom (this point will be discussed in more detail in the next paragraph). As the patriarch, he is in return attached to everything in the state that can claim reverence. In fact, he can be considered as the only one single free individual in the entire empire, since the rectitude, the prosperity and the security of all - in short, the entire chain of hierarchy - depend on him to set them in motion.<sup>82</sup> Because of that, he is required to be consciously moving, ever wakeful and spontaneously active. Therefore he is given in his youth the best education and hardest training to achieve this purpose. But ironically this also means that once his personal character fails to be what is required, "everything is relaxed, and the government is paralyzed from head to foot, and given over to carelessness and caprice. For there is no other legal power or institution extant, but this superintendence and oversight of the emperor."<sup>83</sup> This alone, Hegel concludes, can explain the dynastic cycle in Chinese

---

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., pp.124-125.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p.127.

political history. It comes not from the conscious opposition of the reflective individuals, but from the weak-mindedness of the emperor; not from bottom to top, but from top to bottom.<sup>84</sup>

In Hegel's view, the lack of a constitution in China not only brings about paternal despotism, but also creates a necessarily related reality of absolute equality in the administration of the government. Since there is no objective existence of independent sharing of power beside the imperial dignity of the emperor, all the individuals become unfree but absolutely equal. Unfreedom and equality are necessarily synonymous in this empire; because on the one hand the individual is born without any independent rights of his own - no personal interests and privileges but an existence dependent on the state - and therefore unfree. On the other hand the administration of the government is open to him according only to his ability, and in this sense he is absolutely equal. "All the differences that exist are possible only in connection with that administration, and in virtue of the worth which a person may acquire, enabling him to fill a high post in the government."<sup>85</sup> As a result, all

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p.105,125. On this point, it is apparent that Hegel fails to distinguish the power institution from the family institution in China. Hence, he mistakes the Chinese dynastic cycle as a result of the capricious personality of the emperor in the power institution, without realizing it as the consequence of the conflict between the power institution and the family institution (see pp. 53-54).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p.124.

individual attentions are attracted to, and absorbed in, the centre. It is in such a situation, according to Hegel, that the empire is able to develop a highly rational bureaucratic government whose positions are occupied by men of the greatest intellect and education selected by means of standardized examinations (this perhaps is the only thing in China to which Hegel expresses his admiration).<sup>86</sup> Such bureaucratic administration largely helps stabilize the entire empire. However, it operates not according to the conscience of officials but rather on the basis of a settled routine, "which in a peaceful condition of things becomes a convenient habit."<sup>87</sup> In other words, this bureaucratic hierarchy of officials, however efficient, is still no more than a machine, an unconscious working instrument subject to the will of the emperor, who is still the only single one conscious, around whom everything turns, without whom everything collapses.

The patriarchal nature of the Chinese polity also heavily conditions its religious development. Religion, as Hegel understands, means "the retirement of the spirit within itself, in contemplating its essential nature, its inmost being."<sup>88</sup> That is to say, in order to be religiously reflective, the individual has to first withdraw from his relation to the state - to release himself from the secular

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p.124.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p.127.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p.131.

government and betake himself to this retirement. But in China, Hegel points out, religion is still unable to separate itself from the patriarchal condition and appears as a state-religion. The emperor, as the supreme head of the state, is also the head of its religion. He represents the highest religious exaltation of man because of his moral and right-doing, and is at the same time alone responsible for approaching Heaven - the Chinese highest religious absolute. However, this religious absolute is understood by the Chinese as no more than the abstract, simple rule of this right-doing and the power that sanctions it - no more than the morality and power the emperor himself represents. Other than that, there is no contemplation of relations in the natural world, i.e., on the postulates of subjectivity such as heart and soul.

The Chinese in their patriarchal despotism need no such connection and mediation with the highest being; for education, the laws of morality and courtesy, and the commands and government of the emperor embody all such connection and mediation...<sup>89</sup>

In this sense, the Chinese religion, Hegel argues, is not a true religion at all but a primitive form of magical superstition; its people have not advanced to their independence - they are still dependent on the patriarchal state for their being in every direction, in religion as well as in other areas.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p.131.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., pp.131-132.



Finally, the deficiency of subjectivity, according to Hegel, is in essence connected with the form the Chinese science assumes. For Hegel, science is a truly theoretical occupation of mind which presupposes a free ground of subjectivity.<sup>91</sup> Following this reasoning, the undevelopment of subjectivity in China under patriarchal despotism automatically eliminates any higher aspect of scientific development. Indeed, as Hegel himself is said to have found, genuine scientific interest is entirely lacking in all branches of Chinese science, including history, language, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and medicine.<sup>92</sup> What is called science in China, he argues, is no more than some kind of practically oriented knowledge, representing merely an empirical taste which is made absolutely subservient to the practical interests of the state.<sup>93</sup> In other words, in Hegel's view, the beginning of true science is still paralyzed in China by the absence of subjectivity and has not found the soil to develop itself yet.

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p.134.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., pp.134-138.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p.134.

#### 2.4 DISCREPANCY BETWEEN HEGEL'S THEORY OF ORIENTAL DESPOTISM AND THE CHINESE SOCIO-CULTURAL REALITY

This section will contrast Hegel's theory with the Chinese cultural reality to see if it stands up. To summarize, in Hegel's theory of Oriental despotism discussed above, there are five major interconnected arguments:

1. Subjectivity is lacking in China.
2. The Chinese political reality is absolute despotism.
3. Chinese religion is not a true religion but a primitive form of magical superstition.
4. No true science exists in China.
5. China still remains in the beginning stage of human history and its next stage of movement is the ancient Greek democracy.

Among the five arguments, the first one is of central importance, in the sense that the rest of them are all developed on the basis of it.

Hegel's argument regarding the absence of subjectivity in China is, as discussed earlier, based on his observation that the Chinese have not accomplished a constitution similar to that of the West which defines the rights of individuals in respect of their particular interests. Clearly, this argument presupposes that political life (the establishment of constitution) is the only ground for the expression of subjectivity. Otherwise, there are no grounds

for the conclusion that there is no subjectivity in China. Now the question is whether it is really true that subjectivity can only find itself in political life but in no other forms of life? Here precisely lies Hegel's oversight of the Chinese form of subjectivity which asserts itself not in the form of political objective opposition or conflict,<sup>94</sup> but in the form of personal transcendence based on a consciously pre-established universal system of family (social) relations.

Although the Chinese family system was established far back in the beginning of Chinese history (Chou dynasty), the reflected recognition and affirmation of it was begun by Confucius.<sup>95</sup> Since then, the general principle of family (clan) rules and practices as well as the general cultural system they represented were extended to the whole society

---

<sup>94</sup> In political life, the general form that subjectivity takes to express itself is objective antithesis - objective (collective) opposition or conflict (e.g., group and class struggles). In this kind of objective opposition or conflict, the individual gradually develops his self-consciousness (in group, class, etc.) and therefore his subjective freedom (the first expression of subjectivity) - he begins to achieve his reflected independent existence. At the same time, the transcendence of the opposition or conflict through the definition of rights and duties marks the first appearance of laws and constitution, in which subjectivity finds its concrete (objective) expression. Since these laws and constitution are developed out of the struggling effort of individuals, once established, they have objective validity and will always be consciously obeyed and respected by their members as the general (universal) end of all - thus subjectivity becomes complete (becomes free and absolute).

<sup>95</sup> Kwan-Ngai Tang, An Essential Study of Chinese Philosophy: The Essence of Tao Vol.I, Taipei: Student Publishing Company Ltd., 1986.

and, in consequence, stabilized the whole society. But this stabilization occurred not because of any external imposition of a "rigid unity," nor because of unreflected habit and obedience, but rather because of the rationality the Chinese consciously realized resided in the system.<sup>96</sup> This rationality assumes the universal<sup>97</sup> recognition of the value of the five diadic relations (father/son, husband/wife, older/younger brothers, sovereign/subject, and friends) as well as in the practice of them in morality. It is natural (as Hegel says), but only in the sense that it is based on natural (biological) relations or the extension of them; yet it is absolutely rational, because it is a conscious process in which the Chinese realize the rationality behind these natural relations and consciously practice and maintain them as their humanistic values. In Confucius' words, it is the Tao to be actualized only in human practice.<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> As Fou-Kuan Tsui points out, the rationality of Chinese familistic system manifests in that it escapes both extreme individualism and extreme totalitarianism. This is because Chinese familistic system emphasizes both social normative unity and individual concrete development and therefore saves itself from developing into either extreme. (See Fou-Kuan Tsui, Essays On The History Of Chinese Thought (中國思想史論集), Taipei: Student Publishing Company, Ltd., 1983, pp.168-175.

<sup>97</sup> "Universal" is used here strictly from the Chinese perspective, not really meaning present everywhere in a real sense.

<sup>98</sup> Confucius, Analects, Hong Kong: Kwong Chi Book Co., Ltd., 1976, p.193.

It is this conscious establishment of the family system that underlines the Chinese form of subjectivity. In contrast to political subjectivity which takes its form in objective opposition or conflict, the Chinese subjectivity expresses itself in the form of personal internal opposition - that is, between the transcending of natural egoism through the conscious practice of the five human relations as value and the egoism of indulging one's natural animal propensities (i.e., cultural vs. natural). Put differently, it is itself the process of overcoming the alienation brought about by individual natural egoism through the projection of the cultural norm, i.e., the five social relations, into the future as a value to be strived for. The constant realization of value elevates the natural individual and liberates him. It bestows the essence of ethical goodness and of universality.<sup>99</sup> This form of subjectivity is basically moral subjectivity, as opposed to Hegel's political subjectivity. It can also be seen as an organic unity of universality and individuality (to borrow Hegel's term),<sup>100</sup> since the five relations are the only mediate means of representing the ultimate universal existence. Yet the individual can achieve full

---

<sup>99</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.1, Translator, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970, p.358.

<sup>100</sup> Natural relations as originated from biological necessity are by themselves particular and vary in accordance with individual differences; but when they are consciously recognized and culturally practiced in their moral transcendence, they immediately overcome their biological particularity and become universal.

individuality by practising what he selects to be as the distillation of these five social relations (the Chinese considered that the five relations included all basic forms of human relations).

Basically, the Chinese moral subjectivity is very different from Hegel's political subjectivity in its expression. As we have shown, political subjectivity usually takes three successive forms: subjective, objective and absolute (see footnote 91). But for moral subjectivity, once the individual realizes the five relations and projects them into the future as a value to be realized, he immediately becomes absolutely free without any need of external assistance (free from egoistic constraint or domination), such as laws and constitution. The established system of the five relations already provides an objective ground for any of his activity - in fact, he lives constantly in the web of the five relations and does not have to struggle for objectification. The system of the five relations in which his activity takes place is already objectified. In this sense, the Chinese laws cannot be seen as such. They do not result from opposition or conflict in the Western sense, but are merely general rules naturally accepted by people to maintain the general functioning of the cultural system - to guarantee that every individual is fully able (equal) to devote his full energy to practicing the five diadic relations.

As can be attested to in Chinese history, moral subjectivity was always regarded as the highest form of cultural life. The Great Learning, one of the five Chinese classics, states:

From the Son of Heaven to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.<sup>101</sup>

The above quotation is the cardinal doctrine for the Chinese. The emphasis is on "the cultivation of the person" which is precisely to transcend egoism and to make ourselves human. The cultivation of the person rests in the fulfilment of the roles specified in the five relations. In Chinese culture, the conception of "human beings" is basically very sociological, and this can be seen in its definition of "human" - jen (仁), which etymologically means two "persons in relations."<sup>102</sup> For the Chinese, the transcendental essence of human beings cannot be known through abstract thinking; rather, it can only be experienced through social relations, through social practice. More specifically, according to them, human essence, though it is transcendental, is immediately embodied in social relations. It is the sum total of the individual's roles specified in his social relations. Hence, if these social relations are taken away, his humanness or humanity becomes non-existent, and the

---

<sup>101</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.I, p.356.

<sup>102</sup> Kwong Law (羅光), The Philosophical System of Confucianism (儒家哲學的體系), Taipei: Student Publishing Company, Ltd., 1983, p.16.

individual becomes indistinguishable from other animals. The fulfilment of social roles, however, is selective, rather than entirely compulsory, depending upon the individual's projection of his subjectivity. For example, to preserve one's filial subjectivity, one can totally withdraw from the government and mourn for one's father for three years, and the emperor cannot stop one (legally). Similarly, to maintain one's moral integrity, one can disregard the dynastic change or political disorganization unless the objectified ground (i.e., the established system of the five relations) of moral subjectivity is affected.<sup>103</sup> Insofar as the cultural system is unhindered, the Chinese are free to engage in any activity that can enrich the development of their subjectivity (e.g., arts, religion, material pursuit, etc.).<sup>104</sup> But once the system is challenged, the Chinese can die for it, since they believe that it is the very foundation on which their subjectivity is based.<sup>105</sup>

Consequently, Hegel's erroneous view of Chinese society as prototype despotism was due to his failure to notice Chinese subjectivity. His argument, as will be shown in the following, is principally overstated (if not entirely

---

<sup>103</sup> Sau-Ming Leung, The Cardinal Meaning of Chinese Culture, Taipei: Ching Chung Publishing Co. Ltd., 1929, pp.166-168.

<sup>104</sup> Chung-San Mull (牟宗三), The Philosophy of Chinese History (歷史哲學), Taipei: Student Publishing Company, Ltd., 1963, pp.60-74.

<sup>105</sup> Sau-Ming Leung, p.144.



incorrect) and does not match the Chinese reality. Historically there is no quarrel with there being irrational elements in Chinese government nor that possession of the imperial office often conferred wide powers of arbitrary decision on its holder. But the Chinese emperor never possessed the kind of unlimited power perceived by Hegel. In fact, there were at least two major factors that conditioned the emperor's arbitrary use of power.

Most importantly, the established system of the five social relations overtly stated how the emperor was obliged to perform his role, i.e., to attend to "the rectification of the people's virtues, the conveniencies of life, and the securing abundant means of sustentation."<sup>106</sup> In imperial China, there was no doctrine of divine right. The Mandate of Heaven to rule had to be merited by performance. It was not granted in perpetuity to any ruler or ruling house, and could be forfeited by bad behavior. This idea, which is succinctly recorded in one of the Chinese classics, had commonly been accepted by all the Chinese:

Heaven sees as the people see; Heaven hears as the people hear; ... If the emperor fails to look after what the people desire, Heaven will give charge to destroy him.<sup>107</sup>

The above doctrine implied a contingent right of rebellion and certainly acted as a check on the arbitrary use of power. Hence, it is not surprising that a Chinese despot

---

<sup>106</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol. III, Translator, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p.293.

could be fatally condemned, as seen below, when he became irresponsibly capricious:

Show, the King of Shang, treats with contemptuous slight the five constant virtues, and abandons himself to wild idleness and irreverence... He has driven from him instructors and guardians. He neglects the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth. He has discontinued the offerings in the ancestral temple... God will no longer indulge him, but with a curse is sending down on him this ruin. He who soothes us is our sovereign; he who oppresses us is our enemy. This solitary fellow Show, having exercised great tyranny, is our perpetual enemy.<sup>108</sup>

Another factor that serves to limit the emperor's arbitrary rule is the bureaucracy, whose operations embraced not only the central ministries of the capital but extended over the whole territory of the Empire.<sup>109</sup> It was a hierarchically-ordered elite of administrators recruited almost exclusively from the ranks of the educated gentry.<sup>110</sup> As we know, bureaucracy, as Weber shows, once established, has its formal procedures of day-to-day operations which function largely independent of the emperor's will.<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., pp. 295-296.

<sup>109</sup> Ying-Zi Yu, History and Thinking, Taipei: Luen King Publishing Company Ltd., 1985, pp.52-53.

<sup>110</sup> In earlier periods it was mainly the preserve of the upper gentry. From Sung times on (10th-11th centuries), with the spread of printing and the consequent increased availability of books needed for acquiring a classical training, the social reservoir from which the officials were drawn was gradually expanded to include the middle and even lower levels of the gentry group.

<sup>111</sup> Max Weber, From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, translated and edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, London: Oxford University Press, 1949, pp.232-235.

Within the service, promotion was largely by merit, as revealed by fitness reports drawn up by the subject's immediate superior and furnished at regular intervals to the authorities at the capital with whom decisions as to promotions or demotion lay. Its members, from the sixth century on, were increasingly selected by public competitive examination - a point that Hegel also observed, but he failed to notice that the objectivity and formality of this bureaucratic system helped confine the emperor to the imperial court and made him hand over his subjective rule to a more objective, formal bureaucratic administration. Hence, in state matters the emperor was normally expected to act in accordance with the advice of his chief ministers, who formed the apex of the bureaucratic pyramid and whose interests, though not necessarily representing the public,<sup>112</sup> were broadly the same as those that motivated the Mandarins as a whole. In theory, of course, the appointment and dismissal of chief ministers were still exclusively the emperor's decision. In practice they often enjoyed long tenures of office.<sup>113</sup> Historically, conflicts and even clashes between the emperor and the bureaucracy headed by the chief ministers occurred, but most of the time, the emperor tended more to follow the bureaucratic advice than

---

<sup>112</sup> Wing-tsit Chan, Sources of Chinese Tradition, New York: New York Press, 1967, pp.172-173.

<sup>113</sup> Otto B. Van Der Sprenkel, "High Officials of the Ming," in Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Vol.14, 1953, pp. 91-93.

to be capricious in state affairs.<sup>114</sup> In this sense, W. Eberhard's argument that "'Chin Shih Huang Ti' is the only Chinese ruler who could be called a despot" corresponds more to the Chinese historical reality than Hegel's despotic theory.<sup>115</sup> The bureaucratic system of administration in addition to the pre-defined role of the emperor in the familistic social system in most part successfully confined the emperor to his proper domain of activity and thereby greatly reduced his arbitrary use of power. This might explain why the Chinese imperial state rarely appeared as despotic or capricious as did Russian totalitarianism under Peter the Great or Nazism under Hitler in modern Germany, a political state Hegel would consider ideal.

Preoccupied with the view that China lacks subjectivity, Hegel passed over the complexity of the religion of China (especially Confucianism), and misregarded it as an indication of the primitiveness of the Chinese. The characteristic feature of Confucianism is that it was able to unite family, society, the state and religion into one single unity in which subjectivity was precisely the kind of individual consciousness of the good of all (to use Hegel's words). Its starting point was individual consciousness of family love and reverence, and the extension of it ended in

---

<sup>114</sup> Lok-Sing Fu (傅樂成), A General History of China Vol. I & II (中國通史上下冊), Taipei: Tai Chung Kwok Publishing Company Ltd., 1972.

<sup>115</sup> W. Eberhard, Conquerors and Rulers, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1952, p.12.

the worship and reverence of Heaven, the ultimate origin of human life and human virtues.<sup>116</sup> More specifically, what Confucianism did was to teach, on the one hand, the people to elevate the reverence of their ancestors to the reverence of the great Honoured Head (大宗) - the male person who started the family branch, of the emperor, and finally of Heaven. On the other hand, the emperor was enjoined to deemphasize his reverence of Heaven and of his ancestor in favour of loving his kindred and people.<sup>117</sup> True, as the supreme great Honoured Head, the emperor alone represented the people in the offering of sacrifice to Heaven annually. However, this did not deny the ordinary people's religious association with Heaven. The emperor's annual sacrifice only carried a symbolic, not restrictive, meaning. It symbolized the internal unity and harmony of the Middle Empire (中國). Other than that, there was neither legal nor customary restriction on people's direct contemplation of the essential nature of Heaven and its inmost being (for more detail about Chinese religion, see Appendix A).<sup>118</sup> In fact, the high degree of religious freedom in China was hardly found in the West, where Christianity (especially in medieval times ) was so exclusive that it rarely allowed any free religious contemplation and interpretation of God. This religious freedom subsequently made it possible for

---

<sup>116</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.I, pp.383-384.

<sup>117</sup> Tsi-Tan Sun, The Records of Li: An Exegesis, pp.840-841.

<sup>118</sup> Ying-Zi Yu, 1987, p.66.

Confucianism to synthesize Taoism and Buddhism into a highly sophisticated metaphysical system called "Neo-Confucianism" (this happened in the 10-11th centuries). Not only did there develop an articulate concept of Being, but a moralistic path salvation for individual was also formulated.<sup>119</sup> Insofar as systematic reflection on the universe and human existence is concerned, Neo-Confucianism (and Confucianism as well) cannot be regarded as primitive or superstitious but represents a high level of human intellectual (religious) achievement.<sup>120</sup>

With regard to Hegel's fourth argument that no true science exists in China, it is a matter of definition rather than a matter of fact. If science only narrowly refers to the kind of analytical and experimental knowledge it assumes today, there is no doubt that it is not the strength of Chinese culture (but still not entirely non-existent). But if science is, as Hegel defines it, to pursue "genuine principles" and knowledge, then China certainly has a science of its own. Some examples are: in history, the Chinese had both developed a system of methodological principles for historical research and accomplished a grand body of historical knowledge about its development from

---

<sup>119</sup> Chun-i Tang, "The Development of Ideas of Spiritual Value in Chinese Philosophy," in The Chinese Mind, edited by Charles A. Moore, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967, pp.188-212.

<sup>120</sup> Kwong Law, The Philosophical System Of Confucianism, Taipei: Student Publishing Company, Ltd., 1983, pp.39-73.

remote antiquity up to modern time.<sup>121</sup> In philosophy, as has been mentioned, the Neo-Confucianists synthesized Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism into a grand philosophical system. In medicine, the Chinese formulated a wholistic approach to human body and developed acupuncture, both of which have recently been considered in Western medical circles as making immense contributions to medical knowledge; .... All these examples tell us that science as a "theoretical occupation of mind that endeavors to pursue genuine principles and knowledge" does exist in China, though it may have different emphasis to that in the West.<sup>122</sup>

Finally, Hegel's fifth argument that China still remains at the beginning stage of human history and that its next stage of movement will be to ancient Greek democracy, if not wrong, is empirically unverifiable. First of all, as has been shown, the lack of subjectivity is not the essential nature of Chinese society; China does have subjectivity, though in a different form. In this sense, there is no logical necessity for the Chinese to create an antithesis to their government in order to achieve their subjectivity; they have subjectivity. Besides, since we have also demonstrated that Hegel's argument that China is a despotic

---

<sup>121</sup> See Ying-Zi Yu, History and Thinking, 1985, pp.167-221.

<sup>122</sup> For more detail about science in China, see Joseph Needham's continuing voluminous work Science and Civilization in China, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954-.

society is questionable, there is simply no logical certainty that it will sooner or later develop into a democratic society. At last, even if Hegel's argument is correct, it is empirically unverifiable, in the sense that insofar as there has not appeared a democracy in China, it can continue to argue that China still remains in a stage of despotism. But what can this kind of unverified argument tell us about the Chinese reality? What China has now moved into is surely not the kind of democratic system displayed in ancient Greece, but a system still characteristic of its patriarchal nature.<sup>123</sup> Does this really mean that China still remains unmoved historically, or does it reflect something more than Hegel's unilinear historicism can explain?

---

<sup>123</sup> Lung-kee San, The Deep Structure of Chinese Culture, 1983.



## Chapter III

### MARX: THE ASIATIC MODE OF PRODUCTION

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the history of modern social thought, no one can ignore the overshadowing importance of Marx, no matter whether or not he is a Marxist. A compatriot of Hegel, Marx was born in 1818, thirteen years before Hegel's death. Under the influence of his cultural predecessors, especially Hegel, from whom he learned about dialectical logic, Marx developed the historicity characteristic of his society. His thought, usually labelled Marxism, has long evolved into one of the most important intellectual traditions, generating controversy concerning social and cultural evolution.

Marx, however, unlike Hegel, never discussed the Chinese socio-cultural matter directly in any systematic manner.<sup>124</sup> But this does not detract from his theoretical validity in

---

<sup>124</sup> Marx seemed to be interested in China only insofar as it could be related to the central phenomenon of European Capitalism. Most of his works on China were written in article form for The New York Daily Tribune, which accounted for seventeen articles. Of these articles, the first, written in June, 1853, discussed internal conditions in China, and the remaining sixteen, written between 1857 and 1860, were about the commercial and diplomatic relations of China to Britain. (See Karl Marx On Colonialism And Modernization, edited by Shlomo Avineri, New York: Doublesay & Company, Inc., 1964.

explaining the Chinese socio-cultural phenomena. On the contrary, his concept of the Asiatic mode of production (thereafter AMP), which he himself advanced in the 1850's, can in fact be seen as a general theory of the East.<sup>125</sup> It shows Marx's attempt to theorize for the East in particular the nature of socio-economic characteristics in relation to the universal development of mankind as a whole. Over the past century, the AMP has been the subject of much debate among the Marxist and non-Marxist intellectuals alike.<sup>126</sup> In the meantime, some Marxist scholars have even taken it as the theoretical yardstick in guiding their research on non-European societies.<sup>127</sup>

---

<sup>125</sup> Marx's conception of the Orient was developing and in many changing in accordance with his development of Oriental knowledge over his life (see M. Vitkin's "The Asiatic Mode Of Production," Philosophy and Social Criticism, Vol.18, 1981). However, owing to the nature of this thesis, the present chapter will not give any genealogical account of it. Rather, what it will do is to outline the basic theoretical structure of his conception of AMP developed in 1850s in relation to his general conception of the development of mankind as a whole. Although Marx experienced in his final few years tremendous discomfort with this concept and even replaced it eventually with an entirely new, but barely articulated, concept of the primary formation (see his letter to Zusulich in Pre-capitalist Economic Formations, ed. by Eric J. Hobsbawn, New York, International Publishers, 1978), the author believes that Marx's AMP is more or less complete in itself and logically connected to his larger conception of history.

<sup>126</sup> See Perry Anderson's chapter "The Asiatic Mode Of Production" in his book Lineages of The Absolutist State, London, New Left Books, 1974; L.v. Danilova, "Controversial Problems of The Theory of Precapitalist Societies," Soviet Anthropology and Archeology, IX, 1968, pp.269-328; B. Hindess and P. Hirst,

In general, Marx shares many commonalities with Hegel in positing his theory of AMP. The principal one is that he, like Hegel, approaches the Orient from the exclusive position of the New European socio-cultural tradition, in which the ideal of free historical individuality is accepted as universal and absolute.<sup>128</sup> The preoccupation with this new European ideal constantly forces Marx to look for the solution to the contradiction between the kind of individuality he had in mind and the kind of individuality he actually experienced in his time. His conception of history is precisely the result of this pursuit. In a sense, it is very Hegelian; that is, history is viewed as a progressive process toward the complete development of human beings as a historical species, toward the complete realization of the human essence as free individuality. Basically, Marx's socio-cultural analysis, both of the West and of the East, is nothing but an exposition of the historical development of this free individuality - the new European ideal. Hence, it is worth noting here that Marx's theory of AMP, like Hegel's Oriental despotism, is only a

---

Pre-capitalist Modes of Production, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975; Karl A. Wittfogel, Oriental Despotism, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957; and Anne M. Bailey and Josep R. Llobera, Asiatic Mode of Production, Editors, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981.

<sup>127</sup> Maurice Godelier, "The Asiatic Mode Of Production," in The Asiatic Mode Of Production, edited by Anne M. Bailey and Joseph R. Llobera, Roulledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.

<sup>128</sup> M. Vitkin, The Asiatic Mode of Production, Philosophy and Social Criticism, Vol.18, 1981, p.48.

particular part of his general theory of the universal development of mankind toward self-liberation. The cardinal difference between them is that, while Hegel sees concrete freedom as already actualized in the modern German state, Marx maintains that true freedom has not come yet and will find its concrete realization in the transformation of capitalist society.<sup>129</sup> This difference is largely due to their difference in conceptualizing freedom. While Hegel treats freedom in a normatively wholistic way as the necessary outcome of the ultimate development of the ethical whole, of the self-determining state, Marx views freedom, from an absolutely individualistic perspective, as man's "constant opposition to conformity to any pre-established yardstick, with the absolute movement of becoming as the end in itself."<sup>130</sup> Such a difference eventually drives Hegel to

---

<sup>129</sup> In this sense, Marx can be seen as a futurist, constantly looking for the possible dissolution of the present society into a better one from a perspective of the projective future, of "socialized humanity," whereas Hegel as a justificationist, rationally demonstrating the accumulated greatness of his age from the point of view of the present.

<sup>130</sup> Vitkin, 1981, p.154. Also, on this point, it is apparent that Marx, though he agreed with Hegel in seeing history as the progressive realization of freedom, argued that Hegel was not true to himself when his ideas of the state were applied. The state, as a superordinate normative existence, would nevertheless constrain, rather than liberate, human freedom. It itself was free, not the individual; it could not actualize freedom but on the opposite was a denial of it, since the individual, by conforming to the will of the state, would inevitably lose his freedom in a relative sense. Logically, in order for true freedom to take place, the state, as Marx viewed it, must also be overcome eventually, in the coming of communism. About Marx's critique of Hegel's political interpretation of freedom, see Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of

conceptualize the internal integrity of different historical epochs characterized by their political normative totalities and their contributions to the ultimate coming of the German state. It drives Marx to investigate causally the internal forces leading to the socio-cultural transformation in human evolution.<sup>131</sup>

### 3.2 MARX'S CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

In his historical investigation, Marx swiftly identifies the economic, materialistic aspect of human life as the primary, ultimate base of human development, while the other aspects are secondary and derivative. The propelling force of history is economic production - the human labouring process, a process in which man actualizes his essence as a genuine economic being.<sup>132</sup> Free individuality in the Marxian

---

Right, ed. by Joseph O'Malley, Cambridge: The University Press, 1970. But at the time Marx laid this critique, he still had not formulated his economic approach to history and still maintained a perspective of harmonious co-existence of different social institutions. It is only after this critique (at the close of 1843) that, for some unknown reasons, he swiftly moved into his economic analysis of history.

<sup>131</sup> Thus, Walsh's argument that the major difference between Hegel and Marx is in their approaches to history is nevertheless superficial, though not necessarily wrong. He is correct when he says: "Hegel was primarily interested in what gives unity to a culture: he wanted to characterize an epoch, and then to pinpoint its specific contribution to human development. Marx, by contrast, was occupied with efficient causes: he wanted to find out what makes cultures rise or fall, or again what brings about specific changes within them." (Walsh, 1971, p.195). But his problem is that he does not go behind this difference and look for the deeper ground from which this difference arises.

sense therefore means nothing but the individual who is economically, i.e., productively, free from any normative domination.<sup>133</sup>

In the labouring process, human beings are first made aware of the externality of Nature<sup>134</sup> by their attempt to transform Nature "in a form adapted to their own wants"<sup>135</sup> and therefore experience the first historical moment of their freedom as conscious independent individuals, who are able to exercise their will over Nature, instead of being driven by it as are other animals.<sup>136</sup> It is in this sense that human history is a materialistic history for Marx. It is labour, not religion or anything else, that makes the beginning of human history.<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>132</sup> Marx, The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. by Robert Tucker, New York: W Norton T Company, 1978, p.150.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p.160. Here we see that Marx elevates the economic institution to the absolutely superior position to which all other institutions such as family, religion, politics and so on are subordinate.

<sup>134</sup> The terms "labour" and "Nature" are two of the most complicated concepts of Marx. Without any attempt to give full elaboration of them, they are used here to refer exclusively to the meaning given by Marx in Capital: Nature is the material on which human beings act and produce things necessary and useful to satisfy those needs. For Marx, the material provided by Nature is not immediately useful for human wants; rather, human beings have to actively transform it in accordance with their needs. This active transformation of the material available in Nature by human beings is called, by Marx, the labour process. See Marx, Capital I, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1983, p.173,179.

<sup>135</sup> Marx, 1983, p.173.

<sup>136</sup> The human labour process, according to Marx, cannot be confused with animal life-activity. While the former is

But for Marx, production, that is to say, human essence in materialization, "is no abstraction inherent in each single individual."<sup>138</sup> To produce, men not only involve themselves in the expenditure of their energy in the economy, but also cooperate socially in an organized way to accomplish the goal of production. Economic production means at the same time the production of material and of social relations in human life. In the production of their life, men also produce their society and the historical process in which individuals change along with their societies. From this angle, we can apparently find that economy and society are in Marx's view a pair of dialectically inseparable concepts. Production is essentially social production, in which men labour collectively toward their liberation from the domination by Nature.

However, this collective labouring, once crystalized into a certain social normative structure, will itself become a constraint on human freedom. Here lies Marx's entire

---

a conscious activity in which human beings are constantly aware of the externality of Nature and, consequently, always intentionally and actively direct their labour in a planned and purposeful way so that they can transform and appropriate this Nature to their own satisfaction, the latter is an unconscious activity driven by blind natural necessity in which the animal has no awareness of its activity as activity of its own, as activity external to both itself and Nature. See Marx's Capital I, p.76.

<sup>137</sup> Karl Marx, The Marx-Engels Reader, edited by Robert Tucker, New York: W. Norton & Company, 1978, p.150.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p.145.

dialectical notion of human development: in economic production, men work toward their liberation from natural domination; but the very process of material (economic) production immediately involves the development of social relations and brings about social domination of some by others (except in communism). Hence, freedom (free individuality), society and Nature are dialectically unified in the same single historical process. Each of them is dependent upon the other two for its complete development: individual for the development of individuality; society for the development of socialized humanity; and Nature for the development of second Nature (i.e., Nature that has been transformed by human labour); with labour as the sensuously active force bringing all the three together into a single historical process.<sup>139</sup>

This conception of economic production importantly provides Marx with the fulcrum to conceptualize the history of the human species by a socio-economic concept called "mode of production:" history is "a discrete series of modes of production which, in its developmental-logical order, reveals the direction of social evolution."<sup>140</sup> By mode of production Marx means the complex process of economic appropriation determined by the specific articulation of relations and forces of production. By forces of

---

<sup>139</sup> Marx, 1978, p.85.

<sup>140</sup> Jurgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, Boston: Beacon Press, 1979, p..138.



production, or productive forces, he means the form of labour process in which men materialize Nature into second Nature, into useful products that can satisfy human wants.<sup>141</sup> It is, therefore, the way by which Nature is appropriated (e.g., knowledge, technology, etc.). Productive forces determine the degree of human liberation from Nature. On the other hand, relations of production are referred to as the specific relations of human beings to the process and means of production (at a given stage of productive forces), including property relations and all specific political and ideological relations of domination and subordination.<sup>142</sup> These relations determine in particular the distribution of the surplus products and the means of production in the productive process and in general the distribution of social power. They form the basic structure of a society.

Marx's developmental scheme of history is precisely the historical-logical exposition of how productive forces and productive relations correspond with one another to form various progressive modes of production in the history of human evolution. In Grundrisse, he characterizes three major successive modes of production in terms of their dialectical-logical interconnectedness:

Relations of personal dependence (entirely spontaneous at the outset) are the first social forms, in which human productive capacity develops

---

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., pp4-5, 156-158.

<sup>142</sup> Marx, 1978, pp.4-5, 186-193.

only to a slight extent and at isolated points. Personal independence founded on objective (sachlicher) dependence is the second great form, in which a system of general social metabolism, of universal relations, of all-round needs and universal capacities is formed for the first time. Free individuality, based on the universal development of individuals and on their subordination of their communal, social productivity as their social wealth, is the third stage.<sup>143</sup>

Marx himself calls these three major modes of production **Pre-capitalist**, **Capitalist** and **Communist** respectively. According to him, these three major modes of production are marked by the progressive overcoming of natural and social dominations, i.e., by the progressive development of economic independence.

In pre-capitalist societies, individual productive relations are subordinate to other social relations. The individual, instead of being an independent productive unit, "appears as dependent and as belonging to a greater whole: in a still quite **natural** way in the family and in the family expanded into the clan; then later in the various forms of communal society arising out of the antitheses and fusions of the clan."<sup>144</sup> At the same time, the identities of individuals, and the character of their relations to each other are naturally determined by their place within the community, such as through blood distinctions and age. The relations between these individuals are not truly social<sup>145</sup>

---

<sup>143</sup> Marx, Grundrisse, New York: Vintage Books, 1973, p.158.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p.84.

<sup>145</sup> The term "social" in Marx's conception has a connotation

yet. They are still characterized by "personal dependence," that is, relations of domination of one person over another, e.g., fathers over sons, husbands over wives, older people over younger people, etc.. Independent economic relations are limited and overridden by the normativeness of personal domination and have not found their real development. In addition, due to the low degree of the development of productive forces, the labouring individuals are mainly bound to the soil and to a fixed mode of work, and the whole community is confined to a geographical area primarily isolated from the outside world.

Only with the coming of the second great mode of production, capitalism, does a system dominated by commodity production and exchange, dialectically mark the victorious development of economic productive relations - mark the displacement of the personal dependence by personal independence and local development by universal development. And it is here that the uniqueness of Marx's dialectical logic shows. This logic explains the universal not as an abstract generality composing the particulars, as Hegel does, but as an objective reality of a certain particular within the framework of a definite totality; the principle of the relation between elements of this totality, i.e., its logic, is determined by this particular.<sup>146</sup> Capitalism is

---

very different from the common use of it, meaning association of independent individuals (see Marx, 1978, p.85).

<sup>146</sup> E.V. Illyenkov, Dialectical Logic, Progress Publisher,

precisely this objective particular-universal reality. It is the only particular that contains the element of universality. According to Marx, the advent of capitalism brings about by itself at least three major historical breakthroughs, without which the real development of mankind becomes impossible. First, capitalism, though it is, itself, a particular development of a local mode of production (i.e., European feudalism), is carried by its own momentum toward embracing the whole world within its net of productive relations. The need for expanding into the other geographically isolated societies, driven by the search for market, is a characteristic feature of this mode of production. It creates the first historical condition by which the locally isolated developments of mankind are overcome (through market, exchange, and technological advancements) and transformed into the world-historical one.<sup>147</sup> As Marx enthusiastically writes in The Manifesto of The Communist Party:

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization.... It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In other words, it creates a world after its image.<sup>148</sup>

---

Moscow, 1977, pp.344-369.

<sup>147</sup> Marx, 1978, p.185.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p.477.

The second contribution of capitalism to human development consists in its destruction of the personal domination characteristic of pre-capitalist societies. As Marx himself enthusiastically says, "In the money relation, in the developed system of exchange..., the ties of personal dependence, of distinctions of blood, education, etc., are in fact exploded, ripped up... and individuals seem independent..., free to collide with one another and to engage in exchange within this freedom."<sup>149</sup> In Marx's view, the intrusion of commodity production and commodity exchange, for the first time, leads to the separation of individual from personal domination and creates the historical condition for social, i.e., individualized, development. Finally, the internal dynamic of capital accumulation also paves the way to the overcoming of natural necessity through production of an abundance of goods. For Marx, this overcoming of natural necessity results from the built-in tendency of capitalism to increase surplus labour by reducing necessary labour. It leads to constant increase in labour productivity which primarily takes place by means of technological innovations.<sup>150</sup>

Despite all its contribution, the capitalist mode of production is nevertheless a transitional social stage in which the kind of freedom and individuality still appears as merely illusive. According to Marx's sociological analysis,

---

<sup>149</sup> Marx, 1973, p.163.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p.325.

the individual consciousness in capitalist society is objectively conditioned by the fetishism of commodity exchange, which results from the failure of human beings to see their own products for what they are, and their unconscious consent to be enslaved by human power instead of wielding it.<sup>151</sup> Nevertheless, the maturity of capitalism, as Marx believes, will, by its constantly rising internal contradictions, increasingly waken the fetish consciousness of individuals, who will in turn replace it (the things-dominant system of commodity exchange) with communism, a society in which direct, free social interrelations are anticipated.<sup>152</sup> In this final mode of production, both natural necessity and social domination characteristic of the previous societies are overcome.

---

<sup>151</sup> Marx, 1978, pp.319-329. According to Marx, in capitalist society which emphasizes commodity production and exchange, freedom takes its specific form in free labour, but free in the double sense that, on the one hand, it does not belong to anyone by right, except the labourer, who has full disposition over it, and that, on the other hand, its owner, the labourer, is free from all means of production; that is, he possesses nothing but his or her own labour. It is this double sense of free labour that characterizes the personal independence of capitalism which at the same time rests on a foundation of "objective dependence." While the labourer can sell his labour-power freely from, and independently of, any personal domination, he is not free not to sell this labour-power. Put specifically, although the labourer has the full disposition over his labour-power, he has no means of production to realize it and therefore he, in order to gain the means of subsistence, has to sell it as a commodity in the market, an objective system of exchange and capital, on which the labourer depends for selling his labour-power for survival. In this sense, the freedom and independence of the labourer can be seen as an "illusion," since it is separated from the objective condition of its fulfillment. In selling his labour-power in the market, the freedom of the labourer

Social relations become genuinely free, productive relations. Individuals are involved in direct human interrelations, unhindered by any natural limitations and unmediated by any social normative controls.<sup>153</sup> It is the beginning of true human history, the history of socialized humanity, in which individual freedom becomes concrete freedom for self-development, that is, freedom to realize oneself, to develop one's individuality.<sup>154</sup> In sum, freedom in this society becomes free or axiological individuality, in which the individual continuously projects his ideas into the future as a "value" to be always striven for, the constant realization of which in turn marks the constant development of his individuality.

---

turns into the opposite, namely, the domination of labour by the objective system of capital, by things. The freedom of the marketplace reveals itself as a "semblance," which hides a reality of domination in production. For in selling, that is to say, alienating, his labour-power, this labour-power is no longer under the labourer's control but under that of the purchaser, the capitalist. Through this alienation, living labour comes to be dominated by dead labour, by an objective system of capital that is not under the labourer's control. Even worse, the individual is unconscious that this objective system of capital, by which he is dominated, is historically created by human beings, by society, but instead sees it as a "natural condition" existing ahistorically and universally and therefore uncontrollable by human beings, thereby failing entirely to realize the metamorphic nature of such a reality.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p.85.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p.85.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p.85.

### 3.3 THE ASIATIC MODE OF PRODUCTION

The historical scheme outlined above has carried in itself an important point about Marx's conception of history in general and of AMP in particular. That is, Marx is neither historically monolinear nor historically polylinear as many Marxologists argue.<sup>155</sup> As said earlier, to Marx all societies, including the Asiatic one, prior to capitalism are similar in two major ways: their social relations are naturally dominated by personal dependence and their development local and isolated. In other words, natural, not social, relations and particular (local), not universal, development are the prime characteristics of these societies, however heterogeneous in form they appear. It is only the coming of capitalism, a social system characterized by the domination of commodity production and exchange, that the polylinear process of local human development becomes totalized into a monolinear, universal (world-wide) process in which the naturalness of personal dependence is dissolved by, and into, the sociality of exchange relations.<sup>156</sup> As a contemporary scholar succinctly remarks:

---

<sup>155</sup> Umberto Melotti, Marx and The Third World, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1977; and B. Hindess & P. Hirst, Pre-capitalist Modes of Production, London: Routledge and Kagan Paul, 1975.

<sup>156</sup> This point shows that Marx seems to have realized the problem involved in Hegel's unilinear conception of world history and works to revise Hegel's historical scheme by accounting for the independent development of the non-Western societies.



Marx's concept (of history) issues from the plurality of the forms and ways of historical development. And in this sense it is polylinear. However, Marx works to prove the essential character, the authentic historicity, universality, sociality and victoriousness of one line only. In this sense, his scheme is militantly monolinear.<sup>157</sup>

Marx's historical analysis of the transformations of Western society from one mode of production to another (Marx identified four of them that have historically existed in Europe: the primitive communal mode characteristic of bands and tribes prior to civilization, the ancient mode based on slaveholding, the feudal and the capitalist) was exactly according to his intention to trace the historical origins of the dynamic peculiar to this society. Marx was very aware of the limited application of these abstracted concepts, and, indeed, in contrast to Hegel, he never intended to construct an abstract theory of world history that is equally applicable to all epochs and societies.<sup>158</sup> His introduction of the notion of AMP as the explanation of the socio-economic reality of the East precisely shows his awareness of the East-West-difference in social development. It reveals Marx's purpose to contrast, first of all, the divergent developments between the East and the West and, at the same time, the triumphant development of the latter over the former. It is with this European superiority as his indubitable position that Marx looks at the East. Although

---

<sup>157</sup> Vitkin, 1981, p.54.

<sup>158</sup> Vitkin, 1981, p.55.

he realizes the polycentrism and polylinearity of human development, he only commits himself to the unifying power of capitalism from his European point of view. Hence, he strongly believes that all local polylinear developments must eventually proceed through the modern European pattern toward the single prognostic ideal of free individuality.

Owing to his Eurocentrism, Marx treats the AMP principally as a form of the opposition between the East and the West.<sup>159</sup> If modern Europe is the only victorious society in the evolution of mankind, the East, the loser, must contain some defective features that are in direct opposition to the capitalist West. Basically, Marx identifies in his conception of AMP five main features of the following kinds: the naturalness of personal domination, historical stagnation, absence of private ownership of land, predominance of agricultural communes, and the commanding role of centralized power.

Marx's presentation of Asiatic society as dominated by the naturalness of personal relations occupies a central position in his conception of AMP, with which the other three features are connected. Therefore any failure to notice that centrality of naturalness in personal relations will immediately mean the failure to capture the adequacy of the peripheral features.<sup>160</sup> For Marx, the foundation of the

---

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p.55.

<sup>160</sup> Vitkin, "Marx Between the West and the East," Studies in Soviet Thought, Vol. 23, 1982, p.68.

social structure of AMP is not the exchange relations of separated individuals characteristic of the new European society, but the patriarchal family of personal ties. The evolution of AMP is still predominantly natural, and its development mainly takes the form of hypertrophied growth of the patriarchal family into the clan and then into communal society. In such forms of natural evolution, the essential character of its social relations finds its expression largely in the naturalistic nature of personal domination, which has largely remained intact since antiquity and continues to play its dominant role in social structurings.<sup>161</sup> Personal attachment to the collective whole is passively accepted by its members as the normal (natural) state of life.

At the same time, the so-called "history" of Asiatic society is essentially unhistorical (unchanging) compared to Western society; it is merely a constant reproduction of the basic structure of the patriarchal family on an increasingly larger scale. The only changes in this society are some personal or spatial modifications. The basic social structure is always maintained. As Marx writes in an article about China,

The Oriental Empires always show an unchanging social infra-structure coupled with unceasing change in the persons and tribes who manage to ascribe to themselves the political super-structure.<sup>162</sup>

---

<sup>161</sup> Marx, 1973, p.84.

<sup>162</sup> Marx, Karl Marx on Colonialism And Modernization, ed.,

In other words, human essence, understood by Marx as freedom and individuality, has not left its natural character. Individual consciousness of its own has not detached itself from the greater collectivity, and individuality is still enslaved by personal domination.

For Marx, the natural attachment of individuals to the "greater whole" as well as its historical stagnation are principally determined by the economic nature of the Asiatic society, i.e., the absence of private property in land and the predominance of agricultural communes. In Marx's view, "the absence of private property in land... is the real key to the Oriental heaven" - the very base of the Asiatic social structure, without which the AMP immediately becomes unimaginable.<sup>163</sup> Marx contends that the basic historical explanation for the lack of private landed property in Asia lies in the aridity of Asian soil, which necessitates intensive irrigation and hence hydraulic works by the communal authorities and the central state. As he writes in a letter to Engels:

The stationary character (undevelopment of private landed property) of Asia - despite all the aimless movement on the political surface - is fully explained by two circumstances which supplement each other: (1) the public works which were the business of the central government; (2) besides this the whole empire, not counting the few larger towns, was divided into villages, each of which possessed a completely separate organization and formed a little world in itself.... In some of

---

by Shlomo Avineri, New York: Doublesay & Company, Inc., 1968, p.418.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p.87.

these communities the lands of the village are cultivated in common, in most cases each occupant tills his own field.... In any case, it seems to have been the Mohammedans who first established the principle of "no property in land" throughout the whole of Asia.<sup>164</sup>

The above quotation further reveals two other major elements of Marx's conception of AMP: the self-sufficient agricultural communes and the centralized state.

Institutionally, the basis of Asiatic society is the agricultural communes, whose "foundation is tribal or common property."<sup>165</sup> According to Marx, no matter how different its local types are, the basic structure of the Asiatic society is always the same - a system of agricultural communes. Due to the poor communication network, these communes are usually isolated and have little contact with the outside world; that is, inter-communal activity is minimal. Each commune possesses a completely separate organization and forms a world in itself.<sup>166</sup> At the same time, because of the arid nature of the soil and geographical vastness, the individual members of the commune have to work cooperatively and even collectively (e.g., to construct irrigation systems within the commune) in order to maximize their chance of survival.<sup>167</sup> It is largely for this reason that property, which manifests itself mainly in the form of land in

---

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., pp.86-87.

<sup>165</sup> Marx, 1973, p.472.

<sup>166</sup> Marx, 1968, p.87.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p.85.

agricultural society, is naturally held communally as common property rather than individually as private property. The commune is responsible for most, if not all, of its production and consumption, and owing to the low productive capacities, production is "conducted primarily for the satisfaction of the immediate wants of the agricultural families and communities."<sup>168</sup> As Marx writes about this natural unity of agriculture and manufacture of AMP with particular reference to India and China in Capital III:

The broad basis of the mode of production is formed here (India and China) by the unity of small-scale agricultural and home industry, to which in India we should add the form of village communities built upon the common ownership of land, which, incidentally, was the original form in China as well.<sup>169</sup>

Nevertheless, since there is a natural unity of agriculture and manufacture, the commune is self-sufficient. In this sense, the Asiatic commune in most part constitutes an independent existence **sui generis**. Through its economic self-sufficiency, it simultaneously provides all other needs for its members, including religion, education, etc..<sup>170</sup>

On the other hand, the predominance of self-sufficient agricultural communes by itself creates a barrier to voluntary, inter-commune cooperation to organize large-scale irrigation, which is indispensable for Oriental agriculture

---

<sup>168</sup> Lawrence Krader, The Asiatic Mode of Production, Assen: Van Gorcum & cocpany, 1975, p.287.

<sup>169</sup> Marx, Capital III, 1975,

<sup>170</sup> Marx, 1968, pp.85-87.

due to its geographical and climatic conditions. Because of that, a higher entity to provide irrigation becomes functionally necessary if the society as a whole is to survive. This is, in Marx's view, an important clue to the existence of the centralizing power in the Orient. Thus he writes:

Climate and territorial conditions, especially the vast tracts of deserts, extending from the Sahara, through Arabia, Persia, India and Tartary, to the most elevated Asiatic highlands, made of artificial irrigations by canals and waterworks the basis of Oriental agriculture. As in Egypt and India, inundations are used for fertilizing the soil of Mesopotamia, Persia, etc.; advantage is taken of a high level for feeding irrigation canals. This prime necessity of an economical common use of water... necessitated in the Orient, where civilization was too low and the territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralizing power of Government. Hence an economical function developed upon all Asiatic governments; the function of providing public works.<sup>171</sup>

This centralizing power, however, does not exist as the direct ruler of the producers, but indirectly as a "particular entity above the many real particular communities," as "the comprehensive unity," to which the individual is related through "the mediation of the particular communes."<sup>172</sup> At the same time, because of the isolation of, and the lack of interaction between, agricultural communes, as well as because of the patriarchal

---

<sup>171</sup> Marx, 1968, p.85.

<sup>172</sup> Marx, 1973, pp.472-473. Marx's "comprehensive unity" is very similar to Hegel's substantial unity; and Marx even defines it in a Hegelian way as the "substance of which the individual are mere accidents, or of which they form purely natural component parts" (see Grundrisse, p.474).

foundation of the Orient, the centralizing power of the "comprehensive unity" tends to express itself in the form of a despotic state, "the father of the many communes."<sup>173</sup> As the centralizing power which takes care of the productive use of agricultural land by providing public works, the despotic state naturally stands over the producers as "their landlord and simultaneously as sovereign."<sup>174</sup> More correctly, it is the supreme lord of all the land, whereas the commune is merely a second-level hereditary land-owner.<sup>175</sup> Hence, in contrast to the Western feudal society where the direct producers are confronted by a private landowner, the Oriental farmers are "under direct subordination to the state," which extracts from them the surplus product by means of tax, a form of exploitation not

---

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, p.473. Although Marx sees a strong connection between the geographical and climatic conditions and despotic power in the Asiatic society, he himself has never attempted an affirmative thesis that the former must lead to the latter. It is only until Karl A. Wittfogel's publication of his monograph Oriental Despotism that the relationship between the hydraulic nature and despotic power in the East is made causally direct and definite. In this book, Wittfogel argues that Oriental despotism is the inevitable outcome of the hydraulic state by virtue of the process of development from the need for "corvee" (forced) labour to the growth of state management and the construction of an organizational web employing total terror.

<sup>174</sup> Marx, Capital Vol.III, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975, p.791.

<sup>175</sup> For Marx, this hierarchalized ownership of land is one of the reinforcements that contributes to the persistence and further consolidation of the collective ownership of land in the Asiatic society. Though as the supreme proprietor, the despotic state tends to support, rather than destroy, the communal ownership of land, since by doing so it not only maintains the stability of the society as a whole (change always brings about



different from ground-rent.<sup>176</sup>

Up until now, the discussion of Marx's conception of AMP has all centered around the opposition between the West and the East. And by that means some characteristic features of AMP opposite to the West have already been identified and discussed. However, they alone are not enough to constitute the whole picture of Marx's conception of AMP. Marx understood, for most of his life, that Asiatic development was rather complex and could not merely be reduced to any simplistic opposition to the West (e.g., natural/social, static/dynamic, unhistorical/historical, etc.).<sup>177</sup> Analysis by means of opposition does make some of its features theoretically pronounced. But as a historical path (though eventually unsuccessful) of human development, AMP also involved some general processes similar to those of the West. Both the East and the West were initially local in their forms of development and characterized by natural personal relations. Therefore, the question is: how could the West finally win the historical game of human evolution - how could it overcome the naturalness of personal domination and ascend to individualized sociality? Marx's answer is simple, but definite: by commodity production and

---

uncertainty and chaos), but also guarantees the efficiency of the collection of tax at the communal level, instead of at the individual level.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p.791.

<sup>177</sup> L. V. Danilova, "Controversial Problems of the Theory of Precapitalist Societies," 1968, pp.295-297.

exchange. It is the victorious development of commodity production and exchange in the West that makes Europe the leading civilization in social development. Similarly, it is also the eventual failure to develop an independent system of commodity production and exchange in the East that leads to the Asiatic social stagnation. The triumph of **capital**, the particular that at the same time contains the truth of the universal, determines the existence of the "social, historically created element."<sup>178</sup>

Hence, Marx's entire conception of AMP is gradually revealed: the AMP is a complex socio-economic form marked by the presence of both natural and social relations, but with the former dominating the latter. As in the West, there also develops in Asiatic society commodity exchange between communes and a commodity production. Such an appearance of commodity exchange and production, that is, capital, shows the dynamic side of Marx's conception of AMP.<sup>179</sup> Instead of being truly unhistorical, Asian society contains in itself the historical element and experiences the first sign of social and therefore historical transformation. Under the influence of commodity production and exchange, the interaction between agricultural communes begins to increase, individual production and ownership begin to take place, and private property begins to emerge. In other words, the patriarchal foundation, on which the

---

<sup>178</sup> Marx, 1973, p.106.

<sup>179</sup> Krader, pp.286-230.

whole Asiatic society is built, is on the brink of collapse. Natural relations begin to give way to social relations.

This social transformation, however, comes to a halt before the emergence of private property. There are three major reasons responsible for the failure. First of all, because of the self-sustaining nature of the communes, there was little interest in external markets at both the communal and individual levels. Each commune produces in the main what other communes produce. Therefore the demand for inter-communal exchange is small. This demand takes place largely "in the form, and on the basis of, differences in the amounts of agricultural produce and in the natural resources provided by each, which are subject to regional and climatic variations."<sup>180</sup> Individually communal members' demand for exchange with the outside markets are also less likely, since they can find most, if not all, their material satisfaction inside their own communes. Secondly, the nature of the Asiatic natural settings, i.e., the necessity of irrigation, makes individualization difficult. The construction and maintenance of irrigation works, as the pre-condition for Asiatic agriculture, are too big for any single individual producer to undertake, and therefore depend entirely upon communal or state efforts. As a result, even though the emerging commodity relations tend to be intensified by their own logic, they are inevitably blocked by the inability of individuals to separate

---

<sup>180</sup> Krader, p.287.

themselves from the collective ties at that stage of the productive process. Finally, "the comprehensive unity" which represents common interests also creates a serious obstacle to the development of commodity-relations. Commodity production always means the production of particular interests. Its development, therefore, will inevitably bring itself into conflict with "the comprehensive unity." The latter, as its very existence essentially relies on keeping common interests unhindered, by its nature tends to limit, rather than support, any antithetical development of particular interests, i.e., of commodity production and exchange.

The failure of the development of commodity production at last underlines the whole complexity of Asiatic society. The AMP is no longer primitive communism. It is neither natural, static and unhistorical, nor social, dynamic and historical, but instead a combination of both. Commodity production and exchange exist, but in a modest degree; natural relations still predominate, though in an already deformed way in which some degree of private production and ownership is tolerated. Society - the communal system - begins to decompose, but stops mid-way, with the persons grouped around the 'comprehensive unity' turning into the ruling class, a distorted political structure which is very different from that of the West.<sup>181</sup> History is also leaving

---

<sup>181</sup> Marx, 1973, p.473; Vitkin, 1981, p.59. In Marx's view, the ruling class (i.e., the entire bureaucracy) in the Orient displays a distinct characteristic that it itself

primitive communism behind. It becomes stagnant at the time of the victory of natural relations over social - commodity - relations, and therefore has to wait for the coming of European capital to introduce it in the universal development of the social whole. European capital, in Marx's view, is still the Messiah to Asia and will inevitably lead to its capitalist transformation. As he optimistically says in an article about Chinese capitalist development:

It is an amusing fact that the oldest and most unshattered Empire on this earth has been pushed, in eight years, by the cotton ball of the English bourgeois toward the brink of social upheaval that must have most profound consequences for civilization.<sup>182</sup>

#### 3.4 DISCREPANCY BETWEEN MARX'S THEORY OF AMP AND THE CHINESE SOCIO-CULTURAL REALITY

Despite Marx's attempt to present a complex theoretical picture of the dualistic nature of Asiatic society by admitting that some degree of commodity production and exchange did exist in the East, the East-West opposition remains structurally central in his Asiatic conceptualization.<sup>183</sup> In Marx's view, no matter how much

---

is not related to the actual productive relations, to the direct producers, but mediately extracts the surplus product through its domination over the communes. However, it still constitutes a class in the sense that it has monopolized the extraction of surplus product of the communes and constantly endeavors to protect its economic interest through various means of social controls.

<sup>182</sup> Marx, 1968, p.45.

change commodity production and exchange brings to Asiatic society, the absence of private landed property, the predominance of agricultural communes, the centralization of power and the stagnation of history were still the triumphant principles characteristic of this society. In sum, five major arguments can be derived from Marx's theory of AMP as discussed above:

1. Absence of private property in land is the principal mode of economic life in Asia.
2. Agricultural communes are the predominant form of economic life in Asia.
3. The predominance of Asian agricultural communes is materially (geographically) conditioned by the Asian natural settings.
4. The emergence and persistence of the centralized state in Asia is necessitated by the need of large-scale irrigational works.
5. The Asiatic society will eventually be brought into the world capitalist movement by the coming of Western capital.

Now let us compare these five arguments with the Chinese experience to see if they match the Chinese reality.

---

<sup>183</sup> Perry Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, London: New Left Books, 1974, pp.548-549.

The first argument, as discussed, occupies a central position in Marx's conceptualization of AMP, for he believes that the absence of private landed property is the "Key" to the Oriental world. However, this argument certainly does not correspond with the Chinese historical experience. In China, the "privatization" of land had occurred very early and can be traced back to its beginning stages of history.<sup>184</sup> The etymological meaning of the term "private" in Chinese is "the keeping of rice," which clearly shows that the concept "private" is closely associated with agricultural production. She-King or The Book of Poetry, one of the five Chinese classics, has such records as "May it rain first on our public fields, and then come to our private"<sup>185</sup> and "Going vigorously to work on your private, all over the thirty Le" (miles),<sup>186</sup> and the terms "private" all refer to the private land (in relation to the public land) which was allotted to the peasant families in accordance with the "well-field" (井田) system practiced in the Chou dynasty (1122 B.C.-256 B.C.).<sup>187</sup> But at that time,

---

<sup>184</sup> Kwong Chiu (趙周) "The Origins and Development of Private Ownership of Land in China" (中國私產制的起源與發展), Ming Pao Monthly, Vol.23, No.4, 1988, pp.15-18.

<sup>185</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classic, Vol.IV, p.381.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p.584.

<sup>187</sup> The well field system is a fixed landholding system which divides the cultivated land into nine equal portions (similar to a well) and allotted eight portions to eight peasant families for private cultivation, with the one in center collectively cultivated by all of them for their overlord.

the meaning of private land was confined only to the private use (cultivation) of land and had not carried today's meaning of private ownership of land - i.e., not only the right to use but also the right to sell.<sup>188</sup> Nevertheless, it still signifies the first step of the development of private ownership of land in China.

Strictly speaking, the privatization of landed ownership was historically completed during the tenure of Shang Yang (商鞅), a chief minister of the Chin state, during the period of the Warring States (403-221 B.C.). In order to stimulate agricultural productivity, Shang Yang abolished the well field system and replaced it by a more flexible system in which the sizes of land units could vary.<sup>189</sup> Moreover, he transferred a huge number of public lands to private hands by selling or awarding them to the peasant families and distinguished warriors. At the same time he also passed a law to make necessary the registration of landed ownership.<sup>190</sup> As recorded by Ssu-Ma Chien (司馬遷) in Shih-Chi or The Historical Records as to Shang Yang's biography:

---

<sup>188</sup> Kwong Chiu, 1988, p.15. Marx's conception of private property in land apparently means not only the private use of land but also the individual freedom to sell it, i.e., land as capital (see Marx, 1978, p.82).

<sup>189</sup> Derk Bodde, "The State And Empire of Chin," in The Cambridge History of China Vol.I, edited by Dennis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p.35.

<sup>190</sup> Kwong Chiu, p.18.



In the Chin state under and after Shang Yang, every family registered its land for legitimizing its right of ownership.<sup>191</sup>

The registration system of landed ownership begun by the Chin state certainly marked the real historical beginning of private landed property in China, since it specified that landed property must be registered according to law and, after registration, was under the protection of law. This privatization of landed ownership is further confirmed by what the Han Confucianist Tung Chung-Shu (董仲舒) says in a memorial to the throne of about 100 B.C.: Shang Yang's land reform, he remarks, made it legal for the people to sell and buy farmland.<sup>192</sup> As mentioned earlier, the full meaning of private landed property must include the right to use the land as well as the right to sell it. From this angle, Shang Yang's legalization of the people's freedom to sell or buy farmland by itself suggested the full establishment of private ownership of land in China. In fact, since the Han dynasty, private landed property had already deeply been believed in by the Chinese. All landed ownerships must be documented in legally certified certificate which not only must clearly record the date of buying and signatures of both the buyer and seller, but also must clearly specify all the ownership rights over and beneath the land.<sup>193</sup> In the

---

<sup>191</sup> Quoted from Kwong Chiu's "The Origins and Development of Private Ownership of Land in China," p.18.

<sup>192</sup> Nancy Lee Swann, Food and Money in Ancient China, Princeton: The Princeton University Press, 1950, p.180.

<sup>193</sup> Kwong Chiu, p.18.

latter dynasties, even though there were some small modifications or short-time changes,<sup>194</sup> private landed property had always been the principal basis of the Chinese economic structure. And this historical phenomenon obviously fundamentally contradicts Marx's argument about the absence of private landed property in Asia.

Concerning the second argument that agricultural communes are predominant in Asia, it must be pointed out that although this argument may be true in other Asian areas, it is certainly untrue in China. In Marx's conception, the term "commune" does not merely refer to common village life, but is innerly determined by his argument regarding the absence of private landed property in Asia and means specifically a small group of people, usually related in blood, characteristic of collective ownership of land and sharing in work.<sup>195</sup> But as we have just shown, private, not collective, landed property was the elementary economic form in Chinese society. Besides, historically Chinese peasants cultivated their lands privately rather than collectively,

---

<sup>194</sup> In Sun dynasty under Wang Mong (8-23 A.D.), there appeared for a short period of time that land was nationalized, but this was rapidly terminated as a result of the failure of Wang Mong's rule and his subsequent overthrow by Liu Sau, the founder of the Later Han empire; and in early Tang dynasty, part of the cultivated land was allotted to peasant families under the system of Kwan-Tin (equal distribution of cultivated land), but it also only lasted for a short period of time because of impracticality (See Lok-Sing Fu, A General History of China, Vol. I & II, Taipei: Tai Chung Kwok Publishing Company, Ltd., 1972).

<sup>195</sup> Marx, 1978, p.151.

even though sometimes they did voluntarily cooperate to organize irrigation works in some areas.<sup>196</sup> In this sense, theoretically Chinese agricultural life is definitely not equivalent to Marx's conception of communal life. His characterization of Chinese agricultural life as communal life is far from the Chinese reality and therefore by all means wrong.

With regard to the third argument, even if we ignore the invalidity of Marx's characterization of Chinese agricultural life as communal life, it is still far from clear whether Chinese agricultural villages, especially their distinct kinship structures, are largely determined by the Chinese geographical and climatic conditions. As Johann Gottfried Von Herder argued two centuries ago, the formation of Chinese society had something to do with its "racial character," the Chinese cultural attitude toward themselves as being human and the social realization of this humanness.<sup>197</sup> He also argued that even if other races were put in the similar geographical and climatic environment, they might not have a society comparable to that of China.<sup>198</sup> In spite of whether Herder's argument regarding Chinese "racial character" is right, he is basically correct

---

<sup>196</sup> Martin C. Yang, A Chinese Village, New York: Columbia University, 1959, pp.14-31.

<sup>197</sup> G. A. Wells, Herder And After: A Study In The Development Of Sociology, Netherlands: Mouton & Co., Publishers, 1959, p.68.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p.68.

in recognizing the invalidity of geographical or climatic determinism in the formation of Chinese society. As Perry Anderson points out in his study of Chinese society, many European countries (e.g., Germany and Poland) as well as many Asian nations (e.g., India and Mogolia) share many commonalities with China in terms of geographical and climatic features; yet, they did not develop the kind of Chinese agricultural villages characterized by both private landed property and an elaborate kinship system.<sup>199</sup>

Fourthly, it is Marx's belief that the emergence and persistence of the centralized state in Asia are necessitated by the need of large-scale irrigation works. Undoubtedly, the centralized state is a major political phenomenon in China. But the argument that its emergence and persistence are determined by the need of large-scale irrigation works obviously does not match the Chinese historical experience. In China, the first historically documented centralized empire, the Chou empire, emerged long before the first major contour canals were built during the Chin empire in the 3rd century B.C..<sup>200</sup> Hence, causally it is illogical to say that the need of irrigation works "causes" the emergence of the centralized state in China. Moreover, throughout Chinese history, the state always gave priority to transport waterways, with their fiscal and

---

<sup>199</sup> Perry Anderson, Lineage And The Absolutist State, London: New Left Books, 1974, pp.521-549.

<sup>200</sup> Chi-Chao Ting, Key Economic Areas In Chinese History, New York: New York Press, 1963, pp.12-21.

military functions, over irrigation systems proper for agricultural purposes.<sup>201</sup> The latter was quite often organized and constructed by local effort rather than by state effort.<sup>202</sup>

Finally, it is Marx's theoretical projection that "the bourgeoisie draws all ... nations into civilizations ... compels them to become bourgeoisie themselves."<sup>203</sup> However, what has actually happened is that China not only did not develop into a capitalist society but also suddenly moved into communism, a society that Marx supposes must develop through mature capitalism.

---

<sup>201</sup> J. Needham, Science and Civilization in China, Vol.IV, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971, p.225.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p.225.

<sup>203</sup> Marx, 1978, p.477.

## Chapter IV

### WEBER: THE CONFUCIAN ETHIC

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Like Hegel and Marx, Weber was born in Germany, in 1864, forty-six years after Marx. Unlike Hegel and Marx, Weber does not have in his social theory an explicit concept of history (though one is not entirely absent), and therefore the theoretical and methodological structure of his sociology of culture is not easy to reveal. Most of Weber's cultural studies are concrete historical case studies. Their topics are narrow and the sociological problems involved are highly specific and empirical, tending more toward hypothesis-testing than general theoretical model-constructing (at least ostensibly). In a strict sense, Weber's sociology is more comparable to the empirical outlook of the natural sciences. And because of his positivistic orientation, he has had a greater influence on American sociology than Hegel and Marx. However, this does not mean that Weber's cultural analysis is more "scientific." What is true is that the empirical outlook of his work gives him a better concealment of his cultural predilection and historicism. For the purpose of this thesis, the present chapter will, as was done in the

chapters on Hegel and Marx, first briefly outline his conception of history and then discuss his study of China which like those of Hegel and Marx, the author will show, is innerly conditioned by his historical conception.

#### 4.2 WEBER'S CONCEPTION OF HISTORY

Weber's sociology of culture appears to be highly specialized and extremely empirical. Therefore, some sociologists argue that even though Weber might make mistakes in his analysis of cultures, these mistakes would only be technical (unsystematic, solvable without changing the entire theoretical structure), but could not be methodological.<sup>204</sup> Their explanation is that his methodology is not abstractly imposed (like the dialectic of Hegel and Marx) but firmly based on the necessity of the analysis of an observable phenomenon - the presence or absence of capitalism in certain cultural societies and the factors that led to this presence or absence. However, despite its surface validity, this argument is nevertheless superficial and will immediately collapse before a closer examination of certain presuppositions involved in his methodology. As will be shown below, what Weber attempts to explore in the comparative study of culture is not merely a general phenomenon of capitalism but a wider issue about social progress, which is understood by Weber in a particular way as economic (instrumental) rationalization, and its proper

---

<sup>204</sup> Yu, 1987, pp.60-61.

aims are formal specialization and differentiation of the activity domain.<sup>205</sup> The study of China provides him with a good opportunity to demonstrate comparatively what made this society fail to progress along that rational line.<sup>206</sup>

From this angle, the comparative method that Weber employs to analyze China (and other cultures as well) can no longer be seen as the comparative method in its general sense, but a particular method which consists of some distinct procedures in its application. More specifically, it does not simply mean the study of different cultures in order to determine analytically the factors that lead to similarities and differences in specified patterns of cultural behavior. Instead it now approaches different

---

<sup>205</sup> Weber, Economy and Society, New York, Bedminster, 1968, pp.24-26.

<sup>206</sup> This typical Weberian comparison has had a great impact on the contemporary sociological studies of the Chinese society, especially those under the category of the "modernization theory." The sociologists of this school mainly adopted Weber's dichotomized traditional/modern model as their principal methodological strategy but in a more polarized, mechanistic manner in their application to the analysis of China (more correctly, of non-Western cultures). Nevertheless, they no more limited their interests to the Chinese cultural values as their predecessor did, but began to explore other new areas of the so-called "traditional elements" - especially the institutional ones - and related them theoretically to China's absence of capitalism. Some major examples include: Marion Levy's comparison between the Chinese and the Japanese family system, in which she concluded that the former was institutionally too powerful to allow any societal change while the latter was subordinated to the feudal order and therefore less resistant to capitalist development (See her "Contrasting Factors in the Modernization of Japan and China," in Economic Growth: Brazil, India, and Japan, edited by S. Kuznets, Durham: Duke University



cultures vis a vis a single ideal-typical society - i.e., the Western rational bourgeois capitalism in its ideal typical sense<sup>207</sup> - and examines the causes of their failure or success to develop into the Western type. The basic feature of this method is that it presupposes a certain teleological development and time schematism of social history. Social history is moving toward an "iron cage" of rationalization. The ideal-typical society is not merely an abstract, generalized concept; it is also a concrete, specific fact, having its historical existence in the West. The meaning of comparison thus becomes completely transparent: it discloses the historical superiority of Western capitalism in relation to non-Western cultural societies. Capitalism is no longer confined to its narrow

---

Press, 1955); N. Eisenstadt's The Political Systems Of Empires, (New York, Free Press, 1963), in which he contested that the Chinese normative structure allowed only adaptive change within the existing socio-political framework and denied any radical or fundamental change like that of the West; Barington Moore's The Social Origins Of Dictatorship And Democracy (Boston, Beacon Press, 1966), in which he attributed the absence of a capitalism in China to its "political implication," roughly meaning the Chinese political system's unusual ability to absorb almost all the elites' attentions and energies without letting them expend in other activities harmful to its political integrity; and Robert Bellah's Tokugawa Religion (Glencoe, Free Press, 1957), in which he specified that the reason that China and Japan differed in their capitalist development lay in the Chinese accentuation on integrative value which inevitably led to the Chinese traditionalism, in contrast to the Japanese's emphasis on political or goal attainment orientation which forced them eventually to overcome any obstacle to change in time of emergence. In spite of their diversity, a careful examination of all these studies (mentioned or unmentioned) will reveal that most, if not all, of them are merely some theoretical specifications or extensions of Weber's The Religion of China. All the issues they discussed were

economic meaning but represents a general progressive process of the rationalization of human life. Owing to its particular inner cultural values (Puritan ethic), Europe was able to transform itself into a rational, individually motivated and instrumentally oriented society by crushing the power of its tradition and therefore arrived at a non-traditional, modern stage characteristic of axiological projection. On the other hand, exactly because of their lack of the inner cultural values characteristic of the West, non-Western societies failed to develop to this level and, in consequence, remained traditional, historically backward and dominated by their own traditional normative regulations. Hence, cultural analysis in its adequacy must be carried out by means of a dichotomized traditional/modern

---

already treated by Weber, in one way or another, intensively or superficially, in his examination of the Chinese material and non-material conditions in relation to capitalist development. In this regard, Weber's study can be considered to be more profound because it at least goes beyond the institutional phenomena to look for their cultural (ethical) foundation.

<sup>207</sup> "Ideal type" is an important concept in Weber's sociology, roughly meaning the abstract analytical reconstruction drawn from observations of a number of real cases in order to reveal their essential features. But Weber's construction of ideal types contain a larger meaning about the process of rationalization. Hence, such historical ideal types as "patrimonialism" and "capitalism" represent not merely two analytically distinct forms of society but also a progressive rationalization development from "traditional action" (or other ideal types of action such as "value-rational" and "affectual" as Weber classifies them) to "instrumentally rational action." Capitalism is therefore not a "historicistically free" concept but implies a necessary social historical direction developing from traditional societies (be they feudal or patrimonial) to rational capitalism, regardless of whether it is individually desirable or not.

comparative method in which the so-called traditional society is studied and weighed against a single axiological ideal type.

#### 4.3 CHINESE SOCIETY AND THE CONFUCIAN ETHIC

The Religion of China is Weber's single major systematic study of China,<sup>208</sup> though he does discuss China in his other publications.<sup>209</sup> As the title of the book indicates, it is a study of the Chinese religion. However, as was said of his work in general, the book is not a general sociological study of the Chinese religion, i.e., not a study of all the interrelations of religion and society in China. Rather, it is a historical investigation of a specially formulated problem about the failure of China to develop into capitalism. More specifically, the study represents a continuation of a larger theoretical work begun some years earlier (1905-1906) in his somewhat most controversial work,<sup>210</sup> The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism.<sup>211</sup> In this earlier work, Weber sets out a historical argument that the Protestant ethic is one of the necessary

---

<sup>208</sup> Max Weber, The Religion of China, New York, The Free Press, 1951.

<sup>209</sup> See The Sociology of Religion, Boston, Beacon Press, 1956; and Economy and Society, New York, Bedminster Press, 1968.

<sup>210</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, The Protestant Ethic And Modernization, editor, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1968.

<sup>211</sup> Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit Of Capitalism, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1930.

conditions responsible for the rise of Western bourgeois industrial capitalism. The Protestant Ethic itself is actually an historical examination of such a relationship by specifically studying those areas under the influence of Protestant (Calvinist) asceticism in relation to the psychological conditions of capital accumulation - the spirit of capitalism.<sup>212</sup> The study of China, and other cultural societies as well, as Weber sees it, is a necessary clarification of such a relationship on a comparative basis, that is, to show how the absence of a similar Protestant asceticism caused the failure of capitalism to develop anywhere else than in Western Europe. In other words, Weber's study of China is principally a comparative study of the ethic of the Chinese religion in respects relevant to the spirit of capitalism and the ethic of ascetic Protestantism.

---

<sup>212</sup> According to Weber's analysis, the capitalist spirit consists of the goodness of work, success as personal rectitude, the use of reason to guide one's life and the earning of more and more money through delayed gratification, and so on. All of these values, as Weber argues, were of relatively recent origin and emerged after the destruction of the cultural values of traditional society by Puritanism. With this in mind, he examines the religious values of Puritanism (mainly Calvinism) and discovers that they - including emphasis on rational labour in the form of religious calling, rejection of individual enjoyment of life and responsible use of wealth for socially beneficial purposes - are all very similar to the capitalist spirit. Hence, he concludes that causally the accumulation of capital and the rise of the modern capitalism were, other things being equal, the inevitable outcome of these religious values dictating hard work, limited enjoyment (consumption) and the practical use of money (see The Protestant Ethic).

However, there exists a difficulty in accurately comparing the role of the Chinese religious ethic to that of the Protestant one in their economic developments.<sup>213</sup> This is primarily because the elements in Chinese society other than its religious ethic which may be considered as favorable or unfavorable to capitalist development do not necessarily correspond perfectly to those in the West. The practical limitation is that both societies are so historically different that it is empirically impossible to have any precise assessment of their mutual correspondence. What Weber does to solve this problem is to estimate (subjectively, we will go back to this point later) the favorability of the Chinese socio-economic conditions for capitalist development. He intends to assume the combined effect of pro and con non-religious factors in the two areas the same so that he can validly regard the roles of the Chinese religious ethic and of the Protestant ethic as the only effective factors in capitalist development.<sup>214</sup> This

---

<sup>213</sup> Talcott Parsons, The Structure of Social Action, New York, The Free Press, 1949, p.541.

<sup>214</sup> Although Anthony Giddens argues that there is no intention on Weber's side to hold constant the material factors in the West and in China, it is not convincing because if the degrees of favorability of the material factors in the two areas are not approximate to one another, there is just no leveraging point for Weber to argue an "objective" evaluation of the concrete importance of religious ethic in economic development. True, the material factors are different in the two areas compared, but the way Weber seeks to remedy this problem is exactly to approximate them in terms of favorability - to make them "qualitatively" constant - so that their religious ethics can be meaningfully compared in an analytical sense (see Anthony Giddens, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory, Cambridge,

intention finally constitutes the basic two-fold strategy in his study of China: 1) to investigate the non-religious factors favorable and unfavorable to capitalist development, and 2) to compare the Chinese religious ethic with the Protestant ethic.

In performing the first strategy, Weber presents a relatively full survey of the Chinese socio-economic conditions that might stimulate or hinder economic (capitalist) development, including its cities, family system, imperial state, political and social stability, technological development, economic ethic, etc.. According to his observation, there existed quite a good number of positive factors that could have led to a similar capitalist development in China during the period when capitalism arose in the West:

1. There were many large cities (urban centres) where economic activities flourished. These urban centres were usually centres of trade and craft production; their separate quarters were under the control of guild organizations which were extremely economically oriented.<sup>215</sup>
2. The imperial state recognized and left a very high degree of autonomy to organizations of economic interest such as guilds.<sup>216</sup>

---

Cambridge University Press, 1971, p.178.).

<sup>215</sup> Weber, 1951, pp.13-15.

3. With variations at different periods, craftsmanship developed a large amount of mercantile trade, often on a considerable scale, and in each case with powerful craft guilds.<sup>217</sup>
4. There had developed a great deal of external commerce and trade with other nations at different points of time.<sup>218</sup>
5. There was a formal equality of opportunity in choice of occupation which was similar to that of capitalist countries. Since the imperial time, there was no rigidly hierarchical class system as in Medieval Europe, or in India. Formal restrictions on economic activity were relatively few, and both internal mobility and travel abroad were relatively common.<sup>219</sup>
6. The bureaucratic system of administration was very developed and in some respects close to that of the Western capitalist system.<sup>220</sup> The Chinese ruling class was a class of men called Mandarins, whose eligibility for appointment to office was based on the passing of a series of examinations. Thus despite the extent to which factually personal favor and other modifying elements existed, there was

---

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., pp.18-19.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., pp.5,26,89,100.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., p.103.

definitely an impersonal objective standard of qualification which ensured an unusual degree of equality of opportunity in the process of status attainment.<sup>221</sup>

7. The economic ethic in China was strikingly worldly and utilitarian and in many respects comparable to that of capitalism. There was a very positive valuation of wealth among all classes of society. Prudent care for the interests of this world and lack of interest in any other marked a strong tendency of the Chinese toward material pursuit.<sup>222</sup> Furthermore, this worldliness was combined with a kind of rationalism which involved a far-reaching repudiation of the irrational aspects of religion, including orgiastic and transcendental elements.<sup>223</sup> In this sense, the Chinese economic ethic was definitely secular and suitable for capitalist development.
8. There were a number of technological inventions that were more advanced than those in Europe at the same time (e.g., the use of gunpowder, knowledge of astronomy, book printing, etc.).<sup>224</sup>

---

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., pp.115-119.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., pp.237-238.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p.187.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p.15.



9. Finally, at a very early time China had maintained a widespread overall stable and peaceful society.

On the other hand, Weber also notes a number of elements that might hinder the capitalist development in China:

1. The early unification and centralization of the Chinese empire made impossible the development of the cities into autonomous political units,<sup>225</sup> and this in turn inhibited the development of local capitalist enterprises, because of the failure of cities to develop an independent legal system to foster and protect city economy.<sup>226</sup>
2. The extended kinship groups functioned as protective associations in the sense that they defended the individual member against economic adversities in his relations with landlords, money lenders, and employers outside the family.<sup>227</sup> In this way, the payment of debts, and to some extent work discipline, were impeded.
3. In many periods the sale of land was made very difficult by family regulations, even though the development of a money economy facilitated the

---

<sup>225</sup> Weber tends to agree with Marx on the point that the political centralization of China was largely a functional consequence of China's geographical and climatic nature. And this agreement was selectively appropriated by Wittfogel to construct his hydraulic thesis later.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., pp.19-20.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., pp.11-12;89-100.

transfer of landed property.<sup>228</sup>

4. The family orientedness created a serious barrier to legal developments which would have been favorable to capitalism. The prerogatives and self-protective power of village-based kinship groups were incompatible with the concept of a natural law and the establishment of legal institutions like those of Western Europe.<sup>229</sup> In Europe, the existing law had been systematized because of three major factors: jurists constituted a separate status group; urban business life required fixed legal procedures; and the officialdom of absolutist states had a positive interest in regularized legal procedures. In China, no comparable status group of jurists existed. The sacred ceremonies were the only unchangeable laws accepted by the educated officials, and the formal codification of laws would have been a threat to the established order.<sup>230</sup> Chinese judges generally discharged their business in terms of equity and propriety. They adjudicated with due regard to persons and circumstances, in keeping with sacred tradition and the accepted notions of family relationships.

---

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., p.89-100.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p.147-150.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p.150.

5. The patrimonialism<sup>231</sup> of the Chinese government militated against a development of administration along rational lines. The income of officials and revenue of the state were intricately intertwined, and Chinese officials had a high stake in preserving the existing, highly profitable income opportunities of office.<sup>232</sup> The increasing use of money in the payment of taxes only enhanced the financial opportunities of office-holding and hence reinforced the traditionalism of the Chinese government and society.<sup>233</sup>
6. The incumbent officials remained obligated to their families rather than to the society in general. This was because the education and money needed for appointment could not be obtained without family support and because ancestor worship and filial piety gave this financial dependence an enduring spiritual

---

<sup>231</sup> Patrimonialism is referred by Weber to the type of government that is organized as a more or less direct extension of the royal household, in which officials originate as household servants and remain personal dependents of the ruler as long as patrimonialism remains intact. It is different from feudalism in the sense that in feudalism government is organized on the basis of a fealty relation between the ruler and his vassals, independent, self-equipped warriors who exercise the authority of government in more or less autonomous fashion in the lands granted to them on a hereditary basis.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., pp.56-58.

<sup>233</sup> In Weber's view, insofar as the ruling class would benefit from the existing political system, they would tend to perpetuate, rather than upset, it.

foundation.<sup>234</sup>

7. Lastly, a specialized bureaucracy was absent in China. That is, there were no special technical qualifications attached to particular offices and the necessary training was not at all specialized or technical. A knowledge of the classics was required, and this was the same for everyone. The object was not to fit a candidate for the particular technical requirements of a given office but to insure that he was a sufficiently cultivated gentleman to be worthy of the exalted position of a Mandarin.<sup>235</sup> This circumstance was obviously an important hindrance to the extension of the bureaucratic principle into the detail of routine administration.

On the basis of the above observations, Weber concludes that, despite the existence of the unfavorable conditions, the presence of the positive factors does suggest a possibility of a capitalist development in China. He points out that in Western Europe, Capitalism had developed despite a considerable number of unfavorable conditions such as frequent wars, slow population growth, and restrictions on migration, occupational choice, trade and apprenticeship.<sup>236</sup> On this point, Weber intentionally argues a constant of socio-economic conditions between the West and China: both

---

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., pp.91-100.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., pp.121-122.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p.249.

had a similar probability of developing into capitalism as far as their material conditions are concerned. But then, why did the favorable factors in China fail to outweigh the obstacles largely created by the family system and state structure? To answer this question is precisely the long-awaited moment by Weber to introduce his Protestant-ethic argument. Hence, the answer is immediately clear, even though observations have not been made: China must lack a mentality similar to the Protestant one. It is then the comparison between Confucianism, the religion of the Chinese dominant class, and Protestantism, or more correctly, Puritanism, that becomes indispensable. If the Protestant-ethic thesis holds true, Confucianism must be radically different from Puritanism in some important respects.

Weber's comparison of Confucianism and Puritanism is conducted by treating them as two possible orientations toward man and God, rather than as the status ethic of two different groups in two of the great world civilizations.<sup>237</sup> His accentuation is on the meaning of religious world views for man's life on earth, and he wants to prove that the peculiar world view - inner worldly asceticism - of Puritanism alone determined the contrasting forms of rationalism in China and in the West and hence the unintended consequences of their divergent developments.<sup>238</sup>

---

<sup>237</sup> Reinhard Bendix, Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait, New York, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960, p.151.

In carrying out this goal, he makes several contrasts between the two religions on the basis of two primary but interrelated criteria by which the degree of rationalization of a religion can be determined: "the degree to which the religion has divested itself of magic.... (and) the degree to which it has systematically unified the relation between God and the world and therewith its own ethical relation to the world."<sup>239</sup>

With regard to the first criterion, Confucianism was far less radical than Puritanism and therefore less rational. There had been in China, Weber observes, an enormous amount of popular magic and superstition which Confucianism always tolerated.<sup>240</sup> The Confucian gentleman did not himself participate in them because they were beneath his dignity, but at the same time there was not the slightest attempt to drive them out. On the other hand, Puritanism rejected all trust in magical manipulation. Its spokesmen forbade the use of sacraments and symbols as external signs that distracted men from the inwardly experienced fear of, and trust in, God and hence from conduct guided solely by God's commandments.

---

<sup>238</sup> Weber, 1951, pp.237-238.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., p.226.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., pp.226-227.

In respect to the second criterion, both Confucianism and Puritanism had attained a high, but radically different, level of formal rationality in terms of their religious attitudes toward things of this world and the religious ideal of salvation. As to religious attitude toward things of this world, Confucianism accepted the world and man as inherently good. There was no such thing as a radically evil principle; there was no sin but only impropriety, the failure to perform properly in accordance with the required situation. This ethical demand created minimum tension between man and the world.<sup>241</sup> By means of a classical education, the Confucian man was capable of unlimited perfection. Conversely, the attitude of Puritanism is totally different. For the Puritan, everything on earth is inherently evil. Sin is original and at the same time the essence of man. The Puritan was incapable of achieving perfection by his own effort, but only by faith in God. He had to be diligent in his calling and implicitly trust God's inexorable choice of the elect and the damned. Finally, this ethical demand constantly created tremendous tension between him and the world.<sup>242</sup>

This difference in religious attitude was in turn closely related to their religious ideal of salvation. While holding that the world was inherently good, Confucianism believed that man's harmony with the social order was the

---

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., p.227.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p.227.

prerequisite of his cosmic harmony with Heaven and earth.<sup>243</sup> His duty, therefore, was not to shoulder other people's responsibilities, not to be concerned with the state of society in general, but to pay attention to his own concerns. These consisted of two main elements: his self-development as an educated gentleman and his relations to others. Concerning the former, what marked off the gentleman from the vulgar mass was not birth nor wealth but classic learning. To study classics was the only way to achieve individual development and enlightenment. As for the latter, the primary emphasis is on certain specific personal relations, above all those of piety. The central Chinese virtue is filial piety, and the attitude of the official to his superior should be as that of a son to his father. In the Confucian view, the whole of society is but a network of such personal relationships and his injunction to each was to see that his conduct was right in his own relationships. Thus, they accepted a definite concrete order as heavenly given. The cardinal task of a gentleman was to fulfill the traditional obligations of family and office specified in this order. In the Confucian ethics, there was no motive for altering this order. All aspects of life must be consistent with keeping this order in harmonious functioning.<sup>244</sup>

---

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., pp.239-241.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., pp.232-235.



In all these respects Puritanism differed profoundly. The Puritan had to obey God's commandments and in so doing rejected the evil ways of the world. His cardinal virtue was a way of life in which he achieved justification by faith and good works. He always tried for a precarious balance between, on the one hand, too great a preoccupation with man's sinfulness, which led to selfish withdrawal and self-mortification, and, on the other hand, too much misguided pride and confidence that outward success was a sign of grace.<sup>245</sup> To achieve such a way of life he had to act as God's steward during the short span of his life, ever aware that in the end he must give an account of his conduct. No man could do this without sinning; it was enough if he were ever ready and watchful, aware of the danger of pride in the most humble acts of faith and of the danger of worldliness in diligence and work itself.<sup>246</sup> This meant that there was a basic evil in man that could be abated only by true believers who served in God's invisible church and strove with every act of their busy workaday lives for salvation in the world beyond.

Associated with their differences in religious attitudes and ideals was the phenomenon of prophecy. Prophecy, as Weber understands it, typically confronts men with demands that conflict with worldly interests and the exigencies of mundane affairs, either in the sense that God makes an

---

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., pp.238-240.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p.239.

ethical demand upon man and thus enjoins obedience as an ethical duty, or in the sense that the prophet himself calls upon men in their need for salvation to turn away from the world and follow him by exemplary conduct.<sup>247</sup> Such ethical prophecy was absent in Confucianism but was the very foundation of Christianity. Weber speculates that this difference was related to the image of the world and of man that a specific religion projects. By demanding obedience to the divine commands, the Old Testament prophets created the image of a world that must be fashioned by man in accordance with ethical norms. This deliberate contrast between the world as it is and as it ought to be required that man develop himself as a tool for the attainment of goals that transcend the world. In this view, man's life and personality are unified by an ethical aspiration that gives the individual autonomy in confronting the world. This is why the Puritan ethic amounts to an objectification of man's duties as a creature of God, for they are duties outside the "organic relations of life."<sup>248</sup> Such prophecy, therefore, as Weber phrases it, was a main source of the break with traditionalism in the West in favor of an ethical rationalization.<sup>249</sup> And on this point, Confucianism obviously failed. Confucianism depended upon no prophecy, owing to its rigid acceptance of the existing order. It

---

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., p.235.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., p.236.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., p.236.

avored adjustment to the world as it is and a style of life based upon traditional cultivation of familial relationships.

Completely absent in the Confucian ethic was any tension between nature and deity, between demand and shortcoming, consciousness of sin and need for salvation, conduct on earth and compensation in the beyond, religious duty and socio-political reality. Hence, there was no leverage for influencing conduct through inner forces freed of tradition and convention.<sup>250</sup>

The combination of the above differences eventually created the two radically different forms of rationalism between China and the West. According to Weber, Confucianism displayed a high degree of rationality in the way it viewed the relationships among individuals, society and Heaven. However, it was principally a rationalism of this world or a worldly rationalism; it would have nothing to do with transcendental things. Within the framework of Chinese society it placed an unquestioned value on the good things of this world, above all on wealth, long life and a good name. But its rationalism, as Weber sees it, was limited by the fundamental traditional acceptance of an existing order, including all forms of traditional religio-magical elements such as a state cult and ancestor worship. In addition to that was the ideal of the Confucian gentleman, a traditional static ideal, the basis of which was assimilation of a traditional fixed body of literary culture, the classics. He "lacked rational

---

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., pp.235-236.

matter-of-factness, impersonal rationalism, and the nature of an abstract, impersonal, purposive association."<sup>251</sup> As a result, Confucian rationalism remained no more than a rationalism of dignified adaptation to a traditional order, a rationalism of traditionalism. Its discipline was the avoidance of all disorderliness and the self-discipline of the dignified man, and therefore it contained no elements to break through its traditionalism other than to sanction it powerfully.

In contrast, the ascetic Puritanism was rather a distinctly revolutionary force. Its ideal was not adaptation of the individual to a social world uncritically accepted. It was an injunction to make over his world, as far as it lay within his power, in the name of a transcendental ideal - the Kingdom of God on earth. It was therefore not a doctrine of rational adaptation to the world, but of rational mastery over the world. It "objectified everything and transformed it into rational enterprise. It dissolved everything into a pure business relation, and substituted rational law and agreement for tradition."<sup>252</sup> Thus, it can be seen as a genuine rationalism in the sense that it was able to break through the power of traditionalism and in turn to change the world drastically by its transcendentalized inner worldly asceticism. The Confucian ethic failed to move the world precisely because

---

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., p.241.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., p.241.

its worldliness denied a place to stand outside the world. The Protestant ethic, on the other hand, had such a place to stand, owing to its transcendental God and its conception of salvation. It is precisely this transcendental nature plus inner worldly asceticism that gave the West an exceptional strength to overcome all the different obstacles and develop into a rational bourgeois capitalism.

#### **4.4 DISCREPANCY BETWEEN WEBER'S THEORY OF THE CONFUCIAN ETHIC AND THE CHINESE SOCIO-CULTURAL REALITY**

Although Weber puts a great deal of effort in investigating the socio-economic conditions of Chinese society, his theoretical thrust is in the analysis of the Confucian ethic and its relation to Chinese social development. Therefore, this section, as we have done in the last two chapters, will examine whether Weber's theory of the Confucian ethic corresponds with the Chinese socio-cultural reality. Basically, his theory, as discussed above, includes four major arguments associated with the Chinese cultural tradition:

1. Confucianism lacks a transcendental nature.
2. There is no tension between individuals and the external world in the Confucian tradition.
3. Inner worldly asceticism that characterizes Puritanism is absent in Confucianism.

4. The Confucian ethic is not congenial to economic growth. That is, in order to develop economically, China must break with its Confucian tradition and adopt an ethic similar to the capitalist spirit.

Of the four arguments above, the first one is the foundation of Weber's theory of the Confucian ethic, for he believes that it is the transcendental ideal that provides the West a place to stand outside the secular world and enables it to transcend the secular world in accordance with that ideal. Now the question is : Does Confucianism really lack a transcendental ideal? If we follow Weber's definition of "transcendental ideal" as "the kingdom of God on earth,"<sup>253</sup> we can find that a transcendental ideal not only exists in, but also is central to, Confucianism. Confucius, the founder of Confucianism,<sup>254</sup> says in Analects:

I do not murmur against Heaven. I do not grumble against men. My studies lie low, and my penetration rises high. But there is Heaven; - that knows me!<sup>255</sup>

---

<sup>253</sup> Weber, 1951, p.228.

<sup>254</sup> Confucius is usually regarded as the founder of Confucianism. But this regarding needs some qualification. In Chinese, there is no such term called "Confucianism." "Confucianism" in Chinese is "Yu-Chia" (儒家), meaning not merely the teachings of Confucius, as the West thinks. The Chinese meaning of "Yu-Chia" has a broader meaning, referring to the intellectual school that takes care of the knowledge of "Li" or propriety. If this latter meaning of "Yu-Chia" is taken, the founder of "Confucianism" is definitely not Confucius, but the collective efforts and wisdom of the ancient Chinese sages before Confucius. For more discussion of this point, also see Appendix A.

<sup>255</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.I, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970, p.289.

In the above quotation, Heaven means exactly the transcendental higher being which watches over the activity of everything in the universe. But Heaven in Confucianism is different from God in Protestantism, in the sense that it is not merely an external, superior being, but also internalized in human beings as nature. As one of the Confucian classics, The Doctrine Of The Mean, states,

What Heaven has conferred is called the nature; an accordance with this nature is called the path or the path of duty; the regulation of this path is called instruction.<sup>256</sup>

Hence, in Confucianism, human nature and Heaven are essentially both sides of the same coin - they are the transcendental existence of the universe. It is not surprising, therefore, for the Chinese to believe that the sage, the person who follows the path, "assists the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth (the manifested existence of Heaven), and so with Heaven and Earth forms a ternion."<sup>257</sup> What the sage does is but to adhere to his nature and to cultivate it to its perfection.

But what is human nature? In Confucianism, human nature is one of the most complicated terms that requires lengthy discussion and clarification. It is like the nature of God as revealed in the Bible, which is basically undefinable. Simplistically, it can be described as man's tendency to love or to cultivate love.<sup>258</sup> To love and to cultivate love

---

<sup>256</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.I, p.383.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., p.416.

is to follow the path of duty, and this can be said to be the transcendental point of reference of the Chinese, because love is the essence of Heaven.<sup>259</sup> The Chinese kingdom of Heaven, i.e., their transcendental ideal, unlike that of Christianity which can only be attained externally through the coming of Christ, will come when everyone is in love and cultivates love, when everyone truly represents their nature, i.e., follows the path of Heaven:

When the path is pursued, a public and common spirit rules all under the sky; people choose men of talents, virtue and ability; their words are sincere, and what they cultivated is harmony. Thus men do not love their parents only, nor treat as children only their own sons. A competent provision is secured for the aged till their death, employment for the able-bodied, and the means of growing up to the young. They show kindness and compassion to widows, orphans, childless men, and those who are disabled by disease, so that they are sufficiently maintained. Males have their proper work, and females have their homes. They accumulate articles of value, disliking that they should be thrown away upon the ground, but not wishing to keep them for their own gratification. They labour with their strength, disliking that it should not be exerted, but not exerting it only with a view to their own advantage. In this way, selfish schemings are repressed and find no development. Robbers, filchers, and rebellious traitors do not show themselves, and hence the outer doors remain open and are not shut. This is what we call the Grand Union.<sup>260</sup>

---

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., pp.260-261.

<sup>259</sup> Shun-San Wang (王船山), Commentaries On I-Ching (船山易學), Taipei: Kwong Man Publishing Company, Ltd., 1981, pp.461-477.

<sup>260</sup> James Legge, The Sacred Books Of China: Li-Ki, Vol.XXVII, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968, pp.364-366.



This Grand Union, which takes its root in the transcendental Heaven, is certainly not recognized by Weber. Limited by his Christian conception of a transcendental God which is an external super-being, he easily passes over the transcendental nature of Confucianism which is not merely external to man as Heaven, but also internal to him as nature.

Misjudging that there is no transcendental ideal in Confucianism, Weber argues that there is also no tension between the Confucian individual and the external world. In Weber's view, tension arises only when an external world exists (in the individual's mind) and serves as the judge of the individual's behavior in the secular world. Therefore, for him the absence of a transcendental ideal in Confucianism automatically rules out the possible tension in the Confucian gentleman. However, this argument certainly does not correspond with the Confucian reality, as the premise that a transcendental ideal is absent in Confucianism does not hold. In fact, the relationship between the external world and the secular world always remains extremely tense in the Confucian gentleman:

The path can not be left instantly. The path that can be left is not the path.<sup>261</sup>

The determined scholar and the man of virtue will not seek to live at the expense of injuring their virtue. They will even sacrifice their lives to preserve their virtue complete.<sup>262</sup>

---

<sup>261</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.I, p.252.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., p.297.

The Confucian gentleman is always under the numerous temptations to leave the path or to injure his virtue (nature) in the secular world. In order to adhere to the path and keep his virtue, he must constantly be aware of the external temptations and work against them. Such tension is vividly described by Chu-Tshi (朱熹), one of the greatest Confucian masters in the Sung dynasty:

Human beings have both heavenly nature and egoistic desire. When his heavenly nature expands, his egoistic desire subsides; and when his egoistic desire expands, his heavenly nature subsides. There is no neutral ground on which both of them can maintain a harmonious co-existence.<sup>263</sup>

In such a constant battle against egoism, can we say that there is no tension between the Confucian gentleman and the external world in the Confucian tradition?

Concerning Weber's third argument that inner worldly asceticism that characterizes Puritanism is absent in Confucianism, it totally contradicts the Confucian principle. By inner worldly asceticism, Weber means the devoted commitment to labour or work as a response to God's calling.<sup>264</sup> Of course, there is no "external calling" in Confucianism, because Heaven or the nature of Heaven is already internalized in human nature. But from the Confucian perspective, there is no external salvation other than individual effort and hard-work. Therefore, when Yen Yuan (顏淵) asked about how perfect virtue was achieved,

---

<sup>263</sup> Quoted from Ying-Zi Yu, 1987, p.59.

<sup>264</sup> Weber, The Protestant Ethic, 1930, p.131.

Confucius answered as follows:

To subdue one's selfishness and return to propriety is perfect virtue. If a man can for one day subdue his selfishness and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him. Is the practice of perfect virtue not from man himself?<sup>265</sup>

Since there is no external salvation other than by man himself, man has to work industriously for his own salvation. This commitment to industrious work is openly maintained by The Great Learning as the only means of human salvation:

From the son of Heaven down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides.<sup>266</sup>

"The cultivation of the person" is precisely one of the best signs of inner worldly asceticism, since it emphasizes individual commitment to hard-work in the secular world as the only means of salvation. But to work for his own salvation does not mean that he is egoistic. In Confucianism, individual virtue or individual salvation depends upon the individual's hard-working toward social well-being as a whole. That is why Fang Chung Yim (范仲淹), a Confucian scholar in the Sung dynasty, says:

A Confucian gentleman should worry before everyone begins to worry and seek happiness after everyone is happy.<sup>267</sup>

---

<sup>265</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.I, p.250.

<sup>266</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics, Vol.I, p.359.

<sup>267</sup> Quoted from Ying-Zi Yu, 1987, p.74.

Similarly, Cheng Choi (張載), another famous Confucian scholar, holds that social well-being is the fundamental means of individual salvation:

Social goodness is the greatest virtue that everyone must work to secure.<sup>268</sup>

This devoted commitment to work for social well-being is precisely what Weber means by inner worldly asceticism. Then, can we still say that inner worldly asceticism is absent in Confucianism?

Finally, it is Weber's belief that the Confucian ethic is not congenial to economic growth. However, the current economic developments in the Far East (e.g., Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Korea) appear to contradict Weber's theory.<sup>269</sup> All these areas have been heavily under the influence of the Confucian tradition and, yet, have experienced a rapid economic growth. If we follow Weber's logic, these areas must share a cultural ethic similar to that of the West. But if this is true, Weber's theory of the Confucian ethic cannot hold. If their capitalist developments were merely a product of the Western influence, "Weber's argumentation would be impaired in its essence, because, according to him, only inner stimulation by cultural values can trigger the forces of economic and

---

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>269</sup> See Yau-kee Kim (金耀基), The Selected Sociological Papers Of Kim Yau-kee (金耀基社会学选), Taipei: Young Lion Cultural Company, Ltd., 1985; and Ying-zi Yu, The Religious Ethic And The Merchants' Spirit In Late China (中國近世宗教), Taipei: Luen King Publishing Company, Ltd., 1987.

industrial growth."<sup>270</sup> On this point, Herman Kahn's suggestion after his study of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan should deserve some attention:

Both aspects of the Confucian ethic - the creation of dedicated, motivated, responsible and educated individuals and the enhanced sense of commitment, organizational identity, and loyalty to various institutions - will result in all the neo-Confucian societies having at least potentially higher growth rates than other cultures."<sup>271</sup>

Although Kahn's suggestion is not undisputable,<sup>272</sup> it at least points out the possible positive influence of Confucianism on current economic developments in Eastern Asia.

---

<sup>270</sup> David Zilberman, 1977, p.344. Some one may argue that Western influence already implies a change in cultural ethics; but this argument is logically invalid because foreign cultural borrowings do not occur in nothingness but must presuppose a certain cultural ethic or psychology in the indigenous culture which makes foreign cultural borrowings possible. In other words, even a change in cultural ethics must presuppose a certain cultural ethic that allow such a change; and this is exactly where the tension of Weber's argument lies.

<sup>271</sup> Herman Kahn, World Economic Development, Boulder: Westview Press, 1979, p.122.

<sup>272</sup> Some Chinese scholars point out that Kahn's attribution of current economic developments in the Far East to the influence of the Confucian ethic is too hasty, since it fails to explain why these areas did not develop their own capitalism in the last two thousand years. They suggest that in order to examine the impact of Confucianism on economic growth in these areas, it is necessary to isolate which kind of Confucian ethics positively affects economic growth and how they affect it. See Pao Tsin-Shun, "The Confucian Ethic and The Four Asian Dragons," Ming Pao Monthly, Vol.23, No.1, 1988, pp.56-62.

## Chapter V

### SUGGESTED REASONS FOR DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN HEGEL'S, MARX'S AND WEBER'S THEORIES AND THE CHINESE SOCIO-CULTURAL REALITY

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, we have respectively discussed Hegel's, Marx's and Weber's theories about the Chinese cultural tradition and contrasted their theoretical classifications and explanations with the Chinese empirical reality. We have found that although their theories are different from one another in their interpretations of the Chinese cultural tradition, they share one thing in common. That is, they all fall short of capturing the Chinese socio-cultural reality. This discrepancy between their theories and the Chinese empirical reality, as will be shown in the following, has something to do with their European or, more precisely, German, background.<sup>273</sup> All of them came

---

<sup>273</sup> Since Germany is a European country which shares the similar larger open (in contrast to the relatively closed cultural systems of the Eastern societies) cultural background - Christianity, Greek philosophy and natural science, and Roman laws - with most other European countries, the author assumes that it (Germany) is not very different from the mainstream European cultural tradition and finds it justified to use the term "European" instead of "German" so as to make pronounced the internal unity of the European cultural tradition as a whole. Besides, it is necessary to point out that even Hegel, Marx and Weber themselves recognized the internal unity of European culture and referred to their cultural origin by using a broader

from the same German society, and they all inherited a similar historicist consciousness which was very popular in Germany, and in other European countries as well, in their times.<sup>274</sup> This historicist consciousness, as shown previously, played a central role in their theoretical formulations of Chinese society as well as other non-European societies. All of their theories about China are based on their particular conception of history. In this chapter, the author attempts to show that it is precisely their particular historicism that blinds them to the Chinese socio-cultural reality. The method to be employed here for the present purpose is twofold: 1) to reveal, respectively, the logical difficulties of Hegel's, Marx's, and Weber's theories of China, and 2) to examine, at a deeper level, the relationship between their particular (Eurocentric) historicism and the Western cultural tradition.

---

term "Western" or "European" instead of the national term "German."

<sup>274</sup> See Robert Nisbet, 1980, pp.3-9. An review of such so-called great modern thinkers as Herder, Fichte, Schiller, Bradley, Toynbee and Splengler can best reveal the popularity of historicism in the Western consciousness. See R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History, Oxford: The Oxford University Press, 1946.

## 5.2 REASONS FOR DISCREPANCY BETWEEN HEGEL'S THEORY OF ORIENTAL DESPOTISM AND THE CHINESE SOCIO-CULTURAL REALITY

Hegel's recognition of the uniquely overwhelming role that familism plays in the entire Chinese cultural tradition discussed in Chapter 2, taken as a whole, is basically correct and penetrating. Familism is undoubtedly the foundation of the Chinese socio-cultural life. On this point, Hegel can be said to have surpassed many of the sociologists of this area after him - they simply fail to recognize the important role of familism in structuring the entire Chinese socio-cultural development. However, other than this recognition, Hegel has no true understanding of the Chinese experience in its own right. And this is precisely why there is a great discrepancy between his theory and the Chinese socio-cultural reality. Hegel's problem is that he is too preoccupied with his Eurocentric reduction of the richness and diversity of human life and human development to the European ideal - the European state life and the European conception of freedom, thereby failing to subject his theory to methodological reflection, i.e., to account for the possibility that other societies may have some other ideals which are different from, but as valid as, the European one. Put more specifically, his analysis of the Chinese cultural tradition is grounded on some larger unreflected (unproven) methodological presuppositions which can be simplified as follows:



1. Human history is intrinsically unilinear and moves toward a single end which is the state in the Germanic form.
2. With this end, the seemingly chaotic plurality of cultural universes can be logically (by dialectical logic) classified into a single scheme of world historical development of the state: that is, different cultural worlds represent nothing but different stages of the development of the state.
3. Dialectically, there are four successive stages of the development of the state: despotism, democracy, aristocracy and monarchy, each of which represents an antithesis to, and a higher development over, the preceding ones, with monarchy, the idealized Germanic world, reaching its final end in which both the state and human freedom are absolutely identical and concretized.

Hegel's historical scheme, as simplified above, at least involves two forms of reductionism: the reduction of the diversity of historical development to a single path; and the reduction of the richness of human life to a single end. Both of them, the author will show in the following, are methodologically invalid or ungrounded.

Concerning the first form of reductionism, for Hegel world history is nothing but a history of the progressive self-development of the state. Let us here forget the

validity of this statement and simply focus on the methodological problem it involves in the treatment of the diversity of historical development. Now assume that we have a history of the development of the state and different cultural traditions (e.g., China, Greece, Rome and Germany) of which we want to make sense in relation to this history. According to Hegel, these cultural traditions can chronologically be classified into a single developmental scheme in accordance with the political form each tradition represents at a particular concrete historical stage of development. So we have China, Greece, Rome and Germany corresponding respectively to four essentially different political forms - despotism, democracy, aristocracy and monarchy, with the latter ones representing a higher development over the preceding ones. In other words, we have China at the beginning stage and Germany at the final with Greece and Rome in between. Now the question is : we have on the one hand different geographically and, to a large extent, historically separate (independent) cultural traditions and on the other hand a single developmental scheme. Can we legitimately place the former into the latter chronologically? Here Hegel obviously commits a serious methodological mistake by confusing the theoretical with the empirical. His historical classification of the development of the state, as it manifests itself, is based on the arrangement of spatially different political entities into a theoretically pre-established chronological system as

the replacement for their independent historical developments. The problem of this classification is: theoretically, we may be able to deduce from a particular concept (the state) step by step all its logical boundaries and categories (e.g., different stages of development), but in practice, different cultural traditions may not necessarily coincide with all these theoretical-logical categories and may develop their own historical paths in relation to their existing cultural and natural conditions. In fact, it is apparent that China, Greece, Rome and Germany are merely different geographical entities. Each of them has its own particular historical experience of moving toward the general nature of the state (if this is really the essence of human history). For example, on the one hand, we can find a substantial unity in China and in Russia (though different in form: Russia expresses itself in the form of an absolutist state, China makes its appearance in familistic harmony) but without the separate development of individuals as in civil society (as Hegel argues). On the other hand, although Rome, Greece and even Germany have the separate development of individuality (also in different forms and to different degrees), they do not have the kind of substantial unity that China and Russia have achieved (Rome could be considered to have done so, but it eventually declined and collapsed, and this already proves that it lacked the kind of internal integrating power to maintain such a substantial unity in the long run).

In addition, even isolating only the political forms for consideration, it is still difficult to decide which ones should come after which. What is known is merely that they are all cultural products and can go into any direction of development, depending upon the particular cultural and historical conditions from which they themselves arise. For example, with regard to "Chinese despotism" (if this is the right term), it is obvious that it belongs to distinct cultural conditions and does not have any direct historical or cultural relationship with Greek democracy, even though there may be a link among Greek democracy, Roman aristocracy and German monarchy, owing to their similar cultural background and direct cultural interaction. Greek democracy was surely developed out of its own cultural tradition, but whether or not from despotism is still a historical myth waiting to be discovered. But even if a despotism is found before democracy there,<sup>275</sup> it is still incomparable to the "substantial unity" that China has always possessed since antiquity. Such a grand unity is undoubtedly something the Greeks have never dreamed of in their history.<sup>276</sup> We can

---

<sup>275</sup> This would be very unlikely, because Hegel conceived of Oriental history as being static, unchanging. If that is the case, nothing in the Oriental state can explain the development of universal history to the next stage, namely the democratic stage. See Donald M. Lowe, The Function of China in Marx, Lenin and Mao, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966, p.5.

<sup>276</sup> Hegel's identification of modern Germany as the complete realization of the conception of the state can therefore be doubted for the same reason: the grand unity as developed in China and Russia manifests itself as an important element of the universal development of human life, i.e., the comprehensive unity that the small

only conclude that: even if Hegel's theory of the state is correct - that is, the essence of human life is political life, and human history is a history of the development of the state, what we can get at best is but different cultural traditions moving differently in their own histories toward the similar end of an organically harmonious state. This means that we still have many different histories of development instead of a single history. The reduction of the plurality of historical development to a single unitary scheme, therefore, is by all means methodologically ungrounded.<sup>277</sup>

This ungrounded reductionism, however, does not result merely from Hegel's theoretical-empirical confusion, but is closely connected with his second reductionism: the reduction of human life to political life, which is seen by him as the only ground for individual development, for subjectivity. It is under this reductionism that Hegel is able to carry his argument regarding the Chinese cultural development to the extreme - that is, the familistic tradition in China not only causes the deficiency of subjectivity, but also leads

---

Germanic world lacks. The antagonism between the modern Germany and the other European nations forcefully points to the inadequacy of the Germanic State as an ideal human development; it lacks the ability to harmonize other nations into a higher political (ethical) unity that can resolve the conflicts arising at the national level.

<sup>277</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rise And The Future Demise Of The World Capitalist System: Concepts For Comparative Analysis," in Comparative Studies in Society And History, Vol.15, 1974, pp.387-389.

to the stagnancy of the entire society, including the state, religion, science, etc.. Now the fundamental question is: Is political life really the only ground for subjectivity?

To answer this question, we must first clarify what Hegel means by subjectivity. As mentioned in Chapter 2, by subjectivity Hegel means individual freedom to act consciously for the good of all. This definition can be further supplemented in two ways: 1) subjectivity presupposes the individual's consciousness of his own existence as an independent subject; and 2) the individual understands that group (political) life is fundamental to, not the constraint of, his individual development.

For Hegel, individual consciousness emerges only when the individual is in conflict with the larger group to which he belongs, i.e., only when the individual begins to realize his personal interests in opposition to the natural (unreflected) absorption by that larger group. The overcoming of this conflict will be the establishment of a constitution which defines in law both individual interests and group interests.

Apparently, the entire logic behind Hegel's political reductionism is based on the assumption that the only ground for the development of individual consciousness is in the individual-group opposition, an assumption that Hegel thinks is not arbitrary, but has support in European history. Now

before we accept this assumption, we must ask: Is this assumption universally applicable? Or would it merely represent the particular socio-cultural experience of Western society? Or to put it differently, can individual consciousness be developed in ways other than individual-group opposition?

As we know, as a thinking being, man's reflection on himself is not necessarily confined to his conflict with the larger group; it may arise from his contemplation of himself. This contemplation, if we look at it closely, may not involve the conflict between individual interests and group interests. It may be due to the individual's inner dissatisfaction with himself - e.g., like many religious people seeking to transcend themselves morally.<sup>27 8</sup> Even if the contemplation involves the conflict between individual interests and group interests, there is no logical necessity that the solution to it must be constitutional development. It may be, for example, the development of cultural norms, like the articulation and specification of the roles of the five social relations by Confucius in China. As discussed in Chapter 2, in China the principal line development of individual consciousness takes place not in the Chinese struggle for personal interests, but in their reflection of the deteriorating social (familistic) system and the subsequent re-affirmation of it as the foundation of the

---

<sup>27 8</sup> Chung-San Mull, The Philosophy of Chinese History, Taipei: Student Publishing Company, Ltd., 1963, pp.74-82.

realization of their humanity. This re-affirmation is no longer natural, as Hegel thinks, because it is a result of the Chinese awareness of the value of the familistic system.

Hence, we can conclude that Hegel's Europocentric political reductionism is methodologically invalid, since it fails to account for all the possible grounds for individual development. As a result of this failure, it is not surprising that all Hegel's arguments on Chinese society, which are based on the premise that subjectivity is absent in China, inevitably fall flat. The premise simply does not hold.

### **5.3 REASONS FOR DISCREPANCY BETWEEN MARK'S THEORY OF AMP AND THE CHINESE SOCIO-CULTURAL REALITY**

We attempted to show in Chapter 3 that Marx seems to have recognized the problem involved in Hegel's unilinear historicism. His historical conception, in some way, is a reformulation of Hegel's unilinear historical scheme, attempting to account for the independent historical development of the East:

1. Human history moves toward a single end which is free individuality, the individual as a universally developed, self creative subject capable of transcending all natural and social dominations.
2. But human historical development is not initially in itself universal; rather, it begins particularly and



locally, and only becomes universal after the coming of Western capitalism.

3. Asiatic society develops locally and independently, parallel to the Western social development before capitalism.
4. Western capitalist society is also a particular, local development, but it at the same time contains the element of universality, the victorious development of commodity production and exchange, which not only totalizes human local developments into a single universal process through exchange, but also creates the material ground for individual development by separating the individual from his unconscious attachment to the larger community and by enabling him to express in exchange relations his independence and freedom as a conscious subject of his own.
5. But capitalism is still a historical, i.e., transitional, society, in which free individuality, though it has emerged, finds its expression metamorphic and deformed. Behind this metamorphic and deformed individuality hides the domination of individuals by the reified system of capital.
6. The end of human evolution comes after human beings' universal realization of the capitalist system as their own creation and the subsequent transformation of it into communism, a society characteristic of the free association of individuals.

The historical scheme summarized above, in spite of its effort to remedy Hegel's problem of unilinearity, ironically still retains the Hegelian methodological characteristic: the East is treated as merely a residual category of the Western development.<sup>279</sup> Although Marx is very aware of his methodological Europeanism,<sup>280</sup> this does not save him from methodological difficulty. As discussed in Chapter 3, he does attempt to dispose the East as a residual society - to explore its typological peculiarity from the point of view of its basic economic relations. This attempt finally gives rise to the dualism of the Eastern developmental picture: natural/social, static/dynamic, unhistorical/historical, etc.. However, such a dualistic depiction does not help improve the understanding of the East very much. The basic position of AMP has not been changed. It is still seen as an "epiphenomenon," an historical aberration of the "mainstream" (or essential) experience of the West.<sup>281</sup> Europe is still the center of world-historical development as well as the means to the end of this development. Even though it is itself also transitional, its superiority is unquestionable. Without it - without its brutal capitalization of the East, universalization and individualization are simply impossible. Here we eventually come to the double limitation of Marx's methodological

---

<sup>279</sup> Raymond Aron, The Industrial Society, London: Oxford University Press, 1974, p.30.

<sup>280</sup> Marx, 1973, p.408.

<sup>281</sup> Vitkin, 1982, p.62.

Eurocentrism: 1) the East is homogenized into a single residual fact and therefore its internal plurality and diversity are left untouched; and 2) the transformative power of Western capitalism is unquestionably believed, while the stable and integrative nature of the East are largely left unanalyzed. Marx never recognized in his life the problem of the first limitation and therefore the necessity of working out a multipositional perspective, but the second limitation did ultimately drive him to an intellectual crisis in which his monistic position, though not abandoned, was doubted for the first time (we come back to this point later in this section).

With regard to the first limitation, apparently the reason that Marx is able to reduce different Asian societies to a single category called AMP lies in his conviction of the essentialness of economic life. Believing that economic production is the universal foundation of human existence, he automatically sees all other cultural phenomena as particular, super-structural characteristics derived from this foundation. But the problem is: such a conviction is not **the**, but only **a** universal fact. There are also such universal facts as family, power relations, etc.. If economy can be seen as the foundation of human life, why cannot the others? Every society may have its own particular fondness for one of these universal facts - be it family, economy, power, or whatever. But there is just no

such necessary priority of economy over the others. As we know, man's existence, since its ascent to "humanness," is inseparable from a web of cultural complexes in which all different institutions such as economic, political, family, religious, and so on are intricately interwoven with one another. No single one can empirically or theoretically be proved to be more foundational than the others.<sup>282</sup> If economy is the foundation of human life, then it is necessary to add that cultural tradition, from which a particular socio-cultural attitude is formed, is the "supra-foundation" of human life, since it is the latter that gives meaning and structure to the former. That is why at the same level of productive forces, there are still various social forms coexisting with the economic relations (e.g., Medieval church, Indian caste, Chinese family, Russian power, etc.). In fact, even Marx himself agrees that it is man who actively and consciously interacts with Nature. But where does man get this activeness and consciousness? Is it not in the social collectivity of a distinct cultural tradition in which he lives?

Marx obviously fails to see this internality of cultural tradition, the internality that makes the abstract man concrete, as a cultural being, even though he (Marx) is aware of the actual socio-cultural plurality of the human world.<sup>283</sup> As an external onlooker from a particular cultural

---

<sup>282</sup> Karl R. Popper, The Poverty Of Historicism, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961, pp.5-6.

society where the economic institution partially predominates, Marx misconceives this partiality<sup>284</sup> as the only "self-evident" ground for the realization of human content. In addition to his special use of dialectical logic, he decisively treats economic relations as the "essential" phenomenon of human life and considers them to be the only criterion for social typologization, that is, to put societies of different cultural and historical backgrounds into the same typology in terms of their similar economic relations by straining off their cultural and historical differences as "non-essential" phenomena. Hence, he gets the typological concept of AMP. As discussed, for him, China, Tibet, Russia, India, and so on are "essentially" identical. Typologically, they are characterized by a similar form of non-market-conditioned, but politically dominated, supra-economic exploitation, in which the ruling class exploits the direct producers indirectly through the mediation of communes.

---

<sup>283</sup> Chun-Ngai Tang, Chinese Culture And The Contemporary World (中華人文與當今世界), Vol.I, Taipei: Student Publishing Company, Ltd., 1980, pp.7-10.

<sup>284</sup> "Partiality" is a concept borrowed from David Zilberman which is referred to here the quality of a single institution that can disclose the most important spatio-structural parameters of the social system and therefore is able to represent the sum of the social whole by its own rationality and developmental logic (this is an important concept of this thesis and will be explored in more detail in Chapter 6).

However, can the concept of AMP explain the socio-cultural uniquenesses of each of the Asiatic societies? That is, can it (at least by its economic argument alone) explain the tremendous differences among different Asiatic societies? Is the difference among Eastern Orthodoxy, Hinduism and Confucianism merely a more-or-less-the-same Asiatic culture? Or to ask more specifically with regard to the Chinese context, why did the Chinese family, as the basic Asiatic economic unit, develop a content so distinct from those in other Asiatic societies in terms of its complex but distinctly defined kinship structure and corresponding system of normative roles? Why did China have an established system of private landed property? Why did the Chinese centralized state exist far before the first functional construction of large-scale irrigational works? As can be anticipated, Marx is hardly able to handle these questions theoretically within his economic framework. What he can do is to reduce them to some "non-essential" ideological phenomena.<sup>285</sup> But what do these phenomena tell? Are they really "non-essential" or revelations of Marx's inability to comprehend these

---

<sup>285</sup> Marx did not in his life explain why China centralized far before the emergence of large-scale irrigational works. But he did mention in passing in Capital III that "common ownership of land was the original form in China" and that private landed property was only a slight modification of common landed ownership, not the alteration of it. His argument is that in China, private cultivation came under, not by itself independent of, common landed property. However, this argument reflects no more than Marx's ignorance of Chinese history (see Chapter 3).

societies from the inside?

If Marx's economic reductionism is only some kind of categorization for certain analytical purposes, it is totally legitimate and uncondemnable - just like it is legitimate and uncondemnable to classify cat and tiger into the category of "animals with four legs" for the purpose of some kind of biological understanding. But to hold that this categorization is the "ultimate essence" of the categorized subjects - e.g., to confuse tiger with cat, is quite another matter and, indeed, at any rate wrong (and it is dangerous too!). They are obviously irreducible to one another in terms of their uniqueness and therefore can only be understood in their own rights. Marx's mistake is not only because he blurs the plurality and diversity of Asiatic societies by putting them into a single concept of AMP, but also because he regards their economic relations as the "essence" of their historical existence and superimposes on them an external developmental path derived from the European socio-economic experience. This alone can explain why he easily passes over the internal power (of social relations) of each Asiatic society in withstanding transformation by Western capital.

Here we can see the second methodological limitation of Marx's conception of AMP. Although Marx paid quite close attention to the typological stability and integrativeness characteristic of the Asiatic world (this certainly causes

him to investigate the economic characteristics of the East, such as climate, irrigation, etc.), owing to his perspective of economic relations, he did not explore any of the internal differences among Asiatic societies in terms of how different archaic (traditional) social relations have survived over some radically different periodicalizations (e.g., how was Chinese family structure able to survive in spite of some explicit changes in its economic relations before and after the Chou dynasty?). Undoubtedly, it was Marx's belief that, no matter how stable and integrative the social relations of these Asiatic societies were, Western capital would at last bring about their transformation - would break through the **naturalness** of their personal relations and replace it with the **sociality** of commodity relations.<sup>286</sup> But Marx's belief did not last very long. At the end of his life, the real social processes in the world pointed to the very fact that the social relations unique to Asiatic societies were able not only to survive under the pressure of capitalism, but also to subordinate it to their social structurings.<sup>287</sup> Revolutionary movements which spread

---

<sup>286</sup> Marx expresses this belief repeatedly in many of his writings: in "The Manifesto of the Communist Party:" "The bourgeoisie draws all...nations into civilizations... compels them to become bourgeois themselves" (Marx, 1978, p.477); in "The Future Results of British Rule in India:" "England has to fulfill a double mission.... the annihilation of Asiatic society, and the laying of material foundation of Western society in Asia" (Marx, 1969, p.125); and in Capital II: "Capitalist production first makes the production of commodities general and then, by degrees, transforms all commodity production into capitalist commodity production" (Marx, 1984, p.36).



from Europe to the East suddenly pushed these Asiatic societies (first Russia and second China) to the historical end of communism, i.e., a society in which free individuality is anticipated. Marx finally realized his methodological difficulty and began to rewrite his historical scheme. This ended with the restoration of the socio-cultural plurality to its rightful place for the first time.<sup>288</sup> Nevertheless, Marx still maintained his monistic approach to the human developmental end, though pursuing it in a different way in which different social forms are seen as moving not unilinearly through capitalism, but multilinearly, in their own ways, toward the same historical end of free individuality.<sup>289</sup> However, this uncompromising commitment to monism (the only European ideal) is already

---

<sup>287</sup> Both Andre G. Frank and Immanuel Wallerstein have revised Marx's conclusion of the inevitable capitalization of the East. They argue that Western capital not only does not necessarily bring about capitalist transformation in the third world, but also may lead to further consolidation of the traditional social relations there. But owing to the Marxian nature of their perspective, i.e., economic determinism, they still attribute the persistence of traditional social relations in the third world to the structural consequence of the development of the world capitalist economy and fail to appreciate the active role of tradition in preserving these social relations. No wonder some sociologists (e.g., Zeev Gorin and Alejandro Portes) argue that their theories are hardly able to explain the social phenomenon in the communist world where the influence from the capitalist world economy is minimal but social relations are typically traditional. See Andre G. Frank, Latin America: Underdevelopment Or Revolution, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969; Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rise And The Future Demise Of The World Capitalist Economy: Concepts For Comparative Analysis," Comparative Studies In Society And History, Vol.15, 1974, pp.387-415; Zeev Gorin, "Socialist Societies And World System Theory: A Critical Survey," Science And Society, Vol.17, pp.332-366; and Alejandro

unimportant. It merely manifests the fact that until his death Marx was still unable to realize that his commitment to free individuality was not universal as he thought, but culturally tied to the tradition from which he came. What has actually happened in China (and other so-called communist societies as well) is that communism not only has not brought about the realization of free individuality in the Marxian sense, but in many ways displays the Chinese traditional patriarchal relationship between the government and the people.

#### 5.4 REASONS FOR DISCREPANCY BETWEEN WEBER'S THEORY OF THE CONFUCIAN ETHIC AND THE CHINESE SOCIO-CULTURAL REALITY

As discussed in Chapter 4, Weber's conception of social history was not as articulate as those of Hegel and Marx. However, owing to the particular historicist consciousness he inherited from his society, his social theory still implicitly presupposes a historical schematism which assumes a central position in his analysis of non-Western societies:

1. Social history moves from non-rational traditionalism toward an ideal-typical society of economic rationalization.

---

Portes, "Hazards of Historical Analogy," Social Problem, Vol.28, 1981, pp.505-520.

<sup>288</sup> Marx, Pre-capitalist Economic Formations, edited by Eric J. Hobsbawn, New York: International Publishers, pp.142-145.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., p.142.

2. This ideal-typical society is not merely an abstract, generalized concept, but also has concrete historical existence Western capitalist society.
3. Owing to its particular inner cultural values (Puritan ethics), the West is able to transform itself into a rational, individually motivated and instrumentally oriented society by crushing the power of its tradition into pieces and therefore able to arrive at a non-traditional, modern stage characteristic of axiological projection.
4. Non-Western societies, in order to develop into this non-traditional, modern end, must break with their traditions and adopt a psychology similar to that of the "capitalist spirit."

The above historical scheme basically involves in itself three major interrelated problems that Weber himself is unable to realize: the non-rationality of tradition; the non-traditionality of Western capitalism; and the evaluation of non-Western societies from the Western perspective. With regard to the first problem, tradition is consistently seen by Weber as a real source of irrationality which obstructs the normal process of rationalization in social life. As in the case of China, its tradition was regarded as equivalent to traditionalism, a non-rational fixation to the social order. It is therefore totally negative, appearing as a rigid resistance to social change, i.e., a barrier to the

rationalization of economy in particular and of society as a whole. But what does rationality mean? If we follow Weber's conceptualization of rationality as "systematic pursuit of end" based on knowledge,<sup>290</sup> the Chinese cultural tradition is absolutely rational, because it is an active form of conscious position-taking which manifests itself "in the role of an independent and creative instrument of cultural self-organization."<sup>291</sup> Its rationality displays itself not in the hypertrophy of the spirit of a rational economy, but in its ability to organize different cultural elements as well as its people toward its developmental end with certainty on the basis of the available knowledge.<sup>292</sup> This is why "much derided traditional cultures often furnished value legitimations necessary in periods of rapid national change."<sup>293</sup> It is also the reason why Chinese

---

<sup>290</sup> Weber, 1968, pp.24-25.

<sup>291</sup> Zilberman, A Study Of Tradition, unpublished manuscript, pp.201-202.

<sup>292</sup> Some sociologists have realized that tradition is not unilaterally irrational and that so-called secular modernity lacks sufficient cultural elements to match the (rational) force of great national traditions. The Japanese tradition during the Meiji period furnishes perhaps the best known, but not the only, example of how tradition can actively play to organize national development. See Robert N. Bellah, Religion And Progress In Modern Asia, New York: Free Press, 1965; Joseph R. Gusfield, "Tradition And Modernity: Misplaced Polarities In The Study Of Social Change," American Journal Of Sociology, Vol.72, 1967, pp.351-362; and John Walton, "Elites and The Politics Of Urban Development," in Urban Latin America: The Political Condition From Above And Below, by A. Portes and J. Walton, Austin: University Of Texas Press, 1976.

<sup>293</sup> Alejandro Portes, "On The Sociology Of National Development: Theories And Issues," American Journal Of

society has survived with enduring stability and peace over several millenia. But it was not static as Weber views it. It was dynamic and constantly developed new knowledge which it used to materialize its traditional end in a stable manner.<sup>294</sup> The polarization of tradition and modernity is at any rate misplaced, since it entirely ignores the active role of tradition in socio-cultural development.<sup>295</sup>

It will not be surprising, then, when contemporary China develops itself economically and, yet, maintains a highly centralized unity, a fact that would surprise only Weber. In this sense, it was Western society that turned out to be non-rational (non-rational in the sense of cultural stability), primarily because its individualistic tradition failed to unify its cultural elements into an organized whole and therefore let the partial rationalization of the "capitalist spirit" hopelessly override other cultural areas and consequently bring the entire society to a state of extreme uncertainty. (On this account, the two world wars and the contemporary existentialist movement are not accidental but can be considered the logical outcome of the failure of the Western cultural tradition to integrate its social life into a normative certainty).

---

Sociology, Vol.82, 1977, p.73.

<sup>294</sup> See Perry Anderson, 1974, pp.521-549.

<sup>295</sup> Joseph R. Gusfield, 1967, pp.151-152.

Weber's problem is that, in his enthusiasm to distinguish the traditional elements from non-traditional elements in the content of culture, he fails to realize the so-called non-traditional elements come exactly from tradition and from nowhere.<sup>296</sup> Therefore, when he said he succeeded in identifying the goal-attainment dimension in the Protestant ethic as the non-traditional element which eventually eliminated all the traditional elements of the culture content, he immediately passed over the very fact that the goal-attainment motive is not traditionalistically free, but instead is justified by its very existence in the past, i.e., by a typical existing traditional attitude that made this motive triumphant over other cultural elements.<sup>297</sup>

In this regard, the kind of individualism which is closely associated with Western capitalism, therefore, should not be seen as the expression of the non-traditional character of Western society as Weber believes. It is rather a necessary result of the particular development of the Western cultural tradition. The failure of the Western tradition to bring unity to its culture - a phenomenon that Marx successfully revealed in his analysis of the internal contradictions of Western society - was precisely the structural characteristic of this tradition. As Weber himself understands very well, the principal cultural

---

<sup>296</sup> Alejandro Portes, 1977, p.73.

<sup>297</sup> Zilberman, "A Study Of Tradition", unpublished manuscript, p.8.

element that constitutes the Western mentality was the individual consciousness, an irreducible social "atom" upon which Western society was built. From the age of the initial Christian development down to the present time, the preoccupation with the problem of individuality (both Hegel and Marx were immersed in this problem and worked to sort it out) has always been the inescapable reality of the Western mind. The unquestioned belief in the authenticity of individual consciousness, which never took its root in China or India, had long been a reality in the Western consciousness as a form of traditionalistic ideology.<sup>298</sup> This traditionalistic ideology by its mechanisms in turn materialized in social action and, in consequence, as Weber has successfully detected, transformed itself into the very spirit of capitalism, which always generates numerous conflicts and disturbances to the Western social integration and unity. This corresponds exactly to Durkheim's description of the seriousness of anomie of various kinds at the personality level in the West.<sup>299</sup> To view from this angle, Weber's analysis that the rise of Western capitalism in its socially distinct form was a historical development of the prototype of this individualistic mentality is basically undisputable. The spirit of Western capitalism is undoubtedly inseparable from the Western cultural ethic and consciousness. However, what Weber fails to do is to

---

<sup>298</sup> David Zilberman, "A Study Of Tradition," pp.8-9.

<sup>299</sup> Emile Durkheim, Suicide, New York: Free Press, 1980.

subject this tradition to intra-cultural reflection. As a result, he mistakes it for the absolute end of human universal development, an end that China must realize.

This mistake is linked to the problem of Weber's understanding of non-Western societies. Taking the Western economic rationality as his exclusive position, Weber projects his axiological mentality on all the cultures that he studies. In so doing, he subjectively assumes that all other peoples should share an economic interest similar to his. Hence, in his analysis of China, he easily argues China had a socio-economic background as favorable as that of the West to capitalist development. But he forgets that those "objective" facts of interest to himself may not interest the Chinese. All those facts he considers to be favorable or unfavorable to the Chinese capitalist development were only the inseparable part of the total socio-cultural system which might be understood differently from the Chinese point of view. However, his axiological position disabled him to see these facts from the Chinese position. Without this reflection, what seems to him to be problematic in the Chinese capitalist development becomes obvious in his cultural equation: the Chinese cultural tradition - the Confucian ethic - was the main barrier to its rationalization, to its capitalist development. By concentrating on the cultural characteristics of Western society, he neglects the fact that these characteristics, as



well as those of China, are themselves not universal but belong only to the society in which one lives.<sup>300</sup> As a result, he becomes entirely unconscious that China may be able to develop in itself another social alternative different from capitalism.

A further question is, how is the Confucian ethic similar or contradictory to the Puritan one? Or to put it more generally, on what criterion can we judge whether other religions are similar or dissimilar to Protestantism in terms of ethic. Insofar as ethic is concerned, any religion, even the most primitive, consists of a huge ethical system of different levels which makes any detailed comparison difficult, if not impossible. Then, on what basis can we select ethical criteria of a religion's "inner-worldliness" or "other-worldliness," "asceticism" or "mysticism"? Weber's comparative method is no solution to this problem and therefore is inevitably subjective. According to his selection which carries a heavy Protestant value, Weber argues that both transcendentalism and the tension between individuals and the external world are absent in Confucianism. Therefore, he absolutely believed that the Chinese Confucian tradition lacked the kind of inner-worldly asceticism of the West. However, with different criteria, many contemporary scholars have reached the totally opposite conclusion that the Confucian ethic was

---

<sup>300</sup> Theotonio Dos Santo, "The Structure Of Dependence," American Economic Review, Vol.60, 1970, pp.231-234.

similar in kind, though possibly different in degree, to the Puritan ethic both in terms of transcendental belief and in terms of the tension between individuals and the external world.<sup>301</sup> Some theorists even attribute it to the inner momentum of the current capitalist development in the Far East (see Chapter 4). Disregarding the polemical discussion over which conclusion is right or which is wrong, the discussion itself reveals a fact that is markedly important: that is, Weber's conceptualization of the Chinese cultural tradition as purely non-rational and mechanistic is definitely far from the Chinese reality. What may be the case is that the Chinese cultural tradition is able to respond actively to the changing environment and therefore to absorb rationally and selectively elements or knowledge (e.g., economic, political, etc.) from other societies to benefit its development.

#### 5.5 EUROCENTRIC REDUCTIONISM IN HEGEL, MARX AND WEBER

So far as the discussion of the reasons for the discrepancies between Hegel, Marx and Weber's theories and the Chinese reality has revealed, it is apparent that in spite of the difference in their theoretical interpretation of the Chinese cultural tradition, they share at a deeper level a similar methodological structure of approaching

---

<sup>301</sup> See Yu, 1987, pp.13-14; and Robert Bellah's "religion Evolution," in Reader in Comparative Religion, edited by William A Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, New York: Harpper & Row, 1965.

Chinese society. That is, they all three look at China from an absolute external position of contemporary European society. China is not studied by them as such, but as a society to be evaluated against a single European background. For Hegel, this background is political constitutional monarchy; for Marx, it is capitalism in transition to communism; and for Weber, it is instrumental rationalization. In all three cases, the Eurocentric reductionism is evident, as Chinese culture is treated monistically in accordance with the rules of a single European culture and as the Chinese cultural independence in terms of an end in itself is completely denied.

As a result, China becomes no more than a sociological residual category, meaningful only when it is in relation to the West. The rationality of its tradition - of its family system, morality, individuality, history, etc. - is either distorted or ignored. Its sociological meaning is its cultural particularity - i.e., its "despotism," "Asiaticness," and "traditionalism" - which is in their view entirely contradictory to the "sociological universality" of the West and therefore is seen as historically preceding the latter. Such Eurocentric reductionism and historicism have never been subjected by them to any methodological or intra-cultural reflection. Hence, inter-cultural understanding becomes merely an externally-imposed-upon knowledge from the Western cultural perspective and thus

devoid of the intrinsic meaning it is supposed to have. That is why a prominent contemporary social thinker sagaciously points out that if cross-cultural understanding is to be achieved,

both one-sided Weberian axiologism and the hypothesis of monolinear social differentiation and objectively irreversible historical development coached by the classical Marxism had to be rejected. The idea of "convergence" and universalization of the world-wide patterns of social life was also inverted. Western civilization was set off as a local type of "social being" which, owing to its specific system of values, is able to expand into the areas of other societal types but unable to transform them from the inside and hence open to their counteraction at some point. The so-called "Asiatic" or similar societies were interpreted not as blind alleys in the history of social evolution and progress but as different, possibly final, solutions of the societal equation.<sup>302</sup>

Indeed, true cross-cultural understanding will emerge only when the assumption is abandoned of a formal goal necessary for all societies to reach, and attempts made instead to comprehend cultural tradition from the perspective of how it develops rationally and consistently in correspondence with its internal logic (for more discussion, see Chapter 6).

---

<sup>302</sup> Zilberman, "The Post-sociological Society," Studies in Soviet Thought, Vol.17, 1979, pp.311-312.

## 5.6 EUROCENTRIC REDUCTIONISM IN THE WESTERN PHILOSOPHICAL-SCIENTIFIC TRADITION

The Eurocentric reductionism that underlines the Western sociology of culture as represented by Hegel, Marx and Weber, however, is not merely an accident. Instead, it is deeply rooted in the entire modern philosophical-scientific tradition in the West since Rene Descartes, the first philosopher who systematically oriented the traditional Western theological discussion to the problem of knowing, to epistemology. For Descartes, every thing seems doubtable, including God, matter, science, experiences, etc.. But there is one thing that is indubitable - is by itself clear and distinct, and it is the thinking subject.

While I wanted to think everything false, it must necessarily be that I who thought was something; and remarking that this truth, "I think, therefore I am," was so solid and so certain that all the most extravagant suppositions of the sceptic were incapable of upsetting it, I judged that I could receive it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy that I sought.<sup>303</sup>

What is important in this quotation is not the truth it contains, but is the methodological division of the world into a system of objects and subjects it presupposes. The "Cartesian doubt"<sup>304</sup> can be wrong when it is reduced to the status of object by other subjects (and it indeed was rejected by the philosophers after him), but the readiness

---

<sup>303</sup> Rene Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1960, p.22.

<sup>304</sup> "Cartesian doubt" or "radical doubt" is referred to the process to which Descartes' famous cogito: I think, therefore I am, is reached. And it is regarded by him as the Archimedean point of knowledge.

of the subject as an transcendent judge to deal with the world outside him as objective fact in terms of systematic cognition has remained intact in the entire development of the modern philosophy and science. The world is now seen as a split world in which the object cannot be known unless there is an absolutely certain foundation for the subject to stand on. To save this epistemological crisis, there have been historically many attempts to search for this indubitable stand point on which the subject can rely to rebuild the entire edifice of knowledge: Descartes' "radical doubt," Husserl's "transcendental phenomenology,"<sup>305</sup> Hegel's "dialectical state," Marx's "free individuality," Weber's "ideal typical economic rationality" (to a certain degree), etc.. In every case, an immovable transcendent position of the subject is assumed and no methodological reflection is given to it - be it

---

<sup>305</sup> Husserl's transcendental phenomenology is a product of his meditation on Descartes' radical doubt. Basically, Husserl accepts Descartes' contention that thinking is the starting point of knowledge. But he rejects his radical doubt as not complete, as not radical enough, because he finds that the thinking of Descartes' thinking subject has not been purified as pure consciousness. That is, in Husserl's view, the consciousness that Descartes identifies is not pure consciousness but reflective consciousness. Hence he points out, in order to secure the foundation of knowledge, pure consciousness must be reached and it can be achieved by means of phenomenological bracketing, i.e., to put every thing that does not belong to pure consciousness into bracket and not to use them, including experiences, reflection, etc.. According to his analysis, the essence of pure consciousness is nothing but intentionality which is the very original point of knowing (see Ul Kuan-yu's Essays on Phenomenology, Taipei: Lai Ming Cultural Company Ltd., 1981).

consciousness, logical functions (like the dialectics of Hegel and Marx), traditionally free rationality, or whatsoever. The relationship between the subject and the object is clearly delimited: while the subject is an active cognizing agent ready to know, the object is a passive actual (it is only treated as actual, but not necessarily actual by itself) "thing." At the same time, the position of the cognizing subject is naturalized as "ontologically self-certain" in its approach to the subject. And it is the cognizing subject who, by its so called "clear and distinct" presuppositionless position (it is believed), makes known the object, not vice versa.

The naturalization of the subject's position significantly marks the inner character of the modern Western tradition which contains a scientific spirit of skepticism of the world as object but fails to reflect its very naturalized position as a doubting subject. Hence, instead of presenting itself as an "object of cognition," the Western cultural tradition elevates itself to the level of absolute which is the very source of doubt, of judgement, and, at the same time, regards itself as indubitable. It is like the God of the Christian Bible, and therefore a judge over everything. From the perspective of its "absoluteness," the world is nothing but the "extention" (to borrow Descartes' term) of its rationality. For that reason, any doubt of its "absoluteness" will inevitably

force it into "non-being" which will in turn cause the entire world to collapse, just as the Bible says: "you shall not doubt (God)." This alone can largely explain the periodic rise and decline of the philosophical systems in the West, i.e., the so called "epistemological crises" that constantly haunt the Western intellectual minds.<sup>306</sup> Owing to its peculiar subject/object dichotomized thinking, the Western mentality is so eager to look for an "absolute" point for knowledge that it fails to realize that any such point can be approached by other thinkers, as an "extension" from other "absolute" points. As a result, Descartes developed his "radical doubt" which was doubted by Husserl; Husserl developed his "pure consciousness" which was doubted by existentialists; etc.. Each of them approaches the other "absolute" points as objects and considers them "epistemological illusions." But by so doing each naturalizes his position, i.e., makes it absolute, instead of presenting it as "existentially" manifold. Put differently, he always denies the "absoluteness" of other

---

<sup>306</sup> On this account, the so-called "critical foundations" of knowledge as outlined by Jurgen Habermas escapes no such epistemological predicament, even though his original intention was to remedy the problem involved in the Western positivist science. His problem is that when he attempted to reify these foundations - technical interests, practical interest and emancipatory interest - as the absolute epistemological grounds (now not one, but three) applicable to the understanding of any cultural society, he unconsciously stayed back in the same epistemological shell with his predecessors by failing to realize that all these "interests" are from nowhere else other than the very cultural tradition in which he lived. (See his book Knowledge and Human Interests, Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).



people's positions, makes them his "objects of cognition," and subordinates them to his "absoluteness."

The failure of Hegel, Marx and Weber to explain the Chinese cultural tradition (and other non-Western cultural traditions as well) is precisely because they deny its "existentially valid" cultural position, and approach it as an object for investigation from their absolute cultural perspective. Although in their cases individual consciousness is substituted for culture, the basic methodological characteristic of the Western philosophical-scientific tradition remains unchanged: that is, instead of presenting cultural development as existentially manifold, they (Hegel, Marx and Weber) reduce it to a single path, i.e., the Western one, which they regard as the only absolutely rational cultural subject. More specifically, in their analysis of China, they do not realize (or are unwilling to realize) that China, like the West, is a cultural subject which has its distinct historical and cultural consciousness - its relative "transcendentality" (like Husserl's irreducible set of subjective positions) - and therefore cannot be treated as an object, as any residual category of the Western experience. In the very moment they approach China as an object, they immediately naturalize their cultural position and impose it on the understanding of China. As a result, the "China" they understand cannot exist except in their own mental universes.

## Chapter VI

### A NEW SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE CHINESE CULTURAL TRADITION

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, it has been shown that the reason for Hegel, Marx and Weber's failure to understand and explain the Chinese cultural tradition is because they reduce China to a residual category of the West, to a passive object which has its own meaning only in relation to the Western cultural absolute. Also, it has been pointed out that this Eurocentric reductionism is deeply rooted in the Western philosophical-scientific tradition which always tends to "absolutize" a subjective stand point and approaches the external world as object from the perspective of this "absolutized" subjective stand point. Hence, in order to overcome this object-subject opposition - in order to avoid the mistake that Hegel, Marx, and Weber committed in their treatments of the Chinese cultural tradition, a new approach to tradition in general and to the Chinese cultural tradition in particular is proposed in this chapter: an approach that treats tradition as intentionality, as an independent subject, instead of presenting it as an object that actually exists (see further on).<sup>307</sup> In other words,

---

<sup>307</sup> This approach was first introduced and propounded by

what is attempted here is to replace the "tradition-as-object approach" (principally approximate to the contemporary sociological approach to cultural tradition) with a "tradition-as-intentionality" one.

## 6.2 THE FLAW IN THE WESTERN SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CULTURAL TRADITION: TRADITION AS OBJECT

Concerning the tradition-as-object approach, what is emphasized of tradition is no more than the mechanism of the constant reproduction of social institutions and norms<sup>308</sup> and the content of these institutions and norms<sup>309</sup> (Marx and Hegel tend to stress the former as they look at the static, unchanging aspect of the reproduction of the patriarchal structure, while Weber tends to pursue the latter as he wants to know the consequences of two different sets of values - Confucian ethics versus Protestant ethics).<sup>310</sup> In

---

David Zilberman in his Ph.D. thesis "A Study of Tradition" and other unpublished articles including "A Typological Study Of The Russian-Soviet Cultural Tradition" and "Understanding Cultural Tradition As Types of Thinking."

<sup>308</sup> Edward Shils, Center And Periphery, Essays in Macrosociology, Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1975, pp.182-218.

<sup>309</sup> N. Eisenstadt, The Protestant Ethic And Modernization, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1968.

<sup>310</sup> The functionalist approach to culture can, to a certain extent, be included in Hegel's group, especially when it emphasizes the mechanistic reproduction of social system tending toward its teleological functional harmony (interdependence) of parts. Such an emphasis can never be able to explain successfully why a certain social institution (part) can survive in a particular society at the expense of other institutions in spite of the total social harmony, while it remain totally

respect of the first concern (mechanism of tradition), tradition is analyzed only in terms of mechanisms of persistence (unchangeableness) in the attachments to things, persons, societies, and practices of the past, - or in short, anything associated with the past.<sup>311</sup> As for the second concern (content of tradition), tradition is identified with a certain set of values that has a structuring effect on social development (or undevelopment). In both cases, tradition is treated as an actual, unconscious object that can be known only from the investigator's cognitive or cultural perspective. The active and selective nature of tradition is entirely ignored or misinterpreted, and why tradition can historically develop in response to the changing environment without losing its internal integrity is totally unexplained (or unexplainable). These two reasons alone are sufficient to abandon the "tradition-as-object" approach.

---

undeveloped in another culture. For the discussion of the teleologism of functionalism, see E. Nagel's The Structure of Science, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, pp.520-534.

<sup>311</sup> Weber's definition of "traditional" in terms of "ingrained habituation" obviously falls into this concern, though his actual comparative analysis is concerned with the content of tradition - values (see Weber, Economy and Society, pp.24-26).

### 6.3 A NEW SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CULTURAL TRADITION: TRADITION AS INTENTIONALITY

The "tradition-as-intentionality" approach proposed here is to treat tradition as an intentional subject, ready "to understand and accept the message as purposefully sent and traduced by the authoritative (but not necessarily authorized) source of tradition, to decipher this message and to act in the future in correspondence with the properly understood and interpreted spirit of the message."<sup>312</sup> In general, what characterizes this approach is that it views tradition, not from the investigator's cultural perspective, but from the inner position of the tradition being investigated, i.e., from the inner cultural logic (the traditional message and the individual's readiness to understand that message) of that tradition by which it materializes and perpetuates itself in its historical development.<sup>313</sup> It is awkwardly called the "tradition-as-intentionality" approach primarily because in this approach, tradition is understood not as a thing, i.e., as an object, which can be studied "objectively" by the investigator with his pre-constructed model of culture, but as intentionality,<sup>314</sup> which is an orientation or attitude

---

<sup>312</sup> Zilberman, "A Typological Study of The Russian-Soviet Cultural Tradition," p.4.

<sup>313</sup> David Zilberman, The Birth Of Meaning In Hindu Thought, Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1988, p.305.

<sup>314</sup> The term intentionality is similar to Husserl's understanding of the essence of consciousness as intentionality, but in our case, consciousness is replaced by tradition. See Quentin Lauer, The Triumph

toward the external world, or in short, a world view, and which can be known, not by some impossible analysis of what is outside that tradition (as Hegel, Marx and Weber did), but simply from an analysis of the internal rationality of that tradition itself. In other words, the tradition-as-intentionality approach is a return to the study of tradition in its own right, to viewing tradition as consisting of both objectivity and subjectivity, neither of which has significance without the other. Objectivity and subjectivity are nothing but the interrelated and inter-reflected relationship between culture and tradition. While objectivity is the objectified subjectivity and therefore as culture, subjectivity is the internal rationality behind the objectified culture and therefore as tradition.<sup>315</sup>

---

of Subjectivity, New York: Fordham University Press, 1978, p.37.

<sup>315</sup> In sociology, tradition and culture have always been used interchangeably without any clear, analytical distinction, and the unique position of tradition has frequently been ignored and reduced to the position of culture. For the discussion of the reason for the omission of the analysis of tradition, see Edward Shils, Center and Periphery, Essays in Macrosociology, Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1975, pp.183-184. Here, the author emphasizes that conceptually, tradition and culture must be distinguished from one another so as to restore the study of tradition to its full right. As far as tradition is concerned, it is unchangeable and constitutes the absolute reality or "inertial frame of reference" of a society. Any change of this absolute reality means the corresponding change of cultural position. On the other hand, culture, or the activity of culture, is changeable and can be sublated (i.e., negated) or falsified by some other cultural experiences or activities. For example, we may suspect certain cultural activities to be inadequate to the presumed cultural tradition and hence demand their replacement by

To further elaborate, this new approach contends that tradition is not an actual object and therefore cannot be treated as object, and that it is a self-developing, self-actualizing and self-perpetuating subject having its own rationality and subjectivity, both of which can only be understood by the internal identification with them. In this sense, it is similar to Hegel's political state, but in a historically and culturally concrete sense rather than in the abstract-general sense. For the author, the emphasis on political superiority is of no universal necessity and represents no more than a certain traditional consciousness. On the other hand, it is also similar to Husserl's transcendental consciousness, but in our case, the subject is cultural tradition rather than individual consciousness (the latter, when carefully reasoned, comes from no where but the cultural environment in which the individual lives).

Methodologically, the tradition-as-intentionality approach is multi-positional rather than monistic, in that it assumes a plurality of cultural developments in which each cultural tradition develops rationally, i.e., intentionally, in accordance with its traditional message,

---

other cultural activities. But we cannot doubt the radical way that cultural activities are expressed without accomplishing an absolute change of cultural position. For that reason, it means that all cultural activities are phenomenal and must come under the absolute reality of tradition as their formal cause. They (cultural activities) attempt to capture fully the meaning of tradition; yet they never succeed in achieving that. And this is exactly what keeps culture developing as an ongoing process of objectifying tradition.

instead of naturalizing an "Archimedean" cultural perspective against which all other cultures are to be interpreted. Basically, this approach is (1) an attempt to identify the cultural subjectivity<sup>316</sup> that characterizes a particular cultural tradition and (2) to unfold how this subjectivity actively and consciously maintains, develops and objectifies itself in a changing social and natural environment. In short, it seeks to reveal the internal consistency in the development of cultural tradition.

Analogically, to identify the subjectivity of a given cultural tradition is something like detecting the "inertial frame of reference" or the "metaphysics" of that cultural tradition. The inertial frame of reference referred to here is the level of absolute truth or reality accepted by a particular cultural tradition which is non-contestable and does not allow refutation or empirical falsification<sup>317</sup> (e.g., Newton's three laws of motion and Einstein's spatial-temporal continuum in relativist physics). Any refutation immediately means a corresponding paradigm shift, not the empirical falsification in a real sense.<sup>318</sup> Once the

---

<sup>316</sup> Subjectivity means here the kind of quality that constitutes the independent, rational existence of a particular cultural tradition. More specifically, it is the readily qualified attitude to act according to a particularly perceived traditional message such as the kind of individuality that the West is always ready to pursue and struggle for even at the expense of the social whole or the kind of familistic harmony the Chinese tend to seek even at the expense of their individuality.

<sup>317</sup> Zilberman, 1988, p.34.



"inertial frame of reference" of a given cultural tradition is detected and the investigator declares his loyalty to that tradition in his analysis of it, he immediately experiences a change in cultural position, i.e., in frame of reference, from his own to the one he has detected. As a corollary, he is expected to confirm his readiness to understand any event in that cultural tradition as a link in the same chain, with all other cultural alternatives excluded.<sup>319</sup> In other words, all the structures of his previous activity should temporarily be transmuted into that cultural tradition and placed there in accordance with its frame of reference.<sup>320</sup> And by this cultural shift, the investigator can gain the largest possible scope for an objective (i.e., external to his own cultural perspective) and subjective (i.e., internally consistent) understanding of that cultural tradition.

Hence, instead of being irrational and mechanistic, traditional action is considered here both rational and active, having its own inertial frame of reference and internal logic (i.e., the structural order of things or life

---

<sup>318</sup> Since what cultural tradition deals with is the meaning (or essence) of life, it therefore cannot be falsified in any empirical sense. For example, neither familism nor individualism contains the kind of objectivity that must or must not be accepted by all. Both of them have their own metaphysical absolute that is beyond empirical falsification and therefore cannot be sublated or doubted in their inner sense.

<sup>319</sup> David Zilberman, 1988, p.307.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., p.307.

in relation to this frame of reference). In the process of traditional action (i.e., of traditionalization), the authentic traditional message or the inertial frame of reference is referred to, interpreted, clarified and finally projected by the individual into the future for its corresponding rational action, i.e., for the realization of the particular human content (goal) specifically perceived by a particular cultural tradition. In this regard, all social actions, no matter how economically, politically, or otherwise oriented, can be regarded as traditional, in the sense that they all grow out of a certain cultural tradition, develop in relation to a particular frame of reference unique to that cultural tradition, acquire their meanings from that cultural tradition, and act as stated by the particular attitude toward the external world internalized in that cultural tradition. Traditionalization, therefore, is nothing but the very social process by which the individual acquires his identity or individual consciousness as a cultural being, and by which tradition is to be carried through by the individual's collective effort to uphold, i.e., to materialize, his cultural identity in correspondence with his traditional frame of reference.

From this angle, the present approach proposes no "naturalized," non-traditional universal human content that every cultural tradition "ought" to realize (like Hegel's

political state, Marx's free individuality and Weber's economic rationality). Human content is considered here as "ontologically" unapproachable and unknowable, as something without substance. In some way, it is like the object of language: we can only approach the "object" indirectly through linguistic form, and if without the latter, the former immediately becomes unthinkable and unintelligible.<sup>321</sup> Similarly, human content can only be conceived "metamorphically" (in a transformed sense) through the mediation of different types of traditions, of different frames of reference,<sup>322</sup> of different "finalized" social forms<sup>323</sup> (but not in a chronological system as Marx and Hegel think), e.g., power in Russia, family in China, individuality in the West, and so on. Each of these social forms represents a distinctive, but at the same time

---

<sup>321</sup> David Zilberman, 1988, pp.319-324.

<sup>322</sup> Insofar as frame of reference is concerned, there has appeared no single frame of reference that can unify all other frames of reference into an all-encompassing truth or reality; and in this sense, all different frames of reference can be considered as existentially valid, as legitimate frames of reference for qualifying human life.

<sup>323</sup> The term 'form' used here must be distinguished from the way Hegel and Marx use it. For Hegel and Marx, form refers to the historical expression of content, but it is not equivalent to content, unless it reaches its final development in which form and content completely coincide. In our case, "form" is devoid of historicism and is finalized in cultural tradition. Although it is also seen as not equivalent to content, it is the only (finalized) form, through which a particularly perceived content is expressed, and without which the latter becomes unapproachable. Historicist thinking belongs only to a particular form and therefore applies to no more than that social form.

universally valid, form of realizing human content. The very process of traditionalization is but the rational process of actualizing the culturally perceived human content - the traditional message - unique to a particular cultural tradition. Different cultural traditions have different forms of realizing their differently perceived human contents and therefore different traditionalization processes. It is by the traditionalization process that tradition can develop, actualize and perpetuate itself in accordance with its traditional message or inertial frame of reference, and it is also by this process that social life and relations are shaped and reshaped "in a quite definitely qualified spirit of traditionalism."<sup>324</sup>

For many people, the actual relevance of this tradition-as-intentionality approach in the so-called modern world seems dubious, especially when the destruction of traditional values is highly praised and the importation of the spirit of Westernism (especially Western individualistic values) is greatly appreciated under the name of modernization.<sup>325</sup> But one example is sufficient to prove that the doubt is unnecessary. In the West, there has always been an interiorized tendency to preserve its traditional individualistic values (the ones Max Weber discovered and correctly identified as the determining

---

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>325</sup> See Alex Inkeles & David Smith, Becoming Modern, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974.

factor - the cultural ethos - of the emergence of Western capitalism) so as to stimulate people and make them anxious about constant renovation of economic and other interests.<sup>326</sup> Historically, individualism has been the metaphysical absolute, i.e., the unfalsified frame of reference, which forms the elementary structure of Western consciousness.<sup>327</sup> Nowadays, individualistic values still continue to be purposefully inculcated in Western minds through the mass media. Much of the resources and efforts of the West are expended to keep the traditional spirit of individualism alive, in spite of the rapidly growing expense and the elusive outcome.<sup>328</sup> This intentionality (intentional process) is to preserve the traditional message of the integrity of individuality. Thus it is the spirit of Western socio-cultural life expressed in its particular traditionalism, i.e., in its indubious traditional belief in the authenticity of individuality. This appears absurd from other traditionalistic perspectives, e.g., from the Russian or Chinese point of view.<sup>329</sup>

---

<sup>326</sup> David Zilberman, "A Study Of Tradition," p.8.

<sup>327</sup> See Louis Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980; and Chris Youngdall, Television Commercials As Cultural Texts, M.A. Thesis, Winnipeg: The University Of Manitoba, 1985.

<sup>328</sup> This elusive outcome is in some way reflected in Max Weber's pessimistic view on the inevitable domination of bureaucracy over individualistic development as well as on the shrinking of the traditional Puritan ethics resulted from the rising consumerism. See Max Weber's The Protestant Ethic And The Spirit Of Capitalism, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1930, pp.181-183.

<sup>329</sup> For example, even as modernized as today's Taiwan, most

#### 6.4 THE METHOD OF IDENTIFYING INTENTIONALITY OF TRADITION: TRADITION AS PARTIAL INSTITUTION

Now the problem is: how can we identify the intentionality of a tradition which is so complex and diverse in its content? Put more specifically, since society always consists of a whole system of institutions which all have their own internal logic of operation, how is it possible to single out constructively the very intentionality that dictates the development of the entire social system? Will it be the case that the reduction of tradition to intentionality will yield various irreducible intentionalities juxtaposed to one another in the culture content, as was Husserl's "poly-ego-ism at odds with itself" in his final phenomenological reduction?<sup>330</sup> Fortunately, we are not doing phenomenological reduction of tradition so that we will not get a set of positions in tradition which are equally objective in the inner cultural sense. Tradition is treated here as a single subject rational and consistent in its own completion, i.e., as the only social fact from which all other social facts derive their meaning.

---

people still hold that group interests (e.g., harmony) should come before private interests; the latter seem to have no legitimate existence unless they are pursued under the names of larger groups or organizations. For the discussion of the private-public tension in the structure of Chinese personality, see Lung-kee Sun, The Deep Structures Of Chinese Culture, Hong Kong: I-San Publishing Company, 1983.

<sup>330</sup> Edmond Husserl, Experience And Judgment, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973, p.303.

This approach can be practically achieved by introducing David Zilberman's concept of "partial institution."<sup>331</sup> The underlying logic of this concept is that: although in any society there is a system of institutions, there always exists a single powerful institution which, by its own logic, develops itself at the expense of the other institutions, i.e., subordinates them to its single domination and structuring, and which can be used as an independent frame of reference for understanding the main sense of the current cultural process in that society.<sup>332</sup> This powerful institution is thus called a partial institution, partial in the sense that it by its very principle alone represents the developmental direction of the whole social system, which, with its parts as well, "look as if they existed for the sake of this partial institution and against their proper goals."<sup>333</sup> Some distinguished examples that may serve to explain this point are the political institution in Russia and the economic institution in the West. In Russia, the state is super-imposed on the society; its super-ordinate existence, i.e., power, coerces the rest of the institutions to act in conformity to its will as if they had no independent existence. This is why Russian society always gives us an

---

<sup>331</sup> Zilberman, "Understanding Cultural Traditions As Types of Thinking," pp.29-30.

<sup>332</sup> Zilberman, 1988, p.318.

<sup>333</sup> Zilberman, "A Typological Study Of The Russian-Soviet Cultural Tradition," p.8.

impression of over-politicization, of totalitarianism. Indeed, the development of the state forms the very essence of the Russian cultural reality. In contrast, the individualistically based economic institution (i.e., the domination of the market mechanism based on individual demand and supply) in the West permeates every aspect of social life. Everything - be it politic or arts - is measured in terms of market value. Common expressions like political market, cultural market and so on are adequate to reflect the omnipresence of such an economicalized (i.e., individualized, value-oriented) reality.

Hence, it can be said that the identification of the partial institution of a tradition is nothing but the identification of the intentionality of that tradition. The intentionality of a tradition lies nowhere but in the rationality of the partial institution's "institutionalization of all other institutions within the limits of the concrete culture and in the history of its social development."<sup>334</sup> In the socio-cultural process, the (rational) principle of the partial institution is accepted (by the culturally situated individuals) as being able and necessary to determine the development of all other institutions. Therefore, structurally it corresponds to the point of change of the inertial frame of reference of its tradition and comprises the "metaphysics" of cultural

---

<sup>334</sup> Zilberman, "Understanding Cultural Traditions As Types Of Thinking," p.30.



understanding in an unfalsified sense. Considered from its inner cultural perspective, its existence is absolute (i.e., institutionally unavoidable) and cannot be sublated by any kind of institutional principle (unless an absolute transition of institutional principle is accomplished). By its uncompromising principle, the partial institution is in an absolute position to organize and re-organize the entire social relations under its logic, in spite of the dysfunctionality of other institutions.<sup>335</sup> Its historical development signifies the principal line development of its society, and its rationality represents the main structural principle of the entire socio-cultural process. Therefore, it logically follows that, "if there is a definite knowledge that some institution is partial... we are in a position to claim that the study of this society may be freely confined to this single institution and its transformations in various organizations."<sup>336</sup>

If we follow the above reasoning, we can conceptually begin by forming the ideal partial institution and then reduce the whole sum of social life and history of a given society to a system of categories: whole/part.<sup>337</sup> That is, the development of the social whole is always and

---

<sup>335</sup> In this regard, the functionalist approach is necessarily untenable; dysfunctionality of other institutions is not necessarily harmful to, but may be vital for, the survival of tradition.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., p.29-30.

<sup>337</sup> Zilberman, 1988, p.318.

necessarily determined by the partiality of a particular institution which forms the main-line cultural development of that society and whose principle is the structural principle of the social whole. This conceptual system of categories would allow us to articulate that tradition as the partial, and yet the only rational, form of social being in its inner cultural sense, i.e., in its internally consistent sense. But of course, it is assumed that the partial institution identified as the main tradition is sufficiently manifested in the history of the given society.

From the above discussion, it is easy to conclude that the proper sociological method to identify the intentionality of a tradition is to search for the partial institution of that tradition and to reveal how it represents the tradition in integrating the whole sum of social life into its own rational form. This search can be performed by subtracting the competing institutions one by one, and the one that remains at last is identified as the triumphant principle of the corresponding cultural tradition.<sup>338</sup> To be more concise, the partial institution of a tradition is said to be recognized when its principle is found to have overridden other institutions and subordinated them to its development. If the principle of the partial institution is found, all theoretical efforts can be directed toward the understanding of how the rest of the

---

<sup>338</sup> Zilberman, "A Typological Study Of The Russian-Soviet Cultural Tradition," p.8.

institutional phenomena are organized around this principle, i.e., how they are structured or transformed in accordance with this principle.<sup>339</sup>

#### 6.5 CHINESE CULTURAL TRADITION AS FAMILISM: A THEORETICAL OUTLINE

Theoretically, it goes without question that the triumphant principle, i.e., the partial institution, in the Chinese civilization must be family. Hegel, Marx and Weber all have realized the importance of this institution in the Chinese socio-cultural development, even though owing to their Eurocentrism, they never considered it the rational form of social life from the Chinese inner cultural perspective.

Familism in China, like individualism in the West, is elevated to the "metaphysical absolute" which internally structures the entire Chinese traditionalistic consciousness. Familism here roughly refers to the belief that a natural familistic order (e.g., father/son, husband/wife, older/younger brother. etc.) of metaphysical imperative exists at various levels of human life (individual, family, society, state and universe) and that harmony of the order depends upon the individual to harmonize the whole realm of familistic human relationships and cosmic order. In the Chinese mentality, the normative structure of family relations possesses a universally

---

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., pp.8-9.

significant meaning, against which the whole universe is projected. The society is regarded as a macroscopic expression of familistic harmony, while the individual personality is regarded as a microscopic expression of that harmony. On the one hand, the Chinese personality is perceived as temperament, as something constituted by the natural (normative) relation of the 'Yin' and the "Yang" principles.<sup>340</sup> The "Yin" and the "Yang" principles, as the Chinese understand them, are the two essential forces running through everything in the universe. While the former refers to femininity or passivity, the latter means masculinity or activity. For the Chinese, the essence of the universe is constituted by the normative intercourse of the "Yin" and the "Yang," by the interaction similar to the conjugal relationship of husband and wife.<sup>341</sup> It is believed that by the normative intercourse of the "Yin" and the "Yang," everything, both spiritual and material, is given birth. The Chinese project these principles into their personality and look for the possible "signs" of the "Yin" and the "Yang" to judge whether or not their life is properly lived.<sup>342</sup> And the judgement is in turn projected

---

<sup>340</sup> Shun-san Wang, Wang Shun-san Commentaries of I-Ching, Taipei: Kwong-man Publishing Company, Ltd., 1981, pp.3-4.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., p.7.

<sup>342</sup> In this regard, the Chinese projective activity can be compared to Freud's psychoanalysis which assumes a normative complex of "id-ego-superego" in human personality and judges a person's personality in accordance with the "projected symptoms" of this complex appearing in his actual behavior.

into the future for corresponding action. Hence, familism always internalizes an tendency in the Chinese personality to achieve a harmonious adjustment between the "Yin" and the "Yang," between passivity and activity, between "body" and "mind," etc.. Any improper behavior or psychological discomfort is but a result of the imbalance of such pairwise relations which are said to be the natural constituents of personality. Not surprisingly, one of the main tasks of Chinese philosophy is the concrete explication of the "Yin" and the "Yang" principles in relation to social life and historical process, though under different names, such as "Li" (理) and "Tsi" (氣), "Kin" (乾) and "Kwan" (坤), etc..

On the other hand, familism also administers its principle to the rest of the institutions of Chinese society. Familistic harmony forms the cardinal rule of keeping the entire social system vital and moving.<sup>343</sup> But this harmony is not articulated as an abstract-generalality as Hegel's conception of the state. For the Chinese, any abstraction is absurd, like an abstraction of nothingness.<sup>344</sup> This can be attested to by the fact that history, instead of philosophy (even that which is devoted more to concrete moral and historical specification than to the investigation of abstract principles) is of the utmost importance in this civilization. Social harmony depends

---

<sup>343</sup> Kwan-Ngai Tang, 1979, pp.119-200.

<sup>344</sup> Zilberman, "Undersatnding Cultural Tradition As Types Of Thinking," p.36.

upon the harmonization of concrete families. The state, therefore, is considered merely as a higher hierarchical order of the familistic whole, as father of the families, and is responsible for bringing harmony and goodness to the entire familistic kingdom.<sup>345</sup> In the Chinese view, the state must take good care of its subjects and respect their independent development. But this does not mean that the state is primary and that the individual subjects are secondary. For the Chinese, both the state and its subjects are interdependent on each other to form the wholeness of the familistic harmony, i.e., to complete one another. Neither of them can be sacrificed for the development of the other. Thus, insofar as they do not affect the familistic harmony, all other forms of activities are accepted, including material pursuit, religious practice, etc.. In this sense, Chinese society can be seen as a unity of the family, the civil society and the state (to use Hegel's terms), but with the family as the absolute principle of social structuring. It is a system of "familiocracy," in which social and political relations are all expressed familistically.<sup>346</sup> The traditional intentionality that is displayed at the social and political levels is always oriented toward "the world as a family"

---

<sup>345</sup> John C. H. Wu, "Chinese Legal And Political Philosophy," in The Chinese Mind, edited by Charles A. Moore, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967, p.217.

<sup>346</sup> Y. P. Mei, "The Status Of The Individual in Chinese Social Thought And Practice," in The Chinese Mind, edited by Charles A. Moore, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967, p.331.

(天下一家), "all being brothers within the four seas" (四海之内皆兄弟), to settle (political divisions) into a single unity" (定於一), "politic and social teaching (instruction) are united into one" (政教合一), "the state as parent" (邦國父母), etc.. (for more discussion of Chinese familism, see Appendix A).

#### 6.6 THE CHINESE CULTURAL TRADITION: A HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

If the above internal rationality of the Chinese cultural tradition - i.e., the intentionality to realize the familistic order and harmony - can be understood, it is not difficult to capture the main-line socio-political development in Chinese history. Basically, Chinese history can be considered to be a history that constantly struggles to pursue and realize the familistic ideal (harmony and unity) internalized in its tradition. For the Chinese, change or reform is only adjustment to the familistic order, not the alteration of it. It is a means of bringing about a better harmony and therefore cannot be an end in itself. Familistic order and harmony always have a weighty priority over everything, including individual values. Therefore, unless in times of emergency (like the life-and-death threat from the West in the nineteenth century), the Chinese tend not to resort to radical change. In their consciousness, any radical change will inevitably cause the destruction of the familistic order and harmony. Not surprisingly, in the

Chinese language change and chaos are put together to mean social turbulence (Tung-lun, 動亂 ).<sup>347</sup> Change is understood as the source of social chaos.

In fact, the periodic peasant wars characteristic of Chinese history were "Tung-Luns" and cannot indiscriminately be compared to the class struggles of Western history as the Marxists try to do. They are not the internal driving force of Chinese history toward a classless society. To the contrary, they represent the attempts to restore the familistic order and harmony which were lost due to political malfunction, social corruption, natural disasters and so on. These wars were not intended to destroy the familistic hierarchical order, but instead specifically were intended to bring about a higher development of it. If we pay some attention to the Chinese historical development, we can notice that there had been a double-rail process in Chinese history. On the one hand, political power had become increasingly centralized accompanied by increasing unification of political and ideological teaching. On the other hand, families had increasingly been homogenized (proletarianized) - the economic gap among families was disappearing with the passage of time. As can be observed in Chinese history before the mid Tang dynasty (see Appendix B for the chronological scheme of Chinese history), although there had been a formal unity, the political integrity of the central government always faced challenges from powerful

---

<sup>347</sup> Lung-Kee Sun, p.9.



families and landlords. In fact, the downfall of the Earlier and Later Han dynasties as well as the Western and Eastern Tsin dynasties were all directly or indirectly caused by competition from or conflicts with the powerful families or landlords.<sup>348</sup>

This phenomenon is basically a deformed familism, because the individual families expanded at the expense of the entire familistic order. It reflects the tension between the two levels of familistic development: family and political. The historical consequence of this deformation was the curtailment of the unbalanced growth of powerful families and landlords in order to preserve the higher-level familistic harmony. Hence, since the mid-Tang dynasty, Chinese familistic society advanced in a more egalitarian direction, and the paternalistic relationship between the state and individual families became more harmonized and unified. Up until the Sung dynasty, the big, powerful families and landlords had basically disappeared.<sup>349</sup> What remained was an essentially familistic "proletarianized" society. The state eventually coincided with its paternalistic function and was singly responsible for the instruction, teaching and administration of the entire kingdom, while the individual families and subjects lived

---

<sup>348</sup> Ying-zi Yu, A Historical Discussion On The Chinese Intelligentsia as a class for Itself, Taipei: Luen King Publishing Company, Ltd., 1979.

<sup>349</sup> Lok-sing Fu, A General History Of China Vol.II, Taipei: Tai Chung Kwok Publishing Company, Ltd., 1972, p.550.

under the guidance and care of the paternalistic state. But this implies no rigid hierarchicalism. The examination system established by the state ensured a high degree of equality and mobility institutionally, thereby making the paternalistic order more stable and sophisticated and yet conscious in its development.

The invasion by the West in many ways seems to have changed the entire Chinese history. Many people tend to believe that the Chinese cultural tradition withered away. However, this belief is superficial, as it fails to penetrate the essence of the contemporary development in China. No doubt, with regard to cultural content, Chinese society has changed a great deal in response to the pressure from the West and in order to survive in a totally new world situation. Urbanization, the introduction of Western technology, and a series of institutional changes such as the shrinking of family function, the development of an industrial economy and the overthrow of imperial rule all have contributed to the new outlook of China which appears to be abruptly different from the past. But no matter how convincing the argument is that China is leaving behind its tradition, to the disappointment of many people, China did not develop into a capitalist society based on individualistic values. Conversely, the Chinese communist revolution brought China to a historical peak where the traditional ideal was almost completely realized. The

communist land reform and socialization further lessened "the difference between the small poor and the big poor" as Sun Yatsen observed in the late Ching dynasty.<sup>350</sup> Consequently, the Communists made concrete the Confucian ideal of the "Grand Union Datung" (大同), a society in which mutual care and socialized humanity are expected to replace egoistic individualism. On the other hand, political power has become highly centralized. Communism, having replaced Confucianism, has become another single legitimate body of thinking, teaching and learning. With the assistance of modern mass media, the traditional paternalistic relationship between the state and people has nearly reached its perfect expression. The state not only takes care of its subjects' proper education, but also is responsible for their material needs. Those who are running the political machine are still intellectuals, though no longer Confucian. Like a father, they are still at the top of the paternalistic hierarchy to look after the harmonious development of the entire nation.<sup>351</sup>

There is no doubt that the original goal of the Chinese Communist Party was to achieve Marx's ideal of free individuality. But ironically, the result of social practice is that this goal is inexorably transformed by the Chinese tradition. On the surface, no one can deny that

---

<sup>350</sup> Sun Yatsen, The Teachings Of Sun Yatsen, Taipei: San Man Publishing Company Ltd., 1974.

<sup>351</sup> C. P. Fitzgerald, Revolution In China, London: The Cresset Press, 1952, p.117.

China has experienced a radical revolution in society and in the relations of production. But at the level of cultural consciousness, what can be seen is a big victory for the Chinese cultural tradition. The 'continuous revolution' that Mao Zedong put into practice in order to destroy the Confucian paternalistic harmony-emphasized tradition only created the most disastrous "ten-year Tung-Lun" (十年動亂) as his successors have admitted. It not only did not bring the paternalistic order and the bureaucratic state machine to an end, but instead caused serious social unrest and discontent which almost uprooted the entire country. Today, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution still remains a nightmare to most Chinese. After the revolution, it is still the return to "the great unity" (大統一) and "the universal peace and harmony" (天下太平). To the present day, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, the idea of "continuous revolution" has been totally dropped. What appear instead are the slogans of "stability," "obedience" and the "steady development under the Party's guidance."<sup>352</sup> Now the nation is completely restored to the previous paternalistic order: the state teaches and instructs and the people follow; other forms of activities are allowed, provided they do not affect the existing order.

---

<sup>352</sup> Lung-Kee Sun, p.298.

6.7 THE SUPERIORITY OF THE TRADITION-AS-INTENTIONALITY APPROACH OVER HEGEL'S, MARX'S AND WEBER'S APPROACHES TO THE CHINESE CULTURAL TRADITION

Finally, before concluding this thesis, it is necessary to explain briefly how the tradition-as-intentionality approach is better than Hegel's, Marx's, and Weber's theoretical approaches for explaining the Chinese cultural tradition. To begin, as has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, the tradition-as-intentionality approach treats tradition as an intentional subject rather than as an unconscious object. Therefore, it is able to understand cultural development in its own right. The reason for Hegel, Marx and Weber's failure to understand the Chinese cultural tradition is precisely because they reduce it to the status of object, and analyse it from their own cultural perspective. As a result, they entirely miss the point that the Chinese cultural tradition has its own internal rationality which is different from that of the West. In contrast, the tradition-as-intentionality approach involves no such problems. Its theoretical departure is the internal rationality of the Chinese cultural tradition, and what it deals with is the internal consistency of the Chinese socio-cultural experiences and the Chinese cultural frame of reference. Thus, it allows the investigator to suspend his personal cultural perspective and thereby enables him to fathom the Chinese cultural tradition both objectively (externally) and subjectively (internally) without being ethnocentric.

Besides, without being ethnocentric, or more precisely concerning the present discussion, Eurocentric, the tradition-as-intentionality approach formulates no reified universal historical scheme that China, and other societies as well, must follow. The reason for the failure of all the historical predictions of Hegel, Marx and Weber is primarily that they ignore the Chinese developmental end and corresponding developmental experience and externally impose the Western historical experience for understanding China's socio-cultural development. In consequence, what they understand to be the reality of China is no more than a mystery and inevitably subsides before the trial of history. Comparatively, the tradition-as-intentionality approach, as it has been pointed out, is multi-positional, and therefore its understanding of the Chinese historical development is based on its internal developmental logic, i.e., on how China has historically developed in accordance with its particularly perceived developmental end (or traditional message, as we called it), rather than on the naturalized developmental path abstracted from the Western socio-cultural experience.

Furthermore, since the tradition-as-intentionality approach reifies no single non-traditional human end that all societies must realize, it naturally escapes the traditionality-versus-rationality dilemma that Hegel, Marx and Weber face. For Hegel, Marx and Weber, social

development is unidirectional and moves toward a single non-traditional end - i.e., individual freedom in different forms (for Hegel, it is political or ethical freedom, and for Marx and Weber, it is economic or axiological freedom). Without subjecting themselves to intra-cultural reflection, they all assume that individual freedom is the essence or the absolute reality of social life. And it is under this assumption that they consider Western society to be both non-traditional and rational, while Chinese society to be both traditional and non-rational. In their mind, traditional China is simply incompatible with rationality and, more importantly, with the so-called modern economic, legal and political life. In order to be rational, i.e., to modernize, China must replace its mechanistic tradition with Western conscious rationality. In this regard, the tradition-as-intentionality approach differs radically. It not only does not see Western society as non-traditional, but also assumes no incompatibility between traditionality and rationality. More precisely, it contends that all societies are traditional and that all traditions are by themselves rational in terms of the internal consistency of their socio-cultural developments. The Chinese society is no exception and therefore also traditional. Yet it is absolutely rational, i.e., conscious and self-organizing in accordance with its cultural principle. Since it is rational, it is possibly able to adjust itself to the changing socio-cultural environment and even to proliferate

in it. From this angle, the current developments in the Far East as well as in mainland China that seem to have contradicted Hegel, Marx and Weber's conceptualization of the incompatibility between the Chinese cultural tradition and "modern" economic, legal and political life make perfect sense in the tradition-as-intentionality approach: the acceptance of the compatibility between the Chinese cultural tradition and other contemporary forms of socio-cultural life is entirely warranted.<sup>353</sup> And it is on this point that the tradition-as-intentionality approach displays its utmost superiority over Hegel, Marx and Weber's theoretical approaches to the Chinese cultural tradition; it illuminates both the stability of the Chinese cultural tradition as well as its compatibility with contemporary socio-cultural development (e.g., industrial growth).

## **6.8 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The present thesis has both shown the inadequacy of Western sociological theory as represented by Hegel, Marx and Weber for interpreting the Chinese cultural tradition and suggested a theoretical approach which is a more adequate explanation of the Chinese cultural tradition. This approach, as the author calls it, is the tradition-as-intentionality approach. In contrast to Hegel's theory of Oriental despotism, Marx's theory of Asiatic mode of production and Weber's theory of the

---

<sup>353</sup> David Zilberman, "The Post-Sociological Society," p.310.



Confucian ethic, all of which are constructed from these people's cultural perspective, this new approach is a return to the study of the Chinese cultural tradition in its own right. The author believes that only by returning to the study of the Chinese cultural tradition in its own right the reality of this society can truly be captured.

Tentatively, the author has outlined the intentionality of the Chinese cultural tradition which is familism and explained briefly how it has historically structured the Chinese socio-cultural development. It must be admitted that this outline is crude and needs more research to further clarify the complex historical phenomenon of Chinese familism and its intricate relationship with the overall Chinese socio-cultural development. Nevertheless, the author must also admit that this theoretical outline shows the proper sociological direction for understanding the Chinese cultural tradition, because it succeeds in pointing out the trend of Chinese socio-cultural development in terms of its internal rationality and internal consistency. This internal rationality and internal consistency are precisely what Hegel's, Marx's and Weber's theories fail to realize and explain.

Finally, it should be further added that since the tradition-as-intentionality approach does not specifically dwell in any particularly pre-constructed abstract model of cultural tradition, it is not limited to the study of the

Chinese cultural tradition but is applicable to the study of any other cultural tradition. But of course, this application must be confined to the methodological level. That is to say, other than the methodological procedures the approach specifies for identifying the intentionality of tradition, the theoretical understanding of any particular cultural tradition is still materially grounded in the actual analysis of the internal rationality of that cultural tradition.

All in all, if cross-cultural understanding does have its supposed meaning - i.e., understanding other cultures without being ethnocentric, the tradition-as-intentionality approach should be the first step to this goal, since its underlying assumption is precisely the understanding of other cultures without holding to any particular cultural position or value. The author believes that this is the only proper way of approaching, as well as understanding, different cultural traditions sociologically, i.e., scientifically.

**Appendix A**  
**THE GENESIS OF FAMILISM IN CHINA**

**A.1 INTRODUCTION**

This appendix attempts to give a supplementary account of the Chinese familistic tradition which has only been discussed briefly in the main body of the thesis. For the sake of clarity, it is organized into four sections. Section I elaborates in more detail on the nature of familism. Section II clarifies the relationship between familism and Confucianism. Section III traces the emergence of familism by examining the five Chinese classics, i.e., the five oldest, Chinese sacred books. Finally, section IV discusses how familism affected ancient Chinese social development.

**A.2 THE NATURE OF FAMILISM**

As we have said in chapter 6, familism refers to the belief in a metaphysical imperative that governs a natural familistic order at various levels of human life, and that harmony depends upon the individual's ability to harmonize the whole realm of familistic (or familistically expressed) human relationships and the cosmic order. Basically, it

consists of two major metaphysical assumptions: the universe is a harmonious normative unity in homology with family; and the essence of the universe is ethical goodness or love, manifest in the mutual completion and interdependence among the individual members in the unity.<sup>354</sup> Like family, the universe is seen as a hierarchical order of various levels of existence. At the top is Heaven, and then there are the state, the family and the individual in that order. Every level exists only in its relation to the other levels, not absolutely, and the sum of their interrelationships constitute the totality of the unified whole, the universe. The structure of the unity is familistic, and the relationships among different levels are also familistic in nature. The relation of Heaven to the state, for example, is parental; Heaven is the parent of the state and the emperor is called the "son of Heaven" (天子); On the other hand, the relation of the state to its subjects is also parental; the subjects are considered the children of the state (子民).

To elaborate further, familism, when it is subjectively expressed, i.e., at the level of consciousness, is basically a way of thinking, a qualified attitude toward life and everything that surrounds it, or to use Husserl's word, a world view. This type of thinking is characteristic of

---

<sup>354</sup> Y.P. Mei, "The Basic of Social, Ethical, and Spiritual Values in Chinese Philosophy," in The Chinese Mind, edited by Charles Moore, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967, p.148.

three major structural aspects. First of all, it presupposes the existence of a normatively structured order, an **a priori** familistic unity.<sup>355</sup> This unity, however, cannot be fully known by cognition or by abstract thinking. As Confucius conclusively says, the "Tao" (the principle of the unity) is not something to be known but something to be practised.<sup>356</sup> Lao Tze, another great Chinese philosopher, also believes that the "Tao" that can be reasoned is not the eternal Tao.<sup>357</sup> In the Chinese view, harmony of the unity will reveal itself in the process of individual practice. Hence, practice is the only way that truth can be verified. This has been one of the major principles in Chinese philosophy and is still upheld in Communist China. The second aspect of familistic thinking is that: individual value and individual practice are recognized and cannot be denied. Any attempt to achieve harmony must begin with individual practice and with the respect for individual value.<sup>358</sup> Finally, it naturally follows that abstract

---

<sup>355</sup> That familistic unity is undoubtedly believed is primarily because it is the most natural (like heavenly given) form of social order in which every individual lives. The Chinese have peculiarly in character a special fondness of naturalness, especially of infantile pleasure and satisfaction under parental care and love. This fondness is typically obvious in Taoism and Mancius' philosophy.

<sup>356</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics, Vol.I, p.302-303.

<sup>357</sup> Lao Tze, The Canon of Reason and Virtue, translated by D.T. Suzuki & Paul Carus, La Salle: Open Court, 1974, p.73.

<sup>358</sup> Thus, that familistic values become highly praised in this way of thinking is understandable: they are all concretely felt and immediately met by every individual

thinking in this type of thinking will not be emphasized. In the Chinese mind, abstract ideas must be subsumed under, and be verified by, practice. As already mentioned, the essence of the universe is goodness. Goodness is to be practised, not merely to be known. Knowledge is only the supplementary tool of practice and, therefore, must come under practice.

### A.3 FAMILISM AND CONFUCIANISM

Familism is always associated with Confucianism. Some students of Chinese culture even attribute the origin of familism to Confucius himself.<sup>359</sup> In fact, this attribution is basically wrong. No doubt, Confucius did provide systematic reflections on, and promoted, familism. But he was surely not the creator of the Chinese familistic tradition. As Confucius himself openly admitted, he was only "a transmitter and not a maker (of tradition), believing in and loving the ancients."<sup>360</sup> That is to say, what he did in Chinese history was to carry on the existing tradition handed down from the past. On this account, he may be understood at best as a conscious carrier of the Chinese cultural tradition and cannot be regarded as the founder of a new tradition. This is exactly why in Chinese

---

in his daily social life.

<sup>359</sup> Hai-Kong Yin, The Future Of Chinese Culture Vol.I & II, Taipei: Zi Pao Publishing Company, Ltd., 1968.

<sup>360</sup> James Legge (translator), The Chinese Classics Vol.I, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970, p.195.

there is no "Confucianism" in its literal meaning. The term "Confucianism" displays the confusion of the West in distinguishing Confucius' thought from the tradition with which he identified. In Chinese, "Confucianism" is "Yu-Chia" (儒家), meaning not the thought of Confucius but the intellectual school which takes care of the knowledge of "Li" or propriety and whose existence can be traced back to the remote past.<sup>361</sup> The importance of Confucius in Chinese culture is that he could rationally appreciate and respect the familistic order, which was stabilized in the Chou empire and which was on the brink of collapse due to internal corruption, and that he undertook to clarify, promote and restore this order. It is only after his conscious effort of reflection and promotion that the familistic tradition was consciously recognized and valued by the Chinese as the meaningful universal form of expressing their humanity.<sup>362</sup>

From this angle, the argument of Feng Yu-lan (冯友兰) and Hu Shih (胡适), that the thought of Confucius represents a radical change in Chinese history resulting from social disorganization and corresponding skepticism about the existing tradition, seems to have over-emphasized the social determinism in thinking and failed to acknowledge

---

<sup>361</sup> Lok-sing Fu, A General History Of China Vol.I, Taipei: Tai Chung Kwok Publishing Company, Ltd., 1972, pp.76-77.

<sup>362</sup> Kwan-Ngai Tang, An Essential Study of Chinese Of Philosophy: The Essence Of Tao Vol.I, Taipei: Student Publishing Company, Ltd., 1986.

the activeness and continuity of the Chinese cultural tradition.<sup>363</sup> On behalf of the Confucian school (Yu-Chia), Confucius did not develop his thought on questioning and criticizing the familistic tradition in which he lived. Rather, what he did was to consciously reflect on and, consequently, to re-affirm the humanistic values embodied in it. Surely his reflections were prompted by the social bankruptcy of the Chou empire, especially the collapse of the Chung-Fai system (宗法制度, for the discussion of this system, see the last section of this chapter), but his goal was not to replace the old social order with a new one (as Plato's republic did for Greek democracy). Instead, he intended to restore the old order to its perfect harmony by rectifying the proper familistic relations and roles constituting it. Not only did the Confucian school make no attempt to break with tradition. Other important schools like the Legalist, Taoist and Moist all had to look into the tradition for the necessary elements as their theoretical bases to settle the crumbling social order. Hence, although their theories were different from one another in many ways, they shared a similar concern for how China could avoid internal division and restore its universal harmony (the conception of universal harmony is very much Chinese and has its root deep in the familistic thinking). That the

---

<sup>363</sup> see Yu-lan Feng, A History Of Chinese Philosophy Vol. I, translated By Derk Bodde, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953; and Hu Shih, "The Scientific Spirit and Method in Chinese Philosophy," in The Chinese Mind, edited by Charles A. Moore, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp.108-109.



Confucian school finally gained orthodoxy was not because it was theoretically superior to other schools, but because it could keep up the traditional familistic principle (e.g. in harmony with other schools) and yet bring harmony to the society.

#### **A.4 FAMILISM AND THE FIVE CHINESE CLASSICS**

Familism was the dominant thinking in China from the early formative stage of the society. All the five classics (including I-Ching, She-King, Shoo-King, Chun Ysew, and Li-Ki), the sacred books of China which were written between 2000 to 500 B.C., a period during which China first took historial shape, are filled with familistic thinking.

I-Ching or The Book of Change, a book representing the earliest stage of Chinese mataphysical thinking, states:

The "Tao" or the way is constituted by the "Yin" and the "Yang;" what follows the "Yin" and the "Yang" principles is love or goodness, and what is created by the "Yin" and the "Yang" is nature.<sup>364</sup>

The above quotation is the foundation of Chinese metaphysics, and the latter developments of Chinese metaphysics are all founded on the exegesis or development of this quotation.<sup>365</sup> At the same time, it is also the direct manifestation of familistic thinking. In this quotation, the essence of the universe is viewed as

---

<sup>364</sup> Shun-san Wang, Commentaries on I-Ching, Taipei: Kwong Man Publishing Company, Ltd., 1981, pp.475-477.

<sup>365</sup> Kwong Law, The System of the Confucian Philosophies, Taipei: Student Publishing Company, Ltd., 1983.

consisting of the intercourse of the "Yin" and the "Yang," by an interaction similar to the conjugal relationship of husband and wife.<sup>366</sup> The "Yin" and the "Yang" are, as the Chinese understand them, the two essential forces running through everything in the universe. While the former refers to femininity or passivity, the latter means masculinity or activity. The "Yin" and the "Yang" join together to form the "Tao," the ultimate principle which everything should follow, including the highest being "Heaven" and "Earth." The essence of "Tao" is the harmonious adjustment of the "Yin" and the Yang.<sup>367</sup> In other words, the "Yin" and the "Yang" are not opposed to one another; rather, they complete and complement one another through their harmonious adjustment. This harmonious adjustment, i.e., the normative interaction, gives birth to everything and causes the universe to develop in an orderly way. Hence, I-Ching writes,

Without the normative intercourse of the "Yin" and the "Yang," there will be no thing or life.<sup>368</sup>

The "Yin" and the "Yang" are, therefore, the life-giving principle of the universe. As the Chinese believe, the giving of life is an act of love. It is a blessing or

---

<sup>366</sup> It should be cautious that, although the "Yang" and the "Yin" are in some way similar to the nature of husband and wife, in Chinese philosophy, both the husband and the wife have in themselves the "Yang" and the "Yin" principle and will become "Yang" or "Yin" depending upon to whom they are in relation.

<sup>367</sup> The "Tao" is therefore also called the "Tao" of the "Yin" and the "Yang."

<sup>368</sup> Wang, p.461.

virtue. As stated in I-Ching:

To give life is a virtue; it reflects the virtuous essence of the universe.<sup>369</sup>

Since the "Yin" and the "Yang" are the life-giving principle of the universe, they are the source of goodness and love; they are goodness and love. Through their harmonious interaction with one another, they create everything and give life to everything. I-Ching says:

The greatest virtue of Heaven and Earth is that they give and maintain life.<sup>370</sup>

Heaven and Earth are nothing but the concrete representations of the "Yang" and the "Yin" respectively, of the conjugal relationship of husband and wife.<sup>371</sup>

The cardinal principle of Heaven and Earth is like a family, in which the wife manages things properly inside the family while the husband manages things properly outside the family.<sup>372</sup>

Like the relationship of husband and wife, the essence of the "Yin" and the "Yang" is love; they love. Since they love and are love, they create life to share the goodness of life. This is exactly what is meant by "what follows the "Yin" and the "Yang" principles is love or goodness, and what is created by the "Yin" and the "Yang" is nature." For the Chinese, human nature is derived from the virtuous nature of the "Yin" and the "Yang" principles, the essence of Heaven, and therefore is virtuous and good. The

---

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., p.481.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., p.533.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., p.578.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., p.124.

normative intercourse of the "Yin" and the "Yang" principles is but the harmony principle, i.e., the principle of harmonizing and completing one another, not denying one another. To follow this harmony principle is love and goodness, simply because to do that means to perfect oneself as well as the other. And since everything is given birth according to this principle, they are naturally endowed with the harmonizing nature, the tendency to harmonize, i.e., to love and to be good.

The "Yin" and the "Yang," however, are only the highest principles that dictate the continuous functioning and development of the entire universe. They exist in everything and give motion to everything. But they are not everything; they are not "thing." The concrete origin of everything is Heaven and Earth, which constitute the highest being of the universe. They are the real source, or familistically expressed, the real parents of everything. While Heaven represents the "Yang," Earth signifies the "Yin." Although they are the highest being, they still have to follow the "Yin" and the "Yang" principles, the ultimate universal laws. Their interactive activities are the highest manifestation of the "Yin" and the "Yang" principles. By their concrete interaction, everything is given existence. As I-Ching says:

Through the normative intercourse of Heaven and Earth, everything is given birth.<sup>373</sup>

---

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., p.495.

That is to say, everything in the universe, both spiritual and material, is in the same "family" and shares the same parent: Heaven and Earth. Since everything is in the same "family," a comprehensive unity of the latter must be preserved if the peace and happiness of all are to be achieved. In order to preserve the harmony of the familistic order of the universe, the "Yin" and the "Yang" principles, the "Tao," should be followed. More specifically, everything, though its existence is not denied, should perform its role in the universe according to the "Yin" and the "Yang" principles. For example, the state represented by the emperor, the son of Heaven, is "Yin" and should obey the "injunction" (命) of the "Yang" "Heaven" by loving and caring for its people (who are "Yin" in relation to the "Yang" state) and by giving sacrifice to Heaven. In Chinese philosophy, the entire universe is but a complex familistic system of the relationships of the "Yin" and the "Yang." The "Yin" and the "Yang" principles operate not only between, but also within, different hierarchical levels of the system. Everything has its role of being "Yin" or "Yang" in relation to other, and therefore everything must act according to the "Yin" or the "Yang" principle situationally and relationally, depending upon the "object" of interaction.

In the other four classics, familistic thinking is less abstract and expresses itself more concretely in social

terms. The "Yin" and the "Yang" principles are less mentioned, whereas the relationships among or within, and the roles of, Heaven, the state, families and individuals are more emphasized. Such a difference is mainly due to the fact that the other four classics are records of practical social, political and family life rather than contemplations of the universe. As a result, even though ideas about the universe are often expressed, they are expressed in connection with real social human relations. In Shoo-King or The Book of Historical Documents, for example, the shifting emphasis on man and human relationships is obvious:

Heaven and Earth is the parent of all creatures; and of all creatures man is the most highly endowed. The sincere, intelligent, and perspicacious among men becomes the great sovereign; and the great sovereign is the parent of the people.<sup>374</sup>

Heaven compassionates the people. What the people desire, Heaven will be found to give effort to.<sup>375</sup>

In Li-Ki or The Records of Li:

Man is the product of the virtues of Heaven and Earth, by the interaction of the dual forces of nature, the "Yin" and the Yang.<sup>376</sup>

However, in spite of the change from abstract to humanistic and social expression, familistic thinking remains dominant in all the other four classics. The familistic relationship, harmony and unity are not only of

---

<sup>374</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.III, p.283.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., p.288.

<sup>376</sup> Tsi-Tan Sun, The Records of Li: An Exegesis, Taipei: Man Si Tshi Publishing Company, Ltd., 1982, p.553.

absolute importance but are also more elaborately described in terms of their social and political aspects. This description, theoretically, depicts two fundamental, and yet related, forms of familistic relationships by which familistic unity and harmony are accomplished. First of all, within every level of the familistic hierarchical order, harmony shows itself in the form of a horizontal, more-or-less parallel relationship of mutual adjustment, like the relationship of husband and wife; secondly, among different levels of the familistic order, harmony takes the form of a vertical, parental relationship, manifest in the parental care from the higher level to the lower level and loyalty and respect from the lower level to the higher level.

With regard to the first familistic form of harmony, The Records of Li states as follows:

Brothers should love each other as hand and foot of the same body; husband and wife should respect each other like the host to the guest; friends should trust each other like brothers of the same family; families should harmonize each other like they are from the same ancestor. It is by these mutual harmonious adjustments that the "Tao" can be known.<sup>377</sup>

In this quotation, the focal emphasis is apparent: mutual harmonious adjustment. The relationships of brothers, of husband and wife, of friends, and of families are basically parallel, like the constituting forces of the universe, the "Yin" and the "Yang," which mutually complete and develop

---

<sup>377</sup> Tsi-Tan Sun, 1982, p.431.

one another in their harmonious interaction. In each level of the familistic order, reciprocity is the principal role in the maintaining of harmony. Thus She-King or The Book of Poetry says:

How clever the sage was, he could learn the "Tao" of managing the entire kingdom from the "Tao" of husband and wife.<sup>378</sup>

The "Tao" of husband and wife is but the "Tao" of the harmonious adjustment of the "Yin" and the "Yang," the reciprocity in the horizontal familistic relationship.

Perhaps because political harmony is the most obvious reflection of a country's harmony, the vertical relationship between the state and its subjects is most frequently recorded and discussed in all four classics (I-Ching not included). In praising one of the greatest legendary founders of China, Yaou, Shoo-King has the following record:

He was able to make the able and virtuous distinguished, and thence proceeded to the love of the nine classes of his kindred, who all became harmonious. He also regulated and polished the people of his domain, who all became brightly intelligent. Finally, he united and harmonized the myriad states of the empire; and the black-haired people were transformed. The result was universal concord.<sup>379</sup>

The above record, regardless of how "factual" it is, is very similar to the familistic thinking manifested in I-Ching in major respect: that is, the accentuation of harmony and unity. In Shoo-King, harmony and unity are still the extension of I-Ching's "Yin" and "Yang" thinking, though the

---

<sup>378</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.IV, p.311.

<sup>379</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.III, p.17.



latter is not explicitly said. The accomplishment of unity and harmony is not one-sidedly super-imposed from top down by the supreme existence of external power, but through the parental emperor's effort to harmonize and to unite each level in the hierarchical familistic whole, starting first from his close relatives and eventually to "the myriad states." There is no external existence of power; power belongs to the same familistic order, though at a higher level. It represents a hierarchical difference. The means of achieving harmony and unity is familistic, is parental love, is the harmonious adjustment of the "Yin" and the "Yang." Here the adjustment of the "Yin" and the "Yang" is no longer horizontal but vertical, not conjugal, but parental. It is not a parallel relationship in an equal sense; but rather, it is a superordinate/subordinate relationship in a hierarchical sense. Here, the "Yin" and the "Yang" express themselves not as two parallel forces, but as two hierarchically different functional levels in the familistic order. The higher level represents the higher order which guides the development of, and provides the care for, the lower order. "The love of the nine classes of his kindred" means exactly the familistic love and care to all of the same surname, all the relatives of consanguinity, from the great-great-grandfather to the great-great-grandson. In the "Yin" and "Yang" philosophy, the emperor is "Yang," is parent, and therefore must be active, must actively show his love to his

"children-subjects" by caring for both their spiritual and material life. This tendency to view the political relationship between the state and its subjects familistically, as the parental relationship, can easily be found everywhere in the entire book of Shoo-King as well as in the other three classics:

He (Yaou) attached great importance to the people's being taught the duties of the five relations of society, and to take care for food, for funeral ceremonies, and for sacrifices.<sup>380</sup>

How much to be rejoiced in are these princes, the parents of the people! When a prince loves what the people love, and hates what people hate, then is he what is called the parent of the people.<sup>381</sup>

In She-King:

Take the pool-water from a distance; Draw it into one vessel and let it flow to another, And it may be used to steam rice or millet. How much more should the happy and courteous sovereign be the parent of the people!... How much more should the happy and courteous sovereign be the centre of rest for the people!<sup>382</sup>

In Chun Tsew or Spring And Autumn Annuals:

Kwan Chung said to the marquis of Ching, "You have bound all the people to your propriety and truth; and will it not be improper to end with an opposite policy? Here we should have no treachery between ruler and his people, like between father and son, and truth in that of the people's observing their ruler's commands according to the exigency of the times. There cannot be greater criminality than that of the ruler who acts contrary to these two things."<sup>383</sup>

In The Record of Li:

---

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., p.136.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., p.374.

<sup>382</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics, Vol.IV, pp. 489-490.

<sup>383</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.V, p.149.

The sage sovereign regulated the services to be rendered to his father and grandfather before him - giving honour to the most honourable. He regulated the places to be given to his sons and grandsons below him - showing his affection to his kindred. He regulated (also) the observances for the collateral branches of his cousins - associating all their members in the feasting. He defined their places according to their order of descent; and his every distinction was in harmony with what was proper and right. In this way, the procedure of human duty was made complete... When he stood with his face to the south, and all the affairs of the kingdom came before him, there were five things which for the time claimed his first care, and the people were not reckoned among them. The first was the regulating of what was due to his kindred; the second, the reward of merit; the third, the promotion of worth; the fourth; the employment of ability; and the fifth, the maintenance of a loving vigilance. When these five things were all fully realized, the people had all their necessities satisfied, all that they wanted supplied. If one of them were defective, the people could not complete their lives in comfort.<sup>384</sup>

Although the political relationship between the state and its objects is parental, the ancient Chinese saw it as reciprocal instead of unilateral. That is, when the state treats the people as children, the people have to show respect and loyalty to the state correspondingly. This familistic reciprocity is the key to the Chinese dynastic cycle: when the state fails to perform its role as a caring parent, the people will stop being loyal children and rise to overthrow the state in order to establish another familistic order. That is the legitimate ground of revolution or rebellion in China that the Chinese have believed since the ancient time:

---

<sup>384</sup> Tsi-Tan Sun, p.830.

Heavens sees as the people see; Heaven hears as the people hear;... If the emperor fails to look after what the people desire, Heaven will give charge to destroy him.<sup>385</sup>

Now Show, the King of Shang, treats with contemptuous slight the five constant virtues, and abandons himself to wild idleness and irreverence... He has driven from him instructors and guardians. He neglects the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth. He has discontinued the offerings in the ancestral temple... God will no longer indulge him, but with a curse is sending down on him this ruin. He who soothes as is our sovereign: he who oppresses us is our enemy. This solitary fellow Show, having exercised great tyranny, is our perpetual enemy.<sup>386</sup>

Nevertheless, revolution or rebellion is only a means to bring back the familistic order and harmony. The latter was unquestionably believed by the ancient Chinese as their cultural principle as well as their rule of social survival. For they understood that, in order to have peace and happiness last for all ages, they must unite their energies and hearts,<sup>387</sup> i.e., make "all under the sky as one family, and all in the Middle State (China) as one man."<sup>388</sup>

---

<sup>385</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics, Vol.III, p.292.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., pp.295-296.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid., p.293.

<sup>388</sup> Tsi-Tan Sun, The Records of Li, p.551.

#### A.5 FAMILISM AND ANCIENT CHINESE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned, in China thinking and practice are inseparable. For the Chinese, the pursuit of pure knowledge i.e., abstract thinking, is impractical and should be suspended.<sup>389</sup> Knowledge is to assist practice. It has no end in itself. The end is practice, the development of virtues. As Li-Ki openly states:

what the ultimate or great learning (not thinking) teaches is to illustrate illustrious virtue, to love people, and to rest in the highest excellence.<sup>390</sup>

The close connection between learning and practice is reflected in that familistic thinking in China was, at the very beginning of its history, so intricately interwoven with its social practice that they are practically undistinguishable from one another (though for theoretical purpose we have tried to discuss them separately here). That is why being the sacred books of China, the five classics are largely records of concrete rituals, divinations, social and political activities, ceremonies, etc.. (Even I-Ching records mainly the results of divination, containing very few abstract interpretations of these results). For the Chinese philosophers, and historians as well, the sacredness of the five classics lies exactly in their high degree of historicity and practicality.<sup>391</sup>

---

<sup>389</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.I, p.303.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., p.289.

Certainly, the familism that underlines the five Chinese classics is the foundation of the social development in ancient China. It molded the ancient Chinese development and, indeed, was the ancient Chinese development. Since the dawn of Chinese history (and even as far back the legendary periods), familistic harmony had begun to dictate the direction of Chinese historical development. The virtues of the legendary founders, Yaou(堯), Shun(舜), Yu(禹) and Tang(湯), which are of great demonstrative value to Chinese cultural and social orientation, are not their heroic characters, as heroes are praised and worshiped in the West, but their familistic practices and efforts to bring unity and harmony to China.

As previously quoted,

Yaou was able to make the able and virtuous distinguished, and thence proceeded to the love of the nine classes of his kindred, who all became harmonious. He also regulated and polished the people of his domain, who all became brightly intelligent. Finally, he united and harmonized the myriad states of the empire; and the black-haired people were transformed. The result was universal concord.<sup>392</sup>

In the same book, the virtues of Shun are recorded as follows:

Shun carefully set forth the beauty of the five cardinal duties, the virtues belonging to the five social relations of husband and wife, father and son, sovereign and subject, elder and younger brother, and friends; and they came to be universally observed. Being appointed to be General Regulator, he arranged the affairs of each

---

<sup>391</sup> Kwan-Ngai Tang, 1982, pp.21-24.

<sup>392</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.III, p.17.

department in their proper seasons. Having to harmonize the princes from the four quarters of the empire, he made them all docilely submissive. Being sent to the great plains at the foot of the mountains, amid violent wind, thunder, and rain, he did not go astray.<sup>393</sup>

As for Yu, he is described as "full of toilsome earnestness in the service of the state" and "sparing in his expenditure on his family."<sup>394</sup> At the same time, he was able to follow and teach his people the five familistic relations set up by Shun and, consequently, "harmoniously attended to the rectification of the people's virtues, the conveniences of life, and the securing of abundant means of sustentation."<sup>395</sup> And, finally, Tang, the founder of the Shang dynasty, is remembered as a filial and thoughtful man who led his people to overthrow the immoral, capricious rule of Kieh, the last emperor of the Hia dynasty, and reestablished the social harmony and unity lost during Kieh's reign.<sup>396</sup> In Shoo-King, Tang is praised as one with a lofty ideal of what a king ought to be.<sup>397</sup> He was the first emperor who "clearly defined the parental responsibility of the state," saying that "all men, even those of the lowest orders, have been endowed by God with a sense of what is right," and that "it is the business of the sovereign to

---

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., pp.31-32.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., p.60.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., p.57.

<sup>396</sup> J. Macgowan, The Imperial History of China, London: Curzon Press, 1973, p.28.

<sup>397</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.III, pp.79-80.

direct this sense into the "Tao" or path of Harmony" in which, if obeyed, it would continually lead them.<sup>398</sup>

Regardless of their legendary accomplishments and virtues, all these founders, to a certain extent, indicate the earliest periods of the formation of Chinese familistic society. As the above descriptions show, the greatness of these founders is mainly in their contributions to the unification, expansion and harmonization of China, the institutionalization (rectification) of familistic relations, or the establishment and maintenance of a parental government that could take good care of the people's spiritual and material needs. From Yaou's first establishment of a comprehensive familistic unity, Shun's rectification of the five familistic relations, Yu's subsequent implementation of these familistic relations, to Tang's restoration of the familistic order after the socio-political turmoil caused by the capricious rule of Kieh, and subsequent elucidated demarcation of the parental role of government, it can be seen that, step by step, China was developing socially and politically with a direct reflection of the familistic thinking peculiar to this tradition even during its earliest socio-historical development. Thus, there was no exaggeration when Confucius said that he could show both the social continuity and development from ancient times up until his time.<sup>399</sup> There

---

<sup>398</sup> Ibid., pp.80-85.

<sup>399</sup> James Legge, The Chinese Classics Vol.I, p.313.



were indeed a continuous tradition of familism penetrating and integrating the ancient Chinese socio-historical development.

The development of this familistic tradition first blossomed visibly in the Chou dynasty, the first historical period distinguished by historians from the legendary, on the basis of verified historical documents and materials.<sup>400</sup> The Chou dynasty, to a certain extent, can be considered one of the most important periods in Chinese history because of its socio-political achievements.<sup>401</sup> It marked a very high level cultural integration. Prior to the Chou dynasty, social cohesion (unity) was marginal and was characterized by tribal divisions. Only with the Chou dynasty did there emerge a concrete socio-political system that unified the social collectivity into a more organic, hierarchical whole. This system, as we mentioned before, is the Chung-Fai system (宗法制度).

The Chung-Fai system is a system that views the entire society as a big family in which the emperor, the people and Heaven are familistically and hierarchically related. More specifically, on the one hand, following the traditional familistic thinking the system sees the emperor as the patriarch, the parent-ruler of China, who is appointed by Heaven as the son of Heaven; on the other hand, it holds

---

<sup>400</sup> Lok-Sing Fu, 1972; J. Macgowan, 1973.

<sup>401</sup> Sau-Ming Leung, The Cardinal Meaning of Chinese Culture, Taipei: Ching Chung Publishing Company, Ltd., 1929.

that all the Chinese people are ancestrally related. Because of that, every individual should play his familistic role in accordance with his position in the familistic order (not only in his family, but also in the entire familistic society). Since the emperor carries the appointment from Heaven, he must be greatly honoured by all people as the great great Honoured Head (大大象), just as the ancestor must be greatly honoured by his descendants as the great Honoured Head. At the same time, the emperor, appointed by Heaven as the parent-ruler, should also perform his duties properly as a caring and loving parent. Hence, the entire society under the Chung-Fai system becomes unified, in such a way that all the Chinese are familistically related to each other in one way or another, depending upon their ancestral locations.

There are two basic principles that govern the general functioning and development (expansion) of the system: vertical and horizontal. As recorded in Li-Ki:

There was the (great) Honoured Head whose tablet was not removed for a hundred generations. There were the smaller Honoured Head whose tablets were removed after five generations. He whose tablet was not removed for a hundred generations was the successor and representative of the other than the eldest son who became an ancestor of a line; and he was so honoured by the members of his line because he continued the high ancestor from whom both he and they sprang; this was why his tablet was not removed for a hundred generations. He who honoured the continuator of the high ancestor was he whose tablet was removed after five generations. They honored the Ancestor, and therefore they revered the Head. Their reverence showed the significance of that honor.<sup>402</sup>

---

<sup>402</sup> Tsi-Tan Sun, p.838.

"The great Honoured Head whose tablet was not removed for a hundred generations" is the vertical principle and represents the unchanged, continuous centre of vertical social integration. This means that regardless of whatever change takes place, the eldest son succeeds to the headship of the ancestral line and becomes the great Honoured Head, while the other sons are smaller Honoured Heads. The major ancestral line will be carried on and on for ever by this principle of primogeniture. At the same time, the younger sons represent the branch-line developments of the major ancestral line. Although they are the smaller Honoured Heads in relation to the eldest son, they become great Honoured Head for their successors. On the other hand, the smaller Honoured Heads have to move out from the ancestral family and their tablets have to be removed from the ancestral temple after five generations. This is a principle that makes possible horizontal social development when population increases. Basically, both the vertical and the horizontal principles are applicable to both the imperial and the ordinary families, in that the emperor represents the supreme great Honoured Head and that his ancestral line is the supreme ancestral line, in relation to which all other ancestral lines are branch-lines. Since the emperor is the supreme great Honoured Head, he alone represents the people at annual sacrifice to Heaven, the highest ancestor of all human beings. However, this does not deny the ordinary people's religious reverence to Heaven

in their daily ancestral worship. The emperor's annual sacrifice only carries a collective, i.e., familistically representative, not restrictive, meaning - it symbolizes the hierarchical unity of the Middle Empire (中國). Other than that, there is neither legal nor customary restriction on people's direct worship of Heaven.<sup>403</sup>

The principal characteristic of this system is that it was able to unite family, society, the state and religion into one single unit. Its starting point was family love and reverence, and the extension of them ends in the worship and reverence of Heaven, the ultimate origin of human life and human virtues. More specifically, what the system did was to teach, on the one hand, the people to elevate the reverence of their ancestors to the reverence of the great Honoured Head, of the emperor, and finally of Heaven. On the other hand, the emperor must lower his reverence of Heaven and ancestor to the loving of his kindred and people. The merit of the system is idealistically summarized in Li-Ki:

---

<sup>403</sup> In this regard, Hegel surely failed to understand the familistic complexity of the religion of China by mistaking this phenomenon as an indication of the primitiveness of the Chinese religion. What he missed is that in the Chinese tradition, even religion is familized, is characteristic of familistic hierarchical harmony on the one hand, and individual religious practice on the other. While the emperor serves a symbolic meaning of the hierarchical religious unity, individual religious pursuits are never denied but instead highly tolerated. The latter poses a sharp contrast to Christianity in the West which is exclusive rather than inclusive.

Where the starting point was in affection, it began with the father, and ascended by steps to the ancestor. When it was in a consideration of what was right, it began with an ancestor, and descended in natural order to deceased father. Thus the course of humanity (in this matter of mourning) was all comprehended in the love for kindred. From the affection for parents came the honouring of ancestors; from the honouring of the ancestor came the respect and attention shown to the Heads (of the family branches). By that respect and attention to those Heads all the members of the kindred were kept together. Through their being kept together came the dignity of the ancestral temple. From that dignity arose the importance attached to the altars of the land and grain. From that love came the right administration of punishments and penalties. Through that administration the people had the feeling of response. Through that restfulness all resources for expenditure became sufficient. Through the sufficiency of these, what all desired was realized. The realisation led to all courteous and good customs; and from these, in fine, came all happiness and enjoyment.<sup>404</sup>

Although the practical development of the Chung-Fai system did not necessarily coincide with the ideal elucidated in Li-Ki, it nevertheless reflected the endeavor of the ancient Chinese to implement their familistic thinking into social practice. This again characteristically explains the inseparability of knowledge and practice unique to this tradition. Owing to its value of familistic harmony, the implementation of the Chung-Fai system, as a contemporary Chinese scholar points out, not only reduced the conflict among the feudal lords as failed to happen in the West, but also enabled China to maintain a high degree of socio-cultural unity and harmony over a

---

<sup>404</sup> Tsi-Tan Sun, The Records of Li: An Exegesis, pp. 840-841.

massive area at a time when communication technology was so undeveloped.<sup>405</sup> On the other hand, the long duration of social unity and harmony (900-500 B.C.) created by this system also reinforced the development of familism and further accelerated the Chinese racial expansion and integration. This influence can best be seen in the social thought of the late Chou period, the so-called the Spring and Autumn (春秋) and the Warring states (戰國) period. During that time, the Chung-Fai system began to decline and collapse, and the Chou empire was divided into numerous warring states competing and fighting with one another. It was a period similar to the 6th and 7th century Europe after the decline of the Roman empire. However, familism saved China from internal division, from falling into a long-term divided continent like contemporary Europe. Under the shadow of familism, all the important schools of social thought of that period, regardless of their theoretical variations, displayed a strong tendency to restore or rebuild a universal familistic order and harmony in China. For example, the four major intellectual schools, Confucianism, Taoism, Moism, and Legalism, all saw the Warring States period as an aberration of the "normal" state of socio-political unity characteristic of the early Chou empire, and endeavored to provide a theoretical base for future socio-political unification.<sup>406</sup> For that reason, the

---

<sup>405</sup> Kwan-Ngai Tang, 1982, pp.41-45.

<sup>406</sup> Lung-Kee San, 1983.

later unification accomplished in the Chin empire would not be surprising. It simply denoted the natural (necessary) consequence of the inner will of the Chinese familistic tradition that emerged in the remote antiquity and matured in the Chou dynasty.

## Appendix B

### THE CHINESE DYNASTIES: CHRONOLOGICAL SCHEME OF CHINESE HISTORY

1. The Hsia Dynasty	B.C.	1994-1523
2. The Shang Dynasty	B.C.	1523-1027
3. The Chou Dynasty	B.C.	1027-256
4. The Epoch Of Spring and Autumn and The Epoch Of Warring States (largely overlapped with the Chou Dynasty)	B.C.	722-221
5. The Chin Dynasty	B.C.	221-207
6. The Tho-Han War	B.C.	207-202
7. The Earlier Han Dynasty	B.C.	202-A.D.9
8. The Sun Dynasty	A.D.	9-25
9. The Later Han Dynasty		25-220
10. The Epoch Of Three Kingdoms		220-265
11. The Western Tsin Dynasty		265-317
12. The Eastern Tsin Dynasty		317-420
13. The Epoch Of Division Between North and South		420-589
14. The Sui Dynasty		589-618
15. The Tang Dynasty		618-906
16. The Five Dynasties		906-960
17. The Sung Dynasty		960-1279
18. The Yuan Dynasty		1279-1368



19. The Ming Dynasty	1368-1644
20. The Ching Dynasty	1644-1911
21. The Republic Of China	1911-now

The People's Republic of China established in 1949.<sup>407</sup>

---

<sup>407</sup> Adapted from Olga Lang's Chinese Family And Society, Archon Books, 1968, p.347.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adorno, T. W., & Horkheimer, Max,  
1972 Dialectic Of Enlightenment, New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Anderson, Perry,  
1974 Lineages of The Absolutist State, London, New Left Books.
- Aristotle,  
1962 The Politics of Aristotle, edited and translated by Ernest Barker, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Aron, Raymond,  
1974 The Industrial Society, London: Oxford University Press.
- Avineri, Shlomon,  
1972 Hegel's Theory of The Modern State, Cambridge: The University Press.
- Bailey, Anne M., Llobera, Josep R.,  
1981 Asiatic Mode of Production, Editors, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Bellah, Robert N.,  
1957 Tokugawa Religion, Glencoe Free Press.
- Bellah, Robert N.,  
1964 Religion And Progress In Modern Asia, New York: Free Press.
- Bellah, Robert N.,  
1965 "Religious Evolution," in Reader in Comparative Religion, edited by William A Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, New York: Harper & Row, pp.
- Bendix, Reinhard,  
1960 Max Weber: An Intellectual Protrait, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc..
- Benedict, Ruth,  
1946 Chrsanthemum And The Sword, New York: Free Press.

- Bodde, Derk,  
1986 "The State And Empire Of Chin," in The Cambridge History Of China Vol.I, edited by Dennis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chan, Wing-Tsit,  
1967 Sources of Chinese Tradition, New York: New York Press.
- Chiu, Kwong (翦同),  
1988 "The Origins And Development Of Private Ownership Of Land In China" (中國私產制之起源與發展), Ming Pao Monthly, Vol.23, No.4, pp.15-18.
- Collingwood, R. G.,  
1946 The Idea Of History, Oxford: The Oxford University Press.
- Confucius,  
1976 Analects (論語), Hong Kong: Kwong Chi Book Co., Ltd..
- 1978 Dai Shek or The Great Learning (大學), Kwong Chi Book Co., Ltd..
- Danilova, L.V.,  
1968 "Controversial Problems of The Theory of Precapitalist Societies," Soviet Anthropology and Archeology, IX, pp.269-328.
- Descartes, Rene,  
1960 Meditations On First Philosophy, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc..
- Dos Santo, Theotonio,  
1970 "The Structure Of Dependence," American Economic Review, Vol.60, pp.231-234.
- Dumont, Louis,  
1980 Homo Hierarchicus, Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press.
- Durkheim, Emile,  
1966 The Rules of Sociological Method, New York: A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co, inc..
- Durkheim, Emile,  
1968 Suicide, New York: Free Press.
- Eberhard, W.,  
1952 Conquerors And Rulers, Leiden: E.J. Brill.

- Eisenstadt, N.,  
1963 The Political Systems of Empires, New York: Free Press.
- Eisenstadt, N.,  
1968 The Protestant Ethic And Modernization, New York: Basic Books, Inc..
- Feng, Yu-Lan,  
1953 A History Of Chinese Philosophy Vol.I & II, translated by Derk Bodde, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Fitzgerald, C. P.,  
1952 Revolution In China, London: The Cresset Press.
- Frank, Andre G.,  
1969 Latin America: Underdevelopment Or Revelation, New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Fu, Lok-sing (傅樂成),  
1972 A General History Of China Vol.I & II (中國通史), Taipei: Tai Chung Kwok Publishing Company, Ltd..
- Giddens, Anthony,  
1971 Capitalism and Modern Social Theory, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Giddens, Anthony,  
1984 The Constitution Of Society, Berkeley: University Of California Press.
- Giddens, Anthony,  
1987 Sociology: A Brief But Critical Introduction, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, Publishers.
- Godelier, Maurice,  
1981 "The Asiatic Mode Of Production," in The Asiatic Mode of Production, edited by Anne M. Bailey and Josep R. Lloberra, London: Roulledge & Kegan Paul, pp.
- Gorin, Zeev,  
1977 "Socialist Societies And World System Theory: A Critical Survey," Science & Society, Vol.17, pp.332-366.
- Gusfield, Joseph R.,  
1967 "Tradition And Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in The Study Of Social Change," American Journal Of Sociology, Vol.72, pp.351-362.
- Habermas, Jurgen,  
1970 Toward A Rational Society, Boston: Beacon Press.

- Habermas, Jurgen,  
1970 Knowledge And Human Interests, Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, Jurgen,  
1979 Communication and the Evolution of Society, Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hegel, G. W. F.,  
1929 Science of Logic, New York: Dover Publications, Inc..
- Hegel, G. W. F.,  
1956 The Philosophy of History, New York: Dover Publications, Inc..
- Hegel, G. W. F.,  
1971 The Philosophy of Right, London: Oxford University Press.
- Hindess, B., Hirst, P.,  
1975 Pre-capitalist Modes Of Production, London: Routledge and Kagan Paul.
- Hook, Brian,  
1982 The Cambridge Encyclopedia Of China, editor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Horkheimer, Max,  
1972 Critical Theory, New York: Continuum.
- Horkheimer, Max, & Adorno, T. W.,  
1972 Dialectic Of Enlightenment, New York: Continuum Publishing Company.
- Husserl, Edmond,  
1973 Experience And Judgment, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Illyenkov, E. V.,  
1977 Dialectical Logic, Moscow: Progres Publisher.
- Inkeles, Alex, and Smith, David,  
1974 Becoming Modern, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Kahn, Herman,  
1979 World Economic Development, Boulder: Westview Press.
- Kant, Immanuel,  
1963 Kant On History, edited by L. W. Beck, New York: Free Press.

- Kim, Yau-kee (金耀基),  
 1985 The Selected Sociological Papers Of Kim Yau-kee  
 (金耀基社會學選), Taipei: Young Lion Cultural Company  
 Ltd.
- Kim, Yau-kee,  
 1982 "The Sinicization Of Sociology," in The  
 Sinicization Of Social And Behavioral Studies  
 (社會學中國化), ed., by Kwok-she Yang &  
 Sung-i Man, Taipei: The Chinese National Research  
 Centre, pp.91-114.
- Ko, Sing-shui (高承堃),  
 1982 "The Possibility And Meaning Of The Sinicization  
 Of Social Sciences," The Sinicization Of Social  
 And Behavioral Studies (社會科學中國化可能性與意義),  
 edited by Kwok-she Yang & Sung-i Man, Taipei: The  
 National Research Centre, pp.31-50.
- Lang, Olga,  
 1968 Chinese Family And Society, Archon Books.
- Law, Kwong (羅光),  
 1983 The Philosophical System Of Confucianism  
 (儒家哲學之體系), Taipei: Student  
 Publishing Company, Ltd..
- Legge, James,  
 1968 The Sacred Books Of China: Li Ki, Vol.XXVII,  
 translator, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Legge, James,  
 1970 The Chinese Classics Vol.I,II,III,IV & V,  
 Translator, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Leung, Sau-Ming (梁漱溟),  
 1929 The Cardinal Meaning Of Chinese Culture  
 (中國文化意義), Taipei: Ching Chung Publishing Co.  
 Ltd..
- Levy, Marion,  
 1955 "Contrasting Factors In the Modernization Of Japan  
 And China," Economic Growth: Brazil, India and  
 Japan, edited by S. Kuznets, Durkram: Duke  
 University Press, pp.
- Lowe, Donald M.,  
 1966 The Function of China in Marx, Lenin and Mao,  
 Berkeley: University Of California Press.
- Lukacs, Gerog,  
 1985 History And Class Consciousness, Cambridge: MIT  
 Press.

- Macgowan, J.,  
1973, The Imperial History Of China, London: Curzon Press.
- Marcuse, Herbert,  
1964 One-Dimensional Man, Boston; Beacon Press.
- Marx, Karl,  
1978 The Marx-Engel Reader, edited by Robert Tucker, New York: W. Norton & Company.
- Marx, Karl,  
1983 Capital I, Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Marx, Karl,  
1975 Capital III, Moscow: Progress Publishers.
- Marx, Karl,  
1973 Grundrisse, New York: Vintage Books.
- Marx, Karl,  
1968 Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization, edited by Shomo Avineri, New York: Doublesay & Company, Inc..
- Marx, Karl,  
1970 Marx's Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, edited by Joseph O'Malley, Cambridge: The University Press.
- Mei, Y. P.,  
1967 "The Status Of The Individual In Chinese Social Thought And Practice," in The Chinese Mind, edited by Charles A. Moore, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp.323-339.
- Mok, Chin (錢穆),  
1979 The World Situation and Chinese Culture (世界局勢與中國文化), Taipei: Tong Tai Publishing Company Ltd..
- Moore, Barrington,  
1966 The Social Origins of Dictatorship And Democracy, Boston: Beacon Press.
- Mull, Chung-San (牟宗三),  
1963 The Philosophy Of Chinese History (歷史哲學), Taipei: Student Publishing Company, Ltd..
- Nagel, E.,  
1961 The Structure Of Science, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Nakamura, Hajime,  
1964 Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India, China, Tibet and Japan, Honolulu: East-West Centre Press.
- Needham, Joseph,  
1954 Science and Civilization in China Vol.I,  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Needham, Joseph,  
1971 Science And Civilization in China Vol.IV,  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nisbet, Robert,  
1980 History Of The Idea Of Progress, New York: Basic Books.
- Pao, Tsin-Shun (包道信),  
1988 "The Confucian Ethic And The Four Asian Dragons" (儒家倫理與亞洲四龍), Ming Pao Monthly, Vol.23, No.1, pp.56-62.
- Parsons, Talcott,  
1949 The Structure Of Social Action, New York: The Free Press.
- Popper, Karl K.,  
1961 The Poverty Of Historicism, New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Portes, Alejandro,  
1981 "Hazards Of Historical Analogy," Social Problem, Vol.28, pp.505-520.
- Portes, Alejandro,  
1977 "On Sociology Of National Development: Theories And Issues," American Journal Of Sociology, Vol.82, pp.55-85.
- Rudolph, Lloyd, Rudolph, Suzanne,  
1967 The Modernity Of Tradition: Political Development In India, Chicago: The Chicago University Press.
- Russell, Bertrand,  
1982 History Of Western Philosophy, London: Unwin Paperbacks.
- San, Lung-kee (孫隆基),  
1983 The Deep Structures Of Chinese Culture (中國文化的深層結構), Hong Kong: I-san Publishing Company, Ltd..
- Shils, Edward,  
1975 Center And Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology, Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press.



- Siao, Sun-Wang (蕭新煌),  
 1982 "The Structural Problem in the Sinicization of Sociology," in The Sinicization of Social And Behavioral Studies (社會學中國化之結構問題), edited by Kwok-she Yang & Sung-i Man, Taipei: The Chinese National Research Centre, pp.69-90.
- Stevenson, G.,  
 1977 "Federalism And The Political Economy Of The Canadian State," in The Canadian State, ed. by L. Pantitch, Toronto: University Of Toronto Press.
- Strauss, Leo, Cropsey, Joseph,  
 1973 History Of Political Philosophy, Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press.
- Sun, Tsi-Tan (孫希旦),  
 1982 The Records Of Li: An Exegesis, Taipei: Literature, History And Philosophy Publishing Company, Ltd..
- Sun, Yatsen,  
 1974 The Teachings Of Sun Yatsen (國父遺教), Taipei: San Man Publishing Company, Ltd..
- Swann, Nancy Lee,  
 1950 Food And Money In Ancient China, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tang, Chun-i,  
 1967 "The Development of Ideas of Spiritual Value in Chinese Philosophy," in The Chinese Mind, edited by Charles A. Moore, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp.248-285.
- Tang, Kwan-Ngai (唐君毅),  
 1984 The Reconstruction Of The Humanist Spirit (人文精神之重建), Taipei: Student Publishing Co. Ltd..
- Tang, Kwan-Ngai,  
 1986 An Essential Study Of Chinese Philosophy: The Essence Of Tao Vol.I (中國哲學原論-原道篇), Taipei: Student Publishing Company, Ltd..
- Tang, Kwan-Ngai,  
 1979 The Spiritual Value Of Chinese Culture (中國文化之精神價值), Taipei: Ching Chung Publishing Co. Ltd.
- Tang, Kwan-Ngai,  
 1980 Chinese Culture and The Contemporary World (中華人文與當今世界), Vol.I, Taipei: Student Publishing Company, Ltd..

- Theodorson, Geroge A.,  
1969 Modern Dictionary Of Sociology, Card: Appollo Editions.
- Ting, Chi-Chan,  
1963 Key Economic Areas in Chinese History, New York: New York Press.
- Tsui, Fou-kuan (徐復觀),  
1980 Between Academia And Politic  
(學術與政治之間), Taipei: Student Publishing Co. Ltd..
- Tsui, Fou-kuan,  
1983 Essays On The History Of Chinese Thought  
(中國思想史論集), Taipei: Student Publishing Co., Ltd..
- Ul, Kuan-Yu (烏昆如),  
1981 Essays On Phenomenology (現象學論文集),  
Taipei: Lai Ming Cultural Company Ltd..
- Van Der Sprenkel, Otto B.,  
1953 "High Officials of the Ming," in Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies Vol.XIV, pp.
- Vitkin, M.,  
1981 "The Asiatic Mode Of Production," Philosophy and Social Criticism, Vol.18, pp.46-66.
- Vitkin, M.,  
1982 "Marx Between The West And The East," Studies in Soviet Thought, Vol.23, pp.243-256.
- Walsh, W. H.,  
1978 "Principle and Prejudice in Hegel's Philosophy of History," in Hegel's Political Philosophy, edited by Z. A. Pelczynski, Cambridge: The University Press, pp.181-198.
- Wallerstein, Immanual,  
1974 "The Rise And The Future Demise Of The World Capitalist System: Concepts For Comparative Analysis," Comparative Studies In Society And History, Vol.15, pp.387-415.
- Wallerstein, Immanual,  
1979 The Capitalist World-economy, London: Cambridge University Press.

- Walton, John,  
1976 "Elites And The Politics Of Urban Development," in Urban Latin America: The Political Condition From Above And Below, edited by A. Portes and J Walton, Austin: University Of Texas Press.
- Wang, Shun-san (王愷山),  
1981 Wang Shun-san's Commentaries On I-Ching (愷山易經), Taipei: Kwong Man Publishing Company, Ltd..
- Weber, Max,  
1930 The Protestant Ethic And The Spirit Of Capitalism, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd..
- Weber, Max,  
1949 From Max Weber, edited by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, London: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, Max,  
1951 The Religion in China, New York: The free Press.
- Weber, Max,  
1956 The Sociology Of Religion, Boston, Beacon Press.
- Weber, Max,  
1968 Economy And Society, New York: Bedminster Press.
- Wells, G. A.,  
1959 Herder And After: A Study In The Development Of Sociology, Netherlands: Mouton & Co., Publishers.
- Wittfogel, Karl,  
1957 Oriental Despotism, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Wu, John C.H.,  
1967 "Chinese Legal And Political Philosophy," in The Chinese Mind, edited by Charles A. Moore, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp.340-364.
- Yang, Martin C.,  
1959 A Chinese Village, New York: Columbia University.
- Yip, Kai-ching (葉啟政),  
1982 "A Discussion of The Sinicization Of Sociological Studies From The Viewpoint Of The Existing Character Of Chinese Sociology" (從中國社會學既有性談論社會), in The Sinicization of Social And Behavioral Studies, edited by Kwok-she Yang & Sung-i Man, Taipei: The Chinese National Research Centre, pp.115-152.

- Youngdall, Chris,  
1985 Television Commercials As Cultural Texts, M.A. Thesis, Winnipeg: The University of Manitoba.
- Yu, Ying-zi (余英時),  
1979 A Historical Discussion On The Intelligentsia As A Class For Itself (知識份子階級史論), Taipei: Luen King Publishing Comapny, Ltd..
- Yu, Ying-zi,  
1985 The Modern Meaning Of Chinese Culture From a Value-system Perspective (從價值系統看中國文化之現代意義), Taipei: Chinese Daily Publishing Co. Ltd..
- Yu, Ying-zi,  
1985 History and Thinking (歷史與思想), Taipei: Luen King Publishing Company, Ltd..
- Yu, Ying-zi,  
1987 The Religious Ethic and The Merchants's Spirit In Late China (中國近世宗教倫理與商人精神), Taipei: Luen King Publishing Company Ltd..
- Zilberman, David,  
1977 "Orthodox Ethics And The Matter Of Communism," in Studies In Soviet Thought, Vol.17, pp.341-328.
- Zilberman, David,  
1979 "The Post-sociological Society," Studies In Soviet Thought, Vol.19, pp.261-327.
- Zilberman, David,  
1988 The Birth Of Meaning In Hindu Thought, Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- Zilberman, David,  
---- Understanding Cultural Tradition Through Types Of Thinking, unpublished manuscript.
- Zilberman, David,  
---- A Study of Tradition, unpublished manuscript.
- Zilberman, David,  
---- "On Cultural Relativism And Radical Doubt," unpublished manuscript.
- Zilberman, David,  
---- "A Typological Study Of The Russian-Soviet Cultural Tradition," unpublished manuscript.