

# A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

*Zheng Chuxuan*

---

---

**Viewpoint 1:** The Western tradition of Chinese political ideas is moral-despotic while that of Western political ideas is liberal-democratic.

Chinese political ideas and Western political ideas actually deal with the same subject matter such as human nature, the relationship between the individual and society, the relationship between democracy and despotism, the relationship between the rule of law and the rule of man, the relationship between politics and morality and so on, but, by reason of their different formative historical back-grounds and social conditions, they come to different conclusions on these subjects and thus form two major distinct traditions.

The major tradition of Chinese political ideas is moral-despotic while that of Western political ideas is liberal-democratic;

---

Professor and Vice President for Academic Affairs Guang Dong Institute of Public Administration. People's Republic of China.

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

they actually constitute the two major political cultures which strongly influence the general framework of thought of Chinese and Western people in their respective domains. This is felt by people in their daily life experiences. Generally speaking, for instance, Chinese people are more obedient, more fearful of and more respectful for officials; they have the psychology of “blue sky” (a just judge) and are easier to be managed. This is the result of long time influence by the Chinese moral-despotic political culture. Western people are generally more accustomed to act independently, have strong sense of democracy and legality, this is a reflection of the Western liberal-democratic political culture.

Furthermore, When people generally talk about Chinese political ideas, they readily describe them as conservative, despotic or centralist. Conservatism generally has the meaning of keeping present order, no demand of improvement, it also has the meaning of moderation, caring of various relationships and then undoubtedly contains the elements of morality. On the other side, when people talk, in general, about western political ideas, they readily describe them as individualistic and liberal or democratic.

Moreover, many Chinese thinkers and politicians actually place their despotic theories on the base of morality while many Western thinkers and politicians place their theories of democracy

on the base of liberty, although the logical relationships between the bases and conclusions are not absolutely reasonable. For instance, Confucius tried to explain that the people should absolutely obey the prince by his theory of benevolence, love, righteousness, etiquette and so on; Jiang Jie-Shi just started from his theory of loyalty, piety (being filial), benevolence, trustworthiness and peace and then demanded that all Chinese people must be absolutely loyal and filial to their country, so as to set up his theory of despotism. John Milton, an English thinker, held; it is precisely that everybody is born free that makes the people become the sole owner of the public power, and makes the people's resistance to a tyrant reasonable. According to Rousseau, a French theorist, it is precisely because that everyone gives up his "natural born freedom" through the social contract that the sovereignty of the community always resides in the people as a collective person.

**Viewpoint 2:** In practice, many people consider the relationship between the Chinese moral-despotic tradition and the Western liberal-democratic tradition as one's negation of another. This, first of all, is not supported by the collisions of the two traditions which occurred in history, because the collisions of the two traditions showed that the two traditions have their strong points and shortcomings respectively.

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

In practice, scholars or politicians who favor the Chinese moral-despotic tradition usually emphasize its moral elements and use them to criticize Western liberal-democratic ideas. For example, according to Zhang Zhi-Dong, a famous Pro-Westerner, the three cardinal guides and five virtues are the sacred truths which cannot be violated. In his own words, “the three cardinal guides are the most perfect and sacred doctrines delivered from the very beginning of the Chinese society, they are the origins of ethics and politics”; “the five constant virtues produce everything that is valuable, prevailing over thousands of years, and their validity cannot be suspected”. So long as China exists, the three cardinal guides and five constant virtues cannot be changed. On the other hand, Zhang Zhi-Dong said, “once popular sovereignty is propagated, rogues and hooligans will rejoice and commit crimes, sabotaging all discipline and etiquette, throwing the whole country into great chaos ... [so], never advocate democracy, never emphasize popular sovereignty, and never establish parliament”.

On the other side, there is no lack of scholars and politicians who use Western liberal-democratic ideas to attack the despotic ideas of the Chinese moral-despotic tradition. For instance, according to Tan Si-Tong, a famous bourgeois reformer, all China’s weakness and failures originated from the feudal-imperialist despotism which places too much emphasis on the prince’s

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

power while neglecting the subject's rights; and one of the main reasons why western countries were rich and powerful was that democracy, based on Rousseau's theory of popular sovereignty, prevailed there. So Tang Si-Tong suggested that "the despotism of the prince must be replaced by democracy, changing inequality into equality". The Chinese bourgeois revolutionaries represented by Sun Yat-Sen started from Lock's "natural born rights" and Rousseau's "social contract", and criticized Confucianism as despotism, holding that if Confucianism could not be erased from people's mind, there could be no success for the revolution. In short, these people, at the academic or political level, oppose one tradition to another, considering the relationship between the two as one's negation of another. This, first of all, is not supported by the four major collisions of the two traditions which occurred in Chinese history.

The first major collision of the two traditions occurred between 1895-1898 when the Japanese government forced the Chinese Qing Dynasty to sign the unequal Sino-Japanese Treaty of 1895; it took the form of a conflict between the Chinese bourgeois reformers headed by Kan You-Wei, Liang Qi-Chao and Tan Si-Tong and the "obstinates" and the "Pro-Westerners" headed by the prince's mother Chi Xi and Li Hong-Zhang who were in power at that time. Like Tan Si-Tong, the bourgeois reformers held that

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

all China's weakness and failures originated from the feudal-imperialist despotism which placed too much emphasis on the prince's power while neglecting the subjects' rights; and one of the main reasons why Western countries were rich and powerful was that democracy, based on Rousseau's theory of popular sovereignty, prevailed there. So they severely criticized Confucianism and proposed "to replace despotism with democracy" and to set up parliamentary system and constitutional monarchy in China. The "obstinates" and "Pro-Westerners" held that the three cardinal guides and five constant virtues are the sacred truths which last forever, they are "the most perfect and sacred doctrines delivered from the very beginning of the Chinese society, they are the origin of ethics and politics", so they can never be violated; but spreading democracy and popular sovereignty would necessarily cause disasters and tuebulences in China, so "never advocate democracy, never emphasize popular sovereignty, and never establish parliament".

The second collision of the two traditions took place from the beginning of the 20th. century to 1916, when it was reflected in the struggle between the Chinese bourgeois revolutionaries deaded by Sun Yat-Sen, Zou Rong and the feudal "obstinates" headed by Yuan Shi-Kai and Kang You-Wei (now converted to Confucianism). The bourgeois revolutionaries proposed to replace the Chinese traditional despotism with bourgeois democratic theory, to

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

replace the despotic government of Qing Dynasty with a bourgeois democratic republic. The feudal obstinates argued that a democratic republic could only produce turbulences while constitutional monarchy was the only government that could bring order out of chaos. So 'in China, the effective way to stop turbulence is to destroy democracy and establish a prince; the effective way to rule is to destroy democracy and to develop a constitutional monarchy". In, short according to their views, only Confucianism and despotism could save China from going into great chaos.

The third major collision of the two traditions happened from the May Fourth (1919) period to 1949, when it was reflected in the insistence of some Chinese bourgeois scholars and the Chinese democratic parties on the Western political ideas and systems and the criticisms of those ideas and systems by various feudal scholars and feudal bureaucrats and warlords on one hand, and by the Chinese new democrats on the other. The Chinese bourgeois scholars and the Chinese democratic parties were headed by Hu shi, Dai Ji-Tao and the others; most of them were university professors, upper-Class intellectuals and writers. They actually continued the bourgeois revolutionary line, trying to spread Western political ideas and to rebuild the bourgeois democratic republic in China. The Chinese feudal scholars, feudal bureaucrats and warlords were headed by Liu Shi-Pei, Gu Hong-Ming and Jiang Jie-Shi

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

respectively. They held, on one hand, that Western political ideas “consider dissoluteness as freedom and appropriation as obligation”, “they are no better than floods and wild beasts to human beings”. These people, on the other hand, held that the “Confucianism teaches people the only possible way to be noble and unsullied, to be abstruseness (profundity), comity and happiness; it will necessarily prevail all over the world one day”. The new democrats included Li Da-Zhao, Chen Du-Xiu, Mao Tze-Tung, Zhou En-Lai and the others. According to these new democrats, Confucianism had been impeding China’s development; Western liberalism and democratism had also been proved inapplicable to the country. They, on the other hand, recommended the new democratism of the proletariat and the popular masses’ despotism, trying to build a people’s democratic republic in China.

The fourth major collision of the two traditions happened from 1978 to 1989, when it was reflected in the conflict between the Chinese socialists’ insistence of the “four basic principles” (Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the leadership of the CCP, the socialist road and the dictatorship of the proletariat) and the insistence of a few elite intellectuals headed by Yan Jia-Qi, Fang Li-Zhi and Liu Xial-Po on Western ideas of freedom and democracy. The Chinese socialists headed by Deng Xiao-Ping, Chen Yun and Peng Chong. Their insistence on the guidance of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the

leadership of the CCP, the socialist road and the dictatorship of the proletariat actually constitutes the politics of one thought, one road, one party and one class, essentially coinciding with the despotic or centralist tradition of Chinese political ideas. Therefore, the few elite intellectuals criticized the “four basic principles as the despotic politics of feudalism”, and they proposed to build up a democratic system with multi-party competition, and a separation of powers or a balance of powers in China.

Although the collisions in different times took different forms and have different characteristics, but the results of collisions were always the same: the Western liberal-democratic tradition was overcome by the Chinese moral-despotic tradition. This makes people think deeply.

The bourgeois reformers' movement of Constitutional Reform and Modernization culminated in the “New Government”, but the “New Government” only lasted 103 days. Tan Si-Tong, Yang Rui and others were executed; Kang You-Wei, Liang Qi Chao and many others were forced into exile; and Kang You-Wei later converted to Confucianism, becoming feudal obstinate.

Sun Yet-Sen even lead the bourgeois revolutionaries to overthrow the Qing Dynasty and build up a bourgeois democratic

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

republic according to the Western models. But the republic had a very short life. In its 15 months, it was usurped by Yuan Shi-Kan and was gradually changed by him into a monarchy. After Yuan Shi-Kai died and the monarchy was over, in China, a division and wars between warlords occurred, this caused more suffering for the Chinese people. So Sun Yat-Sen suspected the applicability of the Western liberal-democratic ideas and systems to China and gradually realized his change to uniting with Russia, the Communists and to supporting workers and peasants.

In the third major collision of the two traditions, the bourgeois scholars and the democratic parties were not successful in their efforts to retrieve the failure of the Chinese bourgeois revolution. Their efforts merely reverberated among a few intellectuals and were becoming less and less influential in the development of the Chinese society as time went on. The feudal scholars, feudal bureaucrats and warlords adhered to Confucianism and used it in openly defending the despotic rule which was self-evidently going against the historical trend of democracy and was hated by the Chinese people. Naturally, they could not get support from the majority of the population and could not succeed against the rising Chinese new democrats. The new democrats adapted themselves to the historical trend of democracy and advocated people's democracy and a people's state, differentiating themselves from the Western

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

tradition of democracy while criticizing the despotism of the feudal scholars and the feudal bureaucrats and warlords. The coincidence of the theory of the people's democracy and a people's state with the despotic tradition of Chinese political ideas actually constituted a theoretical victory because the theory also coincided with the national psychology which desired unity and centralism. This is one reason why most of the Chinese people could rally around the Chinese new democrats and formed a powerful people's army, eventually overthrowing the rule of the feudal bureaucrats or warlords and leading to the birth of the people's republic of China in 1949.

In the fourth major collision, the Chinese socialists headed by Deng Xiao-Ping insisted on the "four basic principles", emphasized unity first and stability first, they were always superior to the elite intellectuals in the collision. The elite intellectuals insisted on the Western liberal-democracy. Although their efforts reverberated in some young intellectual, yet they could not get support from the majority of the people, so they failed at last. Afterwards in October 1989, Jiang Zhe-Ming, the new general secretary of the CCP, held that Confucianism was China's precious cultural legacy; the cream of it would be inherited and developed.

Looking back at the whole process of collisions, although the Chinese tradition cannot avoid being impinged upon by the

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

Western tradition, yet it shows a great vitality in its resistance to this intrusion, still keeping its dominating position in political ideas over the period from the 1890s until the present day in China. On the other hand, the Western tradition displays a great tenacity in its tendency to intrude into and replace the Chinese tradition, albeit it was not always the victor in these collisions. All these suggest that both the Western and Chinese traditions have their own rationality. Without this intrinsic rationality, these would be no such vitality of the Chinese tradition and such tenacity of the Western tradition in various collisions. All these also show that, the two traditions have their own shortcomings, without shortcomings, why could not the Chinese tradition avoid being impinged upon by the Western tradition? and why could not the Western tradition escape being failure of its intrusion? Kang You-Wei changed from a bourgeois reformer of recommending western liberal-democracy to a Confucian, this is not, as some people say, because the Chinese tradition is too backward and too conservative which strangled his revolutionary spirit, but because practice made him realize that Confucianism was still useful to China. Sun Yat-Sen changed from believing Western liberal-democratic ideas and systems to uniting with Russia, the Communists and supporting workers and peasants, it is because that the teachings of blood made him realize that the Western liberal-democracy did not suit China well.

**Viewpoints 3:** The Western liberal-democratic tradition departs from the individual, is identical with man's independence, freedom and initiative, and makes the society have its motive force, so as to make great contributions to the high-developed Western material civilization, but is not capable of dealing with the unrest and turbulence caused by the inflation of individual greed and degeneration of morality. The Chinese moral-despotic tradition departs from the other people and the whole, emphasizes ethical-moral value and centralism; it has certainly played a very important role in maintaining the long period of stability in China, but has become conservative as compared with the Western tradition.

On the relationship between the individual and society, the Western liberal democratic ideas attribute man to animal and maintain that man is born free, independent, selfish, and to pursue his own interests and safety limitlessly; the development of state, law and government is not on the base of "public interests" and "public morality", but is for protecting personal interests and safety. For example, according to Machiavelli, an Italian political philosopher, human nature is essentially selfish, men are born aggressive and acquisitive, they aim to keep what they have and acquire more; states and laws are formed solely to protect each individual against the aggression of other individuals. Hobbs, an English thinker, held that society, states and laws are formed not because there exists

“the general good” or “the social well-being”, they are the result of the transition from the instinct self-preservation to the rational self-preservation, so they are all based upon the intelligent calculation of personal self interests. Bentham, an English thinker, held that states and laws are essentially not the expression of the so-called “public willing” or “common interest”, they all need to be analyzed and censored in the light of the greatest happiness of pain and pleasure. These views undoubtedly allow the society to have its motive force of development, but they, in practice, encourage people to pursue personal interests and safety limitlessly, disregarding the other’s and the society’s interests and safety, so they are no good to the overall development and further perfection of the society.

Contrary to the Western liberal, individualistic views, the Chinese moral-despotic ideas prefer to explain human nature through clarifying man’s social nature and submerge man in social relations, maintaining that people should always put other people and society’s interests in the first place, never pursuing personal interests. For instance, Confucius demanded that a person with lofty ideas or a gentleman should not separated himself from benevolence at any time or in any circumstances, but should try his best to “comply with benevolence when he is hungry for food, when he is in hurry, even when he is homeless and miserable”; “There are no people with lofty ideas who damage benevolence in order to save their lives but

there are people with lofty ideas who kill themselves in order to comply with benevolence". Mencius considered virtue and the desire for gain as completely opposite things. He used virtue to mark a man of noble character while using the desire for gain to mark a mean person: "the difference between Shun [a prince given high praise in legendary ancient time of China and the humble is nothing else but the difference between virtue and covetousness". These views are undoubtedly good for maintaining the harmony, unity and stability of the society, but they also suggest, in practice, to inhibit the development of people's initiative and activity, impeding the development of society.

Democracy and despotism is the central concern of political thought. On this subject, Western liberal-democratic ideas, as their name suggests, advocate democracy. But they usually place democracy on the base of "natural-birth rights", that is, it is precisely because people are born to have the right to pursue their own interests that they own the sovereignty of their country or nation. John Milton, an English thinker, held that it is precisely because everyone is born to have the "natural-birth rights" of self defense that the people become the sole owner of the public power of a country, a city or a town and that the right to defend public interest and to act against tyrants always resides in the people. According to Rousseau, a French thinker, it is just because everyone gives up or alienates his natural

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

rights through the contract agreed by them all that the sovereignty of the community, as the exercise of the general will, should always belong to the people as a collective being. So, if violation of the social contract and abuse of sovereignty occur, the people will reasonably withdraw or modify the power, which in fact means that the people just regain their “natural rights”. From the departure point of “natural right”, of course, one can come to democratic conclusion; but the ideas meanwhile make unverifiable reference to nature and thus can easily tend to the other extreme, even denying a reasonable degree of centralism and state power, because everyone can make use of the ideas and says: “I was born free, I was born to have the right to do everything I like”, regardless of the public order and social legislation. That is to say, democracy cannot be based on “natural right”; it should be based on another concept. This concept should be human rights. As compared with “natural rights”, human rights is certainly a concept with a social dimension and has a natural relationship with basic individual obligations. And basic obligations include not hurting other people, making contribution to the common good, obeying the laws, maintaining public order and so on, which evidently mean observing duties and are related to a reasonable degree of centralism and state power. Therefore, if democracy is based on human rights, it can prevent people from going to the extreme of liberalism or individualism and prevent society from going into anarchy.

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

Contrary to the Western liberal-democratic ideas, the Chinese moral despotic ideas undoubtedly tend to be despotic. For instance, Zhou Gong a politician of the Western Zhou Dynasty (1100-771 BC) held: Prince Jie of the Xia Dynasty (2100-1600 BC) brutalized his people, "God thus looked for another master of the people, and then ordered Cheng Tang [the first prince of the Shang Dynasty (1600-1100 BC)] to destroy the Xia Dynasty", letting Cheng Tang "replace the Xia Dynasty as the master of the people". Later when Prince Zhou of the Yin Dynasty (the late period of the Shang Dynasty) followed in Prince Jie's footsteps, "God ordered Prince Wen (the first prince of the Western Zhou Dynasty) to develop the Zhou Dynasty"; the Zhou Dynasty hence replaced the Shang Dynasty "in carrying out orders from God to rule the popular masses". Obviously, what Zhou Gong tried to demonstrate here is that every prince is appointed by God to rule the people, so the people should absolutely be loyal to the prince, without fomenting any rebellions against the prince. Confucius suggested that "the courtier serves the prince with loyalty", maintaining that the prince is born to be the master of the courtier. On the other hand, a courtier is naturally a handmaid of the prince, he must obey the prince everytime and everywhere; he may never violate the prince's will, even if the prince's will is unreasonable and commands the courtier to kill himself. This is what meant by the popular Confucian saying: "If the prince wants the courtier to die, the courtier has to die"

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

Jiang Jie-Shi and the others suggested the fascist political regime and said: "In running a country, the autocratic rule of a capable leader with superior morality is, of course, better than the so-called democracy which makes the country corrupt and degenerate,...it is really better to concentrate responsibility on the brave and sage leader than to hope that the blind and incapable masses of the people should undertake political duties.

Of course, the Chinese moral-despotic ideas also sometimes emphasize people's role in politics. For instance, Mencius said: "the people are precious, the state are less precious and the prince is least precious"; "to be the son of Heaven [the prince], one should, first of all, possess the earth and have the people who inhabit the earth, on his side". Hsun Tsu likened the people to water and the prince to a boat, and maintained that, "water can float a boat and it can also overturn the boat"; if the prince's atrocities make the "water" indignant, the prince will necessarily be overthrown. All these explanations are not based on the concept of human rights, but depart from the ruler's interest, so they are not democratic. on the other side, centralism and despotism, through the power in a few people's hands, went to their extreme.

Therefore, both the Chinese and Western ideas need to be im-proved and perfected on the base of human rights, so as to avoid going to despotism or anarchism.

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

The rule of law or the rule of man? The Western liberal-democratic ideas advocate the rule of law, maintaining that law is made on the base of reason or conscience, which mean justice and neutrality and are not affected by personal feeling or willing, so the rule of law can guarantee man's dignity and equality. For instance, according to Aristotle, and ancient Greek, the reason for the rule of law is: to seek for the form which rules take is to seek for justice: and "to seek for justice is to seek for a neutral authority; and law is a neutral authority", because law is "reason free from all passion". According to Harrington, and English thinker, people form a country or nation in order to have a best possible life; government or sovereignty should based upon reason and hence become virtuous. From the viewpoints of practice, such government and sovereignty must be the laws which are agreed by everyone and hence can prevent passion from doing eviles.

The Chinese moral-despotic ideas, because they advocate des-potism, necessarily tend to the rule of man, and always base the ideas of the rule of man upon the logical premise of inequality of mankind, maintaining that, in history, there always are some people who are very intelligent and moral, these people are ordered by the Heaven or know the development law of history, and should become the ruler of society. For instance, Mencius said: "in the long history of mankind, order and disorder always appear alternatively".

## A. Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

When society is in good order, there must be sages, like Yao, Shun and Yu, in power. When such sages disappear, society will soon fall into chaos. Tung Chun-Shu put forward the theory of the “interaction between Heaven and man” and maintained that “the son of Heaven takes orders from Heaven, and the people on earth take order from the son of Heaven.” That is to say, since the prince follows heaven and thus become the supreme being in the world, the people should always obey the rule of the prince as children obey their parents.

The rule of law is of course superior to the rule of man, because the rule of law is usually related to human dignity, equality and freedom, while the rule of man is usually related to personal will, private interests and inequality. But this does not mean that there is nothing good in the Chinese ideas of the rule of man. It is just because the Chinese moral-despotic theorists advocate the rule of man that they emphasize the rulers’ moral cultivation and behavior, and, to some extent, moralize politics, so as to make the Chinese moral ideas have more far-reaching significance for the future development of human society, because the purpose of human society suggests the unity between politics and morality (this point will be explained in more detail later).

The relationship between politics and morality is a subtle question. For most Western liberal-democratic theorists, there is

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

close relationship between politics and morality, because law contains the moral element of reason, justice and so on, or because the moral purpose of reason, justice and so on can only be realized through the guarantee of law. For instance, Helvetius, a French theorist, held that, any individual judges to be good is what he supposes to conduce to his own interests. As a result of this, a man may act so as to harm the general interest for the sake of his own interests. So morality becomes the problem of the legislator. The legislator must first spread the knowledge by which men can see how the general interest includes their own, so as to make the individual interests consonant with the general interest. The legislator must then establish laws by which virtue is rewarded and vice is punished, so as to force man to be virtuous. Therefore, "good laws are the only means of making men virtuous". Rousseau, a French theorist, held that mere likeness of kind does not make men into a society. Only a psychological or spiritual bond--the reciprocal sensibility and internal correspondence of all the parts--makes men into a society. Therefore, society becomes a corporate self which has "a general will"; "the general will always tend to the preservation and welfare of the whole and every part, and constitutes for the members of the state, in their relations to one another and to it, the rule of what is just or unjust". But for Rousseau, the spiritual bond or "the general will" are in practice very fragile, they could only play their part through legislation or by being concretized as

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

laws. Therefore, the rule of just or unjust is actually a legal provision. So, the Western liberal-democratic theorists' recognition of the close relationship between politics and law is only a formality, because if there is no law, there would no morality at all.

Different to the Western liberal-democratic ideas, the Chinese moral-despotic ideas tend to equalize politics and morality, advocating benevolent government, the rule of morality and emphasizing the rulers' moral cultivation and moral behavior, so as to moralize politics. For instance, Confucius held that engaging in politics is a process of moral affection; the relationship between the prince and the courtier is not the kind of power relationship, but is a moral relationship of etiquette, loyalty and so on. Mencius held that the best way to rule a country is "Wang Dao", that is exercising benevolence and morality. For Jiang Jie-Shi, "politics bases itself on men and means the relationship between men"; the standard of the relationship between men is "benevolence" which "is equal to humanity or human nature", so "the motive power of all politics is sincerity". "Politics (in this sense) should proceed from the fact that each individual is completely responsible for his family, the society and the country"; namely, between father and son, elder brother and younger brother, and between friends, everyone should be loyal, filial, benevolent, trustworthy and peaceful. that is to say, the way of governing lies from the inside to the outside, and from

close relationship to distant relationship; “relationship make people benevolent”; “manage the family and then govern the country”.

In general, mankind from various communities in order to have a better life, that is, the purpose of forming community is moral, but because of the material poverty and the spiritual or moral imperfection, the moral purpose of a society must be realized through the legal punishment, that is, the end and the means of society are logically unitary but contradictory in practice, in the sense that the end is a moral one while legal punishment is coercive, rather than a moral force. But this is an “unfortunate necessity”, and this is the starting point from which the Western view on the relationship between politics and morality gets its realistic significance. But as time goes on, with the development of material and spiritual civilization, the conscious and moral elements in human life should grow and increase while immoral behavior and violence will decrease in society, so as to gradually realize the unity between the society’s end and its means both logically and in fact, and to accelerate the society’s amelioration. In this sense, the Chinese moralization of politics has a more far-reaching significance for historical development, although it is less realistic than the Western perspective in the contemporary human society.

**Viewpoint 4:** Summarizing all the above, the best way to deal with the relationship between the Chinese moral-despotic and

## A Comparison between Chinese and Western Political Ideas

---

western liberal-democratic tradition is to compare the two traditions' strong points and shortcomings objectively and reasonably, seek the mutual complementarity between them and the dialectical combination of them, so as to improve the two traditions themselves and to speed up the development and perfection of human society as a whole.