



Secularization and China's Modernization

Zhongmin Wu



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CHAPTER 1

The Endogenous Dynamics of Modernisation

Modernisation is an inevitable trend in the development of human society and an inevitable choice for every country unless it is willing to fall behind and perish. It is safe to assume that there is no disagreement about this. However, some phenomena in the historical process of modernisation require further analysis and explanation: why have some countries been able to maintain their modernisation for two or three hundred years and still thrive? Why is it that the modernisation of some countries, despite impressive achievements, soon falls behind or stagnates? For latecomers that have been independent for more than half a century or even more than a century, theoretically, they all have had enough time to shed the influence of the original colonialism to modernise themselves independently and to achieve basic successes. However, why is it that the modernisation of some of these countries has finally taken off while that of others is still struggling to make progress? If we analyse such phenomena, we will find that while there are many reasons, one of the most important reasons is the different strengths of the endogenous dynamics of modernisation in each country.

1.1 BASIC STATUS OF ENDOGENOUS DYNAMICS IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

When human society entered the traditional society based on the natural economy (agrarian society), human beings changed from the previous mode of production, which by gathering, hunting, fishing, etc. mainly ‘utilised’ the ready-made means of living provided by nature to the mode of production which mainly ‘produced’ the materials of living through agricultural cultivation. It is a change from a mode of survival that used to be ‘parasitic’ on nature to a mode of self-producing; from a state of fluctuating life to a relatively stable state of life. ‘Agriculture is the original mode of production of all more or less fixed societies’ (Marx & Engels, 1979). On this basis, traditional societies of a truly ‘civilised’ nature were formed and they lasted for thousands of years.

Most traditional societies rely on the agrarian economy as their economic foundation.¹ In an agrarian economy, people use limited human and animal power as a source of motivation to obtain limited means of living from limited land, so the endogenous dynamics of the social community is relatively weak.

1.1.1 *High Dependence on Land*

Traditional societies are extremely dependent on the primary means of subsistence and production provided by nature—land. If land resources are a matter of great importance in any society, then, for the vast majority of the members of traditional societies, the issue of land is a matter of greater urgency, immediacy, or indispensability and one that has the greatest impact on the daily lives of the people.

In traditional societies based on the agrarian economy, the vast majority of members of society are peasants, and the integration of human and land is the basic means of survival and production for the vast majority of members of society. Land is not only the most basic means of production but also the most basic means of living for members of society. Whether or not one can own a decent piece of land is a necessary condition for the vast majority of members of society and their families to

¹ Strictly speaking, traditional societies include various types of ethnic groups whose main mode of production is farming, nomadic or fishing and hunting, but the main or typical ones are those whose main mode of production is farming.

guarantee their basic survival. If a farmer loses his land, he loses the basic conditions for his survival, and everything else will be out of the question. Moreover, in China specifically, land resources are very limited, while the population is constantly increasing. Chinese peasants must make full use of their extremely limited land for the simple survival and re-survival of themselves and their families. For peasants, “land” is their lifeblood. The god that reigns supreme in numbers is undoubtedly “land” (Fei, 1999, p. 317). For this reason, it is necessary to work hard and diligently. There is no other way.

Land is the most important thing not only for the peasants but also for the rulers. If a landowner loses his land, he is no longer a landowner. At the same time, for the rulers of the country, land resources are the basic guarantee of financial, military, and national power. They are the top priority for the normal functioning of the state power, the country’s strength, and the rulers’ possibility to maintain an extravagant life.

The land ownership status of peasants determines the security of society. Generally speaking, as long as a peasant family owns a decent piece of land, it means that it possesses the basic resources for survival so that its basic livelihood can be guaranteed, and it will live in peace and let nature take its course rather than taking the risk of engaging in fierce social resistance activities. As has often happened in Chinese history, with the intensification of the phenomenon of land annexation, accompanied by natural disasters and the increase in government taxes, peasants may lose the land on which they depend most for their livelihood. Once the peasants are deprived of the land they depend most on for their basic livelihood, they become desperate. As a result, they sometimes resorted to the most violent means of resistance against the other party—either the government or the landlords—who had caused their suffering, resulting in violent social unrest. This is one of the major reasons peasant riots have been so frequent in all Chinese dynasties.

Under traditional social conditions, the land issue, although vital to farmers, is extremely limited regarding its potential for raising productivity levels. With its integration of human and land, the agricultural economic production mode can only produce a relatively limited number of crops to satisfy people’s most basic needs of life. It is impossible to create enormous wealth and sustain the expansion of reproduction. It thus could not be a powerful engine for rapid social development and the overall progress of civilisation.

1.1.2 *Self-Sufficient Production*

Traditional societies are based on the agrarian economy. Under traditional social conditions, the degree of the social division of labour was very low and surplus products were relatively few. As a whole, the agrarian economy is used to satisfy the basic needs of the producers through the combination of a simple agricultural economy and cottage industries rather than for the exchange of goods. From the point of view of industrial structure, agriculture is the basic production sector. Even if there are cottage industries and commerce, they are, on the whole, a complement to agricultural production. Marx pointed out that under the conditions of an agrarian economy, ‘the conditions of the economy are either wholly or for the overwhelming part produced by the economy itself, directly replaced and reproduced out of its gross product. It furthermore presupposes the combination of rural home industry with agriculture’ (Marx, 1894). ‘Each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient; it directly produces the major part of its consumption and thus acquires its means of life more through exchange with nature than in intercourse with society. A smallholding, a peasant and his family; alongside them another smallholding, another peasant and another family. A few scores of these make up a village, and a few score of villages make up a department. In this way, the great mass of the French nation is formed by the simple addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes’ (Marx & Engels, 1852). According to Engels, in medieval society, ‘production for immediate consumption, either of the producer himself or his feudal lord. Only where an excess of production over this consumption occurs is such excess offered for sale, enters into exchange’ (Marx & Engels, 1880). Mao also pointed out that ‘the natural economy of self-sufficiency predominates. The peasants produce not only the agricultural products they need but also most of the handicrafts they need. The landlords and aristocrats, too, mainly used the rents they exploited from the peasants for their own enjoyment rather than for exchange. At that time, there was a development of exchange, but it did not play a decisive role in the economy as a whole’ (Mao, 1991a, 1991b, pp. 623–624).

In traditional societies, the majority of people were poor, or at least not rich, and thus, there was little expansion of reproduction in the true sense. At that time, only a few members of society possessed larger amounts of wealth. But for the wealthy, even if they were able to stockpile large amounts of wealth, they would not use it to expand their reproduction,

let alone to do so on a sustainable basis. For example, the Roman Empire, which was initially based on an agrarian economy, acquired a great deal of wealth from its conquered colonies as it rapidly expanded outward. The Roman Empire squandered this wealth rather than using it to expand reproduction. In the second century A.D., the number of national public holidays in the Roman Empire increased from one day 300 years ago to 123 days. During public festivals, citizens enjoyed watching horse races, comedies, gladiatorial fights, naval battles, and other entertainment, all mainly at the expense of the government. One of Emperor Aurelian's 'festival was protracted by theatrical representations, the games of the circus, the hunting of wild beasts, combats of gladiators, and naval engagements. Liberal donatives were distributed to the army and people, and... a considerable portion of his oriental spoils was consecrated to the gods of Rome; the Capitol, and every other temple, glittered with the offerings of his ostentatious piety; and the temple of the Sun alone received above fifteen thousand pounds of gold' (Gibbon, 2011, p. 497). Some of the emperors in ancient Chinese history also spent large amounts of wealth on lavish consumption while they were alive and when they died, they would spend vast amounts of wealth on burials but would not spend that wealth on expanding reproduction and using the proceeds of that expanded reproduction for the exchange of goods. In China, for example, on the eve of the Opium War, about 24.5 billion catties of grain circulated between urban and rural areas and regions, accounting for 10.5% of the production, and excluding the tribute grain and population tax, which was not exchanged, the commodity rate was no more than 9%. Grain was never produced as a commodity, and whether peasants or landowners sold their surplus grain, they did so for the sake of buying (Wu, 1983).

This is why, under the traditional social conditions based on the agrarian economy, the social community can only appear to be closed. Even within a large social community, there is a clear isolation and closure between its various groups. As far as the social interaction of the members of the largest peasant group is concerned, 'each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient; it itself directly produces the major part of its consumption and thus acquires its means of life more through exchange with nature than in intercourse with society' (Marx, 1852). China's 'vernacular society is a small-scale peasant economy. Economically each peasant family, with the exception of salt and iron, is quite capable of shutting down and becoming self-sufficient when necessary' (Fei, 1985, p. 64). Not only in China but also in the most important socio-economic

unit of Europe in the Middle Ages, i.e., the feudal lords' estate, basic life, and production were also characterised by self-sufficiency, self-contained system, and mutual isolation and closure.

1.1.3 Little Evolution of Productive Capacity

Under traditional social conditions, the main source of power on which agricultural production is based relies on human and animal power; the social division of labour is very simple; the scale of production is very small; the degree of demand of the vast majority of social members is very low; the society is very closed; the members of the society have a strong personal dependence; the various factors of production are unable to realise the effective flow of production; the degree of dependence of the production on the market is generally low; and there is a serious lack of funds that may be used for the expansion of reproduction; science and technology are very backward and has not formed an effective combination with the productive forces; the vast majority of peasants were uneducated because they did not receive the minimum level of education, and the members of society lacked autonomy and creativity, so it was impossible for their productive potential to be fully developed. In short, social development at that time lacked the effective support of productivity, capital, and demand, as well as human capital and science and technology.

As a result of all these circumstances, the endogenous dynamics of the traditional society as a whole were obviously weak, and the evolution of productive capacity was very small, or rather very small over a relatively long period, and the level of productive capacity remained unchanged over the years. Compared with the extensive agricultural production of medieval European society, the agricultural production of traditional Chinese society was already at the level of 'intensive and meticulous farming' (Wu, 1993). But even so, the evolution of agricultural production in traditional Chinese societies was very low. During the Han and Tang dynasties, the heyday of China's history, the amount of grain (unprocessed food grains) per capita was nearly 1,000 pounds. After 1,000 to 2,000 years, during the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty, the amount of grain (unprocessed food grains) per capita was only 1,085 pounds. There was little change. From the point of view of productivity, 'the productivity of 1941 kg/household in the Qing dynasty fell by 9% points from 2173 kg/household in the mid-Ming period' (Ma, 1997, p. 111).

Clearly, the vast majority of the members of society, mainly peasants, were in a sense only able to achieve the repetition of simple life and the continuation of ‘involutional’ production under traditional social conditions.

1.2 CONNOTATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ENDOGENOUS DYNAMICS OF MODERNISATION

1.2.1 *The Material Basis and Social Division of Labour on Which the Endogenous Dynamics of Modernisation Are Generated*

Human society has undergone three major transformations. The first was the evolution of homo sapiens into primitive man and the society entered a primitive society. The second was when primitive society, through the three great social divisions, entered into a traditional society based on an agrarian economy (agrarian society). The third is the modernisation process that is currently underway, in which a traditional society is being modernised into a modern society.

Modernisation refers to a series of great changes in the whole of society on a global scale, starting with industrialisation and being carried out by individual national (state) entities. The result of this transformation is a modern society (industrial society) based on modern great industry.

Modern society offers unprecedented and extremely favourable material basis and social division of labour conditions for the enormous growth of economic wealth. In this regard, the following types of material infrastructure and social division of labour are the most important:

First, modern great industrial production.

Under traditional social conditions, the tools of production used by people were mainly manual labour tools, and the power they used came mainly from manpower and animal power, so the development of production was never able to break through the physiological limitations of manpower and animal power to realise a breakthrough leap. In modern society, the large-scale industrial system whose main content is the operation of machines and other advanced production tools (such as computers) replaced the previous manual labour. In other words, the variety of alternatives to human manual labour is increasing in number and effectiveness. In contrast to the hand tools of the past, machines replace human labour with natural forces, ‘a greater number of labourers working together, at the same time, in one place (or, if you will, in the

same field of labour), to produce the same sort of commodity under the mastership of one capitalist, constitutes, both historically and logically, the starting point of capitalist production' (Marx & Engels, 1867). Modern mass production is far beyond the physical limitations of man as a driving force and the limitations of animal power, and even to a large extent beyond the limitations of man's mental labour, from which man's physical and mental labour have gained great double emancipation. Steam kinetic energy, electric kinetic energy, solar kinetic energy, and nuclear kinetic energy provide 'astronomical level' of huge amount of power, exceeding the previous power from human and animal power more than tens of millions of times; socialised mass production has unprecedentedly increased the scale and efficiency of production on a large scale; and the standardised production mainly controlled by computer has unprecedentedly increased the scale and quality of products, drastically reduced production costs, and allowed for large-scale differentiated production that meets the different needs of specific customers, i.e., personalised needs. These are things that were simply unimaginable in the past (Wu, 2019a, 2019b, pp. 2, 29).

Modern society, based on a great industrial economy, has in less than a hundred years 'created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together'. 'What earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?' (Marx & Engels, 1848). At the present stage, the development of Internet technology has made modern productivity more visible as a result of new empowerment, which has led to sustained, high-quality development. The Internet Association of America released a piece of data showing that in 2018, the Internet contributed \$2.1 trillion to the U.S. economy, while the total GDP of the United States in 2018 was \$20.51 trillion, which means the Internet economy accounted for 10%. Manufacturing, on the other hand, contributed \$2.3 trillion to the U.S. GDP, or 11%. The Internet is second only to manufacturing as the fourth largest sector of the U.S. economy after real estate, government, and manufacturing. The Internet industry creates nearly six million direct jobs, while it indirectly supports as many as 13 million jobs (Souhu.com, 2019).

Second, the continued accumulation and expansion of funds for productive inputs.

In modern society, people no longer produce with the direct aim of satisfying their own needs, but with the direct aim of exchange or satisfying the needs of others and even the needs of people in other countries.

Thus, the continuous accumulation and expansion of productive capital becomes an inevitable phenomenon. This can be understood as follows: with the increase in productivity, the surplus produced by people is increasing rapidly; at the same time, with the dissolution of feudal dependence, labour with independent status can move freely. In such a situation, people can exchange their surplus products for currency and then turn the currency into productive capital and, at the same time, they can also use this productive capital to hire free labourers to set up enterprises and to manufacture more products for exchange. For this exchange to continue, manufacturers must expand their production scale to reduce product costs and continue to research, develop, and find ways to upgrade their production processes to improve the quality of their products. Such a process is an inevitable continuous expansion and accumulation of productive capital. 'At the same time, as the social security system is increasingly improved, people are becoming more and more resilient to future risks. As a result, not only entrepreneurs but also the public began to generally pay attention to the problem of the accumulation of productive capital. The public has used a large amount of money indirectly for accumulation through various financial methods such as saving, investing in funds or stocks' (Wu, 2019a, 2019b, p. 6).

The phenomenon of the continued accumulation and expansion of productive capital is of great significance. It is of irreplaceable significance not only for the satisfaction of the existing needs of the members of society and the creation of new ones but also for the unprecedented increase in the total wealth of society. It can also provide the necessary material conditions for the fulfilment of the basic purpose of modernisation, which is to share the fruits of social development.

It should be noted that the phenomenon of the continuous accumulation and expansion of productive capital has a dual nature. On the one hand, it is an indispensable material basis for modernisation, providing the necessary support for the modernisation of the economy and the necessary material conditions for the comprehensive development of society. On the other hand, if the phenomenon of continuous accumulation and expansion of productive capital is not subject to necessary constraints, it will evolve into a situation of 'disorderly expansion of capital', which will inevitably lead to further 'law of the jungle' and 'alienation' of human beings, that is to say, human beings, who originally had a fundamental purpose, are in turn infringed upon by the instrumental economy. More seriously, the 'disorderly expansion of capital' will inevitably lead to social

conflicts and disputes and may even cause social unrest and undermine the safe operation of society. The reason is simple. In modern society, members of the community have a general sense of independence and equality, and therefore, the phenomenon of ‘alienation’ of human beings cannot be tolerated. Once the ‘alienation’ of human beings reaches a certain level, it will inevitably lead to widespread resistance from the public. As early as two thousand years ago, Aristotle found that ‘factional conflict is everywhere the result of inequality’; ‘in general it is equality they seek when they engage in factional conflict’ (Aristotle, 1498).

Third, the complex social division of labour.

The increasing scale of production and the competitive needs of the market economy has led to an increasingly specialised, professional, and complex social division of labour. Such social division of labour helps to maximise the development of human potential and to maximise people’s productive and creative capacity. ‘The social power, i.e., the multiplied productive force, which arises through the cooperation of different individuals as it is caused by the division of labour’ (Marx & Engels, 1932). Through the professional and detailed social division of labour, producers break down the original thing or product into several things or products, making it easier for producers or operators to specialise in one thing or one product and to devote more attention and labour to the fine production of each refined thing or product so that its quality is constantly improved and its standard constantly upgraded. Moreover, standardised management is an integral component of the professional social division of labour. Each thing or product that has been disassembled is easy to be managed in a standardised way because of its specific and simple function. By formulating the professional standard with the same specification and reliable quality for the corresponding thing or product, the output of the thing or product will be incorporated into the process of standardised management; in this way, not only can we produce the stable and quality-reliable thing or product but also be able to carry out the mass production, and then expand the scale of the output, reduce the cost of the output, and the scale effect of the thing or product will be formed as a result (Wu, 2019a, 2019b, p. 36).

The modern social class structure is based on the need for a complex and specialised social division of labour. It should be mentioned that the formation of the entrepreneurial group made it possible for the creation of material wealth to be laid out and designed through a specialised occupational group, while the formation of an increasingly professional group

of ‘front-line’ workers, or ‘craftsmen’, made it possible to produce material wealth in fine detail. All these made the rapid accumulation of material wealth an unstoppable trend.

As shown above, the modern economy, i.e., the modern material foundation and the modern social division of labour are some of the most important conditions that make the development of the economy itself show some kind of ‘self-starting’ quality and ‘compound interest effect’, which provides the modern economy with huge space for development. At the same time, they provide an essential material basis and a huge development space for the modernisation of all areas of society as a whole.

It is important to note that what is referred to here as the huge space for development or modernisation is still only a ‘possible’ huge space. Given the possible space of the modern economy, the specifics of modernisation in different countries still vary considerably. Whether or not the potentially huge space becomes a corresponding set of great realistic achievements of modernisation depends on several factors. One of the most critical factors is the state of a country’s endogenous dynamics of modernisation.

1.2.2 Connotation of the Endogenous Dynamics of Modernisation

The advancement of modernisation in the early-developing countries was largely derived from their own internal driving forces. This is a matter of little dispute. For most of the late-developing countries, one of the main reasons for the difficulty of modernisation before independence was the resistance of the early-emerging countries, the colonial powers of the time. However, this situation has changed greatly with the passage of time, as most of the former colonial or semi-colonial countries have gained independence. Today, the success of modernisation in most of the late-developing countries depends more and more on their own efforts and their choice of modernisation paths, rather than primarily attributing the difficulties encountered in modernisation to the impediments of the early-developing countries.

The dependency theory and world-system theory, which had once had a certain influence, explained the difficulties in the modernisation of the late-developing countries by attributing them to the obstacles posed by the former colonial powers, that is to say, the early-developing countries. According to this view, underdevelopment and development are not two stages of development that are necessarily connected, but two sides of

the same coin; the underdevelopment of the late-developing countries is a necessary condition for the development of early-developing countries; and the main obstacle for the late-developing countries is external, not internal. ‘The population of the core countries can reap the benefits of the technological progress of the frontier through the low prices of its commodities. The population of the frontier, however, suffers from the technological progress of the core by having to increase its real prices to pay for the goods of the core country’ (Hopkins & Wallerstein, 1985). In such a situation, where the pattern of world inequality is well established, the latecomer countries can’t carry out normal modernisation. Take Latin American countries as an example. ‘Latin America is an underdeveloped region; the cause of the region’s underdevelopment is the coexistence of a monocrop export economy, which developed from the nineteenth century onwards, alongside a feudal economy and a feudal society, and an “outward-looking” model of development, i.e., a model of development based on the export of primary products, and import of manufactured goods as a model of development’ (Santos, 1999).

Although theories such as the dependency theory and the world-system theory have a certain degree of legitimacy and can explain to a certain extent the reasons why the modernisation of some late-developing countries has struggled or failed in the initial stages, the time has changed. Since the end of the Second World War, the worldwide colonial system has disappeared and ended, and almost all of the late-developing countries have gained national independence and possessed national self-determination, thus making their autonomous modernisation possible. From an objective point of view, in the relatively long period of time of more than seventy years since the end of the Second World War, there is much room for a large number of the late-developing countries to make a difference: not only have they been able to develop a sense of equality among their peoples and possess the basic elements necessary for a sovereign state, but also have been able to gradually move towards modernisation mainly by their own efforts and by choosing the appropriate paths, and some of them have even been able to join the ranks of the more developed countries. The historical process of modernisation has shown that, through their own efforts and the choice of appropriate paths, some of the latecomer countries have not only developed a modern philosophy, set up a modern industrial structure, established a relatively mature market economic system, and formed a modern social class structure but also built a modernised country with a certain degree

of comparative advantage. For example, former colonial countries such as Singapore and South Korea have not only started genuine modernisation but have also achieved great success in their modernisation and have entered the ranks of high-income countries. Among them, Singapore has become a world-renowned financial centre, while South Korea has become a world-famous shipbuilding powerhouse and electronics manufacturing powerhouse. Since the reform and opening up of China, the latecomer with the largest volume, it has even relied on its own unremitting efforts and the choice of appropriate paths to make great achievements recognised by the whole world and step into the threshold of modern society. The proportion of China's gross domestic product (GDP) in the world was 1.7% in 1978, 1.6% in 1990, 3.6% in 2000, 9.2% in 2010, 13.3% in 2014, and 15.9% in 2018; its foreign exchange reserves ranked the first in the world, and accounted for 26.9% of the world's share in 2018; and the proportion of China's total import and export trade of goods in the world was 0.8% in 1978, 1.6% in 1990, 3.6% in 2000, 9.7% in 2010, 11.5% in 2016, and ranked first in the world with a proportion of 11.8% in 2018 (NBS, 2017, 2019a, 2019b, p. 3).

The above shows that, with the passage of time since the end of the Second World War, a number of latecomers have been able to minimise the constraining influence of the former colonial powers on their own countries. Accordingly, it can be said that the success of modernisation in most latecomers is increasingly dependent on their own factors. In other words, the success of modernisation in a growing number of countries, both early- and late-developing, depends primarily on their efforts and the choice of paths of modernisation, rather than on the influence of other countries. If in the past, the modernisation of early-developing countries was often associated with 'endogenous' and that of late-developing countries with 'exogenous', nowadays, the modernisation of both 'early' and 'late' developing countries is mainly linked to how 'endogenous' the situation is. This is a major change in the historical process of modernisation in the world compared to the era before the Second World War.

There is no doubt that under the conditions of independence and sovereignty of each state, the ultimate carrier of modernisation is each specific national community. For each national community that carries out its modernisation, the intrinsic motivation comes first and is decisive. The reason is simple. Among the various factors influencing the basic course of the modernisation of the national community, the economic factor is the most important and decisive underlying force. Further, among the

various economic factors, the state of the productive forces is the most important one. And among the various components of the productive forces, such as the producers, the means of production, and the objects of labour, the producers, that is, the human beings themselves, are the most important and the most active. In this way, the endogenous dynamics of each specific national community, which is dominated by the human factor, becomes the most important internal motivation for the modernisation of the community. According to Amartya Sen, ‘free and sustainable agency emerges as a major engine of development’ (Sen, 2000, p. 4).

When a national community is independent and sovereign, there is no doubt that its internal dynamics are the main driving force behind modernisation. As Mao pointed out, ‘The development of society is due primarily not to external but to internal causes’. ‘External causes are the conditions for change, internal causes are the basis for change, and external causes act through internal causes’ (Mao, 1991a, 1991b, p. 302). In contrast, external factors, no matter how important, can only work as they should through internal motives. When external factors are ‘internalised’ by internal factors, their ‘external’ significance will diminish, and they may even gradually become an ‘internal’ organic component of the national community. For example, China’s total imports and exports have increased significantly since it acceded to the WTO. In 2019, China’s gross domestic product was 990,865 billion yuan, and the total amount of goods imported and exported for the whole year was 31,550.5 billion yuan, with the degree of dependence on foreign trade as high as 31.8% (NBS, 2020a, 2020b). This situation, on the one hand, has increased the degree of China’s foreign exchanges and, on the other hand, more importantly, has enhanced China’s modern production capacity and consumption standards as a national community.

This leads to an extremely important question: for an independent national community, the key to the success of modernisation lies in the state of its endogenous dynamics of modernisation. If a national community has strong endogenous dynamics of modernisation, then the smooth and sustainable advancement of the modernisation process of the country is a matter of high probability. On the contrary, if a country’s endogenous dynamics of modernisation are relatively weak, then it will undoubtedly be very difficult for the country’s modernisation to proceed, and it may even be aborted halfway, or it may be distorted.

The so-called endogenous dynamics of modernisation refer to ‘the internal driving force of a country in the process of its modernisation,

which originates from its own self and is in line with the trend of modernisation' (Wu, 2019a, 2019b, p. 149). Specifically, the endogenous dynamics of modernisation include not only the expectation of the people of a national community to improve the status quo, their attitude and spirit of pursuing modernisation, and the corresponding human capital inputs, including specific labour inputs, but also the community's practical ability to improve the status quo and to promote modernisation, which includes innovation, upgrading, adjustment, etc.

Compared with the community of traditional society, the endogenous dynamics of the community in the modern sense are even more enormous. Firstly, at the micro level, the energy of the members of modern society is enormous. The modern productive forces and the market economy have dissolved the dependence of human beings under traditional social conditions so that each member of the community has become a self-responsible 'individual human being' with an independent personality so that self-induced efforts have become the basic behavioural orientation of each member of the community. 'This self-induced behavioural orientation, which is based on the elimination of family blood privilege and wealth privilege, is not only equitable and reasonable but also relatively easy for most members of society to find a suitable place to fulfil their potential since they are doing things according to their own will and efforts, which is a "consensual" thing. From the point of view of the specialised division of labour, such an approach can fully develop the potential of the members of society, and thus can effectively promote social progress' (Wu, 2019a, 2019b, p. 267). Moreover, with the popularisation of cultural education, the level of rationalisation of every member of society is increasing, and the ability to judge and create is greatly enhanced, thus giving the whole social community great endogenous dynamics. Secondly, at the macro level, social cooperation in modern society has given rise to great social momentum. Under the conditions of modern society and market economy, the degree of social differentiation is deepening, and various 'heterogeneous' components are increasing sharply. This situation has led to a significant increase in the degree of social integration. The functioning and development of modern societies depend more and more on closer, more detailed, and more specialised cooperation between the various groups in society. 'It is through social union founded upon the needs and potentialities of its members that each person can participate in the total sum of the realised natural assets

of the others' (Rawls, 1971, p. 523). Modernisation thus acquires great endogenous dynamics.

1.2.3 Characteristics and Composition of the Endogenous Dynamics of Modernisation

The endogenous dynamics of modernisation are broadly characterised by these two distinct features:

Firstly, it seeks dynamics from 'within' the community itself rather than from 'outside'.

In the early stages of world modernisation, foreign expansion was a necessary condition for a country to become a modern power. Among them, the most typical one is Britain. Relying on the First Industrial Revolution, advanced market economy operation mechanism, and strong foreign expansion, Britain quickly became the world's earliest modern power. In the mid-nineteenth century, Britain's production of iron, steel, and cotton cloth was equal to that of the rest of the world combined, while its coal production was twice that of the rest of the world combined. In 1860, Britain's population accounted for only 2% of the world's total population and 10% of the total population of Western Europe, but it produced 40–50% of the world's industrial goods and 50–60% of Western Europe's industrial goods (Qian, 2012, pp. 199–200). In addition to its endogenous dynamics, Britain's emergence as a modern world power was also due to an extremely important and indispensable reason, namely, the largest foreign expansion and plundering since the history of humanity. At the height of its hegemony, Britain, whose mainland area was just over 200,000 square kilometres, occupied colonies with a quarter of the world's population and nearly a quarter of the world's land area. The extremely large colonies became the basic source of capital, raw materials, and labour on which British modernisation depended, as well as the export of capital and manufactured goods. A British economist described it as follows: 'The plains of North America and Russia are our corn-fields; Chicago and Odessa our granaries; Canada and the Baltic are our timber forests; Australasia contains our sheep farms, and in Argentina and on the western prairies of North America are our herds of oxen; Peru sends her silver, and the gold of South Africa and Australia flows to London; the Hindus and the Chinese grow tea for us' (Kennedy, 1989, p. 210).

After the Second World War, the situation described above changed considerably. The colonial system, which had once ruled the world,

collapsed rapidly with the widespread emergence of national independence movements throughout the world. Some of the countries that emerged after the Second World War and embarked on modernisation chose a completely different path from that of the past, namely, that a country could modernise only by relying primarily on its own internal forces and that the colonialist countries' reliance on external expansion to modernise themselves was becoming more and more impossible. In general, if a country wants to achieve modernisation, it must seek its own internal impetus, including establishing a modern great industrial system; working hard; accumulating capital by all means; developing education, science, and technology; maintaining social justice; actively opening up the country to the outside world; formatting its own comparative advantages; formulating a scientific and feasible development plan; and so on. Only in this way can the most important endogenous dynamics of modernisation be formed and the goal of modernisation be successfully achieved. Moreover, its own modernisation should not be carried out at the expense of hindering the modernisation of other countries or undermining the interests of the communities of other countries. In this regard, South Korea is a typical example. At the beginning of South Korea's modernisation, its foundation was impoverished and it did not have superior resources. Under those circumstances, Korea had worked hard for decades to develop effective endogenous dynamics of modernisation, which led to its globally recognised modernisation achievements and a leap forward in modernisation.

In short, the search for dynamics 'within' the community itself is a feature which shows that the endogenous dynamics of modernisation have become the basic driving force of modernisation in all countries since the Second World War.

Secondly, the endogenous dynamics of modernisation is an organic combination of modernisation content and ethnic tradition.

In a sense, the endogenous dynamics of modernisation is actually an organic whole composed of two aspects, namely, the content of modernisation (the content of the times) and the content of ethnic tradition. 'In terms of historical development, the modernising tendency itself is a healthy continuation and extension of the traditional civilisation of mankind' (Inkeles, 1985). Although the proportion of modernisation content and ethnic tradition varies according to the different historical and practical conditions of different countries, it is an indisputable fact that both aspects are indispensable. All countries that have succeeded in

building modernisation have, without exception, organically integrated the content of modernisation and their own ethnic traditions, which were interdependent and interconnected.

The content of modernisation (the content of the times) in the endogenous dynamics of modernisation is clearly contemporary and developmental. In terms of its epochal nature, compared with the old epochal content of the traditional society built based on an agrarian economy, the modernisation content (the content of the times) built on the basis of the great industry is obviously advanced, and is ahead by a whole civilisation era. Undoubtedly, from the point of view of civilisation, there is a difference between modern society and traditional society in terms of advancement and backwardness, as well as a difference between the old and the new. For example, the productive capacity of modern society is more advanced than that of traditional society; the market economy is more advanced than the closed small-scale peasant economy in traditional society; modern values such as freedom, equality, and justice are more advanced than the personal dependence, the standard of behaviour that people believe in traditional society; and the hierarchical structure of modern society, which is rich in mobility, is more advanced than the class structure of scholars, peasants, artisans, and merchants in the traditional society, which is relatively stagnant and unchanging; the education system and knowledge system of modern society are advanced over the education system and knowledge system of traditional society, etc. As far as its development is concerned, the content of modernisation (the content of the times) will continue to be developed and updated with the continuous development of productive forces and science and technology. Among the endogenous dynamics of modernisation, the proportion and weight of modernisation content (the content of the times) are relatively large, and the magnitude of its change is also large, so this part of the content has a positive and direct significance in promoting the construction of modernisation.

The so-called ethnic tradition, in a sense, refers primarily to ‘a certain system of provisions and tendencies inherent in the past, the present, and the future of each nation, a certain framework within which the content of the nation’s history unfolds. Ethnic tradition is not the content of the times itself, but something beyond the age, a certain system of regulations and tendencies that runs through the course of national development, which does not in itself reveal a state of “development,” but can only be said to be indispensable to every nation’ (Wu, 1999, p. 74). In contrast

to the content of modernisation (the content of the times), which is very clear in its epochal and developmental nature, an ethnic tradition belongs to a kind of ‘historical gene’ that has existed for a long time in the national community. They have a long historical timeliness, and show a certain kind of ‘relatively constant existence’ of a national mentality or culture and will not change immediately with the rapid changes of the times. Some scholars refer to such historical genes as ‘embryonic seeds’, ‘the germs out of which has assuredly been unfolded every form of moral restraint which controls our actions and shapes our conduct at the present moment’ (Maine, 1963, p. 116). The main function of ethnic tradition is to provide some of the functional effects of symbolism, belonging, centripetalism, cohesion, and integration necessary for the modernisation of the national community, as well as indicating some directions to the ways in which the public behaves. In this way, the ethnic tradition and modernisation content (the content of the times) form a kind of organic fusion, which together constitute the endogenous dynamics of modernisation and then effectively promote the construction of modernisation. From this, we can see that we cannot judge whether the ethnic tradition is advanced or backward, but can only make the value judgement of whether it is beneficial or not and whether it is reasonable or not. This is the obvious difference between the ethnic tradition and the content of modernisation (the content of the times).

It is important to note that an ethnic tradition, although characterised by a certain ‘relatively constant existence’, i.e., relative stability, is not absolutely unchanging. The continuation of an ethnic tradition does not mean the ‘wholesale inheritance’ of the ethnic tradition by the national community. Otherwise, an ethnic tradition would become a ‘retro’ phenomenon in a sense and would be reproduced again and again so that it would remain ‘unchanged for all eternity’. It should be noted that an ethnic tradition ‘is subject to additions, deletions and adjustments in response to changes in the environment. This is because the environment in which an ethnic tradition is situated will never remain unchanged, and the changed environment will always have an effect on the ethnic tradition’ (Wu, 1992, p. 97). It is precisely for this reason that an ethnic tradition must undergo the necessary ‘sublation’ to adapt to the new environment of the times and regain its vitality. In addition, under certain historical conditions, some kind of ‘new’ traditions may be formed which are different from the previous ones. For example, in the late Middle Ages

in Europe, as the Reformation progressed, a new tradition of ‘Protestant Ethics’ began to take shape in Europe, which had a far-reaching influence on the modernisation process in Western Europe and North America in the future. Another example is the May Fourth Movement, during which a new tradition of ‘Democracy and Science’ was formed in China, as well as a new tradition of radical behaviour such as ‘Down with Confucianism’ (to shake off fetters of old conceptions) and destroying the feudal hierarchy. In the first half of the twentieth century, driven by the national independence movement, a ‘new tradition’ of unprecedented social mobilisation was gradually formed in China, whose wide-ranging and far-reaching impact continues to this day.

The organic combination of modernisation content and ethnic tradition, on the one hand, makes the modernisation content show an irreversible trend because it has a certain ‘carrier’, that is, a life base on which it exists and diversifies, and on the other hand, an ethnic tradition can be inherited due to the continuous injection of new, ‘modern’ vitality contents. All of these give complete meaning to the endogenous dynamics of modernisation.

Looking furtherly, the endogenous dynamics of modernisation are mainly composed of three key elements of the utmost importance, namely, primary dynamics, upgrading capacity, and adaptive capacity. Each of these three key elements has its own important function and each is indispensable. Primary dynamics focus on the initiation and maintenance of the basic impetus of modernisation; upgrading capacity focuses on the continuous upgrading of modernisation capacity; and adaptive capacity focuses on the safeguard of the security environment for modernisation and the path of releasing the dynamics of modernisation. In a nutshell, the primary dynamics, upgrading capacity, and adaptive capacity constitute an organic whole of the endogenous dynamics of modernisation.

1.3 ORIGINAL DYNAMICS

From the most basic level, the original impetus of modernisation comes from the broadest and longest-lasting pursuit of people’s demand for interests in the national community.

1.3.1 The People's Demand for Interests Is the Basic Driving Force of Modernisation

Generally speaking, the most important thing for the members of the society is the satisfaction of their own demand for interests, especially the satisfaction of their immediate material interests. 'Everything that people struggle for is related to their interests' (Marx & Engels, 1965). Importantly, for members of society, the demand for interests has a universal significance and is a 'mass' and continuous thing. 'Lack of attention to material interests is fine for a few advanced members, but not for the masses; it is fine for a while, but not for a long time' (Deng, 1994, p. 146).

People's pursuit of demand for interests has at least several distinctive features. First, infinity. As far as the possible space of people's pursuit of demand for interests is concerned, there is no end. As Marx pointed out, 'man is distinguished from all other animals by the infinity and extensiveness of his needs' (Marx & Engels, 1982, p. 130). Second, diversity. In addition to the most basic needs, i.e., material needs (physiological needs), there are also needs for safety, love, respect, and self-actualisation, as described by Maslow. For example, 'Human beings naturally seek not only material things but also recognition. Recognition is the acknowledgement of another person's dignity or worth, which can also be called status' (Fukuyama, 2012a, 2012b, p. 441). Third, gradual growth. In a certain historical period, the degree of satisfaction of people's demand for interests depends on the level of a particular productive capacity. The productive capacity is constantly developing and improving. Therefore, with the continuous development of modern productive capacity, the number and variety of people's demand for interest is also growing and expanding. 'As a result of the changes in the conditions of production and the changes in the social structure which they entail, new needs and interests are created' (Marx & Engels, 1971, p. 29). Moreover, once a new type of need is created, it will also generate connected and complementary needs, which in turn will give rise to even more diversified new types of needs. It should be noted that, in modern social conditions, the concept of human-centredness is deeply rooted in people's hearts, and modern productive forces show a rapidly changing development trend, all of which makes the aforementioned features of people's pursuit of demand for interests more and more prominent. For example, people's demand for improving life quality is increasingly high. In a sense, the growth of

people's demand will also show some kind of compound interest effect. One important manifestation of this is the increasing per capita spending on healthcare. The world's per capita expenditure on healthcare increased from \$472.5 in 2000 to \$1,026.2 in 2016; that of high-income countries increased from \$2,430.2 in 2000 to \$5,179.7 in 2016; that of middle-income countries increased from \$62.5 in 2000 to \$255.0 in 2016; in the United States, it increased from \$4,559.9 in 2000 to \$9,869.9 in 2016; in China, it increased from \$42.4 in 2000 to \$398.3 in 2016 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020a, 2020b, p. 343).

Since members of society value demand for interest, especially material demand for interest, and the pursuit of demand for interest is unlimited, diversified, and gradually growing, the people's pursuit of interest needs has become a wide-ranging, continuous, and fundamental driving force for modernisation.

1.3.2 Market Economy, Social Cooperation, and Historical Genes Determine the Original Driving Force of Modernisation

Demand certainly generates impetus, but it is only a possibility. The key to the matter is, how can the general pursuit of people's demand for interests be transformed into a realistic and fundamental driving force for modernisation? It is very important to understand this transformation. Because only through such a transformation can a country 'turn the people from spectators to participants in its development, and realise the endogenisation of development' (Huang, 1991, p. 45). In this regard, this specific transformation depends mainly on the specific status of three things: market economy, social cooperation, and historical genes. In other words, the state of the market economy, social cooperation, and historical genes determines, to a large extent, the state of the original impetus of modernisation.

First, the market economy is capable of stimulating the potential and vitality of every producer.

Undoubtedly, as a fundamental economic arrangement in modern society, the market economy system can provide an effective driving force for modernisation. This can be understood in at least two ways.

The market economy can organically combine the immediate interests of each member of society with his or her own specific inputs, thus maximising the vitality of the members of society in creating wealth. Unlike traditional society, in a market economy, every member of society

is an equal and independent natural person, and every person must be responsible for his or her own behaviour. The specific status of the members of the society in terms of their own life, development, wealth, and social status depends primarily on the status of their self-causal effort, not primarily on others and other ‘predisposing’ factors. ‘In a market economy, everyone must invest labour or other factors of production and receive his or her share of income and wealth according to the just principle of distribution according to contribution. There is no doubt that the way in which people’s own will is closely linked to their own specific pursuits is bound to maximise their potential, vitality, and creativity in engaging in production or other work’ (Wu, 2019a, 2019b, p. 32).

Further, a market economy is also capable of achieving a rational allocation of resources and effectively enhancing the competitiveness of every producer. A necessary condition for the smooth progress of modernisation is to achieve a rational allocation of resources. ‘Both theory and practice have proved that market allocation of resources is the most efficient form. It is a general law of the market economy that the market determines the allocation of resources, and a market economy is essentially an economy in which the market determines the allocation of resources’ (People’s Daily, 2013). A market economy is not only capable of reflecting, through the market price system, the true and accurate supply and demand of the vast majority of products within the scope of society as a whole, thus effectively solving the problems of what to produce and how much to produce; moreover, a market economy is also capable of effectively enhancing the competitiveness of every producer. The market economy is in fact a mechanism for the selection of quality products, whereby the ‘survival of the fittest’ can be carried out on the many products available. ‘In order to cope with price competition and maximize profits, the only way for producers is to use the most efficient production methods in order to minimize costs. The producer, stimulated by profit, will at all times substitute the cheapest method of production for the more expensive one’ (Paul, 1992, p. 73).

Second, social cooperation can generate an indispensable positive ‘synergy’.

If the market economy focuses on activating the primary motivation of countless members of society as individuals at the micro level, then social cooperation in the modern sense focuses on activating the primary motivation of various groups in society at the ‘meso’ and ‘macro’ levels.

As far as the generation of primary motivation at the micro level of modernisation is concerned, the market economy certainly plays a fundamental and indispensable role in stimulating it, but at the same time, it must be seen that the market economy itself does suffer from chronic problems of ‘market failures’ such as spontaneity, short-term behaviours, and the law of the jungle. After years of reflection on the market economy, Samuelson pointed out that ‘after two centuries of experience and reflection, we now recognise the scope of application and the practical limitations of this doctrine. We know that markets sometimes fail us and that there is “market failure”’. Market failure refers primarily to ‘the absence of perfect competition and the presence of external effects’ (Paul, 1992, p. 76). Because of this, if the market economy is regarded as everything and the only thing to the exclusion of other things, then it will be too much and too late, and the chronic problems of market failure will rapidly worsen. Once the chronic problem of market failure is aggravated, it will bring about, on the one hand, local rational choice and high efficiency, and on the other hand, the formation of serious problems in the society as a whole, such as environmental and ecological damage, disregard of social public utilities, tearing of the social community, etc., which will make the original impetus of modernisation in the meso- and macro-levels diminish, disappear, or be deformed and out of shape.

As a kind of correction and remedy for the chronic problem of ‘market failure’, social cooperation can effectively stimulate the original impetus of modernisation at the meso- and macro-levels of society.

Social cooperation can actively promote the integration and solidarity among various social groups with direct interests at the meso-level of society and give rise to endogenous dynamics. The conceptual basis of social cooperation is social justice. Based on social justice, social cooperation emphasises the mutual benefit of social groups with direct interests in interaction, i.e., the reciprocity of social groups in the promotion of their interests. ‘The promotion of the interests of the higher-positioned classes cannot make into a necessary precondition the impairment of the interests of the lower-positioned classes; on the contrary, while the interests of the higher-positioned classes are being promoted, the situation of the lower-positioned classes should be improved as a result’ (Wu, 2019a, 2019b, p. 215). As a result, a large number of social conflicts and disputes can be effectively resolved, unity and integration among various social groups can be enhanced, the potential energy of ‘synergy’ among various social groups can be accumulated, and the phenomenon of positive-sum rather

than zero-sum game of interests among various social groups can be facilitated, thus generating a strong meso-level of modernisation impetus.

Social cooperation is also able to promote solidarity and integration between groups with indirect interests in various fields of society at the macro level, thus forming effective social cohesion. Based on the concept of social justice, society is able to guarantee the basic livelihood and basic dignity of minors, retired elderly people, and members of disadvantaged groups who are incapable of working, as well as the basic livelihood of the unemployed through systematic social welfare and other institutional arrangements. 'Social assistance should ensure a reasonable standard of living for everyone. Social assistance should be designed on the principle of enhancing the resources of independent living for each individual' (Ionahand, 1999, p. 310). And it should not be overlooked that, from a vertical perspective, social cooperation also includes cooperation between generations. The long course of cooperation between the various groups of the social community from generation to generation can be measured in terms of decades, centuries, or even thousands of years as a unit of time measurement. In the course of this long history of cooperation, not only each generation but also each individual has been a contributor to and beneficiary of cooperative co-construction. Therefore, the 'old people' who made important contributions in the past should be duly rewarded, and a certain amount of appropriate accumulation of material wealth as well as a favourable natural and social environment should be reserved for the 'new era' in the future. If, in the past, under the conditions of traditional society based on natural economy, we were unable to consider the issue of intergenerational cooperation due to the extremely low productivity and lack of material wealth, then, in today's modern society based on large-scale industrial economy, where material wealth has increased as never before, we should be able to consider the issue of intergenerational cooperation under such conditions. For the long-term continuity of the social community, we should not squander all these material goods but should set a certain 'storage rate', so that we can do our part for the survival and development of future generations. 'When a reasonable rate of accumulation is maintained, each generation (except perhaps the first) can reap the benefits. Once the process of accumulation begins and continues, it benefits all succeeding generations' (Rawls, 1988, p. 280). In this regard, the sovereign wealth fund established by Norway is a good example. Norway's sovereign wealth fund 'is currently the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, with a size of more than a trillion dollars, financed

by oil revenues'. 'As the largest oil producer in Northern Europe and the world's third-largest oil exporter, Norway aims to preserve and increase the value of its assets for the benefit of future generations through the proceeds of its oil resources' (Wang, 2019). The approach deserves to be learnt by many countries. As such, it not only contributes to the unity and integration of the social community, ensures the safe functioning of society, contributes to the full development of human resources but also contributes to intergenerational social cooperation. All this can provide a continuous impetus for overall and long-term modernisation.

In short, through social cooperation in the modern sense, a country's modernisation not only reduces unnecessary internal conflicts but also obtains a primary impetus for modernisation in the sense of social wholeness, which is more than the simple sum of the energies of individual members of society.

Thirdly, the spirit of hard work can effectively promote the continuous generation of the basic original power of modernisation.

For the people of a national community, whether or not there is a general spirit of hard work is not directly correlated with the 'era' conditions such as the degree of development of its productive forces. On the contrary, as the degree of modernisation increases, people's leisure time tends to increase and their working time tends to decrease. It can be said that the general spirit of hard work among the people in a national community is to a large extent shaped by an ethnic tradition or 'historical genes'. In a certain sense, the industriousness of people in countries such as China, Japan, and Vietnam was formed during the long period of agricultural societies, while the industriousness of the United States originated from the difficult need to survive and expand the land at the beginning of the formation of the nation as well as 'the protestant ethic'. At that time, these countries could not talk about modernisation. Especially the Chinese society in the past, 'for the simple survival and simple re-survival of human beings, Chinese peasants had to make full use of the extremely limited area of land. To do so, they had to work hard and diligently. There was no other way to do this'. 'Over time, diligence and working hard have become a kind of habitual, "instinctualised", traditional gene of Chinese history and culture that continues to this day' (Wu, 2020).

The spirit of hard work and diligence is of great significance for the continued generation of the foundational endogenous dynamics of modernisation. One obvious reason is that under the same level of

productive capability and labour productivity, the more diligent the people in a country's community are, the more their labour is continuously invested. The sustained input of labour is bound to contribute to the sustained enhancement of the fundamental driving force of the country's modernisation.

The intensity of the people's labour input is mainly manifested in the high or low labour participation rate and the amount of time spent on labour input. For a national community, under a given level of productivity, the higher the labour participation rate and the greater the amount of time invested in labour, the stronger the fundamental driving force of the country's modernisation. The opposite is true. China, with its strong 'historical gene' of hard work and diligence, can illustrate this point in a typical way. Generally speaking, the higher the productivity level of a country, the lower the labour participation rate of its members and the smaller the amount of time invested in labour. In 2015, China had already entered the ranks of the world's middle-income countries, but due to the influence of its historical genes, its labour participation rate and its time invested in labour were still relatively high. The labour participation rate of 70.9% is much higher than the world average of 62.9%, much higher than the average of 60.1% in high-income countries, much higher than the average of 62.3% in middle-income countries, much higher than the average of 63.5% in lower-middle-income countries, and just below the average of 76.2% in low-income countries (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018, p. 105). Not only does China's labour participation rate rank among the higher levels of all countries in the world, but the amount of time invested in labour also ranks among the higher levels. Some statistics show that in terms of the median annual working hours per worker, the United States works about 1,920 hours per year; Germany works about 1496 hours per year; France works about 1505 hours per year; the United Kingdom works about 1677 hours per year; Sweden works about 1420 hours per year; Greece works about 1255 hours per year; and China works about 2100 hours (Sohu.com, 2015). Data from the sixth national population census shows that 'the average weekly working hours of employees in China is 45.16 hours, which is still significantly higher than the national legal working hours level'. The proportion of people working seven days (or 48 hours or more) per week was '38.37%' (Zheng, 2014). From this, it can be seen that the spirit of hard work has effectively strengthened the fundamental driving force behind China's modernisation, and has been a

direct pushing factor to the take-off of China's modernisation since the reform and opening up of the country.

1.4 UPGRADING CAPABILITIES

1.4.1 *The Key to Modernisation Lies in the Enhancement of Capabilities*

The market economy, social cooperation, and the spirit of hard work can of course give rise to the original impetus of modernisation and can provide a steady stream of impetus for modernisation at the basic level, but this impetus from the demand for interests cannot directly solve the problem of constantly improving the standard of modernisation itself, that is, the problem of 'upgrading'. This is an issue that should be of great concern to us. For example, as far as China is concerned, its market economic system and social cooperation in the modern sense have been basically formed, and its spirit of hard work is no less than that of developed countries such as the United States, but it lags far behind developed countries such as the United States in terms of labour productivity, which is an important indicator of modernisation. Since the reform and opening up, China's unit labour output has been greatly improved, but compared with the GDP growth rate, the rate of increase is relatively slow. In 2015, China's unit labour output was only 7318 dollars, while the United States was 98,990 dollars, the eurozone was 68,631 dollars, Japan was 76,068 dollars, and the world average level was 18,487 dollars. In comparison, the gap between China and developed countries is relatively obvious (International Statistical Information Center, 2016). This scenario suggests that the direct reason why the degree of China's current modernisation is not yet high enough does not lie in the lack of endogenous motivation such as the spirit of hard work, but rather in the lack of ability to enhance modernisation.

Obviously, the understanding of the endogenous dynamics of modernisation should not be limited to the basic primary dynamics brought about by the demand for interests, but should also focus on the upgrading capacity of modernisation construction. In addition, it needs to be clarified that, although the basic primary impetus of modernisation has a certain influence on the upgrading capacity of modernisation construction, the two are not the same thing after all.

1.4.2 The Strength of Upgrading Capacity Depends Mainly on Education and Science and Technology

In terms of the strength of the upgrading ability of the endogenous dynamics of modernisation, it mainly depends on the general standard of education and science and technology of a country. Modernisation is driven by people. The specific condition of human beings or human capital has a direct impact on people's ability to carry out modernisation. There is a direct and positive correlation between the level of education and science and technology and the level of human capital. In a country undergoing modernisation, the level of education and science and technology determines the strength of its ability to upgrade modernisation. Therefore, to upgrade modernisation, it is necessary to raise the standard of education and science and technology in the country.

First, the level of education determines the level of the modernisation team.

In traditional society, the relative simplicity of the social division of labour and the closed nature of the society made the socioeconomic needs for education at that time not very practical. Most of the members of the society acquired the necessary life and production skills by passing them on from father to son or from master to apprentice. Education and production were two disconnected fields, and education was far from becoming a necessity for social and economic life, not to mention becoming a popular thing; education was relatively a 'luxury' for a small group of people. At that time, the literacy rate, the most basic indicator, was generally very low, not to mention the fact that higher education was basically unavailable. For example, even in China, an ancient country with an unbroken civilisation and a relative emphasis on education, the literacy rate was limited. It has been estimated that 'at the end of the Qing Dynasty, the number of literate people was still only about 40 million, and with a population of 400 million at that time, the literacy rate was only about 10%' (Chen, 2002). Although the standard of education in China was much higher than in the traditional society of other countries and made an important contribution to the relatively high standard of traditional civilisation, education was still unlikely to have had a great impact on the socio-economy, and was unlikely to have led to a qualitative leap in the standard of productivity.

Modern society is very different. In modern society and market economies, the scale of production is increasing; the division of labour

is becoming more and more vocational, specialised, and complex, and society is becoming more and more open. Without the necessary educational training, a person cannot become a qualified practitioner, and it is difficult for him to adapt to a normal, realistic socio-economic life. 'Modernisation has been accompanied by an expansion of cultural education; whereas in traditional society only a very small proportion of the population was literate, now virtually all have acquired this ability' (Black, 1988, p. 30). Importantly, the content of modern-type education is also being enriched, having changed from the transmission of knowledge in the past to the cultivation of comprehensive abilities and literacy. The six core literacies of innovation, critical thinking, civic literacy, cooperation and communication, independent development, and information literacy 'are the key few high-level behavioural competencies that everyone needs to possess in the twenty-first century, and they are the integration and fusion of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The worldwide core literacy boom is essentially a movement to upgrade the quality of education, and is a concentrated reflection of the international competition in education' (Chu, 2016). In such a situation, education becomes more and more necessary for modernisation.

People are the main body of modernisation. A team of builders with a high level of knowledge and literacy is necessary for modernisation to be sustained and upgraded. This situation becomes more and more obvious as the modernisation process continues. It is a clear fact that the more educated the members of society are, the higher the degree of modernisation of the country. The gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education in 2016, for example, was 75.2% in high-income countries, 34.5% in middle-income countries, and 7.5% in low-income countries (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018, p. 338). Looking further, the higher the general educational level of a country, the higher its labour productivity. In 2017, the specific scenarios of GDP generated per employed person (Purchasing Power Parity, constant 2011 dollars) were, respectively, \$88,908 in high-income countries, \$24,884 in middle-income countries, \$22,626 in lower-middle-income countries, and \$4098 in low-income countries (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018, p. 130). This suggests that there is a clear positive correlation between the level of educational attainment and the level of modernisation, other things being equal. 'Investment in education is not only highly beneficial in terms of increasing the rate of economic return for individuals but also contributes to the economic growth of the country as a whole. According to Schultz's

1961 study of the causes of economic growth in the United States during the period 1929–1957, investment in education contributed 33% to the growth of national economic income; China’s 1978–1998 was close to this percentage’ (Xu, 1999).

From the above, it can be seen that a higher standard of education determines a higher standard of modernisation builders, which in turn is the supporting force for the smooth progress of modernisation. In other words, a higher level of modernisation builders is the key to the continuous progress of a country’s modernisation process and the continuous improvement of its modernisation degree.

Secondly, science and technology have increasingly become the direct driving force for modernisation.

Science and technology undoubtedly play an increasingly important role in promoting modern economic development. Unlike traditional society, the development of productive forces in modern society is inextricably linked to the development of science. This situation has been particularly evident since the nineteenth century. ‘After 1870, science began to play a more important role. Gradually it became an integral part of all great industry’ (Stavrianos, 1992). Marx noted that in modern society, ‘for the first time, natural science is put at the service of the immediate process of production’. ‘The process of production becomes the application of science, and science in turn becomes a factor, the so-called function, of the process of production. Every discovery becomes the basis for a new invention or a new improvement in the methods of production’ (Marx, 1978, p. 206). The modern and contemporary history of the world shows that changes in science and technology inevitably lead to great economic development. Changes in science and technology have not only liberated man’s physical strength but also his brain power, leading to a tremendous release of human potential and a great increase in labour productivity. Deng Xiaoping famously said, ‘Science and technology are the first productive forces’ (Deng, 1993, p. 274). Looking at the development history of developed countries, at the beginning of the twentieth century, ‘only 5–20% of the increase in industrial labour productivity was achieved by relying on new scientific and technological achievements. In the 1970s, this proportion rose to 60–80%, and in some emerging industrial sectors it reached more than 90%’ (Liu, 1997). Specifically, take Japan as an example: the growth rate of Japan’s national economy in 1955–1960 was 8.7%, of which the labour factor

accounted for 5%, the capital factor accounted for 2%, and the technological factor accounted for 1.7%. In 1965–1970, the economic growth rate was 11.6%, of which the labour factor accounted for 2.2%, the capital factor accounted for 5%, and the technological factor accounted for 4.4%. In 1975–1980, the economic growth rate was 6%, of which the technological factor accounted for 3.9% (Feng, 1985, p. 13). This situation became more and more obvious with the progress of modernisation.

It should be noted that the level of science and technology directly determines the level of a country's manufacturing industry. The state of the manufacturing industry determines the basic level of economic modernisation and is the foundation of a country. If the standard of the manufacturing industry in a country is low or the proportion is small, then no matter how rich the natural resources and how developed the service industry of the country are, the prospect of its modernisation cannot be optimistic. Since the reform and opening up, China's manufacturing industry has gained unprecedented development and has become the world's largest manufacturing country. However, it should be sobering to see that China's manufacturing industry has the advantage of being the largest in terms of volume and the most comprehensive in terms of industry chain, but it is far from being first class in terms of standard. 'China's labour productivity level in 2015 was only 40% of the world average, equivalent to 7.4% of US labour productivity' (Guangming Daily, 2016). 'At present, China's manufacturing and industrial chain advantages are more reflected in aspects such as scale and layout, and overall remain at the middle and lower ends of the global value chain. The key components required for the production of domestic hi-tech products as well as high-technology capital goods especially have serious demand gaps, and are mainly dependent on imports from developed countries, such as the case with chips' (Jia, 2020). Objectively speaking, China's manufacturing industry belongs to the third echelon of the world; the first echelon is the United States, and the second echelon is Germany and Japan. There are many factors to improve the standard of the manufacturing industry, but one of the most important factors is to increase the content of advanced technology in the manufacturing industry.

It is precisely because science and technology are so important that once a country takes the lead in science and technology, it possesses a great capacity for modernisation and strong economic competitiveness. It is an obvious fact that the more modernised a country is, the higher its R&D expenditure as a share of GDP and the number of researchers

per million people. In 2016, the average share of R&D expenditure in GDP in high-income countries was 2.5%, and it was 2.7%, 3.1%, 4.2%, and 4.3% in the US, Japan, South Korea, and Israel, respectively. In comparison, it was 1.6% for middle-income countries and 2.1% in China. Then let us look at the number of researchers per million people: in 2016, it was 4196.2 in high-income countries, and 4256.3, 5210.0, and 7113.2 in the US, Japan, and South Korea, respectively; in comparison, it was 774.7 in middle-income countries and 1,205.7 in China (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020a, 2020b, pp. 338–339). Under such circumstances, paying attention to the development of science and technology has become an important lever for some developing countries and regions to achieve modernisation and transcendence. Some scholars have found that in the twentieth century, ‘Korea and Taiwan Province of China were still lagging behind Brazil and Mexico in the 1960s, but in the 1990s they managed to catch up with the developed countries, while the latter remained in the ranks of developing countries’. One of the important reasons for this is that South Korea and Taiwan Province of China attached great importance to the development of science and technology, and their ‘scientific and technological outputs are highly correlated, and their scientific level and technological capabilities are increasing simultaneously; at the same time, there is also a high correlation between economic growth and scientific and technological outputs’ (Wu et al., 2005).

Science and technology have the same positive enhancing effect on the modernisation of non-economic fields. With the spread of the effect of science and technology, science and technology have a great enhancement effect on the modernisation of various fields of society. Science and technology play a very obvious role in improving the social class structure and can promote its continuous optimisation. With the increasing influence of science and technology on industry, the modern industrial structure is also undergoing deeper and deeper changes. Correspondingly, the social class structure has changed dramatically. For example, the proportion of manual workers in the United Kingdom began to decline slowly from the 1930s onwards, and the rate of decline accelerated in the 1970s. The percentage of manual workers in the main occupational groups in the UK fell from 74.6% in 1911 to 47.7% in 1981, while the percentage of non-manual workers rose from 18.7% in 1911 to 52.3% in 1981 (Chen, 2001, p. 278). By the same token, modern science and technology have an important influence on the development of modern culture. ‘Science is not just something methodical and skillful, it is a culture’ (Wu, 2002,

p. 11). Science and technology contribute to the general formation of scientific culture and rational thinking among members of society. Moreover, the development and popularisation of the Internet nowadays have objectively increased the learning needs of the members of society on a large scale and substantially, and at the same time have also increased their learning opportunities on a large scale and substantially, as well as reduced their learning costs. It contributes to the formation of a learning society, which in turn contributes to the continuous upgrading of modernisation.

1.5 ADAPTABILITY

1.5.1 Adaptability is the Key to the Sustained Advancement of Modernisation

For a country's modernisation construction, it will inevitably face a large number of uncertain factors. In the process of modernisation, a country's own social and economic interest structure will inevitably undergo significant changes. At the same time, the country must also open up to the outside world and interact with other countries, including 'strong' developed countries. Therefore, it will inevitably face unprecedented, complex, diverse, and massive uncertainties. These uncertain factors are often complex and intertwined, generating various contradictions and conflicts. The road to modernisation is long and not something that can be achieved overnight, and along this long journey, there will be newly generated uncertainties. Affected by these massive uncertainties, there are inevitably multiple possibilities for a country's modernisation construction prospects. Improper handling of these uncertain factors can lead to various obstacles to modernisation construction. Especially, if it leads to a disruptive error, it will interrupt the trend of modernisation construction and even destroy the huge achievements already made in modernisation construction, at least resulting in huge losses.

Obviously, what kind of adaptability is included in the endogenous driving force of a country's modernisation has become a crucial issue that affects the smooth, healthy, and sustainable progress of its modernisation construction.

The adaptability here refers to the ability of people to resolve various unfavourable factors, choose reasonable paths, reduce costs, and ensure the sustainable advancement of modernisation. Adaptability is an organic component of the endogenous driving force of modernisation.

Any country that engages in modernisation construction, regardless of whether it started early or late, will generally go through a process of allowing ‘free’ or ‘exploratory’ development paths in its initial stage, followed by adjustments and determining the main path of its own modernisation construction. In such a process, a country exhibits a certain degree of modernisation adaptation ability with varying strengths and weaknesses. The ability to adapt to modernisation is composed of two parts: factors belonging to modernity and factors belonging to historical genes. The former is constantly generated with the advancement of modernisation, while the latter is activated and continued through necessary ‘sublation’. The two together form an organic whole of modernisation adaptation ability.

The adaptability of different strengths and weaknesses has significantly different impacts on the advancement of a country’s modernisation construction. Strong adaptability helps a country eliminate the adverse effects of many uncertain factors in its modernisation process, avoid the ups and downs of modernisation construction, reduce the cost of modernisation construction, promote the formation of factors conducive to modernisation, expand the positive achievements of modernisation, and thus ensure the healthy, smooth, and sustainable progress of modernisation. However, weaker adaptability cannot guarantee or would even hinder the smooth progress of modernisation construction.

1.5.2 The Main Content of Adaptability

Although the adaptation ability in the endogenous dynamics of modernisation includes many types of content, roughly speaking, adaptation ability includes the most important aspects such as risk prevention ability, error-correction ability, and the ability to keep up with the times.

First, the ability to prevent risks.

If a country wants to effectively promote the modernisation process, it must be based on the awareness of bottom-line thinking, and adopt various practical and feasible ways to effectively avoid major social risks, especially those with disruptive hazards, to effectively maintain the safe operation of society. This can be understood from two aspects.

One is to have the ability to control social conflicts within a certain range.

In the modernisation process of any country, there will inevitably be a situation of comprehensive and large-scale adjustment of social

interest structures, which will inevitably give rise to a large number of complex and diverse social contradictions and conflicts. This is a pattern. Therefore, in the process of promoting modernisation, a country should establish corresponding institutional arrangements based on the basic concept of social justice, resolve existing problems in a controllable way, and enable the interests and demands of various groups in society to maintain a relatively balanced situation, to gradually promote modernisation construction. On the contrary, if a country treats social conflicts with a *laissez-faire* attitude or in a fierce manner, it will inevitably lead to the accumulation and expansion of social conflicts, or artificially exacerbate and intensify social conflicts. Once social contradictions and conflicts intensify and break through a certain important critical point, they will crush the entire security support system of society. Once this happens, not only will it fail to resolve existing social conflicts, but it will also lead to an accelerated expansion trend of social conflicts. If so, the entire society will collapse, the entire population will fall into a state of suffering, and the achievements of modernisation construction will be destroyed in an instant.

If effectively resolving corresponding social conflicts and preventing their escalation is very important for any country, then it is even more so for a large country like China. As Deng Xiaoping said, 'China's problems require stability above all else. Without a stable environment, nothing can be achieved, and the achievements already made will also be lost' (Deng, 1993, p. 284).

The second is to have the ability to control the negative impact of economic factors that affect social security within a certain range.

Things that seem to belong to the economic sector, such as continuously increasing inflation, rising unemployment rates, and increasing taxes, are actually also major cross-disciplinary issues that affect the safety bottom-line of modernisation construction. The potential negative impact should not be underestimated. These three economic factors are related to the basic living conditions of the people. If not solved properly, it will inevitably lower the basic living standards of the people, cause panic among the people, increase the sense of isolation among social members, reduce the trust in public power, and make the people lose hope for the future, which will seriously affect the safe operation of society. It is particularly important to note that 'during a period of severe economic decline, these three economic factors are likely to intertwine, interact, and intensify, thereby creating a cumulative effect on social conflicts and

contradictions. Once this happens, the social conflicts and contradictions that may worsen due to these three economic factors will become even more severe' (Wu, 2016).

It can be seen that special precautions should be taken against these economic factors that are harmful to social security. Therefore, a very necessary, specific approach is to establish a reserve system for strategic resources, that is, to establish a reserve system for strategic resources such as food, oil, foreign exchange, gold, etc., effectively building a guarantee foundation for a country's basic lifeline in case of emergencies and to prevent potential problems.

Second, the ability to correct errors.

In a sense, it is inevitable to make mistakes in modernisation construction. The reason is simple: anyone who is human cannot avoid making mistakes. Modernisation is a gradual process of advancement and expansion, and the emergence of new things with modernity is also a gradual process. For the constantly emerging modern new things, people's adaptation and understanding require a process. In situations where there is a lack of sufficient perception and understanding of these things, people sometimes have to make certain judgements and make decisions based on them, making it inevitable to make mistakes. Furthermore, when making decisions related to modernisation construction, people are often consciously or unconsciously influenced by their own interests and preferences, making decisions that are in line with their own interest preferences but not necessarily suitable for the needs of others, leading to certain errors. In addition, in the early and middle stages of modernisation in various countries, a large number of previous institutional arrangements need to be adjusted, and the new institutional design inevitably has many unreasonable and imperfect aspects, which will also make it difficult to effectively correct existing errors and form certain new errors to varying degrees. 'A good system can prevent bad people from acting recklessly, while a bad system can prevent good people from doing good deeds to the fullest' (Deng, 1994, p. 333).

The problem is that if the errors in the modernisation process are not effectively corrected for a long time, they will accumulate more and even become irreparable, seriously hindering the smooth progress of modernisation construction. 'If a country lacks a decision-making error prevention mechanism, it may lead to a large number of decision-making errors, and the lack of a decision-making correction mechanism may bring serious crises to the entire country' (Cui, 2012). For example, if social justice

is not emphasised in its modernisation construction, it will lead to an increasingly widening wealth gap, form a certain degree of interest imbalance, cause general dissatisfaction among the people, trigger various social contradictions, and thus have a very harmful negative impact on modernisation construction, and in severe cases, it will interrupt the modernisation process, deform or lead to a long-term state of 'low development'. The modernisation process of countries such as Brazil and Argentina has clearly confirmed this point.

The essence of error-correction ability lies in continuously reflecting and evaluating the actual situation of modernisation construction in our country based on the basic purpose, basic laws, the historical and current environment of modernisation construction, and referring to the experience and lessons of modernisation construction in other countries; once certain problems or hidden dangers are discovered, they should be corrected promptly. To prevent general problems from evolving into serious problems, serious hidden dangers from evolving into real serious problems, and serious problems from evolving into irreparable problems. In this regard, China's environmental and ecological construction has typical significance. In the decade at the turn of the twenty-first century, due to the excessive pursuit of GDP growth and the difficulty in considering other factors, China's environmental ecology suffered from relatively serious pollution and damage. This situation not only seriously reduced the quality of life of the Chinese people but also posed serious challenges to China's sustainable development. When China discovered this serious problem, it adopted extremely strict policies to vigorously correct it. After ten years of strict rectification, China's environmental and ecological construction can be said to have reached a relatively high level, with a leading level of governance among developing countries. In contrast, although countries such as Brazil and Argentina once achieved significant modernisation, they have not timely corrected some obvious mistakes (such as inadequate high welfare policies). Instead, they often cater to the call for populism for the 'election race', and political leaders continue to promise higher levels of welfare policies to the people. As a result, these countries are deeply trapped in the middle-income trap and find it difficult to extricate themselves. More seriously, the continuous high accumulation of errors makes it increasingly difficult to correct them in the future, even becoming impossible.

In short, if a country wants to ensure the smooth and sustainable progress of modernisation construction, it must have strong error-correction capabilities. Through this strong error-correction ability, firstly, from a probability perspective, errors in modernisation construction can be reduced, and secondly, from a degree perspective, the negative impact caused by errors in modernisation construction can be reduced.

Third, the ability to keep up with the times.

The significance of the ability to keep up with the times in adaption ability lies in enabling a country to adapt to the new trends of continuous development and changes in modernisation, seize the opportunity for self-innovation, seize development opportunities, especially major strategic opportunities, and promote modernisation construction to a new level.

The ability to keep up with the times is closely related to a sense of historical responsibility, the ability to judge historical trends, and the ability to make policy decisions. Firstly, only with a strong sense of historical responsibility can decision-makers of a country form a historical responsibility for the country's modernisation construction, and adapt to the trend of social change and carry out self-innovation, to have the courage to face various internal drawbacks and external challenges, and at the same time, generate a necessary social cohesion. Secondly, only with a clear judgement of practical problems and development trends can decision-makers formulate reasonable and feasible modernisation construction goals and paths accordingly. For example, since Singapore gained independence in 1965, leaders such as Lee Kuan Yew formed goals and paths suitable for Singapore's modernisation construction based on the judgement of Singapore's small land area, limited resources, numerous ethnic groups, and superior geographical environment, as well as the grasp of development opportunities, the goals and paths being namely: 'Shaping the most competitive urban country in Asia with international competitiveness as the core, creating an economic structure with international economic centres as the main body, constructing an operating system with the organic combination of free port economy and government regulation, establishing a micro foundation for industrial development with foreign multinational corporations, and promoting coordinated economic, social, cultural, and ecological development with development goals as policy guidance' (Wang, 2015). It is precisely by following this reasonable and feasible modernisation construction goal and path that Singapore's modernisation construction has achieved

remarkable achievements recognised worldwide. Thirdly, only with decisive ability can a country prevent its choice of modernisation strategy from falling into a dilemma of divergent opinions, endless debates, and indecisive decisions, thus gaining an advantage in time. Deng Xiaoping pointed out, ‘Not arguing is to fight for time. Once you argue, it becomes complicated. If you squander all your time, you won’t be able to achieve anything. Without arguing, boldly try and boldly break through’ (Deng, 1993, p. 374).

The success of China’s modernisation construction since the reform and opening up is a typical example of keeping up with the times. From the perspective of the major goals and paths of modernisation construction, at the beginning of reform and opening up, China proposed the basic goals and guidance centred on modernisation construction. In the 1990s, China timely proposed the construction of a market economy system. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the concept of scientific development was also proposed. Furthermore, two centenary goals for modernisation and a five-in-one overall strategy for promoting modernisation were proposed. Moreover, with each major modernisation strategy proposed by China, corresponding meso-level rules will also be formed to support it. ‘Through effective planning, the extremely limited and relatively dispersed material and human capital can be concentrated and utilised’. ‘Through planning, efforts can be concentrated to promote the “advanced” development of education and science and technology’ (Wu, 2019a, 2019b, p. 216). Objectively, these major goals and paths of modernisation construction, which were successively launched, were all proposed at the appropriate window of the times. They not only have scientific, feasible, and appropriate characteristics but also have interconnectivity, effectively promoting China’s modernisation construction to reach new heights step by step.

1.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the above analysis of the endogenous dynamics of modernisation, we can easily draw the following two points:

1.6.1 *The Endogenous Dynamics of Modernisation Determines the Potential and Prospects of Modernisation*

As organic components of modernisation's endogenous dynamics, the primary dynamics, upgrading capability, and adaptive capability each have their own functions and cannot be lacking. Without any of these elements, a country's modernisation construction cannot proceed smoothly and advance. For a country, if it lacks the primary dynamics, its modernisation process is difficult to sustain; if it lacks the upgrading capability, its modernisation construction level will be difficult to achieve continuous 'upgrading and replacement'. If it lacks adaptive capability, its modernisation construction will be difficult to effectively cope with various risks and proceed smoothly, and it will also be difficult to keep up with the changes of the new era and make necessary adjustments.

In this regard, the different manifestations of modernisation in several countries can illustrate this point in a more typical way. In the sixteenth century, Spain seized huge amounts of gold and silver from Latin America through large-scale navigation and subsequent colonialism, becoming the wealthiest country in the world at that time. However, Spain lacked the basic driving force for modernisation construction. For example, at that time, the country had neither established a standardised market economy system nor engaged in effective social cooperation among various groups, and the entire population had not developed a universal spirit of hard work. Because of this, Spain did not enter the threshold of modern society for a long time. In the twentieth century, Brazil entered the threshold of modernity because it had a certain degree of endogenous dynamics for modernisation, but it lacked the capacity for upgrading and adaptation, and as a result fell into the 'middle-income trap', from which it has been staggering and unable to move forward smoothly. Although the Soviet Union did not implement a market economy system, its social cooperation was relatively good under specific historical conditions, and its nation also had a spirit of hard work. Therefore, it did once possess the endogenous dynamics in a sense. In addition, its education and science and technology achieved significant development at a fast pace, so its ability to improve is relatively strong. However, due to the lack of necessary adaptability in the modernisation construction of the Soviet Union, it was trapped in a rigid planned economic system for a long time and could not extricate itself, ultimately leading to disintegration. In contrast, Singapore has a relatively well-rounded modernisation of endogenous dynamics.

Singapore not only has a strong endogenous dynamic for modernisation construction but also has strong capabilities for improvement and adaptation. As a result, its modernisation construction can proceed smoothly and develop significantly, and it took just over 50 years to become one of the developed countries.

1.6.2 Efforts Should be Made to Effectively Promote the Growth of Endogenous Dynamics for Modernisation

Since the endogenous dynamics of modernisation is the fundamental driving force of modernisation construction, effectively promoting the growth of endogenous dynamics has become the key to ensuring the smooth, healthy, and sustainable progress of modernisation construction. In terms of effectively promoting the growth of endogenous dynamics for modernisation, it involves various aspects, among which special attention should be paid to the following three aspects:

Firstly, attention should be paid to the growth of modern endogenous driving forces related to the economic foundation.

An obvious fact is that ‘The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life’ (Marx, 1859, p. 4). Therefore, it can be seen that the growth of modernisation endogenous dynamics in terms of economic foundation is the most fundamental thing in the entire modernisation endogenous dynamics. Two aspects are the foundation of the foundation: on the one hand, a standardised market economy operation mechanism should be formed to effectively allocate the necessary resources for economic modernisation construction and to activate the vitality and creativity of economic modernisation; on the other hand, we should vigorously develop the manufacturing industry to lay a solid foundation for economic modernisation. Now people pay more and more attention to the role of the Internet, which itself is not wrong. However, it should be noted that the manufacturing sector, instead, is the foundation of a country’s economic modernisation. In contrast, no matter how important the Internet technology is to the whole society, in the field of economic modernisation, it is only a technology ‘empowerment’, not a foundation. Only when the Internet is dependent on the physical economic modernisation, such as the construction of the manufacturing industry, can it play its due ‘empowerment’ in the sense of boosting the role.

Secondly, attention should be paid to the overall development of the endogenous dynamics of modernisation. As mentioned earlier, the primary driving force, upgrading ability, and adaptive ability in the endogenous dynamics of modernisation are an organic whole, and each of them is indispensable. When any one of these components is over- or under-emphasised or absent, it will hinder the smooth and sustained progress of a country's overall modernisation process. Throughout the modernisation process of various countries, any country that has achieved success in modernisation not only possesses the primary driving force, upgrading ability, and adaptive ability in its modernisation endogenous dynamics but they also are in good condition. For countries where modernisation construction is not successful enough, these three components of their endogenous modernisation dynamics show overall weakness or insufficient content in a certain aspect. Therefore, we can also use these three organic components of the endogenous dynamics of modernisation as important metrics to judge whether a country's modernisation construction can be successful. Based on such metrics, it is possible to identify the shortcomings of a country's modernisation construction, and then make up for them, to promote the overall modernisation construction of a country through the overall growth of modernisation endogenous dynamics.

Thirdly, the endogenous dynamics of modernisation should be given a 'human' dimension.

People are not only the main driving force of modernisation construction, but more importantly, they are the purpose of modernisation construction. Being human-centred is the basic purpose of modernisation construction. Essentially, modernisation construction itself is not an end in itself, but only a means. It is a fundamental way to achieve the basic purpose and goal of modernisation construction. Modernisation construction is to meet the growing needs of the people, specifically to enable all people to share the fruits of development and provide sufficient space for the free development of every member of society. Therefore, the specific content of meeting the specific needs of individuals and promoting their progress should be integrated into the specific plans or goals of promoting the growth of endogenous dynamics in modernisation construction. The organic combination of promoting human progress and promoting the growth of endogenous driving forces in modernisation should be achieved to attain a positive interaction between the two. The result of doing so will not only give modernisation construction the

meaning of its basic purpose, that is, a positive meaning of ‘for people’ and ‘relying on people’, prevent modernisation construction from falling into the trap of pure ‘materialisation’ or ‘spontaneity’, but also enable the public to actively participate in modernisation construction, thereby stimulating the vitality and creativity of modernisation construction.

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Basic Characteristics of Secularisation

2.1 INTRODUCTION

From the point of view of the basic attitudes or basic behavioural orientations of the members of society in their daily lives, one of the important elements of modern society that distinguishes it from traditional society is secularisation. Secularisation is not only a question of whether the basic purpose of modernisation can be achieved, but also a question of whether the basic endogenous dynamics of modernisation can be formed. Obviously, if there is a lack of in-depth understanding of such important issues as the basic meaning and characteristics of secularisation, then it is impossible to have a comprehensive understanding of modernisation.

2.2 ORIGIN AND MEANING OF SECULARISATION

2.2.1 *The origins of secularisation*

Secularisation is a phenomenon that inevitably arises along with the formation and advancement of modernisation and the market economy, and has a historical inevitability. As Marx (1859) pointed out, ‘the process of social, political and intellectual life is altogether necessitated by the mode of production of material life; that all social and political relations, all religious and legal systems, all theoretical conceptions which arise in the course of history can only be understood if the material conditions of life obtaining during the relevant epoch have been understood and the former are traced back to these material conditions, was are revolutionary

discovery not only for economics but also for all historical sciences'. In a traditional society (feudal society) formed on the basis of the agrarian economy, its social members, both in their behavioural and value orientations, are bound to present a characteristic of personal and ideological dependence on the king's power or religion, and cannot be characterised by an independent personality. Traditional Chinese society was a feudal and authoritarian hierarchical society. In traditional Chinese society, the members of society did not have independent personalities, and their persons were dependent on the hierarchy. Western medieval society was a religious society. In medieval Western society, obscurantism prevailed, and the church controlled every aspect of the lives of the members of society. 'Their adepts called on God to intervene to help them to cope with the world' (Black, 1976). With modernisation and the advancement of the market economy, this situation was radically changed.

'All emancipation is a reduction of the human world and relationships to man himself' (Marx & Engels, 1844). Along with modernisation and the advancement of the market economy, people's productive and creative capacities have been greatly enhanced, the concept of freedom and equality for members of society has been formed and popularised, and the development of people's education and culture, as well as the degree of rationalisation of people, has been generally increased. All of this has led to the gradual disappearance of the personal dependence of members of society, and to the gradual replacement of their original 'God-centred' behavioural and value orientation with a 'human-centred' one. Under such historical conditions, more and more people agree with the basic idea that human beings are the most important thing, and that human beings are the end, not the means; and that every person can lead a 'satisfactory' secular life on the reality of This World through rational judgement and self-caused efforts, and that there is no need to search for a happy life on The Other World that is unverifiable. This situation is a great progress in the history of mankind. 'From the point of view of personal happiness, the desire to have everything fulfilled in life without relying on God and privilege, but only on the accumulation of wealth by the individual, is the main psychological factor that subverted feudal civilisation and its value system' (Guo, 2001, p. 97).

2.2.2 *Max Weber on the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

The phenomenon of modernisation first appeared in Europe. The reasons for its emergence include economic, political, cultural, scientific and technological, maritime and other factors. Max Weber believed that the causes of modernisation could not be analysed only from the economic point of view, but should also be explained from the cultural point of view. Based on such considerations, Weber developed his viewpoints on the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, which provided an important perspective on the endogenous reasons for the formation of modernisation in Europe. Weber's view has had a far-reaching impact.

Max Weber's views on the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism broadly include the following aspects: firstly, the factor of spiritual culture is an important part of the endogenous dynamics of modernisation. Weber pointed out that 'we are evidently talking about a specific type of "rationalism" peculiar to Western civilisation'. That's the reason why the West was able to generate capitalism. The reason why China and India did not generate capitalism is that 'neither science, nor art, nor the state, nor the economy, have developed along the paths of rationalisation peculiar to the West in those countries' (Weber, 2001). Secondly, profit through one's own labour has a basis of legitimacy. According to Weber, unlike the behaviour of profit-oriented merchants and sinful acts such as theft and plunder, if a person acquires wealth through hard work, then this kind of profit-making behaviour is decent and beneficial, and is approved by God. 'For if the God that the Puritan sees as acting in all the fortunes of life reveals to one of his children the opportunity to make a profit, then there is a purpose in this. Consequently, the believing Christian must follow this call by taking advantage of this opportunity' (Weber, 2001). 'Such work is like a calling and the sole means of making sure of one's state of grace' (Weber, 2001). 'Man is merely the steward of the gifts granted him by God's grace; he, like the wicked servant in the Bible, must give an account of every penny' (Weber, 2001). Thirdly, reason and frugality are necessary for legitimate profit. On the basis of rational considerations, 'if that restraint on consumption is combined with the freedom to strive for profit, the result produced will inevitably be the creation of capital through the ascetic compulsion to save. The inhibitions which stand in the way of consumption of what have been acquired favoured

its productive use: as *investment capital*' (Weber, 2001). Fourthly, secularised behaviour eventually breaks through the constraints of the original religious ethic. People's demand for material interests inevitably triggers their economic impulses, which will then make it impossible for ascetic behaviour to last forever. 'Where "doing one's job" cannot be directly linked to the highest spiritual and cultural values—although it may be felt to be more than mere economic coercion—the individual today usually makes no attempt to find any meaning in it'. 'The pursuit of wealth, divested of its metaphysical significance, today tends to be associated with purely elemental passions' (Weber, 2001).

Weber's study of the Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism is an important revelation for people to understand the phenomenon of secularisation in the modern sense. Firstly, it reminds people that they should not only limit themselves to economic factors alone but should also pay attention to cultural and spiritual factors when analysing the dynamics of modernisation. Secondly, as the process of modernisation advances, the attachment of members of society to religion is gradually weakening. Accordingly, the sense of human subjectivity, independence, autonomy, and self-caused behavioural orientation is gradually taking shape and becoming an irreversible trend. Thirdly, secular life of reality has a certain degree of legitimacy, and secularisation has been recognised and accepted by more and more members of society, and the people's pursuit of secular life will become an important driving force for modernisation.

Weber's views of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism have several limitations at the same time. Firstly, it overestimates the role of cultural factors. In terms of the basic causes of social change and the formation of modern societies, the role of the economic base is of fundamental significance. In contrast, although cultural factors certainly have a certain role in the formation of modern society, they cannot have a fundamental role, and can only have a certain 'facilitating' or 'hindering' role, or have the significance of a specific style of shaping or the choosing of a specific path. Although Weber sometimes sees the importance of economic factors for the formation of modern society, he actually compares the Protestant ethic and other cultural factors with the role of the economy, without distinguishing between the two. The role of the economy is even sometimes downplayed. 'Among Weber's substantive works, none is further removed from the economism he opposed than his famous study *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*' (Ringer, 2004, pp. 113–114). This approach is too lopsided. It is a truism

that elements of a culture that are not combined with the economy cannot be the great driving force that effectively moves society forward. In contrast to the religiously oriented society of medieval Europe, traditional Chinese society is a secularised society. In traditional Chinese society, the tradition of secularisation can be said to be deeply rooted and to have lasted for thousands of years. However, because this secularised tradition was based on an agrarian economy, it did not give rise to a modern society. Instead, between the late 1970s and the early 2000s, along with the development of modern large-scale industry, market economy, and opening up to the outside world, China's secularisation tradition as a historical gene combined with the phenomenon of secularisation with modern significance, and they together effectively pushed forward China's modernisation to a great extent. Secondly, this view actually implies the assumption that the religious world of The Other World is still higher than the reality of This World. Although Weber recognised to a large extent the significance of secularised life in the human world, the space for such secularised life is in fact very limited and is not an 'independent' world. In Weber's view, the logical cornerstone of the idea that the Protestant ethic contributed to the emergence of the capitalist spirit is still the idea of the supremacy of God's 'heaven' over the secular world, not yet the 'human-centred' idea. Therefore, according to this logic, only secularisation that is approved by God is justified and can increase the glory of the 'Protestant' believer. The opposite is harmful secularisation. Thirdly, the scope of interpretation of this view is clearly geographically limited and not yet universal. While it can reasonably explain one important reason for the success of modernisation in European countries, it is difficult to explain why modernisation in other countries has been successful or not successful enough. For example, it cannot be used to effectively explain the main reason why China, which has a long tradition of secularisation, has had difficulty in generating modernisation, or why the modernisation of a secular country such as China was able to take off in the four decades and more after the 1980s and achieve the universally recognised modernisation successes.

2.2.3 *The meaning of secularisation*

At first, secularisation existed as a concept that corresponded to religiosity, transcendence, and asceticism. With a little scrutiny, we can see that the earliest meaning of the concept of secularisation was the 'desacralisation of

religion, meaning the “demystification” of traditional sacred concepts, the retreat of sacred symbols and the deciphering of sacred symbols, whereby the mystical and mythological interpretations of religious imagery and concepts of the past have been replaced by today’s rationalised, realistic, and reductive interpretations’ (Zhuo, 2002, p. 4).

As the process of modernisation and market economy advances, the meaning of secularisation is becoming clearer and clearer. Secularisation mainly implies that members of a society attach more and more importance to everyday life in the real world, to the behavioural orientation of self-caused endeavour and the corresponding rational judgement, and to the participation in social affairs related to everyday life. Accordingly, religious systems, supernatural beliefs, and the things associated with them have become relatively less important, and are no longer able to influence people’s basic attitudes to life and basic behavioural orientations, and their ‘decisive’ influence on the earth has disappeared. ‘The old absolute power in the spiritual sphere (meaning the power of the European Church) has been overthrown’ (Xu, 2002, p. 252). ‘Religious beliefs and institutions have been transformed into non-religious forms. This includes the transformation of knowledge, behaviours, and institutions previously considered to be rooted in divine power into purely human creations and responsibilities’ (Sun, 2008, p. 103).

With the gradual deepening and improvement of modernisation and the market economy, the concept of secularisation has become more and more abundant in meaning, and is no longer simply a question of the extent of religious influence, but has gradually become an important content and a basic feature of modern society, as well as a basic life attitude, basic behavioural orientation, and way of doing things of the people, affecting all aspects of modern society. Broadly speaking, secularisation is characterised by reality, autonomy, and rationalisation.

2.3 REALITY

From the point of view of the basic attitude of the members of society to life and the corresponding basic behavioural orientations, secularisation is first and foremost manifested in reality. Reality is the most fundamental characteristic of secularisation, from which, in a certain sense, all other characteristics of secularisation are formed and extended.

2.3.1 *The formation of realistic behavioural orientations*

In terms of their basic attitude towards life, members of society must first resolve the fundamental question of 'for whom' or 'for what'.

During the medieval period, which preceded the modern era, Europe as a whole was a religious society. Engels pointed out that 'a religion that brings the Roman world empire into subjection and dominated by far the larger part of civilised humanity for 1,800 years cannot be disposed of merely by declaring it to be nonsense gleaned together by deceivers. One cannot dispose of it before one succeeds in explaining its origin and its development from the historical conditions under which it arises and reaches its dominating position' (Marx & Engels, 1882). At the end of the ancient Roman Empire, with the large-scale invasion of the barbarians, the whole of Europe was plunged into a state of turmoil for many years, the productive forces were seriously damaged, and the people were wandering and living in great misery. In addition to their own urgent material needs for basic survival, the suffering people also had their own urgent spiritual needs to hope for a better life in the future. Although the people were in deep suffering, they hoped to have a happy life in the future, even in the afterlife promised by others. 'Despairing of material salvation, they seek in its stead a spiritual salvation, a consolation in their consciousness to save them from utter despair' (Marx & Engels, 1882). At that time, religion, especially Christianity, provided a platform that could carry the future hopes of a large number of people. It was in this context of the times that Christianity was able to rapidly expand and become the religion to which the populace of much of Europe generally converted.

Compared with any other religion, in the Middle Ages, Christianity had unprecedentedly strong social and ideological control and influence over the entire European society. Not only did Christianity have almost complete control over the spiritual world and daily behaviour of the people, but the people also had to make regular contributions to the church in the form of 'tithes', which further strengthened the economic power of the church and the connection between the people and the church. In addition, the Christian Church tried to conduct the affairs of society as a whole on principles higher than those of secular kingship. 'They argued that the pope was properly the head not just of the Church but also of Christendom. The pope was, in other words, a temporal ruler as well as a religious one: He was God's vicar in all matters. This argument did not eliminate kings, dukes, nobles, and other

secular leaders, but it placed them below the pope and accountable to him' (Bennett & Hollister, 2006). This practice, although it often led to conflicts between ecclesiastical and royal authority, illustrated the strong influence and control of religion. In addition, the Church owned one-third of the land and encouraged its parishioners to buy 'indulgences' and donate large amounts of their family wealth to the Church. The Church thus became a huge interest group that outweighed many countries. The powerful control and influence of the Christian Church, as well as its economic strength, made its propositions indisputably influential on all groups in society. 'In fact the picture which they [the minds of that age] form of the destinies of man and the universe is in almost every case a projection of the pattern traced by a Westernised Christian theology and eschatology, nothing can be more true' (Bloch, 2004a, 2004b).

During the Middle Ages in Europe, the teachings of the Christian (Catholic), Church became the basic guidelines for the population's basic life attitude and basic behavioural orientations. This was mainly expressed in the following ways: firstly, entry into heaven was the ultimate goal of every human being. The specific statement is that the soul of every human being is immortal, compared with the shortness of his or her earthly life through a physical body, and therefore, every human being has the ultimate goal of entering heaven. The earthly world, which is also the real world, belongs to This World, and is a sea of pain and filth for everyone. 'No matter how hard it tries, the state has the taint of lust upon it. The state can never be "good" enough to wipe out its stain' (McClelland, 2005). Heaven, which is The Other World, is completely different. As far as the eye can see, heaven presents such a desirable situation as this: 'See, the Tent of God is with men, and he will make his living-place with them, and they will be his people'. 'And he will put an end to all their weeping; and there will be no more death, or sorrow, or crying, or pain; for the first things have come to an end'. 'And her light [the new Jerusalem] was like a stone of great price, a jasper stone, clear as glass' (Hooke, 1965; Revelation 21:2–11). Secondly, belief in God is the only way to salvation. Christianity believes that every human being is sinful and has original sin. According to the Bible, after the LORD God fashioned Adam and Eve, the patriarchs of mankind, out of clay, he 'took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to do work in it and take care of it' (Hooke, 1965; Genesis 2:7–15). The relationship between man and God was originally very harmonious. Unfortunately, Eve and Adam were lured by the serpent and disobeyed the LORD God's instructions and ate the forbidden fruit,

resulting in the loss of harmony between man and God. As a result, man fell into the abyss, and the sin was passed on from generation to generation as Adam and Eve's offspring reproduced and reproduced again, until now. And the only way to be saved is that one must believe in God. The Bible tells us, 'and in no other [than Jesus] is there salvation: for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, through which we may have salvation' (Hooke, 1965; Acts 4:12). Thirdly, the practice of asceticism is the only infallible way to hold fast to the faith. The Bible informs us that, 'then when its time comes, desire gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is of full growth, gives birth to death' (Hooke, 1965; James 1:15). Since this is the case, each person can atone for his sins and enter heaven only by abstaining from selfish desires and by labouring and toiling. If he fails to do so, he will become an evil person, and will inevitably go to hell. The Bible also sternly warns all people that all bad and evil people who have been made by indulgence will, at the Millennium Judgement, 'have their part in the sea of ever-burning fire which is the second death'. 'Only those whose names are in the Lamb's book of life' (Hooke, 1965; Revelation 21:8, 27) can come into heaven.

Traditional Chinese society is a 'monarch-based' society. In such a 'monarch-based' society, although it is not absolutely religious, it is a 'secular monarchy', and the emphasis is on the divine right of kings, stating that kingship itself is a representative of heaven. It should be admitted that there is a certain tendency of secularisation in traditional Chinese society compared with the religious society of medieval Europe. However, this kind of secularisation is not under modernisation conditions, so it can only be a certain 'tendency', and can only be said to be partially reasonable. Moreover, although the secular monarchical power in traditional Chinese society had a certain tolerance for the secular life of the people, in essence, this tolerance was limited and was only limited to the level of the people's basic subsistence needs. Desires that go beyond the level of basic survival needs must be prohibited. 'Almost without exception, every detail of every part of people's lives is supervised, controlled and governed by a politicised system of operation and control of social life centred on an authoritarian monarch' (Liu, 2000a, 2000b, p. 264). Therefore, fundamentally speaking, the basic life attitude and the basic behavioural orientations of the people had to be subordinated to the will of the monarch. Moreover, in order to maintain the extravagant life of the royal family and the superior life of the middle and senior officials, the feudal dynasty had to levy from the people all kinds of heavy taxes

and corvée services, thus seriously lowering the actual living standard of the people.

In contrast to traditional societies, which were ‘God-centred’ and ‘monarch-based’, modern society is a secular ‘human-centred’ society. Under the conditions of the modern era of increasingly developed productive forces, the general formation of a consciousness of equality, freedom, and independence among members of society, the rising incomes of members of society, the increasing leisure time of people, and the growing degree of modern civilisation, the concepts of ‘God-based’ and ‘monarch-based’ have disappeared and have been replaced by the basic ‘human-centred’ concept. People increasingly agree with the basic idea that the human being is an end in itself, not a means, and that everyday life, in line with this, which is directly related to the human being himself, is the most important thing. ‘There is generally a stronger quest and a stronger desire for a better reality. What is important is that people want to live a good life at the present moment, and that they should live a better life at this stage that is compatible with the economic standard of the age. People are less and less likely to put this good life into a distant future, to let the goal of life become too disconnected from the actual state of life’ (Wu, 2014, p. 116). This change is a huge step forward in human history. ‘From the point of view of personal happiness, the desire to live without relying on God and privilege, but to have everything fulfilled simply by the accumulation of wealth by the individual, is the main psychological factor that subverted feudal civilisation and its value system’ (Guo, 2001, p. 97).

It should be noted that the phenomenon of religiosity as an ideology cannot be completely eliminated, nor is it likely to disappear in modern societies, owing to the multifaceted and differentiated needs of the population and, more specifically, in the area of spiritual life. However, even so, it should be acknowledged that the influence and authority of religion in modern society have changed considerably compared with that of traditional society. Firstly, for members of society, even if they believe in a certain religion, it should be out of their judgement and choice, rather than out of some kind of social deterrent such as the church or the pressure of social conformity, which makes them passively and forcibly ‘convert’ to a certain religion. Secondly, compared with the omnipresent influence of religion in the past society, the influence of religion in modern society is more limited to the moral dimension and has become less important, and even many religions themselves have tended

to become secularised to varying degrees, or have become more tolerant of secularised content. ‘Religious functions that were once deeply rooted in people’s social, economic, and political lives have been separated to the extent that there exists a redefined religious world that is detached from everyday life’ (Weller, 2017).

2.3.2 *Main elements of a realistic behavioural orientation*

Under the conditions of modern society and the market economy, the primary value orientation of secularisation is human-centred. For each specific individual, that is, a member of society, the actual basic needs for life and development, that is, the fundamental interests, are the most important things about the question of ‘centre’. As a result, society is increasingly showing a basic value orientation that is responsive to the basic needs of human beings and attaches importance to real life. People pay more and more attention to daily life, the reality of This World, while staying away from the asceticism advocated by society in the past and from the religious world of The Other World. The ‘human-centred’ basic attitude to life and basic behavioural orientation, closely related to people’s daily lives, is first and foremost manifested in a strong sense of reality. Broadly speaking, this is mainly manifested in the following two aspects:

Firstly, the reality of the moment is most important.

Under the conditions of modern society and the market economy, people are paying more and more attention to the reality of the ‘present world’ or the ‘present moment’. They are unlikely to pay any attention to the ‘afterlife’, which is difficult to verify. People attach more and more importance to This World in which they live and stay away from The Other World promised by absolutist religions, even if it is magnificent. Although there are many unsatisfactory aspects of the ‘present’ society, and it faces many risks and uncertainties, the ‘present’ society is tangible and capable of continuous improvement and progress, and people’s living standards and quality of life will thus be continuously improved. This is a self-evident fact that the history of modernisation has repeatedly proved for more than 200 years. ‘Based on a highly developed economy and with the widespread dissemination of advanced knowledge, people have come to realise more and more generally that it is possible to create an environment suitable for their survival and development in the real world, and that ideal can be realised in the real world without having to look for them on the other side of the world. People’s spiritual and material

worlds can be united in reality. This situation is very different from that of pre-modernised societies' (Wu, 1999, p. 46). In contrast, the goal of life in the 'afterlife' or The Other World emphasised by medieval European religious societies is a God-centred approach, which is incompatible with a human-centred philosophy and gives people expectations that are difficult to verify. At the same time, the time point people expect to achieve should be too far and out of reach. These cannot adapt to people's basic needs under the conditions of modern society.

Secondly, there is legitimacy in people's quest to fulfil their daily needs.

Under the conditions of modern society and the market economy, since the basic value concept of society is human-centred concept, then people's pursuit of meeting the needs of daily life has a legitimate basis. As Marx (1932) pointed out, 'We must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to "make history"'. But life involves everything else: eating and drinking, habitation, clothing, etc. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, producing material life itself. And indeed this is a historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life'. For each specific person, that is, a member of society, the actual daily needs are the most important and indispensable thing, which are the prerequisites for a person to be a human being. Therefore, it is the social community's most basic 'fundamental' thing about the question of 'centre'. At the same time, it should also be noted that, from a dynamic point of view, with the continuous development of productive forces, people's daily life needs are constantly rising, and the types of needs are becoming increasingly diversified, which is a historical trend. Therefore, the continuous satisfaction and development of people's needs in their daily lives should be the subject of the basic human-centred concept and the primary yardstick for measuring social development (which can even be broken down into a series of specific indicators). In short, the primary purpose of modernisation lies in the constant satisfaction of the growing needs of the people in their daily lives and the continuous improvement of their quality of life. 'Growth was a means to an end, not an end. The objectives were to eliminate poverty, illiteracy, and disease, to increase the range of human choice, to give humankind greater control over the natural environment and thereby to increase freedom' (Griffin, 1992, p. 164).

In terms of the legitimacy of people's pursuit of fulfilment of their daily needs, this is an essential distinction between the basic concept of being human-centred in modern society and the asceticism of being God-centred in traditional culture. The asceticism of medieval European religious societies advocated a God-centred approach that ignored the meaning of human life and thus regarded typical human desires and the pursuit of everyday life goals as the source of evil. In this way, human beings themselves do not have the value of independent existence but can only become the tools or enslaved people of 'God'. The fallacy of the concept of asceticism in medieval European society is thus evident. The phenomenon of secularisation in the contemporary sense is incompatible with the asceticism advocated by the religious institutions of medieval Europe and with the asceticism promoted by some other religions and some extreme non-religious doctrines. Most religions advocate asceticism to some extent. 'Nearly all religions, ancient and modern, have an ascetic tendency, and some of the extreme religions and sects even practise extremely severe asceticism in their doctrinal prescriptions, except a very few, like the sexual power sects of Hinduism and the cult of Dionysus in the ancient Greek religion, which are characterised by some indulgence' (Lu, 1989). Even with the 'Protestants' in the early stages of European modernisation, man was entirely at the mercy of God. 'The life of the saint was directed solely towards a transcendental end, salvation. But precisely for that reason it was thoroughly rationalised in this world and dominated entirely by the aim to add to the glory of God on earth'. 'This rationalization now provided Reform piety with its uniquely ascetic character' (Weber, 2005, p. 72). In addition, some extreme ideologies, such as Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties, also promote asceticism. The basic tenet of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties is to 'expel all human desires' and 'restore all the principles of heaven' and to 'preserve the principles of heaven and extinguish human desires'. It cannot be denied that, for human beings, excessive and indulgent desires will undoubtedly produce significant adverse social effects and should be subject to reasonable restraints. In this sense, one of the intentions of asceticism is to prevent uncontrolled human desires and eliminate harmful habits so that people's lives and behaviours can be maintained in a healthy state and thus have a certain rationality. At the same time, however, asceticism restricts or even denies the basic needs of life that are inherent, 'normal', and necessary for the members of society as human beings. Asceticism denies the legitimacy of such basic needs of daily life,

thus significantly suppressing the ‘nature’ of human beings, giving rise to another type of ‘alienation of human beings’ which is quite different from the phenomenon of ‘money worship’, and causing human beings to lose the significance of their ‘normal existence’ to varying degrees, thus impeding the progress of society. In a sense, this kind of extreme asceticism really ‘extinguishes the principles of heaven’. Secularisation, on the other hand, is based on the basic human-centred concept, emphasising the legitimacy of people’s everyday needs in life and the right of every member of society to pursue a realistic and happy life in the real world. If there is a ‘principle of heaven’, this is the only way to comply with it.

2.4 AUTONOMY

Autonomous behaviour by members of society is another essential feature of secularisation from the perspective of those responsible for the behaviour. Autonomy focuses on ‘who one depends on’ to achieve one’s life goals. Under the hierarchical system of traditional society, the primary behavioural orientation of members of society is inevitably characterised by a sense of personal dependence. In contrast, in modern society and under the conditions of the market economy, the primary behavioural orientation of members of society is characterised by autonomy, whereby the state of existence and development of members of society is not dependent on others but rather on their own free choice and self-causal effort.

2.4.1 *Personal dependence in traditional society*

Under traditional social conditions, members of society are necessarily characterised by personal dependence. Marx pointed out, ‘the process of social, political and intellectual life is altogether necessitated by the mode of production of material life; that all social and political relations, all religious and legal systems, all theoretical conceptions which arise in the course of history can only be understood if the material conditions of life obtaining during the relevant epoch have been understood and the former are traced back to these material conditions, was a revolutionary discovery not only for economics but also for all historical sciences’(Marx & Engels, 1859). While in traditional society, ‘personal dependence here characterises the social relations of production just as much as it does the other spheres of life organised on the basis of that

production' (Marx & Engels, 1887). Personal dependence is the materialisation of the concept of 'God-centred' or 'monarch-centred', the general identification of the members of society with the absolute centre of authority of the Church and the monarchy, and the social basis of the hierarchy.

In traditional society, the personal dependence spawned by the absolute centre of authority and hierarchy of the Church and the monarchy is manifested in several ways. Firstly, a complete hierarchical sequence is formed in the society as a whole. In the Western medieval society, based on the cosmological and social views at that time, the emperor, the pope, and the king were at the tip of the pyramid of the hierarchy, and below them were the nobles, bishops, and officials of different ranks, and the lowest classes were the peasants and artisans, and so on. Corresponding to the difference in the level of the hierarchical sequence, the resources and power possessed by the members of each hierarchical arrangement varied from the largest to the smallest. The 'hierarchical nature of the medieval world' is demonstrated by the fact that 'society, the natural world, and the cosmos manifested themselves in similar hierarchical relationships. Popes and bishops, emperors and kings, nobles and commoners all found their place in nature' (Stavrianos, 1992). In traditional Chinese society, the feudal hierarchy, which is mainly characterised by the rule that the emperor is the emperor, the minister is the minister, the father is the father, and the son is the son, is even more differentiated between the upper and lower levels, and is so well ordered that no one can step beyond the threshold. Secondly, the members of society at the relatively low level of the hierarchy have a solid personal dependence on those at the relatively high level. Once the God-centred and monarch-centred system is adopted, the emphasis is inevitably on obedience to the God or the monarch, which is unconditional obedience. Accordingly, the autonomous behavioural orientation of the members of society will inevitably be rejected. No one has the right to autonomy, at least not in its entirety, except the monarch and the pope at the top of the pyramid's spire. 'In the state, the monarch is the moment of individual will, of ungrounded self-determination, of caprice or arbitrariness' (Marx & Engels, 1843). The vast majority of members of society exhibit a character of personal and intellectual dependence, i.e., unconditional obedience, to regimes such as the monarchical power and the ecclesiastical power, and cannot be characterised by an autonomous, independent personality. 'Physical dependence

is characterised by the fact that the higher members of the hierarchy have arbitrary power over the destinies of the lower members of the hierarchy, i.e., the relationship between the higher members of the hierarchy and the lower members of the hierarchy is that of a “master” and a “subject”. The “master” can decide the fate of the “subject”, and the “subject” must obey the “master” (Wu, 2016). In traditional Chinese society, the most inferior and miserable status is women. ‘Although men are no longer serfs, a woman is still a man’s serf or semi-serf, without political rights and personal freedom. No one suffers more than women’ (Mao, 1991, p. 239–240). Personal dependence taken to its extreme is the loss of human dignity. ‘The monarchical principle in general is the despised, the despicable, the dehumanised man’ (Marx & Engels, 1843). Even a ‘subject’ in a relatively high position in the social hierarchy is no more than a servant in front of the emperor. ‘In the face of the monarch, although the servants have some autonomy in their cognition, such as serving the monarch with the Way and admonishing the monarch with the Way, etc. However, the autonomy of this understanding is limited, and there is no understanding of the meaning of equality in front of the object of knowledge. On the contrary, there is a deep sense of error and guilt in cultural concepts and psychology’ (Liu, 2000a, 2000b, pp. 6–7). Thirdly, ascribed behavioural styles dominate. In traditional society, since hierarchy is the dominant institutional arrangement and personal dependence characterises the behavioural style of the vast majority of social members, they have little room for choice for survival and development. Under such circumstances, the vast majority of members of society can only rely on such ascribed ways as privileges and family origins to obtain a particular social position or living status in a manner similar to intergenerational transmission. Although the traditional Chinese society has the imperial examination system, which can solve the problem of self-causal effort of some members, the number of people involved is so tiny that it is impossible to change the innate behaviour of the majority of members of the society.

This situation has fundamentally changed with the process of modernisation and market economy. At the level of real life, the development of modern productive forces has led to a proliferation of new industries and corresponding employment opportunities. The establishment of the market economy system has made the free movement of all factors of production, including labour, a necessity, which has led to an unprecedented increase in the rate of social mobility. ‘We noted that the dominant

mobility pattern in agrarian societies was downward. In industrial societies, the volume of upward movement is so much greater that a balance is usually achieved, and, in most cases, the amount of upward movement exceeds the downward' (Lenski, 1988, p. 429). This provides the necessary space for free choice and self-causal effort by members of society. Further, at the level of values, based on a free and competitive market economy, people's values have changed dramatically, and values like freedom and equality have started to prevail. 'As pure ideas, they are idealised expressions of its various moments; being developed in juridical, political and social relations, they are merely reproduced in other degrees. This has also been historically confirmed' (Marx & Engels, 1859). All this, in turn, has led to the dissolution of the previous hierarchy and the disappearance of the personal dependence of the members of society. Instead, there is a general formation of autonomous behaviour among the members of society. '...there being nothing more evident than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another, without subordination or subjection, unless the lord and master of them all should, by any manifest declaration of his will, set one above another, and confer on him, by an evident and clear appointment, an undoubted right to dominion and sovereignty' (Locke, 1964, p. 5).

2.4.2 *Elements of an autonomous behavioural orientation*

The gist of autonomous behaviour is broadly expressed in two ways.

First, free (autonomous) choice.

Under the conditions of modern society and the market economy, every member of society is an independent, autonomous human being with equal rights and an individual human being in the sense of a natural juridical person responsible for themselves. 'The independent individual can only be generated in the context of the world's historical activity and the universal relations of people's interaction. Here, it is not in any way to get rid of the relations of dependence on others or to weaken the social ties between people, but to break down the fixed relations of personal dependence and to establish a comprehensive and mutual dependence between individuals to break down the naturally occurring ties of narrowness and to replace them with universal ties of a social nature. These are all the qualities of a market economy, and they can only be provided by the

full development of a market economy' (Gao, 1996, p. 182). Modern society does not allow for the existence of 'legal hierarchies' and 'legal privileges'. Each member of society, i.e., the individual, must be responsible for himself, make his own choices about his own life and prospects for development, and determine his destiny through his self-causal effort. Autonomy is the fundamental difference in behaviour that distinguishes 'modern man' from 'traditional man'. 'It must be recognised that each person retains a part of his rights to be determined by himself and not by others' (Spinoza, 1963). Without this, not only would 'modern man' be unable to exist, but the modern social community of which it is a part would also be deeply affected. 'Where, not the person's character, but the traditions of customs of other people are the rule of conduct, there is wanting one of the principal ingredients of human happiness, and quite the chief ingredient of individual and social progress' (Mill, 1959, p. 60).

Since every person is an independent and equal individual, it means that every person should make independent, autonomous, and free choices about their behaviour; that is to say, every person should make their own choices in accordance with their own will and through their own independent judgement, and do what they can undertake and be responsible for, as long as it is not detrimental to the reasonable interests of others. Each person should not unconditionally do what is not their own will, according to God's instructions, or the instructions of a particular person or a specific group of people, or according to some social conformity. The behavioural choices of each member of society are of no concern to others as long as they do not harm the interests of others. In short, free choice means 'I do what I want' and 'I take responsibility for what I do'. 'Actors are not exempt from personal responsibility for the consequences of their actions because the right to choose goes hand in hand with the obligation to take responsibility. Thus, under the conditions of secularisation, modern man is equally capable of "doing something (the so-called *qi*) and not doing something (the so-called *jie*)". The difference is only that everything is autonomous, that one does what one is doing what one is happy to do, doing what one thinks is worth doing, and this is where the meaning of modern man's action lies' (Feng, 2000).

Secondly, self-causal effort.

The self-causal effort here refers to the fact that under the conditions of modern society and the market economy, members of society should obtain what they intend to get and their rightful place in society mainly

through their own acquired factors, such as their hard work, rational judgement, vocational skills, education, personal achievements, and other factors, rather than relying on ascribed factors such as birth, privilege, race, sex, and so on, or depending on the luck of the draw. 'In all sectors of society, there should be roughly equal prospects of culture and achievement for everyone similarly motivated and endowed. The expectations of those with the same abilities and aspirations should not be affected by their social class'. 'At the same time, positions of authority and responsibility must be accessible to all' (Rawls, 1988, pp. 57, 69). In addition, there is another layer of self-causality, which is the idea that the results obtained through one's hard work should be recognised by society as long as they match. One should refrain from inappropriately asking for relatively more. Otherwise, the fruits of the self-caused efforts of others would be usurped, and the self-causal effort of others would be undermined in the long run.

To ensure the success of each individual's self-causal effort, society must ensure this: 'It was a demand that all man-made obstacles to the rise of some should be removed, that all privileges of individuals should be abolished, and that what the state contributed to the chance of improving one's conditions should be the same for all' (Hayek, 1960, p. 92).

2.5 RATIONALISATION

From the perspective of how to act, people in modern society work rationally. The so-called rationalised approach mainly refers to the rational calculation or assessment of one's actual life situation to determine the reasonable goals of one's efforts and achieve them reasonably and at a lower cost. In modern society, the functional difference between autonomy and rationalisation lies in the fact that if autonomy focuses on 'I am the master of my affairs' and 'I am responsible for my affairs' to solve the autonomy of 'decision-making power' of one's behaviour, then rationalisation focuses on 'how to act rationally (effectively) to do one's own thing' to solve the problem of one's own 'ability' to carry out autonomous activities, that is, the person can achieve self-caused acquisition effectively using rational self-causal effort.

2.5.1 *Habitual obedience and instinctive conformity in traditional society*

Based on the backward natural economy of traditional society, people's general way of acting and corresponding ability to make judgements has yet to reach the level of rationalisation. They can only remain in habitual obedience and instinctive conformity. On the one hand, from the perspective of the real-life environment, people live in a very closed and narrow circle. In traditional society, 'the smallholding peasants form an enormous mass whose members live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with each other. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse' (Marx & Engels, 1852). In the small and closed living and production environment, the population and means of production are produced and reproduced day after day. The simple and challenging living conditions continuously replicate daily, making it easy for people to form the mentality of conformism and lack the spirit of enterprising and seeking novelty. The public's closed eyes and ears make them unable to broaden their horizons and make comparative analyses. Moreover, at that time, science and cultural education were very backward; the scientific system had yet to be formed, and no minimum impact had been exerted on society, which failed to provide people with a basic scientific cognitive foundation. Furthermore, the agrarian economy makes the vast majority of people live in a closed and narrow circle for a long time or even for their whole life, and the members of the society have very little interaction with each other, making it a 'vernacular society' of 'acquaintances'. 'In rural society, which is a face-to-face society, people can talk directly to one another and do not need to rely on a written language' (Fei, 1985, p. 15). At the same time, the agrarian economy is a simple mode of production, and literacy is optional for mastering such a mode. Since primary education did not become a necessity of life and production for most of the society at that time, it was impossible and unnecessary to popularise primary education then. The inevitable result was that the vast majority of the members of society were illiterate and uneducated. This made it impossible for most members of society to break through the empirical level and possess rationalised behaviour and judgement abilities. They could only do things in habitual obedience and instinctive conformity.

On the other hand, from the ruler's perspective, obedience (including blind obedience) and unconditional loyalty are more important than rationality. Both the Church and the Crown, in general, have strictly guarded against the emergence of rational cognition, or at least a higher level of sound understanding, to ensure absolute obedience of the people to God and the will of the king. Whether it is an absolutist religion or an authoritarian hierarchy, since they attach importance to the unconditional obedience and absolute attachment of the people to themselves like 'sheep', they will inevitably reject scientific knowledge and rationality as the basis for their final rule. In the cognitive realm of some significant issues, such as the social order, the legitimacy of the ruler, and the cosmology and worldview, no one needs to or can have a view different from that of the Church or the monarch. Otherwise, one will become a heretic of thought and thus become a challenger or potentially challenging force to the Church and the absolute authoritarian ruling order. In the event of dissenters and challengers, the Church and the monarchs would undoubtedly resort to the harshest means to repress and proscribe them. 'In the first half of the thirteenth century, the Holy See established heretical inquisitions all over the countries of Western Europe'. 'The sentences handed down by the heretical inquisition were classified, in degree, as "light", "insulting", public floggings, imprisonment, and finally excommunication, and the prisoner was handed over to the secular regime to be burned on the pyre. Whatever the punishment, the prisoner was almost always flogged and had his property confiscated' (Lu, 2015). In traditional Chinese society, there was a succession of literary inquisitions aimed at suppressing ideas, reaching a peak during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Compared to the Inquisition in medieval Europe, the 'implicating' of family members and friends of the literary inquisitions is even more brutal and horrifying. 'According to statistics, during the Qing dynasty, a total of 268 years of history, there were more than 160 literary inquisitions, almost once every year and a half on average. And in the Qianlong period, it was more than twice a year, the highest in history' (Luo, 2000).

In the aforementioned historical times, people were bound to develop habitual obedience and instinctive conformity. This way of acting presents three distinctive features. Firstly, in terms of broad social awareness, members of the society obey the instructions of the Church or the monarch. Over time, people's obedience under ideological pressure becomes the norm and even reaches the point of an intuitive way of

acting. Secondly, in their daily lives, members of society mostly follow the experiences and customs formed by their forefathers over the years in making judgements and doing things. These habits are, after all, developed based on generations of experience accumulated by ancestors in adapting to similar living and production environments, and they have some certain rationality and validity. For example, for the farmer, 'living close to the subsistence margin and subject to the vagaries of weather and the claims of outsiders', 'his behaviour is risk-averse; he minimises the subjective probability of the maximum loss' (Scott, 2001, pp. 5–6). So, for the farmer, the principle of 'safety first' must be practised for basic survival. It is precisely because of the legitimacy and validity of these experiences and habits that they have, in a meaningful way, given rise to the phenomenon of the transmission of skills from father to son in farming households and from master to apprentice in artisanal workshops, ensuring the continuity of this practical experience from one generation to the next. Thirdly, members of society often act in a conforming manner. In traditional society, due to the lack of a sense of autonomy and the ability to make rational judgements, people were often at a loss as to what to do once they encountered something beyond their limited cognitive scope and could only give up their judgement, worship the authority of their 'masters', and form a habitual obedient way of behaving, or act according to the way 'everyone' does things, falling into a particular state of blind obedience, that is, automatic 'conformity'. The problem is that conformity and blind obedience are potentially very harmful. As one scholar pointed out, 'the crowd is always intellectually inferior to the isolated individual'. The group is prone to 'impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgment and the critical spirit' (Bon, 2005, pp. 19, 21). It can easily trigger social unrest and challenge social order to varying degrees.

It should be acknowledged that in traditional society, people's habitual obedience and intuitive way of acting, although remaining at the level of empirical knowledge and irrationality, were generally sufficient for people to cope with the relatively simple problems of survival at that time. Otherwise, traditional society such as China would not have lasted for thousands of years. However, it should be noted that the previous ways of acting, based on empirical knowledge or irrationality without scientific cognition, could not be adapted to the complex and changing modern society due to the lack of basic scientific cognitive understanding.

2.5.2 *The formation of a rationalised way of acting*

In modern society, due to the development of the market economy, it has become challenging for people to settle down in a way of habitual obedience and instinctive subordination. As a result, the general establishment of a rationalised way of acting has become inevitable. Members of society must make rational self-planning and choices for their own life and development prospects, rather than depending on others, acting unconditionally according to the instructions of others, or relying solely on the direction of the herd mentality to survive and develop. Locke (1988) points out that ‘the freedom then of man and liberty of acting according to his own will, is grounded on his having reason, which is able to instruct him in that law he is to govern himself by, and make him know how far he is left to the freedom of his own will’ (p. 309). On the one hand, from the perspective of needs, the population can only survive and develop if they act rationally to solve their problems. The extreme complexity of modern society and the market economy provides people with many fleeting opportunities, so it is only by autonomous rational analysis and judgement that people can find opportunities conducive to their survival and development. Furthermore, the great industry and the market economy have separated family life from work. Generally, members of the same family don’t work in the same workplace. In such a situation, people have to be guided by professional ethics and competence rather than the family-submissive ethic to cooperate effectively. In addition, in terms of the life prospects and career of each member of society, the extreme complexity of modern society and the market economy exposes them to a large number of risks. So, every member of society must respond effectively according to rational analysis and judgement; otherwise, he or she will not be able to survive and develop normally.

On the other hand, from the perspective of possibility, the reality foundation of modern society and the market economy makes the general establishment of a rationalised way of acting a possibility. ‘Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily, or mental or spiritual’ (Mill, 2006, p. 24). Firstly, the widespread use of great industrial production tools has, to a certain extent, spawned the general rationalised way of acting of social members. ‘The machines and their techniques (especially the mathematical techniques), embodying rational and universal norms, impose on the men who use them a discipline that tends to promote individual and social attitudes that approximate more and more closely

to the norms of the machines' (Black, 1976, p. 18). Obviously, a certain level of scientific and technical knowledge has become the occupational threshold for members of society to participate in modern great industrial production. The law of equal competition in the market economy directly leads a large number of participants to weigh the pros and cons rationally to participate in it effectively, reduce the cost of products, enhance their competitiveness, and fight for a place of livelihood. Secondly, the rise of modern science. In modern society, natural sciences and humanities and social sciences have emerged and significantly developed. 'The rapidity of the process of historical development has led to the belief that the emergence of science is as important as the emergence of mankind itself or the emergence of human civilization' (Liu, 1985, p. 364). The development of science has provided a solid scientific cognitive foundation for forming a scientific outlook on the universe and society, as well as rationalised judgments, thus fundamentally eliminating the cognitive roots of people's ignorance and corresponding blind obedience and unconditional submission. Thirdly, the popularisation and development of education. In traditional society, a few monopolised knowledge, and education belonged to a small group of people, so the vast majority lacked the necessary knowledge. The modern society is different. In modern society, the dual demand for knowledge by members of society in both life and production, as well as the vast expansion of educational 'capacity', has led to the unprecedented development and widespread popularisation of mass education. 'Modernisation has been accompanied by an expansion of education, which in traditional societies only a small proportion of the population could read and write, but which is now virtually universal' (Black, 1988). Even higher education has become popular. Even in China, a developing country, the total number of students enrolled in all types of higher education reached 40.02 million in 2018, with a gross enrolment rate of 51.6 per cent in higher education (MOE & 20 May, 2020). It equips the vast majority of members of society with basic cultural knowledge and rational judgement, which enables them to judge and plan their own real-life goals and development prospects accordingly. Moreover, 'education investment not only greatly benefits the improvement of individual economic returns, but also contributes greatly to the economic growth of the whole country. According to Schultz's 1961 study of the causes of economic growth in the United States from 1929 to 1957, investment in education contributed 33 percent to national

income growth; China's 1978–1998 figure was close to that percentage' (Xu, 1999). It highlights the importance of education as something generally valued and heavily invested in by people. All this has led to a general acceptance and establishment of a rationalised way of acting by the members of modern society, and society has thus assumed a rationalised character.

2.5.3 *Main features of the rationalised way of acting*

Several distinctive features characterise the rationalised way of acting in modern society:

Firstly, the behavioural orientation of cost-value ratio calculation between costs and income.

The first concern of rationalisation is the issue of economic benefits. The reason is simple. The interests to which the members of society attach the most significant importance are economic interests, and pursuing economic interests is a legitimate and fundamental matter. Therefore, 'every such attempt at explanation must, recognising the fundamental importance of the economic factor, above all take account of the economic conditions' (Weber, 2001, p. 33). In modern society and under the condition of the market economy, competition among people has become a familiar and self-evident social phenomenon. Under such circumstances, people must consider how to relatively minimise production and transaction costs, direct and indirect costs, in exchange for rather maximum economic benefits, or at least the sum of production and transaction costs must be lower than the benefits obtained; otherwise, production and transaction activities can hardly be sustained and terminated. And accordingly, the survival and development of the members of the society will become a problem, and they will not be able to get a foothold in social and economic life. In the market economy, 'to cope with price competition and maximise profits, the only way for producers is to adopt the most efficient production methods in order to minimise costs. The producer, motivated by profit, will at all times substitute the cheapest method of production for the more expensive one' (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 1992). Moreover, with the process of modernisation and market economy, accounting for costs and income is gradually becoming a standard behavioural orientation and even a normative and regulated behaviour in society. It is an essential source of motivation for

modern society to maintain a high degree of economic evolution and to be able to continue to move forward.

It is worth noting that the behavioural orientation of cost-value ratio calculation cannot exist in the economic sphere alone. As Weber (2001) says, 'at the same time the opposite correlation must not be left out of consideration. For though the development of economic rationalism is partly dependent on rational technique and law, it is at the same time determined by the ability and disposition of men to adopt certain types of practical rational conduct. When these types have been obstructed by spiritual obstacles, the development of rational economic conduct has also met serious inner resistance' (p. 33). In a sense, this behavioural orientation in the economic sphere will inevitably be extended to other spheres, and the behavioural orientation of people in various spheres, including weighing the interests of various parties and risk prevention, will then be derived and generalised to form a kind of rationalised behaviour as a whole.

Secondly, the communicative principle of universalism (universality).

In modern society, the people with whom people interact in their daily lives and routines are mostly members of different regions and ethnic groups, with no particular 'proximity' to each other. Parsons (1964) points out that the principle of universality implies 'rules have been formulated and held to apply to categories of persons or collectivities on the basis of generally defined characteristics independent of their statuses in these "lower-order" particularistic solidarities'. In contrast, people in traditional society acted in a particularistic manner (the principle of specificity or specialisation), the gist of which is that 'the definition of legal rules in such a way that the rights and obligations thereby created could be abstracted from the status and expectations of certain particularistic solidary memberships, without destroying that membership' (p. 143). Just as the members of the same family in traditional society were non-selective, so is the phenomenon of 'heterogeneity' of interactions in modern society. Under such circumstances, it is clear that the particularistic manner of traditional society is no longer valid. Therefore, interaction and cooperation must be based on the principle of universalism. By universalism (universality), we mean that members of a society act in such a way that they treat all others equally, without excluding some of them because they are not from the same particular group, such as the same region, the same ethnic group, the same age group, the same school, or the same family.

Thirdly, the boundary of behavioural modes.

The primary behavioural orientation of the population in modern society is, of course, characterised by autonomy, but this autonomy is not an arbitrary way of behaving; it must be based on reason. One should not ‘mistake for freedom an unbridled license to which it is diametrically opposed’ (Rousseau, 2006, p. 3). ‘The freedom then of man and liberty of acting according to his own will, is grounded on his having reason, which is able to instruct him in that law he is to govern himself by, and make him know how far he is left to the freedom of his own will’ (Locke, 1988, p. 309). In short, there are rational boundaries to the way people act autonomously.

There are at least two aspects of reasonable boundaries to how people act autonomously. On the one hand, there should be a reasonable limit to the consumption of wealth. Although secularisation emphasises the importance of actual daily life and quality of life, it does not mean people should be encouraged to consume endlessly, to the point of ‘squandering’. Even the affluent should not take high consumption for granted. Weber (2001) finds that ‘business leaders and owners of capital, as well as the higher grades of skilled labour, and even more the higher technically and commercially trained personnel of modern enterprises, are overwhelmingly Protestant’ (p. 38). Protestant congregations’ code of conduct is to increase God’s glory by adopting a frugal lifestyle and acquiring wealth through a spirit of hard work and rational planning. On the other hand, people’s autonomous behaviour must not be preconditioned to harm the reasonable interests of others. The exchange of interests between people should be based on the principle of rationalisation, and consideration should be given to how to make it safe, long-term, and sustainable. In order to achieve it, people should follow the non-zero-sum game principle of win–win cooperation. ‘The advancement of the interests of the higher-positioned classes cannot be made contingent upon the impairment of the interests of the lower-positioned classes; on the contrary, the advancement of the interests of the higher-positioned classes should be accompanied by a consequent improvement in the situation of the lower-positioned classes’ (Wu, 2019, p. 215). Once a society has a ‘winner-takes-all’ situation, then it will be insecure. And in the long run, once social insecurity has evolved into social unrest, there will be no winners but losers for all groups in society.

Fourthly, inclusiveness.

Modern society is human-centred. Difference between people is a critical characteristic inherent in human beings and is an important manifestation of humanisation. 'From the perspective of human nature, the needs, personalities, circumstances, and lifestyles of members of a society are very different. Correspondingly, the specific goals, interests, expectations, levels of satisfaction, and measures that members of society form on this basis must vary widely' (Wu, 2019, p. 256). As Mill (2006) points out, 'human beings are not like sheep; and even sheep are not undistinguishably alike. A man cannot get a coat or a pair of boots to fit him, unless they are either made to his measure, or he has a whole warehouse to choose from; and is it easier to fit him with a life than with a coat, or are human beings more like one another in their whole physical and spiritual conformation than in the shape of their feet?' (p. 114). The pursuit of goals based on human differences is at the root of what makes modern society so vibrant and rich. If there are no more differences among members of society in terms of values, willingness, demand, behaviour, and lifestyle, then there will be no more social vitality, and there will be no harmonious yet different, rich and colourful modern society. 'If the differences are not very important, then freedom is not very important and the idea of individual worth is not very important' (Hayek, 1978, p. 86). From a rational point of view, in order to ensure this necessary difference, there must be a sense of mutual tolerance between people. Allowing room for the existence of difference and the pursuit of 'agreeableness' in others, and the reward is that others give them spaces as well.

Fifthly, the spirit of activism.

The continuous development of productive forces is a trend and a law. It is inseparable from the efforts of the members of society. In order to improve the standard of living and the quality of life, people in modern society believe that everything depends on human effort, and have a positive and innovative behaviour orientation. Moreover, the emergence and advancement of modernisation have normalised changes in many aspects of society and the economy. In such a situation, members of society are bound to develop an enterprising spirit in order to adapt to the changing realities. 'To pursue knowledge without ceasing, to remain open to new ideas, and to cope with the adaptations in thinking and living that new inventions bring with them, human minds must have the will and the capacity to accept change' (Black, 1976, p. 20). This approach starkly

contrasts to the traditional society in which people were stuck in their ways and did not think about progress.

Sixthly, the awareness of preventing social risks.

Compared with traditional society, modern society faces a wide variety and a large number of social risks. First, unlike traditional society, with the development of current productive forces and the simultaneous enhancement of social differentiation and social integration, modern society is not only massive in volume, but also extremely complex in its constituent elements. The interest demands of various social groups vary greatly, and there is obviously unbalanced development as well as diversified 'linkage' and 'stagnation' relations among various fields, various constituent elements, and the survival and development of various social groups. Second, during the period of rapid social transformation in most countries, there is a phenomenon that deserves attention, namely, 'the activation and release of huge amounts of social energy on the one hand, and the relative absence of a system of rules on the other. The coexistence and intertwining of these two situations will inevitably have a negative impact on social integration and thus on social security', and 'the greater the contrast between the two situations, the more contradictory and conflicting behaviours among various groups in a society, and the more social conflicts arising from them' (Wu, 2013). Third, in the context of opening up to the outside world and economic globalisation, there are also a large number of 'mutual inducements' and 'mutual feelings' between various national economies, which make the countries concerned face more uncertainties. Fourth, with the increase in human production capacity, environmental ecology is often damaged in some ways, and in some countries, it is even seriously damaged, thus causing unforeseen disasters for each country and even for the whole human society. All these have led to the increasing expansion and accumulation of social risks, making social risks a normal phenomenon that must exist in modern society. As Beck (1992) points out, 'in advanced modernity the social production of wealth is systematically accompanied by the social production of risks'. 'In the course of the exponentially growing productive forces in the modernisation process, hazards and potential threats have been unleashed to an extent previously unknown' (p. 19). 'Risk society in this sense is a world risk society' (p. 23).

Against this background, the people of modern society have developed a deep-rooted awareness of social risk. People without foresight will have immediate worries. An inappropriate response to high social risk will lead

a country's modernisation construction to pay a huge cost, or bring it to a standstill or even backward. As a result of rational consideration of the bottom line, countries engaged in modernisation have gradually regarded prevention and resistance to social risks as a normal behaviour in modernisation construction, and have established strategic reserve systems of important resources, social welfare security systems, and various public crisis response plans to deal with a wide range of social risks.

2.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the above analysis of the basic features of secularisation, it is not difficult to form the following opinions.

2.6.1 *Secularisation is composed of realism, autonomy, and rationalisation*

In modern society, secularisation is the basic behavioural orientation or way of acting of members of society, which has three main characteristics, namely, realism, autonomy, and rationalisation. Each of these three basic behavioural orientations or ways of acting has its own important function and is indispensable, constituting such an organic whole as the behavioural orientation of secularisation. Specifically, first, the basic behavioural orientation of realism solves the problem of the foothold of the basic behavioural orientation of the members of the society, or solves the basic problem of 'for whom and for what', namely, the behaviour orientation of social members is an important issue for the satisfaction and continuous improvement of their daily life in the real world. This question concerns the basic attitude of the members of society towards social life. The realistic character of secularisation reflects not only the objective development trend of modernisation and the process of market economy, but also the basic content of the human-centred concept in the modern society. Second, the basic behavioural pattern of autonomy addresses the question of who is in charge and who is responsible for the actions of members of society; that is, members of society should act according to their own decisions rather than following the instructions of others; 'I am in charge of my own affairs' (Beck, 1992, p. 19) and 'I am responsible for my own affairs' (Beck, 1992, p. 23). Under the conditions of independent and equal competition in the market economy, members of society generally become individuals with independent consciousnesses, so they will

inevitably further require the autonomy of decision-making and action and be responsible for themselves without accepting the instructions of others and without the intervention of others. Third, the rationalised way of acting solves the problem of the ability of a member of society to act autonomously, i.e., not to be ignorant, not to follow mindlessly, but to analyse the objective realities of the environment on the basis of the principles of rationalisation, to form correct judgments, and to act reasonably accordingly. It is based on these three basic characteristics that the fundamental behavioural orientation of complete secularisation in the modern sense is formed.

2.6.2 Secularisation is a phenomenon of fundamental importance for modernisation

Compared with the traditional society, a fundamental reason for the continuous progress of the modern society lies in the orientation function and strong momentum provided by secularisation. Firstly, secularisation has an important orientation function for the construction of modernisation. It can be explained in two ways. On the one hand, in a certain sense, secularisation opposes taking the Other World as its basic behavioural goal orientation. Secularisation is a kind of basic life attitude and behaviour orientation based on the concept of being human-centred, which advocates aiming to satisfy the basic needs of people in real world, especially the basic needs of the members of the society in their lives at present. This approach helps to ensure that the modernisation process will not become biased and ‘alienating’. On the other hand, secularisation is also opposed to behavioural goals that are too long-term, ideal, and difficult to verify. To a certain extent, due to the limitations of cognitive ability, it is impossible for people to have a continuous scientific, feasible, and accessible design and grasp of the very long-term modernisation goals. Moreover, the modernisation process is full of all kinds of variables, so various modernisation planning goals are often in a state of need for correction. Under such circumstances, people’s planning and designing of long-term modernisation goals for the future cannot be accurate. Once people set a distant goal and are required to achieve it without fail, the result is that not only do people fail to achieve these goals, but they also create a situation in which there is a disconnection between their own endeavours and the improvement of their own interests, thus

weakening the vitality and creativity of society. In this regard, secularisation can remind people that the real world of the 'present' is more important, and that they should focus on modernisation goals in the medium and near future, thus helping to enhance the feasibility, accessibility, and sustainability of modernisation. Secondly, secularisation gives an irreversible forward trend to modernisation. The phenomenon of secularisation implies a positive correlation between promoting people's vital interests and advancing modernisation. In order for members of society to promote their own interests, they must make a real and concrete contribution to modernisation. In this way, the phenomenon of secularisation makes the promotion of modernisation organically linked to people's own specific destiny, and makes modernisation a necessity for the improvement of their lives and a goal of their basic behaviour, which leads to a high degree of acceptance of modernisation by the population. Importantly, because the phenomenon of secularisation involves the vast majority of members of society, the promotion of modernisation has a broad and profound underlying force, making modernisation an irreversible historical trend. Thirdly, secularisation is directly conducive to the enhancement of the driving force of domestic consumption. For a country's economic modernisation, the most important driving force comes from three aspects, namely, investment, domestic consumption, and foreign trade. Among them, as modernisation enters the intermediate and advanced stages, the driving force of domestic consumption becomes more important, so that it will gradually occupy a major position. Secularisation emphasises people's growing and diversified needs, which undoubtedly will push people to spend more on their consumption needs. From an objective point of view, it is conducive to a large and substantial increase in domestic consumption.

2.6.3 Secularisation itself implies certain harmful tendencies

While secularisation has a positive effect on the modernisation process, it also contains some harmful potential trends. Although secularisation is a realistic basic behavioural orientation of the members of society, it does not exclude values; on the contrary, it presupposes essential modern values. The phenomenon of secularisation in the contemporary sense is a materialisation of the human-centred concept and a concrete manifestation of the basic values of freedom, equality, and justice that characterise the modern society. However, secularisation is sometimes easy to be

understood unilaterally in the real world. People only see its ‘material’ side and ignore its ‘spiritual’ side to varying degrees, so sometimes it is easy to fall into the trap of ‘pure materialism’. In a certain sense, ‘the greatest difference between the modern society and the past is, above all, the change in economic relations, which has first made people pursue secular interests in the field of economic interests, and also first obliterated the aura of religious sanctity in the economic sphere and turned it into a nakedly secular profit-making endeavour on the part of the people’ (Chen, 2001). Similar potentially harmful tendencies of secularisation, if left unchecked, can have a number of real and harmful negative effects in varying degrees. Typical manifestations of these negative effects are excessive utilitarian behaviours, such as low-level egoism, money worship, unreasonable expectations, and high consumption beyond one’s means. It reminds us that we should clearly understand the potentially harmful trend of secularisation and take appropriate countermeasures to correct and prevent it.

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The Basic Characteristics of the Chinese Secularisation Tradition

To some extent, an important manifestation of the distinctiveness of traditional Chinese society compared to medieval European society and many other countries and regions lies in its deeply rooted tradition of secularisation.¹ This deep-rooted secularisation has had an extremely profound and extensive positive impact on all aspects of traditional Chinese society and has contributed in an important way to the continuation of traditional Chinese civilisation for thousands of years to the present day. ‘Chinese civilisation is characterized by longevity’ (Stavrianos, 1999a, 1999b, p. 296). Because of this, without understanding China’s deep-rooted tradition of secularisation, it is impossible to have a deep overall understanding of traditional Chinese society and the continuously evolving modern Chinese society with its specific historical imprints (or ‘historical genes’), and it is impossible to effectively promote China’s modernisation process.

¹ The term ‘traditional society’ refers primarily to those that preceded the form of ‘modern society’, which was based on the material economy of the natural economy. Since some countries have a long span of time and a long history prior to modern society, they can be divided into a number of different specific historical periods. The degree of influence of these different historical periods on modern society varies greatly. Historical periods that are too long ago have had relatively little, if any, influence on modern societies, in some cases almost negligible. Therefore, to be more specific, the term ‘traditional society’ should refer to the ‘recent’ and ‘neighbouring’ historical periods that are still based on the natural economy and have a relatively large influence on modern society.

Under the conditions of modern society and the market economy, the tradition of secularisation, as an important historical legacy, still exists to varying degrees in contemporary Chinese society, with both valuable and backward elements coexisting. This is an objective reality. In order to effectively promote the healthy development of China's modernisation, it is necessary, on the basis of the standards of the times and the realities of the national situation, to reasonably conduct sublation with the tradition of secularisation, to inherit its valuable aspects, to creatively transform it into an integral part of modern Chinese society, and to eliminate the backward and negative aspects within it.

3.1 THE MEANING AND ORIGINS OF THE CHINESE SECULARISATION TRADITION

3.1.1 *Clear differences between traditional societies in China and Europe*

Undoubtedly, the phenomenon of secularisation is an important characteristic of modern society. Whether in the modern society of China or the modern society of European countries and many other countries and regions, as a whole, there is no exception. However, it needs to be clarified that secularisation is not unique to modern societies. The timing of secularisation in China and Europe differs significantly in their respective histories. In a certain sense, the phenomenon of general secularisation in European countries was gradually formed and spread along with the process of modernisation and gradually replaced the original general phenomenon of 'religiosity'. In the case of China, secularisation has long been prevalent in its traditional society and has become a deep-rooted historical tradition lasting for thousands of years, so much so that it has become an important feature of Chinese traditional society that distinguishes it from the 'religiosity' prevalent in medieval European societies as well as in the traditional societies of many other countries and regions. In other words, if medieval European society was characterised as a religious society, traditional Chinese society could be seen as a secular society. Although the phenomenon of secularisation in traditional Chinese society

does not yet align with the modern sense of secularisation, it has nevertheless existed widely and exerted an extensive and profound influence on the society of the time as well as on the ongoing modernisation process.²

Secularisation is a major issue that encompasses various aspects, such as the ultimate life goals (belief-related concerns such as ultimate concerns), fundamental attitudes, and core behavioral patterns of social members. It influences multiple facets of a societal collective, such as the ways of survival and production of members of the society, the modes of social integration, the criteria for moral judgement in society, the specific expectations of the society members, and their specific plans and commitments, and so on.

It should be acknowledged that due to the multifaceted nature of societal demands, people's life goals cannot be single-minded. Just as the phenomenon of religion exists in both traditional and modern societies, so does the phenomenon of secularism. In any type of social community, individuals cannot ignore their everyday realities, hence the presence of 'secular' phenomena. The problem is that, once the phenomenon of secularism becomes widespread in a society and reaches the attributed point, that is to say, the phenomenon of secularism reaches the point of 'secularisation', then it becomes distinct from ordinary 'secular' phenomena. The phenomenon of 'secularisation' implies that individuals widely accept and identify with the realities, embracing corresponding fundamental attitudes and behavioral orientations. When secularisation reaches a point where its prevalence and influence hold significant weight within the entire society, the emphasis placed by individuals on secular life goals and expectations outweighs that placed on religious life goals. The phenomenon of secularisation has exerted an irreplaceable influence on all aspects of society. In this 'secularised' society, religious phenomena still exist, albeit without the possibility of significant religious influence and with a diminished

² The phenomenon of secularisation in traditional societies differs significantly from that in modern societies in terms of the 'content of the times'. In a certain sense, if secularisation in traditional societies is an 'elementary' secularisation phenomenon, then secularisation in modern societies is an 'advanced' secularisation phenomenon. Secularisation in traditional societies is a social phenomenon based on the natural economy and its corresponding personal dependence. In contrast, secularisation in modern society is a social phenomenon based on the highly developed productive forces of large-scale industry, the cognitive and creative capacities of modern science, and the modern concepts of human-centred, freedom, equality, and justice.

emphasis on religious aspects. This is evident in the respective expressions of secularisation and religious phenomena in traditional Chinese society.

3.1.2 *The traditional societies of China and Europe are natural economy societies*

The traditional societies of China, medieval Europe, and many other countries and regions, such as India, were based on the natural economy and were basically at the same level of agrarian production of the same era. Marx & Engels (1995, p. 469) pointed out that ‘that all social and political relations, all religious and legal systems, all theoretical conceptions which arise in the course of history can only be understood if the material conditions of life obtaining during the relevant epoch have been understood and the former are traced back to these material conditions’. Traditional Chinese society, medieval European society, and traditional societies in many countries and regions shared the same model of natural economy based on a combination of agriculture and cottage industry, necessarily identical and consistent in broad respects. For example, all of them were societies pursuing private ownership of land under natural economic conditions; all were societies with a low degree of social differentiation and social integration; all were societies with authoritarian hierarchies as well as personal dependence; all were societies with low social mobility; and all were societies that showed a closed situation on the whole, and so on. In both traditional Chinese and medieval European societies, ‘personal dependence characterizes the social relations of material production as much as it does the other spheres of life based on that production’ (Marx & Engels 1972, p. 88). There is no doubt about this. Some scholars believe that traditional Chinese society was much more advanced than that of other countries and regions. One of the important manifestations of judgement is that, unlike medieval European society, traditional Chinese society has become an equal society from a very early stage. Qian Mu pointed out that ‘Chinese society since the Song Dynasty onwards has created a flat society. Feudal nobles such as dukes and counts have long been abolished, officials cannot be hereditary, the regime is generally open, and anyone who meets the conditions of the examination can enter the civil service’. In terms of explaining the differences between the traditional societies of China and Europe, this insight has a certain degree of legitimacy. But on the whole, this conclusion is not yet tenable. Although the degree of social mobility in traditional Chinese society was

greatly improved compared with that in medieval European society due to factors such as the imperial examination system, which increased mobility in society and stimulated its vitality to a certain extent, it was impossible to fundamentally change the hierarchy and personal dependence of traditional Chinese society. For example, it is an obvious truism that traditional Chinese society, which was established on the basis of the ‘three cardinal guides and five constant virtues’, such as ‘ruler guides subject, father guides son, husband guides wife’, as well as ‘benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity’, is, on the whole, a hierarchical society with a strict distinction between superiority and inferiority and a strong personal dependence. Moreover, in each dynasty of traditional Chinese society, there were quite a number of privileged groups of people with various titles by virtue of the blood relationship of the imperial relatives or by other names. Traditional Chinese society cannot be a society of equality as hierarchy is an indispensable feature of it. This, I am afraid, is an indisputable fact.

3.1.3 *Contextual factors in the formation of the Chinese secularisation tradition*

While seeing the great similarities among Chinese traditional society and European medieval society and the traditional society of many other countries and regions, it should also be noted that because of the geographical environment, historical origin, and various realistic factors faced by the Chinese traditional society compared with other countries, it also has some distinct differences. Among these, the deep-rooted tradition of secularism is a distinctive feature of Chinese traditional society, which varies from the religious traditions of medieval European society and the traditional societies of many other countries and regions.

The reason why traditional Chinese society has not become a religious society but a secular one is manifold. There are several major background factors of great importance, which directly gave birth to the ineradicable tradition of secularisation in traditional Chinese society.

Firstly, the favourable natural geographical environment was conducive to the birth of a mature farming society.

The humid temperate climate of the Chinese region is very favourable to the growth of crops. Traditional Chinese society originated in the Yellow River basin and then expanded to the eastern, southern, and southwestern regions on a large scale. Historically, ‘three large-scale

expansions of China's arable land occurred mainly during the Western Han Dynasty, the Song Dynasty, and the mid-Qing Dynasty' (Fang et al., 2019). This expansion reached the Yangtze River basin, Pearl River basin, and other areas. From the specific geographical location, this vast area is primarily a temperate zone, with a subtropical climate that regularly brings abundant rainfall. 'Although the amount of rainfall can vary greatly from year to year in a given place, the average rainfall across China is consistent' (Huang, 1997, p. 25). Taking northern China as an example, 'five thousand years ago, the weather in northern China was quite warm. It then decreased, but only for a century or two, and in the Spring and Autumn period it tended to be warm again and remained so until the first century BC. The warm climate was accompanied by a rather humid climate. Subsequent periods of drought, though intermittent, were shorter in duration and periods of humidity are longer, at least up to the year 1000 A.D.' (Shi, 1991). Such geographical conditions are very favourable for the growth of crops.

The Chinese region spans multiple longitudes and dimensions from east to west and north to south, and its crops are richly diversified by this. 'Dry farming on the Loess Plateau and its periphery, as well as rice cultivation along the coast of Hangzhou Bay, began as early as 7,000–8,000 years ago and continues to this day'. 'As early as the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, Chinese farmers domesticated and cultivated cereals, rice, sorghum, barley, wheat, soybeans, oilseed rape, hemp, mulberry, plum, citrus, and more'. 'Dogs were domesticated as early as the Paleolithic era, and after the Neolithic era, pigs, sheep, goats, cows, horses, donkeys, mules, yaks, camels, chickens, ducks, geese, rabbits, bees, silkworms, and so on were bred' (Zhao, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d). According to statistics from scholars, the total number of cultivated plants originating from China is 237, of which 46 are vegetables, 53 are fruit trees, 19 are important ornamental plants, 43 are medicinal plants, and 8 are aromatic and seasoning plants (excluding species that are also considered ornamental or medicinal plants). Biologist Vavilov divides the world into eight crop origin centres, including China, Indo-Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Near East, the Mediterranean, Ethiopia, South Mexico, and Central and South America.' 'Of the eight centres, China has the greatest variety of cultivated crops, with 136 species' (Bu, 1981). In addition, another important phenomenon is that in the vast territory of China, crop production in different regions was able to complement and promote each other to a certain extent. For example, 'to adapt to the climatic characteristics

of “flooding in the north and drought in the south” in eastern China during the Song Dynasty, under the initiative of the government of the Northern Song Dynasty, rice cultivation was promoted in the Yellow River basin in the north, and Chamchung rice with the shorter-growing period was popularised in the Yangtze River basin, and the rice–wheat continuous cropping system was formed. The latter is regarded as an important change in the history of Chinese agriculture and has had a profound impact on China’s socio-economic development since then’ (Fang et al. 2017).

China’s traditional agrarian society came into being as a result of a favourable natural and geographical environment and the interaction of various factors. Both the people and the rulers of traditional Chinese societies attached great importance to agriculture and regarded it as the foundation of their livelihood and the basis for the state. The rulers implemented the basic national policy of prioritising agriculture and suppressing commerce. Every year, the emperor had a customary important task, which was to perform rituals to worship heaven and earth, praying for favourable weather and abundant harvests for the people as their ‘sons’. Moreover, the emperor also directly intervened in agricultural production. In the Han Dynasty, ‘Emperor Wu of Han Dynasty carried out significant reforms in agriculture, thus laying the basic framework of our traditional agriculture’ (Zhao, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d). This basic framework included agricultural policies, land systems, farming techniques, crop varieties, and so on. Subsequently, through the development of the Sui and Tang dynasties, the two Song dynasties, the Ming and Qing dynasties, the traditional agrarian society in China, based on the natural economy, became increasingly mature.

The mature agrarian society drove the formation of a secularised tradition in traditional Chinese society. ‘Agriculture is the basis of Chinese society; the suitability of the land for cultivation determines the distribution of Chinese civilisation. Where it is suitable for agriculture, Chinese civilisation develops; where it is not, a pastoral way of life is practised, whether it belongs to the Mongols, the Manchus, or the Turks’ (Stavrianos, 1999a, 1999b). Under the conditions of a mature agrarian society, individuals who rely on the agricultural economy as their means of subsistence naturally develop a widespread reverence for nature and adhere to its laws. They adopt a way of living and producing in a ‘natural state’, sowing, plowing, and harvesting on a regular schedule. Through their own hard work, without resorting to supernatural forces, they could

consistently obtain the most important basic means of subsistence they need, and achieve predictable and determinate basic life goals. In other words, the growth of all things in nature is closely intertwined with the survival and reproduction of the Chinese people. Furthermore, this practice can be continuously replicated and passed down through generations without interruption, thus possessing the characteristics of relative longevity and stability. As such, the possibility of the formation of secular attitudes and behaviours increases, and correspondingly, the possibility of the formation of religious attitudes and behaviours decreases.

Secondly, economic and social structures with a certain elastic space contribute to the motivation of social members in their livelihood and production.

In traditional Chinese society, the economic and social structure had a certain degree of flexibility. This was mainly reflected in its unique system of free land sale, as well as the social upward mobility available to its members.

In traditional societies, land undeniably held immense importance for the vast majority of social members. The reason is simple. Under the conditions of an agrarian economy, the integration of human and land, the cultivation of land, and reliance on agricultural production activities were the most basic means of production and livelihood for the vast majority of society. Land was not only the most fundamental means of production for most social members, but also the core source of subsistence for their lives. Generally speaking, for the vast majority of families, the extent to which their basic livelihood can be secured primarily depends on whether they possess a reasonably sufficient piece of land, and land ownership directly determines people's access to land.

Although both traditional Chinese society and medieval European society practised land ownership under natural economic conditions, the specific forms of land ownership differed markedly. In medieval European society, the feudal lord's land ownership prevailed. In the feudal lord land ownership system, the largest group of producers, namely the serfs, had a strong personal attachment to the feudal lords. Everything belonged to their masters, and their status was almost equivalent to that of slaves. 'They were as much a part of the demesne as were the live-stock' (Boissonnade, 1996, p. 188). Moreover, this slave status was hereditary. 'His distinguishing feature, on the contrary, was that he was so strictly dependent on another human being that wherever he went this tie followed him and clung to his descendants'. What's more, sometimes

his life was dictated by the feudal lord. 'It was considered that the serf who committed a crime, at least a crime involving a judgment of blood, ought not to have any other judge than the lord of his body regardless both of the lord's normal judicial powers and the domicile of the accused' (Bloch, 1989, p. 264). Not only that, but the serfs had to pay 'tithes' to the Church. This undoubtedly added insult to injury to the basic livelihood of the peasants. 'The economy of the estates depended on these non-autonomous peasants (serfs), they and their families toiled their entire lives with a meager income barely enough to sustain their livelihoods' (Xu, 2013, p. 129). Under such circumstances, it was difficult for the large number of serfs in such a miserable situation to have any hope for the future, not to mention an increase in the productivity and enthusiasm in their agricultural work.

In comparison to medieval European society, traditional Chinese society is significantly different. The land ownership system in traditional Chinese society, though undergoing some changes, generally consisted of a coexistence of landlord land ownership and small-scale peasant land ownership. For the self-employed peasants, who made up a large proportion of the peasantry, owning their own land meant that, to some extent, they had control over their own destinies and were not subject to the whims of others. Moreover, the rulers of traditional Chinese society adopted the basic national policy of establishing the country based on agriculture. China has long upheld the principle of 'agriculture as the foundation of the country, passed down through thousands of years, viewed as the fundamental essence' (Shi, 1999). Therefore, in most dynasties, for the sake of basic social stability, except for a few dynasties, the central government represented by the emperor generally implemented policies of light labor and low taxes. 'The taxes imposed by the Chinese Ming and Qing governments were exceptionally light, with all additional charges included. With rare exceptions, ... tax rates in various regions were below 10%, some even below 5%' (Huang, 2015, p. 10). Moreover, during times of famine, farmers sometimes received assistance from the government. In China, by contrast, 'China's encounter went beyond the West in the scale and frequency of the government's efforts to aid and protect farmers, and the towns as well, from serious natural disasters and famines' (Taughner 2010a, 2010b, p. 39). Furthermore, even for the hired tenant farmers employed by landlords, his status was theoretically that of an 'employee' for a specific period of time, not that of a serf. Tenant farmers had personal autonomy and did not have to work

for a certain ‘proprietor’ for the rest of their lives. Once a tenant farmer has accumulated a certain number of financial resources, he can purchase land and become self-sufficient farmers, escaping his previous status as an employee. It is evident that under such a system of land ownership, Chinese peasants were able to combine their specific labor situation with the improvement of their personal interests, thus undoubtedly giving rise to a certain degree of productive motivation.

Further, it is worth noting that, unlike medieval European societies, traditional Chinese societies had a certain degree of economic and social mobility. At least two of these had a great impact on its members. One is that land, which was the most valued possession of the people, could be freely bought and sold under several conditions. This phenomenon of ‘buying and selling land other than wells and fields’ appeared in China during the Warring States period. Although the degree of freedom in land transactions varied across different dynasties, such as in some dynasties where the sale of land required the permission of the parties’ clans or families, involving some cumbersome procedures, the fact that land could be freely bought and sold under many conditions is undisputed. In theory, the free sale of land meant that every peasant had the possibility of becoming a landowner. Secondly, China’s imperial examination system, which lasted for more than a thousand years, provided a channel for upward mobility for many members of society, especially for those in relatively lower social positions. As a unique phenomenon in the history of each country, the imperial examination system provided a large number of members of traditional Chinese society with the possibility of upward mobility and development. Theoretically, even a farmer’s son born in the lower class could, after many years of hard study, become a member of the imperial court in the blink of an eye. Such a possibility of upward mobility provided hope for a large number of members of society. Hope brings the impetus for progress. In medieval European society, the acquisition of higher status by social members was not determined by effort but by innate bloodline. ‘Whosoever was not “born” into the class, had little hope of entering it’ (Thompson, 1928, p. 708). In contrast, in traditional Chinese society, the possible space for upward mobility of members of society was obviously much greater. Although the beneficiaries of the imperial examination system were still relatively few, they were after all able to produce a large social demonstration effect. From an objective point of view, the existence of upward mobility paths such as the imperial examination system ‘was important in convincing peasants that it was

possible for them to rise to the rank of gentlemen, as it provided some kind of incentive, and, in general, ultimately contributed to the stability of the social structure' (Fei, 2006a, 2006b). In short, all of the foregoing contributes to a certain kind of motivation of the members of society to lead productive lives.

We cannot underestimate the significance of a large number of members of society who have an active and productive life. Comparatively speaking, in the real world, the majority of the social members with motivation for productive living find it easier to identify with the earthly realm, develop a positive attitude towards life, and cherish and 'enjoy' the tangible rewards that come from their own hard work. Further, since the Chinese people are still able to lead a generally normal life in the real world, it is difficult for them to develop a religious complex and an urgent expectation of a saviour to save them. Such a situation would naturally contribute to a general secularisation.

Thirdly, the growth of secularised traditions was facilitated by a relatively advanced form of civilisation and a relatively secure 'defense' environment.

The relatively advanced form of civilisation possessed by traditional Chinese society gives it a relatively strong capacity for security. This can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, compared to neighbouring countries or ethnic groups, Chinese traditional civilisation has always been in a leading position and thus has greater attractiveness and assimilation power towards these countries or groups. Even if China's territory was sometimes temporarily occupied by foreigners, Chinese civilisation could not be conquered, and the Chinese nation could not be 'exterminated'. Instead, Chinese civilisation would ultimately assimilate the invaders and make them an integral part of the Chinese nation. Whether it was the 'Five Barbarian' ethnic groups that once brought chaos to China or the Manchu who ruled China for many years, their ultimate result was becoming an organic part of the Chinese nation. On the other hand, the Chinese nation has obvious inclusiveness. The Chinese nation is a community of 'pluralism and unity' with natural inclusiveness. From its earliest origins, the Chinese nation was formed by the fusion of several ethnic groups. This fusion has accompanied the entire evolution of the Chinese nation for thousands of years, resulting in a growing inclusiveness. 'The evolution of Chinese civilisation is the integration of multiple civilisational factors. The mode of integration is to take the Chinese civilisation as the core, with the core spreading to the surrounding, the

surrounding converging to the core, and the core and the surrounding complementing, absorbing, and integrating' (Yuan, 2007). This strong inclusiveness makes the Chinese nation more continuously vital due to its absorption of the strengths of multiple ethnic groups. Powerful inclusiveness and strong vitality are mutually reinforcing and interacting in a positive way, which in turn further enhances the Chinese nation's strong security guarantee capability.

Another point worth noting is that, as a social community, traditional Chinese society is huge in size and scale, possessing an 'inherent' power that is difficult to conquer. China is a country of enormous size or volume and possesses a strong comprehensive national power that can withstand the depletion of a general war. Moreover, from a geographical perspective, China's territory is vast, providing ample room to manoeuvre. 'It has a broad strategic depth and can withstand the resistance and consumption of foreign invasions. The surrounding seas, deserts, and high mountain ranges act as natural barriers, hindering potential invaders' (Wu, 2019, p. 93). In terms of the power of the neighbouring countries or ethnic groups that might invade China, most of them are nomadic groups in the north, while the potential threat of foreign invasion in the south-east, south, and south-west is objectively greatly reduced due to the geographic isolation of the sea and the high mountains and ridges. Regarding the most threatening northern nomadic groups, although they have strong agility and are often able to temporarily gain military tactical advantages in their invasions, their relatively small population, limited overall strength, and relatively backward civilisation prevent them from having the ability to occupy China in the long term. Additionally, because of the relative backwardness of their civilisation, it is even more impossible for them to fundamentally 'conquer' or 'assimilate' the relatively advanced way of production and life of traditional Chinese society. Unless they change their civilisational affiliation, identify themselves with Chinese civilization, and evolve into an integral part of the traditional Chinese social community, these countries or ethnic groups will be defeated by China after a certain period of time and will either voluntarily or be forced to withdraw from China. Such instances are common in Chinese history.

It is the relatively advanced civilisation of traditional Chinese society, its strong inclusiveness, and its unique natural conditions that have objectively contributed to the persistence of traditional Chinese civilisation for thousands of years. Among the four major 'homologous' ancient civilisations throughout the history of the world, Babylonian civilisation,

Egyptian civilisation, and Indian civilisation have long been extinct, and the inhabitants of their former sites are no longer the descendants of the original inhabitants and have even been replaced by a few groups of ethnic inhabitants. In comparison, only Chinese traditional civilisation persists to this day. As Hegel pointed out, ‘only the Chinese Empire, through which the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers flowed, was the only lasting state in the world. Conquest has no way of affecting such an empire’ (Friedrich, 2001).

The result of such a relatively advanced civilisation, inclusiveness, and relatively safe ‘national defense’ environment is that, overall, it avoids the possibility of the Chinese nation experiencing immense turmoil and cultural regression after being annihilated. It also prevents the possibility of the original ethnic groups and residents falling into a widespread life of wandering, displacement, and suffering after their nation is destroyed. Such a situation, on the whole, is conducive to the long-term continuation of the traditional Chinese civilisation, and allows society members to produce and live in a secular manner accustomed to in the past, without the need to seek salvation through religion. Some scholars have compared the attitudes of the people of traditional Chinese and European societies, pointing out that ‘Sima Qian wrote *Records of the Grand Historian*, which was about a hundred years before Jesus was born. At that time, the political and social situation in China was moving in a rational direction, and the ethical education of life, which can be seen as their “religion”, did not rely on a vague spiritual realm. In contrast, Rome, under the invasion of nobles and the indulgence of the military, collapsed. The spread of Christianity was precisely because the Europeans of that time could not build a rational new nation, and earthly happiness seemed elusive to them, so they turned to God’ (Qian, 2012, p. 17).

It can be seen that in the mature agricultural society, with the presence of socio-cultural factors such as the motivation of society members towards productive living, relatively advanced forms of civilisation, inclusiveness, and a relatively secure ‘defense’ natural environment, the secular tradition in traditional Chinese society has been able to form and persist.

Compared with the religious tradition of medieval European society and the traditional societies of many other countries and regions, the deep-rooted ‘secular’ tradition of traditional Chinese society exhibits distinct differences and its notable characteristics. A clear understanding of these features is of paramount importance and indispensable significance in comprehending the unique connotations and evolutionary trends

of the entire traditional Chinese society, as well as the reasons behind the distinct ‘Chinese characteristics’ in its modernisation process, including its specific paths and modes.

In a nutshell, the basic features of the secularisation tradition in traditional Chinese society are as follows: from the perspectives of ultimate care, basic daily life goals, and basic activity areas, members of traditional Chinese society attached great importance to and commonly pursued life in ‘the real world’, namely This World, and its continuity and improvement, rather than the heaven of afterlife or The Other World. From the point of view of the foundational support for the normal functioning of the socio-economic system, Chinese society relied extensively on blood family. From the standpoint of personal life goals and commitments, the values of hard work and thrift were widely embraced by society members. From the standpoint of ensuring the effectiveness of actions taken, pragmatism and rationality were commonly accepted values. Consequently, these four elements—the real world, blood family, hard work and thrift, and pragmatism and rationality—together constitute the deeply ingrained secular tradition in traditional Chinese society. The tradition of secularisation, with these four fundamental features, has enabled the endogeneity of traditional Chinese society to achieve the “polarisation” or “maximisation” effect that would have been possible under natural economic conditions in an important way.

3.2 THE REAL WORLD

3.2.1 *Importance and main implications of the goal orientation towards ‘the real world’*

To prioritise and excel in the daily life of the real world and to consider the real world as the primary realm of activity is the essential feature of the phenomenon of secularisation in traditional Chinese society. It also serves as the fundamental basis or cornerstone for the formation of other key features of Chinese secular tradition. ‘Among the known ancient nations, China alone was not ruled by a clergy’ (Voltaire, 1994a, 1994b). So, ‘in substance, the duties of a Chinese Confucian always consisted of piety toward concrete people whether living or dead, and toward those who were close to him through their position in life. The Confucian owed nothing to a supra-mundane God; therefore, he was never bound to a sacred “cause” or an “idea”’ (Weber, 1959, p. 142). What is important is

that once a social community values the real world and seeks its primary activities within the realm of reality, it signifies the confidence of that community to navigate and influence its own destiny through collective effort, in harmony with the laws of nature, enabling normal existence and reproduction within the society of the real world, without relying on divine powers. It should be said that this is a relatively positive attitude towards life. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to form a religious society. This is in stark contrast to the religified society of medieval Europe. In medieval European society, people generally believed that only God, or the divine, was the force that determined the fate of the social community, rendering individuals insignificant and unable to control their own destiny. In a sense, in medieval European society, what people did was not for their own sake, but to satisfy God. Only in this way could people be saved and enter the heaven, thus realising their ultimate goal. In the ‘God-centred’ or ‘Lord (God)-based’ scenario, individuals themselves have no autonomous position. They are seen as an insignificant speck of dust and are expected to disregard or even despise themselves while serving and devoting themselves to God. In such circumstances, there is no way to speak of a relatively positive attitude towards life; on the contrary, a relatively negative attitude towards life can only be formed.

‘The real world’ referred to here as the basic feature of the Chinese secularisation tradition has two meanings. The first meaning is that of a ‘real’ earthly world. That is to say, everyone lives in the real earthly world, not in the illusory, other-worldly ‘heavenly kingdom’ or the sinful, temporary earthly world determined or arranged by the ‘gods’. In other words, in the view of the Chinese, living a good life on earth is the will of the ‘Tian Dao (the way of the heaven)’. As *The Universal order or conduct life* states, ‘the moral law is not something away from the actuality of human life. If men take up something away from the actuality of human life as the moral law, that is not the moral law’ (Chapter 13). In traditional Chinese society, the most important goal in life for a member of society can only be realised in the real world of the earth, and not elsewhere such as in the heavenly kingdom. According to Weber, ‘Confucianism exclusively represented an inner-worldly morality of laymen. Confucianism meant adjustment to the world, to its orders and conventions. Ultimately, it represented just a tremendous code of political maxims and rules of social propriety for cultured men of the world’ (Weber, 1959, p. 152). The second meaning is that of the ‘real’ or ‘immediate’ world. That is, the real human world in which people live is a world that can be personally

experienced and enjoyed in the present moment. Furthermore, through generations of diligent work, people's experiences and enjoyment of the real world can be continuously replicated and prolonged. Because of this, there is no need for people to pursue an afterlife or a future 'heaven' that cannot be directly experienced and proven through personal recognition but can only be entered through belief in God, even if the description of the afterlife or 'heaven' is incredibly magnificent.

3.2.2 *Specific manifestations of 'the real world'*

The basic feature of the Chinese secularisation tradition, 'the real world', can be broadly understood in the following ways:

Firstly, people's main goals and basic fields of activity exist or take place in 'the real world'.

In traditional Chinese society, from the point of view of the basic foothold of all the main activities of the members of society, people generally strive to live well and improve their lives in the normal realm of the real human world. They focus on the real life in This World, rather than pursue the heavenly life in The Other World. 'What the Chinese wish for is a kingdom on earth, not a kingdom of heaven in the air' (Qian, 2012, p. 17). This is the main axis and the cornerstone of the people's basic goal of life in traditional Chinese society, and it is the fundamental basis of the people's life. In the view of the people at that time, the reality of the earth belonged to the realm accessible to human cognition and behavior, while the world of God belonged to the realm inaccessible to human cognition and behavior. For the former, people should actively intervene; for the latter, it is not appropriate to directly and hastily intervene, or might as well simply stay out of the way. Regarding the two worlds of man and god, the Analects of Confucius explain it as follows: 'A disciple (the intrepid Chung Yu) enquired how one should behave towards the spirits of dead men. Confucius answered, "We cannot as yet do our duties to living men; why should we enquire about our duties to dead men?" The disciple went on to enquire about death. Confucius answered, "We do not as yet know about life; why should we enquire about death?"' (Xian Jin Section). 'Fan Chi enquired about knowledge. Confucius answered, "To do what the people consider righteous, to honor ghosts and gods but to stay away from them, that is having knowledge.'" (Yong Ye Section). *Zuo Tradition* also has a similar statement: 'The Way of Heaven is far away, while the Way of men is near at hand, and it does not have access to the

former. How can we know anything of it?’ As Lu Xun (2015) pointed out, ‘Master Kong (Confucius) was indeed great. He was born in an era when witchcraft and ghostly powers were thriving, yet he refused to talk about ghosts and gods like the common people’.

Although the real world has many problems and cannot be perfect, people can gradually improve it through their own hard work. The real world is neither a world of suffering nor a ‘heavenly kingdom’, but a real-life arena with the normal joys and sorrows of human beings. This real world, with all its shortcomings, is a field of life activities that can be expected to be overcome through various efforts and to be gradually rationalised. Under such circumstances, it is relatively easy for people to form a relatively positive attitude towards life. In this regard, a series of discourses in *the Analects of Confucius* is of typical significance. It says, ‘there were three cases in life in which Confucius considered a man was called upon to exercise the most mature deliberation: in case of worship, of war, and of sickness’ (Shu Er Section). “‘With such a large population,” asked the disciple Ran You, “what should be done?” “Enrich them,” answered Confucius. “And after that?” asked the disciple. “Educate them,” replied Confucius’ (Zi Lu). ‘A disciple of Confucius enquired what constituted a moral life. Confucius answered, “A man who can carry out five things wherever he may be is a moral man.” “What five things?” asked the disciple. “They are,” replied Confucius, “earnestness, consideration for others, trustworthiness, diligence, and generosity. If you are earnest, you will never meet with want of respect. If you are considerate to others, you will win the hearts of the people. If you are trustworthy, men will trust you. If you are diligent, you will be successful in your undertakings. If you are generous, you will find plenty of men who are willing to serve you.”’ (Yan Huo). ‘A disciple once said to Confucius, “If there is a man who carries out extensively good works for the welfare of the people and is really able to benefit the multitude, what would you say of such a man: could he be called a moral character?” “Why call him only a moral character,” answered Confucius. “If one must call such a man by a name, one would call him a holy or sainted man. For judged by the works of which you speak, even the ancient Emperors Yao and Shun felt their shortcomings. Good people help others get on their feet while establishing their own career; they help others to achieve their goals while achieving their own objectives. By standing in other people’s shoes, it can be said that they’re on the right track to goodness.”’ (Yong Ye).

In contrast, medieval European society was a religious society. In such a society, every individual saw themselves as inherently sinful, and entering the ‘heavenly kingdom’ and obtaining eternal life was seen as the main goal to strive for throughout one’s lifetime. The real world in which they lived was considered insignificant, mundane, or even a ‘world of suffering’. As a last resort, people can only temporarily reside in the suffering secular society or suffering world. People have no control over their own destinies, which are in the hands of God, and they can only humbly prostrate themselves at God’s feet. In this secular society of suffering, ‘For we are conscious that all living things are weeping and sorrowing in pain together till now’ (Hooke, 1965; Romans 8:22). The only way to change this situation was through faith in God, willingly enduring all sufferings, and working diligently to cleanse one’s own sins and receive God’s grace. Only then could the sinful individuals have the possibility of salvation and enter the ‘millennial kingdom’. ‘In no other is there salvation: for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, through which we may have salvation’ (Hooke, 1965; Acts 4:12). The destination of salvation is not on the real world, but in the ‘Heaven’ or the ‘Millennial Kingdom’ through conversion to God. ‘Jesus Christ’s salvation not only aims for people’s liberation, but also for people to turn to God, reconcile with God, and become sanctified’ (Zhao, 2017, p. 55). A similar situation existed in the traditional society of religious India. ‘The abiding devotion of men to the faith of their hearts is much more firmly tied to the Hindu promise of reincarnation than to any other social ethic. For Hinduism does not associate it with preaching moral values of stability of occupation and modesty of behavior, ... but with the immediate interest of the individual in the salvation of his soul’ (Weber, 1988). Therefore, in traditional Indian society, which is also God-centred and believes in an immortal soul, where the living body of a human being is only a shell in which the soul temporarily resides, the top priority of people’s general concern must necessarily be the question of how the soul can be saved, rather than the problems in the real world. In short, under the God-centred conditions, people can only adopt a relatively negative attitude and behavioral orientation, rather than developing a relatively positive attitude towards life.

Secondly, great importance is attached to the reality and accessibility of everyday life.

In traditional Chinese society, which is based on a well-established agrarian economy, people were able to produce consumer goods that

satisfy their basic needs, but the surplus of such consumer goods was very limited. Moreover, under the conditions of an agrarian economy, people's ability to cope with natural risks was extremely limited. In a certain sense, people relied on the whims of nature for their sustenance. In the event of natural disasters or famine, people's basic survival became a major problem, leading to phenomena like begging and even starvation. Therefore, the general focus and aspirations of the population were on leading a normal and realistic daily life, rather than pursuing unrealistic and idealistic goals detached from reality. People generally wished to achieve specific and attainable goals, such as a good harvest and prosperity in livestock farming, as well as a flourishing family with many descendants, as long as they worked hard and had favorable weather conditions. On the premise of meeting the baseline needs of life, if possible, it is also expected to be able to purchase a little bit of land on the basis of some savings in the means of production and living or to be able to provide for the education of future generations. It is thus clear that the life goals of the people in traditional Chinese society were not unattainable, but very realistic, concrete, reasonable, and feasible. In this regard, *History of Southern Dynasties* describes it as follows: 'If one has five hens, one sow, a hundred coins for bedding, and a few liters of rice in the jar, even if Su (Qin) cleverly persuades from the front and Han (Xin) menacingly holds his sword from behind, no man would be forced to resort to theft' (Li, 1975, p. 1369). In addition, in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, Zhang Lüxiang's *Book of Supplement to Agriculture* for a normal farming family designed a realistic and reasonable management programme on the thin production of ten mu (unit of area equal to 1/6 of an acre), that is, 'the barren field of ten mu and a pond is divided into the following pieces: three mu for mulberry trees (also suitable for growing vegetables in winter, and beans and yams around them), three mu for beans (which can be used to rotate crops with wheat and even flax if possible), two mu for bamboo (different varieties and shoots at various times, can be exchanged for rice), two mu for fruit trees (such as plum, apricot, jujube, orange, which can also be exchanged for rice), and a fishpond for raising fish (the fertile soil can be used for planting bamboo and the remaining space for mulberry trees; at the end of the year, the fish can be exchanged for rice), and also six to five sheep for raising. This would enable one to "sustain life without anything lacking" and to have "leisure for self-cultivation and reading books"' (Ma, 2004).

In particular, it should be mentioned that in traditional Chinese society, out of daily life issues such as clothing, food, housing, and transportation, people attach particular importance to the issue of 'food'. This serves as a typical example of how Chinese people value their real-life experiences. With access to a relatively mature agrarian society and the availability of diverse plant and animal-based food sources, the Chinese people take great pleasure and put significant effort into maximising the effects of their food. The high standard of their diet and the completeness of their system can be said to be at the forefront of all ethnic groups or countries in their contemporaries (traditional societies based on an agrarian economy). Over 2,500 years ago, Confucius was an advocate of the saying 'eat no rice but is of the finest quality, nor meat but is finely minced'. The phrase 'the king regards the people as heaven (primary importance), and the people regard food as heaven', as stated in the *Records of the Historian*, has been passed down in China for more than 2,000 years. People in the northern regions primarily rely on wheat-based food, while rice is the staple in the southern regions. Throughout Chinese history, not only have distinctive regional cuisines such as Shandong, Sichuan, Cantonese, and Huaiyang cuisines developed, but a complex and diverse range of culinary techniques have also emerged. In addition, tea also became a necessity in the lives of the Chinese people. 'Since the Tang Dynasty, under the influence of Buddhism, tea drinking has flourished in China, and tea culture fever has appeared'. 'During the Song Dynasty, as tea drinking became more prevalent in China, tea drinking became a common interest for all social classes, from the emperor down to the common people' (Kim, 1998).

Thirdly, religious practice is a necessary complement to secularised life.

Throughout the history of traditional Chinese society, the influence of religion, in general, has been very limited, and it has never been able to become a significant force in shaping society as a whole. China 'differs particularly from other peoples in that their history books never mention that a religious group has ever influenced their laws' (Voltaire, 1994a, 1994b). From the point of view of the relationship between religion and secular power in history, China has always followed the principle of 'government controlling religion', where religion has not become a force capable of challenging secular political authority. 'In traditional Chinese society, clans and lineages have overwhelmingly dominated. The clan nurtured a tendency towards engagement with the world rather than seeking transcendence. Therefore, while religion has always existed in

China, it has not become a significant force capable of countering political power. On the contrary, Chinese religion has always been subordinate to political authority. To a considerable extent, it was an appendage of the regime' (Wu, 1990). This situation is quite different from European medieval society. In medieval Europe, the principle of 'give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God' was followed, emphasising the separation of political and religious powers. The Church, however, was not content with this and often tried to intervene and even limit the power of the secular king, expanding its own power and economic interests, such as owning one-third of the landed property. 'Since in the Middle Ages the separation of Church and State was impracticable'. 'The Church refused to accept the parity of State and Church, and instead found the solution of the controversy in the doctrine of supremacy of Church over State' (Thompson, 1928, p. 665). For example, 'The Catholic Church, since the Gregorian Reformation in the eleventh century, has pursued world domination, which, by the very fact of the matter, means pursuing what is called the theocracy of the papacy in the "two knives" theory (divine and secular), which holds that only the pope can deal with the emperor' (Gayard, et al. 2000). Also, from the point of view of the relationship between religion and the people, religion did not become a major force capable of indoctrinating the people in traditional Chinese society. China mainly indoctrinated the people with the positively worldly Confucian doctrine. In traditional Chinese society, where blood family were the basic social units, the actively engaged Confucian teachings had a widespread and profound impact on the people's moral education, surpassing any religious force. In contrast, in medieval European societies, the Church was responsible for the basic indoctrination of the people throughout their life course, from baptism at birth to countless regular services to penance at death.

Although religion did not become a force that can shape society, it still existed and had a certain influence in traditional Chinese society. In any society, there is always the problem of seeking psychological comfort, and therefore there is always the phenomenon of religion, and there is no difference. The difference lies only in the weight of the influence of religion in different societies, in the position of religion in people's minds, and in the degree and quantity of their demand for religion. In this respect, there is a clear difference between traditional Chinese society

and Western medieval society. In traditional Chinese society, secularisation held a dominant position, addressing people's ultimate concerns and maintaining the regular functioning of society. In comparison, religion held a subordinate and dependent position, addressing specific matters. In terms of the weight of influence, religion is only a necessary complement to people's important needs in all aspects of life, which are deeply rooted in secularised life. In other words, in a certain sense, in traditional Chinese society, if secular life is people's main business, then religious life is only a side business or a hobby. Despite not fully accepting it, Confucius did not vehemently oppose or exclude religion but rather accommodated it, leaving some space for its existence. Because of this, Lu Xun (2015, p. 192), in the affirmation of Confucius's 'distancing from ghosts and gods', added a few lines: 'It's a pity that he was too clever, sacrificing as if the gods were present'. 'He didn't talk about it, but he definitely didn't curse it, and as a result, he became a saint in China, encompassing all things'.

It is worth noting that in traditional Chinese society, the roles played by various deities often manifested as providing specific services with specialised functions for the people's lives. This is a distinct feature of religion in traditional Chinese society. Emile Durkheim (1995, p. 38) argued that as a religion, 'the sacred thing is par excellence that which the profane must not and cannot touch with impunity'. This statement is evidently applicable to medieval European society. In the religious European society, the entire society strictly separated people's ultimate concerns from their daily lives. The religious dimension addressed the ultimate concern of people, namely the fundamental purpose of the salvation of the human soul. In contrast, daily secular life pertained to lowly bodily matters. It goes without saying that the former's hierarchy and importance far surpass the latter, with the latter being subservient to the former. In medieval European society, this situation made the influence of religion on the whole society so great that it overrode almost everything, influencing every aspect of the concrete life of every member of the society. Conversely, secular life had relatively little influence. The hierarchy and influence of each are almost disproportionate. In contrast, traditional Chinese society is very different. In traditional Chinese society, in many instances, religious activities often conformed to people's secular purposes, showing a clear utilitarian orientation, rather than aiming to resolve people's ultimate concerns. People often chose a particular religion based on their specific life needs, using it for their own purposes,

rather than dedicating themselves to the religion. For example, ‘through the intricate connections with the secular world, we can see that the folk gods in our country possess strong secular characteristics’ (Ren, 2005). Various folk gods and goddesses are not only capable of being close to people, but they are also capable of providing the population with a wide range of specific specialised services covering a wide range of areas almost unconditionally. Various gods and goddesses often have the function of providing different kinds of ‘specialised’ services to meet the different needs of different people. The Jade Emperor, as the head of the universe, is responsible for controlling the overall situation of the universe, while other gods and goddesses are in charge of different aspects of life; land gods take care of the growth of all living beings and oversee people’s hometowns; the Kitchen god presides over food preparations; the South Pole Immortal (South Pole True Lord) is in charge of longevity; deities like Yue Lao and Nüwa handle matters related to marriage and funerals; the Guanyin goddess is responsible for fertility; Emperor Guan protects safety (including wealth security); the Wenshu god educates offspring; and so on. Taoism, which originated in China, is truly a localised Chinese religion. However, its primary objective is to achieve immortality and eternal existence in the real world through various practices, rather than abandoning the physical body in an attempt to reach the heaven in The Other World and save the soul.

In addition, compared to the religions of medieval European society and traditional Indian society, traditional Chinese society exhibits a spirit of tolerance and inclusiveness towards religion, including various religions that were ‘imported’ from foreign countries to China. This is in stark contrast to medieval European society. In medieval European society, Catholicism held strict characteristics of singularity, supremacy, and corresponding exclusivity. This situation brought about frequent conflicts between different religions and between different sects within the Catholic Church, and even triggered foreign wars with strong religious overtones, such as the Crusades, which caused serious social disasters to other countries and ethnic groups. Traditional Indian society is also highly religious but shares a similar exclusiveness within Hinduism. ‘Hinduism does not wish to encompass mankind. No matter what his belief or way of life, anyone not born a Hindu remains an outsider, a barbarian to whom the sacred values of Hinduism are in principle denied’ (Weber, 1958, p. 6). In complete contrast, multiple religions in traditional Chinese society were not the exclusive faiths of their followers. It was common

for an individual to simultaneously adhere to several religions, and these various religions did not mutually exclude each other. Overall, different religions were able to coexist harmoniously. For instance, in some cities, temples, Taoist shrines, and mosques could be situated side by side and coexist harmoniously. This situation contrasts sharply with the religions of medieval European society. Nonetheless, one crucial point to note is that in traditional Chinese society, regardless of religion, no religious authority could become too powerful. If a religious authority grew too dominant, it would objectively weaken the unquestionable authority of secular royal power, posing a direct threat and hindrance to the normal functioning of secular governance. Therefore, once the religious power becomes too big in a certain period, it will be brutally and relentlessly attacked by the sensitive and powerful secular regime, leading to its rapid decline. In this regard, the several large-scale ‘Buddhist persecutions’ that occurred during the Wei and Jin Dynasties, as well as the Sui and Tang Dynasties, serve as the clear evidence of this phenomenon.

3.3 THE BLOOD FAMILY

The blood family is the basic support for the normal functioning of the socio-economic system in traditional Chinese society. This is an important feature of traditional Chinese society that distinguishes it from medieval European society and from traditional societies in many other countries and regions. The existence of a universal and fundamental blood family constitutes the deep-rooted social unit of traditional Chinese society. Through the widespread spread of the deep-rooted social unit of the blood family, the social community of traditional Chinese society is deeply rooted in the soil of nature and the soil of the real society, absorbing to the maximum extent every kind of nutrient that is favourable to its own growth. In this way, not only does it strengthen the Chinese people’s identification with the goals of the real world, but it also ensures the continuity of the community of the ‘Chinese nation’ (‘Chinese ethnic groups’) from generation to generation, and through the continuous integration of the various ethnic groups within the ‘Chinese’ region, ‘the Chinese nation’ community grows stronger and stronger, while at the same time providing the basic path and mode of integration and functioning for the entire traditional Chinese society.

3.3.1 *The main reasons for the deep-rootedness of the blood family in traditional Chinese society*

The so-called ‘family, also known as a clan. It is a special form of social organisation in which the children and grandchildren of the same male ancestor meet for a number of generations and, in accordance with certain norms, are united by blood ties’. Generally speaking, ancestral halls, genealogies, as well as clan fields are the necessary elements of a blood family. ‘The clan field is the material condition on which the family system depends for its existence, relying on it as a bait to bring the clan together, which is called “collecting the clan”; the ancestral hall and genealogy are used to respect the ancestors, emphasise the blood relationship, stipulate the clan rules and regulations, and maintain the family system in terms of superstructural and ideological aspects’ (Xu, 1980). If the main function of the clan field is to ‘collect the clan’, then the main function of the ancestral hall and genealogy is to ‘consolidate the clan’, i.e., to strengthen and reinforce the blood family.

In traditional societies based on an agrarian economy, people’s productive capacity, safety and defence, and resilience to risk are very low. For their own survival, production, security, and reproduction, the degree of interdependence between people within a narrow, humanly accessible range is inevitably very strong. As Marx noted, ‘human dependence (which happened completely naturally at first) is the initial social form. Under this form, human productivity only develops within a narrow range and in isolated locations’ (Marx & Engels 1972a, 1972b, p. 104). In keeping with this, the small, closed family with relatively the highest degree of dependence between people and bound by blood becomes the basic unit of production and life for people. There is no exception to this, as long as it is under the conditions of an era that is also based on an agrarian economy, whether in medieval European societies or in the traditional societies of many other countries and regions, or in the traditional societies of China. At the same time, however, it must be acknowledged that the specific manifestations of the blood family and the extent of its influence vary markedly in the traditional societies of different countries and regions as a result of various historical, practical, and natural conditions.

Compared with medieval European societies or the traditional societies of many other countries and regions, the blood family in traditional

Chinese society is the most prominent, both in terms of its morphological integrity and in terms of its weight of influence on society. The main reasons for this are:

Firstly, a relatively safe and stable social environment. The long-term continuity of the blood family depends on the existence of a necessary condition, which is a relatively safe and stable social environment. Otherwise, once the society encounters repeated large-scale invasions by powerful foreigners and civil strife on a large scale, the entire social community will be fragmented and a large number of members of the community will often be displaced, uprooted from their homes and wandering around. Thus, the blood family will be in decline or at least has difficulty stabilising its existence and continuity. Generally speaking, the higher the frequency of war, the weaker the integrity and continuity of the blood family. In the southern regions such as Fujian and Guangdong, where there were relatively fewer wars, although these regions were not the birthplace of traditional Chinese civilisation, in the long run, compared to the northern regions where there were frequent wars, their blood families have been preserved relatively more intact. Compared with the 'civil strife', the foreign invasions of foreigners are more destructive to the blood families, because the foreign invasions are accompanied by the destruction of the native civilisation by the foreign civilisations. As mentioned earlier, China's special geographical environment and relatively advanced civilisation have a strong deterrent effect on foreign invasion, and as a result, the Chinese nation is never occupied, conquered, or assimilated by foreigners for a long period of time. Even if China was occupied by foreigners at one time, after a certain period of time, China still recovers its basic homeland and its traditional Chinese civilisation still exists. In addition, the various civil strife in China's history caused great damage to the blood families, but such damage is more of a 'physical' blow within the homologous civilisation and does not harm the original roots of the homologous civilisation of the blood families. All these things contribute to the long-term continuity of the traditional Chinese blood family.

Secondly, a stable agricultural life. In traditional societies, another requirement for the long-term continuity of the blood family is the need for a stable productive life. Compared with nomadic life and commercial activities, which are relatively more mobile and wandering, traditional agricultural life has a stable or even super-stable character. Agriculture is 'the first form of production in all societies that have attained a measure

of stability' (Marx & Engels, 1974, p. 146). Stable traditional agricultural life is dependent on the same location and has few ups and downs. Accordingly, the traditional agricultural way of life can be reproduced over and over again. Traditional Chinese society is a mature farming society with a predominantly agricultural way of life, which is very favourable to the long-term continuation of the blood family.

Thirdly, the protection of agriculture and peasants by the imperial central government. In traditional Chinese society, there are two important phenomena that tend to generate and have a very negative impact on the existence and continuity of the blood family which is based on the agricultural way of life. One phenomenon is that once the power of rich merchants and tycoons grows, it is not conducive to the agriculture-based way of founding the country. Another phenomenon is that once the local powerful landowners expand, they will annex land on a large scale, directly destroying the economic foundation of a large number of blood families, causing a large number of displaced persons, and weakening the government's tax revenue, control, and authority. Therefore, the central government, represented by the imperial power, whether out of the consideration of maintaining the security situation of the 'monolithic' nation or out of the consideration of maintaining its own authority and control, will certainly take a series of strong measures to inhibit the expansion of the strength of the rich merchants and tycoons, to prevent the expansion of the power of the local powerful landlords, and to suppress the phenomenon of excessive land annexation. Such situations abound in Chinese history. The result is objectively favourable to the long-term continuity of the blood family.

Fourthly, there is no strong religious force in traditional Chinese society. As a general rule, most religions are incompatible with the blood family, and the relationship between the two is in a sense mutually exclusive. 'The great achievement of the ethical religions—especially the ethical and ascetic sects of Protestant Christianity—was to break the bonds of the clan. These religions established superior communities of faith, with communities of ethical styles of life, in opposition to communities of blood, and even, to a large extent, to the family' (Weber, 2004, p. 320). Typical of this is the religion of medieval European society. Religion in medieval European society was by its very nature meant to exclude the blood family and to resist the increase of its influence. The reason for this is simple. Religions in medieval European society demanded that their congregations strictly follow the teachings and codes of conduct

of their religion and demanded uniqueness in their beliefs. In this way, once the congregations emphasised too much on their own blood family components, it would inevitably weaken the degree of devotion to the religion and the corresponding material payment. Some scholars have pointed out that in medieval European society, ‘the Gospels, it is true, take an anti-familial stand: in Matthew, Jesus says, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”’ (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 237). Particularly when it came to people’s most important financial interests, ‘whatever the case, the church systematically cut off all available avenues that families had for passing down property to descendants. At the same time, it strongly promoted voluntary donations of land and property to itself. The church thus stood to benefit materially from an increasing pool of property-owning Christians who died without heirs’ (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 238). Because of this, in medieval European society, the influence of blood families was much less than that of religion. And in traditional Chinese society, religious power had not been great, its influence was relatively limited, far from becoming a force that can influence the whole society, especially the basic society. Under such circumstances, the blood family in traditional Chinese society was able to normally exist and continue.

For at least these reasons, the blood family has been perpetuated in traditional Chinese society. In terms of its basic evolution, the blood family in China was owned by the lords and nobles during the Western Zhou period, and by the aristocratic families from the Eastern Han Dynasty to the Tang Dynasty as a ‘small group’, and then evolved into a ‘mass group’ of ‘commoners’ and ‘common people’ after the Song Dynasty, especially during the Ming and Qing Dynasties. In other words, it became a common phenomenon in traditional Chinese society. (Li, 1989).

It is particularly important to note that, from the standpoint of self-growth and social integration, the blood family in traditional Chinese society has the basic characteristic of deep-rooted ‘intrinsic adhesion’. This deep-rooted ‘intrinsic adhesion’ of the blood family means that, as the most basic social unit in traditional Chinese society, it has an extremely strong capacity for social integration, survival, and reproduction. At the same time, the blood family also has a strong social integration effect derived from this base. In short, by relying on this ‘intrinsic adhesion’,

the blood family organically ‘glues’ together all levels and fields of traditional society, making it a solid organic whole that can be formed under the conditions of an agrarian society.

3.3.2 *The great influence of the blood families on traditional Chinese society*

The blood family, with its fundamental characteristic of deep-rooted ‘intrinsic adhesion’ has had an extremely broad and far-reaching impact on all aspects of traditional Chinese society. This can be explained at two levels: relatively micro and relatively macro.

3.3.2.1 *Huge impact on the relatively micro level of traditional Chinese society*

From a relatively micro point of view, the blood family in traditional Chinese society was, in a certain sense, a highly integrated and fundamental social community that combines the community of life, the community of living, the community of production, the community of interests, and the community of beliefs under the conditions of an agrarian society. Such a highly integrated basic social community hardly existed in the traditional social era in most countries and regions. For example, in the religious society of medieval Europe, the community of faith was largely separated from the community of production and the community of interest, with the community of faith being controlled by the church, the community of production being controlled by the lords and the family, and the community of interest being controlled by the church and the secular regime respectively. In traditional Chinese society, however, the blood family integrated the various basic communities into an extremely strong basic community, which effectively provided the vast majority of members of society with a variety of indispensable basic assistance. This is mainly manifested in the following aspects:

Firstly, the blood family can effectively provide ultimate concern for family members.

Members of any society will be concerned about questions regarding the ultimate concern of life such as ‘where I come from’, ‘where I am going’, ‘what is the significance of my existence’, and so on. Such major questions of life as the ultimate concern will undoubtedly have an important impact on the goal orientation, values, and specific behaviour of most members of society.

Under traditional social conditions, the population of most countries and regions addressed the major issue of ultimate concern primarily through religion. In medieval European society, it was through Christianity that members of the society addressed the major issue of ultimate concern. The logic of their cognition and behaviour is: I am from God, and I want to go to heaven; but I am a person of original sin. Therefore, in order to be able to go to heaven, I must believe in God, and I must do good things and be justified. Otherwise, I will go to hell.

Compared with the medieval religious society in Europe, the path of social members in traditional Chinese society to solve the problem of ultimate concern was very different. In traditional Chinese society, each family member solved the big question of ultimate concern mainly through the blood family rather than through religion. In this regard, it is worthwhile to express such a logic of cognition and behaviour in the following passage: 'I come from my ancestors and parents. Without my ancestors and parents, there would be no me. Therefore, I should be grateful to my ancestors and honour my parents'. 'My life will continue from generation to generation with my children and grandchildren. Therefore, raising and caring for my children and grandchildren is the greatest thing in my life. And only in this way can I be worthy of my ancestors and my parents'. It is based on this cognition that the continuation of the same family lineage and life has become the most important thing in the life of every family member in China. The *Analects of Confucius* says, 'let there be a careful attention to perform the funeral rites to parents, and let them be followed when long gone with the ceremonies of sacrifice, then the virtue of the people will resume its proper excellence' (Confucius, 1960, p. 141). In this regard, Kong Anguo's explanation in the Eastern Han is, 'to treat the death of a parent with care and diligence; to honour the memory of a long-time ancestor with reverence and piety' (Liu, 1990; Laozi & Zhuangzi, 1986). This is the reason why the Chinese believe that 'there are three unfilial acts; bearing no descendant is by far the most unforgivable'. As a result, in traditional society, China became 'recognised as a country of ancestor worship and the country that placed the highest value on descendants'. 'Descendants were regarded as an infinite extension of one's own finite life'. 'Only when they lived and multiplied for eternity could their own lineage and fame be eternal' (Wang, 1996). In short, the perpetual blood family was both the goal and the basic place for every family member to realise his or her ultimate concern. Compared with the traditional societies of other countries and

regions, this is also the main reason why every family member in traditional Chinese society, that is, every member of society, attached great importance to 'honouring the ancestors', paid special attention to the offspring, and urgently 'had high hopes for their children'.

Secondly, the blood family was able to effectively address a large number of basic production and basic living needs of its members.

Under traditional social conditions, the blood family was not only capable of solving such a major life issue as the ultimate concern of every member of the Chinese family, but also had an indispensable and extremely important practical significance. Under the conditions of agricultural society, land, and labour were the most important means of production, and the shortage of labour will seriously affect the sustainability of agricultural production activities. And objectively speaking, the extreme attention to the blood relationship and life reproduction by the blood family, on one hand, was conducive to strengthening the internal cohesion of the blood family which was a basic economic unit and enhancing the effectiveness of its economic output. On the other hand, it was conducive to the continuous supply of labour for agricultural production, so as to ensure the sustainability of agricultural production, the material basis of traditional society.

The blood family was likewise able to meet some of the essential basic needs of the family members. 'In this peasant society, the individual depended upon his own blood group for his livelihood and for the security provided in modern society through insurance, as well as for education, recreation, and major social contact' (Fairbank and Liu, 1978, p. 11). For one thing, there was relief for clansmen in the midst of hardship. No matter which group in a society, there were always some members who were in a difficult situation for various reasons. In traditional Chinese society, for some members of the family who lived in great difficulty, such as widows, widowers, orphans, and elders without children, those who lacked basic food supply, as well as those who encountered natural and man-made disasters and fall into difficulties, the family had the responsibility to provide a certain amount of relief and give them guarantees to the basic survival needs. Since the Song Dynasty, especially after the Ming and Qing Dynasties, it was common for families to set up clan fields. 'The income from the clan fields was used to pay for the expenses of the family's activities, to organise various public utilities within the clan, to provide relief to the poor members of the clan, and

to keep the members of the clan deeply attracted to each other economically so that the clan will not disperse' (Xu, 2012, p. 302). Secondly, they adjudicated many disputes between clansmen as well as offences. When financial or other disputes arose between members of the clan, or when members of the clan committed 'offences', the chiefs of the clan, who were elected by the public, respected and highly regarded, had certain powers to adjudicate. Strictly speaking, this practice is not a 'lynching', but is to a certain extent within the scope of 'lawful' actions. The country actually ceded some of its power to the blood families to administer justice at the grass-roots level. For example, 'in the 10th year of Qing Dynasty's Emperor Daoguang, the Qing court declared, "In all cases of minor and major incidents of the clan, the judgement will be made by the head of the clan", and the head of the clan became the judge of the clan' (Wang, 2017). 'The law recognised both the head of the family and the patriarch, as the sovereign of the family, and gave them all kinds of powers in law'. 'We can say that the family was the most elementary judicial institution, and disputes and conflicts within the family group should first be arbitrated by the patriarch, and only if they could not be adjusted and dealt with would they be dealt with by the national judicial institution'. 'In addition to the power of life and death, the patriarch had the highest power of judgement and punishment' (Qu, 2010, p. 29). This practice, to a certain extent, could effectively avoid the occurrence or aggravation of some conflicts and disputes within the family, and was conducive to the maintenance of the normal order of the blood family. Thirdly, to satisfy the basic needs of most members of society for 'indoctrination' (or 'socialisation'). Any member of society needs to have a process of accepting the basic indoctrination, so as to become a 'qualified' member of society. In medieval European society, the need for basic indoctrination was mainly met by the Church. Chinese traditional society is different. The basic indoctrination of most Chinese society members was mainly done within the blood families. Most families had their own family rules and disciplines, which were used to satisfy the basic indoctrination needs of family members. These family rules and instructions clearly set out the norms of daily behaviour that met the requirements of an agrarian society and that family members are required to follow. For example, one of the most typical family rules, the *Family Instructions of the Yan Clan*, clearly states that the essence of family governance lies in the following: 'If the father is not kind, then the son will not be filial; if the older brother is not friendly, then the younger brother will not be respectful; if the

husband is not righteous, then the wife will not be obedient' (Tan, 2011, p. 34). 'You can be frugal but don't be stingy. Those who are frugal are not extravagant. Be thrifty but not stingy, which is feasible' (Tan, 2011, p. 36). 'The ancients wanted to know the hardships of agricultural labour, which was probably a way to make people treasure food and devote themselves to agricultural labour. Bread is the staff of life. Without food, people cannot survive. Fathers and sons could not protect each other if they did not eat for three days. Food has to go through several processes, such as ploughing, hoeing, harvesting, storing, pounding, and raising, before it can be put in the granary. So how can one despise agriculture and value commerce?' (Tan, 2011, p. 182). In addition, some families with better economic conditions often organised family villas and free schools, while families with relatively poor economic conditions could join hands with other families to organise community schools and employ tutors to support the reading and writing of their children. The family villa 'used *Three Character Classic*, *Hundred Family Surnames*, and *Thousand Character Classic* as textbooks' and 'teaches children to read and write, to learn the codes and edicts of the feudal government, to study the *Four Books and Five Classics* of Confucianism, and to instil in them feudal ethics and morals and the principles of morality and discipline' (Xu, 2012, p. 337).

Thirdly, the blood family constituted a very tough and strong basic social fundamental unit.

The foundational basic unit of society based on deeply rooted blood families is undoubtedly extremely tough and strong. 'Consanguinity is a stabilising force. In stable societies, a tie to a specific place (diyuan), or regionalism, is no more than an extension of consanguinity and cannot be separated from it. "Being born and dying in the same place" fixes the relationship between places and people' (Fei, Hamilton & Zheng, 1992, p. 121). In traditional Chinese societies, almost every person's entire life course began and ended within the blood family. Each person's life, living, and production, as well as each person's obligations and responsibilities all took place mainly in the domain of the blood family, without being able to make any other choices. The members of the family depended on each other, and no one could survive alone without the blood family. This deep-rooted 'internal adhesion' of the blood family not only implied a high degree of compatibility between the blood family as a basic unit of production and the specific smallholder economic mode of production, but also implied that the members of the blood family have a high degree of consistency, belongingness, and sense of identity in their

understanding and actions, which resulted in a high degree of integration within the family. In a sense, cooperation between blood family members was ‘unconditional’. In this way, the blood family had a strong ‘grip’ effect, that is, the countless blood families are like a huge fine network of countless capillaries taking deep roots, growing comprehensively and deeply in the natural and worldly soil, and sucking up every kind of nutrient conducive to the production and life of the blood families to the maximum extent possible in various effective ways. This gave the blood family, as the basic unit of society, a strong and resilient vitality, which in turn constitutes a solid foundation for the existence and continuity of society as a whole. Further, on the basis of this ‘homogeneous’ blood family, a kind of extremely tenacious vitality would be formed from the local society to the overall social community. Historically, China has been invaded by powerful foreign forces many times and suffered serious injuries to the extent that there were regime changes and forced restructuring, such as the Yuan Dynasty. However, traditional Chinese society has not only not been exterminated by ‘heterogeneous’ alien forces and ‘become one of them’, but also, in a short time, would be able to repair or regenerate, or even assimilate the foreign invaders. ‘Though often invaded, at times divided and, in some periods, seriously disrupted, China was never wholly subjected to non-Chinese rule; foreigners who succeeded in carving out an area of authority were indeed, through acculturation and intermarriage, always absorbed into the civilisation’ (Keegan, 2004, p. 202). For example, ‘the Khitans, Tanguts, Jurchen, and Mongols all eventually adopted Chinese institutions once they conquered Chinese territory’ (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 294). The reasons for the strong super-stability of traditional Chinese society and its strong ability to repair and regenerate were manifold, such as the relative sophistication of the civilisation, its huge volume, and so on. In addition, there is another very important reason that should not be ignored, which is the ‘intrinsic adhesion’ of the blood family, which establishes a solid and resilient social foundation for traditional Chinese society. It can be said that this ‘intrinsic adhesion’ of the blood family brought the potential of the basic social unit of traditional Chinese society to the limit of what was possible under the conditions of productivity at the time.

3.3.2.2 *Huge impact on the relatively macro level of traditional Chinese society*

From a relatively macroscopic point of view, in traditional Chinese society, the deep-rooted ‘intrinsic adhesion’ of the blood family has had a tremendous integrative effect on society as a whole. This is mainly manifested in the following aspects:

Firstly, the blood family can provide a very effective, ‘natural’, and malleable behavioural logic for social integration.

In traditional Chinese society, everyone lived in their own blood family. The concept of blood family was deeply rooted in each individual. One of the basic characteristics of blood family members was their strong ‘closeness’ based on the same ‘blood’ relationship, and this brought ‘unconditionality’ in a sense. ‘Whether it was farming, labouring, or trading, it all depended on the joint efforts of the whole family; the so-called “father and son finding battles together” were naturally what it meant to depend on each other. The ethical relationship was thus strengthened!’ (Liang, 2015, p. 34). At the same time, the blood family itself was also a kind of basic, small core community with the nature of the hierarchy which people were accustomed to. Therefore, members of the community in a variety of social interaction activities would naturally follow a kind of behavioural logic in which people treated different people differently according to the closeness of blood relations. According to this behavioural logic and extending it, when a person left home, the closeness of blood relations was further extended into the regional hometown association relationship and so on. This is the origin of the importance of the concept of hometown and fellow villagers in traditional Chinese society. The logical origin of this kind of behaviour is in fact a kind of behavioural rule that must be followed by the members of the blood family in the farming society, where people was born and grew up in the same area. In other words, under certain historical conditions, Chinese people, who were members of the blood family, identified with a ‘natural’ behavioural logic that is empathetic, concentric, and consistent with common sense. Importantly, since the blood family was the most basic social unit of traditional Chinese society, the logic of cognition and behaviour based on the blood family was most easily shared by members of all classes of the same social community. As a result, such a logic of behaviour based on the blood family would logically move from the micro level to the macro level and become the macro logic of social integration of the ‘the differential mode of association’ and ‘similar structure of family and nation’.

‘This kind of feudal ethical thinking is summarised into loyalty, filial piety, integrity, and righteousness or filial piety, brotherhood, loyalty, and faith. Filial piety speaks of the relationship between father and son, i.e., the father acts as the guiding principle for the son. Integrity speaks of the relationship between husband and wife, i.e., the husband acts as the guiding principle for the wife. Brotherhood speaks of the relationship between brothers. They are the principle by which feudal society deals with the relationship between several parts of the family or clan. Loyalty, faith, and righteousness are nothing more than the extension of the principles of father-son relations in the family to the relations between ruler and subject, friend and friend, master and servant’ (Xu, 1980).

Secondly, the blood family was directly responsible for an important part of grass-roots social governance in the integration of society as a whole.

This can be understood in two ways. On the one hand, the non-selectivity, cooperative nature of life and production, blood ethics, and self-governance of the blood family made the clans undoubtedly have a ‘deep constraint’ meaning for the behaviour of their members, which greatly reduced conflicts and disputes originating from the grass-roots level of society. The degree of constraint was no less than the constraints imposed by the Church on its parishioners in medieval European society. What is important is that the coverage of this ‘deep constraint’ was very broad, involving countless blood families, and thus, from a macro perspective, it was very favourable to the safe operation of the entire grass-roots society in China. On the other hand, from the perspective of the operation of power in the overall social governance system, traditional Chinese society adopted a ‘double-track’ governance model, i.e., a combination of a top-down centralised system of power and a bottom-up system of some kind of grass-roots social autonomy. ‘The political system cannot be developed on a single track from the top downward... This means that there must be, in some way, a parallel track from the bottom up. A sound system which will endure must thus be “double track”’ (Fei, Zhao and Qin 2011, p. 826). The central government, with its limited energy and financial resources, did not have the capacity or the need to do everything and worry about every specific social matter. In a certain sense, ‘judging from the reality of people’s lives in agrarian societies, then, we can see that the power structure, although it may be labelled a “dictatorship”, is actually loose, weak, and nominal. It is a government that does not actively govern at all’ (Fei, Hamilton and Zheng, 1992, p. 113).

In many cases, it was difficult for centralised power to directly influence every aspect of grass-roots society. As some scholars have pointed out, ‘the officials dispatched by the central government are ended at county head magistrates. There is no lower official position. A single track from the top downward was built only as far as the county magistrate’s office and then stopped and did not reach in front of or within the gates of each family’s house’ (Fei, 1999a, 1999b, pp. 337–338). For the governance of grass-roots society, the emperor actually took some kind of ‘power transfer’ approach and empowered the blood family patriarchs and village gentry in grass-roots society, so that they took part of the grass-roots social governance responsibilities. ‘The government took the initiative to give certain autonomous rights to the clans in order to contribute to the stability of its regime. The reasons for the government’s transfer of certain rights were: the need to implement the policy of “shifting filial piety to loyalty” and the clan law; to save administrative costs and reduce the hassle of cumbersome governmental affairs; to make use of the clan’s representatives—the township squires, to assist in the governance of civic affairs and to eliminate or reduce the gap between the government and the civil society; the local government borrowed the power of the clan to maintain the stability of the social order’ (Feng, 2005). This kind of ‘power transfer’ or ‘empowerment’ to the clan chiefs and the village squires not only established the legitimacy of the status of the clan chiefs, but also fully mobilised their motivation. This was conducive to the normal and effective functioning of grass-roots society.

Thirdly, blood families were able to provide a basis of legitimacy for the supremacy of the emperor.

Traditional Chinese society was an agrarian society based on a natural economy. Under such conditions of the times, the feudal hierarchy characterised by blood families and personal dependence, as well as the differential mode of association, were inevitable. The family and the state were the same with the same structure. Although from today’s point of view, this was an authoritarian approach that suppressed the ‘nature’ of human freedom and equality, it was a realistic and reasonable behaviour from the point of view of the historical conditions at that time. Under the conditions of the natural economy, in the traditional society where the blood family was the basic social unit, objectively speaking, each specific blood family needed to have a world ‘parent’, ‘great patriarch’, i.e., the ‘Son of Heaven’ to manage itself. ‘In Neo-Confucianism, the category that really carried through and permeates everything was human

ethics, the Three Fundamental Bonds and Five Constant Virtues'. 'In the Three Fundamental Bonds and Five Constant Virtues, everyone has to be in his or her place, which is the "Mandate of Heaven," the "Destiny," and the "Fate."' (Liu, 2000, p. 399). Thus, based on the notion that the people 'ought' to obey their parents and patriarchs, and moving up through several levels, the people eventually and logically formed the idea of obeying the 'Great Patriarch of the World', who was 'commanded by Heaven', i.e., obeying the emperor. Obviously, this kind of habitual cognitive logic based on blood family made the emperor, the 'Great Patriarch of the World', have the power over the world, and then the responsibility over the management of the 'small patriarchs', the 'smaller patriarchs', and the 'even smaller patriarchs' all the way down to the 'ten thousand people'. As a result, the emperor gained the legitimacy to rule the world.

Whether from the perspective of the cognitive and behavioural logic of the blood family, or from a practical point of view, in a sense, the emperor and the people actually formed a super-sized family-type community of interest. As the 'head of the world's big family', the emperor had to 'deserve Heaven with virtue' and perform a series of duties that were in line with and protected the interests of the people, such as respecting the ancestors, filial piety and fraternal duty, protecting the people, and employing the wise. 'There was a form of accountability in the Chinese system. Emperors were trained to feel responsibility to their people, and good ones tried to be responsive to their demands and complaints' (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 314). This responsibility was reflected not only in the fact that the emperor had to offer sacrifices to heaven and earth on a regular basis to pray for the 'ten thousand people' for good weather, abundant harvests, and peace in the world, but also in the fact that the emperor was supposed to have the spirit of dedication to the 'ten thousand people' and diligently attend to official matters. Moreover, from its specific 'ruling' level, the emperor also 'rightfully' and 'naturally' governed the world by the principles of the three fundamental bonds and five constant virtues, which were adapted to the hierarchical system of the blood family, i.e., ruler guides subject, father guides son, and husband guides wife.

Fourthly, the blood family was able to effectively integrate many major things in all aspects of society.

This strong 'internal adhesion' of the blood clan had a powerful convergence effect on the whole society, which could effectively give

rise to a certain 'fit' and 'self-conformity' between all levels and fields of society. From the perspective of vertical governance, the whole traditional Chinese society took the blood family with deep 'intrinsic adhesion' as the origin of its behaviour and took 'loyalty and filial piety' and 'cultivating and ruling' as the typical cognition and logic of the blood family, which made the whole society consistent from the grass-roots level of governance to all levels of government, up to the level of governance of the emperor, and so on. And at the same time, it also made the whole governance system present a self-consistent situation at all levels, which in turn made the whole social community able to effectively coalesce. From the perspective of horizontal governance, the blood family based on deep 'internal adhesion' enabled the whole traditional Chinese society to achieve coherence and integration in various fields such as economy, society, politics, and education. It is precisely under the influence of the deep 'internal adhesion' of the blood family that, as a whole, traditional Chinese society did not have any obvious 'separation of politics and economics', 'separation of politics and religion', and so on. There is no obvious phenomenon of social 'exclusion', 'rejection', and 'separation' in traditional Chinese society as a whole. Because of this, traditional Chinese society did not have the kind of 'social tearing' phenomena such as the lack of solid social units, the existence of vassal states and feudal lords, the separation of church and state, and the confrontation of various sects within the church, as was the case in medieval European society.

In short, under the same conditions of natural economy in a farming society, compared with the European medieval society and the traditional societies of many countries and regions, the Chinese traditional society is relatively well integrated and has relatively strong vitality and capacity for continuity for many reasons. But there is no doubt that one of the most important reasons lies in the strong support of the deeply rooted 'intrinsic adhesion' of the blood families in traditional Chinese society.

Finally, it is important to point out that the strong 'intrinsic adhesion' of blood family is a fundamental feature of the Chinese secularisation tradition, which had a great impact on the society of that time, both at the micro level and at the macro level. Not only that, but also, on the other hand, the deep-rooted 'intrinsic adhesion' of the blood family has greatly strengthened the overall secularisation of traditional Chinese society. The fulfilment of people's ultimate concern needs and various basic needs by blood families has undoubtedly strengthened people's identification with and dependence on the real world. In the real life of traditional

Chinese society, people relied on this deep-rooted ‘internal adhesion’ of the blood family to produce together, live together, resist all kinds of risks, and ultimately achieve the ‘continuous growth and development’ of traditional Chinese civilisation together. As a result, each blood family became a concrete and fundamental ‘community of destiny’ or even ‘community of life’ in which each member of the society lived, and which spread throughout the entire Chinese society. Such a situation made it unnecessary for people to seek effective and direct help from the ‘heavenly kingdom’ of ‘The Other World’, which has not yet been directly recognised. Generally speaking, one of the major reasons why traditional Chinese society has remained a secularised society with a passion for This World for thousands of years and has not been replaced by a religious society with The Other World lies in the deep-rooted ‘intrinsic adhesion’ of the blood family. In contrast, medieval European society, which lacked such a deep-rooted blood-family-based social unit, was in a completely different situation, namely, ‘everywhere there was this state of upheaval: established and overthrown; united and divided. They had no boundaries, no governments. People extends beyond the limits within which they are at first enclosed; There was only a general confusion of situations, principles, facts, races, and languages. Such is barbarous Europe’ (Guizot, 2005, p. 54).

3.4 HARD WORK AND THRIFT

From the point of view of the specific situation of societal members’ contribution and input, that is, whether they are willing to work or not, and whether they are willing to invest or not in production activities, the people of traditional Chinese societies show an extremely hardworking and thrifty behavioural orientation. Naturally, people in traditional farming societies in most countries and regions are hardworking and thrifty. However, compared with the medieval societies of Europe and many other countries and regions, the hard work and thrift of the people in traditional Chinese societies are more prominent. We cannot underestimate the significance of hardworking and thrifty behaviour. For traditional Chinese societies with limited potential for improvement in traditional agricultural production techniques and scarce land resources, very hardworking and thrifty behaviour has a direct impact on whether their inner potential can be activated and released to the fullest extent, and whether their basic survival and continuity can be sustained.

3.4.1 *Reasons for Chinese people's hard work and thrift*

Compared with traditional societies in other countries and regions, the Chinese people's awareness and behaviour of hard work and thrift are very prominent. There are several main reasons for this phenomenon:

First, the contradiction between people and land is highlighted.

The enormous pressure caused by the accentuation of the contradiction between man and land has made it impossible for people in traditional Chinese societies not to be hardworking and thrifty. Otherwise, their basic survival would be seriously affected. A very real problem is the scarcity of arable land per capita in traditional Chinese society. 'The whole surface of the empire is, with trifling exceptions, dedicated to the production of food for man alone' (Staunton, 1797, p. 544). And 'No arable land lies fallow' (Staunton, 1797, p. 545). 'The labour of man is little diverted from that industry' (Stanton 1797, p. 545). Even so, the area of arable land in China was still extremely limited in relation to the size of the huge population. The Tang Dynasty poet Li Shen's poem, 'No field has been lying fallow, Still the hungry peasants to the corpse,' is a true reflection of this reality. (Li, 2017). Table 3.1 shows that in the 1,600 years from 2 A.D. to 1602, China's arable land doubled from 557 million mu to 1,059 million mu, and then shrank again. In stark contrast, the population of China increased from 59 million in 2 A.D. to more than 180 million in 1753 and more than 370 million in 1822, a net increase of two and five times, respectively. Correspondingly, the area of cultivated land per capita declined from 9.35 mu in 2 A.D. to 3.69 mu in 1753 and 1.87–3.7 mu in 1822. By contrast, Europe, which historically had a population roughly similar to China's, had 'ten billion mu of agriculturally accessible plains' (Feng & Li, 2014, p. 11).

Second, other pressures on basic livelihood needs.

In traditional Chinese societies, in addition to the enormous pressure of the human-land conflict, the basic needs of the people were subject to pressure in several other important areas. Firstly, the 'ceiling' effect on the potential of agricultural production under natural economic conditions. Under natural economic conditions, the evolution of the agrarian economy was extremely limited. When the development of the agrarian economy reached a certain point, it would show an obvious effect of diminishing marginal utility of production efficiency, that is, the 'involution' or 'ceiling' effect, and it was difficult to make breakthroughs. The reason for this situation, according to Schultz's explanation, is that in

Table 3.1 Population cropland and acreage in some dynasties

<i>Dynasty</i>	<i>Year (AD)</i>	<i>Population (millions)</i>	<i>Cultivated Land (Millions of Mu)</i>	<i>Cultivated Land Per Capita (Mu)</i>	<i>Grain Seeding Yield Per Mu (kg)</i>
Western Han Dynasty	2	59.59	557	9.35	132
Eastern Han Dynasty	105	53.26	511	9.59	132
Tang Dynasty	755	52.91	666	12.6	167
Ming Dynasty	1393	60.55	776	12.8	174
Ming Dynasty	1602	56.31	1059	18.8	-
Qing Dynasty	1753	183.68	678	3.69	184
Qing Dynasty	1784	286.33	701	2.45	-
Qing Dynasty	1812	333.70	727	2.18	-
Qing Dynasty	1822	372.46	697	1.87	-
			(It is also said that the total cultivated land in 1840, a neighbouring year, was about 1.4 billion mu.)	(or 3.7 mu)	

Source: Zheng, Z., Ma, L. and Wang, X. P. (1998). The real area of cultivated land in the Qing Dynasty. *Jianghai Journal*, 04, p. 129–135

traditional agriculture, ‘the state of technology remained unchanged’; ‘the state of preferences and motivations for holding and acquiring sources of income remained unchanged’; and farmers had little savings and thus lack the capacity to invest (Schultz, 2006). Table 3.1 shows that grain yields in China increased from 132 kilogrammes per mu in 2 A.D. to only 184 kilogrammes per mu in 1753 after more than 1,700 years, which is a too small development. The same is true of Europe. ‘Peasant farming methods in continental Europe rarely advanced beyond medieval practices until the nineteenth century’ (Tauger, 2010a, 2010b). This situation is a general rule for the development of productivity in the agricultural economy under the conditions of agrarian societies. Secondly, farmers in traditional Chinese societies were disproportionately exposed to various risks. Farmers who lived off the land were exposed to a large number of natural disaster risks. China is a region with a high prevalence of natural disasters such as droughts, floods, and locusts. ‘According to statistics,

between 206 B.C. and 1936 A.D., there were 5,150 documented disasters in China alone, with an average of one occurring every six months' (Feng & Li, 2014, p. 11). Specifically, during the 2,155 years from 206 B.C. to 1949, there were 1,056 more serious droughts, averaging one major drought every two years; during the 2,155 years from 206 B.C. to 1949, there were 1,092 larger flood events, averaging one every two years; and in the 2,600-odd years between the end of Zhou Dynasty and Spring and Autumn Period and 1949, there were more than 800 locust plagues, averaging once every two to three years. (Zhu, 2020, pp. 88–89). In the event of a famine year, if people did not have the necessary food reserves, they could only starve to death or escape from a famine-stricken region. This situation contrasts sharply with that in Europe. In Europe, the natural climatic conditions are much better. 'There is enough rain, ... rivers in the riverbed normally flow into the sea. Only a few areas are in danger of serious flooding or drying up. Cereals are plentiful in many parts of Europe and ... there is no need to do a great deal of water storage or irrigation' (Needham & Pan, 1986, p. 91). Not only that but Chinese farmers were exposed to a large number of social risks. Traditional Chinese society allowed the free sale of land under many conditions. This was accompanied by the phenomenon of land annexation, which threatened the basic survival of small landowners, homesteaders, and semi-homesteaders. These people would lose their land or part of it in the event of a slight mismanagement of their land or in the event of a year of calamity, thus losing or partially losing the guarantee to their basic livelihood. 'At the beginning of each dynasty small proprietors constituted the majority of the peasantry. But as taxes increased, more and more of them lost their plots to the large landowners and became tenants' (Stavrianos, 1991, p. 150). Obviously, the smallholder economy was extremely fragile and could not withstand all kinds of natural and social risks, and agricultural producers had to be extremely careful and diligent in their labour.

Third, the large number of rigid duties of the members of society.

Under such enormous and numerous pressures, the Chinese people were also burdened with a large number of realistic, concrete, and rigid responsibilities. In addition to having to solve the immediate basic needs of life, out of an instinctive desire for the 'eternal existence' of the blood family, the Chinese people must also assume endless and unlimited responsibility for their offspring and thus must invest enormous energy and possibly material resources to ensure the reproduction of

their offspring. This includes building houses for their children and grandchildren, arranging for their marriages, and, if possible, making some necessary educational expenditures for them. ‘Family affection and responsibility walk hand in hand together and never wish to be separated’ (Macartney, 2019). As one scholar puts it, the labour of fulfilling these duties in life ‘is the sort of job that “harms the self as it benefits others.” Except, perhaps, for a sense of spiritual fulfilment, what benefit does one get out of raising an embryo to an adult?’ (Fei, Hamilton & Zheng, 1992, p. 116). Furthermore, China is a humane society, and every blood family still has some necessary expenses for human contacts and social interactions. Even if these rigid needs are met, the Chinese tend to consider the acquisition of land, a major issue that members of society have dreamed of for generations. It is also important to note that the Chinese believe more in the real world. As mentioned earlier, the real world is the basic goal orientation and the basic field of activity of the Chinese. The focus on the real world brings about, firstly, that there is no place for people to avoid all kinds of duties in life, and they must rely on their own hard work; secondly, they value the present life and the present rewards, and they hope to see the improvement of the life of the blood family in the present life, and they don’t believe in the afterlife. All these have increased the urgency of the Chinese people’s lives, and accordingly increased the degree of their hard work.

How could the Chinese people obtain the necessary means of subsistence in a situation where the pressure for survival was enormous and land resources were scarce?

Many nomadic communities are accustomed to expanding outwards, invading other countries and communities in order to plunder their resources and wealth for their own survival. For example, Genghis Khan’s aim ‘was extractive, not stabilising, designed to support the nomad way of life, not to change it’ (Keegan, 2004, p. 207). In traditional Indian society, which was based on an agrarian economy, the people believed in incarnation. With the Indian populace, ‘The only possibilities for social mobility existed not in this life but between lifetimes, since one’s karma can change only from one lifetime to the next. An individual was thus trapped in his or her karma for life. But whether one moved up or down in the hierarchy of jatis depended on how one fulfilled the dharma, or rules governing good conduct, for the jati one was born into. Failure to abide by these rules could cause one to fall lower in the hierarchy in the next life, and hence farther away from true existence’ (Fukuyama, 2011,

p. 166). Based on such a religious logic, the sense of diligence of the Indian people in the midst of the present world is bound to diminish.

In contrast to many nomadic communities that live by plundering the resources and wealth of others, the traditional agrarian-based Chinese society has not, historically speaking, been able to develop the idea of relying on the plundering of the wealth of other countries or communities to support itself. Furthermore, the survival, wealth ownership, and, above all, the level of civilisation of China's neighbouring communities are far inferior to its own. In traditional society, the Chinese people had a strong sense of civilised superiority and had always regarded themselves as the Kingdom of Heaven, so it was difficult to form, nor was it possible to form the idea of plundering the wealth of neighbouring communities on a large scale. 'Although only Japan was not politically subordinate to China, all the neighbouring countries, including Japan, were absorbing Chinese civilisation. In this sense it can be said that China rules "everything under heaven"' (Toynbee & Ikeda, 1985). For the neighbouring countries and regions, China's basic attitude was to be superior and to 'gift' extensively. The basic principle of interaction was 'giving more and getting less'. The main action was to give, not to ask for, let alone to loot. China is 'concerned with its own development and has no ambitions for external expansion' (Fairbank, 2013).

China was also out of place in comparison to the people of traditional Indian society, which aimed at the afterlife. The Chinese valued the reality of earthly life and strived for the present. More specifically, in the religious life of traditional Indian society, a person's present situation is destiny, and is the return on the specific condition of one's multiple past lifetimes of 'karma' and is not something to worry about. But instead, the next step in the process of reincarnation is a matter of serious consideration. The cultivation of one's 'disciplines' to be reincarnated as one wishes requires a relatively long process, which is measured in a short time by 'one lifetime' and 'one life' and in a long time by 'many lifetimes' and 'many lives'. Indians have plenty of time to carry out their spiritual practices, so they are not in a hurry to complete the major events of their lives, which take a long time to complete. Therefore, in a sense, for people in traditional Indian society, there is a lot of time, so much so that it appears to be a kind of 'stagnation' or 'static' unchanging state. This mental condition of the Indian is bound to diminish the intensity of his sense of diligence and intensity of behaviour. The Chinese are the opposite of the Indians in their traditional society. The Chinese pursue a realistic life on earth, and

a realistic life based on an agrarian economy. The agrarian economy is based on ‘year’ and ‘season’ as the basic unit of time, which is extremely time-sensitive. Once ‘out of time’, what is delayed is not only the agricultural harvest but also the basic livelihood of the family. Under such circumstances, it is necessary to strive ‘year by year’, ‘season by season’, and to aim for the livelihood of the present.

That being the case, there is only one way for people in traditional Chinese societies to obtain the resources they need to live, and that is to look to themselves ‘inwardly’ for a way out in a peaceful way. In terms of seeking and developing one’s own potential ‘inwardly’, it can be said that there is basically no room for the reclamation of new land; the development of science and technology and the increase of capital investment are the inherent shortcomings of the traditional agricultural economy which cannot be effectively solved by the traditional agricultural economy itself, and thus there is almost no room for it; although there is some room for the development of commodity economy, the potential of the domestic market is very limited and expanding overseas markets is both distant and foreign thus intimidating. In addition, due to a variety of reasons, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, the government introduced more and more stringent trade prohibitions by sea. So even if a small number of people had the idea of foreign trade, it was difficult to realise. The important thing is that the basic state policy of the country which is to be based on agriculture, as well as the overall closure of the society, put a cap on the possibility of opening up. Thus, it seems that as a necessity, the Chinese can only seek kinetic energy ‘inwardly’, focusing on their own internal labour force and tapping into its almost limitless potential. On the one hand, the potential of labour must be exploited to the maximum, and the potential of traditional farming techniques must be maximised. On the other hand, it is necessary to make maximum savings in production and life, to save wherever possible, and to cut out all unnecessary expenses on production and consumption. It is in this sense that thrift means output. All this has given rise to the consciousness and behavioural orientation of hard work and thrift in traditional Chinese society.

3.4.2 Chinese People’s Awareness and Behaviour of Hard Work and Thrift

The diligence of the Chinese is self-evident. As Weber (1995, p. 115) said, ‘the diligence and labour power of the Chinese have always been

regarded as unsurpassed'. For the Chinese, their own labour force is relatively the most reliable and self-evident thing they have, and the Chinese hold a positive attitude of 'human effort is the decisive factor'. Under traditional social conditions, the main source of agricultural production potential is physical strength, which requires hard work to maximise the development of physical potential, complemented by maximising agricultural production skills. The Chinese believe that 'bread is the staff of life' and the simple truth that you reap what you sow. Although diligence is a virtue promoted by most ethnic groups, for the Chinese it is not just a moral issue, but also a very real concern for their own lives and for the survival and continuity of their family line. Furthermore, the widespread existence of blood families maximises the sense of responsibility, motivation, and willingness to work, as well as the accompanying investment in the labour of the members of the society. Under the enormous pressure of survival, such as the scarcity of arable land per capita, the family could not survive and the blood could not continue without hard work. For thousands of years, the enormous pressure of survival and a strong sense of family responsibility have made hard work and meticulous cultivation a deep-rooted instinctive behaviour of the Chinese people, almost similar to what Kant called absolute command. The first British mission to China during the Qianlong period of the Qing dynasty found that 'through the whole of this short land journey, not a spot was seen that was not cultivated with industry. ... The husbandry is singularly neat; not a weed to be seen' (Staunton, 1797, p. 482). Other foreigners found that Chinese farmers acted with 'the largest and best crop possible, rather than the least labour and trouble, as is so often the case with us, determining their methods and practices' (King, 2013, p. 284).

Closely related to the consciousness and behavioural orientation of diligence is the consciousness and behavioural orientation of thrift. In traditional Chinese societies, where basic production resources, such as land, productivity levels, and the mass production of household goods, are very limited, the Chinese people's 'inward' search for kinetic energy has almost reached its limit. If diligence focuses on maximising the 'open a water source' of labour resources, thrift focuses on maximising the 'reducing outflow' of consumption expenditures by members of society. Objectively speaking, thrift has an indispensable positive effect on the saving of all unnecessary expenditures, as well as on the basic stockpiling of reserves for possible future risks, including natural and social risks, to prepare for the unexpected.

In traditional Chinese society, the rulers, the intellectual class, and the public all attach great importance to the issue of thrift. ‘In Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Mohism classics and the country’s generations of family tradition, for the individual, thrift is the internal discipline of the moral purpose and the guidelines for dealing with the world. “In terms of your own behaviour, the first thing you should do is to treat people respectfully and live frugally”. For the politicians, thrift is the political strategy to promote social harmony. “Prohibiting extravagance and promoting frugality is good governance” (Li & Huang, 2016). Confucius (1960, p. 207) said, ‘extravagance leads to insubordination, and parsimony to meanness. It is better to be mean than to be insubordinate’. ‘Ever since Dong Zhongshu of the Western Han Dynasty established the orthodoxy of Confucianism by “dismissing all schools of thought and exclusively respecting Confucianism”, the idea of depreciating extravagance and respecting frugality has become the consumption guideline for the common people in their daily lives during the feudal dynasty of China’ (Hang, 2016). Generally speaking, a farming family originally did not have much-accumulated wealth. Relying on the extremely limited accumulation of family wealth, a family had to cope with the basic problem of survival and make all necessary expenditures. Under such circumstances, a family that is not careful and is a little ‘extravagant’ is bound to decline rapidly, or at least not be able to cope effectively with the risk of a poor harvest in the coming year. The Chinese regard thrift as a virtue, and the phenomenon of having a ‘spendthrift’ son as the misfortune of the family. Almost invariably, all family traditions and books advocate the virtues of thrift and avoidance of wastefulness, lest the family should fall into the vice of extravagance. *Familial Precepts of Master Zhu* reminds future generations, ‘for a porridge or a meal, we should think that it is hard won; for half a thread or half a thread of clothing, we also need to constantly remember that the production of these materials is very difficult’. ‘You must be frugal in your own life, and don’t linger when you are having a dinner together. The tableware is simple and clean, even though it is made of clay, it is better than gold and jade; food is economical and exquisite, even though it is a vegetable grown in the garden, it is better than delicacies’ (Zhu, 2013). Zeng Guofan (1985) in the family letter earnestly urged his family, ‘taking farming and reading as the foundation is a long-term strategy’. ‘Family’s failure is due to luxury, people’s failure is due to leisure, and being disliked is due to arrogance’. Over time, thrift has become a deep-rooted concept and behavioural orientation that can

be compared to hard work in traditional Chinese society. ‘Nothing jars on the nerves of these people more than incurring of needless expense, extravagance in any form, or poor judgment in making purchases’ (King, 2013, p. 234). One scholar describes the phenomenon of thrift in traditional Chinese societies as specifically as this, ‘thrift is encouraged. It was believed that throwing away anything unused would offend the Master of Heaven’. ‘Wasting grains of rice was not allowed. Even when the rice had become stale and sour, the whole family had to try to finish it. Clothing may be worn by several generations until it is worn out. Worn-out clothes are not thrown away, but are used to make soles for shoes, to exchange for sweets, or for ceramic vessels’ (Fei, 1999a, 1999b, p. 85).

As can be seen from the above, the people of traditional Chinese society relied on the consciousness and behavioural orientation of hard work and thrift to ‘turn inward’, that is, to explore their potential to the maximum extent possible within themselves, instead of ‘turning outward’ to aggressively expand and plunder the living resources and wealth of other ethnic groups, or passively waiting for reincarnation, thus enabling the people in the farming societies to maintain a basic and the real world life, that is, a basic secularised life, under extremely difficult and hard circumstances. Further, in the face of severe per capita land scarcity, population growth, and other risks and pressures, one of the major reasons for the resilience of traditional Chinese civilisation, which has lasted for thousands of years, is that it is strongly supported by this awareness and behavioural orientation of hard work and thrift, as well as by the farming techniques of meticulous cultivation developed on this basis.

It should be made clear that Chinese hard work and thrift are not ascetic forms of behaviour, nor do they advocate the spirit of ‘asceticism Chinese hard work and thrift are an integral part of the whole tradition of secularisation in China. In essence, the goal of secularisation is to live a good life on earth in the real world to satisfy people’s normal daily needs, not to restrain people’s normal desires in exchange for qualification to enter the ‘kingdom of Heaven’, not to ‘abstain’ from desires. Therefore, it is generally recognised by the Chinese that once the basic needs of survival have been met, people should be able to pursue a happy real life within their means. It is impossible for the Chinese to approve of the extreme practices advocated by extreme religions such as Christianity in medieval Europe and Brahmanism in traditional India, i.e., to satisfy their need to enter the heaven or reincarnate, people must adopt a lifestyle that deviates from human nature, such as ‘abstinence’ and ‘self-mutilation’.

For example, Confucius (1960, p. 248) aspired to a harmonious life of physical and mental happiness: ‘In this, the last month of spring, with the dress of the season all complete, along with five or six young men, and six or seven boys, I would wash in the river, enjoy the breeze on the hill, and return home singing’. The same is true of folk life. In the rural areas of traditional Chinese society, many festivals served a similar function of entertainment and leisure. ‘After hard labour, it was a physiological need to relax muscle and nerve tension’. ‘Recreation requires collective activities, and so the social system developed this function. Collective activity in recreation strengthens the social bonds between the participants so that it goes beyond mere physical rest’. ‘Festivals always occur at the time of intervals between productive activities’ (Fei, 1999a, 1999b, pp. 91–92).

3.5 PRAGMATISM AND RATIONALITY

Pragmatism and rationality are other distinctive features of the Chinese secular tradition. In traditional Chinese society, for the people’s primary production, living activities, and the normal functioning of society, it is not enough to have the consciousness and behaviour of ‘willingness to work’ and ‘hard work’ of diligence and thrift. This is because, under a given level of productivity and a given amount of labour input, if one is only ‘willing to work’ and ‘working hard’, one cannot effectively solve the problems of cost per unit of output, cost-effectiveness, social cooperation, coordination of interest structures, and resistance to various risks. It also needs to effectively solve a series of significant problems such as social cooperation, coordination of interest structure, and resistance to various risks. Suppose the aforementioned important issues are not effectively resolved, they will still affect the average survival of the people, the efficiency of production, the regular operation of society, and a series of other important issues. Therefore, on the basis of ‘willingness to work’ and ‘hard work’, people in traditional Chinese society have further solved the problem of ‘whether they can do it’ and ‘cost-effectiveness’ to a certain extent. ‘Cost-effectiveness’ inevitably leads to the question of pragmatism and rationality.

3.5.1 *Reasons for Pragmatism and Rationality*

In traditional Chinese society, all groups of society generally agree on a pragmatic and rational way of consciousness and behaviour and generally value practical results rather than following the ‘will of God’ from ‘the other world’ and doing things that are not directly related to their interests and that cannot be verified. This is the only way to ensure the smooth running of one’s primary production, living activities, and the normal functioning of a complex society.

The unique conditions of the times in traditional Chinese society have made the consciousness and behaviour of pragmatism and rationality among various social groups.

First, on the characteristics of agricultural societies.

Traditional Chinese society is an agrarian society with its roots in farming. ‘Agriculture differs from both pastoralism and industry in that it draws directly from the land’ (Fei, 1999a, 1999b, pp. 1–2). If people want to carry out normal agricultural activities, they must follow the laws of nature, ploughing, sowing, fertilising, watering, and working diligently in strict accordance with the different agricultural seasons in order to reap the rewards. Whenever there is a slight deviation from the specific agricultural seasons, the actual output of people’s agricultural activities will be reduced, and they will have to pay an unbearable price. In particular, Chinese farmers have very little land per capita, are small business owners, and are exposed to many risks and pressures, and the ability to maintain a family’s basic livelihood depends on the normal output of crops on the land in a given year. Therefore, farmers have to rationally calculate everything related to the costs and benefits of their agricultural production activities based on realistic scenarios. ‘Living close to the subsistence margin and subject to the vagaries of weather and the claims of outsiders’, therefore, ‘the peasant cultivator seeks to avoid the failure that will ruin him rather than attempting a big, but risky, killing. In decision-making parlance his behaviour is risk-averse; he minimises the subjective probability of the maximum loss’ (Scott, 2001, pp. 5–6). Moreover, farmers must also make the necessary reserves in advance to guard against possible natural disasters. ‘And bad years were bound to come, sooner or later. A peasant living on the assumption that bad years would not come didn’t live long’ (Harari, 2014, p. 99).

Secondly, the complex structure of social interest relations.

The structure of traditional Chinese society is very different from that of medieval European society. In a sense, if the European medieval society is a 'simple double world' between 'man and God', then the traditional Chinese society is a 'complex single world' between 'man and man'. Medieval European society was a religious society. This religious society divided everything under the sun into two relatively simple worlds: the world of man and the world of God, with the former dependent on and subordinate to the latter. 'Everything is about communication and dialogue between these two worlds and its result. It is not necessary to invest great energy and enthusiasm between man and man'. 'The two worlds of man and God can be communicated through appropriate rituals, behaviours, and beliefs. In short, the relationship between these two worlds and their respective internal structures are simple and clear' (Wu, 1996). Compared to medieval European society, traditional Chinese society is a relatively homogeneous secularised society, i.e., a relatively homogeneous present world. However, the internal structure of this single present world was extremely complex. The hierarchical structure of society, the differential order of human relationships, and various kinds of interests are intricately interwoven, and each hierarchy and each kind of human relationship has its own specific interests and normative requirements. As a result, the seemingly simple single world is in fact divided into a large number of branch worlds with complex compositions. The actions of each group and each individual are subject to the constraints and limitations of the 'many branch worlds' of interest relations from multiple groups and aspects. Under such circumstances, if Chinese people want to achieve something, they must balance the interests of all parties in a spirit of pragmatism and rationality, so as to minimise unnecessary internal losses and reduce transaction costs.

3.5.2 *Main Manifestations of Pragmatism and Rationality*

People's consciousness and behaviour of pragmatism and rationality in traditional Chinese society are manifested in at least the following aspects:

Firstly, from the producer's point of view, people attach great importance to and continuously improve agricultural production skills.

Traditional Chinese society is an agrarian society. For members of an agrarian society based on a natural economy, land is the most important resource for production and life. People are based on the earth in 'heaven and earth', and they take their means of production and living from the

land within their reach; all their production and life are born from the land, and the continuity of the Chinese civilised community for generations is also guaranteed by the land. However, as mentioned earlier, China's per capita land area is extremely scarce, while its population is growing exponentially. In addition, unlike many nomadic groups, traditional Chinese societies based on an agrarian economy did not have the possibility or strong motivation to occupy large amounts of land. Thus, in order to solve the outstanding contradiction between people and land, China could only 'turn inwards', i.e., seek a solution to the problem from within itself.

Under these circumstances, in addition to developing their full physical potential, people attached particular importance to the continuous improvement of agricultural production skills and to the issue of intensive cultivation of the land, with the goal to increase the yield per unit area of crops. It is a historical fact that since the time of Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty, China's 'intensive manual labour, with most of the arable land being intensively cultivated like a garden, created the highest level of production per unit of area in the contemporary world agriculture while maintaining the strength of the land' (Zhao, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d). During the Western Han Dynasty, crops and agricultural technologies such as winter wheat, the substitute field method, and the seed plough began to spread, and the construction of some large-scale water conservancy facilities such as the Liufu Canal, the White Canal, the Longshou Canal, and the Chengguo Canal contributed to the development of agriculture in general. After a long period of accumulation, to the Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties, China's agricultural production skills have been further developed. Especially, the emergence of 'one year, multiple harvests' technology improved the yield of crops per unit area significantly. 'People used various production factors in a comprehensive and dialectical way, and arranged the production procedures in a more reasonable way through intercropping, crop rotation, crop sets, and other measures' 'so that the number of harvests in a year was increased from one to two or three, or even more times' (Li, 1982). In addition, crops such as corn, sugar cane, peanuts, etc., were introduced from overseas, which enriched the variety of crops in China and increased the total crop production, enabling it to feed a larger population; the fact that China's population exceeded the 100 million mark is related to this.

It is worth noting that the improvement of agricultural production skills in traditional Chinese society was inextricably linked to the continuous accumulation and development of related empirical knowledge. The knowledge of astronomy and calendar related to agriculture has been studied from a very early stage in China. ‘During the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period’, the ‘four risings (beginnings)’ of spring, summer, autumn, and winter were added. The idea of the four seasons was established. In the Western Han Dynasty, on the basis of the original concept of the four seasons and using the astronomical achievements of the time, the whole year was divided into twenty-four portions of about fifteen days each, which were used to indicate the changes of the seasons and climate during the year’ (Zhang, 1999). Furthermore, there was a proliferation of works summarising the experience of agricultural activities and some of the patterns. In China, ‘there are 376 kinds of ancient agricultural monographs, and some of them occupy a special place in the history of world agronomy’ (Yang, 1986, p. 34). In traditional Chinese society, four ancient Chinese agricultural books, *The Book of Fanshengzhi*, *Qimin Yaoshu*, *Book of Agriculture by Wang Zhen*, *A Complete Treatise on Agriculture* have been specifically guiding China’s actual agricultural production activities, so that the agricultural activities in traditional Chinese society were more professional and standardised. In contrast, in the medieval European society, a series of agricultural books that had an important influence in the Roman period, including the *De Agriculture* written by Cato, have been lost for a long time, and there were no corresponding replacement agricultural books. In addition, in traditional Chinese society, the emperor, who advocated an agrarian-based approach, often issued ‘agricultural texts’ to urge farmers to cultivate their crops and listened to the views of his ministers when promoting agricultural technology, which were used to guide agricultural production in the whole country or in some regions and to promote an increase in food production’ (Wang, 2013). The rulers of medieval European societies, including secular kings and church popes and bishops, were unable to match this example.

Secondly, from the perspective of intellectual orientation, the tradition of pragmatism is deeply rooted.

In traditional Chinese society, intellectuals play a significant role. Generally speaking, it is obviously different from the intellectual groups in European medieval society. The Chinese intellectual groups, which are deeply immersed in Confucianism, have a strong sense of the family and

the country, and take the whole world as their responsibility, emphasises very much on building a career in real society rather than striving for the 'ideal goal' of 'the other side of the world', let alone spending their lives as pure scholars or a 'purely academic' researcher for the goal of 'academics for the sake of academics'. From the perspective of the basic behavioural orientation of the intellectual community, China stresses the 'unity of knowledge and action'. The highest goal of the Chinese intellectuals is to fulfil their ambitions in the real world and to achieve the 'three immortality' of 'establishing virtue, establishing speech, and establishing merit'. For this reason, this group naturally puts great emphasis on the behavioural orientation of being oriented to the real world and applying it to the real world. 'In the view of Confucianism, not only the knowledge of virtue but also all the narratives in the classical world, if they are to lead to the real world, must be completed by practice, and practical wisdom must be transformed into practical action. Practical wisdom as "knowing" itself requires unfolding itself into "action"' (Chen, 2014).

It should be admitted that, while attaching importance to the pragmatic behavioural orientation of the world, the Chinese intellectual community has not paid enough attention to the 'metaphysical' exploration of 'pure science', so that the progress of science at the level of 'doctrine' has relatively lagged behind the development of technology at the level of 'utility'. The progress of science at the level of 'doctrine' lags behind the development of technology at the level of 'practice'. As a relatively less utilitarian or realistic academic exploration, science attaches importance to a certain kind of relatively 'ultra-utilitarian' research, a kind of discussion that, relatively speaking, only attaches importance to the search for truth, judgement of true and false, right and wrong, regardless of 'usefulness' or not. Moreover, the scope of this kind of study is very wide, even beyond the scope of the real world. This is obviously something that the Chinese intellectuals, whose basic behavioural orientation is pragmatism, are not keen on. In a sense, what Chinese intellectuals are keen on is a kind of discussion on how to ensure that all kinds of interests in the social community can reach a coordinated and balanced state, and to ensure the normal operation and continued improvement of the society, which belongs to a kind of 'practical interest weighing rationality' rather than a 'scientific inquiry rationality'. Chinese intellectuals are relatively over-exerting themselves in the 'practical interest weighing rationality', while they are relatively under-exerting themselves in the 'scientific inquiry rationality'. Such a situation will inevitably lead

to an imbalance in the development of science and technology in traditional Chinese society. It is a recognised fact that in traditional Chinese society, the development of technology at the practical level has long been a world leader. ‘The emergence of Chinese technological discoveries and inventions are often far in advance of contemporary Europe, especially up to the fifteenth century’ (Joseph, 2018). But in contrast. China’s scientific development had obvious limitations. It is true, as Needham Joseph put it, that ‘there were many technical discoveries in China, but this was not modern science, nor theoretical science, but empirical science’ (Pan, 1986, p. 80).

Strictly speaking, the relative emphasis of the intellectual community on the practical activities of the world and the relative lack of attention to the theoretical level of knowledge made them, in a sense, separate from the category of ‘pure intellectuals’, and converted them into the ‘scholar’ group with a deeper degree of ‘involvement in the world’ and humanism. This is a distinctive feature of the intellectual group in traditional Chinese society, which differs from that in medieval European society. Although this practice itself was not conducive to the development of science, objectively speaking, the orientation of pragmatism and ‘in practice’ still had a considerable positive impact on the ability of all groups in society, including the emperor, to pay attention to and solve the real problems of the day, and to continuously improve the present society.

Thirdly, from the point of view of the specific way of dealing with the problems, people generally agree with the golden mean approach of listening to both sides and finding the moderate and suitable solution.

The social structure of traditional Chinese society is highly complex, with a wide variety of interests intertwined. As mentioned earlier, unlike the ‘simple double world’ of medieval European society, which consisted of both ‘man and god’, traditional Chinese society was a ‘complex single world’ composed ‘purely’ of human beings. The social structure based on the kinship family with ‘the differential mode of association’ has a vital ‘humane’ component, with complex and varied humane rules that must be followed, and each person must follow the specific agreed upon humane rules (extending and returning favours in social interactions). Only in this way can the necessary social interactions take place. At the same time, the related and intertwined hierarchical society, but with a different centre of gravity, formed many hierarchical social rules that every member of the society had to follow from the point of view of ‘ruling’ and ‘getting things done’. In addition, the traditional Chinese society is

a vast social community, which is composed of many elements and variables, and a large number of actual and potential conflicts and disputes need to be resolved and prevented, so the whole society is full of tension, and the slightest carelessness will further lead to fierce social conflicts. In this way, every group and even every individual in the two social sequences of differential mode of association and hierarchy will be faced with a situation in which a variety of interests, a variety of rules of human behaviour, and conduct of business are intertwined, and what every group or individual does or encounters will have repercussions on more groups or more people. In other words, every group and every person have compound interest requests and play a cluster of roles with complex 'interest demands'. And the impact is of a wide range; the handling or response to each problem will affect more people or things, and the advancement of the interests of one group may inadvertently result in the simultaneous loss of the interests of another group, or the advancement of this interest of the group may objectively and simultaneously result in the loss of another interest of the group. Such a situation in real society will be further extended to a broader range of people and events, involving a more comprehensive range of complex and diverse interests and creating more social tensions.

Under such circumstances, when members of society deal with the problems of specific people and matters, they are not facing the unilateral interests of other groups or individuals and adopting the corresponding 'matter-of-fact' approach; it is not only related to the parties involved, and a specific thing done by the parties involved, and it is not a simple issue of right and wrong, but indeed it is an issue of balance between the multiple interests of the related multiple groups. 'The closer the relationship, the more important balance is and the more balancing criteria there are. Each individual in an interaction generally self-assesses his relational distance from another interactant, so that when he has to consider the question of balance, he can choose one or several balancing criteria among relationships of similar distance' (Zhai, 2018, p. 150). It is clear that, in the case of complex claims of interest such as these, dealing with a seemingly very specific but wide-ranging issue of interest in a 'matter-of-fact' manner and with simple criteria of right and wrong generally not only has limited positive effect but often is counterproductive. It is in this context that, in traditional Chinese society, people attach great importance to the skills of communication and interaction in order to maintain a complex and diverse balance of interests.

In traditional Chinese society, in the face of the complexity and diversity of people and events, the problem-solving approach which focuses on balancing and coordinating the interests of all parties is probably a more effective way of solving problems than the straightforward approach of distinguishing between right and wrong, promoting good and punishing evil, and keeping what is right and getting rid of what is wrong. Insofar as balancing interests is concerned, the Chinese people generally agree with the golden mean approach, which looks at both sides and chooses a solution in the middle. The essence of the golden mean lies in the basic principle of safeguarding fundamental interests, solving problems with an approach that is ‘appropriate’, ‘moderate’, does not go to extremes, leaves room for manoeuvring, ‘balanced’, ‘coordinated’, and ‘takes into account both sides’. *The Analects of Confucius* says: ‘Zigong asked: “Who is better, Zizhang or Zixia?” Confucius said: “Zizhang is too much, and Zixia is not enough.” Zigong said: “Then Zizhang is better?” Confucius said: “Too much and not enough are both not good.” Confucius advocated that people, in dealing with specific things, should take an unbiased, appropriate attitude and leave room for manoeuvre. It is worth noting that the golden mean is not something entirely passive. The true meaning of the golden mean is not to be ‘hypocritical’, ‘peacemaker’, or to ‘make peace without principles’, but to follow, or at least not to violate, the basic principles on the big issues of fundamental interests. This is the cornerstone of the golden mean. For example, treating people with kindness, tolerating some inadequacies of people, and not being aggressive in everything is an important starting point of the golden mean. However, this does not mean that one should just tolerate and accommodate people or things that are not proper without any principle; rather, one should solve and deal with issues concerning right and wrong on the basis of major principles. On this point, the *Analects of Confucius* actually makes it very clear. ‘Someone asks Confucius: “What do you think of repaying a grudge with virtue?” Confucius said: “Then what can repay virtue? We should repay grudges with justice and repay virtues with virtue.”’ For those who make peace at the sacrifice of principles, Confucius directly criticised: ‘Xiangyuan (hypocrite) is the thief of virtue’.

Dealing with specific and complex realities in a golden mean way has many benefits for maintaining the normal functioning of traditional Chinese society. Firstly, it helps to maintain a relative balance between the interests of various groups in society. The normal functioning of a society depends on the existence of a necessary precondition, which is the relative

balance of the social interest structure. One of the obvious efficacies of the golden mean approach lies in the fact that, through essential compromises and necessary concessions, it avoids the emergence of a situation in which the winners' interests are all-encompassing or the losers' interests are all lost, so as to realise the relative balance of the social interest structure as a whole. Even for some fierce opposition forces, if they are properly dealt with in a golden mean manner, they will, to varying degrees, weaken their resistance, or even eliminate their resistance activities. 'When the people of a wide area get along with each other in a large group, the most important thing for long-term peace and stability is to be able to live in harmony. It is also important to have a golden mean society'. 'After the Qin and Han Dynasties, China can be said to be founded on the golden mean, the famous ministers of the past generations all had a golden mean attitude, reaching their own goals while in harmony with others, the meaning of it is deep and long carried on' (Qian, 2004, pp. 86–87). Chinese history is full of such examples: the imperial court, by means of 'recruiting and securing' and through some degree of transfer of benefits, succeeded in 'subduing' and 'integrating' some originally fierce social resistance forces, so that they not only did not become the opponents of the court, but also submitted to the court, and even could be used by the court. Secondly, it helps the various groups in the society to interact with each other over a long period of time. Traditional Chinese society is, after all, a humane society. In such a humane society, under the condition that people's basic survival can be guaranteed, no matter which group members, the 'face' issue is very important. 'Face' is related to whether the basic dignity of the person concerned can be guaranteed, as well as their trustworthiness, which further has a bearing on their long-term interests. Some foreign scholars have found that 'in China, criticism is not a good thing. Criticism relates to personal background relationships, which are part of the social structure, and is therefore perceived as a personal attack rather than an expression of dissent. This is partly a face-saving emotion—if a person loses the trust of other people, then he will soon lose the trust of more people'; 'Losing the trust of others will directly put the individual at a disadvantage because in Chinese society, most social status is based on trust, so if you make a critical comment, it will immediately become a question of whether you trust the person' (Fairbank, 1982). Once a person's 'face' is lost due to involvement in a dispute, the person's psychological resentment will persist for a relatively long period of time, and may

even turn invisible disputes into visible disputes, thus affecting the long-term interactions and effective cooperation between the relevant interest groups. In this regard, a golden mean approach to dealing with disputes and conflicts among various groups in society can, to varying degrees, objectively leave the necessary room for manoeuvre for the long-term and essential future interactions among various groups in society.

Fourthly, from the point of view of the macro functioning of society, the rulers have adopted a more practical and effective policy of governance.

The rulers promoted a worldly, pragmatic approach for a social community as large and geographically vast as traditional Chinese society. The rulers adopted more practical and effective governance strategies based on the basic behavioural orientation of pragmatism and rationality. Among them, several of these governance strategies were particularly important. Firstly, they paid more attention to protecting the fundamental interests of the primary social groups to ensure the basic order of society. In traditional Chinese society as a whole, the rulers have consistently implemented and maintained the basic state policy of putting agriculture first. This basic state policy, although inhibiting the development of traditional industry and commerce and, from a critical aspect, limiting the development of productive forces, has a significant positive effect to ensure the long-term stability of the whole society. The reason is simple. In China's traditional farming society, the majority of the population, subsistence farmers, semi-subsistence farmers, and small and medium-sized landowners, rely on agricultural production as their primary source of livelihood. Therefore, as long as agricultural production is stabilised, it means that the primary livelihood of most members of society is preserved, stabilising society's basic order. At the same time, to ensure the society's safe operation, the rulers also paid attention to the adoption of necessary policies to inhibit the phenomenon of large-scale land annexation and the growth of the power of local strongmen. In addition, in order to prevent the occurrence of disasters, the government set up a system of voluntary warehouses and had warehouses in many places to store grain and make the necessary strategic reserves so as to provide relief to the victims in the year of disaster and help them to tide over the difficulties. All these would undoubtedly help maintain the basic order of society. Secondly, to maintain the normal functioning of such a large-scale social community as traditional Chinese society, China established a relatively complete bureaucratic system of a sectional nature, almost unique in

the world under the conditions of the traditional social era. This bureaucratic system, with its prominent rational elements of functional division of labour, hierarchical management, and regulatory safeguards, could govern society relatively effectively. In addition, China had established a matching system of inspection and supervision to provide the necessary regular assessment and monitoring, which enabled it to correct problems in governance and prevent significant deviations from occurring. This approach ensures the relative effectiveness and sustainability of the governance system. Fukuyama points out that ‘in a sense, they invented good government. They were the first to design an administrative system that was rational, functionally organized, and based on impersonal criteria for recruitment and promotion’. ‘The Chinese bureaucracy set a template of which almost all modern bureaucracies are copies’ (Fukuyama, 2011). Third, it provides a degree of social mobility. In contrast to medieval European societies and traditional Indian societies, where hierarchies were in a state of apparent solidification, traditional Chinese social hierarchies had a certain degree of mobility. Members of the middle and lower classes in traditional Chinese society had a certain upward mobility due to the existence of the imperial examination system. ‘The imperial examination system is more or less popular in that it only uses examination results as a criterion to determine whether a person can enter a higher rank, which provides an important route for the upward mobility of lower ranked members of society’. ‘As a result of the imperial examination system, the Chinese hierarchy had a certain mobility’ (Wu, 1995, p. 90). This provided a certain useful kinetic energy for the continued functioning of society, which was conducive to enhancing the vitality of society. Moreover, objectively speaking, society has thus increased its elasticity space to a certain extent, absorbing the dissatisfaction of some members of society and releasing the possible negative energy of some members of society. Fourthly, some adaptive policies are adopted to suit local conditions. For some remote ethnic minority areas and ‘vassal states’ in the neighbouring regions, the central government did not adopt the same uniform governance policies as those in the mainland. Instead, based on practical and rational considerations of adapting policies to local conditions, it formulated and implemented some alternative policies with a certain ‘one country, two systems’ colouring, such as the administration system of the Tusi (chieftain), the policy of tribute of vassal states, and the policy of ‘peace-making marriage’, which effectively achieved relatively effective governance for specific groups of people in specific regions.

In contrast, neither medieval European societies nor traditional Indian societies can be compared to traditional Chinese societies in terms of effective macro-social governance. In the traditional societies of these countries or regions, there is basically no effective macro-social governance. As a result of either adopting the policy of the separation of church and state or maintaining the situation of multiple states, medieval European and Indian traditional societies lacked the minimum social cohesion and unity, their social governance lacked rationality, and their social structure lacked organicity. Thus, each showed apparent ‘separation’ and ‘chaos’. Strictly speaking, such a disorganised society is not even an organic social community.

In addition to the above four manifestations, the pragmatism and rationality of the Chinese secularisation tradition are also reflected in the deep-rooted awareness and behavioural orientation of people to ‘think and play a long game’. In the medieval religious society of Europe, people were primarily concerned with their own ‘salvation’, and thus their timeline was ‘this life and this world’. On the other hand, in traditional Chinese society, people were more concerned about and considered the ultimate concern of how to make their kinship family continue for generations to come, and thus the timeline was ‘perpetuation’ of ‘generations to come’. It is for this reason that the Chinese people attach particular importance to the issue of the ‘centennial plan’; that is, not only should we consider the present day when doing things, but also ‘think long term’, consider the long-term issues, and make good preparations for the future, leaving room for manoeuvre. In this way, the Chinese people are paying more attention to the efforts of all parties and the coordination of interests holistically.

3.5.3 *Avoidance of Extreme Irrational Behaviour*

In the history of humanity, especially before the modern era, the vast majority of countries or ethnic groups have experienced some extreme irrational behaviour, which has manifested itself in intense confrontation and killing between different countries or ethnic groups, or within the same country or ethnic community. There are two main reasons for this phenomenon. One reason is under the condition of extremely limited resources, several social groups within the same state or community have intense confrontation over the primary means of subsistence to survive. Another reason is the intense confrontation and fighting caused by the

spiritual factor of polarisation. Under traditional social conditions, the spiritual factor of extremism is mainly manifested in extremist religious consciousness and extremist communal consciousness. These two causes are sometimes intertwined and sometimes relatively separate.

In traditional Chinese societies, there are two situations in which violent confrontation and killing occur. In the first case, the social community was confronted with a severe natural disaster, which, together with intolerably high taxes imposed by the dynasty and serious land annexations by wealthy merchants and large landowners, made it impossible for the people to survive, thus giving rise to violent peasant uprisings and social confrontations. In the second case, the social community was forced to put up fierce resistance in the face of a large-scale invasion by a powerful foreign enemy. Strictly speaking, these two scenarios have a certain degree of legitimacy and reasonableness and do not count as extreme irrational behaviour. Apart from these two cases, in most cases, as long as there is no serious threat to the people's basic survival, the society can generally function normally, and there are few cases of extremist irrational behaviours that can affect the national situation.

There are several main reasons why traditional Chinese society has been able to circumvent extremist and irrational behaviour effectively: first, a realistic attitude towards life. In the deep-rooted conception of the Chinese people, human life and daily life are of the utmost importance; they are the foundation of everything, above all other things. Therefore, anything detrimental to human life and daily life should be avoided by all means. This is what the *Analects of Confucius* mean by 'Do not enter a dangerous country and do not live in a chaotic country'. Although this kind of cognition belongs to common sense, it is the most reasonable and fundamental cognition, an essential human nature, and a normal, wide-ranging, and far-reaching rational thinking. We cannot underestimate the significance of this common sense perception. 'The Chinese do not have any of the "arrogance" that many religions have' (Voltaire, 1759). It is by virtue of this normal thinking that traditional Chinese society has been able to effectively prevent the phenomenon of extremist religious consciousness and extremist communal consciousness, and has been able to prevent the emergence of extremist irrational behaviours from occurring at all. Second, the sense of family responsibility. Under traditional social conditions, family is most important to the Chinese people. The existence and continuity of the family are the

ultimate concern of the Chinese. Family members have immense responsibility for their families and clans, and feel attached to many things in the family, and thus are unwilling to take risks whenever they can survive. 'There are three forms of unfilial conduct, of which the worst is to have no descendants'. Once a person is involved in extremist and irrational activities, his or her safety will become a problem. Furthermore, the existence and continuity of his or her family will likely be seriously affected. Therefore, a person must avoid polarising and irrational behaviour. Moreover, in general, the family has a function of 'deep constraints' on the behaviour of each member, and family rules and regulations will also prevent family members from engaging in extreme irrational activities. Thirdly, the Chinese have an instinctive sense of risk prevention. The extreme emphasis on agricultural production has made the Chinese extremely sensitive to various unfavourable factors affecting agricultural production. Over time, the Chinese have become instinctively aware of various social and natural risks. The Chinese people will generally make 'cost calculations and rational calculations about the possible consequences of various vital actions, the cost-effectiveness of various actions, and, in particular, safety considerations to prevent the emergence of dangerous behaviours'.

Medieval European society was very different from traditional Chinese society. Medieval European society was a religious society. Almost every member was a Christian (Catholic) believer in such a religious society. For each member of the community, Christianity had a significant influence, and it almost dictated their thoughts and behaviours. An essential characteristic of Christianity is its 'supremacy' and 'exclusiveness'. 'Few things have done more harm than the belief on the part of individuals or groups (or tribes or states or nations or churches) that he or she or they are in sole possession of the truth: especially about how to live, what to be & do—& that those who differ from them are not merely mistaken, but wicked or mad: & need restraining or suppressing' (Isaiah, 2003, p. 393). Once the extreme 'uniqueness', 'supremacy', and 'exclusiveness' of Christianity are intensified to a certain point, it becomes an extreme spiritual factor, and thus gives rise to a kind of extremist irrational behaviour. Unfortunately, Augustine, one of the most influential Christian fathers in medieval Europe, put forward the concept of 'just war', that is, to 'fight for love through forgiveness. This was the first time that religious problems were solved by force' (Leung, 2014). Since then, Christianity's active attacks on heretics and infidels have been intensified because of the

important basis of ‘justification’, and the irrational behaviour of Christian extremism has become more prominent and even more insane. ‘Religious war is a war of faith, but in fact it is a conflict of interests, both of principle and utilitarianism; the interests of people, places, and times are easy to be covered with a layer of sacred and inviolable religious aura. Enemies can be mended, but heresy and orthodoxy can never be compromised under the one true cultural gene. The West of the last thousand years of great unity has suddenly dropped its anchor and is spinning in a whirlpool’ (Leung, 2014).

Extreme irrational behaviour is very harmful and destructive, both from the point of view within the community and from the point of view of other communities. Once extreme spiritual factors occupy an important position in a social community and become the ideas or beliefs that can influence a large number of members of the community, especially once extreme spiritual factors are combined with certain material interests of the people, they will inevitably cause a large number of people in a group to fall into a state of irrationality and go overboard, and even give rise to all kinds of inconceivable crazy behaviours and lead to intense social conflicts, which in turn cause great social disasters and make the community suffer great damage. For example, it is an obvious fact that ‘religious war is a war of faith, but in fact it is a conflict of interests... the interests of people, places, and times are easy to be covered with a layer of sacred and inviolable religious aura... heresy and orthodoxy can never be compromised under the one true cultural gene’ (Leung, 2014, p. 29). This is exemplified by medieval European society, where the Church’s witch hunts, which lasted for three hundred years from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries within the laity, were horrific. ‘According to historical sources and estimates by experts and scholars, some 300,000 to two million people lost their lives to the crime of witchcraft, and some witches were implicated in the extermination of their entire families. There were villages where no man, woman or child was spared. It was under such Biblical inspiration that tens of thousands, millions of witches were mercilessly nailed to the burning stake over a period of three hundred years in Europe’ (Liu, 2003). And the Crusades, organised by the Church and lasting for two hundred years, brought great disasters and horrific scenes to a number of countries and communities in West Asia and North Africa. ‘One who had arrived in Jerusalem with the Crusaders, and witnessed what happened, depicted: “The Arabs fled to the top of Solomon’s Temple, and many were killed by arrows, falling headlong

from the roof. Ten thousand men were beheaded in this Temple. If you had been there, the blood of the slain would have reached your ankles. What can I say? No one was lucky enough to survive. They didn't even spare the women and children.” (Zhao, 2004).

As can be seen from the discussion above, it is precisely because of China's deeply rooted secular tradition of pragmatism and rationality in some sense, which has a restraining effect on extreme and irrational spiritual factors and behaviours, that China has avoided many possible disasters. This is one of the major reasons why the Chinese nation has survived for thousands of years.

3.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The tradition of secularisation, which is characterised by the real world, blood family, hard work and thrift, and pragmatism and rationality, is a deep-rooted ‘historical gene’ in traditional Chinese society, and has become one of the most important factors influencing the entire traditional Chinese society. This deep-rooted tradition of secularisation has not only ensured the continuity of traditional Chinese civilisation for thousands of years, but has also had a significant impact on the modernisation process in China today. In this regard, it is not difficult for us to form the following understanding:

3.6.1 The Extremely Broad and Far-Reaching Positive Impact of the Secularisation Tradition

Undoubtedly, China's deep-rooted tradition of secularisation is based on the reality of life on earth as the essential foothold of people's behavioural orientation in society. In a certain sense, the secularisation tradition emphasises the human rather than the divine. From the point of view of the direction of people's behaviour in human society, this approach is reasonable. Although this human-centred behavioural orientation in the secularisation tradition is still within the scope of traditional society and is not the same thing as human-centred behavioural orientation in the modern sense, at that time it was, after all, to place the centre of attention of the whole society into the reality of life on earth, i.e., into the ‘world of this shore’, in which the people lived, rather than into the unverifiable heavenly world, which is The Other World. Under such circumstances,

compared to medieval European society, traditional Chinese society naturally paid more attention to the fundamental real-life problems of the people and their quality of life. This is also an important reason why people in traditional Chinese society can live a 'ordinary' but 'normal' life, and why their quality of life is better than that of medieval European society. Moreover, the emphasis on the reality of human life avoided a great deal of, even violent, religious disputes and conflicts. 'In the way of belief "the relationship between men" replaced "the relationship of man and God", and "patriarchal culture" replaced "religious culture", a situation that is prone to complex interpersonal entanglements but hardly ever descends into irrational religious fanaticism' (Chen, 2004) This relatively reduced the likelihood of frequent social upheavals in China at that time in an important way.

Another point to note is the great inclusiveness of the Chinese secularisation tradition. Although the basic behavioural orientation of the secularisation tradition is non-religious, it does not reject religious phenomena outright, but leaves some room for the existence of 'normal', non-extremist religious phenomena. At the same time, the degree of social mobility permitted by the secularisation tradition provides room for upward mobility of various groups in society. Furthermore, the double-track social governance system combining centralisation and grass-roots autonomy under the secularisation tradition provides greater flexibility for effective social governance. Based on the inclusiveness provided by the secularisation tradition, China has developed a broader platform conducive to the release of the potentials of multiple groups, which to a certain extent contributes to the formation of multiple social endogenous dynamics from multiple social groups.

The strong internal dynamics of the Chinese secularisation tradition are of crucial importance. Many people both inside and outside the academia often dwell on the question of the time of origin of a certain social community, as if the earlier the origin, the better, and the earlier the origin, the more it can be said that the community has some kind of superiority. In fact, for a social community, the question of its early or late origin certainly has a certain significance, but it is not the most important one. Rather, what matters most is the strength and sustainability of its endogenous dynamics. If the internal energy of a social community is weak, even if it originated at an early time, there is no guarantee that it will be able to obtain the necessary kinetic energy to sustain its existence and development. There are many reasons why social communities

such as those in Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt, and Ancient India, which originated at an early point in time, have not survived to the present day. One of the primary reasons is that the weak internal dynamics of these communities could not support their long-term existence and development, let alone their effective response to the invasion of foreigners or even less civilised foreigners, and they were annihilated. Unlike many nomadic groups, the deep-rooted tradition of secularisation has given traditional Chinese society a robust internal energy and resilience. As a whole, traditional Chinese society has never relied on outward expansion or plundering the survival resources and wealth of other ethnic groups to support its existence and development, but rather it has ‘turned inward’, i.e., sought internal energy within itself: with the present world as the primary goal and field of life, deeply rooted in the natural and social soil with the kinship family as the basic social unit, the Chinese worked hard in the spirit and behavioural orientation of diligence and thriftiness, and with the spirit of practicality and rationality they improved the effectiveness of their behaviours, coordinated all kinds of complex interests, and avoided all kinds of natural and social risks. The traditional Chinese society has relied on such practices to maximise their internal potential, thus creating a continuous internal energy that has successfully sustained the existence and development of such a mega-community for thousands of years to the present day. It is precisely on the basis of this deep-rooted tradition of secularisation that the development of traditional Chinese society’s potential in several essential areas, such as productive capacity, living standards, civilization level, and the effectiveness of governance, has almost reached the maximum peak, or ‘limit’ of what could be achieved under the conditions of the agrarian society of the times.

In short, the deep-rooted tradition of secularisation has, in a significant way, enabled traditional Chinese society to acquire a strong and continuous internal energy. Relying on this strong internal energy, the Chinese people were able to live an everyday productive life in a relatively stable social environment for an extended period. They prevented many possible destructive strikes by nomadic herdsmen and the formation of a religious society, thus preventing the ‘demise’, ‘disruption’, and ‘extinction’ of the traditional Chinese civilisation. ‘Although the Zhou State is old, its life is renewed’. In a certain sense, one of the significant reasons why traditional Chinese civilisation has survived for thousands of years, and why it is the only one of the four major ‘homologous’ civilisations in the world

to have survived to the present day, lies in the deep-rooted tradition of secularisation in China.

3.6.2 *The Tradition of Secularisation in China is Different from the Phenomenon of Secularisation in the Modern Sense*

Although the deep-rooted tradition of secularisation has had an enormous and irreplaceable positive effect on traditional Chinese society, to the extent that traditional Chinese civilisation could not have survived for thousands of years without it, at the same time it must be clearly seen that the tradition of secularisation is, after all, a product of China's natural economy, and has obvious epochal characteristics of the traditional agrarian society. And there is no doubt that the reality of society is constantly evolving and changing with the development of material production. It is true, as Marx and Engels said that the sensuous world is 'not a thing given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry and of the state of society; and, indeed, in the sense that it is an historical product, the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations, each standing on the shoulders of the preceding one, developing its industry and its intercourse, modifying its social system according to the changed needs' (Marx and Engels 1832). By the same token, secularisation itself is constantly evolving. Measured by the standard of the development and change of 'times', the phenomenon of secularisation in traditional Chinese society is not the same thing as secularisation in the modern sense; they are 'one before and one after', with the former lagging behind the latter, and it is the latter that should gradually sublate the former. This is an inevitable historical trend. The former is a social phenomenon based on the traditional agrarian economy. The traditional farming economy has the basic characteristic of the 'involution' effect of diminishing marginal effects of production, that is to say, when the farming economy reaches a certain level, there will be a kind of 'ceiling' effect and the development of its productive forces will inevitably fall into a state of stagnation for a long period of time without being able to make an effective breakthrough. Obviously, this 'ceiling' effect of the development of the traditional farming economy can only be effectively broken through with the help of modern productivity, market economy, and science and technology. As some scholars have pointed out, this problem 'cannot be abandoned at least until the twentieth century, chemistry and machines to enable planting industry to carry out a more

thorough reform'. 'It can also only be solved by a combination of technological change and institutional progress' (Pomeranz, 2010, p. 294). Accordingly, as a historical gene, the secularisation tradition based on the agrarian economy, while contributing to the growth of the phenomenon of secularisation in the midst of modern societies, cannot, on the whole, be automatically converted into the phenomenon of secularisation in modern societies. 'Every culture has its typical beliefs, norms, and values, but these are in constant flux' (Harari, 2014). Therefore, from the point of view of the development and change of the times, with regard to China's secularisation traditions, we cannot over-glorify and idealise them in isolation from the conditions of the times, to the extent of treating them as something eternal and transcendent.

From the point of view of the attributes of the times, as a whole, the Chinese secularisation tradition, which is compatible with the agrarian economy, cannot be adapted to the modern society, or is essentially exclusive to the modern society. As mentioned earlier, Qian Mu overly praised the phenomenon of 'egalitarian society' in traditional Chinese society, believing that this 'egalitarian society' was no different from modern society. Such an approach is in fact detached from the conditions of the time and is an inappropriate analogy. Liang Shuming also praised traditional Chinese ethics to the extent that he regarded it as the future path of human society. This is also an attempt to drive history backwards. Gu Hongming, moreover, mystified the superiority of traditional Chinese society to such an extent that he raised it to a point of no return. According to Gu, traditional Chinese society 'possesses the secret of the new civilisation that the European people rebuilt after the war. And the mystery of this new civilisation is what I call the religion of the good people'. 'The religion of the good people teaches that the law of love is to love your parents'. 'The law of justice is to be truthful, trustworthy, and loyal; every woman must be selflessly and absolutely loyal to her husband, and every man must be selflessly loyal to his monarch, king, or emperor' (Tomson, 1996, p. 27). The crux of Gu's views lies in the lack of awareness of modernity, the lack of knowledge of the basic contents of modernisation, the lack of awareness of the fundamental 'time' gap between modern and traditional civilisations, and the lack of awareness of the fact that modernisation is an inevitable trend in human society.

Generally speaking, the phenomenon of secularisation in the traditional Chinese context and the phenomenon of secularisation in the modern context do not belong to the same type of 'epoch' civilisation. The

modern phenomenon of secularisation is based on the material foundation of large-scale industry and the market economy; every member of modern society is an independent natural person based on the concepts of freedom, equality, and justice, and not a member of the hierarchical system of the secularised tradition, which is characterised by a strong sense of personal dependence. By the standards of the times, many of the specific elements of the secularisation tradition are in conflict with the phenomenon of secularisation in the modern sense. ‘Kinship means that the rights and duties of persons are determined according to family relations’ (Fei 1985, p. 71). Although, unlike the stagnant and unchanging hierarchical system of medieval European society, traditional Chinese society allowed upward mobility of social members to a certain extent and thus had a certain degree of reasonableness, from the point of view of the attributes of the times, the kinship family among the secularised traditions was, after all, the social basis of the authoritarian state (the dictatorship of a few over the destiny of the parties concerned) and the traditional hierarchical system, and furthermore the social governance logic of ‘ruler guides subject, father guides son, husband guides wife’ is naturally included. In such a situation, the independence and autonomy of the individual is lost. ‘As a matter of fact, the lower societies did not leave any room for individual personalities, and of course there was no talk of artificially restricting and suppressing them, for the simple reason that they did not exist at that time’. ‘The domination of the individual was entirely the result of collective despotism, and what ruled the members of society could only be a supreme power’ (Durkheim, 2017, p. 154). For example, under the kinship family condition, ‘not only did the family property belong to the father or head of the family, but even his children and grandchildren were considered property. Strictly speaking, the father is really the owner of his children, and he may pledge or sell them’ (Qu, 2010, p. 18). ‘Family life is centred on the paternity with the ideal of the extended family of four generations, and the interests of the individuals in the family must be subordinated to the interests of the family. The kind of independent, self-reliant, autonomous individual is also virtually impossible to exist in traditional Chinese society’ (Wang, 2011). In particular, the gender inequality of male superiority and female inferiority left women, who made up half of the population, to follow the ‘Three Obediences and Four Virtues’ rule, and were oppressed for a long period of time in a miserable situation. Mao Zedong pointed out that in the old society, Chinese men were generally subject to the power of the regime, the power

of the clan, and the power of the gods, and that ‘as for the women, in addition to being subject to the three powers mentioned above, they were also subject to the domination of the man (husband’s power)’. Chinese women were ‘serfs or semi-serfs of men. They have no political status, no personal freedom, and they suffer more than anyone else’ (Mao, 1991, p. 31). Therefore, under the conditions of modern society and market economy, if the tradition of secularisation is not reasonably sublated as a whole, it will not be conducive to the smooth progress of the modernisation process. Another example is the tradition of attaching too much importance to practical technology. Although this tradition has its reasonableness, if pushed to the other extreme, it is the lack of importance attached to basic science, regarded basic science as something of little use. The problem is that in modern society, science and technology play an increasingly important role in promoting social and economic development, and are even the ‘first productive force’. As far as the relationship between science and technology is concerned, basic science is the foundation of technology. In a certain sense, how far a country’s science and technology can go depends on how its basic scientific development is. It can be seen that, in order to effectively promote China’s modernisation, it is necessary to change the ‘tradition’ of attaching relatively more importance to practical technology and paying relatively little attention to basic science in the past.

It should be noted that mankind’s transition from traditional to modern society is a historical necessity. As Marx and Engels said, modern large-scale industrial production ‘has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together’, ‘what earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?’ (Marx and Engels 1848, p. 33). The involution of the traditional agricultural productivity development, i.e., the ‘ceiling’ effect, can only be effectively broken under the conditions of modern large-scale industry. Moreover, on the basis of modern productive forces, market economy, high social differentiation and integration, secularisation in the modern sense, urbanisation, high openness, universal education, and highly developed science and technology have become the basic features of modern societies. For example, even medieval European society would gradually evolve from a religious society to a secular one in the modern sense. ‘The replacement of Christianity with a secular system was the culmination and most crucial outcome of the Industrial Revolution’ (Durant 1968, p. 48).

Looking at the development of the times, on the whole, the replacement of traditional society by modern society is an inevitable event. Under such historical conditions, the development of modern society will be seriously hampered if the specific contents of the secularisation tradition are implanted in modern society as they are. For example, under the influence of secularised traditions, China still has not, to a certain extent, escaped the influence of the humane society with personal favours. In the humane society, the gradual evolution and proliferation of the differential structure based on the proximity and distance of kinship relatives will gradually amplify the effect of the phenomenon of ‘relatives protecting each other by not reporting crimes’, which originally had a certain degree of reasonableness, to the extent that it will transcend the reasonable boundaries. On this basis, it will inevitably form a kind of behavioural logic that emphasises private morality and neglects public morality. Such a behavioural logic means that many members of society are still accustomed to doing things ‘justifiably’ in accordance with the rules of favour or unwritten rules that benefit themselves or their own particular circle, and do things that harm the public interest and the spirit of equality under the rule of law ‘without discrimination’ by virtue of the emotional support of a small group. All these will inevitably lead to the emergence of some excessive short-term behaviours in Chinese society that only consider themselves or their own small circle without considering others or the public, and that only take into account the immediate interests without considering the long-term interests, and thus damage the social credit and the spirit of the rule of law that are indispensable to a modern society, as well as the integrity and sustainability of the process of modernisation. ‘The patriarchal concepts of clans have deeply influenced later societies and even dominated people’s behaviours to a certain extent, with the prevalence of small-group concepts and patriarchal and sectarian consciousness, the preference for kinship and friendship, and the emphasis on sentiment over law, which makes it difficult to develop a sense of individual subjectivity and make people remain in dependence thinking, which is not conducive to the advancement of society, and which needs to be completely eliminated’ (Feng, 2011). Another example is that the kinship family, as the basic unit of society in traditional Chinese society, will inevitably give rise to a general sense of settling down. For the phenomenon of urbanisation and the rapid increase in social mobility that will inevitably occur as a result of modernisation, the

sense of settling down and unwilling to relocate will undoubtedly play a significantly hindering role.

3.6.3 *Rational and Effective Inheritance of the Valuable Elements of the Secularisation Tradition*

The tradition of secularisation in traditional Chinese society should not be glorified in isolation from the conditions of the times, but neither should it be simply regarded as the dregs of the olden days and be criticised and discarded altogether.

It must be noted that, in the process of modernisation, it is impossible for such historical heritage as national traditions to completely disappear, as they are a form of differentiated existence of national communities. It is necessary to rationally sublimate the valuable ones and make them an integral part of the modern social community.

In a certain sense, any form of civilisation is an organic whole made up of the ‘epochal’ content based on the productive forces and relations of production and the ‘national’ content based on national traditions and other valuable historical legacies. Both are indispensable. The primary function of the former is to provide the community with the most essential material, institutional and cultural foundation, and development capability, while the primary function of the latter is to provide the community with a differentiated style of existence, a particular path of development, and a particular community sentiment (including a certain sense of national identity and centripetal force), as well as the necessary reference and learning from other examples. The history of a community cannot be cut off. In the historical process of the community’s ‘continuity’, the national traditions and valuable historical heritage with a particular ‘relatively constant existence’ (‘relative independence’) play an indispensable role. ‘To say that man is a historical being is to say that the realisations of the powers of human individuals living at any one time takes the cooperation of many generations (or even societies) over a long period of time. It also implies that this cooperation is guided at any moment by an understanding of what has been done in the past as it is interpreted by social tradition’ (Rawls, 1988, p. 511).

In China’s secularisation tradition, there are many valuable elements that contribute to the advancement of modernisation. If these valuable elements are reasonably sublimated, they will become an organic part of modern Chinese society and a useful ‘historical gene’ on which modern

Chinese society can move forward. The behavioural orientation of aiming for the present life in the secularisation tradition can provide a useful reference for the people-centred orientation of China's modernisation, preventing the emergence of extremist spiritual factors, such as extremist religious consciousness and extremist communal consciousness, and all the drawbacks arising therefrom. The relations of the kinship family and the strength of the grass-roots level of the society can remind people to a certain extent that the sense of belonging of the members of the society and the solidity of the social unit are essential. Even under the conditions of modern society, it is still necessary to build up a sense of belonging among members of society and a grass-roots society, compatible with modern society and the market economy, on which the social community can base itself, in accordance with the real situation and which can help prevent or rectify the sense of 'rootlessness' of individual human beings arising from the excessive 'atomisation' of the modern large-scale industrial society. The spirit of diligence and thrift can help to form effective human capital momentum and a sense of conservation under the conditions of modern societies and the market economy, which is essential to the sustainable promotion of modernisation and the reduction of its costs. The spirit of practicality and rationality is essential to the continuous promotion of modernisation and the reduction of its costs. The spirit of practicality and rationality helps China to form a gradual and feasible path for modernisation, and helps to formulate a reasonable development plan and develop an awareness of preventing various possible socio-economic and natural risks.

The complexity of the problem lies in the fact that, in the long process of historical evolution, the specific content of China's secularisation traditions was closely bound up with the content of the backward agrarian society of the times, and the two were often inseparable. For example, the strong national cohesion at that time was based on the homogeneity of the family state, centralised authoritarianism, and a high degree of personal dependence, while the strong human integration was based on a strict hierarchical society based on the reality of the kinship family. This situation objectively makes it more difficult for people to judge which elements of secularised traditions are valuable and which are backward and negative. Therefore, when we inherit the valuable elements of secularised traditions, we must firstly make a clear judgement on the valuable elements, and secondly, we must strictly eliminate the harmful elements. Otherwise, it will be contrary to our wishes.

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‘Endogenous and Externalised’: The Extended Logic of Traditional Chinese Civilisation

Among the four widely acknowledged homologous civilisations of Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt, Ancient India, and China, China is the only ancient civilisation that has survived for thousands of years. This is an indisputable fact. There are many reasons why traditional Chinese civilisation has lasted for thousands of years. Among them, the unique ‘endogenous and externalised’ logic of extension of traditional Chinese civilisation is undoubtedly an important reason. Obviously, if we do not understand the logic of extension of ‘endogenous and externalised’ of traditional Chinese civilisation, it is impossible to explain clearly the ‘historical gene’ that gives Chinese traditional civilisation its strong vitality from a ‘dynamic’ point of view, or to summarise the basic features of Chinese traditional civilisation that make it different from those of other countries and regions from a ‘static’ point of view. However, it is a little regrettable that people have not yet paid due attention to such an important issue.

Obviously, an in-depth discussion of ‘the logic of extension’ of the survival, change, and development of traditional Chinese civilisation is of great academic value and practical significance. This discussion is not only conducive to promoting an in-depth explanation and a reasonable grasp of the evolutionary law of traditional Chinese civilisation, as well as the law and unique path of China’s modernisation but also helps to deepen people’s understanding of the evolutionary law of civilisation in human

society. To put it in another way, one of the reasons why our explanation of the form of traditional Chinese civilisation and the unique path of China's modernisation is not yet very in-depth is due to the insufficient study of the logic of extension of traditional Chinese civilisation.

4.1 FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

Throughout the history of world civilisation, among the homologous ancient civilisations with independent origins and a certain scale, such as Mesopotamian civilisation, ancient Egyptian civilisation, ancient Indian civilisation, and traditional Chinese civilisation, only traditional Chinese civilisation has remained uninterrupted for thousands of years. All the others have been conquered by foreigners, or have been conquered many times by multiple foreigners, and their original civilisational lineage has long been interrupted and their original civilisational forms have long been annihilated. Nowadays, the inhabitants living in the areas where they used to live have changed their civilisation many times, and most of their ethnic groups are no longer the descendants of the original inhabitants. Some scholars have pointed out that 'we find the empire of the two Chinese rivers the only durable kingdom in the World. Conquests cannot affect such an empire' (Hegel & Sibree, 1902). Moreover, traditional Chinese civilisation has a long history of independent origins. 'In this respect there was less of a break between this civilisation and the antecedent Neolithic culture in the Yellow River basin than there had been between the Sumerian civilisation and the antecedent Neolithic cultures in Mesopotamia and in western Iran' (Arnold, 1976).

4.1.1 *Relevant Studies by Foreign Scholars*

4.1.1.1 *Relevant Studies by Early Modern Scholars*

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some foreign scholars began to generalise and study the basic forms of traditional Chinese civilisation. These scholars mainly included Voltaire, Montesquieu, Hegel, and others. The views of these scholars on the basic form of traditional Chinese civilisation were roughly divided into two opposite evaluations, basically positive and basically negative.

Voltaire is not only affirming but almost 'celebrating' traditional Chinese civilisation. According to Voltaire, China has been a secular civilisation since ancient times. 'Almost everywhere else, too, the theocracy

has been so firmly established, so deeply rooted, that it can be said that the history of antiquity is the history of the rule of the gods incarnate'. There is only one exception to this situation, and that is China. 'Of all the known ancient nations, China alone was not ruled by a clergy'. Confucius 'was not a prophet; he did not claim to have received divine revelation; what he did receive was constant attention to the suppression of the passions; he spoke only as a sage, and was therefore regarded by the Chinese only as a saint' (Voltaire, 1759). Traditional Chinese society, despite being a secularised state, was remarkably inclusive of religion. Chinese 'officials tolerated the presence of monks but kept them in check; in almost all other places, those who practised the profession had great power'. While Europeans were still wandering in the forests, 'the vast and populous empire of the Chinese was already governed like a family, of which the ruler was the father, and the forty ministers were regarded as elder brothers'. 'The things the Chinese most deeply understood, most carefully cultivated, and most devoted to perfecting were morality and law'. 'In so remote an antiquity, the Chinese were already so advanced' (Voltaire, 1759). This advanced civilisation manifests itself in every aspect of society, economy, and culture. The main shortcoming of traditional Chinese society is that its 'progress in the various arts and sciences' has been 'but slight'. 'There are two possible reasons for this: one is that the Chinese have an incredible reverence for what has been handed down to them by their ancestors, and believe that everything ancient is perfect; the other is the nature of their language - grammar is the first element of all knowledge' (Voltaire, 1759).

Montesquieu, on the other hand, summarised the general characteristics of traditional Chinese civilisation from two aspects. On the one hand, from the point of view of the concepts of liberty and equality in the modern sense, Montesquieu considered China as an absolutist totalitarian state and fiercely attacked it. 'Such has been the origin of those regulations which have been so greatly extolled. They wanted to make the laws reign in conjunction with despotic power; but whatever is joined to the latter loses all its force. In vain did this arbitrary sway, labouring under its own inconveniences, desire to be fettered; it armed itself with its chains, and is become still more terrible'. 'China is therefore a despotic state, whose principle is fear'. 'It is determined, by the laws of China, that whosoever shews any disrespect to the emperor is to be punished with death. As they do not mention in what this disrespect consists, everything may furnish a pretext to take away a man's life,

and to exterminate any family whatsoever'. '...it was not infamous to be beaten with a stick' (Montesquieu, 1823). On the other hand, from the point of view of historical rationality, Montesquieu believed that there were still some redeeming features in the traditional Chinese civilisation. He pointed out that the Chinese rulers 'mixed up religion, laws, customs, and manners. All these things are morals. All these things are virtues. The rule of these four is called ritual. It was through the strict observance of this rite that the Chinese rulers succeeded'. In China, 'the principal object, which the legislators of China had in view, was, to make their subjects live in peace and tranquility. They would have people filled with a veneration for one another, that each should be every moment sensible of his dependence on society, and of the obligations he owed to his fellow-citizens. They therefore gave rules of the most extensive civility'. 'Thus the inhabitants of the villages of China practise amongst themselves the same ceremonies as those observed by persons of an exalted station: a very proper method of inspiring mild and gentle dispositions, of maintaining peace and good order, and of banishing all the vices which spring from an asperity of temper' (Montesquieu, 1823). Montesquieu believed that this form of civilisation was resilient. 'They confounded together their religion, laws, manners, and customs; all these were morality, all these were virtue. The precepts relating to these four points were what they called rites; and it was in the exact observance of these that the Chinese government triumphed. They spent their whole youth in learning them, their whole life in the practice. They were taught by their men of letters, they were inculcated by the magistrates; and, as they included all the ordinary actions of life, when they found the means of making them strictly observed, China was well governed'. 'From hence it follows that the laws of China are not destroyed by conquest. Their customs, manners, laws, and religion, being the same thing, they cannot change all these at once; and, as it will happen that either the conqueror or the conquered must change, in China it has always been the conqueror. For, the manners of the conquering nation not being their customs, nor their customs their laws, nor their laws their religion, it has been easier for them to conform, by degrees, to the vanquished people, than the latter to them' (Montesquieu, 1823).

Hegel, on the other hand, summed up traditional Chinese civilisation with the 'spirit of the world' ('absolute spirit') as the basic criterion of judgement. According to Hegel, 'the history of the world travels from "East" to "West", for Europe is absolutely the end of history, Asia

the beginning' (Hegel & Sibree, 1902). China's traditional civilisation belongs to the beginning stage of the world's spirit and has almost always been free from historical change, with everything in a state of obscurity and backwardness. Traditional Chinese society is only at the beginning stage, the sensual stage, among the three stages of the development of the world spirit: sensibility, knowledge, and reason. 'Its distinguishing feature is, that everything which belongs to "Spirit" ... is alien to it. The emperor always speaks with majesty and paternal kindness and tenderness to the people; who, however, cherish the meanest opinion of themselves, and believe that they are born only to drag the car of Imperial Power. The burden which presses them to the ground, seems to them to be their inevitable destiny; and it appears nothing terrible to them to sell themselves as slaves, and to eat the bitter bread of slavery' (Hegel & Sibree, 1902).

It should be said that, as the first group of modern-conscious scholars in European history, Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Hegel have made exploratory generalisations about the characteristics of traditional Chinese civilisation from different perspectives, which are of a certain degree of inspirational significance. However, the shortcomings of their summaries are even more obvious. For one thing, they lack a minimum knowledge of the basic conditions of traditional Chinese civilisation, and their descriptions of traditional Chinese civilisation are often far from the historical facts. They did not even enter into the state of research but were more of a passing glance. Therefore, the conclusions formed on this basis are naturally unconvincing. Sometimes Montesquieu would arrive at some basic judgements about Chinese traditional civilisation only on the basis of the observations of a few missionaries in China. This kind of practice can be said to have reached the point of 'unseriousness'. Secondly, in summing up the general characteristics of traditional Chinese civilisation, they often seize on one aspect only and then affirm or deny it in its entirety. For example, Montesquieu and Hegel did not see that Chinese traditional civilisation has an extremely tenacious vitality and great value under specific historical conditions, nor did they see that a lot of contents of Chinese traditional civilisation can become valuable components in the construction of modernisation once scientifically sublated and become an organic part of China's modernisation process. Obviously, these views cannot explain the phenomenon that Chinese traditional civilisation has lasted for thousands of years, nor can they explain the historical reasons why China's modernisation took off at the end of the twentieth century

and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Thirdly, Montesquieu's and Hegel's commentaries on traditional Chinese civilisation are tinged with a clearly paranoid Eurocentrism that has been proved wrong by the actual process of modernisation in the world. In addition, Hegel's criteria for evaluating historical evolution, including the historical orientation of traditional Chinese civilisation, are inherently erroneous by being oversimplified. Hegel's basic concept for analysing the problem, the notion of 'world spirit', is too large, and at the same time, its very validity is questionable. The lack of certainty in this concept makes it difficult to explain effectively the evolutionary patterns of specific types of civilisation. Moreover, things like spirituality cannot, after all, exist and evolve independently of a real economic base.

4.1.1.2 Relevant Studies by Modern Scholars

In the twentieth century, the study of traditional Chinese civilisation by foreign academics entered a new stage, and its main representative scholars included Max Weber, Toynbee, John King Fairbank, and Cho-Yun Hsu. These scholars' analyses and summaries of traditional Chinese civilisation have gradually entered a state of genuine academic research.

Max Weber made a more systematic analysis and generalisation of traditional Chinese civilisation. First, traditional Chinese society is a secularised form of civilisation. Weber pointed out that 'Confucianism exclusively represented an innerworldly morality of laymen'. 'The relationship between Confucianism and its adherents, whether of a sorcerous or sacrificial nature, is in its original sense of the word hereabouts, a hereabouts much stronger and much more principled than the conventional manifestations of religious relations anywhere and at any time'. 'In Confucianism there prevailed, anyway, an absolutely agnostic and essentially negative mood opposed to all hopes for a beyond' (Weber & Gerth, 1951). Second, the Chinese hierarchy is connected to the imperial examinations. Weber notes, 'for twelve centuries social rank in China has been determined more by qualification for office than by wealth. This qualification, in turn, has been determined by education, and especially by examinations. China has made literary education the yardstick of social prestige in the most exclusive fashion, far more exclusively than did Europe during the period of the humanists, or as Germany has done'. 'As a status group, the literati were privileged, even those who had only been examined but were not employed' (Weber & Gerth, 1951). Third, clans play an important role in traditional Chinese societies. According to

Weber, 'in China, the influence of the sib was maintained and grew to equal the prerogatives of the overlord'. The clan 'had the unquestionable right to lay down the law for its members - a right which operated not only *praeter legem* but, under certain conditions and even in questions of ritual, *contra legem*. The sib faced the outside world with solidarity'. 'The sib was accustomed to settle the debts of its members whenever possible'. 'Where necessary, again, the sib provided medicaments, doctors, and burial services; it cared for the aged and widows, and above all, it provided schools' (Weber & Gerth, 1951). Fourth, China advocates pacifism. Weber points out that 'the Confucianists, who are ultimately pacifist literati oriented to inner political welfare, naturally faced military powers with aversion or with lack of understanding' (Weber & Gerth, 1951). Fifth, 'a lack of natural scientific thinking'. Weber notes that in traditional Chinese society, 'apart from philosophy and theology, juristic "logic" was also underdeveloped. Systematic and naturalist thought also failed to mature'. 'Practical rationalism, the intrinsic attitude of bureaucracy to life, free of all competition, could work itself out fully. There was no rational science, no rational practice of art, no rational theology, jurisprudence, medicine, natural science or technology; there was neither divine nor human authority which could contest the bureaucracy. Only an ethic congruent with bureaucracy could be created and this was limited solely by consideration of the forces of tradition in the sibs and by the belief in spirits' (Weber & Gerth, 1951).

If there is any obvious shortcoming in Weber's analysis of traditional Chinese civilisation, it is that Weber's discourse has a 'pan-religious' overtone. Weber includes traditional Chinese civilisation into the framework of 'religion' and identifies Confucianism as 'Confucianism religion'. This is an obvious shortcoming. In this regard, it is not even comparable to Voltaire. Voltaire clearly argued that Confucianism is not a religion and cannot be called Confucianism religion. An obvious common sense is that for the people in traditional Chinese society, Confucianism has the function of addressing their ultimate concerns. This suggests that it is not just religion that can address the ultimate concerns of the people. Confucianism is a typical secularised doctrine, emphasising the real world and present of earthly life, This World, and emphasising the path of people's ultimate concern through the continuity of life from generation to generation. This is very different from The Other World, which religion is so keen to pursue.

Toynbee is full of praise for traditional Chinese civilisation and is almost entirely positive about it. In his extensive discussion of traditional Chinese civilisation, there are several points that deserve special attention. First, Toynbee uses the core categories of ‘challenge’ and ‘response’ to explain the phenomena of ‘growth’ and ‘disintegration’ of all kinds of civilisations, including traditional Chinese civilisation. Compared with Hegel’s view, this approach is obviously superior and more convincing. Toynbee points out that for a civilisational form, ‘each of the responses was not only successful in answering the particular challenge by which it had been evoked, but was also instrumental in provoking a fresh challenge, which arose each time out of the new situation which the successful response had brought about. Thus the essence of the nature of the growths of civilisations proved to be an élan which carried the challenged party through the equilibrium of an effective response into an overbalance which declared itself in the presentation of a new challenge’ (Toynbee, 1934). Only in this way can civilisation progress. Second, traditional Chinese civilisation, which has experienced many ‘challenges’ and ‘responses’, has been very successful. According to Toynbee, ‘the Chinese, for thousands of years, have succeeded in uniting hundreds of millions of people, politically and culturally, more than any other people in the world. They have shown this knack for political and cultural unity with unrivalled success’ (Toynbee & Ikeda, 1985). Third, China will play an extremely important role in the future development of human civilisation. Toynbee points out that ‘world unity is the way to avoid the collective suicide of mankind. In this regard, the most prepared of all peoples now is the Chinese people, who have cultivated a unique way of thinking over the past 2,000 years’. ‘The Chinese, in co-operation with the peoples of East Asia, may have to play a leading role in what is regarded as the indispensable process of human unification’ (Toynbee & Ikeda, 1985).

While Toynbee’s view of traditional Chinese civilisation and the evolutionary pattern of civilisation certainly has its reasonable points, the main problem with his view is that Toynbee lacks the concept of epochal change and fails to see the economic motive behind epochal change, thus inevitably falling into the dilemma of ‘circular argument’ that explains culture by culture only. Because of this, Toynbee is unable to see that traditional Chinese civilisation as a whole is a product of a specific natural economy (agrarian economy), and that only after the ‘baptism’ of modern civilisation based on large-scale industry and the ‘scientific sublation’ can

the valuable elements of this civilisation be compatible with modernisation and the market economy, and become an integral part of modern civilisation.

John King Fairbank has made an in-depth and systematic study of traditional Chinese society. His main points are: first, traditional Chinese society is a great unitary state. According to John King Fairbank, 'the gradual spread of Chinese civilisation, with its characteristic features of intensive agriculture, tightly-organised family life, and bureaucratic administration, had given an underlying homogeneity to the whole country north and south, east and west'. 'Like political unity, cultural homogeneity was one of China's great social myths' (Twitchett & Fairbank, 1978). Second, 'Government by Moral Prestige'. Fairbank notes that the Confucian view of the 'Mandate of Heaven', or 'benevolent rule', 'emphasises the good conduct or virtue of the ruler as the ethical sanction for preserving his rule. Bad conduct on his part destroyed the sanction. Heaven withdrew its Mandate'. 'The main point of this theory of "government by goodness" was the idea of the virtue which was attached to right conduct. To conduct oneself according to the rules of propriety or *li* in itself gave one a moral status or prestige. This moral prestige in turn gave one influence over the people'. At the same time, 'on this basis the Confucian scholars established themselves as an essential part of the government' (Fairbank, 1983). Third, religion plays the most important role at the grass-roots level of the state. According to Fairbank, 'traditional China at the local level was dominated by the extended family or lineage, not least because it was the main support of the hierarchic structure of roles enjoined by the classical teachings about kinship. It taught obedience to superiors, whether father or husband, gentry or official' (Twitchett & Fairbank, 1978). Fourth, the merchant community is in a lower social position. According to John King Fairbank, 'the merchant groups remained subordinate to officialdom, obliged to secure official licences and pay official taxes while at the same time dependent on personal relations with bureaucrats to avoid being unofficially squeezed out of business'. 'Government had kept the merchant class under control by a variety of measures. ... This was accomplished basically by the principle of licensing, which brought in revenue to the government, unofficial perquisites to officials operating the system, and an official sanction and opportunity for the merchants' (Twitchett & Fairbank, 1978). Fifth, 'the nondevelopment of science'. Fairbank notes that 'until late medieval times China was at least on a par with and in many

ways ahead of Western Europe in technological inventiveness and systematic observations of nature (such as the recording of sunspots). ‘Yet these brilliant early achievements did not lead to the establishment of an organised technology and the formulation of a body of scientific principles - in other words, the creation of science as a persisting institution, a system of theory and practice socially transmitted, consciously developed and used’ (Fairbank, 1983). Sixth, China handles its foreign relations with the superior mentality of placing itself as the centre of the world. John King Fairbank points out that ‘its contact with the non-Chinese peoples round about was posited on a Chinese myth of central superiority. ... The basic problem was that the Chinese scheme of things was a hierarchic pyramid. ... this required in turn that the barbarians similarly accept lord-and-vassal relations’. ‘The Chinese state had gradually developed its own image of world order radiating outward from the Son of Heaven at the top of the Chinese scene’. ‘The idea that the only possible relationship with the emperor of China must be that of a tributary was hard hit at times but always survived’ (Twitchett & Fairbank, 1978).

In his extensive discussion of traditional Chinese society, Cho-Yun Hsu emphasises the vital importance of cultural integration and uses the expression ‘concentric circles’ to summarise the evolutionary logic of traditional Chinese culture. According to Cho-Yun Hsu, ‘the Chinese and barbarians view is a process of gradual spreading of concentric circles. If the core in the middle becomes bigger and stronger, the scope of the culture will become larger and larger. The remarkable thing about the “world” view is that it is so broad that it throws away the boundaries of politics and makes culture the key to understanding the relationship between people and between communities’ (Shi, 2015a, 2015b). ‘In the medieval period, China experienced seven to eight hundred years of ethnic realignment. During this time, the Han (*Hanren*) population of China absorbed many cultural elements from numerous non-Han peoples from both north and south and emerged as a new and very large, pluralistic nation (or people, *minzu*). This people or nation was not so much a race defined by blood relationships but a people both identified by a unified cultural tradition and exhibiting great cultural diversity’. ‘The chief characteristic of Chinese culture is not that it enlightened or assimilated its neighbours with its outstanding civilization. What is genuinely worthy of pride in Chinese culture is its capacity to tolerate, accommodate, and absorb elements from other cultures’. ‘From the Qin and Han empires on, the concept of “China” had to accommodate the cultures of

many different ethnic groups living on this piece of land in East Asia. ... To this day, many ethnic Han Chinese consider themselves the descendants of the Yellow Emperor, and many non-Han ethnic groups have constructed their own theoretical genealogies to link their origins with those putative Han Chinese origins' (Hsu, 2012).

There are also some shortcomings in the above scholars' work on traditional Chinese civilisation. This is mainly manifested in the following: firstly, apart from Hsu's 'concentric circles' extension, other scholars' generalisations of traditional Chinese civilisation have remained at the level of generalising its specific characteristics, while the laws of its evolution have not attracted sufficient attention, and there is a lack of in-depth research. Secondly, there has been no in-depth analysis of the basic social units on which traditional Chinese civilisation is based. If so, it is impossible to find the 'root' that makes Chinese traditional civilisation different from other types of traditional civilisation. Thirdly, there is a lack of in-depth analysis of the linkages, i.e., mutual influences, between China's 'local' ('intra-regional') civilisation and the civilisations of neighbouring countries, regions, and ethnic groups ('extra-regional').

4.1.2 *Relevant Studies by Chinese Scholars*

Compared with foreign academics, an even greater number of Chinese academics have conducted in-depth studies on the basic forms of traditional Chinese civilisation. It is noteworthy that some of these scholars have gone one step deeper than foreign scholars in that they have begun to conduct a more in-depth study of the evolutionary laws of traditional Chinese civilisation while conducting a large number of studies and generalisations on the basic forms of traditional Chinese civilisation. What needs to be mentioned in particular is that some scholars have changed their narrow vision of studying China only from the perspective of China, and have begun to regard China itself ('intra-region') and its neighbouring countries and regions ('extra-region') as a whole that is interconnected and linked and to explore traditional Chinese civilisation from the perspective of China and its neighbouring countries and regions. The study of the evolution of traditional Chinese civilisation from this perspective has become more scientific and convincing.

Li Ji noted relatively early on that the horizon of the study of the basic forms of traditional Chinese civilisation could not be confined to the region south of the Great Wall alone. 'Chinese people should pay

more attention to the north', Li Ji noted, 'ignoring the historical north, the origin of our people and culture, we would still be submerged in the chaotic realm of "pitch blackness"'. 'It is a great mistake to think that China's culture and people are all a matter of south of the Great Wall'. 'Those of us who have made a career of studying ancient Chinese historiography should have a new slogan, which is to fight against the self-appointed view of Chinese culture in terms of the Great Wall. ... Go north of the Great Wall to find the materials of ancient Chinese history, where civilisation has an even older home' (Zhang, 2006, pp. 133–134).

Fei Xiaotong uses the concept of 'pluralism and unity' to summarise the basic characteristics and evolutionary law of Chinese civilisation, stating, 'during a long period of mutual contact many groups were mixed, aligned, or integrated, while others were divided and became extinct. In time the groups unified into one group which consisted of a number of subunits that kept emerging, vanishing, and reemerging, so that parts of some subunits became a part of others, yet each retained its individual characteristics. Together they formed a national entity which was at once pluralistic and unified'. 'Three thousand years ago, a nucleus assembled in the middle reaches of the Yellow River and gradually melded together a number of national groups. Known as Hua Xia, this nucleus attracted all groups around it, growing larger like a snowball. By the early fifth century, its domain enclosed the East Asian plain in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River and the Yangtze. These people were called Hans by other ethnic groups. The ethnic entity of the Hans grew steadily by their absorption of other groups. In the meantime, groups of Hans seeped into the habitats of other nationalities, where in time they became centres of liaison and assembly. These in turn formed a network which was the foundation for the Chinese people to be unified and to emerge as a single nation'. The main reason for this situation was the special geographical environment. 'Any nation has its specific living space for its habitat and reproduction'. China, 'in the eyes of the ancients this was the only piece of land for the human race to live in. For this reason the land was called Tianxia, meaning "all the land under heaven". Another name for China was Sihai, meaning "the land surrounded by seas on all sides", as was believed in those times. These conceptions are, of course, long outdated. What remains true is that this piece of land, which forms a geographical entity by itself, still serves as a living space for the Chinese people. It seems that, as a rule, the makeup of a nation is restricted by the limits of

the ecological structure of the homeland. To this restriction the Chinese people are no exception' (Fei, 1988).

Ge Zhaoguang focuses on explaining the evolution of traditional Chinese civilisation from the perspective of the 'core' and 'axis' of Chinese cultural history. According to Ge Zhaoguang, 'as a cultural world, "China" is not static, but a space that gradually spreads out from the centre to the four directions, and then converges from the four directions to the centre. "Chinese culture" is also not a single culture, but a community formed by the gradual fusion of various cultures with Han culture at its core'. 'As a result of the Qin Dynasty's implementation of "one scale for weight, one measurement for length, one distance between wheels for all carriages, one text for all writings", and the Han Dynasty's implementation of "ban all schools of thought except Confucianism", "China" began to emerge with the imaginary and legendary "Nine States" as the central area, and the Han nation began to take shape with "Huaxia" as the core, and the "Chinese culture" based on the sense of the centre of the world, the concept of yin and yang and the five elements, the politics of king and hegemony (Confucianism and law), the habit of writing Chinese characters, the order of clan ethics, and so on began to take shape'. 'As a result of the three solidifications of the cultural world in the Qin-Han, Song, and Ming dynasties, it gradually formed the main axis and core of Han Chinese culture. Especially in the Song and Ming dynasties, the consciousness of "China" (Han China) and "foreign countries" (the neighbouring barbarians and foreign lands) gradually took shape, and there began to be a clear demarcation between "China" and "barbarians"' (Ge, 2014).

Zhao Tingyang uses the concept of 'vortex model' to analyse the evolutionary path of traditional Chinese civilisation. Zhao Tingyang points out that 'the direct motive force of existence lies in seeking out resources for survival. This is a natural condition. But whenever an existence seeks to arrive at a stable and reliable mode of surviving, or in other words, whenever an existence seeks to occupy the future, there must be a striving for political resources. It thus enters a political condition'. 'History shows that initially, some political forces took the initiative to get involved in fierce competition in order to seize the advantageous resources, thus creating a vortex, and with the involvement of more political forces, the volume of this vortex continues to expand, and the advantageous resources and political significance continue to accumulate, thus further strengthening the centripetal effect of the vortex. It is the

ongoing vortex effect of the global competition that created China'. 'The reason for China's continuous existence lies in the fact that China itself is a method of growth. ... With its method of growth and existence being a limitless "existing through change", China has been enabled to exist as a "world". And with this "worldly" absorptive capacity in full effect, China can always grow by way of "being what it is not"' (Zhao, 2016a, 2016b).

Ma Rong, on the other hand, summarises the evolutionary logic of traditional Chinese civilisation from the perspectives of geography and cultural unity as well as cultural diversity. According to Ma, 'due to the objective existence of such a geographical unit as the "East Asian continental ecological zone", over the past thousands of years between the core and periphery of this ecoregion, ... in the midst of mutual exchanges and competition, some groups have risen to power, while others have been forced to integrate into the others, either voluntarily or after declining. It was on the basis of this millennial interaction that a confederation of ethnic groups, familiar with each other, intermingled by blood, knowing their roots, sharing their respective histories and many values and ethical commonalities, gradually emerged, and these groups were eventually incorporated into a civilisational and administrative community during the Qing dynasty'. 'Looking back at the history of the development of the various dynasties of the Chinese regime over the millennia, the Chinese cultural community (now commonly referred to as the "Chinese nation") is not only multi-sourced in terms of ancestral bloodline lineage but also equally multi-sourced in terms of cultural tradition lineage. The developmental situation of "constant combination and reorganisation" and "that which is long divided must unify; that which is long unified must divide" is precisely an objective description of the constant exchange and fusion of the bloodlines and cultures of various groups of people in the "East Asian continental ecological zone"' (Ma, 2019a, 2019b). 'Regional cultures have preserved the diversity of local traditions, while at the same time demonstrating the commonality of Chinese culture and the overall framework of "pluralistic unity" under a unified administrative and economic system. The "core area" where Chinese civilisation originated has shown strong cultural "cohesion", while the "peripheral areas" have also sprouted different degrees of cultural "centripetal force", both of which intersected and played a role in the development of the Chinese civilisation community' (Ma, 2012, p.181).

It should be said that these Chinese scholars have developed many enlightening insights into the logic of extension of traditional Chinese

civilisation, but at the same time, there are also some obvious shortcomings in these scholars' studies of traditional Chinese civilisation.

Firstly, there is a lack of convincing explanations at multiple levels as to why traditional Chinese civilisation has had a strong vitality and assimilative capacity. Some scholars attribute the strengths of traditional Chinese civilisation mainly to the advancement of agricultural civilisation relative to nomadic civilisation in neighbouring countries and surrounding areas. Some scholars point out that 'the agricultural economy has made the Hans a nucleus with such centripetal force. Once a nomadic tribe made its entrance into the plains and found itself in the midst of the careful, orderly society of farmers, most of the nomads would eventually throw themselves all too voluntarily into the embrace of the Hans'. 'China's national minorities mostly live on highlands, on grasslands, or in mountain valleys or out-of-the-way localities, places the Hans did not care to live in or beyond their convenient reach. Without exception, these were places where the "agriculture-oriented" Hans found it impossible to give play to their superiority' (Fei, 1988). The merit of this view is that it sees the extremely important and fundamental significance of the economic base for the evolution of traditional Chinese civilisation, which is certainly worthy of recognition, but it ignores the far-reaching influence of things at the social level, such as blood family, on traditional Chinese civilisation. Moreover, there are many more scholars who explain the logic of the evolution of traditional Chinese civilisation only from the cultural point of view, without paying enough attention to the influence of the traditional Chinese agricultural economy and the traditional social structure to explain the logic of the evolution of traditional Chinese civilisation in a scientific way. Objectively speaking, these scholars have used a lot of cultural concepts in their analyses of traditional Chinese civilisation, but these concepts often lack the necessary precision, and thus, while their macroscopic explanatory power has a greater elasticity, the uncertainty of their specific explanations is also more obvious. The existence of this deficiency has led to the obvious lack of or weak analysis of the social foundation, basic social units, social vitality, and social integration of traditional Chinese civilisation, which makes it impossible to study the laws of the evolution of traditional Chinese civilisation in a precise or in-depth manner, and at the same time, it is inevitable to fall into the trap of circular argumentation of 'because it is excellent, it is excellent'. For example, if the specific characteristics and functions of blood family, which is the most important basic unit of society in traditional Chinese society,

are not analysed in-depth, the explanation of the laws of the evolution of traditional Chinese civilisation will lack basic support. In addition, other scholars attribute the main reason for the long-term continuation of traditional Chinese civilisation to the relatively safe geographical environment. Needless to say, the relatively advanced agricultural civilisation and the relatively safe geographic environment are both necessary conditions or important catalysts for the strong vitality and assimilative capacity of traditional Chinese civilisation, but they are not 'sufficient' factors. Therefore, an analysis based on these two factors alone is far from being able to explain the reason why traditional Chinese civilisation has strong vitality. For example, ancient India was also a country of agricultural civilisation, and from the point of view of its geography, it was generally in a relatively safe position: the north was adjacent to high mountains, and the east, south, and west were facing the sea, so it was almost in the middle of a complete 'natural' security barrier, except that the northwestern part of the country was not conducive to defence. It is such a country with relatively advanced agricultural civilisation and a relatively safe geographical environment that has been conquered and substantially assimilated by foreigners on many occasions. This shows that, as far as the important factors influencing the long-term vitality and assimilative capacity of traditional Chinese civilisation are concerned, in addition to the advancement of the mode of production and the security of the geographic environment, there are also some other important influencing factors that should not be overlooked, including the resilience, integrality, inclusiveness, and restorative nature of the traditional Chinese social organism itself, and so on.

Secondly, there is a lack of necessary explanations as to how traditional Chinese civilisation has been able to deal effectively with the relationship between the Mainland ('intra-territorial', 'home region') and neighbouring countries and regions ('extra-territorial'). Although most of these scholars have seen that traditional Chinese civilisation has had a non-negligible interaction between the local and foreign communities, they lack a more complete explanation of the weight and role of the interaction between the two. For example, the use of the 'vortex model' to explain the logic of the extension of traditional Chinese civilisation has the advantage of seeing the interaction between the intra-territorial and extra-territorial forces of traditional Chinese civilisation, but it has the disadvantage of treating them as the same while they are not. For example, although the saying of 'pluralistic unity' can, to a certain extent,

explain the overall characteristics of traditional Chinese civilisation, it is difficult to effectively explain the significance of the proactive nature of the 'intra-territorial' forces of traditional Chinese civilisation as compared to the 'extra-territorial' forces. What needs to be seen is that the reason why Chinese traditional civilisation has been able to last for thousands of years is that, in addition to the support of a relatively strong economic power and a relatively solid social structure, as well as the guarantee of a relatively safe geographic environment, from the point of view of dealing with the relationship between the mainland and neighbouring countries and regions, China has for a long period of time established and followed a relatively stable and effective 'diplomacy' strategy. This 'diplomacy' strategy involves both the traditional Chinese conception of the world and the corresponding objectives of China's unique behaviour towards neighbouring countries and regions, as well as a specific and stable 'diplomacy' policy. Compared with many other countries and regions, China's 'diplomacy' strategy is distinctly different and has had a very effective positive effect, effectively contributing to the continuity of traditional Chinese civilisation. However, there is a lack of systematic analyses by domestic scholars on such important issues.

Obviously, if the above two deficiencies are not effectively remedied, the explanatory and persuasive power of the logic of extension of traditional Chinese civilisation will be weakened.

4.1.3 *Two Indispensable Dimensions*

As far as the perception of 'the logic of extension' of traditional Chinese civilisation is concerned, it is necessary to look at it from the perspective of two very important and indispensable dimensions. One important dimension is that it must be analysed from the perspective of material production, which is an attribute of the times. Undoubtedly, material production is the basis and fundamental driving force for the existence and development of civilisation. 'According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life' (Engels, 1890). 'The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life' (Marx, 1859). From the point of view of material production, the people of traditional Chinese society have invested almost to the limit in human capital for material production, so that the level of intensive farming has almost reached the extreme that can be achieved under the

natural economic conditions of traditional society. It was on the basis of such a high standard of material production and living conditions that traditional Chinese civilisation had the possibility of continuous growth and development.

Another important dimension is that it must be analysed in terms of the multiple non-economic factors of difference. It should be noted that the material or economic dimension, although extremely important, is not the 'only' dimension in the analysis of traditional Chinese civilisation. We are talking about the 'decisive' influence of the economy in a specific context, mainly in the sense of its 'fundamental' influence, i.e., 'the economic movement is far and away the strongest, most primary and decisive' (Engels, 1890). Clearly, it is in this sense that the material or economic factor, while essential, is not the 'only' influence on the shape of civilisation. In other words, the 'decisive' influence of the economy does not cover all areas and aspects of a social community. As Engels puts it, 'hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase' (Engels, 1890).

It is an obvious fact that, given the 'same' level of productive capacity, civilisations can be affected by a variety of factors such as geography, society, culture, certain opportunities, and historical traditions, and that civilisations can be differentiated and diversified, and even have very different destinies. Especially in the early stage of human civilisation, due to the low level of production capacity, cognitive ability, and corresponding risk control ability, people are unable to effectively control their own living and production conditions, and thus the social community is relatively more affected by variability and contingency factors. In the early stage of human civilisation, these factors of variability and contingency are manifested in many ways. For one thing, the specific modes of production and governance of different social communities are greatly influenced by the different conditions of the natural environment in which they were located. Marx points out that 'the external physical conditions fall into two great economic classes: natural wealth in means of subsistence, i.e., a fruitful soil, waters teeming with fish, etc., and natural wealth in the instruments of labour, such as waterfalls, navigable rivers, wood, metal, coal, etc. At the dawn of civilisation, it is the first class that turns the scale; at a higher stage of development, it is the second' (Marx, 1867). Regions located in temperate zones with a rich diversity of organisms and relatively abundant precipitation are naturally favourable to the existence and

development of an agrarian economy. A social community dominated by agrarian economy, with vast territory and a great scarcity of public service goods, requires a strong central government to coordinate the supply of essential basic public products such as water sources. 'In the Orient where civilisation was too low and the territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary association, the interference of the centralising power of Government. Hence an economical function devolved upon all Asiatic Governments, the function of providing public works' (Marx, 1853). In this way, centralised institutions tend to become important institutions of governance in these countries and regions. For another, the security and defence capabilities of different social communities against alien invasions are strongly influenced by the way of life that they themselves possess. In traditional societies, it is a 'cold weapon' era in terms of people's military capabilities. In the cold weapon era, the strength of a country's military combat capability and security defence forces do not depend entirely on the level of its economic production. In other words, there is no positive correlation between military power (security and defence power) and economic level. The strength of military power depends on a number of factors, such as economic factors, the size of the country, and so on. Another important factor that cannot be ignored is the way of life of the people in the community. Compared with the farming community, the nomadic community, because of its basic daily life style of hunting, animal husbandry activities, finds it easier to form military offensive capabilities with more mobility and surprise. It is not uncommon for a country with a high degree of civilisation based on agricultural production to be defeated by a country with a relatively low degree of civilisation but relatively strong military power. For example, the ancient Roman Empire with a relatively high degree of civilisation was conquered by the barbarians, who were a relatively low degree of civilisation. The relatively highly civilised ancient India was successively conquered by the relatively less civilised nomads such as the Aryans and the Yuezhis. The relatively highly civilised China was often defeated by the less civilised nomadic groups of the north, and so on.

It is worth noting that a civilisation may be influenced by many contingent factors and its evolutionary tendency may be random, but once it is formed, it has a certain relative independence, that is to say, it has a certain autonomy and a certain self-extension logic, which is used to maintain and influence its existence and 'natural' ('automatic') evolution, and makes it present some characteristics that are different from other civilisations.

Further, with the development of productive forces, once a civilisation has formed a relatively stable economic base, social structure, orientation of people's behaviour, a certain scale of community, and a stable and effective governance capacity within it, and has formed a strong endogenous power on this basis, and at the same time, the civilisation has gradually developed a strong adaptive and defensive capacity in its external communication activities, then the civilisation will be able to survive for a long time and possess a specific, relatively stable logic of extension with a certain degree of strength.

4.1.4 Endogenous and Externalised: The Key to the Extended Logic of Traditional Chinese Civilisation

Specifically, the main reason why traditional Chinese civilisation has lasted for thousands of years is due to the unique circumstances of its 'internal' and 'external' conditions. Firstly, it has a strong 'endogenous' capacity. As far as the existence and extension of a civilisation is concerned, the 'endogenous' ability is its inner foundation. From the perspective of the traditional Chinese social community, on the basis of an advanced agrarian economy, an extremely strong basic social unit, a certain degree of social mobility, a high degree of social integration, and a strong capacity for social governance, traditional Chinese civilisation has developed a strong 'endogenous' capacity. If we make a comparison, it is not difficult to find that among the traditional civilisations of various countries or regions, the 'endogenous' dynamics of traditional Chinese civilisation is the most prominent. This is the main reason why Chinese traditional civilisation has been able to continue. Secondly, it has a relatively strong 'externalised' ability. From the perspective of China's handling of its 'external' relations, based on its own strong 'endogenous' dynamics, its relatively peaceful view of the world, its non-plundering behaviour, its avoidance of military conflicts as far as possible, and its effective and stable strategy of external relations, China as a whole has gradually developed an effective 'externalised' capability that is not only able to cope with changes in the external environment but also able to strengthen its 'endogenous' dynamics by means of its 'externalised' strategies.

It is on the basis of such complementary capacities of 'endogenous' and 'externalised' that traditional Chinese civilisation has developed a logic of extension that is very different from that of other countries and regions. From an important point of view, it is precisely on the basis of this

complementary logic of extension of 'endogenous' and 'externalised' that traditional Chinese civilisation has been able to continue for thousands of years, making it the only survived homogeneous traditional civilisation among the world's four major ancient civilisations.

4.2 'ENDOGENOUS': PROMOTING THE VITALITY OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE CIVILISATION

4.2.1 *Definition of 'Endogenous'*

The term 'endogenous', that is, 'endogeneity' or 'endogenous capacity', mainly refers to a kind of driving force or kinetic energy that arises from within the traditional Chinese society and is constantly growing and integrating. Specifically, it can be interpreted both horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, this 'endogenous' refers mainly to the fact that under the conditions of an agrarian economy, traditional Chinese society is based on the tenacious basic unit of society, namely the blood family, as its production and life foundation. There is an effective mutual support between the various fields and parts of society, and the whole society is formed into a relatively strong organic whole. From a vertical perspective, this 'endogenous' means that although the social community may make some adjustments in response to changes in the environment and the times, in the long run, the large socio-economic structure and cultural patterns of traditional Chinese civilisation have been able to develop in a slow but stable manner, thus leading to a 'homogenous' development and giving rise to the unique phenomenon of Chinese traditional society: 'Although the Zhou State is old, its life is renewed'. In contrast, the 'endogenous' conditions of medieval European societies, ancient Indian societies, and the Mongol Empire are far inferior to those of traditional Chinese societies, and thus, in a sense, these civilisations or countries would inevitably fall into the predicament of social fragmentation, in which the whole society would not be able to form an effective integration, and the social community would not be able to continue for a long period of time.

Specifically, under traditional social conditions, compared to medieval European societies and the traditional civilisations of many other countries and regions, traditional Chinese civilisation relies on strong social units such as the deep-rooted blood family to lay down a solid socio-economic foundation, provides vitality for the social organism by the free sale of land, imperial examination system, and other degrees of mobility,

relies on the effective coordination of the interests of various groups and a variety of effective social governance methods such as the bureaucratic system, and thus successfully integrates the large-scale Chinese traditional society. As a result, the strong and continuous ‘endogeneity’ or ‘endogenous capacity’ of traditional Chinese civilisation is formed, and traditional Chinese civilisation is able to survive for thousands of years.

4.2.2 *The Deep-Rootedness of the Blood Family as the Basic Unit of Society, Forming a Solid Socio-economic Base*

4.2.2.1 *The Unique Functions and Characteristics of the Chinese Blood Family*

If a greater emphasis on the blood family is a common phenomenon in most countries and regions under traditional social conditions, in traditional Chinese society, people place a greater emphasis on the blood family. ‘One of the great constants in Chinese history is the importance of family and kinship to social organization’ (Fukuyama, 2011). The blood family is an extremely strong and fundamental community of production and life in traditional Chinese society, and it is also a strong and fundamental community of interests, beliefs, and destinies, which has become a deep-rooted social unit of the whole society at the basic level.

The blood family has existed in China since ancient and medieval times and has become a strong support for the social infrastructure. Along with the slow development of the small peasant economy and the continuous crackdown on the power of dominant families and local strongholds by the central government represented by the emperors, since the Song Dynasty, the blood family has tended to become miniaturised and popularised and has become the basic unit of society that every member of the society lives in and cannot be separated from even briefly, constituting the most basic ‘cell’ or ‘factor of influence’ of the traditional Chinese society.

The blood family in traditional Chinese society is able to maximise the accumulation of basic social energy. For one thing, in China’s relatively closed traditional society, every family member living in a blood family cannot do without the cooperation and mutual help of family members, whether in production, in life, or at every specific stage of their lives. Over time, a deep-rooted ‘natural’ attachment will undoubtedly develop. ‘In truth, not only do people rarely leave their hometown, but their hometown is usually the same as that of their parents. This is the consequence of being born and dying in the same place’ (Fei, 1985a,

1985b). Based on such deep-rooted attachment, the sense of belonging, centripetal force, and many other important common behaviours of every member of the society towards the blood family are generated. Secondly, unlike the traditional societies of most countries and regions, in traditional Chinese societies, the blood family is able to solve not only the basic needs of its members but also their 'ultimate care' needs, i.e., the need for faith. For all human beings, in general, in addition to the reality of the production of life needs, there will be 'ultimate care' needs, that is to say, the questions of 'who am I' and 'where am I going' must be resolved. Although 'ultimate care', i.e., the question of faith, is indispensable to members of society at any time, it is more important in traditional societies than in modern societies because of the weak independence of the people, the relatively limited choice of their behaviour, and the relative barrenness of their cultural life. In medieval European society, this ultimate concern is addressed through religion. In this way, objectively speaking, in the European medieval society, there is a phenomenon of emotional 'divergence' among members of society, that is to say: part of the emotions is invested in the family, which can satisfy the needs of daily life, and part of the emotions are invested in the religious world, which can satisfy the needs of the ultimate care. This is not the case in traditional Chinese society. In China, the need for ultimate care is addressed mainly through the blood family, i.e., 'I come from my parents', 'my parents come from my ancestors', and 'my life will continue for generations to come in my children and grandchildren'. Thus, for the Chinese, through the blood family, the satisfaction of the needs of daily production and ultimate care are combined into one. As a result, the dependence and sense of belonging of the Chinese to the blood family is bound to increase even more than in the medieval European society, and the members of the family even generate a certain degree of unconditional trust in each other. Bergson divides human emotions into two types, one is 'the natural love for our relatives and neighbours', the other is 'human love'. The difference between the two is that 'the former we get directly, the latter only indirectly: for it is only through God that religion can lead man to love mankind' (Toynbee, 1934). While it cannot yet be said that Bergson is entirely correct in this view, it should at least be recognised as somewhat instructive. In medieval European society, people acquired these two emotions through two paths: family and religion. In traditional Chinese society, however, people acquired both through the blood family. In other words, through the blood family, these two

emotions are not diverted but combined into one, which is relatively more fully accumulated and concentrated in traditional Chinese society. As a result, the cohesion of the blood family in traditional Chinese society is stronger. Thirdly, the blood family solves the livelihood problems of some poor family members through the public income of the family, such as the clan field; the family members solve the problem of labour transfer between the family members through mutual assistance and cooperation; the family members solve the problem of the education of some children through the holding of private schools with joint funding. All of these undoubtedly enhanced the unity and integration between family members. Fourthly, family members rely on family rules to form the grass-roots level of social 'deep constraints'. The reason why it is called 'deep constraints' is that every person living in the family, within the reach of his or her basic life, from the whole process of his or her life, the basic style of life, to his or her specific ethical norms, sense of responsibility, sense of duty, and sense of belonging, etc., are all subject to the strict constraints of the family rules. Moreover, since all this happens mostly within the same blood family, the supervision of family rules for each family member is almost omnipresent from both tangible and intangible aspects. It can be said that this kind of constraint is not only comprehensive but also almost reaches a kind of instinctive point. As such, it can effectively resolve some of the conflicts and disputes among the members of the family, and substantially reduce the costs and obstacles of mutual cooperation among the members of the family. Fifthly, through the establishment of ancestral halls and the regular holding of ceremonies and methods such as ancestor worship and genealogy, blood families can strengthen the sense of identity of members of different generations in the same family. In other words, through various ancestor-worship ceremonies, the important purpose of 'collecting the family' is effectively achieved. 'Ancestor worship has often played a decisive role in fostering the concept of the family lineage, and continues to this day in a fully secularised form'. 'Through ancestor worship, the family line binds the living and the dead in a community' (Mitterauer & Sieder, 1987).

It is easy to see that the indispensable life significance for every member of the blood family is characterised by several features: first, comprehensiveness. The blood family gives maximum satisfaction to almost every aspect of the needs of the family members, from life, production, community, to ultimate care, and so on. Second, lifelongness. It can be said that in traditional Chinese society, the whole course of a person's life begins

and ends in the blood family. Third, interdependence. Blood family for each member is an interdependent 'super community', including community of life, community of interests, community of destiny, and community of faith, which one cannot choose or avoid. 'According to the Chinese conception, a family has only unanimous interests; all other ideas are unnatural and immoral' (Macartney, 1963). Fourth, it is largely unconditional. The blood family is almost unconditional in its devotion to each of its members, and especially in its almost unlimited responsibility to the members of the immediate family. It is on the basis of these characteristics that we can say that the blood family, as the basic unit of society, has a 'nearly inconceivable sanctity and intensity' (Maine, 1861). Such a situation is extremely rare in other countries or at other times.

Because of this, the blood family in traditional Chinese society is able to maximise the energy of each member, so that each member of the blood family has a high sense of identity, belonging, and a sense of 'contribution'. A scholar's description of the people of Qingtian, Zhejiang Province, is a typical illustration of this point. In Qingtian, Zhejiang Province, 'the land cannot feed the people here, people are forced to go out to escape, ... hawking along the way, some even across the land of China, through Central Asia, walked to West Asia, and then turned into Europe. People travelled tens of thousands of miles, through countless countries'. 'Today their family name is Zhang, tomorrow it's Wang; they were living without a fixed place, travelling without a fixed name. The passport was hereditary, and when one person left or died, another inherited it. When they crossed the border in Europe, they didn't go through customs either; they just find a path to cross, and it is said that there are also those who had been shot by border guards. After so much hardship, they saved up a little money, and would try their best to bring it back to Qingtian, their hometown' (Ji, 2015, p. 134).

In this way, the blood family has become the basic social unit of traditional Chinese civilisation with a high degree of solidity and resilience. In traditional Chinese society, it is through the blood family that the Chinese people are tightly attached to the land and the social soil, showing a strong, almost seamless 'ground-grabbing' character in order to survive and make a living. In a sense, in Chinese traditional society, this situation led to the 'integration of people and people', 'integration of people and land', and 'integration of people and industry (occupation)'. In other words, through the blood family, the specific mode of production, lifestyle, interaction, and ultimate care of almost every individual in

Chinese society forms a solid organic whole. This is true of all the blood families spread throughout the whole society. As a result, a huge and fine social network consisting of countless blood families like countless capillaries is deeply rooted in the whole society. Through this huge and fine social network, each blood family, that is, each basic social unit, can respectively draw on the natural resources and socio-economic resources necessary for their own survival and production to the maximum extent possible, and draw on every kind of beneficial nutrient in the natural soil and social soil that is conducive to their own growth to the maximum extent possible, and can make good use of every opportunity. On this basis, society as a whole has accumulated enormous energy, forming the extremely tenacious, resilient, and fundamental vitality that Chinese traditional civilisation relies on for an endless continuation. It is in this sense that the reason why China ‘has gone through countless changes of all sizes but the society is still not disintegrated is because of the family system. Each family is a small state in its own right. Each member, or even all members, can be killed or dispersed. But the institution of the small state itself cannot be shaken by any violence or accidental blow’ (Lei, 1989, p. 69).

By contrast, in the religiousised societies of medieval Europe, the stability of the blood family is subject to suppression by religious forces. ‘The Gospels, it is true, take an antifamilistic stand: in Matthew, Jesus says, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me”’ (Fukuyama, 2011). Under these circumstances, the family cannot become a very strong and solid basic unit of society in medieval European society.

Specifically, as the basic social unit of traditional Chinese society, the deep-rooted blood family has an extremely important and fundamental role in fueling the existence and evolution of traditional Chinese society.

4.2.2.2 *Promoting the Slow but Steady Development of Agricultural Production*

Under the conditions of the natural economy, as a basic form of socio-economic organisation, the blood family has a natural fit with the traditional farming mode of production, and the two are tightly bound together as an organic whole. ‘Agriculture is generally regarded as the general term for the productive activities in which mankind consciously uses social and natural resources to promote and control the process of

activity of the life functions of living organisms through socially productive labour in order to obtain the products needed by mankind, as well as for other sectors subordinate to this type of productive activity' (The Chinese Society for the Dialectics of Nature, and Writing Group for The Basis of Agricultural Philosophy, 1991). The source of power for traditional agricultural production activities under natural economic conditions can only rely on human labour and limited animal power, and the area of land that can be cultivated per capita in China is very limited. Under such circumstances, in order to produce the necessary food output, it is necessary to rely on the extraordinary input of human resources and the skill of intensive agricultural production. In traditional Chinese society, 'as population grew, making land scarcer relative to labor, people worked it more intensively, squeezing more output from each acre through the heavy labor of plowing, manuring, and even irrigating' (Morris, 2015). The hardship of its productive life is evident here. It is precisely a form of socio-economic organisation such as the blood family, whose members have a strong sense of cohesion, responsibility, and unconditional commitment, that can carry out this function. In traditional Chinese society, in order to produce the necessary agricultural and non-agricultural products, all the members of a family have to make the maximum 'voluntary' labour contribution, and at the same time to carry out the most reasonable division of labour in a cost-effective manner. In this way, the Chinese blood family 'closely combines agriculture and handicrafts, productive labour and living labour, outdoor labour and indoor labour, main labour and auxiliary labour, in order to maximise the functions of labourers of different ages and genders, maximise the use of time, conserve raw materials, reduce costs, and so on. The most basic means of subsistence needed by people on a daily basis - food, clothing, etc. - could be produced at home, and only some special items, such as iron and salt, had to be obtained through exchange. The family became the self-sufficient micro-socio-economic structural cell of traditional Chinese society' (Zhang, Ma, & Lu, 2001, p. 250).

In traditional Chinese society, people must rely on their blood families to cope with the enormous pressures of survival on many fronts. Although China's temperate climate and biodiversity are favourable to the growth of a wide range of crops, it is also a country prone to natural disasters. One statistic shows that 'famine was recorded in 826 out of a total of 2,117 years during Western Han to Qing Dynasty, accounting for 39% of the total time span, with a total of 2,073 records of famine events'.

‘Among the records with cause descriptions, famine was mostly caused by drought in the early period, and in the later period, especially during the Southern Song and Ming and Qing dynasties, famine caused by floods triggered by the Yellow River breach increased, in addition to locusts, epidemics, and taxation’ (Teng et al., 2014). Furthermore, China has to face the enormous pressure of rapid population growth and dwindling arable land per capita. In 2 A.D., China’s population was 59.59 million people, and the per capita area of arable land was 9.35 mu; by 1753 A.D., the population was as high as 183.68 million people, and the total area of arable land was 678 million mu, while the per capita area of arable land is reduced to 3.69 mu (Zheng, Ma, & Wang, 1998). In Europe, where the population size is roughly similar, the per capita area of arable land is 2–3 times that of China. Under a variety of enormous pressures, the Chinese people can only rely on their blood families, seek kinetic energy within themselves, develop their own potential to the maximum extent possible, work extremely hard for agricultural production, and also have to continuously improve their skills in intensive farming. ‘While making full use of the land, successive generations of Chinese forefathers also actively conserved the land on which they depended for their survival through a series of measures such as increasing the application of organic fertilisers, cultivating green manure, crop rotation, ploughing and soil modification, and adopting the pro-farming method, which effectively maintained the situation of “ever-new and strong soil”, and the crop yields continued to be increased’ (Wang et al., 2016). It can be said that in a traditional society based on an agrarian economy, the lack of capital and the low level of agricultural technology make the evolution of agricultural production very low. Even so, the level of agricultural production in China has almost reached its peak under the given conditions of the natural economy. Despite such a small area of arable land per capita, China, which has the largest population in the world, has successfully maintained its continued existence. This is a miracle in the history of mankind. Behind it, however, is the unimaginable hard work of every member of China’s blood families at the time.

All this ensures the stability of traditional Chinese agricultural production and the slow improvement of farming skills, which broadly meet the basic needs of the Chinese population and provide the most basic material conditions for the continuation of traditional Chinese civilisation. The superiority in productivity and population, ‘in turn, made China

more capable of supporting its empire's bureaucratic and military establishments and of resisting, or, if necessary, absorbing, barbarian invaders' (Stavrianos, 1991). It is sometimes easy to overlook or under-appreciate this painstakingly fundamental contribution of the blood family.

4.2.2.3 *Laying the Cornerstone of the Basic Behavioural Orientation of Secularised Life for the Chinese People*

Medieval European society is a religious society. It emphasises that the ultimate goal of life is to enter the kingdom of heaven or the 'millennial kingdom', or The Other World, where God resides, rather than This World of the real world. Such a religious society promises its people that only through hard work, abstinence from personal desires and self-interest, and faith in God can they eliminate original sin, be saved, and thus enter the kingdom of heaven. The Bible says: 'So that as Jesus was put to death in the flesh, do you yourselves be of the same mind; for the death of the flesh puts an end to sin; so that you may give the rest of your lives in the flesh, not to the desires of men, but to the purpose of God' (Hooke, 1965; 1 Peter 4:1–2). The parishioners (the vast majority of whom were peasants), no matter how hard their lives were, had to pay the church tax of 'tithes' every year, thus directly lowering the real standard of living for an already poor population. In addition, the Church was sometimes so corrupt that it sold additional 'indulgences' to its parishioners for its own 'profit'. From an objective point of view, in such a religious society, since human beings are fundamentally born as sinners, they lose their 'human' dignity at least partially, and there is no justification for their normal 'human' life, and the meaning of their lives and their quality of life will inevitably decline. It can be seen that for members of society who are 'human beings' to be subjected to the notion that they are not to be treated as normal human beings is, in any case, a very serious negative problem.

Compared with the European medieval society, the traditional Chinese society, in which the blood family is the basic unit of society, is very different. The blood family solves the major problems of people's faith, i.e., 'ultimate care', through 'the continuation of human life from generation to generation', i.e., 'honouring your ancestors and your roots', 'having a long history', 'the ancestor's merit is far-reaching', 'follow and remember one's ancestors', etc. The blood family emphasises a secularised and realistic human life orientation, stressing that people should live a normal human life in This World without deliberately pursuing life in

The Other World which is difficult to be verified, even though the life of The Other World is often described as magnificent. As Weber puts it, ‘the orthodox Confucian Chinese, but not the Buddhist, performs his rites for the sake of his fate in this world - for long life, children, wealth, and to a very slight degree for the good of the ancestors, but not at all for the sake of his fate in the “hereafter”. This is in sharp contrast with the Egyptian care of the dead which was wholly oriented toward man’s destiny in the hereafter’ (Weber & Gerth, 1951).

We cannot underestimate the significance of this secular behavioural orientation. It must be acknowledged that it is impossible to be truly human-centred in a traditional Chinese society based on a natural economy. Personal dependence and authoritarian hierarchy must be the basic features of traditional Chinese society. However, it is undoubtedly a positive thing that the establishment of secularised basic life behavioural orientation can, to some extent, prevent the members of society from losing the meaning of ‘being human’, give some ‘legitimacy’ to the normal life of ‘human’, and accordingly reject the absolute asceticism advocated by the religious society. Moreover, on the basis of the basic orientation of secularised life, the Chinese people are able to pay due attention to the improvement of their quality of life to a certain extent, given a certain level of productivity. ‘Generally speaking, China has historically attached greater importance to the reasonable life of man himself, emphasising “righteousness, utilisation, generosity, and harmony”, in order to achieve relative abundance in the material and spiritual life of the members of society, and to achieve the relative satisfaction of both the physical and mental needs of the members of the society, rather than the needs of a single aspect’ (Wu, 2019, p. 309). This is an important rationality of traditional Chinese society as compared to medieval European society.

4.2.2.4 *Effective Maintenance of the Safe Functioning of Society at the Basic Social Level*

As the most basic social unit in traditional Chinese society, the blood family plays an indispensable role in easing conflicts and disputes at the grass-roots level. In the case of disputes within the family, the head of the clan already has the power and authority to enforce family rules and laws, and since the State has ceded part of its grass-roots judicial power to the family, the head of the clan has the basis and authority to deal with

disputes within the clan. The blood family creates a 'society of acquaintances' or a 'society of personal relationships'. In such a 'humane society', 'all aspects of life and human relationships are governed by specific rules. All the actors in this society have been familiar with the rules since childhood, and they take those rules for granted. Their long education since childhood has turned these exterior rules into interior habits' (Fei, 1985a, 1985b). Therefore, the matriarchs tend to take a mediatory approach to resolving conflicts and disputes among the clan members. 'Regarding the general fights in the clan, the ruling of the clan chief is the final judgement, regardless of whether it is justified or not, and the people of the clan can only obey it and cannot disobey it' (Xu, 2012, p. 22). A scholar describes this in this way, 'the local government of the village was a fully self-governing body without outside interference. It was a government by elders of the clan with the Ancestral Hall as its seat'. 'Elders of the clan were obligated to see that the ceremonies of ancestral worship were properly performed and were entrusted with the duties of arbitration in case of dispute among the clansmen. No one was allowed to go to law without first going through arbitration. To "open the gate of the Ancestral Hall" meant to summon an arbitration court of the elders. Anyone in the village could go there to observe the proceedings'. 'Disputes were usually fairly settled in the ancestral hall. No lawsuit was necessary' (Chiang, 2021).

In addition, disputes between members of the clan and outsiders are generally resolved through mediation. 'Disputes between members of the clan and outsiders of the clan are also mediated by the two ancestral halls first, and only when it is unsuccessful do they engage in a lawsuit' (Feng, 2006).

Traditional Chinese society is an agrarian society, and farmers living in blood families make up the vast majority of the population. The resolution or alleviation of many conflicts and disputes among farmers by blood families means that a large number of social conflicts and disputes from the countryside in traditional Chinese society can be resolved or alleviated at the source without going out of the countryside. The resolution of conflicts and disputes at the grass-roots level plays a very important fundamental role in the safe operation of traditional Chinese society as a whole.

4.2.3 *A Certain Mobility in Society Provides a Certain Vitality to Traditional Chinese Civilisation*

Although traditional society was generally a hierarchical society based on a natural economy, it could not be understood in absolute terms. It should be recognised that even within traditional hierarchical societies, there was a certain degree of mobility, to a greater or lesser extent. Mobility under traditional social conditions was much stronger in traditional Chinese society than in medieval European societies, ancient Indian societies, and other countries and regions. ‘The traditional Western social structure was a solidified hierarchy, while the traditional Chinese social structure was a more fluid hierarchy’. ‘By comparison, Western hierarchies were solidified and precluded the possibility of upward mobility, while Chinese hierarchies allow a considerable degree of bottom-up mobility’ (Wu, 1995, p. 90). In traditional Chinese society, this mobility was manifested in two main ways, one of which was the mobility of goods, and the other was the mobility of people.

4.2.3.1 *Mobility of Goods*

From the point of view of the mobility of goods in traditional Chinese society, among the various flows of goods, from a practical point of view, the one that had the greatest impact and influence was undoubtedly the freedom to sell and purchase land. This was because the land-related issue can fundamentally affect the basic livelihood of the majority of the population, including peasants and small- and medium-sized landowners who depended on the land for living. In medieval European society, land was acquired through feudalism, and the feudal lords adopted primogeniture to continue from generation to generation, and the free sale of land was not allowed. Traditional Chinese society was different. With the dismantling of the well-field system, the free sale of land, along with private ownership of land, continued throughout Chinese history. Since the Warring States period, China has permitted the free sale of land. ‘After the abolition of the well-field system, the people were allowed to buy and sell land’. In particular, ‘after the invisible elimination of the equal-field system in the late Tang dynasty, private ownership of land became an unshakeable system throughout the period of Five Dynasties and Ten States and into the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties’ (Li, 2011, p. 942). It should be noted that the freedom to sell land was also limited by several factors. For example, ‘the land in rural China cannot be bought and sold

freely. The rights over the land are protected by lineages, so it is difficult to sell land to outsiders unless the sale is approved by the lineage groups themselves' (Fei, 1985a, 1985b, p. 74). Nevertheless, it is an indisputable fact that, on the whole, the free sale of land became a relatively common 'norm' in traditional Chinese society.

From an objective point of view, the free sale of land has profoundly impacted traditional Chinese society in two ways. On the one hand, the phenomenon of land annexation, which accompanied the free sale of land, became a significant variable affecting whether the social order could be safely maintained in each dynasty. In traditional Chinese society, the longstanding basic national policy was centred around agriculture, with a focus on prioritising agriculture over commerce. This policy not only led big landlords to attach great importance to the continuous expansion of land but also prompted wealthy merchants who lacked political security to regard land as a secure investment and thus attached great importance to the annexation and hoarding of land, known as 'getting rich through commerce but securing wealth through land' (which is also an important reason why it was difficult for the industrial and commercial forces to grow in traditional Chinese society). The intervention of various powerful social forces made land annexation a severe problem faced by almost every dynasty. 'Land annexation is a factor of great social instability. The increasing land annexation often triggers peasant uprisings and refugee problems' (Wu, 1995, p. 88). In serious cases, it sometimes even became a catalyst for dynastic change. On the other hand, the free sale of land brought both hope and longing as well as a great sense of crisis to the peasants. For peasants and small- and medium-sized landowners whose livelihoods were centred around agriculture, expanding their landed property was a lifelong, even multi-generational aspiration. At the same time, from a practical point of view, if the land was poorly managed or encountered an era of disaster, it was still a question of whether one could keep one's existing land or not. Moreover, the consequences were unimaginable once the land could not be preserved. This possible unfortunate prospect brought a great sense of crisis to peasants. The coexistence of hope and crisis objectively intensified the competitiveness among peasants and small- and medium-sized landowners. This prompted them to redouble labour inputs and work harder on their agricultural production, thus stimulating production vitality. Thus, in traditional Chinese society, the stimulation of the production potential of peasants and small-

and medium-sized landowners originated not only from the blood family's responsibility but also from the competition between their respective 'peers'. In addition, to secure their own land and prevent the threat of land annexation, peasants and small- and medium-sized landowners hoped that the imperial court could effectively curb the trend of land annexation by large landowners. In this way, from the perspective of practical interests and security concerns, they were more able to become allies to the court, which was always worried that the expansion of local power would affect national taxation and ruling orders. It could be said that the court and the peasants and small- and medium-sized landowners who directly operated agricultural production were very much in line with each other regarding their interests in land.

4.2.3.2 *Mobility of People*

In terms of human mobility, in traditional Chinese society, as a relatively 'normal' phenomenon, the most important thing was the implementation of the imperial examination system.

The imperial examination system began officially during the Sui and Tang dynasties. This system ended the previous practice of selection and employment system within a limited scope, which was excessively influenced to the point that it essentially became a system manipulated by upper-class aristocrats or officials. It was initiated and has continued for more than 1,300 years as a relatively fair selection and employment system. This system had at least two advantages. The first one was that it was open to almost the entire society. The imperial examination system adhered to the principles of 'meritocracy' and relied on examination results as the fundamental criteria, making it accessible to most social classes and carrying a certain 'popular' flavour. 'Those who held the power to elect were greatly restricted, while the right to be elected was thus enlarged. Henceforth, individuals from humble backgrounds could rise to prominence; those in positions of authority could not maintain their status, all thanks to this system' (Lu, 2016, p. 174). The second advantage was the rigorous examination process. Not to mention the stringent requirements imposed on examination candidates, even the examiners and related personnel were subject to very strict regulations. Once a cheater was found, the punishment was extremely severe. Even the Grand Secretary who presided over the examination, if found involved in any cheating, would face harsh penalties, including beheading.

As a unique feature of traditional societies in each country or region, the imperial examination system had a vast and far-reaching impact on traditional Chinese society. Firstly, it provided a certain hope and room for upward mobility for members of most social classes. Theoretically, the imperial examination system was open to members of most social groups. The imperial examination system was inclusive of members of lower social groups, except for the restrictions imposed on groups like courtesans, performers, and slaves. The saying 'promoted from a rural scholar in the morning to the imperial court in the evening' might contain an exaggeration, but it vividly illustrates the system. The imperial examination system undoubtedly provided many social members with the space for upward mobility and hope for more people, especially capable individuals, thus fostering apparent social vitality. Moreover, this practice objectively absorbed the possible dissatisfaction within society. Because the system offered some members dissatisfied with their current situation an upward channel for improvement through individual efforts. Imagine if there were no such a social upward channel; some discontent members might have resorted to other means, including confrontation, to release their dissatisfaction. In other words, the imperial examination system reduced the potential confrontation from some dissatisfied elements, alleviating and releasing numerous possible social conflicts. No wonder Emperor Tang Taizong exclaimed that the imperial examination system led 'all the heroes in the world falling into my net'. Secondly, it directly gave birth to a relatively specialised elite governance group. To effectively govern such a large and complex social community as China, there must be a relatively specialised governing or political elite. Through the imperial examination system, a large number of talents from various ranks emerged, such as metropolitan graduates, provincial graduates, and scholars, forming a professional 'elite' governing class at different levels of the central, provincial, prefectural, and county governments. This, to a large extent, changed the situation of the hereditary aristocracy holding and monopolising political power in the past. More importantly, officials selected through the imperial examination system were more likely to follow the court's commands. 'Since these people were not backed up by strong backgrounds, ... they have nothing else to rely on except the imperial authority and the bureaucracy itself, making it much easier for the imperial authority to control them' (Sun, 1996). Thirdly, it was essential to promote cultural education in traditional Chinese society. Regarding

cultural education, the imperial court's emphasis on the imperial examination system and the superior social position of officials selected through the system had a huge social demonstration effect, which not only made the public more respectful of cultural education but also gave rise to a massive demand for cultural education throughout the society. It became an important driving force for the development of Chinese cultural education after the Sui and Tang dynasties. Furthermore, a large number of people at various levels who achieved recognition through the imperial examination system, if not directly involved in an 'official career', might devote themselves to cultural education, become persistent guardians of culture, or become teachers who spread culture in all kinds of academies and private schools. As a result, the development of Chinese cultural education gained a crucial impetus.

In contrast, both medieval European and ancient Indian societies were strictly hierarchical, and their hierarchies were much stricter than those of traditional Chinese society. Correspondingly, mobility was weak in both medieval European and ancient Indian societies. In medieval European society, apart from the lack of mobility due to the fact that land was not allowed to be bought and sold freely, there was also a lack of room for upward mobility for members of society. The attainment of higher social status was predominantly determined by inherent hereditary factors, making it impossible to achieve through later endeavours. There were strict boundaries between the different social classes that could not be crossed. This was even more true in ancient Indian society. The caste system lasted for thousands of years, defining a strict hierarchical order determined by blood descent from birth, with the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras in descending order; in addition, there were also the 'untouchables', who were the lowest in status outside of the caste system. From birth, an individual was recognised as belonging to the same caste as their parents. Each caste was associated with a certain political and economic status, including occupation, and was distinguished by specific rituals. 'Historically, powerful people such as kings, government officials, large and small feudal lords, and village heads were generally born into the higher castes' (Shang, 2016, p. 29). In such a situation, it was almost impossible for a member of a lower caste to change their lower social rank and gain a higher one. Because of this severe lack of mobility, medieval European and ancient Indian societies exhibited an absence of basic social vigour compared to traditional Chinese society.

4.2.4 *Effective Social Integration Through Effective Social Governance*

Traditional Chinese society has always been one of the largest communities in world history. China has a large population with complex and varied interests of various groups and communities; it has a vast territory with a wide range of specific conditions in each region; and it faces many possible contingencies, such as invasions by foreigners, natural disasters, and other diverse risk factors. It can be said that traditional Chinese society has experienced a multitude of uncertainties, placing it at the forefront of traditional societies globally. Under such circumstances, traditional Chinese society has achieved effective social integration through effective social governance, which has ensured the continuity of traditional Chinese civilisation in a significant way.

4.2.4.1 *Coordinating and Balancing the Interests of Various Groups and Spheres of Society on the Axis of Imperial Power*

While acknowledging that the ruling elite in traditional societies was a group with vested interests, we could not simply generalise the government in traditional societies as an institution bent on exploiting the people. As some scholars have pointed out, 'the first business of government' is to 'discover what is just, reasonable, and suitable to society'. 'It is a necessity to introduce it to the public mind; to get it approved by the men upon whom it is to act; to persuade them that it is reasonable' (Guizot, 1828, p. 110). In this respect, China's central government, represented by the imperial power, did a relatively productive job at a relatively low cost.

First, at least roughly, consistency was achieved between the justificatory basis of imperial power and the interests and behavioural logic of various groups. 'In China and Japan, the ruler-subject relationship was considered inherent in human nature, so that the relationship between ruler and subject was conceived as analogous to the relationships between husband and wife and parent and child' (Dilworth et al., 2008, p. 51). Imperial power in traditional Chinese society had twofold attributes. On the one hand, the emperor indeed asserted, 'I was the world', considering the community of the state as his own private property. On the other hand, there was a responsibility towards the 'subjects' (people). For the emperor, the people were the foundation on which he could prosper

or fail. A significant legitimacy basis for the emperor's position came from 'deserving heaven with morality'. His primary duty should be to 'advocate morality and protect the people'. In the deep-rooted blood family as the basic unit of society in traditional Chinese society, the imperial power regarded itself as the world's 'big parent'. They employed a behavioural logic of self-cultivation, family regulation, state governance, and bringing peace to all heaven, which resonated with various social groups. Imperial power coordinated and converged the interests and demands of all levels of social groups so that, to a certain extent, the Chinese government was able to effectively link itself with the people as a community of interests. The tax burden on the Chinese people was relatively light compared to medieval European society. Some scholars have found that 'Chinese emperors certainly were capable of acts of tyranny, like the first Qin emperor, who created a unified Chinese state on the basis of harsh legalist punishments. And yet dynastic China was not renowned for the harshness of its rule. The Chinese state observed certain clear limits with respect to property rights, taxation, and the degree to which it was willing to intervene to reshape traditional social practices' (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 289). Most Chinese dynasties made light levies and taxes a top priority among their various initiatives. For example, 'the Chinese government of the Ming and Qing dynasties was subjected to the lightest taxes. When all the additional taxes were added together, with very few exceptions, ... they were less than 10% of the local harvest, and in some cases even less than 5%' (Huang, 2015, p. 10). In medieval European society, not counting what the feudal lords would take, taxes that the farmers paid to the church alone accounted for 10% of their income. Compared to the peasants in traditional Chinese society, the tax burden was much heavier. Moreover, the Chinese court often took some initiative in terms of basic livelihood and basic production. The promotion of the winter wheat crop and the replacement-field method, the adoption of new technologies like the animal-drawn seed plough, and the direct organisation of large-scale water conservancy construction during the Western Han Dynasty were typical examples.

Secondly, politics was used to unify religion. Generally speaking, in many countries and regions under traditional social conditions, religion could easily become one of the most crucial factors influencing society as a whole and, in turn, a vital force that could compete with the secular regime. Under such circumstances, the relationship between religion and the secular regime, if not properly coordinated, could easily lead to social

disintegration. However, in the secularised traditional Chinese society based on blood families, religion basically did not become a force that could compete with the secular imperial power. On the contrary, the imperial power was always firmly in charge of religion and the power of indoctrination of the people. In traditional Chinese society, religion was subject to imperial power, and in a sense, it was an appendage of the secular regime. This was very different in medieval European society. In medieval European society, there was a 'parallelism between church and state', i.e., as far as the division of labour in social governance was concerned, the secular regime and the church each had its own role to play, with a clear division of labour; 'give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's'. 'Western medieval society was a Christian society, and the church was a force that was strong enough to compete with secular kingship. The church controlled people's thoughts and competed to a considerable extent with the king's power in economic and administrative matters' (Wu, 1995, p. 89). This situation inevitably led to a great deal of conflict between the secular regime and religion as well as between different sects in medieval European society, which in turn led to the division of medieval European society.

Thirdly, civil society at the grass-roots level was given a considerable degree of autonomy. In many cases, the state gave a certain degree of autonomy to grass-roots societies. In many dynasties, the administrative power of the state did not even extend directly to every corner of society. In China, 'the political system could not be developed on a single track from the top downward ... This means that there must be, in some way, a parallel track from the bottom up. A sound system which will endure must thus be "double track"' (Fei & Fei, 1980). The government gave some power concessions to the blood families, allowing the squires and clan chiefs to play a role in grass-roots social governance. 'The bureaucracy played a minor role in the life of the common people, while the lineage system played the major role' (Twitchett & Fairbank, 1978). To a certain extent, squires and clan chiefs, the grass-roots political elite, 'concerned themselves with the promotion of the welfare and the protection of the interests of their respective home areas. They represented the interests of their areas vis-à-vis the government officials. They undertook many tasks such as welfare activities, arbitration, public works, and, at times, the organisation of local military corps or the collection of taxes. Their cultural leadership encompassed all the values of Confucian society but was also materially expressed in such actions as the preservation of village

temples, schools, and examination halls' (Chang, 2011, p. 51). Such an approach, on the one hand, was conducive to the government's localised policies, which fully mobilised the grass-roots society, enabling the blood family, the basic unit of society, not only to have the legitimacy of the state's approval but also to be more vital through the establishment of its own rules and regulations as well as a certain range of inter-connections, which made the operation of China's grass-roots society with a certain sustainable vitality; and on the other hand, it was conducive to the saving of government administrative costs, which greatly reduced the financial and human resources expenditure of national governance. Some scholars pointed out that the important role of the behaviour of the group of squires and clan chiefs lay in: 'saving administrative costs and reducing the trouble of cumbersome government affairs; using the representative figures of the clans, the squires, to assist in the governance of civic affairs, eliminating or reducing the gap between the government and the civic community; and the local government borrowing the power of the clans to maintain the stability of the social order' (Feng, 2005). All these were conducive to the stability of the imperial regime as well as the society as a whole.

4.2.4.2 *Relatively Effective Social Governance by a Bureaucracy with a Certain Degree of Specialisation*

Under traditional social conditions, although on the whole, the authoritarian, rule-of-man style of governance was a dehumanising and illegitimate style of governance, it could not be denied that, even under such conditions of the times, compared with other countries and regions, China established a bureaucracy with a specific rational component and a certain degree of specialisation to govern a complex, diverse, and super-sized social community. 'In a sense, Chinese people invented good government. They were the first to design an administrative system that was rational, functionally organised, and based on impersonal criteria for recruitment and promotion'. 'The Chinese bureaucracy established a model that would eventually be replicated by virtually all modern bureaucracies' (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 313). It was by virtue of this bureaucracy that China exercised relatively effective social governance over a large social community such as itself.

A bureaucracy with a certain degree of specialisation, rationality, and effectiveness in traditional Chinese society can be understood as such:

Firstly, there was an institutionalised division of labour, and posts were not set up on a personal basis. For example, in the Cabinet, there were generally six ministries, namely, the Ministry of Personnel, Revenue, Rites, War, Justice, and Works; the six ministries had a more precise division of labour, each with its own responsibilities. Although the specific officials in each ministry often changed, the ministries and posts were relatively fixed. 'No centralised government could work without a professional civil service system' (Toynbee, 1934).

Secondly, there was a certain degree of target responsibility system. Officials were accountable both to their superiors and to what they did. Such a system of target responsibility, even if it could be honoured only to a certain extent, would, to varying degrees, reduce the occurrence of random acts and the waste of administrative resources.

Thirdly, there was an extensive supervisory system to ensure the effective implementation of the central government's directives. The supervisory was bodied at all levels, which coexisted with the various levels of government and had a certain degree of independence, were to some extent able to effectively play the roles of 'taking charge of laws and decrees', 'investigating and correcting the actions of various officials, and interrogating the serious criminal cases', 'scrutinise the penal institutions and reviewing the wrongful convictions', 'purify and rectify the rituals of the imperial court', and 'supervise the military'. From the perspective of Chinese history, the role of the supervisory body is becoming increasingly apparent. 'The Censors-in-chief gained significant influence, particularly during the Ming Dynasty, and was renamed the Chief Surveillance Office. The Censors-in-chief, Vice Censors-in-chief, and Assistant Censors-in-chief were all divided into left and right positions. There were also sub-divisions of Chief Investigating Censors' (Lu, 2016, p. 154).

Fourthly, most government officials had a solid Confucian ethical spirit. After the Sui and Tang Dynasties, most government officials were elected by the imperial examinations. Most of these officials were, after all, winners after fierce competition and naturally had relatively strong abilities; at the same time, because of their relatively high social position, these people were members of the 'political elite' group in society. It should be noted in particular that these officials, after years of Confucian education, had, to a certain extent, developed a positive worldly spirit of protecting the people of the world as their own responsibility, or rather, they had certain positive worldly values. Similar values 'were lacking in the civil service system of the Roman world' (Toynbee, 1934). Based on such

values, these people, ‘after becoming officials, paid by the state, should theoretically serve the public and should no longer consider their own private lives. If they were to seek their own personal finances and run their private lives, they would be a hindrance to the public and will fail in their duties’ (Qian, 2016, p. 53). To some extent, these men tended to see the three as an organic whole: protection of the world’s people, service to the state, and loyalty to the emperor. All of these made these people an essential and indispensable social force for the properly functioning bureaucracy.

It was this reliance on such a bureaucracy with a degree of specialisation for relatively effective social governance that directly contributed to the integration of traditional Chinese society. ‘In fact, the bureaucratic system of modern Britain was modelled on that of imperial China. In comparison with the Roman system, this Chinese system was highly successful. For about two thousand years, to a greater or lesser extent, it served as a pillar of unity and consolidation of order in China. But it was equally limited’ (Toynbee & Ikeda, 1985). By contrast, neither Western medieval nor ancient Indian societies had similar institutional arrangements, thus making it challenging to develop effective social governance and effective social integration.

4.2.4.3 *A Tradition of Valuing Education Contributed to the Effectiveness of Social Governance.*

Under traditional social conditions, compared with most countries and regions, China placed the highest value on education, and attaching importance to education became a tradition. ‘No nation in the world attached greater importance to education than China. Any school of academic thought in China regarded the philosophy of education as its highest core. Any Chinese scholar was almost always an educator as well, which was especially true for Confucianism, especially for Confucius’ (Qian, 2016, p. 99). Since the Spring and Autumn Period, with the phenomenon of economic privatisation, private schools began to appear, leading to the emergence of the phenomenon of ‘cultural downward mobility’, i.e., culture and education going into the grass-roots, which changed the situation of the previous government monopoly on education, i.e., the ‘government as guardian of academics’. For a long time, China gradually formed an education system consisting of official schools, academies, and private schools, achieving notable success in education. During the Ming Dynasty, ‘China seemed to have had a significantly

bigger group of people (overwhelmingly men) with medium literacy and numeracy levels'. By 'around 1700 CE, perhaps just 5% of men could be said to read reasonably fluently, and 35% of boys learned a few characters, but by 1800, as many as half of the boys in northern China were learning a few characters' (Morris, 2013). Traditional Chinese society valued education far more than medieval European society. As Voltaire put it, '500 years ago, there was hardly a man who could write, either in Northern Europe, in Germany, or in my own country' (Voltaire, 1759).

The Chinese tradition of attaching importance to education had at least three distinctive features. Firstly, most social groups attached importance to education. In traditional Chinese society, regardless of one's social status, whether in government or among ordinary people, education was highly valued, and studying was generally accepted as a 'proper' pursuit. Even a large number of ordinary peasants also attached importance to 'cultivating and passing on knowledge', with some families setting aside fields specifically for supporting the education of their children. Secondly, the scope of educated people was relatively broad. Receiving education was not the privilege of the aristocracy or elite groups. From the royal relatives down to the ordinary people, all had the right to receive education. 'Education was for all without discrimination'. Thirdly, it was easy for educated people to obtain a higher social status. China attached great importance to 'elite' education. Once a person achieved success in an imperial examination through years of hard study, they could enjoy a lot of privileges, such as being 'exempted from the labour draft', and 'treated with courtesy by the local government offices', 'often in a superior position in the society', 'the hope of mastering the country's political power at some point', and so on (Chen, 2016, p. 6). It seemed that, in a certain sense, for many members of society, 'education could change one's destiny' was a kind of behavioural goal that could be expected, and it was also a matter of glory on one's ancestors to obtain recognition through education and the imperial examination system. Among regular people, even those who study but have not yet attained official titles were generally able to command a relative degree of respect.

A tradition of universal attention to education had a significant positive effect on the effectiveness of social governance. A general emphasis on education contributed to enhancing people's cognitive abilities and the rationality of society as a whole. Under such circumstances, people would, to a certain extent, abandon irrational and random choices when selecting and formulating social governance methods and policies, and

instead adopt relatively rational governance methods, formulate relatively reasonable and feasible governance policies, and make relatively reasonable institutional arrangements. In this way, it would not only help the realisation of effective social governance but also contribute to the sustainability of effective social governance. Furthermore, the tradition of attaching importance to education helped all groups in society to be in tune with each other in terms of their basic values and specific behavioural orientations. In turn, the identity and consistency of the entire social community regarding basic values and specific behavioural orientations contributed to the improvement of social integration and social cohesion. The Chinese people's identification with the concept of 'monolithic', the human attitude of attaching importance to the present world, the behavioural style of hard-working and thrifty, and the golden mean way of solving problems undoubtedly contributed to the enhancement of the endogenous dynamics of traditional Chinese civilisation and the maintenance and transmission of traditional Chinese civilisation.

In contrast to traditional Chinese societies, traditional societies in many countries and regions did not attach importance to education. In medieval European societies, the mutual opposition between faith and reason was emphasised, and faith was regarded as overriding and taking precedence over reason. St. Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury in England, once said, 'For I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand. For I believe this: unless I believe, I will not understand' (Peking University, Department of Philosophy & Department of History of Foreign Philosophy, 1981, p. 240). In such a scenario, it was unlikely that medieval European society would have valued education, and even if it had, its main function would have been mostly to propagate the religious content of irrational beliefs. The same was true of ancient Indian society. In ancient India, 'Brahmins monopolised learning' and 'rulers were themselves illiterate and relied for administration on a similarly uneducated cadre of patrimonial officials' (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 172). Ancient India did not even have basic historical records. Ancient India 'had no record of the beginning and end of dynasties, kingdoms, and important events in its history, and it was impossible for modern man to understand the precise chronology of the development of ancient Indian history. The attitude of the Indians towards life, death, and history was in sharp contrast to that of the Chinese. The Chinese paid extra attention to life, death, and history, making every dynasty, every important person, and even every important event in our history an exact and detailed record'

(Zhu, 2005). Based on obscurantism and ignorance, people were unable to perceive society objectively, and it was impossible for them to formulate and implement effective policies for social governance. This was an important reason why the standard of social governance in medieval European and ancient Indian societies was far inferior to that of traditional Chinese societies.

4.2.4.4 *Promoting Social Integration with Effective Transport Networks and Textual Tools*

From the time of the first Qin emperor, China began to implement the principle of 'standardising the characters and wheelbase' to promote the integration of Chinese society with an efficient transport network and unified textual tools.

Since the Qin and Han dynasties, China began to build extensive, nationwide, well-connected transport network. 'After unifying China, the Qin built the "Chidao" (imperial roads) from Xianyang to Yanqi in the east and Wu and Chu in the south ... built the "Zhidao" (straight roads) that communicated between Xianyang and Inner Mongolia, the "Wuchidao" (five-chi roads) that communicated between the Central Plains, Bashu, and the Southwest Barbarians, and the "Xindao" (new roads) that climbed over the Five Ridges among Hunan, Jiangxi, Guangdong, and Guangxi, thus constructing a transport network centred on Xianyang'. 'In addition to the avenues leading from Chang'an to various places during the Han Dynasty, even Shu had thousands of miles of trestle roads everywhere' (Lu & Lu, 2004). In addition to land transport, China also attached great importance to the construction of waterway transport. 'On the basis of the original canal channels, the Sui Dynasty, with the efforts of the whole country, dug the Tongji Canal, the Huaiyang and Zhenyang Canal, the Jiangnan Canal, and the Yongji Canal, thus constituting the backbone of east-west and north-south canals, which were later perfected and operated by the Tang and Song dynasties, forming a well-connected water transport network throughout the country' (Jin, 2003). 'There were three great waterways - the Yellow River, the Yangtze River, and the Xijiang River - which, with the canals just mentioned, serve to bind the country together and produce cultural homogeneity among the people' (Morse & MacNair, 1931). From the point of view of their historical impact, these transport networks constituted the 'bloodline' network of 'people' and 'goods' essential to the continuation of traditional Chinese civilisation.

Special attention should be paid to the fact that we cannot underestimate ‘the most important impact of script on human history is precisely this: it has gradually changed the way humans think and view the world. Free association and holistic thought have given way to compartmentalisation and bureaucracy’ (Harari, 2015). In the specific case of China, the unity and consistency of the Chinese characters had a significant positive impact on the integration and continuation of traditional Chinese civilisation.

Over the millennia, the regional map of China has changed relatively dramatically, but it has remained essentially a unified state. ‘A universal state must have provided itself with official media of mental communication, and that these should include not only one or more languages for spoken intercourse but also some system of visual records based on a written notation’ (Toynbee, 1934). Without a unified language and script, it would be impossible for members of society to have a standardised and defined exchange of information between them and to merge into a truly meaningful and sustainable social community. As the homologous written language was formally and uniformly used in traditional Chinese society, Chinese characters have been widely used by the Chinese people without interruption. Of all the ancient traditional civilisations, this phenomenon was found only in China. In ancient Indian society, ‘the lack of a widespread literary culture, particularly among the Indian rulers and administrators, constituted a major obstacle to the development of a powerful centralized state’ (Fukuyama, 2011, p. 153).

The significance of Chinese characters to traditional Chinese civilisation lay in the following: firstly, they facilitated the exchange of information and communication between members of society in all regions of China in an effective, accurate, consistent, and standardised manner. China was an extremely vast country. In such a country, there were naturally a large number of dialects, and there was a great need for a script that preserved traditional dialects and allowed for the exchange of accurate information. Chinese characters fulfilled this seemingly almost impossible need. ‘The great advantage of the Chinese system was its masterly representation of the highest common factor of structure and meaning shared by all the Chinese dialects, many of which were not mutually comprehensible’. ‘By and large, every one of these syllables was represented in writing by a single character, and so the meaning of a written Chinese text would be relatively clear to any literate speaker of any dialect’. ‘No alphabetic script,

based perforce on the sounds of a language, could now be so conveniently neutral in terms of all the different Chinese dialects unless perhaps it was designed on historical principles with a knowledge of all varieties of Chinese' (Ostler, 2010). 'How was China able to remain a unified nation with a unified culture for thousands of years? The main reason for this lies in their use of a uniform written script that could be read and understood in both southern and northern China' (Störig, 1987). Secondly, it helped to strengthen the people's sense of identity and belonging to the traditional Chinese civilisation. If a large number of members of a society in the same country shared a common thing in a written context for a long time, it naturally helped to form and strengthen a sense of ritual, identity, and belonging. As an ideographic tool, a large number of Chinese characters contained specific meanings that were familiar to the Chinese people. 'Chinese characters were hieroglyphs, so ancient Chinese characters often retained the archetypes of "things" (but many were difficult to decipher), and the archetypal things must have been very moving, so they became the classics, in which the essentials of life were also hidden' (Zhao, 2016a, 2016b, p. 156). It was these specific meanings of Chinese characters that, to a certain extent, could bring the readers into a certain common context and then form a sense of identity and belonging to the traditional Chinese civilisation. Thirdly, it helped the continuation of traditional Chinese civilisation. From the perspective of intergenerational transmission, if members of the same ethnic group in different eras were reading the same text, it would undoubtedly help the 'offspring' members of the same ethnic group to understand and identify with the same civilisation or culture owned by members of the 'previous generation', and even generate a certain emotion towards it. They may even develop a certain emotional attachment to it. This would undoubtedly contribute to the transmission of a commonly recognised type of civilisation between generations of the same ethnic group. 'This common written language has been an important force in providing unity and historical continuity to China' (Stavrianos, 1999, p. 51).

As can be seen from the above, in traditional Chinese society, as the basic unit of society, the blood family was deeply rooted, with a strong characteristic of 'grasping the ground', weaving a huge, dense social organic network, which was used to maximise the extraction of all nutrients from the natural and social soil that were helpful to its own growth. This lay an extremely firm and solid socio-economic foundation for the traditional Chinese social community, thus giving traditional

Chinese civilisation a universal and strong regenerative power, a resilience to cope with adversity, and a tenacious ability to repair itself once it encountered changes. A certain degree of mobility in traditional Chinese society, such as the free sale of land and the imperial examination system, contributed to the development of the most important social groups, such as the people and the ‘elites’. Effective social governance and integration of traditional Chinese society was facilitated by the positive balancing of various interests, a bureaucracy with a certain degree of professionalism, a tradition of attaching importance to education in general, and a relatively smooth system of transport and effective writing tools. All of these effectively gave rise to the strong ‘endogeneity’ or ‘endogenous capacity’ of traditional Chinese civilisation, which in turn contributed to the continuation of traditional Chinese civilisation for thousands of years to the present day. In contrast, neither the medieval societies of Europe nor the societies of ancient India had this obvious advantage, and at the same time, there was no alternative advantage. This was also an important reason why medieval European and ancient Indian societies lacked a strong ‘endogeneity’ or ‘endogenous capacity’.

4.3 ‘EXTERNALISED’: SAFEGUARDING THE CONTINUITY OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE CIVILISATION

4.3.1 *Causes and Implications of the ‘Externalised’ Strategy*

4.3.1.1 *How the ‘Externalised’ Strategy Came About*

Traditional society is very different from modern society regarding external communication activities. Modern society is open and based on modern great industry and market economy. The main purpose of its external relations is twofold: first, to deal with the country’s security, which is an essential prerequisite for its survival and development; and second, to open up to the outside world and exchange essential resources with other countries, to form a rational resource allocation structure and comparative advantages in economic and other areas. In contrast, traditional society was, on the whole, a closed society based on an agrarian economy. Under the agrarian economic conditions of the traditional society, most countries, except for a few countries that were trading centres, did not need to exchange plenty of resources with other countries in order to develop their own comparative advantages. In other words, under the traditional social conditions, the social community was

mostly based on the agrarian economy, and thus, generally speaking, the agrarian economy's demand for extra-territorial resources was minimal, and the opening of the society as a whole to the outside world was not a necessity for a country's economy. Although there always existed a certain degree of foreign exchange and dissemination of farming technology, handicraft skills, crops, and other cultural things and other resources between different countries, for example, by some accidental events, the spread of Chinese papermaking to the west, the spread of wheat from West Asia, the spread of sweet potatoes from the Americas in China, and so on, but this kind of exchanges and dissemination was with a certain degree of randomness, and the time was slow. Therefore, under the conditions of traditional society, the external exchange of resources in most countries could not be compared with that of modern social countries in terms of area, intensity, and frequency. Even so, for countries in the era of traditional societies, except for a very few countries such as closed island countries like Japan, some countries or ethnic groups in Eurasia and North Africa sometimes had another type of external communication problem, namely, the external plundering and migration or even the large-scale external plundering and migration of some ethnic groups, especially nomadic groups, due to climatic and other reasons based on the consideration of their basic livelihoods. Therefore, most countries had the problem of managing their relations with neighbouring countries and regions in order to guarantee their own security. If they did not manage their relations with their neighbours well, or if they were unable to effectively resist foreign aggression because they were not sufficiently prepared, or if the foreign aggression was too strong to resist, the result was that their countries would be plunged into a situation of unrest and heavy losses, or, in the more serious case, they would be conquered, and their existing ethnic cultures would be exterminated.

Looking specifically at China, there were many reasons why its traditional civilisation was able to continue for thousands of years from the point of view of its foreign relations strategy. Among them, at least two were 'natural conditions'. One reason was the security barrier factor of geography. For Jerusalem, Poland, and other countries and regions, their natural locations happen to be in the main traffic routes of a number of countries and regions; the four directions are lacking security barriers in the natural geographic sense, and there is a possibility of invasion from strong enemies from all directions. Unfortunately, this situation has occurred many times in history. This is not the case with China. In the

southeast of China, there is the sea as a security barrier; in the south, it does not face any powerful countries, so there is basically no problem with security; in the southwest and west, there are high mountains and plateaus as a reliable barrier for security protection; only in the north is it relatively insecure, and the major invasions of foreign enemies in history basically come from this direction. Another reason is the vast size or volume of the national community. The size of the state has a vital and non-negligible significance for the security of a country. All other things being equal, it is difficult for a small country to defend itself effectively against a powerful foreign invading force. If a country is 'large in size, it has a vast territory, which can provide greater room for manoeuvring in its defence. Moreover, a large country is generally rich in natural resources and has more potential for war. A large country also implies a large population, an adequate source of troops, and a considerable mobilisation potential that can withstand the depletion of war' (Wu, 2019, p. 246). Historically, for thousands of years, China's state size or volume was among the top positions in the world. This objectively provided China with an important kind of security guarantee. Of course, it should be noted that these 'natural conditions' certainly play an important role in the security of a country. However, it is impossible to reach the level of 'major' causes. For example, the size of the ancient Roman Empire and the ancient Indian civilisation could be said to be massive enough, but in the end, they did not escape the fate of being exterminated.

The reason why traditional Chinese civilisation has been able to continue for thousands of years is that in addition to the relatively safe geographical environment and 'natural' factors such as its huge size, the more important reasons are from the internal level of its community. China has a strong 'endogeny' or 'endogenous power', which can provide sustainable and effective support for the continuation of traditional Chinese civilisation; from the level of its community's external contacts, it is because China has long implemented effective 'externalised strategy', which can provide sustainable and effective guarantee for the continuation of its traditional civilisation.

4.3.1.2 Meaning of the 'Externalised' Strategy

The so-called 'externalised' strategy mainly refers to the fact that China, based on the superior potential of the higher standard of civilisation (including material and cultural civilisation) in its region, has mainly

adopted the methods of peaceful interaction, such as 'fusion', 'integration', and 'indoctrination', rather than the military aggression of 'conquest', 'plunder', and 'expansion' to carry out foreign exchange activities, in order to ensure their national security and to gradually spread the influence of their civilisation to the surrounding regions. The main points are, firstly, that the main purpose is not to plunder the resources and wealth of other countries and regions but to establish a mutually beneficial and advantageous security community for each other. Secondly, using peaceful foreign exchanges, accompanied by material benefits and cultural assistance, China 'inspires' the 'barbarian' ethnic groups in the surrounding areas to voluntarily 'come' to the Chinese civilisation to 'naturalise' and 'civilise' themselves, 'converting barbarians into Chinese', so that they can naturally and gradually accept the beneficial elements of China's relatively advanced civilisation, rather than by 'force' to change and exploit them. Thirdly, according to the different spatial distances, we formulate a differentiated, rather than 'one-size-fits-all', conciliatory policy for the neighbouring countries and regions and promote it gradually. Fourthly, according to our own 'natural' practical needs, we carry out material and cultural exchanges with the outside world to a certain extent.

It is important to note that although nowadays, this 'externalised' strategy seems to have a noticeable tinge of condescension and self-importance, at that time, it was a real idea of the Chinese people and an actual act that was put into practice. Therefore, it is relatively appropriate to use the term 'externalisation' to summarise the basic attitude and practice of the Chinese people in their interactions with neighbouring countries and regions, as well as with ethnic groups, at that time.

It is an obvious historical fact that traditional Chinese society has basically adopted this well-established 'externalised' approach to foreign relations for thousands of years. The 'externalised' strategy consists broadly of the following main elements: a worldview of Yi Xia Zhi Bian full of self-superiority but essentially peaceful, a harmonious and tolerant way of interacting with the outside world, and a defensive foreign military strategy.

4.3.2 *The Worldview of Yi Xia Zhi Bian, Full of Self-Superiority but Essentially Peaceful*

4.3.2.1 *The Basic Contents of the Worldview of Yi Xia Zhi Bian*

The basic contents of the worldview of Yi Xia Zhi Bian (Sino-barbarian dichotomy), which has been upheld by traditional Chinese society for thousands of years, are:

First, China is the centre of civilisation in the world.

In the eyes of people in traditional Chinese society, civilisation was the most important, the fundamental yardstick that distinguished the enlightened from the unenlightened. China was the centre of civilisation in the world, and all other countries and regions were uncivilised or less enlightened barbarians. ‘Only China has been educated, so there exist Yaofu (remote areas) and Huangfu (wild areas); all the people living in the places far from China are called barbarians’ (Guo, 1982, p. 439). ‘The doctrine of Confucius and Mencius was the human principles from the heaven to the earth. There were people who had principles, which would read them and remain unchanged for eons. And what doubts should there be?’ (Wang, 1959, p. 137).

Secondly, the world is an orderly system of civilised centres and barbaric lands.

‘For thousands of years, the so-called “world” was not China’s belief that “the world is only so big”, but rather there was only the same humanistic ethical order under the light of day. China considered itself the best and was the place of sustenance for civilisation. Thus, “the world” was a concentric circle without limits, blossoming layer by layer and pushing the barbarians. China, boasting of being the centre of civilisation, constructed a system of tribute with its neighbours and granted fiefs, mollification, and Tusi system with its internal border areas’ (Xu, 2020).

Thirdly, China has a certain responsibility to help other countries and regions to change their uncivilised and ignorant state.

Mencius’ saying, ‘I have heard of men using the doctrines of our great land to change barbarians, but I have never yet heard of any being changed by barbarians’ (Mencius, 1861), actually expresses this meaning. For the barbarians, they should be gradually civilised, and then gradually brought into the circle of civilisation. ‘If remoter people were not submissive, all the influences of civil culture and virtue were to be cultivated to attract them to be so’ (Confucius, 1960). Moreover, since most of the uncivilised people in the barbarians’ land were poor, we should consider

their difficulties in our dealings with them and adhere to the principle of 'giving more and taking less'. According to Kong Yingda's explanation, the so-called "giving more" meant that when a vassal returned to the country, the emperor would repay him with heavy gifts. The "taking less" meant that vassals could pay less valuable tribute to the state'. In this way, the emperor was able to 'make all the vassals submissive, so this is a good way to appease these vassals' (Ruan, 1980, p. 1630). At that time, the Chinese tried to 'guide the barbarians through such "virtuous" and friendly practices so that the backward barbarians could share the high standard of Chinese culture, change their bad customs, and create political and cultural psychological identity, thus making the "barbarian" ultimately culturally subordinate to "Huaxia"'. The Chinese, 'governed by the concept of "changing barbarians with the civilized", were happy to promote the spread of Chinese civilisation abroad, thus realising the political ideals of "one world" and "world emperor"' (Chen, 2010a, 2010b).

4.3.2.2 *The Distinctive Features of Yi Xia Zhi Bian*

The traditional Chinese view of the world as Yi Xia Zhi Bian has several distinctive features:

Firstly, the mentality that the celestial empire alone is the honoured one.

Since it identified itself as the celestial empire, the centre of products and civilisation, it would naturally and logically develop an egotistical state of mind. Emperor Qianlong had a passage that was very typical of this mentality of egotism. In 1773, Qianlong wrote in his letter to the British king: 'The Celestial Empire had plentiful products and everything in it. We did not trade with foreign goods to exchange what we needed. But we would like to extend our favour and compassion to you by opening an overseas bank in Macao to obtain daily funds and profits because the tea and silk produced in the heavenly kingdom are necessary for Western countries and your country' (Wang, n.d.).

Secondly, a relatively solid civilisational capital and a significant regional influence supporting foreign relations.

It should be said that, in traditional society, because of the general economic and cultural closure, countries or ethnic groups, whether of higher or lower economic standards, lacked a basic understanding of other countries or ethnic groups and generally developed a certain degree of ethnic superiority, believing that their own country or ethnic group

was the best in the world and that the region in which they lived was the centre of the world. For example, ‘when the ancient Greeks named the three continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa, they did not take into account the entire inhabited earth, but only their homeland and the land directly opposite them. ... Ancient Roman times inherited the Greek trichotomy of the world’ (Wu, 2007). The ancient Jews also identified themselves as God’s chosen people, superior to all other ethnic groups. Unlike many other countries and ethnic groups, the Chinese worldview of *Yi Xia Zhi Bian* was based on a material and cultural foundation that was actually of a higher standard rather than being nonsense or a dream completely divorced from the actual situation. Under the natural economic conditions, the economic level, economic volume, and cultural standard of traditional Chinese society were always at the forefront of all countries or ethnic groups in the world at that time. Moreover, although the vision of the Chinese people at that time, like the national communities of other countries and regions, could not have a truly global view, it was not a frog sitting in a well with a very small vision of the sky either. At that time, the Chinese view of the world was based on the knowledge of a larger region that transcended the domain of the specific ‘right to rule’, and thus had a relatively large regional perspective.

Thirdly, non-exclusivity.

It cannot be denied that the *Yi Xia Zhi Bian* is a view of the world with a strong sense of superiority. ‘A set of assumptions reinforced the notion of the supremacy of Chinese institutions and culture and of their acceptability to the barbarians; the idea that the latter might not have had any need for Chinese culture was never entertained’ (Keegan, 2004, p. 202). While this was true, it should be noted at the same time that this view of the world certainly had a sense of superiority at the level of ‘civilisation’, but not at the level of ‘ethnicity’ or ‘religion’ in a narrow sense. It did not have the consciousness and behaviour of extreme ethnic or religious exclusivity. Moreover, this worldview believed that the civilisation of a nation or ethnic group could continuously improve, and the backward ‘barbarians’ could gradually become the advanced ‘Xia’ after a certain amount of indoctrination. Therefore, objectively speaking, the worldview of *Yi Xia Zhi Bian* might display evident discriminatory tendencies towards the lands of the ‘barbarians’, but it did not categorically view them as threats to be excluded or combated. On the contrary, there was a certain level of care, even if tinged with a patronising tone. An obvious historical fact was that over the past several thousand years, compared with

many other countries or ethnic groups, the Chinese have basically neither rejected nor cleansed countries or ethnic groups that were 'barbarians' on the religious level nor the racial level but condescendingly gave them a certain practical significance of 'compassion' and 'care'.

4.3.2.3 *The Impact of the Worldview of Yi Xia Zhi Bian on China's Foreign Relations*

The worldview of Yi Xia Zhi Bian had a profound impact on the basic attitudes and behaviours of traditional Chinese societies in their external relations in at least two ways. One important influence was that the main purpose of foreign relations was to 'secure the border' and protect one's national security rather than to plunder the resources and wealth of the other party for one's survival. In this regard, the Daoguang Emperor of the Qing Dynasty had a somewhat representative saying: 'The celestial system must not be lost, and disturbances from foreign barbarians must not be incited' (Association of Chinese Historians, 1954, p. 208). The rationale was straightforward. With China already possessing the world's most abundant resources and being the most civilised celestial empire while other countries and communities lacked the basic resources for survival, there was no need to plunder other nations. Another significant influence was the belief that the duty of 'civilising' the subjects from the barbarian lands lay with China. Thus, apart from military actions necessary to repel barbarian invasions, external interactions should generally be conducted through peaceful, enlightening, integrating ways of 'cultivating virtue', 'welcoming visitors', and 'promoting civilisation'. It was not advisable to proactively resort to aggressive military measures. For example, 'both the Qin and Han Dynasties and the Ming Dynasty used the Great Wall as a line of defence. However, the barriers of the Qin and Han dynasties were open, while the border walls of the Ming dynasty were closed. Like embankments, city walls could collapse under immense pressure. In terms of mentality, this border wall separated Hu and Han, and the Han people set their own limits, being reserved rather than expansive, closed rather than aggressive' (Xu, 2007). It could be said that 'the Great Wall marked the outline of the cultural zone that all Chinese governments sought to preserve' (Keegan, 2004, p. 278).

4.3.3 *Harmonious and Inclusive Approach to External Relations*

On the basis of the worldview of Yi Xia Zhi Bian, China adopted, on the whole, a correspondingly harmonious and tolerant approach to its external relations.

4.3.3.1 *'Tribute' as the Basic Form of the 'Vassal System'*

In its dealings with neighbouring countries and regions, China long developed an institutional arrangement known as the 'vassal system', with 'tribute' as its basic form. The institutional arrangement of the 'vassal system' continued until the late Qing Dynasty. 'The main purpose of the tribute system was to secure peace and order for China along her vast frontiers, and in practice, it was generally successful' (Stavrianos, 1966, p. 56). The institutional arrangement of the 'vassal system' included almost all the neighbouring countries and regions. Nominally, the imperial government rewarded and provided security for the vassal states, which in turn were responsible for defending the land and were expected to pay tribute to the imperial government on a regular basis. It was important to note that the tribute system was characterised by a unique form of reciprocal relations, emphasising the need for mutual contributions. 'If I wanted to get something from Chinese sources, give something. This was simply the ancient idea of reciprocity, not seeking something for nothing' (Fairbank, 1982, p. 204). The vassal system had an irreplaceable significance in the midst of China's historical foreign activities. Some scholars have pointed out that 'Europe cannot be understood without its slaves and its subject economies. China similarly cannot be understood if we ignore the savage cultures within the country that defied it and the distant conquered lands outside it that lived in its orbit' (Braudel, 1992, p. 102). Unlike the colonies of empires such as the Roman Empire, China's neighbouring vassal states were not Chinese colonies, not objects of plunder and oppression by China. Moreover, China not only did not plunder the wealth and resources of the vassal states, did not collect 'protection money' from them, and did not allow their interests to be harmed but also ennobled the vassal states that paid tribute and reciprocated with gifts exceeding the value of their tribute. In contrast, the tributes of the vassal states were only symbolic expressions of 'respect' rather than the living materials needed by the Chinese people. In reality, vassal states obtained certain practical benefits in exchange for preserving the 'face' of the Chinese emperor, who considered himself the centre of the world.

As noted by the scholar Chen Zilong in late Ming Dynasty, 'without diligent planning and farsightedness, without expanding territory, without labouring its people, merely through the exchange of generosity, the national prestige was resounding' (Chen, 2011, p. 739). In addition, China had the responsibility to provide security directly to some of these countries and regions. In this way, the vassal state could not only obtain various types of spiritual satisfaction, such as having the title of honour of 'king', but also got a lot of practical material benefits, with their terms of material benefits almost being a 'net gain' party, so naturally most of vassal states approve of this system of arrangement. Moreover, as a supplement to the vassal system, China sometimes adopted the policies of 'marriage alliances' and 'allying with the frontier' to release goodwill and consolidate friendly relations with some countries or ethnic groups in the neighbouring areas, seeking a safe situation in the neighbouring areas. For example, 'Tang set up autonomous governance and Protectorate on the lands of foreign tribes which were subjugated outside the border, and the government chiefs were the chiefs of these tribes and were hereditary. Such government was, in fact, the unit of self-government, and the central government of the Tang Dynasty only conferred on the chiefs the names of honours and official positions, which were different from the local governments in the interior' (Xu, 2006, p. 154). All these factors contributed to a mutually beneficial 'win-win' situation, where China and its neighbouring countries and regions each obtained what they needed in terms of security, creating a certain degree of shared security.

4.3.3.2 *Apparent Inclusiveness Towards Foreign Cultures*

China has demonstrated a marked inclusiveness towards foreign cultures. This is highlighted by its tolerance of many different types of cultures. For a country or region, it is relatively easy to tolerate the general material products of other countries and regions, but it is relatively difficult to tolerate the heterogeneous cultures of other countries and regions that are different from one's own. This is one of the major reasons why many countries and regions often have conflicts, even serious ones, between their own cultures and religions and foreign cultures and religions. In medieval European society, Christian culture was overwhelmingly dominant. Medieval European society held a basic attitude of total suppression and even destruction of religions from other countries and regions, such as Islam. It could not tolerate the coexistence of 'paganism' and their own religions in the world. The brutal Crusades are proof of this. In

medieval European society, the Church's efforts to combat even different sects of the same religion were appalling. Among them, Spain's crack-down on different sects was famously brutal in Europe. It is recorded that 'the Spanish Inquisition, which was established from the end of the fifteenth century to the beginning of the seventeenth century, in 140 years, reduced the population of Spain by more than three million, and in the 18 years when the Inquisition's activities were at their most frenzied, 114,000 people were accused, 10,220 burned at stake, and 97,000 were sentenced to life imprisonment or to public penitence' (Wang et al., 2006, p. 211). The problem was that 'they weren't Jews, they weren't Moors, they were just "heretics" who were also Christians' (Lin, 2007, p. 179). In contrast, traditional Chinese civilisation, as a secularised, predominantly Confucian culture, was more tolerant of different types of culture. As members of the British mission to China in the late eighteenth century saw, 'When the Europeans first visited China, they were astonished to find that there was a general allowance for all kinds of religious beliefs and to see that lama and Taoist priests, Jews, Persians, and Muslims coexisted peacefully, each practising his own religion without interference' (Macartney, 1963). Not to mention China's tolerance of Buddhism from India, it also demonstrated a remarkable inclusiveness towards Islam from Western countries and regions, which was beyond the imagination of a medieval European religious society. From the Tang Dynasty onwards, Islam entered the northwest, Yunnan, and northern regions of China with little resistance and took root in the Chinese land. Under the influence of traditional Chinese civilisation, even Jews, known for their distinctive practices in various countries worldwide, underwent noticeable changes once they resided in China for a certain period. For example, the Jews who moved to Kaifeng in 998 were gradually assimilated into Confucianism from the beginning of the Ming Dynasty. This was manifested in the following: the Kaifeng Jews 'interpreted the teachings of Judaism with Confucianism'; 'the architectural structure and interior layout of the Kaifeng synagogue embodied a strong Confucian style'; and 'among the Jewish intellectuals in Kaifeng, there emerged a widespread trend of studying Confucianism' (Zhang, 2007). As some scholars pointed out, 'in comparison, China, and only China, was tolerant and peaceful when engaging with other heterogeneous cultural systems' (He, 2016, p. 26).

China was also very accommodating in terms of specific material and cultural exchanges with the outside world. From an export perspective, the spread of Chinese papermaking, printing, gunpowder, and the compass had a profound impact on and significantly contributed to culture, navigation, and industry worldwide. The exports of large quantities of silk, porcelain, and iron contributed significantly to the improvement of living standards and productive capacity of the inhabitants of other countries and regions. 'China's leading position in the world economy in terms of production and exports' is evidenced by the fact that 'China exports silk, porcelain, and quicksilver and, after 1600, tea'. 'Ming China had a virtual monopoly in porcelain and other ceramics on the world market' (Frank, 1998). From the perspective of import, China introduced from other countries and regions a large number of various daily necessities related to the people's food, clothing, housing, and transport, as well as a variety of craft technology. As such, it broadened the Chinese people's horizons, enriched their lives, and raised the production standard of many agricultural and handicraft products.

4.3.3.3 *The Crucial Impact of a Harmonious and Inclusive Approach to External Relations*

Undoubtedly, a harmonious and inclusive approach to foreign relations was not only a positive and indispensable safeguard for China's peripheral security and an essential factor in upgrading China's traditional civilisation but also a very important contributor to the upgrading of the civilisation of neighbouring countries and regions. Japan was a typical example. Toynbee and Ikada (1976) pointed out that 'the Chinese civilisation had been adopted by all China's neighbours, including Japan, though Japan has never been subject to China politically'. The Taika Reforms, which took place in 645 A.D., were one of the two most important changes in Japan's history, abolishing the hereditary system of nobility and establishing the basic system of centralised state power. The 'Taika Reforms' was a copy of the Tang Dynasty's system of rules and regulations. After that, Japan's 'ruler assumed the role not of a mere clan leader but of an emperor, with absolute power, although professedly honouring Confucian principles'. 'Faithful to the example of China, the reformers instituted a civil service, offering examinations to candidates for government posts, whose selection would be based not on familiarity with the problems of Japan but on proficiency in Chinese philosophy and classical literature' (Burns & Ralph, 1998, pp. 451–452). It should be acknowledged that in

the era of traditional societies before the age of the great voyages, China was one of the most prosperous countries in terms of foreign relations all over the world. As Stavrianos points out, ‘the Chinese civilisation and Chinese empires persisted in unbroken continuity to modern times, so that they have controlled East Asia, while no nation in the West has been able to control the West’ (Stavrianos, 1999).

4.3.4 *Defensive Foreign Military Strategy*

4.3.4.1 *Foreign Wars Were a Last Resort Option.*

Historically, foreign wars were an option of last resort for the Chinese, who were preoccupied with their agrarian economy and believed themselves to be far more civilised than the neighbouring countries and regions, full of a sense of superiority. ‘China’s great commanders, who were usually civilians, held to the idea of getting their way in warfare with the least possible fighting’ (Fairbank 1982, p. 458). Generally speaking, conquering other countries and regions and opening up new territories was not a major option in China’s foreign strategy. Unless it was sometimes necessary to eliminate the hidden dangers of large-scale foreign aggression, China generally did not choose to take the initiative and carry out military strikes first. ‘In fact, China was forced to engage in, but did not start the war’. ‘The Warring States period, like ancient Greece and modern Europe, had its share of divisions and resistance. Yet after the Han Dynasty, the spirit of belligerence was abandoned’ (Toynbee & Ikeda, 1976). Even if China sometimes took the initiative, the nature of its operations was generally more of a ‘self-defensive counterattack’. Once the security risks near the borders were eliminated, occasionally, campaigns were conducted to conquer the remnants of the enemy in the vast hinterland extending north and west for thousands of miles from the border. Subsequently, essential border defence forces would station along the borders while the main military forces were withdrawn back into the interior.

The tremendous maritime activities of Zheng He during the Ming Dynasty’s voyages to the Western Oceans are typical illustrations of this point. Zheng He’s seven voyages between 1405 and 1433 were unprecedented in the world’s maritime history in terms of their starting time, fleet size, area across the sea, and time span, far exceeding the voyages of Columbus, Magellan, and Da Gama. Each of Zheng He’s voyages to the West Ocean involved dozens of ships, ‘constituting the largest fleet

of ships in the world at that time'. Among them, the largest ship was '44 zhang and four chi long (more than 138 metres), 18 zhang wide (56 metres), with nine masts and 12 sails. ... It was the largest ship in the world at that time' (Wang et al., 2006, p. 254). Unprecedented in the history of the world's state-led sailing at such a huge cost, the fleet neither plundered the wealth of other countries and regions nor opened up new territories, but on the contrary, it sprinkled wealth wherever it went. All these showed that China then did not consider plundering the wealth of other countries and regions and opening up colonies, but only to proclaim the national prestige of the Chinese celestial empire and the grace of the emperor to the countries and regions it passed through.

4.3.4.2 *Reasons for Adopting a Defensive Foreign Military Strategy*

Traditional Chinese society adopted a defensive foreign military strategy for an extended period of time due to the objective reality at that time.

Traditional Chinese society never had the will to actively engage in military expansion abroad and to plunder other countries and regions of their subsistence resources and possessions. Clausewitz pointed out that war was only a means option to achieve political ends. 'War was nothing but a duel on an extensive scale'. 'War was an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will'. 'War was only a branch of political activity; that it was in no sense autonomous' (Von Clausewitz, 2008). There was some truth in this view of Clausewitz. From the point of view of fundamental interests, that is, the 'grand politics', generally speaking, for a civilised society like China, which was highly developed in the world at that time and established itself as an agrarian nation, the basic resources for its survival came from within the country, and from the hard work of its agrarian labour. For China, foreign wars were basically unprofitable and totally unnecessary. Engaging in warfare would entail enormous workforce, resources, and financial costs. In some cases, it might lead to significant losses of existing wealth, making it a matter of more loss than gain. Therefore, except for the very occasional period when the community had already been under serious threat of foreign aggression, or in a few cases there were a minimal number of militants, in most cases, based on the 'grand political' considerations, no one in China had the will to initiate foreign wars. 'In comparison to more recent regional contenders for power, China was a satisfied empire with limited territorial ambition' (Kissinger, 2011). According to Ricci, the

Chinese 'were quite content with what they had and were not ambitious of conquest. In this respect, they were much different from the people of Europe, who were frequently discontent with their own governments and covetous of what others enjoyed' (Stavrianos, 1966, p. 12). Accordingly, based on the considerations of 'grand politics', the main purpose of the Chinese military power was to protect the peaceful living environment of the country, i.e., to maintain the regular order of social functioning internally, and externally to protect its own national security, and to ensure that its agrarian way of life, on which it depended for its livelihood, would not be disrupted by foreign invasions. For this reason, from the point of view of 'grand politics', that was to say, the overall interests of the country, China would inevitably opt for a defensive foreign military strategy rather than a proactive and offensive one.

In contrast to traditional Chinese civilisation, foreign wars often had a very different significance for a large number of nomadic communities. For many nomadic civilisations, foreign wars were a basic necessity for survival and the greatest political concern for their fundamental interests. Compared with countries or ethnic groups with an agrarian civilisation, these nomadic civilisations were not good at creating material wealth. They were also affected by adverse weather conditions now and then, to the extent that the essential feed required for the livestock, which was vital for survival, could not be provided, leading to many deaths due to the impact of drought or cold climates on the grasslands. This affected the basic survival of these ethnic groups themselves. As a result, waging foreign wars and plundering the means of subsistence and wealth of other countries or ethnic groups became almost a daily political activity for these groups. Over time, it even became an instinctive political option for these groups. 'Genghis is credited with great administrative ability but it was extractive, not stabilising, designed to support the nomad way of life, not to change it' (Keegan, 2004, p. 207). Over time, war became a habitual and even fervent political- and lifestyle-integrated activity for these nomadic tribes, to the point where choices might be made instinctively rather than based on rational judgement. Tacitus found that for the peoples of Germania, 'it was harder to persuade them to plough the land and await its annual produce than to challenge a foe and earn the prize of wounds; indeed, they thought it spiritless and slack to gain by sweat what they could buy with blood' (Tacitus, 2010). Therefore, for nomadic civilisations such as the Mongol steppe empire and the Germanic peoples, war sometimes became not only a necessity for their survival but also a

habitual and instinctive way of life over time. For them, through foreign wars, they could not only plunder the basic resources and wealth necessary for their own survival but also gain a sense of honour from it. Hence, they were unable to get away from it and actively chose to launch foreign wars frequently, even with enthusiasm.

4.3.4.3 *Lack of Professional Honour in the Chinese Army*

The Chinese military has a low social status and lacks the necessary sense of professional honour. In traditional Chinese society, since the state has not needed to, let alone initiated foreign wars for a long time, the military is mainly responsible for maintaining domestic security, and thus the role played by the military in society has been marginalised in a certain sense, which has made the military basically a group lacking a sense of professional honour. For a professional group like the military, honour is a very important thing. 'Even with the most decided inclination to look at War from the highest point of view, it would be very wrong to look down upon this corporate spirit (e'sprit de corps) ... This corporate spirit forms the bond of union between the natural forces which are active in that which we have called military virtue. The crystals of military virtue have a greater affinity for the spirit of a corporate body than for anything else' (Von Clausewitz, 2008, p. 279). And this sense of professional pride has been conspicuously absent in the Chinese military throughout its history. In terms of professional prestige in society, it is those who have achieved merit through the imperial examination system who are most valued and envied, rather than those who have lived a life of military service. 'Nevertheless the Chinese military tradition is of a different type from the European or the Japanese. Once an imperial regime was set up, civilian government was esteemed over military'. 'Disparagement of the soldier is deeply ingrained in the old Chinese system of values' (Fairbank, 1983, p. 68). Even among officials of the same rank serving in the same dynasty, it was the civil officials whose actual status was significantly higher than that of the military officials. From the perspective of the source of soldiers, although the Tang Dynasty was strong in war, it changed from the Fubing system to the mercenary system in the late Tang Dynasty, and as a result, it was naturally of a low reputation. Song Dynasty not only inherited the mercenary system, and often incredibly incorporated bandits, beggars, starving people, rascals, and scoundrels into the official military. All of these things make it impossible for the Chinese historical army as a whole to have a high social status and social prestige, and it is difficult to get the

general recognition of the public, and therefore it is impossible to have the sense of professional honour that the army should have, and then it is impossible to have a high morale.

4.3.4.4 *The Professionalisation Capacity of the Chinese Military Is Significantly Weak*

First, armies in agrarian societies often lack a strong fighting force.

Unlike modern civilisation, in the era of cold weapons, science and technology had not yet reached a certain level of development, and the combination with military power was very limited. Countries and regions with a relatively high degree of agricultural civilisation, despite their relatively abundant financial resources, did not correspondingly have strong military combat power. At that time, military power was often associated with factors such as physical strength, mobility, surprise, and the spirit of hard work and endurance. These factors were not the strengths of countries with a relatively high degree of agrarian civilisation. On the contrary, they are in the possession of the nomadic countries or ethnic groups, which are relatively less civilised. Therefore, it often happens that countries and regions with a relatively high degree of civilisation are often militarily outmatched by barbarian groups, as in the case of the highly civilised Roman Empire, which was eventually destroyed by the less civilised barbarians. Specifically, for China, as Fan Zhongyan said, ‘strong and powerful soldiers and horses are the strength of the Western Rong, and abundant gold and silk are what China has’ (Li 1042). China’s soldiers were mainly from the peasants. The majority of these soldiers joined the army with a clear intention of ‘odd jobs’. In most cases, these soldiers had neither a sense of professionalism nor strict, professional military training. Even important military materials such as horses were in short supply in China, which was known for its agricultural activities. For example, in the early stages of the Song dynasty, despite the fact that they had already tried to buy a large number of horses in the border areas and also in the interior of the country, they were still unable to meet the needs of foreign wars, which resulted in the fact that ‘the cavalry of the Song army, in terms of both quantity and quality, was much inferior to the Liao army, which had a large number of horses and was good at shooting’ (Military Museum of the Chinese People’s Revolution, 2001, p. 299). Moreover, influenced by the daily nomadic lifestyle and production methods, the cavalry of nomadic civilised ethnic groups had great mobility. ‘By means of this highly mobile cavalry, the nomads achieved an

effect of surprise and ubiquity which, before any action began, disconcerted their adversary' (René, 1970, p. 224). In the face of Mongol cavalry forces, the Chinese army often found it difficult to cope with the situation and fell into a state of haste and passivity.

Secondly, the combat skills of individual soldiers are significantly weaker.

For soldiers in the armies of nomadic civilised ethnic groups, hunting is a way of daily life. The effect of applying their hunting acquisitions to warfare against agrarian civilised nations was obvious. 'In all these operations the Mongols made the fullest use of the terror inspired by their physique, their ugliness, and their stench. They appeared unexpectedly, deployed, and ringed the horizon. They advanced at a jog trot in an awe-inspiring silence, maneuvering without shouts of command, on signals from the standard bearers. Then suddenly, at the right moment, they charged, uttering diabolical shrieks and yells'. 'The Mongol and his horse were to hunt the Chinese ... just as they hunted the antelope or the tiger' (René, 1970, p. 225). In comparison, the combat skills of the Chinese soldiers, who came from farming and were accustomed to working at sunrise and resting at sunset, were naturally unparalleled.

Thirdly, the Emperor's strict precautions and restrictions on the army.

For the security of their own rule, Chinese emperors were more concerned about internal disorder than external danger, and thus military power was always tightly controlled. Especially in the Song Dynasty, the emperor had even stricter control of military power, lest the situation of the generals exerting their self-importance by controlling much troops occur again. The Song Dynasty adopted the practice of separating soldiers and generals in normal times and temporarily designating generals during wartime, forming a situation where soldiers had no permanent generals and generals had no permanent divisions. This practice, of course, is conducive to preventing the emergence of the situation of the generals' arrogation of power, but at the same time, it also brings about another serious problem, that is, once faced with foreign invasion and military resistance is needed, the lack of necessary coordination and trust between temporarily designated military leaders and soldiers greatly reduces the combat effectiveness of the military.

4.3.4.5 *Significance of a Defensive Foreign Military Strategy*

It should be said that, although a defensive foreign military strategy for China often puts it in a state of passive defeat in foreign operations and

causes it to suffer serious losses, in the long run, it is still a relatively reasonable, realistic, and rational choice in a certain sense. On the whole, China is, after all, a huge country with a strong wealth base and strong national cohesion, and is relatively able to withstand the depletion of a long period of defensive operations. Under such circumstances, even if China does not adopt an aggressive military strategy, it will be difficult for other ethnic groups to conquer or assimilate China. This is an objective reality, which is one of the reasons why China has not adopted an offensive military strategy but still managed to continue for a long period of time, and at the same time, it is also difficult for other ethnic groups to follow suit. In contrast, the nomadic groups are markedly different. From the perspective of the probability of winning wars, for the nomadic countries or ethnic groups that are good at war, even if one generation may often be able to win offensive foreign wars, but this does not mean that the following generations will be able to win consecutively in offensive foreign wars. For nomadic groups, if they are bent on foreign expansion, the effect of war expansion may be very obvious for a while, but in the long run, it is something that is not favourable to others or to themselves. From the perspective of others, war will bring disaster to other countries, and even interrupt the history of a country, even to the point of extinction. From their own point of view, war is always a matter of victory and defeat, and it is difficult to predict whether they will win or lose, and once they suffer a major defeat, it is possible that the results of the previous victories won by the ethnic group in the past will be lost. Moreover, the nomadic groups originally lack sufficient material wealth accumulation and could not withstand the huge and continuous war consumption. Years of consecutive wars would make it impossible for the nomadic groups to sustain themselves due to the huge costs. Those who establish a nation by war cannot last for a very long time. 'Its prosperity and decline are both fleeting' has been the fate of almost all nomadic groups that flourished for a while. This is one of the major reasons why this scenario has been repeated throughout history. For a country like China, which is not very good at fighting, if it keeps waging foreign wars, its own wealth will be depleted very quickly, and it is very likely that it will have been destroyed by other countries many times. This scenario is a high probability. Furthermore, if one is bent on militarism for a long period of time, one is bound to conscript a large number of soldiers within the country and drastically increase taxes on the population, and may even extort illegal taxes. In this way, it will easily lead to

various social conflicts within the country, provoking many civil revolts, which in turn will make the long-term existence and continuity of its traditional civilisation problematic.

As can be seen from the above, under the traditional social conditions, from the perspective of external communication, compared with other countries and regions, China established the principle of peaceful and active external communication based on the worldview of Yi Xia Zhi Bian, and established the institutional arrangement of communication with neighbouring countries and regions with the 'vassal system' as the main form, and carried out external material and cultural communication in an inclusive manner, and has defended its own security with a defensive rather than an offensive military strategy. All these constitute the 'externalised' strategy of China's foreign exchanges and communications that has lasted for many years, effectively guaranteeing the continuity of China's traditional civilisation.

4.4 'ENDOGENOUS AND EXTERNALISED'—COLLABORATIVELY SHAPING AND PERPETUATING TRADITIONAL CHINESE CIVILISATION

Compared with the traditional civilisations of other countries and regions, Chinese traditional civilisation has shown the following manifestation: 'Although the Zhou State is old, its life is renewed', which is endogenous and externalised, and continues to the present day. From a holistic point of view, the following important points can be understood with regard to the logic of the extension of Chinese traditional civilisation, namely, 'endogenous and externalised'.

4.4.1 A High Degree of Positive Correlation Between 'Endogenous' and 'Externalised'

'Endogenous' and 'externalised' are complementary, mutually reinforcing and indispensable, and together they constitute the basic logic of the survival and evolution of traditional Chinese civilisation.

4.4.1.1 'Endogenous' Inevitably Leads to 'Externalised'

This is manifested in the following areas:

First, ‘endogenous’ consciousness and behavioural orientations inevitably give rise to ‘externalised’ ways of interacting with the outside world for the purpose of peace.

China’s deep-rooted agrarian society and the basic characteristics of the blood family society have given rise to the ‘nature’ or basic behavioural orientation of traditional Chinese civilisation, which seeks its own internal motivation. The worldview of *Hua Yi Zhi Bian* and the high material and cultural standard of China at that time, coupled with the objective reality that the material and cultural standard of the neighbouring countries and regions was relatively backward, made the traditional Chinese civilisation, by its nature, naturally form the ‘externalised’ basic foreign strategy with obtaining a stable neighbouring environment with the neighbouring countries and regions by peaceful and win–win ways as the main purpose, while incidentally obtaining the recognition of the neighbouring countries and regions of the superior status of celestial empire (in other words, to ‘earn face’) is the secondary purpose, rather than to plunder the neighbouring countries and regions of their living resources and wealth. Imagine, if China was in a very backward state with existential crises while advocating and excelling in the way of plundering by military wars, while the neighbouring countries and regions were in a state of comparatively abundant material wealth, then the situation would change, and it would be very difficult for traditional Chinese society to form the peaceful ‘externalised’ basic strategy of foreign affairs.

Secondly, ‘endogenous’ can provide a solid material and cultural foundation for ‘externalised’.

A necessary precondition for a country’s desire to pursue an ‘externalised’ and peaceful way of interacting with the outside world is that it must be based on its own high material and cultural standards. Otherwise, ‘externalised’ cannot be justified. In a certain sense, ‘endogenous’ is the basis of ‘externalised’, and ‘externalised’ is the natural extension of ‘endogenous’, and the two cannot be separated. It is only on the basis of a strong and sustained ‘endogenous’ potential that we can have strong national strength, which in turn will enable us to implement the peaceful ‘externalised’ strategy. Without a relatively strong material and cultural foundation, there is no way to talk about the ‘externalised’ approach. A strong ‘endogenous’ force can not only provide the necessary military material support for the defensive foreign military strategy of ‘externalised’, but also provide a solid material foundation for the foreign exchanges of ‘externalised’. In addition, to the neighbouring countries

and regions, the attractiveness of China's traditional civilisation lies not only in the fact that China does not seize the resources and wealth from the neighbouring countries and regions but also in the fact that it is able to exert a greater attraction and positive influence on the neighbouring countries and regions through the provision of direct security protection, economic assistance, and the demonstrative effect produced by the advancement of civilisation. 'Korea, Japan, the Philippines, the East Indies, Malaya, Indochina, Siam and Burma have all been directly influenced by Chinese civilization. Many of the finest cultures of these places are clearly derived from Chinese civilization' (Hosea, 1998). Some of these countries even regarded it as a matter of pride to embrace the rules of traditional Chinese civilisation. 'Some other countries in East Asia may also consider themselves to be the orthodox of Chinese culture: Japan, Korea, Vietnam... all used to call themselves "Zhonghua (Chinese)", some in the past, some now' (Hsu, 2020).

Thirdly, the strength of the 'endogenous' capacity determines the extent of the 'externalised' extension.

'Externalised' and 'foreign exchange' in the general sense are two different concepts. The former focuses on a country's proactive and 'influential' foreign exchanges, while the latter focuses on general contacts and exchanges between different countries. Under the traditional conditions, China's interaction with neighbouring countries and regions is obviously a kind of proactive and 'influential' foreign interaction, that is, 'externalised'. In this regard, the boundaries of China's 'externalised' have a certain degree of elasticity, and to a large extent, expand and contract according to the strength of its own 'endogenous' capabilities. As the basic unit of traditional Chinese society, the blood family integrates the daily life, agricultural production, interests, and ultimate concerns of the members of the society, and has a strong cohesion and vitality. At the same time, the social community formed on this basis has a strong social vitality due to a certain degree of mobility and more effective social governance. All these make the whole social community have strong vitality and potential, and thus can provide strong support for the implementation of 'externalised'. However, due to various risk factors such as climate change, land annexation, and changes in imperial policies, the strength of China's 'endogeny' varied from time to time, resulting in differences in the overall national strength of the country at different times, which in turn affects the strength or weakness of the supporting forces on which China's

‘externalised’ strategy is based at different times. A large number of historical facts show that, in general, when China’s ‘endogenous’ capacity is stronger, and thus its national power is stronger, the space for its ‘externalisation’ to extend its territory is relatively larger, and vice versa. In the Han, Tang, Ming, and Qing Dynasties, stronger ‘endogenous’ power gave rise to stronger national power, so in line with this, China’s ‘externalised’ territorial space at that time was relatively larger, which roughly defined the basic territory of China’s later map. In the Two Jin dynasties, China’s ‘endogenous’ ability was weaker, which led to China’s weaker national power, and thus its ‘externalised’ ability was also weaker, and its ‘externalised’ territory was consequently reduced. In the Northern Song Dynasty, although from the outward appearance, the central financial revenue is not low, but the accumulation of poverty and weakness has already become a chronic disease that very difficult to cure, coupled with a variety of powerful foreign enemies in the north, the government not only did not effectively strengthen the military force but also artificially weakened the country’s external military defence capability. These factors combined to greatly reduce its ability to ‘externalise’, and accordingly its ‘externalised’ territory was also shrinking.

4.4.1.2 *‘Externalised’ Has the Effect of Safeguarding and Promoting ‘Endogenous’*

Although the worldview of Yi Xia Zhi Bian, and the vassal system in the ‘externalised’ of foreign relations have a certain condescending and unequal colouring, the ‘externalised’ strategy of foreign relations in general has an irreplaceable role in safeguarding and promoting the growth of the ‘endogenous’ capacity of traditional Chinese civilisation.

Firstly, ‘externalised’ can provide essential security for the normal growth of ‘endogenous’.

It cannot be denied that through ‘externalised’, a peace-oriented way of foreign exchange, China has established a ‘peripheral secondary community’ that relies on itself in a certain sense, forming a cooperative situation where neighbouring countries and regions guard China while China provides certain security guarantees for the other parties, and even forming a situation of some kind of security ‘symbiosis’ between the two. ‘From the “Chinese peace” in East Asia, the existence of the Chinese order seems to have reduced the number of wars between the powers’(Hsu, 2020). Objectively speaking, this approach is effective by delineating important war buffer or isolation zones in the northeastern,

southwestern, and northwestern regions. It greatly helps to eliminate and reduce the possibility of a large number of wars, providing effective security guarantees for traditional Chinese civilisation. Otherwise, without such buffer zones, the likelihood of China facing successive years of war would have increased. And successive years of war will cost China a great deal of money and suffer great losses. No single country or region has the human, material, or financial resources to support this effectively on a sustained basis. Moreover, years of war would continue to provoke or exacerbate domestic conflicts, plunging society into turmoil and people into misery. For example, at the end of the Western Han Dynasty, Wang Mang took the initiative to destroy the normal vassal system and humiliated some vassals of neighbouring countries and regions, thus causing them to rebel. In order to quell these rebellions, Wang Mang dispatched hundreds of thousands of troops to conquer, which caused huge financial expenditures to the court, but the result was a great defeat, which aggravated domestic conflicts and triggered a large-scale civil war, so that the dynasty was subverted. Obviously, from the perspective of probability, if there is no such guarantee provided by 'externalised', China still does not know how many times it will have to suffer from foreign invasion and war; furthermore, whether the traditional Chinese civilisation can continue in the long term will become a very real problem.

Secondly, 'externalised' has effectively promoted ethnic fusion.

The origin of the members of any large-scale nation (ethnic group) cannot be single or pure. In the case of the Mongol steppe empire, the members of the ethnic groups come from a number of tribes. 'After the establishment of Genghis Khan's state, the Mongolian tribes that were united under Mongol rule began to unite into one ethnic community, the Mongols, with the Mongol tribesmen as their core'. These people came from the '72 Mongol groups'. 'They came from the three original types of tribes', namely, the 'Nirun Mongols', the 'Darligin Mongols', and 'other Mongol-speaking tribes not previously known as Mongols' (Bai, 1997, pp. 267–268). The traditional Chinese civilisation, which is a mega-sized community with a long history, has its origins in a number of nationalities or ethnic groups. The traditional Chinese civilisational community is based on the fusion of several nationalities or ethnic groups over a long period of time. There are many factors contributing to Chinese ethnic fusion, but it cannot be denied that 'externalised' is one of the major influences. Although the area where Chinese traditional civilisation

originated is relatively small, it is in the process of the continuous ‘externalised’ of Chinese traditional civilisation that the integration of many ethnic groups was gradually achieved, and at the same time, the area where Chinese traditional civilisation is located was gradually expanded in all directions. According to some scholars, in the ancient times, Chinese ethnic fusion took place mainly in the northern region (Fu, 2016). Afterwards, it took place mainly in the northern and southern regions and spread to some neighbouring regions. The traditional Chinese civilisation community was gradually formed. At the same time, some of the original ‘externalised’ regions gradually became ‘endogenous’ regions. ‘For the Chinese civilisation, these regions were gradually transformed from being “external” to being “internal” to varying degrees’ (Ma, 2019a, 2019b). It was during such a long process of ethnic fusion that traditional Chinese civilisation was able to develop and grow. ‘In seeing that in the process of its formation and development the Han absorbed a great deal of components from various other ethnic groups, it should not be overlooked that the Han also constantly exported new blood to other ethnic groups. In terms of the biological basis, or so-called “bloodline”, it can be said that mixing and intermingling are often taking place in the Chinese nation as a whole, and no nation can be said to be “purebred” in terms of blood’ (Fei, 1989). Other scholars, through archaeological anthropological analyses and statistics, have found that ‘there are a total of five large ethnic units and four small ones that constitute the modern Chinese’. These five large ethnic units include: the descendants of the Yellow Emperor, the Tungus group, the Mon-Khmer group, the Shan group and the Tibetan-Burmese group. ‘The historical trend is that the Tungus group is increasingly taking over the territory of the descendants of the Yellow Emperor, while the descendants of the Yellow Emperor are increasingly taking over the territory of the other three groups’ (Li, 2006, p. 4).

Thirdly, ‘externalised’ has effectively promoted the development of traditional Chinese civilisation.

Through ‘externalised’, traditional Chinese civilisation has not only directly drawn on a great deal of other countries and regions, but has also gained a great deal of opportunities and space for reference, cooperation, and exchange, thus enhancing its own endogenous dynamics and enriching its own substance and culture. ‘As a cultural world, China is not static, but a space that gradually diffuses from the centre to the four directions and converges from the four directions to the centre’ (Ge, 2014).

For example, the introduction of Champa rice from the southern neighbouring vassal states was extremely important in enriching China's crops, boosting the country's food production and thus feeding the growing and enormous Chinese population. The Chinese way of life, for example, was also heavily influenced by the Hu people. 'The whole of the Central Plains was also constantly embracing the culture of the Hu people, gradually changing and enriching the cultural nature of the Han people'. 'During the Han Dynasty, sitting on the floor gradually evolved into sitting on chairs and sleeping on beds; taking off one's shoes at the door became putting on shoes at the entrance; the height of rooms was increased, and the position of windows was raised; and in terms of clothing, wide robes and big sleeves were changed into narrow-sleeved long shirts. All these changes are the result of the mixing of the two cultures' (Hsu, 2014).

It is precisely because of this advantage of 'endogenous and externalised' that traditional Chinese civilisation has been able to continue for thousands of years. In contrast, one of the major reasons why most of the other great traditional civilisations have not survived to the present day is the lack of such an advantage. Although the Roman Empire had a strong sense of foreign expansion and military expansion ability, and relied on a huge colonial system to support the basic survival needs of the empire, but because of its endogenous capacity is weak, and therefore cannot support the foreign expansion for a long period of time. Once the capacity for external expansion was weakened, or once the country encountered the rise of powerful rivals, then the collapse of the Roman Empire was a matter of time. The agricultural production capacity of ancient India was decent, but overall, its endogenous capacity was still weak, and the entire society lacked effective social governance and integration, resulting in very weak external communication and defence capabilities. Therefore, it was often occupied and conquered by other countries and regions. As a result ancient India not only cannot be said to last for a long time, but can even be said to have no history of its own. As Marx said, 'Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history. What we call its history, is but the history of the successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society' (Marx, 1853). The Mongol empire was even more severely deficient in endogenous capabilities, relying only on rare and powerful military capabilities to expand outward and sustain itself in that way, so the empire's existence could not last very long.

4.4.2 *Both ‘Endogenous’ and ‘Externalised’ Have Contributed to the Continuity of Traditional Chinese Civilisation*

Under traditional social conditions, the interplay between ‘endogenous’ and ‘externalised’ influences has produced an extremely broad and far-reaching superimposed effect, which, through years upon years, has given traditional Chinese civilisation obvious characteristics such as being relatively advanced, inclusive and open in nature, super-large in scale, and a monolithic national collective consciousness, which has made it the only ancient civilisation in the world that has lasted for thousands of years to the present day.

4.4.2.1 *Relative Advanced*

It is a relatively well-established fact that, given the same ‘conditions of the times’ in traditional societies based on an agrarian economy, Chinese traditional civilisation has reached a relatively advanced stage compared with those of other countries and regions. From the point of view of the economic base on which the society as a whole depended, China’s agricultural production and commerce and industry were clearly ahead of those of other countries and regions under the same contemporaneous conditions. In 1700, China accounted for 22% of the world economy, and in 1820 it was 33%. In 1750 and 1800, China accounted for 32.8% and 33.3% of the world’s manufacturing production, while Europe as a whole accounted for 23.2% and 28.1%, and India and Pakistan respectively accounted for 24.5% and 19.7% (Kennedy, 1989). ‘Economically, China is a landlord system with a very developed intensive agricultural production, whereas Western Europe is a feudal lord system still at the stage of crude agricultural production. The former produces several times as much grain per unit area as the latter’. ‘China was also well developed in commerce, industry, and cities. For example, by the end of the eleventh century China’s annual production of iron had reached that of the whole of Europe in the seventeenth century, and per capita production was 20% higher than in Europe’ (Chen, 2010a, 2010b). In contrast, ‘before the nineteenth century, agricultural technology in medieval continental Europe had barely advanced’ (Tauger, 2015). From the point of view of culture and education, China’s education was relatively advanced. The various institutions of Chinese education were relatively comprehensive, with government schools, private schools, and academies spreading relatively widely throughout the regions. The content of education was

practical and secular. Moreover, although elite education was a top priority at that time, the education was theoretically open to members of almost all social groups, rather than being monopolised by members of a few privileged groups. From the point of view of production technology, China has long been in a relatively advanced position. China's invention and creation were once ahead of other countries. 'Until around A.D. 1450, China was technologically much more innovative and advanced than Europe, even more so than medieval Islam. The long list of Chinese inventions includes canal lock gates, cast iron, deep drilling, efficient animal harnesses, gunpowder, kites, magnetic compasses, movable type, paper, porcelain, printing (except for the Phaistos disc), sternpost rudders, and wheelbarrows' (Jared, 1997). From the perspective of social mobility, which is crucial to the vitality of society as a whole, China not only allowed the free sale of land to a large extent but also solved the problem of upward mobility of members of society to a certain extent with the imperial examination system, which was the world's most advanced system of selecting and employing people at that time, and China solved the problem of cultural communication, dissemination, and identity with the consistent and unified writing system of Chinese characters, which was the first of its kind in the world. China also solved the problem of logistics to a certain extent with a relatively smooth land and water transport. In contrast, in medieval European society, there was a lack of space for upward mobility of social members based on a strict hierarchical system, with feudal kingdoms and corresponding barriers all over the place. From the perspective of social governance, China's longstanding bureaucratic system, with a certain degree of hierarchy, and its emphasis on mobilising the grass-roots to participate in social governance was relatively the most advanced institutional arrangement for social governance under the conditions of the time. From the point of view of the country's foreign relations strategy, China has adopted a very reasonable and feasible basic approach of harmonious coexistence and mutual benefit. In short, under the influence of all the aforementioned factors, in terms of the advancement of civilisation, compared with the traditional civilisations of other countries and regions, it can be said that the standard of Chinese traditional civilisation reached the maximum possible peak under the conditions of the natural economic era at that time. Pragmatically speaking, this judgement is not excessive. It cannot be denied that one of the most important reasons for such a situation is the logic of extension of 'endogenous and externalised' of Chinese traditional civilisation.

4.4.2.2 *A Degree of Conciliatory Inclusiveness and Openness*

The inclusive character of traditional Chinese civilisation is obvious. ‘A world of peaceful coexistence has been the enduring ideal of Chinese civilisation for thousands of years’. ‘The harmony pursued by Chinese culture is a view of harmony premised on the coexistence and complementarity of diversity’ (Chen, 2015, p. 73). Under traditional social conditions, the most important measure of the inclusiveness of a civilisation and the extent of its openness is to look at two points at least, namely, whether it is tolerant and open to different nationalities (including races), and whether it is tolerant and open to different religions. Under traditional social conditions, the lack of inclusiveness and openness to different ethnic groups and different religions in some countries and regions has led to fierce conflicts between ethnic groups and between religions. As a result, these countries and regions are often filled with fierce ethnic or religious conflicts within their communities and in their interactions with each other. From the point of view of the type of civilisation, traditional Chinese civilisation is neither an ethnic nor a religious civilisation, but a secular civilisation. At the same time, this secular civilisation was based on relatively advanced productive forces (relatively advanced agrarian economy) and relatively advanced culture (indoctrination). In other words, it is a secular civilisation that transcends ethnic or religious civilisations and is based on a relatively advanced ‘civilisation of the times’, a secular civilisation that can be accepted and identified with, to varying degrees, regardless of the ethnic group or religion. The reasoning is simple. Anyone who wants to survive normally must have the basic needs of daily life, and must have a basic mode of production. In this regard, there is no distinction between ethnic groups and religions. Therefore, the integration of ethnic groups and religious tolerance on the basis of a relatively advanced secular civilisation could be carried out relatively more smoothly because many obstacles were reduced. China’s secular civilisation, with its relatively advanced contemporary content, allowed various types of civilisations to coexist harmoniously and differently to a large extent. ‘China too was once diverse, as all other populous nations still are. China differs only by having been unified much earlier. Its “Sinitification” involved the drastic homogenization of a huge region in an ancient melting pot’ (Jared, 1997). The Chinese nation, with the Han as its main body, is of diverse origins, not single and pure, but a fusion of many ethnic groups, pluralistic and integrated. The inclusiveness of traditional Chinese civilisation is reflected not only in the coexistence and

integration of different ethnic groups but also in the tolerance of many different religions. As mentioned earlier in this paper, Taoism, Buddhism, and Islam coexist harmoniously on Chinese soil. This inclusiveness is a direct reason why traditional Chinese civilisation has become a civilised community with a certain degree of tension and vitality. 'The criterion by which a civilised society differs from a barbaric society is not in the amount of order it establishes, but in the plurality of developments it allows' (Xu, 2005, pp. 378–379). At a deeper level, this civilisational inclusiveness has helped, to a large extent, in curbing the possible instinctive impulses of the people and the consequent violent clashes between peoples as well as between religions. In the long run, this has been a positive contribution to the continuity of traditional Chinese civilisation. Because from the perspective of probability, it is relatively easy to balance the interests of ethnic groups or religions for a short period of time, but long-term tolerance and the resulting long-term peace is a very difficult thing to achieve, and is particularly valuable. It is also for this reason that there have been very few mass killings or even exterminations of a particular ethnic group or religion among different ethnic groups and religions in Chinese history, or at least the probability of such a phenomenon is extremely small. This situation contrasts sharply with the genocides and religious massacres that occurred from time to time in many countries and regions in the same natural economic era.

It is important to note here that, in the depths of traditional Chinese civilisation, although the emphasis is on the superiority of secular civilisation over other types of civilisation, it should be noted that this superior secular civilisation is in fact based on the fusion of the civilisations of a number of ethnic groups. Undoubtedly, the basic social unit of traditional Chinese civilisation is the blood family. It is reasonable to say that the blood family attaches great importance to the purity of the bloodline, and accordingly, it seems that the traditional Chinese civilisation, which is built on the basis of countless blood family, should have been very exclusive of other nationalities or ethnic groups. But this is not the case. If we look at this issue in a larger social context, we can see that, fundamentally, the inclusiveness of traditional Chinese civilisation and the importance attached by blood family to the purity of the bloodline can go hand in hand. The Han Chinese, who seem to attach importance to their blood family, are themselves a fusion of many ethnic groups, and are a very large mixed ethnic group. Therefore, it is impossible for such a large hybrid nation to exclude other nationalities in the extreme. This can be

explained from two aspects. On the one hand, traditional Chinese civilisation believes in the idea that civilisation is superior to nationality (race or ethnic group). In other words, as long as an ethnic group identifies itself with traditional Chinese civilisation, it can, through the necessary indoctrination, become a member of the big family of ethnic groups of traditional Chinese civilisation, and its original ethnic origin is relatively insignificant. Several ‘authentic’ emperors of the Sui and Tang dynasties were of mixed blood from different ethnic groups. Tang Taizong Li Shimin, who has the Hu people ethnic lineage, has two typical examples to illustrate this point: ‘The foreigners are also human beings, and their situation is not different from that of the Middle Xia. If a person is not affected by virtue, there is no need to suspect anomalies. If the virtue is just right, then all the foreign people can be like one family. If there is much suspicion, even flesh and blood will inevitably become enemies’. ‘Emperor Wu of Han was militaristic over thirty years, exhausted China and gained little. Why not win by virtue today and make the people of poor areas all part of our people?’ (China Social Science Network, 2012). If traditional Chinese civilisation has a sense of superiority, it must be a sense of superiority based on its own high standard of civilisation, not a sense of superiority based on its own race. There is some truth in this approach. By nature, there is not much difference between people, as the saying goes, ‘people are alike in nature’. The differences between people come more from the acquisition in life. As far as acquired knowledge is concerned, the most influential factor is undoubtedly civilisation and the level of civilisation. On the other hand, in the specific case of intermarriage, the blood family do not necessarily exclude all other ethnic groups and do not discriminate against a person on the basis of his or her foreign blood. In order to ensure the fulfilment of each family member’s ultimate concern for the continuity of his or her own life-form and the relative integrity of the family’s inheritance, the blood family naturally attaches great importance to the purity of the bloodline. However, this does not mean that the blood family is fundamentally opposed to foreigners. Although the Chinese family has a relatively obvious exclusivity of distance and closeness in its social interactions, the exclusivity of other ethnic groups in intermarriage is relatively weak. Traditional Chinese civilisation is secular in nature, and the blood family is practical and pragmatic, making necessary adaptations to the actual environment. The Chinese family emphasises the purity of the family bloodline rather than the purity of the ethnic bloodline. No matter what ethnicity a woman

is, as long as she marries into the family, she will become a member of the family; as long as she follows the rules of the family and fulfils the key task of carrying on the family's lineage, she will be able to do so. This practice, regardless of ethnic origin, theoretically can ensure that their offspring is 'pure' from the family line, and will not harm the purity of the family lineage. Moreover, the dowry for marrying a woman from another ethnic group is often lower, making it relatively more affordable. Inter-marriage between Han Chinese and other ethnic groups is not uncommon in southern and southwestern China. In particular, along with the four major population migrations in Chinese history, inter-marriage between Hu and Han Chinese, and between northerners and southerners, was commonplace. Further, one of the major reasons for the growing size of the Chinese nation is that traditional Chinese civilisation not only did not exclude other peoples but also had a relatively high degree of mixing of its own.

4.4.2.3 *National Community Super-Large in Scale*

In accordance with the logic of extension of 'endogenous and externalised', over the course of its long history, traditional Chinese civilisation has gradually expanded its territory in a gradual manner: first from the central and western regions to the eastern region, and then to the southern region, while at the same time covering an ever-increasing number of people. For a long time, the traditional Chinese civilisation had been among the largest in the world, both in terms of the size of its territory and in terms of the size of its population, excluding certain periods of time. Moreover, unlike many larger military empires in world history, such as the Macedonian and Mongol empires, the traditional Chinese civilisation was a more organic and integrated community of states. We cannot underestimate the significance of a community's supersize. In military confrontation between countries, the size of the state is a very important influence factor. To a certain extent, the size of the country determines the comprehensive national strength of a country, which in turn affects the military confrontation capability of a country to a considerable extent. The 'national power equation' put forward by the military science scholar Kline can explain this problem to a certain extent. According to Klein, 'one aspect of comprehensive national power, namely, land area and population, illustrates the important role of comprehensive national power in national security ... The larger the land area, the higher the score, countries with an area of 500,000 square miles or more get full marks, and

only such countries are likely to enter the ranks of world powers; countries with a population of 15 million or less are unlikely to enter the ranks of world powers, and countries with a population of 50 million or more are undeniable forces' (Chen, 1989, pp. 189, 197). From the perspective of world history, a large number of small- and medium-sized communities of nations, because of their weak comprehensive national strength, are likely to fall into a crisis once they encounter small and medium-sized foreign invasions; and once they encounter invasions by militarily powerful and very large foreign countries, then the possibility of being exterminated and losing their own original cultures will be significantly increased. The long history makes this phenomenon a highly probable event. In contrast, for China, which is like a country that is simultaneously mega-sized and strongly integrated, it has objectively circumvented the risk of similar extermination of the country and the ethnicity many times to the extent that it has stretched out to this day. In addition, the super-large scale of the state community, coupled with strong integration, has also helped the traditional Chinese civilisation to produce a relatively large influence on the neighbouring countries and regions, as well as a greater deterrent effect, which can sometimes even turn enemies into friends, thus reducing some of the possible dangers of invasion.

4.4.2.4 *A Monolithic National Collective Consciousness*

Under the influence of 'endogenous' and 'externalised', the traditional Chinese civilisation of 'diversity in unity' was formed. One of the core elements of the unity in the 'diversity in unity' mentioned here is the Chinese people's general sense of identity, i.e., the monolithic collective consciousness of the Chinese nation. Living in a large environment with the same type of civilisation, people will naturally have a sense of identity and belonging to the same or similar ways of living, production, lifestyle, cultural concepts, governance, and so on. On the basis of the sense of identity and belonging, a collective consciousness of the Chinese nation will be formed. And, with the passage of time, the monolithic Chinese national collective consciousness will inevitably become more and more a habitual and deep-rooted thing for people. Compared with the community consciousness of other countries and regions in the same period of time, the collective consciousness of the Chinese nation in the traditional Chinese civilisation appears to be more prominent. People sometimes use the phrase 'that which is long divided must unify, and that which is long unified must divide' to explain a common phenomenon in Chinese history

in which the division and unity of a national community occur in a cycle. There is certainly some truth in this statement, but a little analysis will reveal that, in terms of the two phenomena of 'that which is long divided must unify' and 'that which is long unified must divide', which appear to be very different in appearance but at the same time correspond to each other, division (separation or splitting) and unity (unification) each had a very different status and weight in the minds of the Chinese at that time. For the vast majority of Chinese, the collective consciousness of unity, i.e., the monolithic Chinese nation, always existed and was deeply rooted, and the preservation or realisation of the monolithic national community was a self-evident goal. Even in times of temporary division, the realisation of the monolithic Chinese nation, or China, was an important goal or psychological aspiration of each group. In contrast, division, i.e., separation or fragmentation, was not a goal or a psychological aspiration of most people or groups. 'China's temporary lapses into political disunity have invariably been retrieved ... because her voluntary cultural unification was an accomplished fact already before Ch'in state set out on its career of military conquest' (Arnold, 1976, p. 215). Needless to say, this monolithic national collective consciousness has been a useful fueling force for the continuity of traditional Chinese civilisation. 'Among China's historical legacies, the idea of eliminating the state of division and establishing a strong central government is a deeply rooted force. What is particularly striking about this heritage is that it does not contain a tradition of confrontation between religious or secular organisations and forces. Thus, the proposition, once realised, became a driving force in its own right' (Gilbert, 1989, p. 601). In other countries and regions with traditional social states, we seldom see a monolithic national collective consciousness that is so deeply rooted and has lasted for thousands of years.

To sum up, under the influence of 'endogenous and externalised', the relatively advanced nature of material and culture in the same era has made Chinese traditional civilisation have strong vitality and attraction; to a certain extent, the inclusiveness and openness of harmony with diversity enable traditional Chinese civilisation to learn from and draw on the civilisations of other countries and regions to continuously enrich and update itself; the super-large-scale national community makes traditional Chinese civilisation have a certain natural defensive ability and influence that many countries and regions do not have; and the collective consciousness of the monolithic Chinese nation makes traditional Chinese civilisation have a kind of cohesion of the national community

that is almost impossible to be annihilated and is deeply rooted in the nation's community. All these have made Chinese traditional civilisation last for thousands of years, making it the only uninterrupted traditional civilisation among all the great countries of the same origin in the history of the world. Even if, for various reasons, China was temporarily occupied militarily by a certain country or ethnic group, it would soon expel or assimilate the intruder due to the relative advancement of its civilisation, a certain degree of inclusiveness and openness to differences, its sheer size, and its deep-rooted sense of national collectivity. As Marx noted, 'the barbarian conquerors, by an eternal law of history, were themselves conquered by the superior civilisation of their subjects' (Marx, 1853). This scenario has been repeated throughout history. Although the Mongols partially adopted the existing Chinese system after the occupation of China, they still retained a great deal of their original system, and the degree of 'Chinesisation' of their system and policy implementation was not high enough to be compatible with the traditional Chinese civilisation, so they did not rule in China for a long time before they were defeated by the Chinese and expelled from the Chinese territory. In contrast, the Manchus, after occupying China, took the initiative to adopt the basic systems of traditional Chinese civilisation, and thus were to a large extent 'Chinesised', or culturally assimilated to a large extent by traditional Chinese civilisation. Moreover, this 'Chinesisation' was an active or involuntary choice, and did not carry the colour of compulsion. It is precisely for this reason that the Manchus were able to adapt to traditional Chinese civilisation, so that they were able to maintain their rule in China for a relatively long period of time.

4.4.3 There Are Certain Historic Limitations of the Logic of Extension of 'Endogenous and Externalised' of Traditional Chinese Civilisation

There is no doubt that, compared with traditional societies in other countries and regions, traditional Chinese society is a high-quality traditional society. At the same time, however, it should be noted that precisely such a high-quality society has two situations. On the one hand, a high-quality society means that the civilisation of traditional Chinese society reached the highest possible level under the conditions of the time. On the other hand, as far as the transition from traditional to modern society is concerned, in a certain sense, the traditional civilisation which was of high quality for a long period of time had a greater difficulty of transition. This is because 'although a high-quality society implies the optimisation

of a social organism, it is precisely this high quality that sometimes creates obstacles to the transformation of a society (mainly in terms of epochal changes). This is because the integration, the affinity, and the rationalisation of the high-quality society are so high that the content of the old age with which it is intertwined is at the same time so strong that it is not easy to dismantle' (Wu, 1990).

It can be said that, under the conditions of natural economy, the logic of extension of traditional Chinese civilisation has the following characteristics: the ability to survive is relatively more than enough, while the ability to make innovative breakthroughs is relatively less than enough. In other words, traditional Chinese civilisation has relatively more ability to take root downwards, i.e., it can take deep roots downwards, while it has relatively less ability to make breakthroughs upwards, i.e., it is difficult to 'break through the sky' due to the 'ceiling' it faces. As mentioned earlier, the traditional Chinese civilisation, by virtue of the strong and tough social unit of blood family, was able to be deeply rooted in the natural and social soil, and sucked in every kind of nutrients conducive to its own growth to the maximum extent possible, which made the integration of the various components of the traditional Chinese civilisation community reach a high degree. This has enabled traditional Chinese civilisation to reach the highest level achievable under the prevailing conditions, and has demonstrated a kind of tough, sustainable vitality and restorative capacity, which has enabled it to last for thousands of years. Nevertheless, it should be noted that traditional agricultural productivity alone cannot effectively break through the ceiling of production. 'Agriculture is a diminishing returns activity because cultivatable land is ultimately a fixed factor of production. There are only a few incontrovertible laws in economics, but one is that if a variable factor is added to a fixed factor, its marginal product will eventually fall: the law of diminishing returns' (Thirlwall, 2017, p. 61). Schultz also noted that 'agriculture based exclusively on the various factors of production used by farmers for generations may be called traditional agriculture. A country based on traditional agriculture is necessarily poor, and thus has to spend most of its income on food' (Schultz, 2006). At the same time, in a certain sense, it is precisely because of the high degree of development of traditional Chinese civilisation and the high degree of effective social governance that the growth of modernity has been made difficult by the lack of the necessary gaps.

There is no doubt that traditional Chinese agricultural production had a high level of intensive cultivation; this was coupled with the fact that

traditional Chinese society was a huge community, with a huge amount of agricultural products and a huge amount of wealth. All these things tend to create the impression that traditional Chinese society is prosperous. People's impression of China's prosperity sometimes even carries a kind of 'halo effect' that goes beyond the actual situation. In fact, since China's per capita arable land is very limited, the per capita amount of agricultural products in China is correspondingly very limited. Some scholars have calculated that 'rice output in the Yangzi Delta had reached very high levels by 1300; at 3.5 tonnes/hectare (t/ha) it was more than double the level of English output by area in 1800 (1.7 t/ha), albeit only one-third the level of England in 1800 when measured as output per worker (0.3 t/ha vs. 0.92 t/ha)' (Ian, 2013). Obviously, if we only rely on traditional farming methods, instead of relying on modern large-scale industries and modern science and technology, then no matter how hard the Chinese people try, no matter how intensively they cultivate, the problem of the involution of the production of the agrarian economy, i.e., the problem of the diminishing marginal benefits of labour production, will never be effectively solved. Accordingly, China was unable to enter the modern world. The European modernisation process has shown that 'the path of ecological near self-sufficiency through rural labour intensification, once adopted, was not easily abandoned, at least until twentieth century chemistry and machinery made possible a far more radical transformation of farming'. The problem is 'solvable only with a combination of technological change, institutional catching-up, and New World resources' (Kenneth, 2000, p. 241).

The effective social governance of traditional Chinese society and the corresponding strict social order furthermore left the society lacking in the cracks that would allow the elements of modernity to grow. Macartney, a British envoy who travelled to China, found that during the Qing dynasty, 'the arrogant policy of the government led to a deliberate disdain for anything new or foreign, and a total lack of encouragement for any innovation, which greatly impaired the development of technology and production' (Macartney & Barrow, 2019). In the traditional Chinese society, the institutional arrangement of suppressing commerce and emphasising agriculture left merchants very limited space for their activities, made it very difficult to accumulate capital efficiently, and to form some kind of autonomous chamber of commerce organisations. The government's restrictions on merchants 'deprived Chinese merchants of the opportunity for free enterprise and restricted economic growth'

(Stavrianos, 1982). Furthermore, 'the ideas of Neo-Confucianism was able to absorb and blunt the effects of new technology and of economic growth'. Strict ideological rule kept people's intellectual activities as well as scientific research activities strictly within certain limits. In traditional Chinese society, 'its esteem for age over youth, for the past over the present, for established authority over innovation made it a perfect instrument for the preservation of the status quo in all its aspects. This atmosphere of conformity and orthodoxy prevented continued intellectual development' (Stavrianos, 1982). In China's past history, science has not been able to develop significantly. Voltaire pointed out that the Chinese, 'like the ancient Greeks and Romans, were not brilliant physicists' (Voltaire, 1756). In traditional Chinese society, intellectual activities and scientific research were ruthlessly attacked by the rulers once they crossed the boundaries set by them. The Qing Dynasty's persistent 'literal inquisition' effectively curbed intellectual innovation in Chinese society. Furthermore, 'the cultural and intellectual inertia generated by conservative Confucian thinking in the three centuries from 1600 to 1900 resisted the introduction of modern Western science' (Yang, 1995). The externalised strategy of foreign relations, on the other hand, was focused on the effective management of the country's interests with neighbouring countries and regions for the effective maintenance of national security, rather than opening up to the outside world in the true sense of the word. Opening up the outside world in the true sense means, under the conditions of modern society and the market economy, complementing the resources of each country and forming comparative advantages in production in the context of the economic activities of all countries and regions of the world as a whole; and obtaining a great deal of reference and borrowing from other countries in order to reflect on and develop ourselves. Modern societies have to be open to the outside world in the true sense of the word. In contrast, traditional societies have been able to survive under closed conditions without opening up to the outside world to a large extent. In the past, under the condition of opening to the outside world in the non-genuine sense of the foreign exchange activities, once China found that the foreign exchange activities were not conducive to the security of the country, the ruler would immediately interrupt the foreign exchange activities to carry out the 'sea ban' and blockade of the foreign exchange activities, even if the foreign exchange activities underway economically were very favourable to the economic interests of the country. The foreign policies in the middle and late Ming Dynasty

and Qing Dynasty were typical examples. ‘But during this Ming period, after the interlude of Mongol domination, the Chinese were turning their backs to the outside world. And their merchant class, which lacked the political power and social status of its Western counterpart, was unable to challenge imperial orders that banned overseas enterprise. Thus the Chinese turned their formidable talents and energies inward and deliberately relinquished a lead role in Eurasian and, ultimately, world affairs’ (Stavrianos, 1982).

Factors that are fundamental and conducive to modernisation, such as the massive increase in agricultural products, the accumulation of capital, and scientific and intellectual innovations, are more likely to be generated in the less controlled crevices of traditional societies. Compared with the more integrated Chinese traditional society, the European medieval society, due to its overall low civilisation standard and weak effective social governance, left a lot of obvious gaps for the growth of some modern factors. For example, the medieval situation of Europe was characterised by the existence of many vassal states, which led to a low degree of social integration and the development of a large number of civil forces. These civil forces, either on their own or in partnership with the state, used force to expand their colonies overseas through the great voyages and extracted vast fortunes. This was the case with the great maritime expeditions of Columbus and others. As Max Weber said, ‘the acquisition of colonies by the European states led to a gigantic acquisition of wealth in Europe for all of them. The means of this accumulation was the monopolising of colonial products, and also of the markets of the colonies, that is the right to take goods into them, and, finally, the profits of transportation between mother land and colony’. ‘Either the state drew a profit from the colonies directly, administering them by its own agencies, or it leased them, in return for a payment, to companies’ (Max, 1950, p. 298). This brigandage action objectively expanded the modernisation of Europe, providing essential capital, crops, industrial raw materials, and markets in a variety of important ways.

4.4.3 *Chinese Traditional Civilisation Needs to be Reasonably Sublated in order to Have Modern Vitality*

Fundamentally, it is a basic law of development of human society that any form of society or civilisation is determined by a specific economic base. After the traditional society based on natural economy, the modern

society based on great industry and market economy, in less than a hundred years, 'has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together'. 'What earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?' (Marx, & Engels, 1848). Judging from the course of world history, the replacement of traditional society by modern society is an inevitable trend of history. In the face of the historical trend of modernisation in the world, no country or region can stand aloof and be left alone; they are all bound to be caught up in it, and must conform to the historical trend of modernisation. Otherwise, they will perish. For example, in the 1890s, the late Qing Dynasty of China, which was still in the midst of a traditional civilisation, was faced with a powerful foreign invasion based on modern great industry, and 'the dawdling and corruption of the government was no different in a time of the country's crisis than it was at the time of the peace. ... China's rulers were counting on not having to make a serious effort to cure the causes of their weakness, but to borrow from outside forces to save China from weakness. ... China was humiliated to the core' (Hosea, 1998).

It should be noted that the modernisation of only a few countries in Europe and America belongs to the original or early type of modernisation, while the modernisation of most countries and regions belongs to the late type of modernisation, rather than the original type of modernisation. In the latter case, however, once modernisation has been initiated by external forces, the endogenous dynamics of modernisation will develop over time, and the positive effects of their own modernisation potential, including that inherited from their history which is useful for modernisation, will increase.

Compared with its contemporaries, China's traditional civilisation reached the peak possible under natural economic conditions, making it the only major country in the world with a traditional civilisation that has lasted for thousands of years. Chinese traditional civilisation has left behind many valuable historical legacies for future generations to refer to and learn from. The logic of extension of 'endogenous and externalised' of Chinese traditional civilisation contains many valuable revelations, for example, the goal of life in the present world, the high degree of national cohesion, the combination of macro-control and grass-roots autonomy to form effective social governance, and so on. In terms of external relations for example, the logic of extension of the traditional Chinese civilisation of 'endogenous and externalised' reminds people of the need to take a

long-term view and consider all aspects in an integrated manner in order to reconcile the interests of nations in a sustainable manner. It has been found that ‘a turbulent history has taught Chinese leaders that not every problem has a solution and that too great an emphasis on total mastery over specific events could upset the harmony of the universe’. ‘Chinese statesmanship exhibits a tendency to view the entire strategic landscape as part of a single whole: good and evil, near and far, strength and weakness, past and future all interrelated’ (Kissinger, 2011). The United States, by contrast, ‘is not in the habit of considering things holistically, always looking at the present and proposing solutions to only one thing’. ‘This is actually a difference in the ability to compete and coexist. China is better able to look at the big picture and find a way to coexist, while the United States has no experience in coexistence’ (Xu, 2019).

Nevertheless, it must be clearly seen that, from the point of view of the attributes of the times, traditional Chinese civilisation was an agrarian civilisation belonging to the era of the natural economy, and its economic basis was the agrarian mode of production. Generally speaking, modern civilisation and traditional Chinese civilisation belong to two eras, and there is a huge epochal gap between the two. Prior to the modern era, ‘China’s recorded history was confined to the rise and fall of dynasties within the framework of tradition, not large-scale disintegration and new beginnings’ (Stavrianos, 1992a, 1992b). Failure to see this will inevitably lead to a misjudgement that traditional Chinese civilisation has always been higher and superior to civilisations in other countries and regions, including modern civilisation.

This miscalculation is in fact to regard traditional Chinese civilisation, which arose on the basis of a natural economy, as something advanced and superior beyond its time. For example, according to Qian Mu, China has been an egalitarian society since ancient times. ‘The traditional politics of Chinese history has caused the various classes of society to tend towards equality day by day’. ‘Chinese society since the Song Dynasty downwards has resulted in a flat society. Feudal nobles such as dukes and counts have long been abolished, officials cannot be hereditary, the regime is generally open, and anyone who meets the conditions of the examination can enter the civil service’ (Qian, 2012). Qian Mu’s view lacks a basic sense of modernity and awareness of modernisation, and his evaluation of traditional Chinese society is too idealistic and even utopian. This view fails to see that traditional Chinese society is essentially

a feudal hierarchical society with strong personal dependence, an authoritarian hierarchical society that denies the sense of independence, freedom, and equality of its members, and cannot be an equal society at all. A truly egalitarian society can only emerge on the basis of modern great industry and market economy. Marx pointed out that 'Despotism's only thought is disdain for mankind, dehumanised man; and it is a thought superior to many others in that it is also a fact. In the eyes of the despot, men are always debased. They drown before his eyes and on his behalf in the mire of common life from which, like toads, they always rise up again. ... The principle on which monarchy in general is based is that of man as despised and despicable, of _dehumanized man_' (Marx, 1843). The basic ethic of the Three Fundamental Bonds and Five Constant Virtues in traditional Chinese society is a strict hierarchy. Such a hierarchical system inevitably denies the independence and basic dignity of human beings. The first official British mission to China during the Qianlong period of the Qing Dynasty found that 'in China, anyone who is not an official can be beaten up at will after a brief interrogation. ... The status of the Chinese people was so low that they felt no shame even if they were beaten' (Staunton, 2014).

What is more, it is clear that the social status of women, who account for one half of the population in traditional Chinese society, is not only a matter of inequality but also of inhumanity. Mao Zedong pointed out that men in China were generally subject to the power of the regime, the power of the clan, and the power of the gods, and that 'as for the women, in addition to being subject to the three powers mentioned above, they are also subject to the man's domination (husband's power)'. 'Strictly speaking, they do more than men in farming. ... Plus the rearing of children is a woman's exclusive duty, so that her labour is really greater than that of men. ... Although men have been freed from serfdom, women are still serfs or semi-serfs of men. They have no political status, no personal freedom, and their sufferings are greater than all others' (Mao, 1991, pp. 239–240). In particular, the phenomenon of foot-binding, which is common among women in traditional Chinese society, is a rare and inhumane phenomenon. One Chinese woman who suffered from foot-binding recalled the phenomenon as follows: 'When I was nine years old, they once again wrapped my feet, and this time they had to wrap them more tightly than usual. My feet were in so much pain that for two years I crawled on my hands and knees. Sometimes at night it was so painful that I couldn't sleep, so I put my feet up to my mother, whereupon she

pressed them under her body to ease my pain and let me sleep. By the age of 11 my feet stopped hurting and by the time I was 13 they were completely deformed. I could see that my big toes were bent downwards and could only be seen on the inside and underside of my feet and were clustered together. In the crack between the front of the foot and the heel, two fingers could fit' (Fairbank, 2013). In this way, I am afraid that it would be contrary to common sense to regard such a society as an advanced, humane, just, and egalitarian society as the goal for which we are striving.

It is precisely because of the huge gap between traditional Chinese civilisation and modern civilisation in general that a great deal of traditional Chinese civilisation is incompatible with modern civilisation and impedes the growth of modern civilisation. For example, under the conditions of modern society and market economy, the factors of traditional society that emphasised agriculture and suppressed commerce will hinder the growth of market economy; the consciousness of blood family will hinder the formation of modern contract consciousness; the hierarchical factors of personal dependence will hinder the construction of free, equal, and harmonious society; the phenomenon of differential mode of association will hinder the construction of a society under the rule of law; the behavioural orientation of valuing experience over science will hinder the development of modern science and technology system; the worldview of Hua Yi Zhi Bian as well as the corresponding strategy of foreign relations based on the vassal system will hinder the establishment of modern equal relations between countries and the opening up to the outside world in the true sense, and so on. Obviously, the elements of traditional Chinese civilisation that hinder the development of modern civilisation must be eliminated, otherwise modern civilisation will not be able to develop smoothly.

It is important to note that among the historical legacies of the 'endogenous and externalised' logic of traditional Chinese civilisation, the valuable and the negative are often intertwined. Therefore, these historical legacies must be reasonably sublated, the valuable ones inherited and the negative ones discarded.

4.4.4 Important Lessons for China's Modernisation

Looking back over thousands of years of the traditional society, under the conditions of an agrarian economy, our forefathers endured great

hardship, sought their own motivation, and were convinced of the importance of peace, rather than embarking on the path of external expansion and causing chaos in other countries and regions. On the basis of a very limited amount of arable land per capita, on the whole, our forefathers, with a positive and optimistic attitude towards life, rather than a negative attitude towards life of prostrating themselves in front of God and praying for forgiveness for original sins they did not have in the first place, set realistic and achievable goals in life and, through painstaking and diligent endeavours that are rare in the world and through a spirit of great pragmatism and rationality, they deeply rooted in the natural earth and the reality of the present world. They worked hard and created the highest level of civilisation that could be achieved under the conditions of productivity of the agrarian economy, the traditional Chinese civilisation, which has lasted for thousands of years, and China has thus become the only country among the homologous civilisations that has lasted to the present day, and has made a significant contribution to the development of human civilisation. 'Although the Zhou State is old, its life is renewed', which is endogenous and externalised, and continues to this day.

At the same time, it should be noted that, although traditional Chinese civilisation is the highest level of civilisation under the conditions of an agrarian economy, it has obvious limitations of its own time. One of the biggest limitations is that, due to various factors, although traditional Chinese civilisation has been able to put down deep roots, it is very difficult to break through the sky, i.e., it lacks the ability to innovate and make breakthroughs. This limitation has prevented traditional Chinese civilisation from being modernised. The important thing is that if all countries and regions were in a closed and isolated environment, this limitation would not have had a serious adverse effect on China. But the problem was that from the eighteenth century onwards, under the influence of various historical and practical factors, some countries in Europe and America took the lead in the Industrial Revolution. Taking the Opium War as the starting point, the modernised countries of Europe and America, backed up by big industries, invaded China, which was still at the production level of agrarian economy. Compared with the big industrial civilisation, the farming civilisation was one whole era behind. China was unable to resist the powerful military, economic, and cultural invasion of Europe and the United States, and was reduced to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society. China lost its national sovereignty and the possibility of independent development. Under such circumstances, it

is impossible for China to return to the traditional society of the past, nor is it possible for it to have normal prospects for modernisation.

With the establishment of the new China in 1949, China gained national independence and ended its humiliating semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, making it possible for China to carry out independent modernisation, and China succeeded in establishing a preliminary modern industrial system, laying an indispensable material foundation for the smooth progress of modernisation in the years to come. Since the reform and opening-up process, China has embarked on genuine modernisation and has made great achievements that are universally recognised, entering the threshold of basic modernisation.

China is now facing the task of building a modern and powerful country for the times. In order to successfully achieve this goal, China needs to do many things. One of the most important things is to draw on all kinds of useful experiences and profound lessons from China's history. In this regard, there are many important and indispensable lessons to be learned from the evolutionary logic of traditional Chinese civilisation, 'endogenous and externalised'. Among the many lessons, two are particularly important.

First, turning to one's own internal motivation is the basic guarantee for the success of modernisation.

Internal causes are the fundamental reason for the continued existence of a nation. An important reason why traditional Chinese civilisation has lasted for thousands of years lies in the fact that it has sought motivation from itself rather than from outside. Under traditional social conditions, by seeking power from itself, the Chinese people were tightly attached to the reality of the present world, and through great labour, they achieved a sophisticated agrarian economy, tapping every kind of nutrient conducive to their own survival and growth to the maximum extent possible, which ultimately made traditional Chinese civilisation last for thousands of years without interruption. By the same token, in order for China's modernisation to succeed, it must also seek its own internal motivation.

It should be noted that, unlike traditional societies built on the basis of an agrarian economy, the productive forces of modern society are based on large industrial production and science and technology. 'The establishment of the large industrial system broke through the limitations of the physical strength of the labourers themselves, thus enabling the productive forces to develop by leaps and bounds, and enabling human

society to make a great leap forward' (Wu, 2019, p. 29). Under such circumstances, if China wants to ask for power from itself, it can only attach itself closely to the modern great industry, establish a complete industrial system, and have a complete industrial chain, which is the only way to support the continuous promotion of the modernisation process. At the same time, we should also see that an important trend that the modern productive forces attach to is the increasingly close combination of science and technology and large-scale industrial production, with science and technology increasingly becoming the first productive force. As the degree of modernisation increases, modern knowledge is more and more at the centre of modernisation. Therefore, China should also make every effort to develop science and technology, so as to ensure that modern productive forces in society can not only put down roots and have a solid foundation but also maintain a trend of innovation and breakthroughs that pierce the sky upwards, and constantly occupy the commanding heights of development and form a development trend that continues to move forward. In line with this, there should also be a sense of endeavour and hard work. In other words, China's modernisation can only be achieved by building up a complete and developed industrial system, scientific and technological system, and public infrastructure through an enterprising sense of awareness and corresponding hard work, in order to form an endogenous dynamics for modernisation in the true sense of the word, and ensure that the process of modernisation continues to advance. The modernisation process of some countries such as Brazil shows that once the advantages of industrialisation and science and technology are lost and modernisation is driven only by the advantages of natural resources, the endogenous dynamics of modernisation is bound to be weakened, and accordingly, the prospect of modernisation is bound to be worrisome.

Secondly, peaceful external relations are a necessary prerequisite for the continued progress of modernisation.

Another important reason why China's traditional civilisation has lasted for thousands of years is that China's foreign relations at that time were mainly based on a peaceful and inclusive approach. This is also a very important revelation for China's modernisation.

At a time of deepening economic globalisation, the interests of all countries, including China, were increasingly linked, and they were becoming a community of destiny. Not to mention the need for countries

to cooperate with each other in order to face some extremely important common issues, such as jointly tackling environmental and ecological problems and combating terrorism, it is also necessary for countries to cooperate economically with each other in order to develop their own comparative advantages and to exchange the necessary resources. Under such circumstances, win-win cooperation is a wise choice for all countries. A necessary condition for win-win cooperation is a peaceful environment. On the other hand, if a country is based on militarism and tries to continue to plunder the resources and wealth of other countries through military aggression, it will not only delay the accumulation and upgrading of its industrial system, science and technology, and public infrastructure, but it will also incur the resistance of the country being aggressed, thus adding a great deal of uncertainty to the prospects of its own modernisation.

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The Great Significance of Secularisation for China's Modernisation

Secularisation is both an important feature of modernisation and a key to the formation of the endogenous dynamics of modernisation. Historically, compared with many countries, China, as a generally non-religious society, had a clear tradition of secularisation in the traditional society that preceded modernisation, although this tradition of secularisation was not secular in the modern sense.¹ Since the initiative of reform and opening up, with the process of a true sense of modernisation and market economy, modern secularisation in China has begun to take shape and become a historical trend. It is worth noting that this modern phenomenon of secularisation in China has become more obvious and 'sufficient' because of its 'coincidence' with the secularisation tradition that already existed in China's history, or because this modern secularisation has been supported by some important historical genes, thus

¹ There is a great difference between secularisation in Chinese traditional society based on a natural economy and secularisation in Chinese modern society based on industrialisation. The former is a behavioural orientation that is compatible with the personal dependence and hierarchy of Chinese traditional society, as secularisation in the 'traditional' sense, while the latter is a behavioural orientation that is compatible with freedom, equality, and the market economy of Chinese modern society, as secularisation in the 'modern' sense. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the two have similarities in that they both value the realities of human life and society (albeit to a different degree) and that, in a certain sense, there is a relationship of inheritance between the two, with the latter taking the former as an important source of its gradual development.

becoming an even more important source for the effective formation of the endogenous dynamics of China's modernisation.

If we take a broader view, it is not difficult to find that, from the perspective of the endogenous dynamics of modernisation, in a certain sense, the protestant ethic is an important factor for the development and smooth advancement of the modernisation process in developed European countries, then the phenomenon of secularisation, or the 'secularised ethic', which is more pronounced in China than in other countries, is an important driving force for China to make world-recognised great achievements in modernisation since its reform and opening up, and it will also have a great impact on China's modernisation process in the future.

Obviously, the issue of secularisation is an important key to understanding why China has scored tremendous achievements in modernisation since its reform and opening up, and it is a crucial parameter for people to effectively plan and grasp the prospects of China's modernisation. It is precise because secularisation is so important that if we want to deeply explore the issue of China's modernisation, we must clarify the correlation between secularisation and China's modernisation.

5.1 WHY SECULARISATION IN CHINA IS GROWING

Since the initiative of reform and opening up, the phenomenon of secularisation has manifested itself very prominently. As far as its main causes are concerned, they are roughly as follows.

5.1.1 *The basic human-centred concept has directly given rise to the phenomenon of secularisation in China*

In the process of modernisation, a variety of factors have contributed to the formation and development of the phenomenon of secularisation. However, there is no doubt that the fundamental human-centred concept is the most important factor. The great achievements of China in its modernisation since the initiative of reform and opening up have been manifested not only in the economic aspect, but also in the formation of a large number of modern values in line with the achievements of modernisation on the material level. Among them, the most important values that have been formed since the reform and opening up initiative is the basic human-centred concept. It can be said that the concept of

putting people first is the prerequisite and foundation of modern core values such as freedom, equality, and justice, and that adhering to this basic concept is a matter of both conforming to the trend of the times and public opinion at the same time. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the basic human-centred concept has been widely accepted and recognised by members of Chinese society from all walks of life, thus becoming a solid conceptual basis for China's growing modern civilisation. We cannot underestimate the significance of the human-centred philosophy taking root in Chinese society. This situation marks the fact that China's modernisation since the reform and opening up initiative has been truly different from the 'class struggle as the key link' theory of the planned economy era in terms of conceptual basis; it also marks the fact that China's modernisation in terms of behavioural orientation has been different from the 'GDP-centred' behavioural orientation that was actually popular in some places and departments during the early period of reform and opening up. We know that whether we are guided by the theory of 'class struggle as the key link' or the 'GDP-centred' theory, people are treated only as a kind of tool, and it is impossible to put them at the centre of the whole society or to treat them from the viewpoint of the basic purpose of building modernisation.

What matters is that the basic human-centred concept justifies the phenomenon of secularism and directly contributes to the rapid formation and healthy development of a secular orientation of behaviour that is significant and common to members of Chinese society. In the final analysis, the basic human-centred concept is a basic purpose and a basic attitude that emphasises that modernisation must be people-centred, with the basic goal of satisfying people's basic needs. For people, there is nothing more important than satisfying the needs of members of society for a realistic basic life and basic dignity, in other words, satisfying worldly needs. Therefore, the basic people-centred concept is to satisfy people's needs for real improvement in life and the pursuit of the goal of happiness.

Since human-centredness is the basic concept of the phenomenon of secularisation in modern society, its basic meaning also defines the basic content of secularisation. In this regard, two points deserve our attention. First, the basic human-centred concept requires that the minimum standard of living of every member of society should be guaranteed and continuously improved as the level of production continues to rise. As Engels puts it, 'the expansion of production to the point where it will satisfy the needs of all, the abolition of a situation in which the needs

of some are satisfied at the expense of the needs of others, the complete liquidation of classes and their conflicts, the rounded development of the capacities of all members of society through the elimination of the present division of labour, through industrial education, through engaging in varying activities, through the participation by all in the enjoyments produced by all' (Engels, 1847). Human-centredness means prioritising all people, not just a few. The basic human-centred concept is a fundamental tenet of modernisation. It implies that in a modern society, a social community should consider the satisfaction and continuous improvement of the minimum standard of living for every member of the community. In other words, the basis for the life of every member of society—including social security, compulsory education, public hygiene, employment security, and housing security—should be guaranteed and continuously improved. This will inevitably lead to the formation of a 'mass consumption society', a phenomenon that has never existed in the past. This is very different from the hierarchical and privileged concepts of traditional societies and the 'minority enjoying society' based on these concepts, where the majority of people are limited to simple production and reproduction of the population as a means of 'survival'. Secondly, the basic human-centred concept implies that the social community must provide the necessary conditions for the satisfaction of the individual and the differentiated needs of each member of the community. From the perspective of human nature, the desires, ideas, aspirations, characters, and preferences of the members of society are different so that the life style formed on this basis must also be very different and colourful. Only in a free environment can human personality develop naturally and healthily without artificial constraints (Wu, 2019a, 2019b, pp. 262–263). A society should provide the necessary space for such specific needs of its members to grow freely in terms of individualised, differentiated, diversified lifestyles, and so on. Obviously, under the conditions of modern society, the basic meaning of the above two aspects of the basic human-centred concept has greatly contributed to the emergence of the phenomenon of secularisation.

Moreover, at the present stage in China, the human-centred philosophy and related secularisation issues are highly valued as the most important behavioural and goal orientation from both the public and the government. It is worth noting that China's modernisation is in a sense of government-driven, and the government has played a crucial role in the modernisation process, at least for a long historical period.

This is an objective reality. Once the government pays attention to the human-centred philosophy and the corresponding secularisation issues and encourages and promotes them with appropriate institutional arrangements and policy formulation, the phenomenon of secularisation will grow with greater intensity and speed. In short, under the joint impetus of two powerful forces, namely the public and the government, the phenomenon of secularisation in Chinese society will emerge and develop rapidly on a large scale.

5.1.2 China's secularisation tradition has had an important nudge effect on the formation of the phenomenon of secularisation in the modern sense

No matter which era or country one lives in, people have to solve a big problem in life, which is 'where they came from and where they are going'. In a traditional society (feudal society) based on a natural economy, Chinese traditional society, and European medieval society have very different basic concepts and basic behavioural orientations to address the ultimate concern or sense of belonging of the members of society. In general, medieval Europe was a religious society. In European medieval society, the need for ultimate concern was met through the path of religion. In European medieval society, it was generally accepted that man was insignificant dust compared to God. Everyone is a sinner with an inherent 'original sin', so what everyone must do in life, or the most important goal of life, is to 'atone for sin'. For this reason, everyone must restrain his or her desires for real life, believe in and serve the Lord, and in this way seek 'salvation' and gain eternal life. The Bible says, 'Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin. As a result, they do not live the rest of their earthly lives for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God' (*New international version Bible*, 2011, Peter. 4:1). This is the only way to enter The Other World (the heaven) in the future, which is different from This World (the real world or actual life).

Compared with European medieval society, the paths of social members in Chinese traditional society to resolve their ultimate concerns are quite different. In general, Chinese traditional society is a secularised society. Although it cannot be said that religion does not exist in Chinese traditional society, it should be said that a policy of 'rule of politics to unify the church' has long been implemented in Chinese traditional

society. Religion was subordinate to the political regime and was subject to its jurisdiction. In terms of people's behavioural orientation, secularisation was an overwhelming force, while religious forces were subordinate to it. As early as the Spring and Autumn period (770 BC- 403 BC), Confucius clearly insisted on a 'realistic' and 'worldly' attitude towards life. 'Jilu asked how one should serve the gods and spirits. The Master said, "When you don't yet know how to serve human beings, how can you serve the spirits?" Jilu said, "May I venture to ask about death?" The Master said, "When you don't yet understand life, how can you understand death?"'. 'Subjects the Master did not discuss include strange occurrences, feats of strength, rebellion, and the gods'. 'Fan Chi asked about wisdom. The Master said, "Work to lead the people toward what is right. Respect the gods and spirits but keep them at a distance—this can be called wisdom"' (Confucius, 2007, pp. 45, 50, 73).

Historically, the basic path for the Chinese people to resolve their ultimate concerns has not been the pursuit of heavenly life in The Other World, but rather the desire to live a better life on the earth, to ensure the bloodline continuity for generations, and to realise the ultimate goal of eternity, or 'continuous growth and development', by means of secularisation. The basic social unit of traditional Chinese society is the countless families bound by kinship. It is generally agreed that each generation of a family should live a real life in the real society. Living a 'real life' is in itself the purpose of life for each individual and each family. The ultimate concern that each person and each family pursue across generations can only be realised in real life or in This World, instead of looking for it in The Other World emphasised by religion. As a result, Chinese people have attached great importance to real society and real life, and generally adopted the basic behavioural orientation of reality as a consensus. 'Confucians do not talk about ghosts. Confucius himself said that one should "sacrifice to the spirits as if the spirits were present"'. Apparently, even teachers of religion had no real interest in anything beyond this life. Ordinary people go even further; they secularize heaven itself; they do not want to use a utopian vision to change reality and to realize a heaven on earth. Instead, they regard the present reality as a working draft of what heaven must be like and therefore push this world into heaven itself (Fei, 1985, pp. 46–47). Moreover, 'In China, after the Song Dynasty (96–1279), ordinary people took the path of enjoying and savouring life, and sought for daily happiness and comfort rich in the philosophy of life' (Qian, 1988, p. 16). Furthermore, the rulers and many intellectuals, on

the whole, put great emphasis on the policy orientation and behavioural tone of 'humanistic pragmatism' for improving the real society, rather than the aspiration and pursuit of the illusory 'heaven'. 'Most Chinese focus on practical matters, such as politics, daily life, industry, commerce and farming, so they are diligent in the real world, but not interested in the surreal world' (Zhang, 1977, p. 689). After inheritance for thousands of years, the Chinese tradition of secularisation is deeply rooted.

The traditional secularisation in Chinese history has undoubtedly exerted an important facilitating effect on the formation and development of secularism content in Chinese modern society. In a certain sense, the culture of a society is composed of two parts. One part is the cultural content of the 'era' and the other is the cultural content of the 'ethnic tradition'. In contrast, while the former changes continuously with the times, the latter also changes with the times but generates 'new traditions'. However, it cannot be denied that the cultural content of the 'ethnic tradition' is relatively independent and stable because it has become an integral part of the organism of the nation. As long as the nation does not die out, the cultural content of the 'ethnic tradition' will not change completely with the times or disappear at once. It is from this point of view that the Chinese traditional 'secularised concepts internalised as an integral part of the Chinese people's real lifestyle and behavioural concepts, among them much rationality'. 'Developing the good and discarding the bad will certainly have a beneficial impact on China's modernisation' (Wu, 1996a, 1996b, p. 5). From the perspective of the times, China's basic traditional behavioural orientation of secularisation is, after all, fused with such backward epochal contents as feudal hierarchy, personal dependence, and blood family, and should therefore be rejected. However, from the perspective of ethnic traditions, the tradition of secularisation is an integral part of Chinese ethnic traditions, an important historical and cultural gene of China, and a supporting factor for the continuation of China for thousands of years. Given this, we should admit that the Chinese secularisation tradition and the modern secularisation content are both mutually exclusive, but at the same time, they have a certain natural 'conformity' or 'commonality'. From the perspective of psychology, living habits and path dependence, the Chinese secularisation tradition is relatively easier for the Chinese people to accept and identify with because it is a kind of historical and cultural gene. If the Chinese secularisation tradition is rationally, effectively, and critically analysed, it will greatly contribute to the formation and development of

secularisation in modern Chinese society. In this way, under the conditions of modern society and market economy, the modern secularisation content and the reasonable content of traditional secularisation can form a benign interactive effect of mutual promotion. That is, after the necessary, rational, effective, and critical analysis, the reasonable content of traditional Chinese secularisation genes will be passed on in the environment of modernisation. At the same time, the content of Chinese modern secularisation will be more vital because of a certain genetic basis of traditional secularisation. This shows that the reason why secularisation in China has been able to develop significantly since the initiative of reform and opening up is that, in addition to being fuelled by modern factors such as the basic human-centred concept, the reasonable historical and cultural genes of China's secularisation traditions have undoubtedly also been an important reason. Compared with many countries, this is one of the obvious advantages that has enabled China's modernisation to develop smoothly and sustainably.

5.1.3 The deep collective memory of poverty among a large number of members of society has fuelled the rapid growth of secularisation

Undoubtedly, during the planned economy period, China, through tremendous efforts, achieved large-scale social equality and established a preliminarily and comparatively complete industrial system and national security and defence system. This was a great achievement of that era, and it also laid an indispensable material foundation for the subsequent reform and opening up. At the same time, however, it should be noted that, for a variety of historical reasons, the basic living conditions of the people at that time had not yet been given due attention and improved accordingly they deserved.

From the perspective of economic structure, China's industrial structure at that time was laid out along the guiding lines that can be summarised as 'too much attention to heavy industry, little attention to light industry, and the least attention to agriculture', with insufficient focus on people's livelihoods and very little investment. In terms of the specific process of China's economic modernisation during that period, whether from the perspective of investment in infrastructure or of the growth rate, the proportion of agriculture, light industry, and heavy industry was excessively disparate. Taking total investment as

100, the proportion of agriculture, light industry and heavy industry was 7.1:6.4:36.2 during the First Five-Year Plan period, 11.3:6.4:54 during the Second Five-Year Plan period, 17.6:3.9:45.9 during 1963–1965, 10.7:4.4:51.1 during the Third Five-Year Plan period, 9.8:5.8:49.6 during the Fourth Five-Year Plan period, and 10.5:5.2:36.2 during the Fifth Five-Year Plan period. Taking the output value indexes of agriculture, light industry, and heavy industry as 100 in 1952, and calculating based on comparable prices, in 1978, the output value index of agriculture was 199.8, that of light industry was 1005.2, and that of heavy industry 2,879.5 (NBS, 1990, pp. 57, 166). The fact that heavy industry accounted for such a large proportion must have led to a drastic reduction in the capital supply on which agriculture and light industry depended for their development, thus preventing them from developing smoothly.

Furthermore, from the perspective of social orientation, China at that time did not attach enough importance to improving people's real-life conditions. In China's planned economy period, society as a whole often regarded people's pursuit of material life and realistic interests as unhealthy and not justified, and advocated an 'ideal' pursuit that was divorced from reality. 'After China's socialist transformation was basically completed, the Party's major mistake over a long period of time was that, it did not shift the focus of its work to economic construction, still took class struggle as the key link, belittled education, science and culture, and extremely exaggerated class struggle in the field of ideology until that civil unrest of the "Cultural Revolution"' (Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 1988, p. 1176). At that time, as far as the lifestyles of the members of society were concerned, under the influence of an absolutist ideology, the whole society advocated a lifestyle of hardwork and plain-living, emphasised the lofty ideals that everyone should have the motherland in mind and have the world in view, and carried forward the spirit of collectivism, which served as requirements for every member of society. Actually, this was a moralistic and politicised way of life, which, during the drastic period of the 'Great Cultural Revolution', eventually became a dehumanised lifestyle of asceticism. Against that background, society certainly did not attach any importance to the people's daily lives. Whenever a member of society considers his or her normal life, or the reasonable interests of an individual or a family, he or she is often regarded as a 'self-serving' individualist (Wu, 2019a, 2019b, p. 329). As such, the human being has become a tool in nature rather

than a goal. Furthermore, the pursuit of a human-centred real life became impossible.

As can be seen from the above, the biased layout of the economic structure and the biased social orientation of China at that time led to a lack of attention to the issue of secularisation. In this regard, a prominent manifestation is the fact that the people's livelihood, which is related to the people's basic material life, has not been improved for a long time as it should have been. It now appears that, during the planned economy period, the basic material life of the Chinese people is, in general, in a state of distress that seems pathetic today. In 1978, China's per capita GDP was only RMB 379. The average savings deposit balance was only RMB 89.8 for each urban resident, only RMB 7 for each rural resident, and only RMB 22 for each Chinese person (NBS Social Statistics Division, 1985, p. 92). In 1978, the average Engel's coefficient was 57.5% for each person of urban households, and up to 67.7% for each person of rural households (NBS, 2005, p. 34–35). 'Chinese Engel's coefficient, obtained after weighted averaging, was greater than 60% (Zhang, 2018a, 2018b, p. 41). The Engel coefficient was higher than 60%, the internationally recognised poverty line. In 1978, China's rural poor population was 770 million, and the incidence of rural poverty was 97.5% during the same period (Zhu, 2016). In terms of basic consumer goods, due to the scarcity, 'the state was forced to adopt the method of supplying limited quantities of goods by ticket to ensure people's minimum physiological needs'. 'Due to the lack of food, to fill the stomach, "replacement of food with cucurbits and vegetables" was commonly practised everywhere, and even grass roots and tree leaves were eaten' (Zhu, 2012, p. 75). In 1978, the floor area of housing per capita was only 6.3 square metres for urban residents and 8.1 square metres for rural residents (NBS, 1989, p. 351). Moreover, most housing was of low quality. In cities, because of the lack of housing, 'for a long time, some young people could not get married; in some cases, several families shared a room, with cloth curtains separating their beds, making life extremely inconvenient; in other cases, three or even four generations shared a room, so they had to put up bunk beds' (Zhu, 2012, p. 76). Personal ownership of durable goods was also in dire straits. In 1978, the average number of sewing machines per 100 people was 3.5, watches 8.5, bicycles 7.7, electric fans 1.0, radios 7.8, and cameras 0.5 (NBS, 1989, p. 461).

A large proportion of Chinese members of society have experienced the kind of poverty that prevailed during the planned economy period. The

lack of basic necessities during the planned economy period has become a deep, lingering national collective memory for them. It can be said that in the current Chinese society, a large number of people are still well aware of what poverty means. They are very sensitive to the issue of poverty, and even have an instinctive fear of it. On the other hand, since secularisation is originally a historical gene of the Chinese people, coupled with the fact that since the initiative of reform and opening up, the basic human-centred concept has gained popularity, the pursuit of a better life has already had a historical and realistic justification, and a better life has become the most important expectation of the masses. These two factors together make the Chinese people pay more attention to secularisation issues like their basic material living standards than people in other countries, fearing that poverty will come back to their own families. Surveys have unveiled that both men and women, regardless of age and whether they are high- or low-income groups, show an instinctive fear of poverty. The fear of poverty far outweighs the fear of emotional betrayal, friendship, and loss of dignity (Shuai & Song, 2011). These, in turn, boost the phenomenon of secularisation in present China with a strong impetus from the masses. Thus, we have found an important direct reason for the rapid development of secularisation in China since the initiative of reform and opening up.

5.1.4 Social anxiety in China today has, to a certain extent, contributed to the expansion and spread of the phenomenon of secularisation

It cannot be denied that, in China's rapidly transforming, there exists among members of society a widespread phenomenon of social anxiety, a tense psychological state. This kind of social anxiety covers almost all groups and all regions of China. Poor groups are anxious, middle-income groups are anxious, and high-income groups are also anxious; members of society in the south are anxious, while members of society in the north are anxious as well. The phenomenon of social anxiety in China today, cannot be said to be the 'last', but certainly 'unprecedented'. This is because, as far as China's history is concerned, this kind of severe and wide-ranging phenomenon of social anxiety has hardly ever existed in any previous peacetime period (except abnormal periods such as famines and wars).

In Chinese society, during a period of rapid transition, the phenomenon of widespread social anxiety is broadly attributable to two aspects. The first is the uncertainty in the lives of a large number of members of society. With the rapid and in-depth progress of China's modernisation and market economy, the interest structure of the whole society, as well as the social positions of a large number of members of society, will inevitably undergo a drastic re-adjustment, which will inevitably be accompanied by a drastic and extensive change in their living conditions and even their 'fate'. As a result, many members of society are bound to face drastic changes and uncertainty. For example, it is not rare for a person to become an overnight millionaire or a suddenly laid-off worker, which presents two opposed phenomena. In addition, social problems are emerging, and the social security system concerning the bottom line for the people's basic survival guarantee has not yet been systematically established. Under such circumstances, a large number of members of society inevitably experience a kind of uncertainty in their lives and a lack of predictability for the future. Their uncertainty about life and their unpredictability for the future will inevitably give rise to social anxiety on a large scale. The second reason is that many members of society have lost their faith. Faith is very important for the public. 'Faith is a major issue concerning basic concepts, integration, psychological condition, long-term goals of the social community, and the basic behavioural patterns of the population. If the population generally has a kind of faith, then they will be more confident and stronger, and due to their firm beliefs, long-term goals, and determined efforts, they will be able to withstand many temptations, overcome many setbacks, and strengthen their resilience, to reduce social anxiety' (Wu, 2012, p. 111). In China today, it cannot be denied that, for various reasons, the faith of many members of society has been lost to varying degrees. Many members of society often lack perseverance and determination mentally. Thus, in the face of a large number of temptations, especially the temptation of economic interests, they often lack proper determination and perseverance in their behaviour, and they are too unsettled to inevitably follow the herd and drift. The problem is that in China today, the whole society is flooded with all kinds of temptations. In the face of such a restless society full of temptations, 'due to the lack of perseverance and determination mentally, so once people are frustrated in their behaviour, their ability to resist setbacks and blows is bound to be very limited. This will continue to aggravate their depression. Thus, they will be deeply plagued by the phenomenon

of social anxiety' (Wu, 2012, p. 111). In short, the two reasons above make it possible for the phenomenon of social anxiety to appear on a large scale in China today.

The phenomenon of social anxiety in China today is characterised by several features. Firstly, the proportion of social members with psychological symptoms of anxiety is relatively high. According to more than 50,000 questionnaires from the Hangzhou Seventh People's Hospital, 'In terms of gender, men are more anxious than women. The anxiety-free population is 21% for men and 22% for women, while the severely anxious population is 3% for men and 2% for women'. 'In terms of marital status, those who are married live more comfortably than those who are unmarried, with 22% and 19% of the married and unmarried populations being anxiety-free respectively; 15% and 17% being moderately anxious respectively; and 2% and 4% being severely anxious respectively'. 'In terms of income, as income increases, the proportion of no anxiety increases in steps; the proportion of moderate and severe anxiety is higher among people with annual incomes of less than 100,000 yuan; while people with annual incomes of more than 700,000 yuan show a tendency of two extremes, with the largest number of people with no anxiety and severe anxiety' (Hangzhou Seventh People's Hospital, 2017). Another survey indicated that 'the results show that 80.1% of the interviewees often use the words "irritable", "stressed", "depressed", "indecisive" to express their moods, 74.5% of the interviewees believe that more than 70% of the people around them will have anxiety conditions from time to time; and 88.9% of the interviewees agree that "universal anxiety" has become a social disease in China nowadays' (Zhang & Xu, 2013, p. 17). 'As high as 85.3% of the respondents believe that the current society is permeated by a more serious violent mania (39.8% and 45.5% opted for "serious" and "more serious" respectively)' (Xu et al., 2014, p. 19). Another survey shows that psychological negativity is currently a social problem in Chinese society. 'A large proportion of individuals chose high scores for depression and stress, with 18.87% of individuals having an average score of 3–4 on the depression dimension, and 18.05% of individuals having an average score of 3–4 on the stress dimension'. 'Individual choice for low scores on the anxiety dimension accounts for the highest percentage, with 36.48% of individuals having an average score of 1–2 on the anxiety dimension' (Wang, 2019, p. 102). Secondly, the level of social anxiety varies according to different regions. A survey shows that

‘the provinces with “social anxiety” index rating 1, 2, and 3 are concentrated in the coastal provinces and the central region, while the northwest region has a low degree of anxiety. As time goes by, the level of anxiety in coastal provinces and municipalities has increased significantly, as well as in the northern and northwestern regions’ (Chen et al., 2020, p. 13). Thirdly, the target of people’s anxiety is mostly positioned in terms of their own basic living needs. A survey shows that ‘housing (82.34%), work (80.96%), old-age support (including personal and parental old-age support, 79.11%), children’s education (79.04%), and barriers to social interaction (72.69%) are the five major anxieties that plague white-collar workers’ (Liu, 2013, p. 54). Another survey shows that, ‘at the personal level, the three issues that the public is most anxious about are, in order: “failure to afford medical expenses and old-age support”, “strained interpersonal relationships and crisis of trust”, and “work pressure”, with 61.2%, 50.5% and 47.9% of votes respectively’ (Zhang & Xu, 2013, p. 17).

In China today, the prevalence of social anxiety and the clear target of social anxiety—the basic living needs for a large proportion of members of society will inevitably lead to a strong demand for guaranteeing their own and their family’s basic living standards. People generally hope that they and their families can have a predictable and stable life in a society with increasing competition and social risks, and that their and their families’ living standards can be continuously improved, which prompts members of society to make maximum efforts in this regard, including maximum investment of energy and money. At the same time, it should also be seen that the pervasiveness of social anxiety will objectively make some members of society exposed to the demonstration effect of making a fortune in a short time, generate a desire for wealth and psychological comparisons, and produce unrealistic psychological expectations for getting rich quickly through an attempt to take shortcuts or in a hitchhiking way. These will undoubtedly reinforce the pursuit of a realistic material life by a large number of members of society and, to a certain extent contribute to the expansion of the phenomenon of secularisation.

In short, since the initiative of reform and opening up, modern factors such as the basic human-centred concept and China’s secularisation tradition (i.e., the historical gene of secularisation) have played a major and direct role in promoting the rise and development of the phenomenon of secularisation in China, whereas the deep collective memory of poverty among a large number of members of society and the

pervasive phenomenon of social anxiety have clearly ‘pushed’ and ‘fueled’ the growth and spread of the phenomenon of secularisation. As a result of these factors, the rapid development of secularisation since China’s initiative of reform and opening up has become more certain than in many other countries.

5.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF SECULARISATION IN CHINA

As mentioned above, since the beginning of reform and opening up, a variety of practical and historical factors, such as the general recognition of the basic human-centred philosophy by members of society, the deep-rooted historical gene of secularisation, the profound collective memory of poverty among a large number of members of society, and the pervasive phenomenon of social anxiety, have contributed to the rapid growth and development of secularisation in China’s modern sense, which has led to secularisation presenting itself as a widespread and intense phenomenon.

Compared with many other countries, the widespread and intense secularisation in China broadly exhibits some of the following distinctive features.

5.2.1 *Personal and, in particular, material needs have become a common and relatively over-expected goal of life for the public*

The basic human-centred philosophy justifies the people’s pursuit of a better life in reality, while the tradition of secularisation, the fear of poverty among a large proportion of society members, and the phenomenon of social anxiety have led to an increasing emphasis on economic benefits and a priority to maintaining the basic needs and improving the real life, and made people eager to have a stable and affluent life in reality. As a result of all this, the Chinese people have now taken the satisfaction of basic material needs concerning immediate interest about themselves and their families; in other words, the pursuit of a better life, as the most important goal of life. Thus the basic behavioural orientation of secularism has been deeply rooted. This has been proved by a large number of surveys. According to some surveys, nine life motivations are generally agreed upon by the public, and in order of recognition rate, they are expectations for children’s development, the pursuit of

personal interests, the pursuit of family happiness, the pursuit of interpersonal advantages, the pursuit of a lifetime of peace, endeavouring to do one's part, realising self-worth, contributing to society, and pursuing the pleasures of life (Wang, 2011, p. 63). According to a survey conducted by a research group from Beijing Normal University on the 'values of two generations of contemporary Chinese people' for secondary school students and their parents in Beijing, in the following words, 'What do you think are the most important things in a person's life (choose three and rank them in order of importance): money, social status, honour, friendship, love, knowledge, health, power, family, career, and others', health ranks first with the highest percentage among secondary school students and their parents, with 46.1% of parents and 34.4% of secondary school students choosing it; friendship ranks second among secondary school students, with a proportion of 20.3%; family (23.2%) and career (18.3%), respectively, rank second and third among parents. At the same time, both generations agree on the importance of money. 88.4% of parents and 84.9% of secondary school students fully or relatively agree with the view that 'one cannot do anything without money', and 81.4% of secondary school students fully or relatively agree with the view that 'money is a due reward for those who have made contributions to society' (Bao, 2003). According to a survey conducted by Horizon company on the migrant population in Beijing, 'having a stable job' and 'a fulfilling love life' are considered to be the most important contents of life, and rank first and second respectively in the column of 'life values of the migrant population', while 'having a salary/increase in salary' and 'a good business' rank first and second respectively in the column of 'things I am happy about in my personal life' (Horizon Company, 2006, p. 142). The Sixth National Survey on the Status of the Workforce in 2007 (42,000 samples) found that 63.9% of workers regarded a comfortable and stable family life, a stable job, and earning more money as their ideal pursuits, while only 10.7% of workers regarded contributing to society as their ideals (Ru et al., 2008, p. 318). In 2017, The Eighth National Survey on the Status of the Workforce (45,026 samples) indicated that the top five items in which workers feel the most pressure were 'low income', 'increasingly high property prices', 'high costs of medical treatment', 'children's education' and 'old-age support', accounting for 63.4%, 49.4%, 40.6%, 39.5% and 24%, respectively, (Eighth National Workforce Status Survey Office, 2018, p. 20).

Many members of society have come to see work not only as a source of income, but gradually as part of the good life itself. Moreover, the younger they are, the more they value their freedom and interest in work itself. Undoubtedly, this is a sort of upgrading of secularised goals. According to a survey, ‘Ranking in the top three emerging careers that the interviewed college students would like to do the most are self-media blogger (56.31%), food and sleep tester (45.90%), and clothing match-maker (31.48%). The attraction of emerging careers mainly lies in more freedom of work (77.34%) and the possibility of taking interest as a career direction (76.59%)’ (Bi et al., 2020).

In addition, there is another situation worth noting, which is that the Chinese people have relatively high expectations for real-life goals and, at the same time, are relatively dissatisfied with their current situation. First, the happiness index is relatively low. From 2016 to 2018, China’s happiness index was 5.191, ranking 93rd among all countries in the world, lower than Thailand, Montenegro, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mongolia, the Philippines and Indonesia, which all significantly lagged behind China economically. Second, self-evaluation is relatively low. One survey has found that at this stage in China, ‘about 44% of the public consider themselves to be in the middle class, 31% consider themselves to be in the lower-middle class, and no more than 7% consider themselves to be in the upper-middle and upper class’ (Lu & Cheng, 2014, p. 21). Then again, compared to the income of the Indian people, the Chinese people enjoy a much higher income. But interestingly, the Chinese people’s self-assessment of living conditions is much lower than that of the Indian people. Statistics based on the China General Social Survey (CGSS) indicate that ‘the proportion of the Chinese population subjectively identifying themselves as the “middle class” was 41% in 2006 and 40.3% in 2008; the proportion of the Chinese population subjectively identifying themselves as the “upper middle class” was 6.2% in 2006 and 6.8% in 2008. However, the share of the population identifying themselves as the “middle class” in India was 57.5%, which was about the same as in France (where it was 57.7%)’ (Zhang, 2011, p. 66). This situation suggests, in another way, that one of the reasons for the relative dissatisfaction of the Chinese population with their current living conditions is that, they have relatively high expectations for their desired life.

5.2.2 *The almost unlimited responsibility of members of society for the basic subsistence of their families*

It is self-evident that, compared with the people of most countries, the Chinese have a traditional gene that attaches greater importance to their family. Chinese traditional society, based on a natural economy, is essentially a ‘differential mode of association’ (*chaxuujiegou*). ‘In the pattern of Chinese organisation, our social relationships spread out gradually, from individual to individual, resulting in an accumulation of personal connections. These social relationships form a network composed of each individual’s personal connections’. In this society with a differential mode of association, the consanguineous family serves as the most important unit, and the immediate family including parents and children is the most important interpersonal relationship. ‘In Chinese society, the most important relationship—kinship—is similar to the concentric circles formed when a stone is thrown into a lake. Kinship is a social relationship formed through marriage and reproduction. The networks woven by marriage and reproduction can be extended to embrace countless numbers of people—in the past, present, and future’. ‘The process by which the social spheres extend outward takes various paths, but the basic path is through kinship, which includes relations between parents and children and among siblings born of the same parents. The ethical values that match this sphere are filial piety and fraternal duty’ (Fei, 1985, pp. 23, 32). It is in such a social environment with a differential mode of association that every human being survives and thrives. In the midst of a generally non-religious society, the intergenerational continuation of consanguinity addresses the most important ultimate concern needs of the members of society, the need for a sense of belonging, and a host of other needs such as multiple production and lives. It is in this sense said that ‘The worst unfilial conduct is to have no male heir’. In a blood family, each individual carries almost unlimited responsibilities and obligations to his family. Creating a good life for one’s family, especially one’s offspring, is the most important life goal for most Chinese people. Accordingly, in a certain sense, the success of their descendants is almost equal to their own success, almost equal to the realisation of their most important life goal. Once the descendants achieve ‘success’, it means that it is a matter of ‘making the ancestors illustrious’, and the previous generations also feel that their efforts and even ‘sacrifices’ are ‘worthwhile’.

Since the beginning of modern times, and especially since the founding of New China, along with the disintegration of the natural economy, the gradual advancement of modernisation and the market economy, and the gradual acceptance of the concepts of freedom and equality by members of society, the unequal, hierarchical family system, which was the social bedrock of Chinese traditional society, has been disintegrated as a whole. This is a great historical progress. However, it is also undeniable that in China's first steps into modern society and market economy, the consciousness and behaviour of attaching great importance to the family as an important and deep-rooted historical gene persists to a large extent, and has become a prominent feature of today's Chinese society. Today's Chinese society is still, on the whole, a non-religious society, and a large proportion of its members still need the family largely to solve the major life issues of ultimate concern and, most importantly, a sense of belonging. In particular, there is another important factor that needs to be taken into account. That is, since initiating reform and opening up, due to special historical reasons, China has strictly implemented family planning for more than 30 years in terms of law and policy, resulting in a huge number of families with a '421' (four grandparents, two parents, and one child) demographic structure, which makes numerous members of society pay even more attention to the survival and development of the dwindling number of their offspring. These intertwined factors undoubtedly make the Chinese people pay more attention to their families. Therefore, the Chinese people's consciousness and behaviour of attaching great importance to the family have lasted as of now and have had a more far-reaching impact on the whole country compared with other countries. According to two data based on the China General Social Survey (CGSS) for the whole country and Jiangsu province: 'Among all relationships that are "most fundamental to an individual's life", "family ethical relationships or blood relationship" tops the list (over 60%), 4–6 times more important than the second most important relationship, "relationship between the individual and society", and 8–9 times more important than the third most important relationship, "relationship between the individual and the state and the nation"' (Hu, 2015, p. 24).

Generally speaking, in today's China, the awareness and behaviour of numerous members of society who attach great importance to their families are often manifested in the fact that they still have almost unlimited responsibilities and obligations towards their families. For the sake of their families, members of society are willing to make huge human

and financial investments, and such investments often last for the rest of their lives, rather than a certain phase. For example, parents spend huge family expenditures on their children's education, including education for studying abroad, and it is commonplace for elderly people to take care of their children's children, and so on. It should be mentioned in particular that parents and grandparents also do their best to help their children and grandchildren in housing purchase. In terms of the major consumer spending of many families, the housing purchase is undoubtedly one of the largest expenditures. The Chinese people attach great importance to 'living and working in peace and contentment' and regard housing as one of the most fundamental things in life. While the reality in China is that for a large number of young people, it is clear that they cannot cope with rapidly rising property prices by their relatively low incomes alone. Under such circumstances, 'Capable parents supporting their children to buy a house is the most prominent characteristic of Chinese-style consumption, and parents become one of the main sources of home purchase funds. At present, the post-80s have long been the main consumers for housing. According to the survey on the source of funds for home purchase by post-80s on the websites of major cities, over 40% of post-80s, even up to more than 70% in some cities, are supported by their parents for the down payment or full payment. In other words, buying a house in China is a family affair and will draw on the whole family's funds' (Qiao, 2016). Even some elderly people, who used to be very frugal, are often willing to take years of limited savings to help grandchildren buy a home.

5.2.3 *Extreme diligence in pursuit of life goals*

Compared to the people of most countries, the Chinese people are extremely hardworking. Under traditional social conditions, Chinese farmers, who make their living by cultivating the land, are faced with grave survival conditions of a growing population with a severe shortage of land area per capita, which in turn leads to problems such as difficulties in coping with famine and even failure to survive. 'The essential problem in Chinese villages, putting it in the simplest terms, is that the income of the villagers has been reduced to such an extent that it is not sufficient even to meet the expenditure in securing the minimum requirements of livelihood. It is the hunger of the people that is the real issue in China' (Fei, 1999, p. 199). For the simple survival and re-survival of man, Chinese farmers must make full use of the extremely limited land.

For this reason, they must labour diligently. There is no other way than that. ‘People respect the land and, more importantly, the use of the land; in other words, they diligently labour to fully leverage the utility of farming’ (Gao & Xie, 2004, p. 59). ‘The last generations of more than forty unbroken centuries of farmers who, with brain and brawn, have successfully and continuously sustained large families on small areas without impoverishing their soil’ (King, 1911, p. 198). Over time, diligence has become a habitual and ‘instinctive’ historical gene of Chinese people that continues to this day. This tradition of hard work, coupled with the unlimited responsibility for the basic needs of their families, the uncertainty of their own and their families’ prospects, the fierce competition in society, and the enormous pressure created by social anxiety nowadays, all of these things make the Chinese hardworking spirit extremely prominent.

Chinese people’s hardworking spirit is firstly manifested in the large proportion of labour participation rate. From Table 5.1, we can find that China’s labour participation rate and female labour participation rate in 2018 were 76.2% and 69.0%, respectively, which are among the top positions of all countries in the world. Compared with developed countries, China’s labour participation rate and female labour participation rate are higher than those of the United States (72.3% and 66.8%), the United Kingdom (62.7% and 53.4%) and lower than those of Japan (77.9% and 69.8%). Among the BRICS countries, China has the highest labour participation rate and female labour participation rate, higher than Russia (74.1% and 68.9%), India (54.2% and 24.8%), Brazil (70.3% and 60.6%) and South Africa (59.6% and 46.2%). Compared to low-income countries, China’s labour participation rate and female labour participation rate are higher than those of India and lower than those of Vietnam (82.7% and 79.1%) and Cambodia (82.8% and 77.2%). It is reasonable to assume that, compared with those in less modern countries, labour participation rates in more modern countries should be relatively low because of higher labour productivity and better social welfare systems. However, China’s labour participation rate and female labour participation rate are significantly higher than those of India, which is also an ancient civilisation but a less modern developing country. The reason, in addition to the traditional hardworking genes developed throughout Chinese history, is that, after the founding of New China, the country as a whole began to promote a large-scale women’s emancipation movement, thus bringing Chinese women unprecedented equality and enabling them to take an active part in productive activities.

Table 5.1 Status of labour participation rates in representative countries of the world (2018) (Unit: %)

<i>Country and region</i>	<i>Labour participation rate</i>	<i>Female labour participation rate</i>
Global	66.9	53.1
China	76.2	69.0
The United States	72.3	66.8
Japanese	77.9	69.8
Georgia	74.1	68.9
India	54.2	24.8
Brazilian	70.3	60.6
South Africa	59.6	46.2
The United Kingdom	62.7	53.4
Spanish	73.9	68.8
Vietnam	82.7	79.1
Cambodian	82.8	77.2

Source: National Bureau of Statistics: *International Statistical Yearbook 2019*, China Statistics Press, 2020 edition, p. 103

The hardworking spirit of the Chinese people is also reflected in the huge amount of time that workers devote to their work. The average amount of time spent on labour per worker in China is one of the highest among all countries. In this regard, although there are differences in the statistical calibre and the year of statistics, it is an indisputable fact that Chinese people are the most or one of the most diligent. **‘The July statistics from China’s National Bureau of Statistics in 2018 show that the average weekly working hours of employers in Chinese companies are 46 hours in that month. When converted into 52 weeks with deduction of 13 statutory holidays, this equates to 2,272 hours of annual working time, ranking first in the world’.** ‘While a survey by The Guardian shows that in the global ranking of labour hours, **Mexico ranks first in the world with an annual average of 2,228 hours of work, and China ranks second with 2,200 annual average working hours’.** ‘UBS releases its 2018 Prices and Earnings survey. One of the data points out that among 77 major cities around the world, **Beijingers ranked 22nd with an annual average of 2,096 working hours**, a full 109 hours more than the 1987 annual average working hours for Shanghainese, which, based on an eight-hour workday, equates to 14 more working days per year for Beijingers than for Shanghainese. Paris, the capital of

leisure, works only 1,663 annual average hours, a full 54 working days less than Beijing' (Guo, 2019). Other statistics show that the annual average working hours, measured in the median, are: about 1,920 hours in the US, 1,496 hours in Germany, 1,505 hours in France, 1,677 hours in the UK, 1,420 hours in Sweden, and 1,255 hours in Greece. 'China has about 2,100 annual average working hours. And for the many companies in China today, there are few cases where overtime work does not exist, so the labour intensity of Chinese people can be imagined' (Anonymous, 2015). 'When considered in terms of working hours, employees in China are much more "hardworking" than in European countries', according to a report by market consultancy Mercer. 'In the UK, employees can have 36 days off (in addition to Saturdays and Sundays) throughout the year. To add to annual leave, sick leave and other holidays, it can be said that British people spend nearly one-tenth of a year on holiday'. 'In China, employees only have 11 days off per year' (Anonymous, 2011). Data from the Sixth National Census shows that, 'the average weekly working hours of employees in China is 45.16 hours, which is still significantly higher than the national legal working hours'. 'The proportion of people working seven days per week (or more than 48 hours) is 38.37%' (Zeng, 2014, p. 1). The Eighth National Survey on the Status of the Workforce shows that '47.1% of workers work less than 40 hours a week, 31.3% work 41–48 hours, and 21.6% work more than 48 hours; only 44% of workers indicate that they receive overtime pay for overtime work in full following labour laws, or that they arrange for time off equal to overtime work. In terms of willingness to work overtime, 28.5% express they are not willing to work overtime because there is no compensation or little compensation'. 'In terms of rest and vacations, 35.1% express they do not enjoy paid annual leave and compensation' (Eighth National Workforce Status Survey Office, 2018, p. 19). Among all labour groups in China, rural migrant workers probably suffer the longest working hours. Data based on the China General Social Survey (CGSS) shows that 'the average weekly working hours of rural migrant workers is about 57 hours, 1.4 times the normal working hours of 40 hours as stipulated in the Labour Law, indicating a serious phenomenon of overtime work among rural migrant workers'. Moreover, 'the weekly labour hours of the older generation of rural migrant workers are on average three hours higher than those of the new generation of rural migrant workers, indicating that the former carries greater life and work pressure' (Li et al., 2018, p. 42).

Working overtime is an even more common phenomenon among deliverymen, a new worker group that has emerged in recent years. ‘From the survey, the weekly working hours of deliverymen reach 70.7 hours, which means that deliverymen not only have no rest days, but also work more than 10 hours a day’. ‘4.5% deliverymen work less than 40 hours, 1.9% work 40 hours weekly, while 93.6% work more than 40 hours a week’ (Li et al., 2020, p. 280).

5.2.4 *Strong emphasis on the feasibility and practicality of pathways to achieve goals*

Looking generally at the specific methods and paths of China’s modernisation since initiating reform and opening up, we can see a set of very feasible, practical, and effective practices running through them.

In fact, the emphasis on feasible, practical, and effective methods and paths can be found in the historical genes of Chinese traditional society. At that time, China was facing enormous pressure in at least several aspects. Firstly, society as a whole had to face the basic survival pressure of a constantly increasing population with a limited land area per capita. This basic survival pressure on land and population was a matter of life and death for any farmer who ‘relied on harvest’ or for most members of society. Secondly, unlike the religious society of medieval Europe, China was a secular society. In contrast, the religious society of medieval Europe was a simple ‘double world’—the coexistence of the ‘God’s world’ and the ‘human world’. However, Chinese traditional society was a complex ‘single world’. In this complex ‘single world’, there were strict social hierarchical barriers, and the interests of various groups, which were deeply affected by various ethical relationships, became more complex and diverse. ‘Each hierarchy has its own corresponding code of conduct and ethics, which cannot be confused. Every person living in the world has several roles to play and serves as a complex “role set”’ (Wu, 1996a, 1996b). Consequently, various groups in society must handle these complex and diverse interests with care, for a little carelessness can lead to a variety of linked contradictions and disputes or even conflicts. Thirdly, the unavoidable intensification of land annexation always triggered the problem of refugees to varying degrees, and conflicts between small and medium-sized landowners, peasants, and large landowners, as well as between the imperial court and large landowners, which in turn led to social instability. Fourth, from a broader perspective, China has a vast

territory, many ethnic groups, and the largest population in the world. More importantly, ‘there is a close and complex correspondence between the rise and fall of society on multiple time scales in history including population fluctuations and migrations, economic fluctuations, changes in the social governance and even dynastic alternations and climate change’ (Pei, 2017). In short, the community of the Chinese nation is enormous in its size, and the variables are so complex and numerous that a change in one of them will trigger changes in others. All of these require management to respond effectively, in order to ensure the safe operation of society.

In order to ensure the safe operation of its society under enormous pressure, China attaches great importance to effectiveness and stresses realistic and feasible paths and behaviours. This is manifested in at least three ways. First, it pursues the principle of ‘Safety First’. This is an essential prerequisite for the normal functioning of the community of the Chinese nation. For farmers, who make up the vast majority of the population, safety in production and reproduction is the priority. ‘Living close to the subsistence margin and subject to the vagaries of weather and the claims of outsiders, the peasant household has little scope for the profit maximisation calculus of traditional neoclassical economics. Typically, the peasant cultivator seeks to avoid the failure that will ruin him rather than attempting to make a big, but risky, killing. In decision-making parlance, his behaviour is risk-averse; he minimises the subjective probability of the maximum loss’ (Scott, 1977, p. 4). For the various groups in society, especially for the supreme ruler, it was necessary to maintain the ‘monolithic’ situation, without which the basic goal of normal functioning could not be achieved. It is no coincidence that all groups in society at that time attached great importance to the bottom line of basic survival. To this end, the rulers placed special emphasis on allowing for unforeseen circumstances, living within one’s means, and refraining from deficit spending. The peasants, on the other hand, attached great importance to intensive farming and tried to maximise the unit grain yield; if possible, they also considered purchasing farmlands to realise their dream of owning more landholdings. Secondly, it emphasises ‘the Golden Mean’ while avoiding extremes as a way of life. ‘The principles like “the unity of the wise and the mean” and “putting aside extreme views of things and governing the people with moderate reasoning” show the characteristics of Chinese wisdom’ (Feng, 1994, p. 22). The mean approach emphasises a certain degree of inclusiveness, requiring that each group should

make certain concessions and practice tolerance in exchange for a certain degree of peaceful coexistence with the corresponding group, and then a certain balance of interests in all aspects is achieved. Thirdly, it attaches importance to flexible and realistic ways of dealing with problems. Since practicality is emphasised, it is inevitable to stress the diversity and flexibility of approaches. ‘Because unencumbered by established patterns, with perhaps more energy and flexibility than the West, at least in countries like China and the “Asian Tigers”’ (Kissinger, 2014, p. 364). To ensure the monolithic situation, society sometimes allows or even encourages the people, as well as some local officials, to adopt a variety of flexible and realistic ways to effectively deal with the reality they face. For example, under the chieftain system tainted with a certain ‘one country, two systems’ philosophy, local rulers of some ethnic minorities have been allowed to implement special regional policies that are quite different from those of the mainland.

Since initiating reform and opening up, in the face of an unprecedented increase in the economic aggregate and an unprecedented increase in various social and economic risks, a whole set of feasible, practical, and effective paths has been adopted for China’s modernisation. This path has sublated and inherited China’s historical tradition of focusing on feasible and practical paths, and at the same time, it has been enriched according to the realistic situation. Basically, this path has several distinctive features.

Firstly, great importance is attached to social security.

China regards social security as a prerequisite for the proper progress of modernisation. Deng Xiaoping (1993) pointed out that ‘In China the overriding need is for stability. Without a stable environment, we can accomplish nothing and may even lose what we have gained’ (Deng, 1993, p. 284). ‘Stability overrides everything’ has become the consensus of all groups in Chinese society. Some foreign scholars have found that ‘This is the legacy of the Cultural Revolution: a desire, in fact an obsession, with stability—a deep-seated need for social order and an almost paranoid fear of turmoil and chaos. The nightmare memories are seared in the collective national soul and cannot be eradicated’. ‘it is hard to overstate the importance of this concern’ (Kuhn, 2009, p. 2005). Because of the great importance of social security and social stability, ‘several leaders since the initiative of reform and opening up have, without exception, taken seriously the issue of social security, and have even frequently emphasised it with the word “overriding”, and formulated policies and measures accordingly’ (Wu, 2017, p. 114). It is worth noting that

China's understanding of social security has become increasingly deeper and comprehensive, gradually expanding from the previous emphasis on political security to security in economy, society, culture, environment, ecology, and international environment. For instance, China attaches greater importance to the minimum arable land area and strategic reserve of food, which determines the bottom line of people's livelihood; it attaches greater importance to the strategic reserve of oil, which determines the bottom line of economic development; and it has also put forward and attached greater importance to the issue of 'Community with a Shared Future' in the international environment.

Secondly, modernisation construction and the improvement of the people's immediate interests are organically combined.

During the 30 years before 1978, Chinese people's living standards had been kept at a relative minimum influenced by the planned economic system and asceticism. As the reform and opening up strategy was launched, the planned economy transformed into a market economy, production levels improved, and the basic people-oriented concept gained popularity; people began to give more priority to their own immediate interests and to improving their life quality. Any move to lower people's living standards will be met with widespread resistance. It is on this basis that China has organically combined the improvement of people's immediate interests with modernisation construction. Deng Xiaoping (1994) stated, 'We must make use of the favourable conditions we now enjoy to accelerate the growth of our productive forces, improve the people's material and cultural life and broaden their outlook' (Deng, 1994, p. 128). 'We must calculate honestly whether we can quadruple the GNP. After all, the actual increase in GNP will be reflected in the standard of living. The people can tell very well what their standard of living is. We leaders can never calculate it so well as they do; their judgement is most accurate' (Deng, 1993, p. 284). 'The people see clearly that the current policy benefits all. The people's support and approval is the basis for maintaining political stability and unity and concentrating on developing the economy' (Literature Research Office of the CPC Central Committee, 1998, p. 365). Xi also noted that 'the people's aspiration to live a better life must always be the focus of our efforts' (Xi, 2012). The organic combination of the people's immediate interests and the modernisation process has led the Chinese people to closely link modernisation with their own destiny or their immediate interests, and has also determined the gradual identification of their daily behaviour with modernisation. All

this has provided a sustained impetus for China's modernisation process, making it an irreversible historical trend and maintaining momentum of continuous advancement.

Thirdly, an incremental modernisation model based on pragmatism is adopted.

Committed to pragmatism, China has adopted an incremental modernisation model in promoting modernisation. The incremental modernisation model has several important features: first, modernisation is promoted in the economic sector starting with the easier tasks before moving on to the more difficult ones, and then extending to other sectors. Its significance lies in the fact that 'on the one hand, the continuous development of local reforms can provide support and momentum to the whole process of reform and development; on the other hand, it can also provide a kind of demonstration and pressure on the overall reform' (Wu, 1999, p. 231). This approach has successfully avoided much resistance to development and some possible social shocks. Moreover, because of its success in the economic sector, modernisation has brought tangible material benefits to vast numbers of people, thus justifying modernisation and gaining popular acceptance. Secondly, it focuses on the interest coordination of all groups in society to prevent the emergence of fissures or even serious tears within society. At the beginning of the twentieth century, China put forward the value goals of building a harmonious society and upholding fairness and justice, and then the goals of joint contribution and shared benefits, which served as the foundation for the basic institutional arrangements and formulation of important policies. Thirdly, China has conformed to the trend of the times and adjusted its development ideas and policies to keep pace with the times. One main element of secularisation is the emphasis on realism. To make timely adjustments to development ideas and policies in light of the actual situation and to keep abreast of the times are just the integral components of realism. Engels pointed out, 'To my mind, the so-called "socialist society" is not anything immutable. Like all other social formations, it should be conceived in a state of constant flux and change' (Engels, 1890). The same is true of the incremental modernisation model. At a certain period, a certain modernisation strategy and policy has been effective in promoting the modernisation process because of its scientific and feasible nature. However, with the passage of time and the emergence of new problems, the originally correct strategies and policies may fail or partially fail, and various shortcomings will subsequently develop.

When various shortcomings accumulate to a certain point, they will, to varying degrees, impede the effective progress of modernisation. Therefore, it is necessary to conform to the trend of the times and, in the face of emerging problems, to make necessary adjustments to existing development ideas and policies to keep pace with the times. If we stand still, modernisation is bound to lose its prospects. The Chinese leadership is very conscious of this. Deng Xiaoping (1993) pointed out that ‘leaders should review what they have done, continuing those measures that have proved correct, acting promptly to change those that have proved wrong and tackling new problems as soon as they are identified’ (Deng, 1993, p. 372). Hu Jintao (2005) pointed out, ‘We must endeavour to constantly study new problems, develop new ideas and put forward new methods from the combination of theory and practice according to the evolution of the objective situation, to make our ideological concepts, policies and measures, work deployments, and ways of working more adaptable to the requirements of new circumstances and new tasks’ (Hu, 2005). Xi Jinping (2014) also pointed out that ‘a country, to achieve prosperity, must recognise and follow the underlying trend of the changing world. Otherwise, it will be abandoned by history’.

China’s approach has undoubtedly been very successful. It has effectively avoided the social shocks that might have been brought about by changes in economic and social structures in each specific relative ‘small period’, and has thus enabled China’s modernisation to avoid major, possible social shocks in a relatively ‘large historical period’. Moreover, this approach leads to the sustainable advancement of China’s modernisation from low to high, which finally leads to the great success of China’s modernisation. In contrast to China, Russia’s radical reform model in the 1990s was an obvious failure. At that time, Russia, which also had the heavy burden of a planned economy, adopted a radical reform strategy—shock therapy. Its specific plan is to hit out in all directions, adopt a multi-pronged approach, trying to solve all historical and practical problems once and for all with a package of reform solutions. However, that shock therapy—radical reform strategy not only failed to bring actual material benefits to the Russian people in general, but also failed to link the different stages of the reform strategy itself, which resulted in serious setbacks in modernisation, huge upheavals in Russian society, and plunged the Russian people into a state of misery and suffering. ‘In the 1990s the Russian economy declined for seven consecutive years at an average rate of 6.77% per year, with GDP falling by as much as 14.5% in 1992, and

in 1998 GDP was only 60.6% of what it was in 1991'. Moreover, inflation was severe, and the population's incomes contracted severely. 'The consumer price index reached 26.1 times in 1992, 9.4 times in 1993, and 73.15 times the 1991 level by 2000'. 'Residents' real disposable monetary income in 2000 was less than half of what it was in 1991, and the real wages of labourers in 1999 were only 36% of what they were in 1991. The average wage in 1992–1995 increased by 392 times, while prices rose by 1,608 times. The number of residents living below the poverty line reached more than 53% in 1992 and 1998 respectively. The population declined at an average rate of 759,000 people per year, totalling 6,726,000 between 1991 and 2000' (Li & Shen, 2007, p. 71).

Fourthly, feasible and effective planned milestones that are effectively linked to each other are established.

An overview of China's modernisation over the past 40 years since its reform and opening up reveals that, despite a general vision of China's modernisation beforehand, in the course of its implementation it was further broken down into several specific and interlinked milestones, which were further divided into 'major' milestones such as the 'three-step' goal and many relatively specific 'minor' milestones. All this is achieved mainly through various plans, such as the national and regional 'five-year development plans'. Since initiating reform and opening up, China has 'sought to find the greatest common divisor of development goals and behaviours among various groups and regions through necessary planning to mitigate imbalances and ensure the coordinated and sustainable advancement of modernisation'. 'In a certain sense, without these generally reasonable and effective modernisation plans, there would have been no great success in China's modernisation since the initiative of reform and opening up' (Wu, 2019a, 2019b, pp. 218, 235). From the viewpoint of these planned milestones, China first took the lead in promoting the 'household contract system', and then in revitalising the commodity economy, setting up special zones, and implementing a dual-track price system, etc.; based on certain achievements, experience, and lessons learned, China formally began to set up a market economy and joined the WTO. After the economy had reached a certain level of development, China put forward the human-centred concept and the five concepts for development one after another, in an attempt to promote the coordinated advancement of modernisation from an overall perspective. The realistic and feasible goals of modernisation and the effective connection between the various milestones of modernisation make it possible for

China's modernisation to maintain sustainable development, thus effectively avoiding the emergence of a gap in the modernisation process and the ensuing harm. Such a feasible and practical path has ensured the sustained and steady advancement of China's modernisation since its reform and opening up.

5.2.5 *Strong emphasis on education*

China attaches great importance to education, both from historical and contemporary perspectives. From a historical point of view, the importance China attaches to education is incomparable to that of European medieval society and Indian traditional society. Compared with education in European medieval society, education in Chinese traditional society was not only relatively complete, with both governmental and private schools, but also relatively large in scale; furthermore, the basic content of education was not religious doctrine, but political, social, ethical, and moral knowledge as well as knowledge of cultivating one's character. Numerous members of society regarded education as a gateway to higher social status and upward mobility, with a very clear purpose. In Chinese traditional society, 'for different families, the purpose of changing reality may vary, but the means adopted are almost the same: to educate the children. Although the power of such education is limited, the hope of Chinese peasants to change their family situations by educating their children is stronger than ever from one generation to the next' (Chen, 1999, p. 41). Importantly, the rulers of Chinese traditional society were also encouraging their populations to receive necessary education and, on top of that, to change their fate through imperial examinations. It can be seen that there are certain differences between European medieval society and Chinese traditional society, even though they are both hierarchical societies. Compared with the ossified hierarchical society of medieval Europe, Chinese traditional society is able to contain relatively greater mobility, which presents a certain rationality. 'Since the Sui and Tang dynasties, the system of the nine-rank system has been dismantled and replaced by the imperial examination system, which coincided with the increasing laxity of feudal personal attachments. The imperial examination system was more or less public-oriented, for it only used examination results as a criterion for deciding whether a person could enter a higher rank, which provided an important path for the promotion of lower-ranking members of society' (Wu, 1990, p. 67). Objectively speaking, the imperial examination

system was an important channel and hoped for many commoners to change their basic living conditions, social status and even to honour their ancestors, and, to a certain extent, the change of one's destiny was linked to the change of the destiny of the relevant family generations. Therefore, in Chinese traditional society, both the ruling class and the commoners attached great importance to education.

From the contemporary perspective, in modern society, there is an increasing degree of vocationalisation and specialisation; in most occupations, there is an increasing requirement for higher educational qualifications for those who work in them. To obtain a higher income and social status, one must have a better occupation, and a better occupation often requires a higher level of education. 'Before the modern era, education was essentially disconnected from the labour field. Strictly speaking, education was not universal among the public, and labourers relied only on the master-lead-apprentice approach to gain production experience and labour skills. However, the rapid expansion of the production scale and the increasing complexity of labour following the rise of modern great industry required workers to possess specific professional knowledge and labour skills. Logically, the formation of labour skills among social members needs to be accomplished through education' (Wu, 2019a, 2019b, p. 112). Importantly, there is a roughly positive correlation between a person's income level and their level of education. One survey shows that in China, 'Overall, in descending order of returns to education, there are the post-secondary level and above, the vocational education level, and the junior and senior high school education levels, with the highest returns to vocational education at the lower quartile and the highest returns to tertiary education at the post-secondary level and above at the higher quartile' (Liu, 2017, p. 63). 'The majority (81.28%) have an education level that is roughly in line with their income level' (Li, 2016, pp. 126–127). For the Chinese people, who attach great importance to the reality of secularised life, education is naturally regarded as a matter of great importance since it is something that is tightly bound up with economic benefits as well as social status. In short, the combination of historical and contemporary factors has led Chinese society to place a higher value on education than many other countries, with families investing heavily in it.

Chinese families are very willing to invest for their offspring to receive due education. A survey (in 29 provinces except for Xizang, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan regions) shows that 'the overall

scale of family education expenditure at the basic education stage nationwide was about 190,426 billion yuan in the second semester of 2016 and the first semester of 2017, accounting for 2.48% of GDP in 2016'. 'The average household education expenditure per student at the basic education stage nationwide was 8,143 yuan, respectively 10,100 yuan in urban areas and 3,936 yuan in rural areas'. 'Measuring the national average household education burden rate in terms of the ratio of each student's annual education expenditure to total household consumption expenditure, the average household education expenditure burden rate at the compulsory education stage is 11.9%, of which 10.6% is in rural areas and 14.3% in urban areas' (Li, 2017a, 2017b). The burden on the student's family is undoubtedly higher when viewed from the perspective of family education expenditure at the higher education level.

The government also attaches great importance to education and has accordingly invested an ever-increasing proportion of public funds in it. Reform and opening up began with the resumption of college entrance examinations for higher education, and thus great importance was attached to education at the dawn of the reform process. However, in the later period, due to various reasons such as over-emphasis on GDP growth, the government's emphasis on education declined significantly, and in the 1990s, the proportion of public funds invested in education declined significantly; in 2000, public expenditure on education accounted for only 2.6% of GDP (NBS, 2013, pp. 5, 707). This figure was lower than in most countries. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, this situation has gradually changed dramatically. In 2016, the national GDP was 744,127.2 billion yuan, and the state financial expenditure on education was 313,962.5 billion Yuan, accounting for 4.22% of GDP (Ministry of Education et al., 2017). This figure is already roughly on par with the world average.

5.3 THE GREAT BOOSTING EFFECT OF SECULARISATION ON MODERNISATION IN CHINA

The widespread and strong secularisation is one of the very important reasons why China's modernisation has been able to maintain a strong momentum over a longer period of time than in many countries. This is clearly different from many countries. In a certain sense, the Protestant ethic (spirit) of some European countries and the secularised ethic

(spirit) of China have a similar effect on the promotion of modernisation by the ethical or national factors in different countries. In the early stages of modernisation in some European countries, the 'Protestant Ethic' played an undeniably important role. According to Weber, 'Capitalism is, however, identical to the striving for profit, in the course of continuous, rational, capitalist enterprise, for more and more profits, and for "profitability"'. Weber found that 'business leaders and owners of capital, as well as the skilled higher strata of the labor force, and especially the higher technical or commercially trained staff of modern enterprises tend to be predominantly Protestant'. And what Protestants believe is that they themselves can increase the glory of God by acquiring wealth through a frugal lifestyle and through a work ethic of hard work and rational planning. Obviously, this spirit of social ethics or national factors was an important catalyst for the early modernisation process in some European countries. What needs to be seen is that, although this view of Weber's has some explanatory power and rationality for the success of early modernisation in some European countries, it has obvious limitations. It should be admitted that Weber was not sufficiently aware of the problems of modernisation in a large number of non-European countries. He failed to see that the Protestant ethic was not the only socio-ethical or national factor favourable to modernisation, and that modernisation was not unique to some European countries. In addition to the Protestant ethic, other types of socio-ethical or national factors favourable to modernisation exist in other countries. For this reason, Weber's judgement that modernisation is difficult in non-Western countries is a bit arbitrary. For example, although the non-religious secularisation of traditional Chinese society is not a direct catalyst for China's early modernisation, once China's modernisation is initiated, the traditional secularisation of Chinese society can be transformed into an integral part of the endogenous dynamics of modernisation, which is very important for the process of modernisation. In a certain sense, the traditional secularised ethical spirit of China can be converted into an integral part of the endogenous dynamics of modernisation, which will have a very important boosting effect on the modernisation process. If the spirit of 'Protestant Ethic' in Weber's eyes had an important and positive role to play in the early modernisation of some European countries, then the combination of the secularisation tradition and the phenomenon of secularisation in the modern sense, which gradually grew along with the modernisation process, has formed a general and strong secularisation

phenomenon, which has an important and positive role to play in China's modernisation. The combination of the tradition of secularisation and the phenomenon of secularisation in the modern sense that has developed along with the process of modernisation has created a general and strong secularisation phenomenon that has had a significant positive impact on China's modernisation.

The widespread and intense secularisation of China is of great importance for the advancement of China's modernisation. This is what distinguishes China's modernisation from that of European countries and many non-Western countries. In the context of modernisation, Chinese secularisation is marked by its focus on addressing real and immediate needs, which are widely regarded and relatively high among the expectations of the Chinese people, and characterised by Chinese people's strong drive to actively engage in societal and familial responsibilities, indicating that Chinese people 'desire to do it'. The extremely diligent and hardworking character of Chinese people in pursuing their life goals means that Chinese people are very 'willing to do it'. The fact that Chinese people attach great importance to the feasibility, practicability, and effectiveness of the paths to achieve their goals means that Chinese people are very 'capable of doing it'. Chinese secularisation is characterised by a strong emphasis on education, which means that the Chinese people attach great importance to the renewal of human resources and are therefore very 'competent to do it'. For modernisation, the convergence of 'desiring to do', 'being willing to do', 'being capable of doing it', and 'being competent to do it' of the members of the general society is the most important factor. All of these converge and intermingle together, which will inevitably generate a powerful, wide-ranging and unceasing endogenous dynamics of modernisation. This, in turn, has been a powerful driver for the rapid and continuous advancement of China's modernisation since its reform and opening up.

Specifically, the widespread and intense secularisation in China has had a tremendous boosting effect on modernisation, as seen in the concrete history of the 40 years since the reform and opening up.

5.3.1 *Contribute to the effective formation of a large number of entrepreneurs and self-employed persons in the non-public economy*

As mentioned earlier in this book, the basic behavioural orientation of members of society in modern society and the market economy is characterised by autonomy, i.e., the state of existence and development of the members of society is not dependent on others, but on their own free choice and self-causal effort. This is the proper meaning of secularisation in the modern sense. Otherwise, from the perspective of the driving force, modernisation will lack sustainable momentum due to the lack of real subjective power. In the case of China's modernisation, this is precisely what has happened since the emergence of secularisation in the modern sense.

In the planned economy of the pre-reform and opening-up era, Chinese enterprises and labourers had neither a sense of autonomy nor the pursuit of economic efficiency. At that time, China had a single economic entity, almost exclusively a publicly owned economy. Strictly speaking, the economic entities did not have the right to make independent economic decisions, and everything was left to the government. Self-employment was almost non-existent. Labourers did not have the choice of free movement, and everything was left to the arrangements of their organisations. 'Under the plan, with both the volume and the direction of sales mandated by official fiat, producers experience neither the opportunity to expand through their own initiative nor the threat of being eclipsed by rival suppliers'. 'The plan system's hostility to entrepreneurship enforces uniformities that inflate firm-level rigidities into economywide excesses'. Since operators and labourers are the most important main force in modernisation, this phenomenon of personal dependence of operators and labourers seriously hinders the free flow of factors of production and stifles the release of social potential. Moreover, not only was there a lack of space for independent choice and creation in production and operation, but even the way of life of individuals was, to a large extent, characterised by a kind of dependence, without the possibility of making independent choices, and there was even a lack of space for personal privacy. These were important reasons why China's modernisation at that time was difficult to succeed.

A crucial development in China since the reform and opening up has been the national and societal recognition of the autonomy of non-public enterprises and workers, specifically: the recognition of the right of the majority of peasants to run their own businesses and to work on their own, the recognition of the right of the majority of workers to move freely, and the recognition of the legitimacy of the majority of self-employed persons and private entrepreneurs to run their own businesses as independent legal persons. At the same time, the country and society recognise and encourage enterprises and workers to actively pursue economic efficiency. This is an inevitable requirement of a market economy, and an institutional arrangement and policy setting that corresponds to the specific secular needs of the population, thus giving rise to a large number of independently operating economic legal persons of all kinds, self-employed persons of all kinds, and labourers with the right to choose their own mobility, which are essential in modern society and in a market economy. This phenomenon involves an enormous number of members of society, accounting for the majority of the labour force or employed persons. According to the *Report on the Study of the Relationship between China's Individual and Private Economy and Employment* by the State Administration for Industry and Commerce's research group on the 'Relationship between the Individual and Private Economy and Employment', 'between 1990 and 2014, the number of people employed by individual businesses increased from 20.93 million to 106 million, a 4.06-fold increase. The number of people employed by private enterprises increased from 1.48 million to 114 million, a 76.13-fold increase. The number of investors in the private economy increased from 220,000 to 30 million, a 132.93-fold increase'. The State Administration for Industry and Commerce (SAIC) also has figures showing that 'by the end of 2015, there were 19.08 million private enterprises nationwide, with 35.6 million private enterprise owners (investors), and the number of real private enterprises nationwide accounted for 87.3% of the total number of enterprises; the registered capital was 90.55 trillion yuan, accounting for 53.8% of the national registered capital of real enterprises; and the number of employees in private enterprises nationwide was 164 million, with 128 million employed'. A related study by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) also showed that in 2016, 'private, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan businessmen, foreign businessmen and other unit workers accounted for 82.9% of the total'. In addition, figures disclosed by the head of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce (ACFIC)

showed that by the end of 2017, ‘the number of private enterprises in China was 27,263,000, and there were 65,793,000 individual industrial and commercial households, with a registered capital of more than 165 trillion yuan’ (Zhang, 2018a, 2018b).

Under the conditions of modern society and the market economy, the existence of a large number of non-publicly owned economic entities of all kinds, self-employed persons of all kinds, and workers with the right to choose their own mobility has made it possible to fully satisfy the secular needs of a large proportion of the members of society and has in turn released a huge amount of kinetic energy for modernisation and construction. For operators and labourers, only with independent economic decision-making power and the right to choose free mobility can they make relatively free choices according to the life goals they pursue, according to their own wishes, and according to their own occupations and abilities. Moreover, since their own personal interests and the quality of their living conditions are directly tied to their own specific choices as well as their own specific inputs of manpower and materials, they are able to maximise their investment and diligence. It is also important to note that ‘it is a general experience that small economic units, lesser industrial enterprises and small shops can maintain themselves better in an economic crisis than huge, inflexible concerns which cannot readapt themselves’ (Karl, 2002).

This has enabled Chinese society to unlock significant potential since the reform and opening up, enhancing the people’s ability to adapt to complex developments. ‘Under the conditions of the socialist market economy, there are already more than 100 million market entities in China, which are able to produce, operate and invest on their own, and have strong adaptability’. All these have effectively promoted China’s modernisation. This great contribution of private enterprises to modernisation is ‘summarised by saying that the private economy has the characteristics of “five, six, seven, eight, nine”, i.e., contributing more than 50% of tax revenue, more than 60% of GDP, more than 70% of technological innovations, more than 80% of urban labour employment, and more than 90% of the number of enterprises’. In 2020, 19 of China’s top 500 private companies will be among the world’s top 500. A noticeable phenomenon is that, generally speaking, wherever China is currently experiencing better private enterprise development in regions such as Guangdong, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and provinces such as Fujian, the overall development momentum in that region is better, and vice versa.

In a sense, it is the Chinese people's strong pursuit of secularisation goals and extremely diligent efforts, together with the diversity and effectiveness of the corresponding non-public economy, that have led to the world-recognised great achievements of the Chinese economy since the reform and opening up, with the gross domestic product per capita rising from 385 yuan in 1978 to 70,725 yuan in 2019. During the same period, this growth rate was the highest of any country in the world.

Obviously, it is no longer conceivable today that China's modernisation can be sustained without the huge number of non-public economies that are closely associated with secularisation.

5.3.2 *Directly contributing to increasing domestic consumption*

In the early stages of a country's industrialisation, the biggest bottleneck to development is the lack of capital due to widespread poverty. According to development economics, developing countries begin their modernisation with a 'vicious circle of poverty'. 'It is rooted in a lack of capital and insufficient capital formation. The root causes of the lack of capital formation lie in low levels of savings and too little savings capacity on the supply side, and low rates of investment and too little incentive to invest on the demand side. Both of these causes have trapped capital formation in two intractable vicious circles'. At this time, a country must develop a high savings rate to be able to form a larger amount of capital that can be used to support the advancement of industrialisation. When the industrialisation stage is largely completed, a strong industrial production capacity has been formed, and the continuous supply of products is no longer a problem. As a result, the immediate impetus for economic development will relatively undergo an important change, that is to say, there is a need to have a more powerful domestic consumption to provide a large area of orders for products, which will in turn support the continuous development of the economy.

China's approach to resolving the dilemmas of the early stages of industrialisation has been different from that of many developed countries. While the traditional spirit of secularism meant that the people of an agrarian society were thrifty, living within their means and rejecting extravagance, which seemed to be conducive to the accumulation of capital. The problem lay in the fact that, in traditional Chinese society based on a natural economy, the basic social orientation valued the farm over the business sector and

rejected the 'entrepreneurial spirit'. Under such circumstances, the bulk of private capital could not be used for commodity production in the sense of exchange. The general purpose of the people's frugality was to keep a certain amount of savings to protect themselves against possible future risks because they could not be rich enough to have a lot of money left over, and because even if they did have a certain amount of savings, they had to use it to acquire new land to expand agricultural production. In this case, stable agricultural production, while certainly important for social stability, has a limited effect on the expansion of reproduction in society as a whole because of its small degree of evolution. Obviously, the traditional secular behavioural orientation was not conducive to the smooth advancement of large-scale industrial production in the early stages. However, in contrast to many developed countries, China took an unprecedented approach of strong state mobilisation during the three decades from 1949 to 1978. This involved temporarily deferring improvements in people's livelihoods and prioritising the establishment and development of large-scale industrial production. The order of priority was defined as 'heavy industry first, light industry second, and agriculture last'. It should be admitted that, despite the huge cost of this approach, the long delay in improving people's livelihoods and the development of the countryside, the construction of China's primary large-scale industrial system was completed after all. This, together with the introduction of large amounts of foreign capital and the initial accumulation and investment of private capital since the reform and opening up of China, has made it possible to basically establish a complete system of industrialisation in China.

The problem is that, after more than 40 years of reform and opening up, China's large-scale industrial production capacity has been in a situation of obvious excess, and thus the direct pull effect on the economy is decreasing. Under such circumstances, the significance of consumption to boost domestic consumption has become increasingly prominent. As a result, secularisation is becoming increasingly important as a direct driver of the economy.

The effectiveness of increasing domestic consumption is clearly demonstrated by the fact that China's final consumption rate has shown a gradual upward trend in recent years, with an increasing contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP). From the perspective of 'expenditure on GDP', from 1978 to 2002, China's final consumption rate remained at around 60%; from 2003 to 2008, it began to decline from 58.1% to 50.0%; from 2009 to 2010, it declined to 49.3%, with the lowest of 48.5% in 2010; and it gradually rebounded to 51.5% in 2012, 51.4% in 2013, 52.3% in

2014, 53.7% in 2015, 55.1% in 2016, 55.1% in 2017, 55.3% in 2018, and 55.4% in 2019. From the perspective of its contribution to GDP, the contribution of the final consumption rate has undoubtedly grown in recent years. It was 38.7% in 1978, 78.1% in 1980, 71.9% in 1985, 89.0% in 1990, 46.7% in 1995, 78.8% in 2000, 56.8% in 2005, 47.4% in 2010 and 69% in 2015. After that, there was a decline, with 66.5% in 2016, 57.5% in 2017, 65.9% in 2018, and 57.8% in 2019.

Since the reform and opening up of China, with the advancement of modernisation, it has become more and more possible and realistic for people's incomes and daily living standards to rise. Under such circumstances, the Chinese people, based on a general and strong sense of secularisation, are bound to pay more and more attention to the improvement of their daily living standards and the continuous improvement of their quality of life. In line with this, China's consumption and domestic demand will be effectively stimulated on a large scale, thus forming strong endogenous dynamics for the construction of modernisation.

In the medium and long run, considering the influence of secularisation—people's pursuit of living standards and quality of life—China's domestic consumption still has significant room for growth in those aspects. First, the driving force of the social security system. The inadequacy of China's current social security system means that a large number of members of society still need to protect themselves mainly through the necessary household savings to cope with the various risks that they and their families may encounter in the future. However, China is now placing more and more emphasis on building a sound social security system, and is investing more and more public funds in it. It seems that with the gradual improvement of the social security system, there will be a sort of 'crowding out effect' of savings in Chinese society. A large number of members of society 'can substantially ease their worries about retirement, medical care, unemployment, etc., and can have a relatively stable expectation of their future lives, thus substantially reducing their personal savings. Associated with this is an increase in immediate consumption, and even an increase in early consumption, that is, mortgage consumption (loan consumption). In this way, domestic demand is expanded, and the impetus for economic development can be strengthened' (Wu, 2008). Second, the driving force of the gradual expansion of the size of the middle-income group. China's current share of middle-income group members is only about 30%, but it is growing at a faster pace. It is common sense that members of the middle-income group have the highest degree of marginal consumption

demand compared with members of the low-income group and the high-income group. For members of the high-income group, although their purchasing power is the strongest, their consumption demand shows some tendency of diminishing marginal effect because they have roughly all the consumption items they should have. For members of the low-income group, although there are still a lot of consumer goods that they should have, they have very limited purchasing power, so it is difficult to carry out consensual consumption. For members of the middle-income group, however, consumption desire and purchasing power are relatively strong. Therefore, along with the gradual expansion of the proportion of middle-income group members, China's domestic demand for consumption can be further increased. Third, spending on tourism and cultural recreation has increased significantly. Since the 1990s, people have been able to spend more on tourism and cultural recreation due to the increase in economic income and leisure time. People's expenditures on tourism have increased year by year, and the number of tourists has continued to climb. In 2008, the number of domestic tourists reached 1.712 billion, an increase of 2.3 times compared with 1994. Per capita spending on tourism amounted to 511.0 yuan, an increase of 1.6 times compared with 1994. In 2019, the number of domestic tourists reached a record of 6.606 billion, per capita spending on tourism amounted to 535.3 yuan, and domestic tourism revenue reached 5,725.992 billion yuan. The number of domestic residents travelling abroad reached 169.2054 million, the number of inbound tourists was 145.3078 million, and the international tourism revenue was 131.254 billion U.S. dollars. The average per capita cultural, recreational, and educational expenditure of rural residents in 1981 was only 10.1 yuan, and reached 1,481.8 yuan in 2019; the average per capita urban resident of the whole country in 1981 expenditure on culture, recreation, and education was 35.8 yuan, reaching 3,328.0 yuan in 2019. Fourth, the increasing emphasis on quality of life, demographic changes, and changes in the spectrum of diseases have led to an explosive growth in demand for healthcare services. Between 1978 and 2017, China's total health expenditure grew from 11.021 billion yuan to 4,634.488 billion yuan. According to OECD estimates, without effective cost control, the Chinese government's healthcare and long-term care expenditures as a percentage of GDP will triple in the next 40 years compared to the current level. Fifth, the huge demand of an ageing society. Some data show that the proportion of elderly people aged 65 and above in China's total population was 4.4% in 1953, 3.6% in 1964, 4.9% in 1982, 5.6% in 1990, 7% in 2000, 8.9% in 2010, and 11.9% in 2018. This shows that China has crossed into the ranks of an ageing country since 2000 and is aggravating at a faster rate. 'The growth rate will accelerate significantly in 2021-2030, and the proportion will reach

about 25% by 2030'. From the national level, to deal with the basic goal of the ageing society is 'a sense of security for the elderly'. To achieve this, two important issues must be resolved. The first is the pension insurance, or pension problem and the second the issue of elderly services. With the ageing of the population, the decline in the fertility rate and the miniaturisation of the family, the traditional function of family old-age protection is becoming weaker and weaker, and the demand for socialised old-age services is on the rise. The problem of population ageing has led to a significant increase in the number of elderly people and a rise in the proportion of elderly people in the total population, thus placing more and higher demands on social pension insurance. It should also be noted that in the next 10-20 years, as the proportion of middle-income earners and high-income earners among China's elderly rises significantly, so will their standard of living. However, the current service system for the elderly is relatively outdated, far from meeting the needs of the elderly in the next 10-20 years, and must be substantially upgraded. All of these things make the space for the ageing society to stimulate domestic consumption enormous.

5.3.3 *Effective promotion of national cultural quality and upgrading of human capital*

The Chinese people's high regard for education has led them to invest heavily in education, even during a particular period of biased 'industrialisation of education' (the years between the late 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century). Moreover, the government has gradually increased its investment in education since the beginning of the twenty-first century. All of this has contributed to the historic development of education in China over the past 40 years since its reform and opening up, which in turn has led to a large-scale and substantial upgrading of the cultural quality of the people as well as of their human capital.

Since the reform and opening up, China's education has changed dramatically. It is not an exaggeration to use the phrase 'turning the world upside down' to summarise it. A set of data is sufficient to illustrate the great changes in China's education and the great progress in the quality of national culture brought about by it. In 1981, China's gross enrolment rate in high school education was 39.56%, and the gross enrolment rate in tertiary education was 1.6%. In 2019, there were a total of 154 million students enrolled in schools at the stage of compulsory education, and the consolidation rate of the nine-year compulsory education

was 94.8%; the total size of all kinds of higher education in the country reached 40.02 million, and the gross enrolment rate in higher education reached 51.6%. The total size of the country's tertiary education has reached 40.02 million, with the gross enrolment rate in tertiary education reaching 51.6%, and the gross enrolment rate in tertiary education has 'exceeded the average level of middle- and high-income countries'. 'The development of education has also greatly improved the level and structure of China's human resources: the average number of years of schooling for people aged 16–59 rose from less than 5 years in 1981 to 10.35 years in 2016; and the proportion of people with tertiary education rose from 0.58% in 1982 to 12.44% in 2015' (Gu et al., 2020).

Additionally, there are at least three other evident manifestations of the significant progress in China's education and the quality of national culture. Firstly, the operation of schools has shown diversification, especially in the case of private education, which has grown from scratch and has begun to take shape. The situation in which education was entirely run by the state has initially changed. In 2019, there were a total of 191,500 private schools of all levels and types, accounting for 36.13% of the country's share; 17,743,300 students were enrolled; and 56,166,100 students of all types of education were enrolled. Secondly, external exchanges in education have been greatly advanced. Since the reform and opening up, a large number of members of Chinese society have begun to study abroad. 'By the end of 2015, the cumulative number of students studying abroad in China had reached 4,042,100, with an average annual growth rate of 19.06%. At the same time, the number of returnees has also been increasing, from 2,480 in 1978 to 409,100 in 2015, with the cumulative number of returnees reaching 2,218,600, at an average annual growth rate of 22.46%'. In recent years, 'the ratio of the number of returnees to the number of people going abroad each year is 70-80%'. '80.70% of the employed returnees have a master's degree, 9.49% have a doctoral degree, and 9.81% have undergraduate and specialist degrees'. In addition to 'going out', or studying abroad, China has also cultivated a large number of students through 'inviting in'. The Chinese-foreign cooperation has also trained a large number of students. The formation of an international outlook on education not only provides the necessary reference for China's educational endeavours and stimulates their vitality, but also helps to expand the international outlook of the Chinese people in order to adapt to the development trend of the world. Thirdly, the strategic goal of building a learning society has been put forward. Nowadays, China has elevated the construction of a learning society to a national goal, proposing

that by 2020 China will ‘basically form a learning society’. This goal is of great significance. It advocates not only school education, but also that every member of society should have a conscious awareness of learning, learning habits, and the ability to learn. The advancement of the construction of a learning society is bound to promote the general improvement of our national cultural quality in a solid, effective, and sustainable manner.

What the tremendous development of education has brought about is an extensive and substantial upgrading of the cultural quality of the nation, and an upgrading of human resources and human capital. This is of great significance to China’s modernisation. National cultural quality, human resources, and human capital are the most important resources for modernisation. **‘Since the reform and opening up, higher education has cumulatively trained and delivered 99 million high-quality specialists to the country, and vocational schools have cumulatively trained and delivered more than 200 million technical and skilled personnel. The number of annual graduates from China’s colleges and universities has grown from 165,000 to 8.2 million, an increase of nearly 50 times in 40 years. The proportion of new labour force with higher education exceeds 45%, and the average number of years of education has reached 13.5 years, higher than the world average’** (Chen, 2018). China’s R&D workforce has surpassed that of the United States since 2013. ‘In 2018, the total number of R&D personnel nationwide, calculated on the basis of equivalent full-time workload, was 4.19 million person per year’. The upgrading of human resources and human capital as a whole means that the substantial development of science and technology in China has become possible, and that the upgrading of China’s industrial structure as a whole has become possible. In a word, the enhancement of national cultural quality and the upgrading of human resources and human capital can offer a robust endogenous impetus for the continuous, deeper, and comprehensive advancement of China’s modernization.

5.3.4 Contributing to the continuous maintenance of social security

During the transition from a traditional to a modern society, a country’s economic structure and the structure of social interests are destined to undergo large-scale and drastic changes, inevitably leading to a plethora of social contradictions. This is a law. This is particularly obvious for a

large, late-developing country like China. Whether or not social conflicts in different countries during the period of social transition will evolve to such an extent as to directly endanger the safe operation of the country depends on a number of factors. The most important of these factors is the satisfaction of the interests of the majority of the members of society, and the economic performance of the government and its coordination of the interests of various groups in society. It is precisely in these two areas that the Chinese people and the Chinese government, with their strong spirit of secularisation, have been relatively successful.

At the grassroots level, the Chinese people exhibit a high degree of pragmatism and rationality in their pursuit of goals. The Chinese people generally attach great importance to real life and the question of whether it can be safeguarded and improved in a sustainable manner, rather than aiming for an idealistic world that is too disconnected from real life. At the same time, the Chinese people are rational enough to see that social security is a necessary precondition for the protection and improvement of real life. Without it, nothing can be achieved. Once there is insecurity in society, people's normal real life is bound to be deeply affected or even cease to exist, and there is no way to talk about the hope for a better life in the future. More than one generation of people have a deep pain of social unrest (including political unrest), especially in China, so this feeling is particularly profound. Some surveys show that the Chinese people place the highest value on social security and social stability as a prerequisite for all other life goals. In the question 'What do you think is the most important sign of a good society?', the highest percentage of people chose 'peace and stability' (34.2%), followed by 'a rich life' (26.4%) and 'equality for all' (15.2%), while the proportion of people choosing 'a sound legal system', 'political democracy' and 'freedom' is relatively small (Xuan, 2011). Based on this, it is not difficult to conclude that whoever can ensure a safe social situation, and whoever can guarantee and continuously improve people's livelihoods, will win the approval of the Chinese people.

At the governmental level, the Government maintains social security in a spirit of realism and rationality. In this regard, the Government has implemented a large number of pragmatic and effective policies in various areas. Among them, there are two very effective policies on people's livelihood. Firstly, policies on improving people's livelihood which cover a wide range of areas. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the Government has introduced and implemented a large number of policies

covering a wide range of areas to improve people's livelihood. Whether in terms of social security, old-age protection, public health policies, compulsory education, or employment protection policies, their implementation has been unprecedented in terms of strength and effectiveness. Secondly, policies aimed at specific groups of people to improve their livelihoods. This is highlighted by the successive upward adjustments of pension levels for retirees and the precise alleviation of poverty. By 2020, China's 'pensions **for urban workers and retirees have increased for 16 consecutive years**'. Moreover, China's achievements in poverty alleviation have been recognised worldwide. 'After eight years of sustained struggle, we have completed the goal and task of poverty alleviation in the new era on schedule, lifting all rural poor out of poverty under the current standard, removing the titles of all poverty-stricken counties, eliminating absolute poverty and regional poverty as a whole, lifting nearly 100 million poor people out of poverty, and achieving a major victory that has impressed the world' (Xi, 2020). The two aforementioned policies have improved the overall situation of people's livelihoods in terms of the broad bottom line and the unique shortcomings respectively, which in turn has made it possible for a large proportion of society members to remain hopeful for the future, reducing the probability of the formation of social contradictions and weakening the strength of their release from a very important level, and making it possible to overall realise a safe and secure operation of the society. On the whole, there are many reasons why China has been free of violent social conflict or even social unrest since the reform and opening up, and why the process of China's modernisation has not been interrupted, but has remained secure. One of the most important reasons lie in this.

On the whole, social conflicts in China at this stage are at a 'manageable' level. It should be acknowledged that, since the reform and opening up of China, as members of society have become more aware of their independence, equality, and rights, and as social interests have become more complex, there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of social conflicts and disputes in China, as well as in the variety and breadth of the types of conflicts and disputes that have arisen. However, it is important to note that, compared to social conflicts in many countries at a similar stage of development, the conflicts in China since the reform and opening up are not as severe, let alone posing a threat to the 'foundations of the nation'. First, from the perspective of the main root causes, the main source of China's current social conflicts and disputes comes

from the people's interests in terms of livelihood. 'From the perspective of the formation of social conflicts, the formation of China's social conflicts at the current stage are mostly concentrated in the parts directly related to the basic livelihood or the people's immediate material interests, which is more of a "livelihood" aspect of the interests of the people's aspirations'. For example, at the current stage in China, whether it is the social contradictions triggered by the phenomena of workers' rights defence and 'buyout', or the social contradictions triggered by the phenomena of illegal fund-raising and land requisitioning and relocation, they are almost invariably triggered by the demands for interests in the material aspect. In comparison, conflicts arising from people's livelihood are relatively easier to resolve than those arising from political and ideological interests. As long as China can continue to improve basic livelihoods, rather than delaying them for a long time, social risks will not turn into political risks, which can lead to relatively serious social conflicts. In many countries at the same stage of development, social conflicts are about 'basic values' or 'ideological' conflicts, and thus are relatively difficult to resolve. According to Cosset, 'conflicts in which the participants feel that they are merely the representatives of collectivities and groups, fighting not for self but only for the ideals of the group they represent, are likely to be more radical and merciless than those that are fought for personal reasons' (L. Cosse, 1989). This is the case, for example, of the social conflicts in Britain and France during the early period of great industry, in Russia during the dramatic transformations of the 1990s, and in Latin American countries fueled by populism, to name but a few. Second, in terms of complexity, most of China's current social conflicts and disputes are 'one issue at a time'. Unlike many other countries at the same stage of development, China's social conflicts and disputes as a whole arise sporadically and randomly, and there are not many national groups or organisations to unify their operations and arrangements, nor are there any programmes or plans for nationwide joint action. China's current social conflicts and disputes are mostly dealt with on a small scale and on a 'case-by-case' basis. Comparatively speaking, it is very difficult for such situations to evolve into fierce national conflicts. Third, in terms of the way in which interests are claimed, China's current social conflicts and disputes are basically mild. As far as the vast interior of China is concerned (with the exception of remote ethnic minorities), the parties to social disputes in China have mostly resorted to mild means of appealing for their interests, such as petitions, sit-ins, stoppages of work, and walks, and

have hardly ever resorted to violent bloodshed. This is also very different from the social conflicts in many countries at the same stage of development. In South Korea, for example, in the late 1980s, ‘a wave of violent labour conflict erupted within two weeks of Roh Tae-woo’s announcement of political liberalisation. Labour unrest swept across the country like a prairie wildfire at an unprecedented level of intensity and fury. It started in the manufacturing industries and then spread to mining, transportation, the dockyards, and some service sectors’. ‘Violence occurred frequently as workers retaliated against the mean and arrogant managers and employers’ (Goh, 2004).

Maintaining social security over a long period of time provides the most basic prerequisites for the smooth progress of China’s modernisation, and significantly reduces the costs and uncertainties of China’s modernisation.

From the above, it can be seen that the widespread and strong secularisation phenomenon is of great significance in promoting China’s modernisation. Moreover, because secularisation is more concerned with the people’s daily life, it enables the people to draw extensively on the fruits of modernisation, and makes the modernisation construction itself have a kind of organic growth and diffusion. Consequently, this makes the promotion of China’s modernisation more irreversible.

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Excessive Secularisation in China at the Present Stage

Secularisation is an important element of modernisation, and at the same time it is of great significance to the establishment of the basic purposes, the formation of endogenous dynamics, the sustainable promotion of modernisation, and the safe operation of modern society. Secularisation appears to be a superficial problem concerning people's daily lives, but it is actually a major issue involving the overall situation of modernisation. Secularisation is undoubtedly of even greater importance to the Chinese people, who have historically been genetically secular and are now eager to improve their living conditions.

Since the reform and opening up, China's modernisation has made great strides, in a certain sense, thanks to secularisation. This is one of the major reasons why China's modernisation has made great achievements since the reform and opening up and there is also a clear difference between China's modernisation and that of many other countries. Similarly, some of the obvious problems that have arisen in China's modernisation at this stage, such as the over-orientation towards GDP, the lagging of social development behind economic development, the wide gap between the rich and the poor, and the high expectations of the public for welfare, are to some extent related to excessive secularisation. Although this issue is extremely important, it should be acknowledged that it has not yet been given sufficient attention by academics. To ensure

that China's modernisation progresses healthily and sustainably, the negative effects of excessive secularisation should be given high priority and actively addressed.

6.1 THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE OF SECULARISATION IN CHINA

6.1.1 Secularisation as an inevitable part of the modernisation process

No matter in which country or region, as long as modernisation and a market economy have taken place, secularisation will inevitably become a common social phenomenon in that country or region. In the past France, the Netherlands, and other countries, where religious power was deeply rooted in medieval Europe, have become increasingly secularised since entering modern society, while the influence of religion, which originally imposed serious constraints on all aspects of people's behaviour, has correspondingly tended to decline considerably. Surveys have shown that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, only 9% of people in the Netherlands, 7% in France and 3% in Latvia attended church every week. Compared to European countries, the United States is one of the countries with a relatively high percentage of believers. Even so, as modernisation progresses, the United States is becoming more secular and the influence of religion is declining. Based on Gallop Poll results, it 'indicates that over the last 30 years church attendance in a given week has fluctuated between 36 and 49% of the population, with the fraction of the population attending church in any given week declining steadily since 1958' (Azzi & Ehrenberg, 1975).

The phenomenon of secularisation is becoming increasingly prominent in China, which is gradually moving towards modernisation. Compared with Europe and the United States, the phenomenon of secularisation in China is somewhat more complex. Compared with the medieval society of Europe, in a sense, traditional society of China was not a religious society but a secular society, or at least a society in which secularisation was very obvious. The biggest difference between traditional society of China and medieval society of Europe is that, as a whole, the former pursued the reality of This World rather than the heaven of The Other World. However, there was still a big gap between secularisation in China and secularisation in the modern sense: the main actors were members of

society with obvious personal dependence who recognised the feudal hierarchy of the Three Principles and Five Virtues instead of the consciousness of individual human beings who were free, independent, and equal. In line with the phenomenon of secularisation in the Chinese tradition, there was a very limited code of conduct of ‘seeking profit’ and the basic national policy of emphasising agriculture and suppressing commerce, which is premised on the principle of ‘a wise man regards the moral worth of a man, a fool, only his position’ (translated by Hongming Gu), and thus the behavioural orientation of pursuing one’s own interests is not the same as that in the modern sense of the term, and it is impossible for one at that time to acknowledge the system of resource allocation in the market economy; the phenomenon of secularisation in the Chinese tradition is essentially identified with the prior attainment or ‘destiny’ of the members of society, rather than with their self-initiated endeavours. In all these ways, there is a limit to the real world of human life that people in the traditional society can aspire to. Traditional Chinese secularisation is still an act of prohibiting the free choice of the members of society, with a certain degree of asceticism. However, along with the advancement of China’s modernisation process, especially since the reform and opening up, the phenomenon of secularisation has become increasingly prominent, and at the same time, China’s traditional secularisation has begun to be upgraded and transformed into the modern sense of the term. In today’s China, freedom, equality, and independence have become basic concepts universally shared by all members of society; the pursuit of legitimate interests by members of society has become legitimate and ‘natural’; and self-causal efforts have become a behavioural orientation universally shared by the public.

Secularisation is a fundamental feature of modern society and, at the same time, a necessary condition for the smooth progress of modernisation. From a purposive perspective, secularisation in the modern sense has an extremely important ‘orienting’ significance for the construction of modernisation. The basic purpose of modernisation is not for the sake of ‘things’ but for the sake of ‘human’, and for the continuous improvement of their living conditions and quality of life. Furthermore, in a sense, under the conditions of modern society and the market economy, secularisation is a concrete embodiment of the human-centred concept and the corresponding concept of sharing the fruits of social development, and secularisation includes the improvement of humans’ livelihood and the construction of a universal social security system. Therefore, only

by solving the problem of secularisation and allowing the phenomenon of secularisation to develop normally, modernisation can eliminate the possibility of ‘alienation’ of human beings at an important level and effectively prevent the emergence of the phenomenon of excessive disparity between the rich and the poor, so that all members of the society can benefit from modernisation. In this way, it will be possible to fundamentally solve such a big issue as the basic ‘orientation’ of modernisation. In addition, from the perspective of motivation, secularisation can also provide inexhaustible impetus for modernisation. Secularisation is a major issue of direct and daily interest to the people, and it is the basic issue to which people attach most importance. Therefore, only when a society pays attention to the issue of secularisation can it bind the immediate interests of every member of the society closely to his or her own efforts. In this way, the vitality and creativity of every member of society can be fully stimulated, thus providing an inexhaustible impetus for the continuous progress of modernisation. Furthermore, from the perspective of a specific economic pull, secularisation can substantially increase domestic consumption. The direct pulling force of the economy consists of three aspects, namely, the pulling force of investment, the pulling force of foreign trade, and the pulling force of domestic consumption. For the economic pull of a mega-community of nations like China, domestic consumption is most important. Attaching importance to secularisation means attaching importance to people’s daily consumption life, to investment in daily consumption life, and to the continuous upgrading of daily consumption life. If so, it will certainly be conducive to the continuous expansion of domestic consumption, which in turn will directly promote economic growth.

If secularisation is an extremely important and indispensable foundation for the modernisation of any country, it is of even greater significance for the modernisation of China. This is not only because secularisation is a unique ‘historical gene’ rooted in Chinese society, which is relatively easy to be activated, but also because in the former planned economy, people’s daily life had not been improved for a long time, and the people couldn’t even mention material interests. As a result, the phenomenon of secularisation had once been in a state of ‘interruption’, and the problem of poverty had once seriously plagued Chinese society. It became the strong desire of the Chinese people at that time to get rid of poverty and live a good life. The complex circumstances led to a stronger expectation of secularisation. As Xi Jinping said, ‘our people love life and look

forward to better education, more stable jobs, more satisfying incomes, more reliable social security, higher levels of medical and health services, more comfortable living conditions and a more beautiful environment. They expect their children to grow up, work and live better' (Gao & Yan, 2012). An important reason why China's modernisation has been able to make great achievements since the reform and opening up is due to the strong force of secularisation driven by a confluence of historical and practical factors. 'China's widespread and strong secularisation has had a huge boosting effect on modernisation: it has helped the effective formation of a large number of non-public economic entrepreneurs, private firms, and self-employed people; it has directly contributed to the growing domestic consumption; it has effectively contributed to the large-scale and substantial upgrading of the national cultural quality as well as the human resources and capital; and it has contributed to the sustained maintenance of the social security situation' (Wu, 2020).

6.1.1.1 Possibility of secularisation going astray at the present stage in China

While seeing that secularisation has an indispensable and significant positive effect on modernisation, it should also be noted that the phenomenon of secularisation, if it goes astray and becomes one-sided or excessive, will negatively affect China's modernisation. In the case of China's secularisation, there is indeed a possibility that it may go astray. The reason is simple. At the present stage of China's development, at least three possible factors could lead to secularisation going astray. The first is the relative lack of rules that characterises the period of social transition, which can easily cause the development of secularisation to turn into some kind of instinctive impulse due to the lack of necessary constraints. Secondly, the Chinese people, who have experienced an extreme lack of material wealth in the planned economy era, have an intense feeling of poverty. Objectively speaking, this kind of situation is prone to giving rise to people's eagerness to pursue wealth and high expectations of wealth enhancement. Thirdly, there are a lot of elements in China's historical secularisation phenomena that do not match the attributes of the modernisation era, which can easily lead to the deformation of some historical secularisation phenomena in modern society. All these make the current stage of China's secularisation likely to go astray.

We cannot underestimate the enormous impact of the phenomenon of secularisation on the process of modernisation. From the perspective of

reach, secularisation affects every member of society. From the perspective of impact, secularisation is an issue that affects the immediate interests of every member of society. Therefore, once the phenomenon of secularisation develops soundly, it will have a great positive boosting effect on modernisation, enabling it to advance healthily and sustainably. On the contrary, once the phenomenon of secularisation has gone astray, or even gone too far or deviated seriously, it will have a huge and even increasingly ‘multiplying’ negative effect on the construction of modernisation, causing it to distort and go out of shape or come to a standstill. Obviously, for us, an important task is to ensure the healthy development of the phenomenon of secularisation, to prevent it from going astray, and to ensure that the modernisation construction advances in a healthy and sustainable manner.

6.2 MAIN MANIFESTATIONS OF EXCESSIVE SECULARISATION IN CHINA AT THE PRESENT STAGE

At the present stage in China, along with the advancement of modern society and the process of market economy, secularisation has developed considerably and has had a tremendous positive impact on modernisation. At the same time, it must be noted that, due to a variety of historical and practical factors, some problems of excessive secularisation have arisen in China. These excessive secularisation problems have had a certain misleading effect on the basic purpose of modernisation, the comprehensiveness of people’s needs, and their behaviour of rationalisation. Broadly speaking, these excessive secularisation problems are mainly manifested in the following aspects:

6.2.1 *Varying degrees of profit-seeking behavioural orientation*

Under the conditions of modernisation and the market economy, a society must first of all resolve the basic purpose of ‘for whom’. Undoubtedly, the basic purpose of modernisation is for people. Specifically, for ‘people’, i.e., members of society, under modernisation and market economy conditions, there are two main maxims for their interests: to share the fruits of social development and to have sufficient space for free development. Modernisation is based on the concept of social justice, allowing every member of society to share the fruits of social development and providing every member of society with sufficient space for free

development. Moreover, ‘the advancement of the interests of the higher-positioned classes must not be made contingent upon the impairment of the interests of the lower-positioned classes; on the contrary, the advancement of the interests of the higher classes should be accompanied by a consequent improvement in the position of the lower classes’ (Wu, 2019). In this way, it will lead to greater social cohesion and integration, as well as vitality and creativity for development.

However, at the early stages of the market economy, most countries and regions had, to varying degrees, a profit-oriented phenomenon. It cannot be denied that the market economy is a historical progress. It has effectively destroyed the hierarchy and personal dependence of traditional society, enabling members of society to achieve a certain degree of freedom and equality under the conditions of capital, and greatly liberating the productive forces. However, it should also be noted that in the early stage of primitive capital accumulation in the market economy, capital was a scarce resource owned by a few, and at the same time lacked the necessary institutionalised constraints, coupled with the fact that the social security system had not yet been established. Under such circumstances, the supremacy of capital is bound to become a certain kind of social orientation to a greater or lesser extent. Further, the phenomenon of capital supremacy is bound to give rise to the emergence of profit-oriented phenomena to varying degrees, resulting in the emergence of a situation in which one part of society encroaches on and deprives another part of society of its reasonable interests to enhance its own interests. Many unscrupulous entrepreneurs often do whatever it takes to usurp the reasonable interests of other members of society to achieve the goal of maximising their own high profits. As Karl Marx points out, ‘But capital has one single life impulse, the tendency to create value and surplus-value, to make its constant factor, the means of production, absorb the greatest possible amount of surplus labour. Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the labourer works, is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has purchased of him. If the labourer consumes his disposable time for himself, he robs the capitalist’ (Marx & Engels, 1887, p. 163). At the time, even many children were being squeezed by unscrupulous business owners, and in 1900 in the U.S., ‘at least 1.7 million children under sixteen years of age were employed in factories and fields, more than twice the number of thirty years before. 10% of all girls aged ten to fifteen, and 20% of all

boys, held jobs' (Brinkley, 2009, p. 514). The list of such specific examples is endless. These unscrupulous entrepreneurs were not only directly harming the legitimate interests of the workers, but also the legitimate interests of the public. As typified by a popular book in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, *The Slaughterhouse*, which describes the extreme deception that unscrupulous entrepreneurs in the food industry use to reap high profits: 'They had always been accustomed to eat a great deal of smoked sausage, and how could they know that what they bought in America was not the same—that its color was made by chemicals, and its smoky flavor by more chemicals, and that it was full of "potato flour" besides?' 'Of all the miracles of chemistry which they performed, giving to any sort of meat, fresh or salted, whole or chopped, any color and any flavor and any odor they chose' (Sinclair, 2013, pp. 101, 117).

China in its transition period has also witnessed a relatively pronounced profit-oriented phenomenon. Some scholars have pointed out that historically, 'the intense acquisitiveness of the Chinese has undoubtedly been highly developed for a long time. This drive and the unscrupulous competitiveness toward sib outsiders were incomparably strong among the Chinese' (Weber, 1951, p. 63). This view, though somewhat absolutist, should be admitted to contain a certain element of reasonableness. This historical gene of China has been activated again at a particular time. At the same time, at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in China, the market economy system was in its infancy, the planned economy system tended to disintegrate, and people's consciousness of pursuing economic interests began to form initially, but on a large scale in general. This is a kind of historical progress. At the same time, it should also be noted that people's pursuit of economic benefits has gone too far. The combination of historical genes and people's eager pursuit of economic benefits in the early stage of the market economy has had a wide and far-reaching impact on Chinese society as a whole. 'People tend to attribute the problem of development to the speed of economic development, and then to the high speed of economic development, i.e., the high growth rate of GDP, as the yardstick for measuring the success of development. It is simply assumed that economic growth is the natural driving force of social progress, and that as long as the economy improves, progress in other areas will naturally follow. In other words, in order to change the face of the whole society as soon as possible, it is necessary to pursue a high rate of economic growth' (Wu, 2008). Under this influence,

in a sense, society as a whole seems to be suffering from a kind of ‘economic hunger’. ‘Economic hunger’ not only affects specific individuals but even some public institutions. For example, satisfying the interests of the members of the unit through ‘income generation’ became an important task for a large number of public schools, public hospitals, and public institutions at that time. At the same time, society as a whole had not established a complete system of the rule of law. Therefore, people’s economic behaviour lacked effective constraints. Under such circumstances, on the one hand, compared with the era of planned economy, the vitality of Chinese people to create economic wealth was activated and released as never before, and the economic development at that time thus gained a huge impetus; on the other hand, it was inevitable that the whole society attached too much importance to economic benefits and relatively neglected the issue of social justice. As a result, profit-oriented phenomena were fostered to a certain extent and degree. At that time, China’s profit-oriented phenomenon, although it was far from as serious as the United States in the early twentieth century, was very obvious compared to the past Chinese society. According to a survey, when asked about ‘the main “lack of morality” of modern people’, the respondents believed that the most lacking in society is ‘sincerity’, with a proportion as high as 50.37%, ranking first. 57.29% of the respondents either strongly agreed or basically agreed with the judgement that ‘people who are honest and trustworthy nowadays tend to lose out’ (Wu et al., 2010). In 2010, an online survey conducted by huanqiu.com showed that ‘following the survey, 80% of netizens believe that China is the “most money-worshipping country” of the international community, and about 60% of netizens admit in a recent survey that they are gold-worshippers. In addition, according to other surveys, 95% of respondents believe that Chinese people “worship money” seriously’ (Chen, 2010). According to another survey, in response to the question, ‘How do you think the moral level of Chinese society has changed compared to ten years ago’, ‘an overwhelming 86% of netizens believe that compared to ten years ago, the moral level of Chinese society today “has regressed a great deal”, while 9.5% think “there has been some regression”’ (Wu, 2011). One obvious phenomenon is that China’s public welfare has a large gap compared with many countries and regions. Some figures show that the total donations accepted by charitable organisations in China in 2014 amounted to 104.2 billion yuan, accounting for only 0.16% of the total GDP; individual donations accounted for only about 11.1% (Lan, 2015). In contrast, and

in complete contrast to the situation in China, in 2008, the total national charitable giving in the United States was 307.65 billion in US dollars, or 2.2% of GDP. Of the national donations, 75% came from individuals and 7% from legacies, for a combined total of 82% (Rao, 2011).

It cannot be denied that, in the early days of China's reform and opening up, social injustice was exacerbated by behaviour such as profit-seeking. At that time, enterprises operated by unscrupulous businessmen lacked basic safety protection conditions, resulting in frequent mining accidents. In 2002, there were 1.07 million production safety accidents in China, with nearly 140,000 deaths (Liu, 2016). The mortality rate of 100 million yuan of GDP in China is ten times that of advanced countries; the mortality rate of 100,000 people in industrial, mining, and commercial accidents is more than twice that of advanced countries; and the mortality rate of one million tons of coal is more than five times that of the world average (Xinhua Net, 2008). The phenomenon of 'wage arrears', which is characteristic of China, has occurred from time to time. According to a survey, among migrant workers in 2004, 6.1% were owed wages in arrears, with an average of 1,806 yuan in arrears per capita (Research Group of the Research Office of the State Council, 2006). According to a sample survey conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in 2004, 10% of rural migrant workers were owed wages in arrears for seven months (Research Group of the Research Office of the State Council, 2006). The phenomenon of occupational diseases has become more visible. According to a survey by the Ministry of Health, in 2002 there were 14,821 cases of various types of occupational diseases, an increase of 12.1% over 2001, and the successive growth rates of occupational diseases from 2000 to 2002 exceeded 10%. 60% of township and village enterprises are not equipped with any protective facilities; 90% of township and village enterprises have dusty workplaces that exceed national hygiene standards; 30% of township and village enterprise workers are exposed to dust, toxins, etc.; and the detection rate of occupational patients and suspected occupational patients is as high as 15.8% (Li, 2005). Profit-oriented phenomenon has exacerbated the gap between the rich and the poor and other social injustices, and a large number of hardworking labourers have not been rewarded with the income they deserve. Some scholars believe that in 2008, of the more than nine trillion yuan of hidden income nationwide, the 'off-the-books income' portion amounted to 5.4 trillion yuan, with the top 10% of households taking 63% of the wealth (Zhang, 2010). The sixth

national survey of the status of the workforce in 2007 shows that 43.9% of workers were ‘not very satisfied’ or ‘dissatisfied’ with their wage level, and 22.5% were ‘not very satisfied’ or ‘very dissatisfied’ with their current social status. Only 30.5% of urban workers and 32.7% of rural migrant workers were satisfied with their social status (Ru et al., 2008).

Profit-oriented phenomenon has also seriously undermined the public interest. For some time, there have been numerous cases of fraud and deception, which have posed a serious threat to public food safety. For example, the ‘Sanlu Milk Powder Incident’ has affected the health of tens of thousands of infants and young children in China. This phenomenon has not completely disappeared even now. During the 2020 epidemic, Changsha police found that ‘Mr. Zhang, who is engaged in the wholesale business of health care products in Changsha’s Gaoqiao Pharmaceutical Circulation Park, purchased 1.06 million fake masks at one time and used his own marketing network to quickly spread these fake masks to online and offline small supermarkets, pharmacies, microblogging and other end-channels, and in just one week, 1.06 million fake masks were sold out’ (Ma, 2020). The profit-oriented phenomenon also directly aggravates the deterioration of the environmental ecology and the public health problems in general. In 2004, by using the pollution loss method, the total environmental pollution degradation cost was 511.82 billion yuan, which accounted for 3.05% of the local combined GDP. Among them, the environmental pollution degradation cost due to air pollution was 219.80 billion yuan, the environmental pollution degradation cost due to water pollution was 286.28 billion yuan, the environmental pollution degradation cost due to land encroachment by solid waste dumps was 650 million yuan, and the economic loss due to pollution accidents was 5.09 billion yuan (State Environmental Protection Administration & National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). In 2004, the national air pollution caused a death toll of nearly 358,000, about 640,000 respiratory and circulatory system patients were hospitalised and about 256,000 new cases of chronic bronchitis were reported (Guo, 2006).

In addition, there is another phenomenon worth noting, which is that the traditional Chinese ‘differential structure’ factor has a certain objective effect of fuelling profit-oriented phenomenon. Traditional society of China is a ‘differential structure’ society. In such a society, ‘the network of social relations linked by kinship is individual, with each network having a “self” as its centre, and the centre of each network is different’. ‘This is not individualism, but egoism’ (Fei, 1999). In this case, a preference

for private morality over public morality is bound to emerge. Although this phenomenon has a positive effect on the gathering of social capital for some private enterprises under the conditions of a particular era, in the long run, this phenomenon of treating different people differently in terms of closeness and distance based on human feelings is not conducive to the generation and development of the spirit of contract, which is essential for a market economy, and the spirit of the rule of law, which is essential for the whole society. Objectively speaking, this phenomenon, which emphasises private morality over public morality, provides some kind of basis and guarantee for the existence and spread of the profit-oriented phenomenon.

In recent years, although China has achieved significant results in the governance of profit-oriented phenomenon, it has yet to be fundamentally eradicated, and the social injustice aggravated by this phenomenon still needs to be highly valued. A survey shows that in 2018, ‘in terms of the perception of the overall fairness of society, more than 40% of survey respondents believe that society is unfair, while 34.2% believe that society is fair. This indicates that survey respondents’ overall perception of social fairness is skewed towards unfairness’ (Wang, 2019).

6.2.2 *Overemphasis on the ‘materialistic’ dimension of needs*

Under the conditions of modernisation and the market economy, after society has fulfilled the basic purpose of ‘human-centred’, i.e., ‘for the sake of human’, it further needs to resolve the specific issue of ‘what kind of human needs’ should be met. In this regard, modernisation is about addressing humans’ ever-growing needs for a better life and satisfying their free and well-rounded development. In this regard, if the ‘multifaceted’ needs of humans are ignored and their needs are limited to the material level, it will inevitably give rise to the problem of one-sided secularisation, which places excessive importance on materialistic needs.

In the planned economy before the reform and opening up, China’s material production and living standards were extremely low. China was economically disadvantaged at that time. Even so, in a sense, society at that time viewed and prohibited the pursuit of materialistic life as an unhealthy ‘bourgeois decadent way of life’. This situation is obviously not in line with the general common sense of human society. Marx and Engels point out that ‘man must be in a position to live in order to be able to “make history”’. But life involves before everything else eating and

drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself' (Marx & Engels, 1985, p. 48).

After the reform and opening up of China, the above situation has changed considerably. With the enormous development of productive forces and the great abundance of material wealth, and with the deepening of the human-centred philosophy, the improvement of humans' basic standard of living has become an important matter to society as a whole. At the same time, however, it should be noted that humans' pursuit of material life has gone too far. In a rapidly changing socio-economic environment and in the face of the demonstration effect of the high living standards of some affluent groups at home and abroad, the phenomenon that a large number of society members suffering from 'poverty phobia' over-attach themselves to the materialistic level, i.e., the 'materialistic' level of needs, will inevitably appear. A survey conducted in Jiangsu Province shows that 52.5% of the respondents answer the question of 'factors that "cause physical and mental disharmony"' as 'excessive desires and the inability to be content with what one has' (Hu, 2015). This is also illustrated by survey data from other foreign research organisations. 'In late 2013, France's Ipsos Research released a survey titled "Global Materialism, Money Management and Family Attitudes", in which Chinese people's enthusiasm for material things topped the list among 20 countries. 71% of Chinese said they would measure success based on how much stuff they own, while globally only 34% agreed' (People CN, 2015). While we are not yet certain of the scientific validity and accuracy of this survey, it should be acknowledged that it is still revealing, or at least a valuable reminder.

For the general behavioural orientation of the society members, the multiple levels of needs, including material and spiritual pursuits, are an organic whole and are each indispensable. According to Maslow, human needs are composed of five levels of content from low to high, namely, physiological needs, safety needs, love needs, respect needs, and self-actualisation needs. 'The pursuit and gratification of the higher needs leads to greater, stronger, and truer individualism' (Maslow, 1970, p. 100). There is no doubt that Maslow's statement that human needs comprise a number of dimensions is unquestionable, though we cannot say that the five needs summarised by Maslow are necessarily well-rounded. For example, Maslow's failure to include the needs of culture, social interaction and communication, and the differentiated interests of

society members is clearly a shortcoming. The important thing is that there exists a relationship of interpenetration, mutual constraint, and mutual promotion between the fulfilment of the various-level needs of the society members; there is not such thing as the fulfilment of the needs of a certain level as the absolutely active pole and the satisfaction of the needs of the other levels as the absolutely passive pole, so that the advancement of the former can definitely determine the possibility of the latter's advancement. This is especially true when a society has reached a certain level of development. A lag in the fulfilment of needs at any level will undoubtedly lead to a lag in the fulfilment of needs at all levels. Development necessarily implies the mutual reinforcement and co-development of the needs of society members at all levels. For example, without the fulfilment of material needs, people's pursuit of cultural needs will inevitably not go very far, and vice versa.

The excessive pursuit of materialistic needs will inevitably produce an obvious one-sided orientated effect on modernisation. In this view, the unilateral pursuit or even one-sided strong pursuit of human 'materialistic' needs will definitely weaken the pursuit of needs at other levels to varying degrees, negate the humanistic significance of modernisation, and lead modernisation into a one-sided 'anthropomorphic animal' situation, thus causing a series of negative social effects, such as social construction and cultural construction lagging behind economic construction. Even economic construction itself will, to varying degrees, show some kind of one-sided existence and one-sided promotion.

6.2.3 *Excessive high consumption*

Since modernisation is for the sake of human and to satisfy their multifaceted needs, the further specific issue is how to make the necessary consumption expenditure to satisfy these multifaceted needs appropriately and reasonably. The importance of this issue lies in the fact that once people's multifaceted needs are properly and reasonably satisfied, the basic purpose of modernisation will gradually be realised, the vitality and creativity of the society members will be continuously stimulated, and the endogenous dynamics of modernisation will continue to be formed. On the contrary, if a society makes excessive high consumption expenditures in terms of people's needs, it will not only give rise to an adverse social morality, damage the hardworking spirit of its members, and

diminish their vitality and creativity, but will also overspend the productive funds on which future modernisation is based, delaying the upgrading of public services and people's livelihood, and ultimately undermining the endogenous dynamics of modernisation.

One of the basic features of secularisation is the rationalisation of people's behaviour. From the perspective of rationalisation, expenditure on consumer needs should be scientifically and reasonably planned. In this regard, firstly, on the basis of the principle of 'necessity', people's various needs should be 'necessarily' satisfied, or else the enhancement of material wealth will lose its proper meaning; secondly, on the basis of the principle of respective capabilities, people's needs should be 'appropriately' satisfied; thirdly, the necessary reserves and accumulations should be made to withstand possible future socio-economic risks and to ensure the sustainability of modernisation. The government should not be so intent on depleting all the fruits of development for the sake of humans' current consumption needs, or even overdrawing future wealth to support these high consumption needs.

At the present stage in China, there are many different kinds of excessive high consumption phenomena. Among them, there are two types of excessive high consumption that should be given special attention.

The first is personal ostentatious consumption. In traditional society of China, people attach great importance to the dignity of the family and the individual, i.e., the face. 'If a person does something that meets the expectations of his family, not only does he feel honoured, but his family will also be proud of him and will therefore share the honour and resources with him' (Zhai, 2004). In the market economy, this traditional face-saving problem still exists to varying degrees in China. In the eyes of many people, whether they can be looked up to by others depends to a large extent on the possession of their own wealth and the corresponding external manifestation that can easily attract people's attention - how high the consumption situation is. In other words, wealth has not only been a problem of material life, but also a matter of 'face'. Furthermore, with the advancement of modernisation and the market economy, some people who have escaped the poverty of the past and become rich first are eager to prove or show others that they have risen to a new, affluent 'social status'. These historical and practical factors have given rise to the apparent phenomenon of personal ostentatious consumption in Chinese society today. This phenomenon is especially conspicuous in Chinese society compared to many other countries and regions.

After more than 40 years of reform and opening up, China is still a developing country, despite radical changes. China now has a 'per capita annual disposable income of RMB 30,000, but there are 600 million people with low and middle incomes and below, and their average monthly income is only about RMB 1,000' (People's Daily, 2020). In stark contrast, the Chinese top the world in terms of the percentage of luxury goods purchased. *McKinsey's 2019 China Luxury Consumption Report* shows that in 2018, Chinese bought one-third of the world's luxury goods. 'Chinese spending on luxury goods within and outside the country has reached 770 billion yuan (CNY), accounting for one-third of the total global luxury consumption, with an average luxury-consuming household spending of nearly 80,000 yuan on luxury goods. By 2025, total luxury consumption is expected to increase to 1.2 trillion yuan. More than half of the growth in the global luxury market between 2012 and 2018 came from China. Looking ahead, this proportion is expected to reach 65% by 2025' (www.dyhiw.com, 2019). Separate data shows that 'compared to Bain & Company's November forecast for 2025, the weight of luxury goods purchased by Chinese consumers as a percentage of global luxury consumption will increase further, from 35% in 2019 to 50%' (Drizzie, 2020). In addition, from a generational perspective, there are clear differences in consumption profiles between different age groups in China. Relatively older cohorts who grew up in the planned economy era when material consumer goods were scarce are relatively thrifty in their consumption spending. In contrast, young people who grew up in an era when material goods became plentiful have relatively much higher consumption expenditures. One survey shows that 'the "post-80s" group, in which there are generational differences in materialistic values, generally has a higher level of materialistic values than the "post-70s" group' (Li, 2014). In line with this, the relatively young generation group has undoubtedly become the main force behind high consumption in Chinese society. 'Survey data released by relevant organisations shows that Chinese luxury consumers are on average 15 years younger than European luxury consumers and 25 years younger than those in the US' (Zheng, 2012). This situation, in the short term, is difficult to change fundamentally.

The second is the large-scale ostentatious consumption of some local governments. From a global perspective, it should be said that this is a unique phenomenon in China's society at this stage. For a not-so-short period of time, due to the one-sidedness of the goal orientation, the error in the positioning of their own duties, the lack of scientific, democratic,

and transparent major decision-making process in public policies, the lack of necessary supervision and constraints, the lack of comprehensive assessment indexes for local officials, and the over-reliance on land finance and some local officials' attempts to realise the transfer of benefits by means of large-scale projects, etc., some local governments in China have carried out unprecedented image projects, luxury projects, and the construction of luxury cities for many reasons. The large scale and the luxurious style of these projects are rare in the world. Since most of these constructions belong to expenditure projects that lack economic benefits, are far away from the basic needs of people's livelihoods, and have already exceeded the scope of public services at the same time, they can be regarded as, to a certain extent, showy consumption items and super showy consumption items with a huge investment that is beyond their capacity.

It can be said that luxury construction has become something with a very wide impact in recent years. Image projects, luxury projects, and luxury city construction can no longer be said to be an isolated phenomenon in a few areas. China has built no less than a dozen world-class stadiums, no less than dozens of world-class concert halls and theatres, and no less than dozens of world-class conference centres. An economically not-so-rich city spends 1 billion yuan to build a 70,000-square-metre Grand Theatre, with 20 kilogrammes of gold paving the curtain to show off its splendour, and a total of nearly 10,000 tonnes of steel was used. A survey of more than 40 theatres in a southern province conducted by the Jiusan Society finds that all of these theatres are built in the form of high consumption of energy and materials., and that investment in the construction of cultural facilities has been rapidly escalating (Wang, 2011). A deeply impoverished county in Shaanxi, which has just been removed from the hat of poverty, has built a new 'luxury' middle school with a total investment of 710 million yuan, while the county's 2019 local financial revenue was less than 200 million yuan (Fan, 2020). In all kinds of luxury construction, the hugest investment is in the luxury city construction. Data from the relevant departments of the State Council shows that, according to incomplete statistics, as of May 2016, there were more than 3,500 new cities and new districts above the county level across the country, with a planned population of 3.4 billion (Wu et al., 2016). If some counties and districts setting up their own 'development zones' of various names are added, the scale will be even more enormous. Such a huge scale of urban construction projects, with the existing financial capacity of the Chinese local government, cannot

be finished even in a hundred years of time. Even developed countries in Europe and the United States, for a longer period of time, are also simply unable to complete the construction of such a large-scale project with their existing financial resources. Guizhou, a poverty-stricken county that has just been lifted out of poverty with a financial income of less than 1 billion yuan, has actually raised huge debts to carry out luxurious urban construction. The result is that **‘the debt is as huge as more than 40 billion yuan, with most of the financing costs exceeding 10%, of which** ‘just the “magic building” Dushan County Shuisi Building has cost 200 million yuan’ (China Economic Net, 2020). An autonomous region of only a hundred thousand people in the west of China, an underdeveloped city, in 2002, in order to change the city’s image by expanding investment, has successively built large squares in the south, north, and west of the city. The total area is more than 900,000 square metres, with a per capita square area of six square metres (Li, 2006). Similar instances are not isolated in China. Such luxury-type projects and luxury city construction not only delay the normal development of the local economy and the improvement of people’s livelihoods, but also put the local government in serious debt, leaving huge financial pitfalls. At the end of July 2020, the national debt balance of local governments alone was a staggering 24,161.6 billion yuan (Ministry of Finance of the People’s Republic of China, 2020).

In sharp contrast to the large-scale ostentatious consumption of some local governments, the proportion of public investment in basic livelihoods in our country is still low, and it still belongs to the back rank of countries in the world. Table 6.1 shows that, compared with the world average and many other countries: firstly, the proportion of public investment in social security by the central government is too small, not to mention that the gap with developed countries is too large. There is also a clear gap even compared with many developing countries. It is an indisputable fact that its overall level is at the bottom of the list of all countries and regions. Secondly, the investment in public education is comparatively sufficient and is the closest indicator to the investment in people’s livelihoods in various countries. But it should be noted that a large portion of China’s public education spending goes to non-compulsory education, i.e., higher education, while the state’s public investment in education, which should have been spent on compulsory education, has been drastically reduced, which is a clear reversal of public investment priorities.

This is because compulsory education is a statutory duty of the government and should be heavily invested in, while higher education is not a statutory duty of the government and should not be heavily invested in. Thirdly, the central government's investment in public health care lags far behind not only developed countries such as the United States but also developing countries such as Russia.

It is also important to note that, firstly, government revenues also include a large amount of extra-budgetary revenues as well as revenues from land, which are mainly used for urban construction that is not strictly for people's livelihood expenditures. Secondly, some local governments have raised large amounts of debt, and not only have these funds not been used to improve people's livelihoods, but the pressure to repay the principal and interest later is enormous. This undoubtedly means that, to a certain extent, the funds for improving people's livelihoods in the future have been overdrawn. Thirdly, there is a serious 'two-track system' in China's current social security and public health policies. For example, a

Table 6.1 Comparison of the status of public investment in basic livelihood in different countries (Unit: %)

<i>Country and region</i>	<i>Share of central government expenditure on public social security</i>	<i>Public expenditure on education as a share of GDP</i>	<i>Share of central government expenditure on public health care</i>
Global		4.7	
High-income country		5.1	
Middle-income countries		4.4	
China	11.5 (2016 Central and local expenditures combined)	4.22 (2016)	7.25 (2016 Central and local expenditures combined)
United States of America	32.13	5.2	24.31
Georgia	38.67	3.8	7.88
India		3.9	1.71
South Africa	13.88	6	2.69

Source: China's data is based on the *2016 Central Government's General Public Budget Expenditure* of the Ministry of Finance of People's Republic of China and *2016 Statistical Bulletin on the Implementation of National Education Expenditure* of the Ministry of Education of People's Republic of China; data for other countries is taken from the *International Statistical Yearbook 2015*

disproportionate amount of public healthcare investment is spent in urban areas rather than in rural areas; and in urban areas, a disproportionate amount of public healthcare investment is spent on a small group of people, rather than on the broader population of urban dwellers and ‘rural migrant workers’. In short, if the above factors are taken into account, the proportion of public investment in basic livelihoods in China is actually much lower.

Obviously, some of the local governments’ large-scale showy consumption phenomena mean that there are certain problems in our country’s public investment priorities. If the phenomenon of reversing the priorities of public inputs is not strictly corrected, then improving people’s livelihoods and upgrading the quality of public services will only become empty words.

6.2.4 *Excessive short-term behaviour*

As stated earlier, one of the implications of secularisation is rationalisation. From this perspective, it requires that people should establish relatively stable and sustainable institutional arrangements and corresponding behavioural patterns in line with long-term goals and based on realities. From this perspective, if excessive high-consumption behaviour undermines the balance between long-term and immediate expenditures, excessive short-term behaviour undermines the coherence between individual behaviour, between the behaviour of groups, and between the long term and immediate development goals of society as a whole.

The problem lies in the fact that, during the period of rapid social transformation in China, a new system of rules in keeping with modern society and the market economy has not yet been systematically established, and a large number of society members will inevitably be left with a kind of rulelessness, which is likely to lead to people acting in their own ways. Importantly, ‘those who engage in long-term behaviour bear only the costs of long-term behaviour and do not receive the benefits of such behaviour. The result can only be a generalisation of short-term behaviour’ (Sun, 1994). This is compounded by the fact that the ‘new three mountains’ of education, health care, and housing have become insurmountable problems for a large proportion of society members and that a large number of society members are eager to improve their economic situation. All of this makes a relatively large proportion of society members restless, and social anxiety pervades the whole society,

thus making it inevitable that Chinese society will experience a lot of excessive short-term behaviour that only take into account the individual but not the whole, and that only take into account the immediate interests but not the long-term ones.

At the present stage in China, excessive short-term behaviour is manifested in various aspects, of which at least the following aspects are more prominent and should cause our great concern:

The first is excessive short-term behaviour in educational development.

Since the reform and opening up, education in China has achieved leapfrog development, providing essential human resources support for the development of modernisation. This is an acknowledged fact. At the same time, we should also see that there is still much short-term behaviour in the development of education in China, which constrains the further development of education. Education, especially basic education, should be a public good as far as its main body is concerned, rather than a profit-oriented industry. However, for some time after the mid-nineties in the twentieth century, due to an overly broad understanding of the market economy, a harmful orientation towards industrialisation has emerged in the field of education. Education at all levels and of all types tends to place too much emphasis on economic benefits, treating education as a profit-making business. Unreasonable fees for education abound, both in basic education and in higher education. For example, in the mid-nineties in the twentieth century, because of an over-emphasis on the need for 'education to enter the main battlefield of economic construction', the attributes of education were understood in a rather one-sided and utilitarian manner in an attempt to make education a profit-making industry. This resulted in an obvious weakening of the public attributes of education, particularly of compulsory education itself.

In the following period, although the practice of placing too much emphasis on the economic benefits of education has been corrected to a large extent after reflection, there has been excessive short-term behaviour on the other hand, that is to say, relatively emphasising the external expansion of the educational system and relatively ignoring its internal upgrading. The names of some colleges and universities have gotten more and more grandiose. They have been changed from 'so-and-so teacher's college' to 'so-and-so college' and then to 'so-and-so university'. However, the actual faculty and academic strength of the university are still not much different from what they used to be, without obvious improvement. Many colleges and universities are expanding their

campuses at an extraordinary rate. 'According to incomplete statistics, there are more than 200 new campuses of colleges and universities under construction and already built in China' (Dong, 2017). The number of specialised, undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students has become increasingly large, already ranking first in the world in terms of size. The amount of public expenditure invested in education by the state is getting bigger and bigger, and raising debts to run schools is no longer an isolated phenomenon. According to the People's Bank of China, by the end of 2005, the balance of loans to colleges and universities has reached 200.1 billion yuan (Li, 2007). By the end of 2013, 24 provincial colleges and universities in Gansu Province were in debt of 5.507 billion yuan (Li et al., 2016). It cannot be denied that China's education has been expanding at an alarming rate in terms of 'outreach'. However, in sharp contrast to this, the academic strength of higher education institutions, the dedication and professionalism of teachers, the awareness and quality of learning of students, and other 'inner' aspects of education have made very limited progress.

The second is excessive short-term behaviour in the development of science and technology.

Unlike traditional society, science and technology have become increasingly important to the extent that they have become the 'primary productive force' in modern societies. 'The essential difference between modern and traditional society lies in the greater control which modern man has over his natural and social environment. This control, in turn, is based on the expansion of scientific and technological knowledge' (Huntington, 1996, p. 42). In a sense, the competitiveness of a country depends more and more on the strength and standard of its science and technology. It cannot be denied that since the reform and opening up, China's science and technology have undergone radical changes and made great progress, which has been recognised by the world. Whether in terms of the number of scientific and technological personnel or the amount of national investment in science and technology, China has been at the forefront of the world. However, it cannot be denied that the development of science and technology in China has been marked by the obvious phenomenon of short-termism.

One of the obvious phenomena of short-term behaviour in the development of science and technology is the relative emphasis on technological applications and the relative neglect of basic science. It should be noted that science is the foundation of technology. Only on the basis of

a high degree of scientific development can a highly developed standard of technology be formed. ‘Fundamentally, science should be the backbone, and technology is the branches and leaves developed on it. Going into technology only without science may end up getting nothing’. ‘We can’t say what specific use a certain equation or law has, but the whole scientific system is self-consistent, and basic research is like a brick needed to build a house. Although you don’t know what use a certain brick has, if you pull that brick out, the house will collapse’ (Wang, 2019). An important reason why the United Kingdom and the United States were able to lead the three industrial revolutions in human history is that each of these two countries occupied the leading position of scientific research at that time, which then drove the innovation of advanced technology. As an entrepreneur points out, ‘the role of the lighthouse is obvious: any little discovery and technological invention in the natural sciences by human society will gradually spread to the world, causing changes there’. ‘There is the example of a mathematical paper by Professor Arikan in Turkey, which ten years later turns into a blazing fire of 5G’. ‘Another example is the advancement of molecular science in modern chemistry, where human synthetic materials may be accomplished by molecular editing by computers, which is also a sea change of technology’ (Shanghai Jiao Tong University, 2020).

A number of factors, both historical and practical, have contributed to the current lack of emphasis on basic science in China. Historically, in the traditional society of China, on the whole, people have attached relative importance to the induction and summary of experience, in contrast to the relative lack of importance attached to basic science. ‘The Chinese value practicality and so often overemphasise the difficulties of the practical process, sometimes real difficulties, sometimes merely imagined, so that the principles behind these practical problems are neglected’ (Jiang, 2012). This situation has not been fully rectified until now. From the perspective of real society, the over-emphasis on material life and economic benefits and the pervasive phenomenon of social anxiety have led to the keen pursuit of scientific and technological achievements with quick results and short cycles. As a result, our basic sciences have not received the attention they deserve.

In China, basic science has not received the relative attention it deserves compared to technology. This short-term behaviour is mainly manifested in the fact that ‘international investment in basic scientific research generally accounts for about 15% of R&D investment and can

reach a maximum of 20%, while our country has long stayed at about 5%, with a total of less than 100 billion yuan per year. As far as we can see, insufficient investment in basic science has led to the following problems: firstly, insufficient original results; secondly, insufficient support for technological development; and thirdly, insufficient talents with original ideas and mastery of original innovation methods' (Wang, 2018).

Another apparent behaviour of short-term behaviour in the development of science and technology is fickleness of the academic style. This is also manifested in the relative emphasis on the expansion of extension and is relatively disregard for the development of substance. One of the prominent manifestations of this is the existence of more serious academic style problems in the field of scientific and technological research, with the obvious phenomenon of speculation, and even some plagiarism, data falsification, and other serious internal problems. Some data shows that 'at present, the number of SCI papers published in China has ranked second in the world, almost reaching that of the United States in the first place'. At the same time, the number of retracted manuscripts in China is the highest in the world. 'As of July, 2020, there have been 23,425 SCI retractions worldwide, of which China has 10,303, much higher than the second place, the United States, which has 4,125 retractions. China has accounted for 44% of the world's retracted papers, "topping the list"' (China Economist, 2020). In 2017, Springer Nature issued a retraction statement 'announcing the withdrawal of 107 papers published in the journal *Tumour Biology* (formerly part of Springer), and the lead authors of these 107 medical papers were all from China' (Sina Judicial Network, 2017).

The third is the lure of a possible future high welfare trap.

At the beginning of the reform and opening up, China's material wealth base was very weak, and the major task of the times was to break through the deeply entrenched system of the planned economy and the concept of egalitarianism. Under these specific historical conditions, China lacked the material foundation to improve people's livelihoods on a large scale. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, especially in the past decade, with the development of modern productive forces and the emergence of various social contradictions and changes in the conditions of the times, China has begun to regard 'a better life' of the people as a major task of the times and has been improving people's livelihood on a large scale, which has generally brought the basic standard of people's livelihood up to a great level. This is great historical

progress. However, it should be noted that while we focus on improving people's livelihoods, we should also take precautions against overkill, i.e., to prevent us from falling into the trap of high welfare. The formation of such a sense of precaution is not without purpose. This is because 'egalitarianism has existed for a long period of time in China and has a relatively deep mass base'. 'The more complicated situation today is that the urgent demand for improving people's livelihoods is sometimes intertwined with certain underlying egalitarian factors. In addition, with the large and substantial improvement in people's living standards since the reform and opening up, people's expectations of their future lives are also generally rising' (Wu, 2019). If the people's generally high expectations are not realised, this will lead to widespread disappointment, resulting in a widespread sense of frustration. Moreover, the higher the expectations, the stronger the sense of frustration will be. If this frustration is linked to a lack of basic livelihood or basic development opportunities for a segment of society, there is a high risk that the frustration of that segment of society will be transformed into a sense of despair. Frustrated and despairing members of society may then attribute this to the government or other relevant groups, thereby triggering or exacerbating social conflicts.

There is a law of improving people's livelihoods, namely, that the demand for people's livelihoods is rigid in nature, and therefore improvements to people's livelihoods should be focused on an additive approach rather than a subtractive one. This law indicates that if the improvement of people's livelihoods exceeds their actual financial capacity and is over-invested, it will go beyond the reasonable boundary and fall into the high welfare trap. Looking around the world, no country's fiscal capacity can support an ever-increasing welfare policy. In other words, it is impossible for any country to sustain an ever-increasing welfare policy. In these countries, once a high welfare policy has been established, any weakening of its level will definitely trigger a lot of discontent among the people towards the government.

Excessive welfare policies are bound to generate a large number of negative social effects. 'In France, the monthly benefit received by the unemployed in the first year is equivalent to 70 to 80% of the last month's salary before unemployment, and the gap between the income of the unemployed and that of working employees is often so small that a considerable number of people prefer to stay at home rather than look for new employment opportunities. According to surveys, about 30% of

the unemployed would rather receive state benefits than look for a new job' (Le, 2012). Brazil's 'government pensions account for about 7% of GDP, while infrastructure spending accounts for only 1.5%'. 'In terms of pensions, for example, compared to the average wage, Brazilians' pensions are equivalent to 97% of their pre-retirement after-tax wage income, well above the 69% average suggested by the OECD' (Yan, 2015). Similar high welfare policies are not only unjust, affecting the work incentives of those in the workforce, the newly invested capital in the economies of these countries, and the sustainable development of these countries, but also, in the event of downward fluctuations in the economies of these countries, the financial capacity of these countries will diminish. As a result, the high welfare policies will inevitably be adjusted downwards or will not be honoured, which will, to varying degrees, lead to the dissatisfaction of many members of society, resulting in various social contradictions and conflicts. This is one of the major reasons why many countries in Western Europe and Latin America have developed various social conflicts that are difficult to resolve. These are typical lessons to be learnt from the past.

6.3 NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF EXCESSIVE SECULARISATION AND ITS GOVERNANCE

The problem of excessive secularisation may seem to be a 'superficial' or 'external' phenomenon, but in fact it is a 'deep' problem that has a bearing on the smooth progress of China's modernisation.

6.3.1 *Negative effects of the problem of excessive secularisation*

The phenomenon of excessive secularisation is bound to cause a series of negative social effects.

Firstly, it induces a deviation from the modernisation orientation.

Undoubtedly, the basic purpose of modernisation is human-centred and 'for the sake of human'. The basic idea of human-centredness belongs to the realm of value rationality. Secularisation, on the other hand, is a matter of both value rationality and instrumental rationality. The behavioural orientation of secularisation that emphasises the importance of human reality clearly belongs to value rationality, while the behavioural orientation of pragmatism and rationality emphasised in secularisation

belongs to instrumental rationality. The problem of excessive secularisation seems to be also for the sake of human in a certain sense, and there seems to be nothing wrong with that. However, the problem lies in the fact that under the same name of 'for the sake of human', it is possible to produce a variety of one-sided behaviours that essentially deviate from the basic concept of human-centredness, and may be detached from the scope of value rationality, and thus deviate from the basic purpose of 'for the sake of human' in real society. This is the case of excessive secularisation. Excessive secularisation is either based on the unilateral 'materialistic' desires of human beings, or on a minority of human beings, merely on the consideration of the interests of the present. As a result, the diversified needs of people, the interests of the majority, or the fact that modernisation is a major issue that can be linked in the short, medium, and long term are neglected. In the long run, excessive secularisation will lead to the aberrations of unilateral progress in modernisation, that is to say, either for the sake of one aspect of human needs at the expense of others, or for the sake of the minority at the expense of the majority, or for the sake of the current generation at the expense of future generations. These aberrations, taken as a whole, prevent modernisation from achieving its basic purpose of being truly and comprehensively 'human-centred' and are even counterproductive.

Secondly, it weakens the sustainability of modernisation.

For the modernisation of a country, the real impetus comes not from outside but from the endogenous dynamics of the community itself. In other words, a country's modernisation should look to the 'inside' of the community rather than the 'outside' for motivation. From the 'inside' of the community, there are many factors affecting the generation of endogenous dynamics for modernisation. Among them, there are at least two key factors, namely, the hardworking spirit of the community members and their ability to continuously improve and keep abreast of the times in modernisation. Excessive secularisation will, to varying degrees, create a kind of 'parasitism' in some members of society by overemphasising their enjoyment of life, even a life of high consumption, which in turn will significantly weaken their spirit of hard work. In addition, excessive short-term behaviour will inevitably give rise to a sense of 'trickery' and behaviour among some members of society. Once the 'tricky' behaviour becomes a social culture and habit, what happens further is that no attention is paid to the long-term construction of basic modernisation, such as the development of basic industries and basic sciences, resulting

in a lack of a long-term basis and up-to-date support for modernisation. As a result, the sustainability of modernisation will be weakened.

Thirdly, it undermines the safe operation of society.

Profit-oriented behaviour will inevitably aggravate the orientation of capital supremacy, making it impossible to form a mutually beneficial situation between members of society with relatively high socio-economic positions and those with relatively low socio-economic positions, and thus exacerbating social injustice such as the wide gap between the rich and the poor. 'As a result, the increasingly intense contradiction and conflict between the majority group and the minority group is inevitable, for which society is bound to pay a huge cost, and social security conditions that the smooth progress of modernisation construction depends on will be damaged to varying degrees. This was the most important reason for the emergence of fierce social confrontation in Britain and France in the nineteenth century' (Wu, 2019b). Furthermore, various kinds of excessive short-term behaviour will directly undermine the social rule system, leaving a large number of social members without rules to follow, acting in their own way, and prone to all kinds of resistance and conflicts among themselves. In addition, the growing willingness of the population to provide high levels of welfare is likely to exacerbate tensions between hardworking members of society and those who do not work for a living, as well as between a segment of the population with rising expectations and the government responsible for the provision of public service goods. In all cases, the harmonisation of the interests of society as a whole may be impaired to varying degrees, resulting in a large number of social conflicts that may affect the operation of social security.

6.3.2 *Effective elimination of the evils of excessive secularisation*

How can the phenomenon of secularisation be used to its fullest potential in terms of its positive effects on China's modernisation, while at the same time being able to effectively eliminate or curb its possible drawbacks? In this regard, many things need to be done. Among them, the key ones include at least three of the following:

The first is to provide the population with increasing freedom of choice for their survival and development.

The pursuit of secularisation is the most basic interest of the people, especially the Chinese people. The extent to which the people's quest for secularisation can be realised depends to a large degree on how much

room for free development the society can provide for its people. Engels pointed out that ‘every member of it can develop and use all his capabilities and powers in complete freedom’ (Engels, 1847). If a society can provide the people with the necessary and ever-increasing room for free choice for their survival and development, it means that the people of that society can have more choices of lifestyles, more opportunities for self-employment, and more choices of differentiated styles of survival and development under their own wishes. Such a situation is not only in line with the basic concept of human-centredness, but can also stimulate the vitality and creativity of the whole society to the maximum extent because it can comply with the most basic wishes of the people. Therefore, the people’s enthusiasm for creativity as well as their creative wisdom can be released to the full, thus effectively promoting the construction of modernisation. Specifically, in today’s Chinese society, in order to achieve this, at least two things must be done well. One is to eliminate, through fair and effective institutional arrangements and policy formulation, the longstanding unequal treatment of different identities among members of society, such as unequal social security policies, public health care policies, and housing provident fund policies, etc. among different groups with a ‘two-track system’; and to eliminate the unequal treatment of different forms of enterprise ownership, such as different tax policies and different loan policies between enterprises of different forms of ownership in some regions; and to eliminate all kinds of deep-rooted barriers of interest, such as the phenomenon of ‘privileges’ in employment, schooling, promotion, and so on. Another thing is to organically tie the self-causal efforts of society members to the improvement of their own living conditions. The government certainly bears an unshirkable responsibility for the improvement of people’s livelihoods, but this does not mean that the people totally rely on the government to achieve their basic survival, that is, the goal of secularisation. It should also be noted that if the people try to achieve their secularisation goals by doing everything with the help of the government, then, firstly, the government simply cannot have the financial capacity, nor can it have enough energy and expertise to accomplish this goal, and secondly, it will inevitably lead to an unrealistically rapid rise in public expectations. Given this, a basic orientation should be established that the secularisation goals of the population, other than the basic line of survival, must be achieved mainly through the space of free development and self-initiated efforts.

The second is to focus on the holistic promotion of modernisation.

Holistic promotion is an important law of modernisation. Under the conditions of modern society and the market economy, the components of the social community are becoming increasingly diversified and specialised, and the structure of society as a whole is becoming increasingly complex. What is important is that ‘in the construction of modernisation, there is bound to be a “linkage” or “hysteresis” effect between the various domains of the social organism as well as between the various constituent elements, whereby “rise together” and “fall together” occur’ (Wu, 2019a). Since secularisation itself is something that focuses on the material interests, practical requirements, and consumption needs of the members of society, secularisation, if it goes astray, will lead to the deviation of the whole modernisation construction. In order to prevent secularisation from going astray and to ensure that modernisation is promoted as a whole, it is necessary to do several things: firstly, attention should be paid to the coordinated development of modernisation in all fields, and unilateral promotion of modernisation in a certain field should be prevented, such as neglecting social and cultural construction for the sake of economic development, and so on. A special mention should be made of the need to focus on the coordinated development of people’s material and cultural lives. At the macro level, the basic needs of a society include both material and cultural needs. These two categories are indispensable, and together they support the normal operation and healthy development of a society; moreover, with the advancement of modernisation and the gradual establishment of a social security system, the satisfaction of people’s basic material standard of living is becoming less and less of a problem, and thus, in a certain sense, the degree of people’s demand for material life is in a state of marginal diminution, and that for cultural life is in a state of marginal increment. Secularisation, on the other hand, although it also includes some cultural aspects such as rationality, mainly focuses on the material aspects of life. As mentioned earlier, at the present stage of China’s development, due to a combination of factors such as the deep-rootedness of traditional secularisation and the formation of the phenomenon of secularisation in the modern sense, the phenomenon of secularisation is very prominent in China, and it has a very important and positive role to play in promoting China’s modernisation. However, it should be noted that the widespread and strong secularisation in China has resulted in a certain relative lack of attention to cultural life, which has led to a lack of parallel development of culture, art, education, and science in China. In the long run, this shortcoming

will, to varying degrees, lead to the emergence of the phenomenon of deformity in modernisation, and seriously impede the healthy development of China's modernisation. Given this, China should invest more heavily in and promote basic education, basic science, culture, the arts, and other areas that affect all aspects of cultural life. In this regard, it should select key areas in education, basic science, culture, and the arts, make key investments, cultivate effective growth points, and promote the development of cultural life by leading the way. In addition, the country and society as a whole should strongly advocate the importance of culture, and form a social orientation that attaches importance to basic education, basic science, culture, and the arts, so that practitioners in these fields will have a corresponding sense of dignity. Only in this way can we make up for the shortcomings in the development of cultural life in China's modernisation and provide effective support and guarantee for the upgrading of material life in modernisation. Secondly, we should pay attention to the coordination between long-term and short-term goals. Neither should we compromise long-term goals for the sake of short-term goals, nor should we sacrifice people's immediate realistic interests under the pretext of the importance of long-term interests; we should not only do a lot of hard work in the basic construction for the sake of long-term goals, such as the construction of basic industries and basic science, but also seize the opportunity to do a good job in the specific projects with realistic benefits. Thirdly, we should pay attention to the coordination between internal upgrading and the external expansion of modernisation. Not only does economic development have the problem of coordinating and promoting the development of extension and connotation, quantity, and quality, but the same problem exists in and among various fields such as society and culture. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on the organic combination of 'superficial' expansion and 'internal' upgrading in the modernisation of all fields.

The third is to focus on the rule of law.

The establishment of the rule of law is an indispensable and effective way of curbing the possible drawbacks of secularisation. One of the main reasons why the current phenomenon of secularisation in China has led to the emergence of such drawbacks as the prevalence of short-term behaviour and the overstepping of the boundaries of private morality is that the rule of law is not in place. Law in the modern sense is a legal system of people's behaviour based on good laws (laws based on modern values such as freedom, equality, and justice). The legal system defines the

boundaries of people's behaviour, i.e., what a society allows people to do and what it does not allow them to do, what it encourages, and what it prohibits. The short-term behaviour and associated speculation that may be generated by secularisation may objectively produce some 'immediate' economic benefits, but in general, their negative impact cannot be underestimated. The crux of short-term behaviour is that it costs society too little, or even nothing at all, at any given time, and that, on the contrary, the benefits to the perpetrators of short-term behaviour are relatively large at a certain point in time. This is precisely why short-term behaviour is so prevalent to varying degrees. Another drawback of the current secularisation in China is that private morality oversteps its boundaries, sometimes even overriding public morality, which makes public morality inconspicuous, and this has led, to varying degrees, to market economy irregularities, corruption, lagging development of public welfare, and many other negative effects. Obviously, only through the construction of the rule of law can Chinese society effectively eliminate or at least inhibit the possible disadvantages of secularisation. Through the construction of the rule of law, Chinese society can make people's pursuit of secularisation goals follow the rules, so that they can pursue and realise secularisation goals in accordance with their own wishes by behaving in accordance with the rules and regulations of the law. In this way, the potential advantages of widespread and intense secularisation in China can become a reality, and the positive effects on the advancement of modernisation can be maximised.

The key to building the rule of law is to establish a legal system centred on good laws to regulate the behaviour of every member of society. Xi Jinping points out the need to 'make the socialist rule of law a good law and good governance' (People's Daily, 2016). The essence of the rule of law is that 'the constitutional concept that all state power belongs to the people should be upheld'. 'No organisation or individual shall have privileges beyond the Constitution and laws. All violations of the Constitution and the law must be prosecuted' (Xi, 2012). Only through the construction of the rule of law system can we prevent a certain group or certain people from unilaterally deciding on institutional arrangements and policy making, which can not only prevent the arbitrary expansion of capital but also prevent the transgressive activities of public power and 'lock the power into the cage of the system' (People's Daily, 2013). At the same time, this can also effectively prevent the rise of egalitarianism as well as populism. In this way, it is possible to ensure that the interests

of all groups in society are coordinated, so that each group can make the best use of its abilities and get what it deserves, thus ensuring the healthy progress of modernisation and the safe operation of society.

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POSTSCRIPT

There is no doubt that it is a miracle in the history of mankind that China's traditional civilisation has been able to stretch for thousands of years. Why? Today, China, the world's only ancient civilisation of the same origin that has lasted for thousands of years, is carrying out modernisation with vigour, and it has to be said that this is another miracle in the history of mankind. Why? Similar, almost inconceivable phenomena and problems will undoubtedly arouse increasing interest and attention. It is believed that with the increasing degree of modernisation and international influence, this interest and attention will gradually go beyond the national borders and become a hot topic in foreign academic circles.

China's path to modernisation is obviously different from that of Europe and the United States. I am afraid that there is not much objection to this. The question is how to explain the difference between Chinese modernisation and European and American modernisation. Max Weber used the Protestant ethic to explain one (but not all) reason for the formation and development of European modernisation. It should be admitted that this approach, while persuasive and influential in explaining the origins of modernisation in Europe, cannot be used to explain the path of modernisation in China, because Chinese society has never been a religious society.

Unlike the religious society of the European Middle Ages, the traditional Chinese society was a secular society. China's tradition of secularisation is deeply rooted. In a sense, it is precisely on the basis of

this secularised tradition that traditional Chinese society has ‘rationality’ in the sense of ‘human’ normal life, a steady stream of endogenous motivation, and outstanding tenacity. Looking back at the history of China’s traditional society for thousands of years, we can find that, unlike many ancient civilisations, China did not expand outward to plunder the resources and wealth of other countries as the foundation of the country. Our forefathers took secularisation, i.e., daily life on earth, as the basic point of origin and basic behavioural orientation of life and production, and sought for energy from within themselves, making arduous and painstaking efforts, while at the same time being very pragmatic and rational, and continuing to survive and gradually expanding through the evolutionary logic of ‘endogenous and exogenous’. As a result, the traditional Chinese civilisation became the most advanced form of civilisation under the conditions of the agricultural economy era, and China became the only ancient civilisation of the same origin in the world that has continued to this day. In a sense, it is precisely on the basis of the tradition of secularisation that China has formed such a unique phenomenon in human history: ‘Although the Zhou State is old, its life is renewed’, which is endogenous and externalised, and continues to this day.

However, in the past few thousand years, China’s traditional civilisation has not been able to give rise to modernisation naturally. No matter how much people deplore and put forward all kinds of possible historical hypotheses, it must be admitted that this is an immutable historical fact. It was precisely because modernisation was not born that China, based on agrarian civilisation, inevitably showed a situation of weakness, arrogance, ignorance, and confusion when faced with the unprecedented and all-round ‘barbaric’ aggression of powerful European countries backed by modern large-scale industrial civilisation. The Qing Dynasty at that time could not see the irreversible situation of ‘great changes unseen in a thousand years’ in human history and was unable to carry out effective resistance, thus losing everything and reducing China to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, with no unity or organisation. As a result, China, which always had an instinctive sense of civilisational superiority for thousands of years, experienced more than 100 years of humiliation.

The situation changed dramatically when China had gone through ups and downs, struggled hard, made great sacrifices, and gained national independence, especially since the reform and opening up and the start of real modernisation: China’s modernisation has been recognised as a great, albeit preliminary, success. This success was not achieved by relying

to a large extent on foreign expansion, colonisation, and plunder, as the modern countries of Europe and the United States. Rather, as in the past, it is the result of pragmatic and rational design and extremely hard work by a Chinese population that loves the reality of a good life and puts it into action by looking within itself for development momentum. In the beginning, hundreds of millions of migrant workers left their hometowns and worked for more than 10 hours a day to earn a meagre income, and China could only produce and export hundreds of millions of shirts in exchange for a Boeing plane. The extremely arduous, pragmatic, and rational work of the Chinese people for the take-off of modernisation can be seen here.

Obviously, one of the important reasons why China's modernisation has been able to take-off preliminarily since the reform and opening up is that China has sought energy from within itself, so that the valuable elements of China's secularisation tradition (the historical gene of secularisation) have merged with the modern phenomenon of secularisation in the modernisation process in China, and has given rise to a more universal, powerful, and sustainable endogenous impetus for modernisation than that of other countries, which has had a great boosting effect on the construction of China's modernisation. It is in this sense that, without secularisation, it is impossible to explain why China's modernisation has been so successful in the first place.

The importance of studying the correlation between secularisation and China's modernisation lies in the fact that we can not only explain the reasons why China's modernisation is different from European modernisation from a very important angle but also grasp the key point of China's modernisation from an extremely important aspect, that is, the key to why China's modernisation since the reform and opening up has been able to achieve great achievements recognised by the whole world lies in the real generation of the endogenous driving force of China's modernisation; the future prospects of China's modernisation are also determined to a great extent by China's own endogenous driving force; and China's secularisation is closely related to the endogenous driving force of China's modernisation, and there is a definite positive correlation between the two. In addition, the research on this topic can be further expanded, and on this basis, some important laws of the evolution and development of human social communities can be summarised.

Undoubtedly, there is a need for academic circles to conduct in-depth research on the topic of secularisation and China's modernisation.

A few years ago, the author became very interested in the question of the correlation between secularisation and China's modernisation and devoted a chapter to this issue in his book *On China's Modernisation*. With the passage of time, the author felt more and more that this issue is of great value and needs to be discussed with more time, more energy, and more space. Therefore, the author spent several years of hard work to make some preliminary discussions on this issue and wrote this book, *Secularisation and China's Modernisation*, presented to everyone.

When writing this book, I read a lot of literature and considered many issues that I had not thought about before. After this effort, I feel that my thinking and vision have been greatly expanded, and I have stepped up a great step, compared to the past, with much harvest. This has paved the way for designing and realising my own future plans, which was unexpected.

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