

Chenhong Ge

View of Moralization

Study on Confucian Moral Thought



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Beijing, China

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Foreword by Zhang Dainian

The book *View of Moralization—Study on Confucian Moral Thought*, written by Comrade Ge Chenhong, raises the moral idea to the height of the overall quality of the Confucian thoughts and makes a deep and comprehensive elaboration to the Confucian moral thoughts, thinking that it is the basic idea of Confucianism to grasp the relations between man and nature, man and himself as well as man and society, thus forming an ideological system of Confucianism with morality as the core.

This book combines history and theory in line with the Marxist historical materialism, which is conducive to the critical inheritance of Confucianism. With detailed and reliable contents in an easy and fluent style, the book has reached a high academic level. In terms of the theoretical analysis and research on issues, it goes where no one has gone before with higher academic value.

On the whole, the book is a novel treatise.

Beijing, China

Zhang Dainian

Foreword by Luo Guojie

The book *View of Moralization—Study of Confucian Moral Thought* is a summary of the research by Ge Chenhong on Confucian morality in recent years. There have been a lot of papers and books about Confucian morality in Chinese academic circles, and some new progress has been made. This book by Ge Chenhong focuses on the overall understanding of the extremely important but very special status and function of the moral thoughts in the system of Confucianism. In a series of questions such as what the origin is, what principle is based on, and what method is employed in the Confucian moral thought, Ge Chenhong put forward her own views, so that people can have a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of the Confucian moral thoughts. Although such a grasp is more from the perspective of ethics, it constitutes a new angle. In my opinion, to grasp Confucianism from such a perspective is in line with the original meaning of Confucianism.

China's Confucianism, as a system of philosophical thoughts, does contain the contents of cosmology, epistemology, methodology, ethics, and the like, which is universally acknowledged. And we should also see that an important feature of Confucianism is that it is based on the ethical and moral relations between people. In other words, it is an ideological system that emphasizes the research of ethics and morality to achieve its goal of harmonizing interdisciplinary relations. To understand this is of great significance to our study and analysis of Confucianism, for even in the discussion about the cosmology and ontology and in the study on the relationship between the Heaven and man, Confucian thinkers also start with ethics in most cases. In elaborating the dialectical relationship between knowing and doing, cognition and practice as well as thinking and action, it highlights the importance of ethics and morality. We know that a very important proposition of the famous thinker Wang Yangming in the Ming Dynasty is the "unity of knowing and doing". For the reason why he particularly emphasized that the relationship between knowing and doing should be "unified", the most fundamental origin and purpose is the requirement of ethics and morality. Since many people cannot really understand the thoughts of Wang Yangming, he stressed many times that it is necessary to get his "claims of thought", that is, to understand the origin and the fundamental purpose of his thought Why should knowing and doing be

“unified”? He said, “If we say that a person honors his parents and brothers, then the fact must be that the person himself has conducted the act, so that we can say he knows honoring; otherwise, how can we say a person who just says some words about honoring knows such conduct?” In order to truly grasp the essence of Confucianism, we must also start from the “claims of thought” of Confucian thinkers and understand their original meaning in general when we study Confucianism. Also, for the “mind” in Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming’s philosophy of the mind, we should also fully notice their “claims of thought”. In quite a number of cases, they started with the initiative of the moral subject of man and the moral conscience of the people. Although they were bound to fall into the mud of subjective idealism when they crossed the line of ethics to talk about the issue of pure cosmology, we still need to pay attention to different meanings of the “mind” put forward by them in different places under different conditions.

As *View of Moralization—Study on Confucian Moral Thought* is a summary of Confucianism based on the analysis and summary made by previous thinkers on the representative figures of Confucianism in history, focusing on Confucianism’s long-term occurrence, development, and change on the whole by connecting the thoughts of many Confucian figures, the book presents us a better internal organic logical structure of Confucianism. Focusing on the relations between man and nature, man and himself as well as man and society, the author has deeply analyzed major problems that Confucianism must solve when facing the real life, which has new enlightenment for us to understand Confucianism.

The book *View of Moralization—Study on Confucian Moral Thought* tries to analyze Confucianism with the views and methods of Marxist historical materialism, and to give a correct and objective evaluation to Confucianism. Early in January 1940, Comrade Mao Zedong in his paper *On New Democracy* pointed out, “China created splendid ancient culture in the long feudal society. To comb the development process of ancient culture, remove its feudal dross and absorbing the essence of its democracy is the necessary condition for developing national new culture and improve national self-confidence; but we should never swallow anything and everything uncritically.” He also said, “The new politics and the new economy at present in China are developed from the old politics and the old economy in ancient times. Similarly, the new culture at present in China is also developed from the old culture in ancient times, so we must respect our own history and not cut it off.” He also stressed that we should inherit and develop ancient Chinese thinkers from Confucius to Sun Yat-sen. Comrade Ge Chenhong, in this book, has historically analyzed the occurrence, development, and inevitability of Confucian moral thought by virtue of the concept defined by Karl Marx on the “Asiatic mode of production” in the ancient oriental society, according to the social development characterized by blood ties and clan relations in ancient China, by comparing with the “classical antiquity” development in the West. Guided by the principle of “inheriting its essence and criticizing its dross”, she sought to carry out

the critical thinking while inheriting, to better carry forward the fine cultural and moral traditions of the Chinese nation. This book is worth reading for those who want to know about the culture and moral character of ancient Chinese Confucianism.

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Chapter 1

Blood Foundation and Character of Moral Thought



The relationship by blood, as we all know, is the common historical origin of human society. The complete disintegration and historic preservation of the clan by blood lead the East and the West, respectively, to different paths of civilization. And this historic bifurcation finally makes the “relationship by blood” a logical origin of China’s unique ideology and culture. The inherent logical origin of China, which is synchronized with the historical development, created a unique patriarchal society in ancient China, supported by a patriarchal system and ideological culture based on kinship and human relationships. The Confucian moral thought in China, on the side of safeguarding the patriarchal societal order, is a historical summary of the “Asiatic” patriarchal society in ancient China. History has created the Confucian moral thought, so the history finally chose the Confucianism, so that the Confucian moral thought continues in history, and furthermore grows into the ideological origin that affects the whole Chinese culture and historical development. In a word, the emergence of Confucian moral thought and its growth into the mainstream of Chinese culture are of historical inevitability.

1.1 Social and Material Conditions of Moral Thought

According to Friedrich Engels, “All the social relations and state relations, all the religious and legal systems and all the theoretical viewpoints that have appeared in history can be understood only when the material living conditions of each corresponding era are understood and they are derived from these material living conditions.”¹ Conditions of social material production decide the way of social life, and also a certain culture of social life. To understand Chinese history, the Chinese ideology and culture, and Confucianism, which has deeply guided and influenced Chinese history and culture, we have to go deep into the social and historical background of the pre-Qin Confucianism to analyze those special social and historical conditions.

¹*Selections of K. Marx and F. Engels Vol. 2* (1995), p. 38. People’s Publishing House.

In regard to the historical process of human entering civilization from primitive society, Marxist classical writers believed that the East and the West have taken two distinct paths, namely “classical antiquity” represented by ancient Greece and “Asiatic antiquity” represented by ancient oriental countries. The controversy caused by Marx’s concept of “Asiatic mode of production” is not the intended topic here, as what is important is to grasp the theoretical essence from the consistent thought of Marxist classic writers. K. Marx did not define any of his important philosophical and economic concepts, but instead, as F. Engels said, “They were elucidated in the course of their historical or logical formation”.²

The formation of the concept of “Asiatic mode of production” has gone through a development process. The Asiatic form or oriental society K. Marx and F. Engels talked about at first, in most cases, refers to the primitive form of human society based on the public ownership of village land. After they found that the clan system was the real essence of the primitive society, and that the East and the West saw distinct development paths of evolvements from primitive clan society to class society, they expounded their thoughts a step further. In accordance with the theory of K. Marx, F. Engels clearly put forward his thoughts about the two distinct paths of civilization development, namely “classical antiquity” and “Asiatic antiquity”, in his book *Origin of the Family, Private Ownership and State*.

To be specific, the development path of “classical antiquity” is from clan to private property ownership and then to country, where individual private ownership broke apart clan organization, country replaced clan. While in “Asiatic antiquity”, human society directly stepped into the slavery country, where the blood clan system was combined with the organizational structure of the country, without destroying the original clan organization. As for these two different historical approaches, Mr. Hou Wailu explained that “classical antiquity” took the “path of revolution” while “Asiatic antiquity” took the “path of enhancement”. The former was like a civilized “child” under normal development, but the latter was like a precocious civilized “child”.³

As the private property ownership broke the public ownership of clan land in “classical antiquity”, the dual structure of ownership became an outstanding characteristic, that is, with the state land property and the private land property that are contradictory to each other, “the ownership is in the dual structure where the state ownership and the private state ownership go on in parallel.”⁴ However, the forms of Asiatic ownership are characterized by the following differences: the first is the land public ownership based on the common possession. K. Marx has repeatedly discussed this “Asiatic” public land ownership. He pointed out that in the unique form of the East, commune members “are co-owners of public property”,⁵ “in the forms of Asiatic ownership, there is no personal ownership, but individual possession; the commune is the real owner, so the property exists only as public land property.”⁶

²Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 7 (2009), p. 17. People’s Publishing House.

³Hou (1940s), p. 2.

⁴Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 46 (I) (1979), p. 484. People’s Publishing House.

⁵Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 8 (2009), p. 124. People’s Publishing House.

⁶Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 8 (2009), p. 132. People’s Publishing House.

The second is the patriarchal kinship based on the natural economy. In ancient social forms with a low level of productivity, productive labor could only be based on the public ownership of production conditions on the one hand, and on the fact that individuals had not yet got rid of the clan or the commune's umbilical cord on the other hand. Marx figuratively likened this to the case that "just as a single bee, it cannot survive without a hive".⁷

Clearly, the "Asiatic" form is characterized by state ownership and individual possession with no individual ownership, and dominated by public ownership of land with a strong patriarchal kinship. The "classical antiquity" form is characterized by state ownership and private ownership in parallel, weak in patriarchal kinship. The question is, with the same development of clan towards slavery, why the East and the West diverged into these bifurcating paths? In the ancient times of the clan, Greece, like China and other nations stepping into civilization in the ancient clan period, took the natural human relationship within the clan and the primitive public ownership as the basis of moral regulation. The decisive historical step is that the ancient Chinese clan eventually developed the patriarchal clan system without changing the bond of the clan and thus entered the slavery country, while the ancient Greeks did not directly inherit but disintegrated their blood clan system, replacing the clan system with the city-state democracy.

The different historical changes in the East and the West have been propelled by many special conditions and specific events. For example, in the reform of Cleisthenes, Athens replaced the principle of blood ties of the clan system with one based on territorial divisions, which thoroughly broke the blood ties of the clan society by reorganizing people of different clans and blood ties into different city-states. To divide the region into city-states is an attempt of reform, behind which there are complicated historical reasons. The most fundamental one is that Greece developed a commodity economy completely different from that of ancient China in the early days when the clan entered the civilization of slavery. Due to the relatively developed commodity economy in ancient Greece, the exchange of goods of clans is no longer confined to the tribes, but developed into a common relationship among members within the clan. The more the commodity economy and commodity relationship developed in the tribal clan, the more rapidly the clan organization was disintegrated, enabling the members of the clan to gradually break away from the restriction of the kinship hierarchy and grow into free economic individuals.

With the formation of the new economic relations, a series of corresponding changes in politics happened to ancient Greece, such as reform by Theseus. According to Greek history, after unifying the tribal clans, King Theseus made reform and set up a central council and administrative body centered on Athens, replacing clans with city-states. The members of the city-state were divided into three classes: nobles, peasants, and handicraftsmen by reform, and thus such social stratum division broke previous division of the clans by blood.

About such social transformation, F. Engels analyzed, "The difference between the state and the clan system is, first, that the state distinguishes its nationals according

⁷*Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 44* (2001), p. 388. People's Publishing House.

to its territory and as we have seen, the old ties of kinship which unite the clan community have become ineffective in their reliance on the conditions which now cease to be the fact—all clan members must live in a certain territory. The territory remains the same, but the human race has changed... This resident organization by region is a common feature of all nations.”⁸ The city-states divided by region and their social life are characterized by that “on the one hand, they have fixed the eternal antagonism between the city, which serves as the basis of social separation, and the countryside and on the other side, they have established a posthumous system in which the owner of the property would dispose of his property after his death. This system is a direct blow to the ancient clan, which was unknown until the time of Solon in Greece”.⁹

Commodity economy helps the members of a clan break away from the umbilical cord of clan consanguinity, and differentiate into independent economic individuals, who are no longer subject to the restriction of consanguinity and hierarchy as equal and free economic individuals. People who own private commodities constitute distinct individuals. The nature of exchanging commodities of equivalent values also drives people involved in the exchange to equally recognize the products and labor of the counterparty, so that they develop the concept of equivalent identity and equality. In this way, the commodity economy disintegrates the original blood ties of the clan and creates human relations completely different from those in the clan society, as well as independent and free social individuals.

Based on the distinct ways of their emergence, “classical antiquity” “came from the private ownership after complete dissolution of the clan”, while “Asiatic antiquity” “came out of the transition from the public ownership of clan land to the state ownership of land.”¹⁰ The social organization of the clan went directly into a slavery state, where the grandees were also slave owners, while the captured clans turned into group slaves. The direct transition from clan to the state has given the whole social structure the legacy clan system tied by blood. This is the key to understanding the mode of production, social system, ideology, and culture of ancient China, and in particular, it is the direct historical basis for studying the formation and characteristics of Confucian moral thought.

1.1.1 Material Conditions of Ancient “Asiatic” Road in China

As for the question of why the ancient Chinese clan organizations by blood were not broken by the individual and private ownership system as they were in the West, it needs to find the answer in the historical background, that is, the material production conditions at that time.

⁸Engels (2003), pp. 163–164.

⁹Engels (2003), p. 169.

¹⁰Tian (1992), p. 24.

The material production conditions constitute a comprehensive foundation, and the natural condition (or geographical environment) is at the most basic level, above which lie the economic level (production mode) and the social organization level, etc. When we make a comprehensive study on the conditions of material production in ancient China, we will find that it is a semi-closed continental environment, different from the open ocean environment, having determined the “Asiatic” historical course of China; it is an agricultural natural economy different from both the nomadic economy and the industrial and commercial economy, accompanied by the public ownership of land determined by low productivity and common interest.

Natural geographical conditions are not the main factors that directly determine human history, but the characteristics of the geographical environment determine the development of productivity, and the latter, in turn, determines the development of economic relations and all other social relations that accompany them.¹¹ Therefore, when discussing the reasons for the continuation of the ancient clan system, we have to first analyze the natural environment of ancient society. The geographical environment in which ancient Chinese ancestors lived was continental and was based on rivers but not desert in Central Asia, or grassland where Huns or Mongolians lived, or forest steppe in Eastern Europe. The Yellow River and the Yangtze River fed this fertile land. The natural geographical environment of the rivers based continent first provided decisive conditions for the ancient Chinese ancestors to engage in agricultural production, which had a fundamental effect on the development of ancient China into an agricultural society dominated by agriculture and a self-sufficient natural economy.

The social consequence of self-sufficient agricultural economy was, first of all, the sluggish development of commodity economy, while the underdeveloped commodity economy made it hard for blood ties to be broken apart and the private ownership system to come up. The early clan social organization of the ancient Greeks in the West was finally destroyed, which was the result of the development of commodity economy. The reason why ancient Greece grew into a relatively developed commodity economy with equal importance attached to the business, agriculture, fishery, and handicrafts was closely related to the natural regional environment of the mountains, rivers, and plains as well as the open gulf facing the sea.

Natural economy refers to a social pattern where production and the products manufactured are not for exchange but to meet the needs of producers or economic units themselves. No matter if it is referred to as a closed economy, household economy or small-scale peasant economy, the natural economy actually outlines its main characteristics from different angles. The clan in ancient China was in this agricultural society dominated by the natural economy, where families or tribes cultivated and produced their own daily necessities without and with no need for exchange. Chapter 80 of the book *Lao Tseu* describes the primitive society of “universal harmony”. “Let the people again tie ropes for a reckoning. Let them think their own food delicious, their own clothes beautiful, their own residence comfortable, and their own costumes suitable. So that they can hear the barking of dogs and crowing of cocks of

¹¹ People’s Publishing House (1990). *The Complete Works of Lenin Vol. 55*, p. 446.

their neighbors, and the people till the end of their days shall never have been outside their home territory.” *Family Instructions of the Yan’s · Family Maxims* also says, “People’s survival depends on the cultivation of sufficient food to eat and plantation of mulberry to make clothes. Vegetables and fruits are produced in the garden, and livestock such as chickens and pigs are kept in captivity. As for the houses to live in and the tools to use, as well as candles and lighting are all gains from labor. So the person who keeps his family business will have what he needs to survive without going out ...” All of these, directly and indirectly, reflect the characteristics of the self-sufficient agricultural economy that began and formed thousands of years ago in ancient China, lacking the social division of labor and commodity exchange. It is these characteristics that block the development of commodity economy and the emergence of private ownership, because the social division of labor and social exchange of products is a prerequisite for the development of commodity economy and emergence of private ownership.

Besides the economic production mode above, China’s underdeveloped social commodity economy in the early days also has something to do with the relatively closed inland environment. The development of the commodity economy is inseparable from the large-scale circulation of commodities, which requires material media to be available for easy circulation. Relatively speaking, the natural environment along the Mediterranean coast of ancient Greece did provide convenient water transportation medium for commodity exchange among early Greeks, which promoted the indirect entry of ancient Greece into slavery in the form of “classical antiquity”, by breaking the blood ties of the clan with private property. It can be said that the natural geographical conditions of ancient China, on the one hand, indirectly block the development of commodity economy and private ownership through the resulted self-sufficient agricultural economy deriving from them, and on the other hand, directly block the circulation of commodities through the disadvantageous transportation. While it is certain that, commodity economy is difficult to develop without a suitable geographical environment, a suitable geographical environment may not necessarily boost the commodity economy in a natural way. Only when the natural conditions are combined with the productive forces, mode of production, superstructure, and other factors generated on the basis of these natural conditions, will a difference be made to the social and historical process. In this regard, Lenin concluded, “The geographical environment influences people through the production relations arising from certain local productive forces, and the primary condition for the development of productive forces is the characteristic of such geographical environment.”¹²

But anyway, the historical fact is that in ancient Greece and Rome, the dissolution of the clan organization and the public system was quite thorough because of their developed commodity economy. F. Engels said that if the products of the clan communes were “in the form of commodities utilized in greater depth ... the communes would be disintegrated into small-farm villages more rapidly. Over thousands of years, the rule by the eastern despotism and the Nomadic herdsmen from East to

¹²*The Complete Works of Lenin Vol. 55* (1990), p. 447. People’s Publishing House.

West had no alternative to these old communes; but the gradual destruction of the spontaneous household industry, caused by the competition of large industrial products, has led to the disintegration of the commune.”¹³ The difference is what K. Marx, in summarizing the characteristics of the oriental Asiatic mode of production, said, “These family communes were built on household industry and were self-sufficient by the special combination of manual weaving, spinning, and agriculture.”¹⁴ For the long-standing natural economy of self-sufficient agriculture combined with handicrafts in ancient China’s clan society, failure to develop commodity economy is a key reason why the clan organization tied by blood is not broken by individual private ownership. In addition to the above reasons, there is an even more important historical condition for the direct entry of clan into the state without breaking the blood ties by private ownership, namely the solid existence of the public ownership of land in ancient times.

In the agricultural society of the natural economy, production is based on the established social organization, and the social organization is formed mostly naturally. The low level of productive forces and the labor mode of the agricultural economy in the age of clan society strengthened this social community organization. In that age, agricultural production was mainly in the form of collective labor. The oracle inscription *To Continue*, 2, 28, 5 says, “The prince orders his people to plow collectively and that will bring in a good harvest”. The term “collective” means teamwork, indicting a large group of people plowing simultaneously in groups. In *The Book of Poetry*, there is also a record that “Thousands of peasants are out in force and get engaged in farming in pairs”.¹⁵ In the historical records of China, we can see more historical facts about collective cultivation of wasteland, collective seeding and catching locusts, especially about collective irrigation and other projects. It can be seen that the agricultural production relying on large-scale labor cooperation is fostered by the unique production environment in ancient China.

It is certain that, low level of productive forces and harsh living environment are common phenomena in the early primitive society of human beings, but relatively, China’s ancient agriculture-based society is distinctly different from the ancient society in the West. In fact, in the literature of Rome, the most typical slavery country, there is hardly any record of the simultaneous cultivation by thousands of people as recorded in China. In ancient Rome, grain accounted for only the 6th place in the manor’s income, and its most common manor form was about 60 hectares of olive groves and vineyards. According to historical records, a manor like that was usually under the charge of two butlers with a dozen slaves, and if necessary in the busy farming season, temporary workers would be hired.¹⁶ Therefore, the social production structure where commerce, agriculture, metallurgy, fishery, and handicraft industry coexisted with each other in ancient times in the West led to a production scale and working mode different from those in China’s agriculture-based society.

¹³*Selections of K. Marx and F. Engels Vol. 20* (1971), p. 177. People’s Publishing House.

¹⁴People’s Publishing House (1995). *Selections of K. Marx and F. Engels Vol. 1*, p. 765.

¹⁵Yan (1991), p. 14.

¹⁶Livalov (1957), pp. 441, 36.

It was impossible for ancient Chinese to carry out agricultural work without large-scale cooperation in an unfavorable living environment, which, in turn, made the land property in Chinese clan society fail to take the form of private ownership.

Under the production conditions of the clan society, at first, land property cannot be processed by an isolated individual but some social organization, due to its natural characteristics. In the primitive tribal times, said K. Marx, “It was impossible for an isolated individual to have land property, just as it was impossible for him to speak... The relationship of land as property is always mediated by the occupation of land by tribes or communes in more or less natural or historically developed forms. In this case, the individual cannot be represented as a single point as a free worker.”¹⁷ The first form of agricultural labor is collective cultivation of land, which is adapted to the underdevelopment of this labor mode and production tools. At this stage, the occupation of land is also collective due to the collective labor process. The clan community is not only the owner, but an actual possessor and user of the land. People face nature directly in clan groups, “simply and naively enough, regarding the land as the property of the community”.¹⁸ Therefore, the clan society with agricultural production as the leading economy has the potential public ownership factor which restricts the emergence of private ownership.

Secondly, another constraining factor associated with land is the dependence of agricultural production on natural conditions. Agriculture is mainly a process of plant reproduction, which to a large extent depends on natural conditions such as climate and water conservancy, and the effective use of natural conditions, especially irrigation and water conservancy, which is crucial to agriculture, is bound to rely on the power of the community. K. Marx said, “The need to control the forces of nature socially for their economical use, and to build large-scale projects by manpower to capture or tame them, has played the most decisive role in the history of industry”, “in India, the management of the water supply is one of the material bases on which state power rules over disconnected small-scale production organizations”.¹⁹ Engels also pointed out, “Political rule is everywhere based on the performance of certain social functions, and can only be sustained when it carries out its social functions.” In the east of Asia, no matter how many tyrannical regimes rose or fell, “each of them knew very well that they were the general operators of valley irrigation, where agriculture was not possible without irrigation.”²⁰ At the level of productive forces at that time, it was impossible for a single person or a decentralized tribe to undertake the construction and maintenance of large water conservancy projects. “As a too low level of civilization and too large size of the territory constitutes an obstacle to the formation of voluntary cooperation, there is an urgent need for a centralized government to intervene.” Therefore, “all governments in Asia have to perform an economic function, that is, organizing public works.”²¹ In China, to undertake water

¹⁷ *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 46 (I)* (1979), p. 483. People’s Publishing House.

¹⁸ *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 46 (I)* (1979), p. 472. Beijing: People’s Publishing House.

¹⁹ *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 2* (1995), p. 219. People’s Publishing House.

²⁰ *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 20* (1971), p. 195. People’s Publishing House.

²¹ *Selections of K. Marx and F. Engels Vol. 1* (1995), p. 762. People’s Publishing House.

conservancy projects has been an important function of the state since Dayu began to control water in ancient times. According to statistics, a total of more than 7,000 water control affairs were seen from 722 BC to 1911 AD, around 2,600 years.²² Thus it can be seen that China's agricultural society depends heavily on and attaches great importance to water conservancy. Therefore, agriculture's dependence on water conservancy and water conservancy project's dependence on the social community, in turn, have strengthened the function and existence of the social community of the clan. The Xia created by Emperor Yu was the first Dynasty to transition to a real state. Emperor Yu laid the foundation for ancient agriculture with his huge water conservancy projects, making him a legendary hero among the ancient wise Kings. According to Marx's analysis, in the Asian communes at that time, large-scale water control projects required the development of a higher-level institution among the tribes or villages, and required the generation of the "father of many communes". The state is mainly generated by the basic requirements of irrigation and drainage systems and embankments necessary to meet the geographical and climatic conditions.²³

K. Marx's investigation and analysis of "Asiatic" road throughout the east of Asia covers China, and "China is the most typical example of the Asiatic society in the sense of Marxism."²⁴ The mode of production dominated by agriculture in ancient China got the clan's public institutions mainly engaged in public water conservancy projects, besides financial and military affairs.²⁵

In a word, the low productive forces, acting together with the common interests of water conservancy and agriculture, developed a public functional body and a common clan organization based on the public ownership of land. If the underdeveloped commodity economy is considered an important reason why the ancient clan organization was not broken by the private ownership, the public ownership of land is another important reason why the ancient Chinese clan organization was bound to be thoroughly disintegrated. It is in this sense that K. Marx and F. Engels consistently emphasized, "there is no private ownership of land, which is a real key to understanding the oriental kingdom."²⁶ It is a natural economy and agricultural society with two main characteristics of public land ownership and underdeveloped commodity economy that led ancient China into the society of states without breaking the clan organization.

Henry Sumner Maine, a famous scholar, in speaking of the social and historical transformation in the West, said "what is the relationship on earth between individuals that is used to gradually replace the form of mutual relations derived from family rights and obligations? Such relationship is 'contract'. In the past, all relations of 'man' were summed up in the 'family' relationship, and as an origin in history, we seemed to be moving towards a new state of social order, in which all these relations

²²Chaoding (1981).

²³*Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 46 (I)* (1971), p. 473. People's Publishing House.

²⁴*Marx and the Third World*, p. 117.

²⁵Tian (1992), p. 340.

²⁶*The Complete Works of Lenin Vol. 31* (1985), p. 194. People's Publishing House.

were created by the ‘personal’ freedom and willingness. In Western Europe, the progress achieved in this direction is significant.”²⁷

1.1.2 The Same Structure of the Clan and State—Characteristics of a Patriarchal (Clan) State

The “Asiatic” path in history shows that the self-sufficient small-scale peasant economy in ancient China, the public ownership of land, and the forms of social organization on which the low productive forces must depend, all made the public functions of a state emerge on the basis of the clan organization that was not completely disintegrated. As a result, the social structure of the country fell on the organization based on patriarchal blood naturally. In general, the clan organization by blood is completely different from the political and economic organization of a state, and there are essential differences between the clan system and the state system. F. Engels, when talking about the differences between the state and the clan system in his book *Origin of the Family, Private Ownership and State*, pointed out that the clan system was based on blood relationships, while the state “divided its citizens by region.”²⁸ We can get certain points from the meaning of the word “state” to prove F. Engels’ assertion. In English, the word “state” or “country” carries only the meaning of the nation, region, home village, and the like, with no implication of family or clan, however, its counterpart in Chinese (国家) is composed of the meaning of both “state/country” and “family”, where the two are inextricably linked together. For this concept, Chinese people have always understood it by basing “state/country” on “family”. No matter whether from the perspective of etymology or patriotic sentiment of the Chinese people, the term “state/country” reflects that the state in ancient China developed on the basis of the extended family—clan. In this regard, Mr. Hou Wailu analyzed that in “classical antiquity”, the state replaced the family as the family developed into private ownership and then state; while in “Asiatic antiquity”, the family developed into the state directly, where the state was mixed in the family and was called “the god of the land and the god of grain” (社稷).²⁹ The term “country” in the West is, in fact, derived from the patriarchal social and political organization that integrates the blood relationship of the family and the political relationship of the state. There is a strong clan legacy in the national political system, which makes the ancient Chinese social structure, cultural spirit, and history process quite special.

The Dynasties Xia and Shang in ancient China were both patriarchal countries developed based on the tribal clans. On that basis, the Zhou Dynasty further implemented the system of enfeoffment. The ruler of the Zhou Dynasty, surnamed Ji, originally a tribe under the reign of the Shang Dynasty, conquered Shang and founded Zhou. In order to expand his power and ensure control over a vast territory, the Zhou

²⁷Maine (1995).

²⁸*Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 28* (1973), p. 256. People’s Publishing House.

²⁹*General History of China Vol. 1* (2009), p. 155. People’s Publishing House.

emperor enfeoffed his blood relatives to all parts of the kingdom to set up vassal states in all sizes, known as “enfeoff relatives to found vassal states to safeguard the kingdom”.³⁰ In this way, these vassal states were in connection with the Zhou emperor in both politics and blood ties. The saying “All the territory under the sun belongs to the King; all the people are the subjects of the King, without exception” in a poem of the Zhou Dynasty reflects the social nature of the state, which was established by enfeoffment and incorporated the legacy clan system. For this reason, the prince is both the master of the state and the father of all peoples. As put in *Classic of History · Great Plan*: The King serves as the parent of the people to rule the world under the sun”. K. Marx, however, called the leader of the higher association of clans in the “Asiatic” form the “father of many communes”, which also reflects combination and the same structure of the state and the clan in ancient China.

Although the state was built in the Xia Dynasty, it was still transitional. The transition was completed in the Shang Dynasty and reached its peak in the Western Zhou Dynasty. Although a Dynasty was founded during the reign of Emperor Yu, it was still somewhat a clan society. At that time, there were only clans, tribes, and tribal alliances, but no real state. According to the historical record, the “state” at that time was generally in the sense of region-state, clan-state and vassal state. The saying “all the states” came out in the era of Xia and Yu probably because “a clan is a state and the prince of the state is a clan chief”.³¹ In the process of the transition to the state, the clan got merged with the state with the most pronounced characteristics of a clan state. At that time, the tribal clan organization by blood was not disintegrated, but the clan’s public institutions had adapted themselves to the needs of the emergence of the state and began to perform state functions. It is certain that the central agency was very simple at that time. According to the *Book of Rites · Mingtangwei*, “there were hundreds of officials in the Xia Dynasty”, indicating the then state administration was barely in the embryo.

In this way, the clan is a prototypical organization for the state. The state is built on the basis of blood ties of the clan, and the governing mode that the state can learn from and follow the example of also comes directly from the clan governing mode. The rule and management of the tribal clan are entirely based on the natural ethical relations of kinship. As the leaders and members of the clan are all kindred, coercive management is impossible. A kinship relation of intimacy and mutual love makes it possible to manage the clan with natural ethics and moral customs. As for the management style of the clan society, Engels once said that in a clan society “there were no armies, gendarmes or policemen, nor nobles, princes, governors, magistrates or judges, and there were no prisons or lawsuits, but everything was in good order”, “in most cases, traditional customs have adjusted everything well”.³² The leader and the tribal members are not in the relationship of ruling and being ruled in a clan. The leader is a highly respected person democratically elected by the whole clan and the clan organization is nothing but a simple setup to serve the clan. The principle

³⁰*The Spring and Autumn Annals · 4th Year of Duke Ding.*

³¹Zengyou (2002.10), p. 35.

³²*Selections of K. Marx and F. Engels Vol. 4* (1995), p. 95. People’s Publishing House.

function of the clan chief and its organization is to bring amity between the members of the clan and get along with other tribal clans. As the *Classic of History · Canon of Yao* praised Emperor Yao, “Yao was able to observe talented and virtuous people, so as to make his relatives close and unite them close and harmonious, then he was also able to observe and recognize good named officials to coordinate all the states. As a result, people became friendly and harmonious.” Here the relatives refer to Yao’s clan members, named officials refer to the heads of other tribes (only aristocrats have a surname in the ancient time), all the states refer to all the tribes under the sun. The clan chief must be close to the members of the clan, distinguish between strong and weak clan heads and treat them fairly, and harmonize the relationships between all the states under the sun, with no absolute political authority but moral prestige. As F. Engels summarized, “the chieftain’s power within the clan was paternal and simply moral in nature.”³³

In this way, the “state” with the characteristics of blood ties inherited from clan inevitably follows the moral administration of the clan organization. For example, in the social management in the Zhou Dynasty, “loyalty” and “respect” embodying new political relationships were required, besides “filial piety” and “kinship” that reflect the old blood relationship. The vassal state princes should not only regard their relationship with the Zhou emperor as that between relative subjects and the prince, but as that between the son and the father. And the princes are in a relationship between subjects and a relationship between brothers. In this way of adherence to and unity of loyalty and filial piety, it is possible to maintain a society where the political and kinship relations are brought in one. For this reason, the ruler of the Western Zhou Dynasty developed the “Rites of Zhou”, and used this code of ethics to coordinate the social order and interpersonal relations. Confucius devoted his life to the restoration of the rites of Zhou, and established a set of Confucian doctrines with emphasis on benevolence, courtesy, and morality. Confucius comprehended the nature of a patriarchal society by blood ties and realized the importance of benevolence, courtesy, and morality for the stability of the state order, so he put the practices of “regulating the family” and “ruling the state” on an equal footing. According to the *Book of Rites · Questions of Duke Ai*, Duke Ai of Lu State asked Confucius, “How to deal with government affairs?” Confucius replied, “The duties of the couple should be distinguished, the father and son should love each other, the prince and his subjects should trust each other. If these three relationships are correct, the relationship between all things will be straightened out.” *The Book of Changes · Family* also expresses the same idea: “fathers, sons, brothers, husbands, and wives should do their own duties, respectively. If the household duties are distinguished correctly, the state will be stable and prosperous.” The *Great Learning* also states, “Only when a man is worth emulating, whether as a father, son or brother, will the common people emulate him. That is to say, we must first manage the family in order to govern the country.” Confucianism often considers how to extend family ethics such as filial piety and respect for ancestors to state governance. They believe that the state should be maintained by ethics just as the clan should be maintained by ethics.

³³*Selections of K. Marx and F. Engels Vol. 4* (1995), p. 84. People’s Publishing House.

In their eyes, filial piety is the backbone of maintaining the entire social order and comes from the natural love of blood relationships. People are born with the love and the heart of benevolence for families. People are kind by nature and the law of man is natural. The law of man is the manifestation of that of Heaven in human society. “We should be close to our loved ones, respect the respected, and treat older people as seniors. Men and women are different and should be treated differently”, as recorded in the *Book of Rites · Smaller Records of Mourning Dress*, which indicates the grand scale of the law of man and presents specific features of the law of Heaven. It is almost self-evident that those who have gained the law of Heaven should practice the law of man like “getting close to the loved ones...”—from which, the pre-Qin Confucianism created a whole set of ideas about the same virtue of Heaven and man, virtue granting by Heaven and state governing by benevolence and etiquette, and was shaped into a moral thought system with the unique benevolence, righteousness, and virtue of Confucianism as the core value.

It can be said that the theory founded by Confucius is not a political ideal invented by Confucian thinkers, but a theoretical reflection of the reality of the ancient Chinese clan (patriarchal clan) state, and another extension of the “Asiatic” historical path in the ideological field. The Confucian moral thought was created by Confucius, but its content and value orientation are determined by the historical reality. The ideas of Confucius were not fully realized in his time. There were many schools competing with Confucianism such as Mohism, Legalism, and Taoism in the contention among the Hundred Schools of Thought. The “campaign of burning books and burying Confucian scholars alive” by the First Emperor of Qin also showed that the Confucian ideology and allegation of ruling by virtue was not favored by all the rulers.

Both Mohism and Confucianism advocate love for people. But different from Confucianism differentiating love by “getting close to the loved ones and respecting the respected”, Mohism advocates love without difference. If we say Confucius established the patriarchal ethics of family and state based on blood ties, Mo-tse established a theory of social ethics based on the general social relations of non-family and non-state. Mohism put forward “universal love”, opposing social class and human inequality, but Mo-tse was “in love with each other” for the sake of “mutual benefit”. That is to say, Mo-tse’s love is based on the utilitarian purpose of the small-scale laborer utilitarian foundation of small producers, unlike the Confucian benevolence, people are asked to give unconditionally. The Confucian “benevolence” has gained strong practical support due to its actual patriarchal basis of blood ties of the clan, while the Mohist “universal love” requires no identifying close or distant relationship to avoid the conflict of utilitarianism and tends to be empty due to the separation from reality. In the patriarchal society by blood ties, Mo-tse’s “universal love” appears so empty and weak. Although it has a good ideal side, the thought was hardly adapted to the social reality eventually at that time.

Taoism is the most thorough negator of Confucianism. Its ideological theme is to let everything in the world conform to the laws of nature and pursue the absolute spiritual “freedom” of the individual. Taoism believes that man should obey and return to nature, thinking that only physical desires, fame, ethics, and moral principles are all disregarded, can man be freed from all constraints of “pending” and returns to

simplicity to be “immortal”. The value of Confucianism is to emphasize action, which is full of enterprising and positive attitude towards life, while Taoism advocates going beyond everything to reach the realm of “inaction”. With the practice of “activity in repose” and “inaction and all without exception”, Taoism gives the extreme negation to the earthly etiquette and patriarchal system. When Chuang Tzu set his sights on the ideal society with a “perfect legal system”, he even abolished all the moral ethics advocated by Confucianism and returned people’s absolute individual “freedom”. The Taoist thought and spirit of anti-morality, anti-order, and anti-world determined that it would not be truly adopted by the rulers of the patriarchal society.

Although the legalist view is not directly opposite to Confucianism, it is a sharp critic of Confucian morality in governing the state. Legalism is basically a state-governing theory and advocates “rule by law”. The legalists do not generally negate “benevolence and righteousness”, “loyalty and filial piety”, but also affirm the value orientation of “valuing righteousness over profit”, so it is not contradictory to Confucianism in terms of social purposes. The legalists are only against the use of morality as the principal means for governing the state, by advocating “rule by law”, which is theoretically derived from their different views on human nature and history. The legalists, proceeding from the evil of human nature, place no high hopes on the moral conscience, instead, they emphasize “enlighten people with law” and are committed to achieving morality through coercion.

Legalism was once appreciated and adopted by the rulers. However, the lessons from the downfall of Qin Dynasty and the “Rebellion of the Seven Kingdoms of Wu and Chu” in the early Han Dynasty soon made the rulers of the Han Dynasty understand the Confucian moral thought, founded by Confucius, emphasizing “benevolence” and patriarchal ethics in a patriarchal society like China with a clan umbilical cord could better meet their historical needs than the Legalism advocating heavy penalty and Taoism of “governing by non-interference”. Therefore, after the “Rebellion of the Seven Kingdoms” was pacified, the rulers eventually adopted the policy of “overwhelming Confucianism only”. In a word, Taoism appeals to the individual and does not value the individual’s group responsibility. Such negative individualism and passivism of “inaction” can neither be helpful for the “family” to be stable nor help people to “cultivate oneself, put family in order, govern a state, and make the world peaceful”. Although Mohism is based on the society, its theory lacks sufficient understanding of “state” and “family” in the actual patriarchal society by blood ties, and the utilitarianism emphasizing “mutual benefit” is also incompatible with the requirements of kinship and respect in the patriarchal society. Although the legalists highly praised the “state” ethics and gave strong support to “benevolence and righteousness”, their excessively cold coerciveness and rationality undermined the familial emotion of the patriarchal society and the moral temperament of the consanguineous society. Legalism is not the social consciousness that is the best fitted with the patriarchal society by blood ties, so in the end, it only takes the position of “morality given priority over penalty” in the state governance.

It is no coincidence that in the course of social and political development, Confucianism was finally selected in the political “competition” of all parties. Its emergence undoubtedly reflects more comprehensively and profoundly the economic, political,

and social structures of the ancient “Asiatic” society of China, and it is more adapted to the needs of feudal rule. In a certain sense, it can be asserted that it was the “Asiatic” historical path that brought up Confucianism, which was finally chosen by history because it reflected and got adapted to the unique patriarchal society of China. The “Asiatic” historical road based on blood ties in ancient China is the key to understand the patriarchal clan society of ancient China, as well as the key to solving the puzzle of the generation of Confucian moral thought and the strong vitality of China’s patriarchal society.

1.2 Characters of Moral Thought

“Thought” generally refers to a cognitive achievement relative to impression and feeling as an ideological form of rational knowledge. As there was no term of philosophy in ancient China, all academic thoughts were collectively referred to as “study” in the pre-Qin days... In ancient Chinese philosophy, ethics is closely related to and interconnected with the ontology and the theories about epistemological approaches.”³⁴ Obviously, the study on Confucianism in the pre-Qin days is not a normative theoretical system, so it can better reflect its existence as a kind of ideology integrating ontology, epistemology, and ethics if called “thought” than when called philosophy or ethics and the like. As “thought” is a cognitive achievement of people, the difference in “thought” lies in the use of different viewpoints and methods to understand and grasp the world. Confucianism differs from Western learning in that it understands and grasps the world with the view and method of virtue. This achievement of Confucianism in cognition comes from the original process of Chinese culture, which reflects the “Asiatic mode of production” that produced it and the historical background of ancient Chinese patriarchal society. This is also the fundamental reason why it is compatible with hundreds of schools to become the most typical representative of ancient Chinese traditional thoughts. Therefore, as far as the nature of Confucianism is concerned, it can better express its internal characteristics and unique ideology if called “moral thought”.

1.2.1 *Proposal of the Moral Thought*

K. Marx said, “Animals can build according to the criteria and needs of their own species, while man knows how to conduct his production according to the criteria of any species, how to apply them to his object...”³⁵ It shows that people always recognize and transform the world according to the unified measure of truth, goodness, and beauty. However, due to different social and historical conditions, this measure

³⁴Zhang (1988.5), pp. 1, 3.

³⁵*Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 42* (1979), p. 97. People’s Publishing House.

structure will show the heterogeneity of different focuses. As F. Engels pointed out, “The theoretical thinking of each era (including the thinking of our era) is a product of history, with very different forms and very different contents in different times.”³⁶ In terms of a different “measure”, Mr. Feng Youlan summed up the subjects’ different understanding ideas of the object as the path of ontology, the path of epistemology, and the path of ethics.³⁷ The Confucian moral thought offers a kind of value measure that gives priority to goodness over truth on the basis of the patriarchal society by blood ties, based on which Confucianism expresses its thoughts on Heaven and man, as well as social politics and ethical thoughts. The “virtue” referred to in this book is nothing about personal moral character in the narrow sense, but a “measure” on the level of the world view, whose knowledge of the world is not simple but a polygenic one integrating truth, goodness, and beauty. In terms of the structure and function of virtue “measure”, it is a world view with goodness prior to the sum of truth, goodness, and beauty, and the term “virtue thought” is better than “moral thought” and “ethical thought” in reflecting the peculiar form and historical origin of Confucianism from the angle of particularity, because “morality” (道德) carried two separate meanings in the Spring and Autumn period, as in “only by perfect virtue (德) can the perfect path (道), in all its courses, be made a fact”.³⁸ Until the end of the Warring States Period, the two meanings got combined, as in “the apex of morality”,³⁹ where the “morality” refers to man’s code of conduct and the realization of this code in the actual behavior. Although there are broad and narrow explanations, it is usually about the knowledge of human morality. The word “ethic” (伦理) was found in “Music is the same as social ethics”, recorded in the *Book of Rites · Book of Music*. As annotated by Zheng Xuan, “Ethic is an orderly sequence of people of one kind”. “Ethic” generally refers to the social order and the moral relations at that time. Therefore, in its general sense, neither “morality” nor “ethics” is able to reflect the historical background and its meaning of “measure” as accurately as virtue (德性).

F. Engels said, “The thought process should begin where the history starts.”⁴⁰ Since the historical origin of the idea is in the “primitive era when people had an extremely ignorant, vague, and primitive understanding of the external nature around them”,⁴¹ religious ideas are generally regarded as the common origin of human ideology and culture. Similarly, the ideology of ancient China also developed from the original religious ideas. Because of the different historical conditions, the trend of the development of the ancient Chinese culture is neither the transcendental sublimation of the Indian Buddhist concept nor the growth of the ancient Greek secular culture in the religious ideas, but a virtue oriented cultural thought that replaces religious consciousness. It can be seen from many scholars’ studies of the *Classic of History · Book of Shang Dynasty*, as well as oracle inscriptions discovered in Yin, remains

³⁶ *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Vol. 20* (1971), p. 382. People’s Publishing House.

³⁷ *The Complete Works of Zhang Zhang Vol. 6* (1996.12), p. 526. Hebei People’s Publishing House.

³⁸ *Doctrine of the Mean*.

³⁹ *Works of Xuncius · An Exhortation to Learning*.

⁴⁰ *Selections of K. Marx and F. Engels Vol. 2* (1995), p. 43. People’s Publishing House.

⁴¹ *Selections of K. Marx and F. Engels Vol. 4* (1995), p. 250. People’s Publishing House.