

# ‘Using the Past to Serve the Present’: Comparative Perspectives on Chinese and Western Theories of the Origins of the State\*

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One of the interesting peculiarities of the formative age of Chinese intellectual tradition, the Zhanguo period (戰國, ‘Warring States,’ 453–221 BCE), is its thinkers’ preoccupation with the origin of the state. Several recent studies by Chinese and Western scholars have analyzed Zhanguo theories of the formation of political and social institutions, either in the context of the evolution of contemporaneous political and philosophical discourse or as part of ancient Chinese mythology.<sup>1</sup> Our discussion proposes a different perspective. By comparing Zhanguo theories of the origin of the state with parallel views developed in Europe and North America in the age of Enlightenment and beyond, we hope to disclose common factors that influenced theoretical thinking in both cases, and thereby to contribute to a general discussion about the evolution of human political thought. We believe that an analysis of ancient Chinese discourse may offer insights into the ways in which the social and political agendas of thinkers shape their theoretical approaches – in ancient China no less than elsewhere.

Critics may argue that juxtaposing thinkers from such different cultural and chronological backgrounds is like comparing apples and oranges. Yet this is what cross-cultural comparison always does: It

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1 See, e.g., Liu Zehua 劉澤華, *Zhongguo chuantong zhengzhi siwei* 中國傳統政治思維, Liaoning 1991, pp. 311–318; Michael Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China*, Stanford 2001, Chapter 3; and James D. Sellmann, ‘The Origin and Role of the State According to the *Lüshi chunqiu*,’ *Asian Philosophy*, 9/3 (1999), pp. 193–218.

brings together societies that are very different from each other.<sup>2</sup> Its worth is measured not by the degree of similarity between the societies but by its ability to highlight patterns not otherwise discerned. Beyond pointing out cross-cultural similarities, we hope our study will demonstrate patterns of sociopolitical self-reflection.

Our choice of the comparative framework was not fortuitous. We were inspired not only by the remarkable similarity of the ideas developed independently in two societies set far apart geographically and chronologically, but also by an apparent likeness in the social and political processes that spurred interest in political thought and particularly in state formation. Both societies, the Chinese of the Zhanguo period and the European of the Enlightenment, experienced dramatic transformations in many of their key constituents, including sweeping economic, political, social, military, and administrative changes, the formation of new institutions, a decline in the role of the transcendental in political life, and an intellectual upsurge.<sup>3</sup> In particular, the state in both cases underwent rapid internal institutionalization as well as external expansion, which not only created new political challenges but also brought more people into contact with less developed societies, spurring them to reevaluate the rationales of their own cultures. In what follows we shall try to show that these parallels led to similar intellectual responses, which may explain common aspects of Chinese and Western theories of state formation.

To avoid any possible misunderstanding, we should clarify immediately that we do not view political thought in general and concepts of the origin of state in particular as mechanical reflections of certain political and social changes; nor do we suggest that Chinese or Western thinkers merely manipulated their theories in order to serve their

2 The comparative approach in investigating human intellectual history is becoming increasingly popular, as exemplified by such major recent works as, among others, Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies*, Cambridge, Mass., 1998; and Ben-Ami Scharfstein, *A Comparative History of World Philosophy*, Albany 1998. For earlier attempts see Frederick C. Copelston, *Philosophies and Cultures*, Oxford 1980.

3 On the similarity of these processes in ancient China and early modern Europe see, e.g., Hsu Cho-yun, 'Changes in the Relationship between State and Society in Ancient China,' *Chinese Studies in History*, 28 (1994), pp. 64–65; and Benjamin I. Schwartz, 'History in Chinese Culture: Some Comparative Reflections,' *History and Theory*, 35 (1996), p. 32.

immediate political agendas. However, we believe that these agendas could not have been irrelevant to their thought. A need to reconceptualize state structures in the wake of sweeping change, a desire to bolster one's general political theory, a reaction to the fascinating encounter with heretofore unknown, 'primitive' civilizations – these and other factors, as outlined below, were constantly present in the background of the discussions about state formation in ancient China as well as in the modern Occident. In our opinion, they are responsible for the similarities in the thinkers' approaches.

*Introduction: Ancient China in an Age of Transition*

The third quarter of the first millennium BCE was a period of rapid and profound change in the multi-state Chinese world. The old political, social, and economic order created at the beginning of the Zhou dynasty (周, 1045–256 BCE) was in the process of disintegration. Former fiefs distributed by the Zhou kings to their relatives and allies turned into virtually independent states that were engaged in ever-escalating military conflicts. Inside each of these states, powerful aristocratic lineages that had dominated the political scene in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE were rapidly losing their power, while their retainers, who belonged to the lowest segment of the hereditary aristocracy, the so-called *shi* 士, began replacing their former masters in the upper echelons of the state apparatus. Concomitantly, agricultural and commercial growth and the emergence of private landownership resulted in swift changes in the social and economical structures of the major states.<sup>4</sup>

These domestic and international challenges encouraged most of the overlords (*zhuhou* 諸侯) to implement profound political and administrative reforms, which effectively put an end to the old kin-based order. It was replaced by the new state, run by a highly centralized bureaucracy staffed by appointees whose positions reflected their abilities more than their pedigree. That bureaucracy increased rapidly in scope, enhancing the reach of the state into the lowest segments of

4 For a detailed discussion of the sociopolitical and economical processes of that age see Hsu Cho-yun, *Ancient China in Transition*, Stanford, Ca., 1965; Yang Kuan 楊寬, *Zhanguo shi* 戰國史, Shanghai 1998; and relevant articles in Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, Cambridge 1999.

the populace. The centuries-old political system, which had enjoyed undisputed religious and ritual legitimacy, faded.

These social and political changes were accompanied by a subtle yet visible transformation in human relations with the transcendental. In the early Zhou period, Heaven, the highest deity of the Zhou pantheon, was the guardian of the political order, while ancestral spirits were believed to protect their descendants and scrutinize their deeds. Yet by the early Zhanguo period, these concepts had evidently lost their appeal among the educated elite. The diminishing power of religious beliefs resulted in ‘the breakdown of the moral and political order which claimed the authority of Heaven.’<sup>5</sup> The new age demanded new rationalizations of the political order.

A number of brilliant thinkers responded to this challenge. In their search for a new political and social order, they boldly examined various aspects of the human social and political experience, providing political, ethical, and even metaphysical guidelines for future empire-building. To invoke A.C. Graham’s apt characterization, ‘the crucial question for all of them [was] not the Western philosopher’s “What is the truth?” but “Where is the Way [*Dao*]?” – the way to order the state and conduct personal life.’<sup>6</sup> The resultant political and ethical orientation of most of the pre-imperial Chinese philosophers brings them closer to the political thinkers of the European Enlightenment than to contemporaneous philosophers of the so-called Axial Age.<sup>7</sup>

Among other issues, Zhanguo ‘disputers of the *Dao*’<sup>8</sup> speculated on the origins of stratified society and the state. Their interest was spurred primarily by the need to find justifications in the remote past for the policies they proposed for the present. Aside from immediate political needs, however, many thinkers endeavoured to investigate the nature and social functions of the state. Their suggestions are of great interest, particularly in view of the explicit parallels that emerge between certain Zhanguo theories and those that appeared in recent centuries in the Occident.

5 Agnus C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, La Salle 1989, p. 3.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 3, modifying Graham’s transliteration, *Tao*, to *Hanyu pinyin*.

7 For the concept of the Axial age see, e.g., Shmuel N. Eisenstadt (ed.), *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, Albany 1986.

8 We borrow the term from Graham, *Disputers* (above, note 5).

*'Social Contract': The State as a Solution to Primeval Turmoil*

Interest in the origin of the state appeared at a relatively late stage in Chinese political discourse. Early thinkers may have ignored this issue altogether or viewed the institutions of state as having been ordained by the gods.<sup>9</sup> The earliest of the eminent Chinese thinkers, Confucius (孔子, 551–479 BCE), never discussed the origin of the state, nor did he endorse the nascent institutional reforms of his age. His declared aim was 'to transmit [the ancients' wisdom], not to create [a new theory]';<sup>10</sup> he sought to restore the ideal social-political order of the early Zhou period rather than to create a new political entity. His interest lay in perfecting the extant system, not in discussing its foundations and evolution.

Mozi (墨子, c. 460–390 BCE) is the first thinker known to have discussed the formation of the state. By his time, the prospect of restoring the early Zhou order was no longer relevant, so that alternatives had to be sought. Mozi envisioned a new society based on social equality and mutual help. The principle of 'Universal Love' or 'Concern for Everyone' (*jian ai* 兼愛) ought to replace current social and political divisions, and the entire world ought to be unified under a single powerful ruler. Since these radical suggestions marked a significant departure from the established social and political patterns of his age, Mozi tried to conceal the novelty of his vision by embedding it in a historical narrative. In the 'Elevating Uniformity' (or 'Identifying with Superiors,' *Shang tong* 尚同) chapters of his work, Mozi depicted the dire situation of pre-state society and the resultant need to establish unified rule:

In antiquity, when the people were newly born, there were neither punishments nor [proper] administration. When we inquire into the speeches [of that period], [we see] that the people had different [concepts of] propriety/ righteousness. Therefore, one man had one [concept of] propriety; two men had two [concepts]; ten men had ten [concepts]. The more men there were, the more concepts of propriety appeared. Consequently, each man justified his own [concept of] propriety by rejecting the propriety of others, so that

9 The divine origin of some of the institutions of state is suggested by the fifth-century BCE document, *Lü xing* 呂刑 (*Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏, Beijing 1991, 19:248–249); for a detailed discussion see Puett, *The Ambivalence* (above, note 1), pp. 101–105.

10 See Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯注, Beijing 1992, 'Shu er 述而' 7.1:66.

human contacts were based on mutual rejection. Thus, within [the family] fathers and sons, elder and younger brothers fell into resentment and hatred; they were alienated and unable to unite in harmony. The hundred clans<sup>11</sup> under Heaven all used water, fire, and poisonous drugs to harm each other. Even those who enjoyed extra strength were unable to work for others; surplus commodities rotted, but nobody distributed them among others; good ways were concealed, and nobody taught them to others. The disorder in All under Heaven reached the level of birds and beasts.

Mozi depicted primeval society as leading a bestial life of war of all against all. The narrative was placed in the remote past, but the portrayal of generalized turmoil was all too familiar to Mozi's contemporaries. Hence, the solution presented below was highly relevant to Mozi's audience:

It was clear that the disorder under Heaven derived from the absence of a ruler. Therefore, the worthiest and the most able [man] in All under Heaven was selected and established as the Son of Heaven. When the Son of Heaven had been established, he apprehended that his might was still insufficient; hence, again, [he] selected the worthiest and the most able [men] in All under Heaven and placed them in the positions of the Three Dukes. After the Son of Heaven and the Three Dukes had been established, they apprehended that All under Heaven is vast and huge, and one or two persons cannot clearly know the distinctions between the beneficent and the harmful, the true and the false regarding the people of the distinct lands; therefore, they divided it up into myriad states and established overlords and rulers of the states.<sup>12</sup>

Only establishment of the centralized state, with the Son of Heaven at its apex, could lead humankind out of primeval chaos. Mozi continued his narrative by depicting the ideal state that emanated from the Son of Heaven. In the latter part of the chapter, he presented a model of a highly centralized state that imposes uniformity of thought and uniform

11 'Hundred clans' (*baixing* 百姓) is a common designation of the entire populace in Zhanguo texts.

12 Wu Yujiang 吳毓江, *Mozi jiaozhu* 墨子校注, Beijing 1994, 'Shang tong shang 尚同上,' 11:109. Hereafter all translations are ours unless indicated otherwise.

behavior upon its subjects. Mozi envisioned this model as a solution to incessant conflict and war – a solution that would have appealed to his contemporaries, suffering as they did from such conflicts in their everyday life. Inventing a narrative of the remote past was a means to suggest the establishment of a centralized state in the present. Mozi thus resorted to a common device of Zhanguo thinkers: ‘to use the past to serve the present’ (*yi gu shi jin* 以古事今).

Mozi posed the emergence of the state both as the only adequate response to social turmoil and as the necessary and desirable outcome of societal conflict. His view of the rationale behind the process of state formation was shared by many, but most of his arguments remained uniquely his own. First, he suggested neither economic nor social reasons for the deterioration of primeval society; for him, the turmoil that preceded the emergence of the state was purely an ideological phenomenon, an outcome of divergent views of propriety / righteousness (*yi* 義). Second, his highly schematic narrative suggests that after the Son of Heaven was selected, he created the political order *ex nihilo*; Mozi did not suppose the existence of political institutions prior to the emergence of the Son of Heaven. Third, he refused to specify who had selected the worthiest man to become the Son of Heaven. Did he envision a kind of election, in which all members of society agreed upon the leader best able to impose stability and act for their mutual benefit? Given the egalitarian trend in Mozi’s thought, this suggestion is not implausible, although many scholars tend to assume that he viewed omnipotent Heaven as the sole Elector.<sup>13</sup> The ambiguity may have been intentional: Explicitly propounding the popular election of the supreme ruler might have been too radical a departure from the extant rules of hereditary succession, even for so bold a thinker as Mozi.<sup>14</sup>

13 Mozi remained unique among Zhanguo thinkers in assigning to Heaven the role of the ultimate arbiter in human affairs. Accordingly, many suggest that Mozi regarded Heaven as the selector of the would-be Son of Heaven; see Liu Zehua, *Zhongguo chuantong* (above, note 1), pp. 313–314.

14 Very recently a first piece of unequivocal evidence appeared suggesting that the idea of popular elections was not entirely alien to Zhanguo thinkers. In the recently discovered *Rong Cheng shi* 容成氏 text it is explicitly stated that the first legendary emperor, Yao 堯, was elected by ‘the people of All under Heaven’ (see Li Ling 李零 [ed.], ‘Rong Cheng shi,’ in Ma Chengyuan 馬承源 [ed.], *Shanghai bowuguan zang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書, Shanghai, 2002, II, p. 255, slip 7).

*Evolutionary Models of State Formation*

While Mozi felt compelled to embed his innovations in the imagined past, later thinkers used different arguments to justify the proposed reforms. One of the greatest Zhanguo statesmen, Shang Yang (商鞅, d. 338 BCE), initiated radical reforms in the state of Qin 秦. He proposed a series of measures aimed at strengthening the state apparatus, enhancing the ruler's position, and bolstering territorial expansion, with the ultimate goal of achieving universal rule in All under Heaven. Unlike Mozi, Shang Yang did not claim that his policies matched those of the remote past but argued, to the contrary, that they were an adequate response to the challenges of the present. A major lesson to be learned from the past, claimed Shang Yang, was that human society is constantly changing, requiring continual modification of the political system. Shang Yang's evolutionary model of state formation served to illustrate his theory:

When Heaven and Earth were established, the people were born. At that time the people knew their mothers but not their fathers; their way was one of attachment to relatives and of selfishness. Attachment to relatives results in particularity; selfishness results in malignity.

Shang Yang introduced a new notion of primeval promiscuous (or matriarchal) kin-based order. This order did not resemble Mozi's bestial picture of primeval chaos, but stability was soon undermined by population growth:

The people multiplied, and as they were engaged in particularity and malignity, the people fell into turmoil. At that time, the people began seeking victories and forcefully contending [with each other]. Seeking victories results in [mutual] struggle; forceful contention results in lawsuits. When there are lawsuits but no proper [norms], then nobody achieves his natural life. Therefore, the worthies established impartiality and propriety, instituted selflessness, and the people began preaching benevolence. At that time, attachment to relatives declined, and elevation of the worthy was established.

Thus did the incipient stratification of society, based on 'elevation of



the worthy,' replace the inadequate kin-based order. However, institutional weaknesses of the new order obstructed the successful management of social turmoil resulting from a new wave of population increase. Thus was the state born:

All the benevolent became devoted to love [of benefits], while the worthy viewed mutual refutation as the proper Way. The people multiplied, yet lacked regulations; for a long time they viewed mutual refutation as the proper way, and hence there again was turmoil. Therefore, the sages took responsibility. They established distinctions between lands, property, men, and women. When distinctions were established but regulations were still lacking, this was unacceptable; hence they established prohibitions. When prohibitions were established but none supervised [their implementation], this was unacceptable; hence they established officials. When officials were instituted but not unified, this was unacceptable; hence they established the ruler. When the ruler was established, elevation of the worthy declined and the esteem of nobility was established. Thus, in upper [i.e., the earliest] generations, [people] were attached to relatives and liked themselves; in the middle generations, they esteemed the worthy and preached benevolence; in the lowest generations, they esteemed the nobles and respected officials.<sup>15</sup>

Shang Yang viewed the emergence of the state as the outcome of complicated political developments: As humankind moved towards struggle and turmoil, this demanded readjustment of the political structure to cope with the increasingly unmanageable situation. His model depicts a progressive movement from an egalitarian, promiscuous, kin-based order towards an incipient stratified society, and then to the mature political order based on property distinctions, prohibitions, and officials. Each mode of rule came into existence when the internal contradictions of the previous stage of development produced increasing turmoil, mandating adjustment of the extant system. Shang Yang believed that this evolution must continue: Later in his chapter, he suggested that in the current stage, strict

15 Jiang Lihong 蔣禮鴻, *Shang jun shu zhui zhi* 商君書錐指, Beijing 1996, 'Kai sai 開塞' 7:51–52.

implementation of harsh, impartial laws would ensure universal stability and eliminate disorder.

Shang Yang dismissed Mozi's ambiguous ideas about the popular election of the ruler and suggested that it was the increasing complexity of human organization that elicited the activity of elites. Whereas Mozi suggested that the ruler appeared prior to other political institutions, Shang Yang viewed the emergence of the ruler as a gradual process. It was 'the worthies' who reacted to the disintegration of the kin-based order by creating a meritocratic, moralistic society, and later, as this system similarly proved inadequate to contain social struggle, 'the sages' intervened and replaced it with the autocratic state. Furthermore, unlike Mozi, Shang Yang suggested that social competition stemmed not only from ideological differences but also from economic factors, particularly population growth. This emphasis on economic and technological changes as the background to changes in political institutions became even more prominent in the works of Shang Yang's followers.

The evolutionary theory of state formation adopted by Shang Yang and his followers, the so-called Legalists (*fajia* 法家), became a powerful element in their polemics against conservative-minded thinkers, particularly the intellectual offspring of Confucius. The latter, such as the eminent Confucian thinker Mencius (孟子, c. 379–304), rejected the evolutionary vision of history, emphasizing instead the cyclical alternation of order and disorder. Mencius and other Confucians believed in the universal validity of the moral exemplars of the past, whose virtuous behavior had to be emulated in the present.<sup>16</sup> For the Legalists, on the other hand, emulating the past was ridiculous. History meant change, and previously valid patterns of rule became irrelevant or even harmful under new conditions. By exploring the patterns of human society's evolution, the Legalists undermined their opponents' insistence on the need to follow in the footsteps of earlier sages.<sup>17</sup> The resultant modification of Shang Yang's evolutionary

16 For Mencius's views of cyclical change see Yang Bojun, *Mengzi yizhu* 孟子譯注, Beijing 1992, 'Teng Wen Gong xia 滕文公下,' 6.9: 154–158; see also Puett, *The Ambivalence* (above, note 1), pp. 107–111.

17 Zhanguo Legalist texts contain no less than five variants of the evolutionary model of state formation. Aside from Shang Yang's views and those of Han Feizi, discussed below, see also *Shang jun shu* (above, note 15), 'Hua ce 畫策,' 18:106–107, and 'Junchen 君臣,' 23:129–130; Dai Wang 戴望, *Guanzi jiaozheng* 管

model culminated with the elaborate theory presented by the most eloquent of Legalist thinkers, Han Feizi (韓非子, d. 233 BCE):

In upper antiquity the people were few, and birds and beasts were plentiful. The people could not overcome birds and beasts, insects and snakes. Then a sage appeared; he trained them to make nests in the trees so that people could avoid being hurt, and the people were happy and made him a king of the world, calling him the Possessor of Nests. People ate fruits and berries, mussels and clams – bad-smelling, disgusting things that hurt their stomachs, and many of the people fell ill. Then a sage appeared; he taught the people to create fire by drilling sticks and thereby change the bad smell, and the people were happy and made him a king of the world, calling him the Drilling Man. In middle antiquity, there was a great flood in the world, and Gun and Yu excavated channels.<sup>18</sup> In recent antiquity, [kings] Jie and Zhou behaved violently and calamitously, and [kings] Tang and Wu attacked them.<sup>19</sup> Now, if in the Xia dynasty somebody had begun making nests or creating fire by drilling, he would have been ridiculed by Gun and Yu; if in the Shang and Zhou dynasty somebody had begun excavating channels, he would have been ridiculed by Tang and Wu.

Han Feizi's narrative explicitly aimed to ridicule the Confucians' imperative to emulate the Way of the ancient sages: Different times, Han Feizi argued, require different approaches. For the sake of our discussion, it is notable that Han Feizi introduced another prime mover of social evolution: Political authority was born not in order to resolve

子校正, reprinted as *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成, Shanghai 1986, V, 'Junchen xia 君臣下,' 31:174.

- 18 According to legend, during the reign of the sage emperor Yao 堯 there were great floods. Yao ordered Gun 鯀 to subdue them, and when Gun failed and subsequently was executed, the task was passed down to his son, Yu 禹, who succeeded and later was appointed emperor. He became a founder of the semi-legendary Xia dynasty (夏, c. 1900–1570 BCE).
- 19 Tang 湯 founded the first historical dynasty, the Shang (商, c. 1570–1046 BCE), after reportedly overthrowing the previous dynasty, the Xia 夏, and expelling its vicious last ruler, Jie 桀. King Wu (武王, d. c. 1043 BCE) was the de facto founder of the Zhou dynasty; in 1046 he led the allied forces in annihilating the vicious last ruler of the Shang, Zhouxin 紂辛.

social conflicts, but to advance the technological level of society and enable humankind to cope with problems posed by nature. This emphasis on technological expertise as the way to power had already appeared in the writings of Shang Yang's disciples,<sup>20</sup> but Han Feizi modified and refined it. However, technological advance alone was insufficient to engender state institutions.

In ancient times, men did not till the ground, but herbs and trees sufficed for food; women did not weave, but the skins of birds and beasts sufficed for clothes. Without wasting their force they had enough to nourish themselves; the people were few while goods were plenty; hence people did not compete. Therefore, no rich rewards were bestowed, no severe punishments used, but the people were properly ruled by themselves. Nowadays, five children are not considered too many, and each child also has five children; the grandfather is still alive, and he already has twenty-five grandchildren. Therefore, the people are plenty while commodities and goods are few; people work laboriously, but provisions are scanty; hence the people compete. Even if [the ruler] multiplies rewards and piles on punishments, he will not avoid calamity.

Han Feizi abandoned Mozi's and Shang Yang's belief in primeval turmoil and argued that society in the absence of state initially was free of struggle.<sup>21</sup> Turmoil later ensued not because of ideological discord, as suggested by Mozi, but because of population increase and consequent pressure on limited resources. This notion had first appeared in Shang Yang's writings, but it was Han Feizi who suggested that population growth was a major reason for increasing social competition, which then necessitated the implementation of 'rewards and punishments,' that is, the use of restrictive force. The ensuing social inequality transformed the consciousness of humankind:

20 See *Shang jun shu* (above, note 15), 'Hua ce,' 18:106–107.

21 We shall discuss below the views of advocates of the primeval idyll, represented by Zhuangzi (莊子, d. ca. 286 BCE) who might have influenced Han Feizi. A similar, albeit less sophisticated view, depicting a process of social development from primeval harmony towards competition and the emergence of the state, was also suggested by Shang Yang's disciples; see *ibid.*

When Yao<sup>22</sup> ruled the world, his thatched roof remained untrimmed, his speckled beams unplanned. He consumed coarse millet and a soup of greens, wore deerskin in winter and rough fibre robes in summer. Even the food and clothes of the gatekeeper are not as miserable. When Yu ruled the world, he personally took plow and spade to lead his people, working until there was no more down on his thighs or hair on his shins. Even the slave's toil is not as bitter as this. From this we see that those in antiquity who yielded the position of the Son of Heaven in reality abandoned the gatekeeper's food and left the slave's toil.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the transfer of rule over the world was not considered a great matter. Nowadays, however, when the district governor dies, his descendants for generations go on riding in carriages; hence the people respect this position. ... People relinquished the position of the Son of Heaven not because they were high-minded but because the advantages [of this position] were light; [now] people struggle for sinecures in the government<sup>24</sup> not because they are low-minded, but because the power [of this position] is weighty.<sup>25</sup>

Han Feizi synthesized the achievements of his predecessors and contemporaries to present a complex view of the emergence of the state. Population growth and parallel technological change engendered social sophistication, which in turn resulted in an ideological transformation from cooperation to competition. In the underdeveloped age of primitive equality, yielding a high position was a reasonable thing to do and did not require extraordinary moral qualities. However, in the current (i.e., Zhanguo) age of unequally distributed wealth and riches, such conduct had lost its appeal. As primeval innocence faded and society became increasingly stratified, the need for an oppressive state mechanism became apparent, concluded Han Feizi.

22 Yao 堯, a legendary sage emperor, was said to have ruled in the late third millennium BCE.

23 According to legend, Yao yielded his position as the ruler of 'All under Heaven' to his virtuous minister, Shun 舜, and Shun later yielded to another meritorious minister, Yu.

24 Following the gloss by Wang Xianshen 王先慎, we emend 土橐 to 仕托.

25 Wang Xianshen 王先慎, *Han Feizi jijie* 非子集解, Beijing 1998, 'Wu du' 五蠹, 49:442-444.

The evolutionary view of social and institutional history advocated by the Legalist thinkers reflected an attempt to explain and bolster the rapid social and political changes of the Zhanguo age. Not all contemporary thinkers, however, shared the Legalists' enthusiasm about these changes and reforms. We shall now turn to the views of those who questioned either the possibility of social change or its desirability.

*The State as an Institution of Oppression*

We have seen that in contrast to Mozi and Shang Yang, Han Feizi assumed that life before the emergence of the state was harmonious. Nevertheless, he viewed the dissolution of this primeval harmony as an inevitable stage in the progress of humankind. Sooner or later, primordial society had to sink into mutual strife, and the emergence of the state was the only reasonable solution to this turmoil. Such belief in the moral desirability of the state, although shared by most Zhanguo thinkers, was not unanimously endorsed. On the extreme 'left' of ancient Chinese political thought a different view appeared, in which the state, organized society, and civilization were depicted as the major maladies of human history. This attitude is most explicitly expressed by Zhuangzi (莊子, d. ca. 286 BCE), alleged author of the eponymous book. In a speech notably attributed to a villainous outcast, Robber Zhi (盜跖), the *Zhuangzi* states:

In antiquity, birds and animals were plenty and people few; hence, the people lived in nests to escape the animals, gathering acorns by day and resting on trees by night. Therefore, they were named the people of the Possessor of Nests. In antiquity, the people knew no clothes; they gathered firewood in summer and burned it in winter; therefore they were named the people Who Know How to Live. In the generation of Shen Nong,<sup>26</sup> the people slept peacefully and got up carelessly. They knew their mothers but not their fathers; they lived side by side with elks and deers. They tilled to obtain food, wove to obtain clothes, and had no heart to harm each other – this was the glory of perfect virtue.

26 Shen Nong (神農, 'Holy Farmer') is a cultural hero commonly associated with the invention of agriculture.

This primeval idyll, however, did not last long, on account of the malicious intervention of the sages:

However, Huang Di was unable to sustain virtue: He fought Chi You at the Zhuolu fields, and the blood flowed for a hundred miles.<sup>27</sup> When Yao and Shun appeared, they established multitudes of ministers. [Then] Tang exiled his ruler, and King Wu killed [his sovereign], Zhou.<sup>28</sup> From then on, the strong impinged upon the weak; the many abused the few. Since the times of Tang and Wu, everybody follows these calamitous people.<sup>29</sup>

Zhuangzi turned the arguments of other thinkers upside down. Calamity and struggle were not the reason for the creation of the state but its outcome. The increasing sophistication of civilization was an irreversible process of corruption, which, as Zhuangzi explains here and elsewhere, was brought on by the deliberate intervention of the sages. These would-be rulers' unrestrained bid for power was solely responsible for the disintegration of the primeval order into a disastrous situation of mutual strife and turmoil.

These views are embedded in Zhuangzi's philosophical and political vision. He considered men to be indistinguishable from 'the myriad things,' and, accordingly, from each other. The false social distinctions deliberately created by the sages alienated men from nature and destroyed the harmony within human society. Zhuangzi's attack on the sages, particularly on such widely revered paragons of virtue as kings Tang and Wu, was directed against contemporary hypocrites who praised the rulers of the age, turning a blind eye to their repeated atrocities.<sup>30</sup> Here, like many other thinkers, Zhuangzi 'used the past to

27 According to legend, Huang Di (黃帝, 'Yellow Emperor') was an ancestor of the Chinese people and their neighbours and the progenitor of the unified state. Chi You was a rebel against him.

28 See notes 18–19 and 22–23 for the identities of these personalities. Kings Tang and Wu were considered paragons of virtue and propriety, a view rejected by Robber Zhi on the grounds that they had overthrown the legitimate rulers of their age.

29 Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Zhuangzi jinzhu jinyi* 莊子今注今譯, Beijing 1994, 'Dao Zhi' 盜趾 29:778. Scholars disagree as to whether the chapter 'Dao Zhi' was written by Zhuangzi, but it evidently reflects his views on the emergence of the state (cf. 'Ma ti' 馬蹄, 9:246–47).

30 For the philosophical and political views of Zhuangzi, see such chapters as 'Qi wu' 齊物, 'Ma ti' 馬蹄, 'Qu qie' 胠篋, and 'Qiu shui' 秋水.

serve the present.’ By changing the narrative of state formation, he sought to undermine the basic arguments of his opponents who favored the state’s functions of upholding social hierarchy and exercising necessary coercion. Although Zhuangzi’s views never became dominant, they remained influential among radical critics of the political and social order for generations to come.

*The State as a Basic Human Necessity*

Zhuangzi’s quasi-anarchistic attack on the state and its institutions may have been a source of serious concern to those thinkers who wished to improve rather than dismantle the state apparatus. However, it was not at all easy to refute Zhuangzi’s views. Whereas the nature of primeval society remained a matter of speculation, Zhuangzi’s criticism of the current state and its leaders was readily demonstrable and could easily be endorsed. The political history of the two millennia prior to Zhuangzi was indeed full of turmoil, wars, and treachery. Why, then, should one support the existence of the state?

Xunzi (荀子, c. 310–218 BCE), one of the most brilliant and profound thinkers in China’s history, rose to Zhuangzi’s challenge. A follower of Confucius, Xunzi rejected the concept of evolutionary change in history, since it might have detracted from his appeal to ‘the Way of the former kings’ as the repository of ultimate and indisputable truth. Unlike Confucius, however, Xunzi could not avoid discussing the justification of the state’s existence, since it had become one of the most hotly debated issues in late Zhanguo political discourse. Instead of answering Zhuangzi’s challenge by inventing a new historical narrative, Xunzi concentrated on exposing the rationale behind the emergence of social institutions, particularly the state. In a major theoretical discussion of this issue, Xunzi states:

Fire and water have energy (*qi* 氣), but no life. Plants and trees have life, but no awareness. Birds and beasts have awareness, but no sense of propriety. Man has energy, life, awareness, and, moreover, a sense of propriety; therefore he is the most esteemed being in the world. His force cannot be compared to that of an ox; his speed cannot be compared to that of a horse; but he makes use of both horses and oxen. How is it so? I answer: because men are able to form a social organization, while these [animals] cannot



form a social organization. How are men able to form a social organization? I answer: through distinctions [or divisions (*fen* 分)]. How are they able to implement distinctions? I answer: through the sense of propriety. Therefore, when distinctions are based on the sense of propriety, there is harmony. Harmony results in unity; unity results in plenty of force; plenty of force results in strength; strength enables the subjugation of things; that is how palaces and houses can be acquired for human dwelling.

Xunzi explains that social organization not only is advantageous to human beings but is almost unavoidable, insofar as humans wish to subdue nature and sustain their lives. This organization, however, will not function without the ruler:

Putting in order four seasons, bringing myriad things to completion, benefiting the entire world – [all these] have no other reason but that distinctions based on the sense of propriety were achieved. Thus, in their lives humans cannot avoid forming social organizations. [If, however, in] forming social organizations they lack distinctions, this results in mutual struggle; struggle results in calamity; calamity results in mutual separation; separation results in weakness; weakness undermines the ability to subdue things; then it is no longer possible to acquire palaces and houses and dwell there. This explains why it is impossible to abandon ritual and propriety even for the slightest moment. ... He, who is able to organize [others] in a collective (*qun* 群) is the ruler (*jun* 君).<sup>31</sup>

Xunzi viewed social organization as the only acceptable way for people to fulfill their destiny as the most esteemed beings in the universe, namely, to ‘subdue things.’ Whereas Zhuangzi anathematized social stratification and rejected distinctions among humans, Xunzi viewed these as both inevitable and highly positive. Unstratified society, Xunzi explained elsewhere, would result in unrestricted competition for limited goods, bringing about calamity, turmoil, and universal poverty, which in turn would diminish the human ability to rule nature.<sup>32</sup> Thus, social stratification is the only rational means to

31 See Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, Beijing 1992, ‘Wang zhi’ 王制 9:164–165.

32 *Xunzi*, ‘Li lun’ 禮論 19:346.

ensure proper functioning of the production process. The state, argued Xunzi, must protect and reinforce stratification by imposing strict rules of ritual and propriety to distinguish ‘superior men’ from ‘petty men.’<sup>33</sup>

Xunzi did not view social stratification and state formation as outcomes of particular historical conditions; rather, they represented the only possible way of life for humankind. The state was a natural mechanism by which human beings adapted themselves to nature. Xunzi attributed to the sage kings of antiquity the perfection, not the creation, of the social system. How the state appeared was of minor consequence; what really mattered was its importance to the survival of humankind.

Other late Zhanguo thinkers endorsed Xunzi’s views. Some of them provided empirical evidence of the advantages of organized society over that lacking state organization. The authors of the late third century BCE compendium *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 stated:

The nature of humans is such that their claws and teeth do not suffice to protect themselves; body and skin do not suffice to withstand heat and cold; muscles and bones do not suffice to attain benefits and escape injuries; bravery does not suffice to repel the savage and subdue the haughty. Nevertheless, [men] still master myriad things, rule the birds and the beasts, and subdue vicious insects, while heat and warmth, dryness and humidity can do them no harm. It is not only because humans prepare [appropriate] facilities, but also because they are able to gather into a collective. Gathering into a collective is made for the sake of mutual benefit. Benefits derive from the collective (*qun* 群); this is the way of the ruler (*jun* 君). Therefore, when the way of the ruler is established, benefits appear from the collective, and human preparations are completed.

Up to here, *Lüshi chunqiu*’s explanation of the importance of the state follows that of Xunzi. Then, to bolster their arguments, the authors remind their readers of the dangers of primeval chaos:

33 See Xunzi’s discussions, for example, in the chapters ‘Wang zhi’ and especially ‘Li lun.’ It is noteworthy that Xunzi did not envision class distinctions as hereditary; they ought, rather, to be based on a person’s merits and moral qualities.

In earliest antiquity it happened that there was no ruler; the people lived together, dwelling like a herd; they knew their mothers but knew no fathers, had no distinctions between relatives, elder and younger brothers, husband and wife, male and female; had no way of superiors and inferiors, of the old and the young; had no rites of entrance, departure, and mutual greetings; had no advantages of clothes, caps, boots, dwellings, and palaces; had no facilities such as utensils, instruments, boats, chariots, outer and inner walls, and defensive fortifications: This is the trouble with the lack of a ruler.

This passage synthesizes the discussions of Mozi and Han Feizi, emphasizing the gloomy condition of humankind in the pre-state stage of its development. Lack of a ruler meant lack of appropriate technology and social institutions, which degraded human beings to the situation of 'elks and deers,' unable to cope with nature. The authors do not specify whether technological advancement engendered state formation, or, conversely, whether the creation of the state facilitated technological development. This lack of interest in historical processes is akin to that of Xunzi. However, the authors may have sensed that the foregoing historical argument might not convince astute readers who perhaps were familiar with Zhuangzi's alternative narrative, and they therefore supplemented it with ethnographic data:

To the east of Feibin are the villages of Yi and Hui and the dwellings of Dajie, Lingyu, Qi, Luye, Yaoshan, Yangdao, and Daren, many of which lack a ruler. To the south of Yang and the Han, there are the lands of Baiyue, the lands of Changkaizhu, Fufeng, and Yumi, and the states of Fulou, Yangyu, and Huandou, many of which lack a ruler. To the West of Di and Qiang, Hutang and the Li River, there are the rivers of Boren, Yeren, and Pianzuo, and the villages of Zhouren, Songlong, and Turen, many of which lack a ruler. To the north of the Yanmen, there are the states of Yangzhou, Suozhi, and Xukui, the lands of Taotie and Qiongqi, the place of Shuni, and the dwellings of Daner; many of these lack a ruler. These are the rulerless of the four directions. Their people live like elks and deers, birds and beasts: The young give orders to the old; the old fear the adults; the strong are considered the worthy, and the haughty and violent are revered. Day and night they abuse each other, leaving no time to rest,

thereby exterminating their own kind. The sages profoundly investigate this trouble.<sup>34</sup>

This critique of the ‘rulerless’ society, that is, one that lacks the state organization, is hardly novel, and it generally follows that of Xunzi. What deserves our attention, however, is the authors’ explicit interest in ethnographic data. Surveying the lives of China’s neighbours provided the authors with a powerful argument against Zhuangzi’s criticism of the state. This empirical data proved that rulerless society was remote from the naturalistic idyll advocated by Zhuangzi and like-minded thinkers. Oppression, contest, violence, and inequality were not engendered by vicious, power-hunger sages; they were inherent in human society.

This resort to ethnographic data in a political argument is indicative of the ways in which ancient Chinese thinkers created their models of state formation. The Zhanguo period witnessed a rapid expansion of contacts between the Chinese and their neighbours.<sup>35</sup> The territorial expansion of powerful states such as Qin, Chu 楚, Zhao 趙, Yan 燕, and Qi 齊 led them into the lands of tribes whose level of socioeconomic development was much lower than that of the dwellers of China’s Central Plain.<sup>36</sup> Military, economic, and cultural contacts expanded the horizons of Chinese thinkers, allowing them to draw broad conclusions regarding the history and development of human society in general. These conclusions, as we have seen, became integral to contemporary political discourse.

34 Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋校釋, Shanghai 1996, ‘Shi jun’ 恃君 20.1:1321–1322.

35 The term ‘Chinese’ in a pre-imperial context is certainly an anachronism, and we use it purely as a scholarly convention. Here and elsewhere it refers primarily to the inhabitants of China’s Central Plain and the adjacent regions, who shared a common ritual culture inherited from the Zhou dynasty.

36 For more on this expansion and its political implications see Steven F. Sage, *Ancient Sichuan and the Unification of China*, Albany 1992. For a survey of Chinese and neighbouring cultures in the mid-first millennium BCE see Lothar von Falkenhausen, ‘The Waning of the Bronze Age: Material Culture and Social Developments 770–481 B.C.,’ in Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, Cambridge, U.K., 1999, pp. 450–544.

### Western Parallels

The above discussion undermines the fashionable view that the emergence of theories about the origins of the state is an exclusively post-Enlightenment Western phenomenon.<sup>37</sup> What is remarkable, however, is not merely the theoretical sophistication of the Chinese thinkers but also the existence of explicit parallels between their views and theories developed in Europe and North America some two millennia later. In the following paragraphs, we shall briefly elucidate some of these parallels and then present our explanation for the evident similarities between the approaches developed in ancient China and in the early modern Occident. Our goal is not to present a comprehensive survey of the theories of the genesis of the state that developed in Europe and North America,<sup>38</sup> but rather to highlight those views that closely parallel the Chinese ideas presented above. For the sake of convenience, our presentation of the relevant Western ideas follows the sequence of our discussion of the parallel Chinese views.

Mozi's characterization of the process of state formation is surprisingly close to some of the descriptions associated with the so-called social contract or consent theory. The use of such a theory to

37 This view is strongly advocated, for instance, by leading anthropologist Robert J. Wenke, who states in his otherwise excellent textbook on human prehistory:

The earliest scholars believed the rise of cities and states and other elements of evolving cultural complexity required no explanation, because they assumed these developments to be mainly or entirely the work of the gods. The scholars of the Enlightenment and subsequent centuries usually explained the origins of cultural complexity in evolutionary terms. (*Patterns in Prehistory: Humankind's First Three Million Years*, Oxford 1990, p. 292)

Wenke's approach, which is characteristic of the prevailing views of Western scholars, is doubly incorrect. Not only does it ignore Chinese intellectual tradition, but it also does no justice to the complexity of ancient Greek thought: Neither Plato nor Aristotle considered the state to be "the work of gods," and the latter even put forward a nascent evolutionary theory of the state as evolving naturally from the family through the village community and finally into the higher stage of *polis* association. See Plato, *The Republic* (English transl. by Tom Griffith, ed. F.R.F. Ferrari), Cambridge, U.K., 2002, pp. 51–57; and *The Politics of Aristotle* (English transl. by Ernest Barker), London 1970, pp. 1–5.

38 For such comprehensive surveys, see, for instance, Marvin Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, New York 1968; Elman R. Service and Ronald Cohen (eds.), *Origins of the State: The Anthropology of Political Evolution*, Philadelphia 1978; and Martin Sicker, *The Genesis of the State*, New York 1991.

justify autocracy is also not a uniquely Chinese phenomenon.<sup>39</sup> Like Mozi, certain Western thinkers thought of society prior to the establishment of the social contract as lacking any norms or social rules. For example, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), who lived during England’s age of civil wars, was similarly preoccupied with the origins of internal turmoil and the ways to overcome it. In *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes gives the following description of the original condition of human society:

During the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man.<sup>40</sup>

For Hobbes as for Mozi, differences of opinion are the main reason why people cannot unite themselves in the absence of external force. This existential problem had but one solution: People must delegate their power and subjugate themselves to the authority of leaders.

For being distracted in opinions ... they do not help but hinder one another ... whereby they are easily, not only subdued by a very few that agree together; but also when there is no common enemy, they make war upon each other. ... The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort, as that by their own industry, and by the fruits of the earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; is, to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will.<sup>41</sup>

Mozi’s vague description of the mechanisms of the social contract and the way by which ‘the most able in All under Heaven was selected’ is also paralleled in the Enlightenment context. Almost all the Western thinkers struggled with these questions and mostly left them

39 As pointed out by Martin Sicker on p. 77 of *The Genesis of the State* (above, note 38), in the West, too, ‘consent theory is not necessarily an ally of liberal democratic thought. In fact, it has also been used to justify conservative and even reactionary political views.’

40 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Oxford 1946, Chap. 13, p. 82.

41 *Ibid.*, Chap. 17, pp. 110–112.

unanswered. Gough's assertion that 'the social contract theory is really an attempt at analyzing the logical presuppositions rather than the historical antecedents of the state'<sup>42</sup> may perhaps be applicable to Mozi as well.

If the comparison between Mozi and Hobbes is relatively straightforward, the analogies that can be made for other Chinese schools and thinkers are somewhat less direct. For example, explicit parallels exist between strands of the Legalists' theories and the ideas of various European and American scholars, but these ideas were formulated and integrated quite differently in the two distinct intellectual milieus.

Thus, Shang Yang's assertion that families in primitive society were promiscuous resembles the views of nineteenth-century evolutionists in the West. Scholars such as Morgan, Tylor, McLennan, Bachofen, and Lubbock, though they argued vehemently among themselves about the developmental stages of the family, all included an original stage of promiscuity in their evolutionary schemes.<sup>43</sup> More crucial to Shang Yang's model, however, is the transition from a kin-based society to a bureaucratic one based on written laws. Henry Maine (1822–1888) developed similar ideas in his book, *Ancient Law*:

The movement of progressive societies has been uniform in one respect. Through all its course it has been distinguished by the gradual dissolution of family dependency and the growth of individual obligations in its place. The individual has been steadily substituted for the family as the unit of which civil laws take account.<sup>44</sup>

Many modern socio-political theories on the development of state-level societies are influenced, explicitly or implicitly, by Maine's model of the transition from kin-based to law-based society. The strong individualistic tone of Maine's writing is certainly closer to modern Western thought than to traditional Chinese culture. However, his

42 John W. Gough, *The Social Contract: A Critical Study of its Development*, Westport, Conn., 1978, p. 4.

43 For example, John F. McLennan argued that in the most primitive societies, 'we find marriage laws unknown, the family system undeveloped, and even the only acknowledged blood-relationship that through mothers' (*Primitive Marriage*, Chicago 1970, p. 6).

44 Henry J.S. Maine, *Ancient Law*, London 1965, p. 99.

conceptualization of the law as both the expression of and the moving force behind sociopolitical change is quite close to Shang Yang's ideas. This similarity is not incidental. The increased economic stratification of nineteenth-century European society raised new social and economic issues, such as the need to justify private property, for which the concrete notion of law provided a more effective rationale than the ill-defined idea of a social contract. The fourth century BCE in China was likewise a period of accelerating commercialization, and it was then that the idea of private land ownership developed. The importance of law increased accordingly.<sup>45</sup> The pivotal role of law in both Shang Yang's and Maine's theories of state formation may thus reflect the resemblances between the sociopolitical contexts within which these thinkers were active.

Han Feizi's approach, emphasizing technological developments and population growth as the prime movers of social development, is very similar to the schemes proposed by the nineteenth-century school of social evolution. The important inventions mentioned in Han Feizi's opening paragraph – shelter, fire, irrigation, and agriculture – strongly resemble those highlighted by the leading proponent of the social evolution theory, Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881). In his extremely influential book, *Ancient Society* (1877), Morgan divided the social evolution of mankind into three stages – savagery, barbarism, and civilization – with the two earlier stages each further subdivided into three phases. Morgan's description of two such phases in the introduction to *Ancient Society* demonstrates the general tone of this work.

(I) Lower Status of Savagery. This period commenced with the infancy of the human race, and may be said to have ended with the acquisition of a fish subsistence and of a knowledge of the use of fire. Mankind were then living in their original restricted habitat, and subsisting upon fruits and nuts. ...

(V) Middle Status of Barbarism. It commenced with the domestication of animals in the Eastern hemisphere, and in the Western with cultivation by irrigation and with the use of

45 See, for instance, Hsu, *Ancient China*, pp. 110–119; and Yang Kuan, *Zhanguo shi*, pp. 151–187 (both above, note 4).



adobe-brick and stone in architecture. ... Its termination may be fixed with the invention of the process of smelting iron ore.<sup>46</sup>

In the second part of his book, Morgan relates these phases of technological invention to the development of political organization.

Out of a few grams of thought, conceived in the early ages, have been evolved all the principal institutions of mankind. Beginning their growth in the period of savagery, fermenting through the period of barbarism, they have continued their advancement through the period of civilization.<sup>47</sup>

Like most other scholars working in the second half of the nineteenth century, Morgan based his scheme on the so-called 'comparative method,' in which contemporary societies were labeled and ordered according to their correspondence, as these scholars believed, to the different stages of human social development from remote antiquity to the present day.<sup>48</sup> Although we do not know the sources on which Han Feizi's description is based, we may conclude on the basis of the specific details of its characterization of the subsistence and customs of prehistoric societies that it was also based on some kind of ethnographic analogy, a topic to which we shall return.

The sociopolitical processes described in the two sources are not as different as they might seem at first. Where Morgan attributes the development of social institutions to a 'few grams of thought,' Han Feizi attributes them to the work of the sages.<sup>49</sup> In both cases the mechanisms of the sociopolitical process are obscured, and we are left with the impression that technological advancement is the prime mover of social change. Perhaps the rapid technological advancement witnessed by both societies under discussion encouraged thinkers to emphasize the extraordinary role of technology in human history.<sup>50</sup>

46 Lewis H. Morgan, *Ancient Society*, Cambridge, Mass., 1964, pp. 16–17.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

48 See Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (above, note 38), pp. 150–156.

49 Many other Zhanguo thinkers shared the belief that it was through the intervention of the sages that humankind was guided from an orderless society to the state; see Puett, *The Ambivalence* (above, note 1), *passim*.

50 On China's rapid technological advancement in the Zhanguo period see Hsu, *Ancient China*, pp. 130–139; Yang Kuan, *Zhanguo shi*, pp. 544–605 (both above, note 4); and Donald B. Wagner, *Iron and Steel in Ancient China*, Leiden 1993.

The emphasis placed by Shang Yang and Han Feizi on population pressure as a major factor in sociopolitical change has been echoed by many Western thinkers since the publication of Thomas Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798). It can be safely said that the ideas developed by Malthus had a profound effect on leading scholars such as Lyell, Darwin, and Spencer.<sup>51</sup> The concept of population pressure is still an important component of some anthropological theories, although Spencer, who was the first Western thinker to use it in this context, is now discredited because of the racist overtones and biological speculations in his thinking. In contemporary anthropological theory, population pressure is often posed as an explanation for the transition from a hunter-gatherer to an agricultural economy, a model first suggested by the social economist Ester Boserup. Despite recent criticism, it still enjoys much intellectual currency.<sup>52</sup>

As we saw above, Han Feizi outlined a quasi-economical, deterministic conception of human history, suggesting that human consciousness reflects changes in objective socioeconomic conditions. These views seem keenly resonant with Karl Marx's (1818–1883) famous dictum:

The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.<sup>53</sup>

As for the details, Han Feizi's model of social development is comparable not to Marx's views, but rather to the socio-evolutionary

51 See Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (above, note 38), pp. 113–129.

52 See Ester Boserup, *Conditions of Agricultural Growth: The Economics of Agrarian Change under Population Pressure*, London 1965. For criticism of her views see George L. Cowgill, 'On Causes and Consequences of Ancient and Modern Population Changes,' *American Anthropologist*, 77 (1975), pp. 505–525; and Gary M. Feinman, 'Demography, Surplus, and Inequality: Early Political Formations in Highland Mesoamerica,' in Timothy K. Earle (ed.), *Chiefdoms: Power, Economy, and Ideology*, Cambridge, U.K., 1991, pp. 230–262. For a view that supports Boserup see, e.g., Mark N. Cohen, *The Food Crisis in Prehistory*, New Haven, Conn., 1977.

53 Karl Marx, 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, Part One,' in idem and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works* (English transl. by S.W. Ryazanskaya), New York 1975 →, XXIX, p. 283.

scheme of Morton Fried. In *The Evolution of Political Society* (1967), Fried defines four progressive types of political systems: Egalitarian, Ranked, Stratified, and State. The transition from the simple to the more complex stages in this evolutionary scheme is marked by increasing competition for a decreasing number of political positions that carry increasingly large social and economic benefits.<sup>54</sup> Han Feizi and Fried seem to agree that the economic benefits attached to sociopolitical rank are the reason for the intense competition among members of complex societies. It is perhaps not surprising to find analogies between the ideas of the most politically oriented of all the Chinese thinkers and those of the most politically oriented minds in modern Western anthropology.

Like Zhuangzi, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) was a sharp critic not merely of the politics of his time but of the entire process of modernity. In the words of Orwin and Tarcov:

It was Rousseau who originated modern dissatisfaction with modernity, and he is the source of the multiple polarities through which that dissatisfaction still expresses itself today: nature versus society; sincerity versus socialization.<sup>55</sup>

Rousseau, too, disputed his contemporaries' perception of the original nature of human society. In his 'Second Discourse' (1755), Rousseau opposed Hobbes's idea that the original condition of humankind was a stage of vicious wars and abuses<sup>56</sup> and argued for an original peaceful stage when people's few needs were easily satisfied by their abundant natural environment. This ideal situation, Rousseau explained, was undermined by the emergence of private property. He saw the establishment of a political hierarchy as the culmination of social evils:

54 Morton H. Fried, *The Evolution of Political Society*, New York 1967.

55 Clifford Orwin and Nathan Tarcov, 'Introduction,' in idem (eds.), *The Legacy of Rousseau*, Chicago 1997, p. xi. Some scholars interpret Rousseau's criticism of civilization and the state as ironic, and the same might be said of Zhuangzi. Whatever their original intention was, however, the ideas of both thinkers were accepted by many contemporaries and followers at face value.

56 In one place Rousseau charges that 'Hobbes saw very clearly the defect of all modern definitions of Natural right; but the consequences he draws from his own definition show that he takes it in a sense which is no less false' (*The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, ed. R.D. Masters and C. Kelly, Hanover, N.H., 1992, III, p. 35).

The status of rich and poor was authorized by the first epoch, that of powerful and weak by the second, and by the third that of master and slave, which is the last degree of inequality and the limit to which all the others finally lead. Political distinctions necessarily bring about civil distinctions. The growing inequality between the people and its chiefs soon makes itself felt among individuals, where it is modified in a thousand ways according to passions, talents and events. The Magistrate cannot usurp illegitimate power without creating some protégé to whom he is forced to yield some part of it. Besides, citizens let themselves be oppressed only insofar as they are carried away by blind ambition; and looking more below than above them, domination becomes dearer to them than independence, and they consent to wear chains in order to give them to others in turn.<sup>57</sup>

Other leading European thinkers also identified the state with oppression and violence. Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) was not a whole-hearted advocate of the primordial idyll; like Han Feizi,<sup>58</sup> he viewed the emergence of social stratification and the state as inevitable in the course of technological and economic progress. Nonetheless, as a staunch critic of capitalist society, Engels viewed the state primarily, though not exclusively, as a tool of class oppression. Thus, though he partly shared Rousseau's (and Zhuangzi's) enthusiasm regarding the advantages of the classless society, his ideal was not the stage of Savagery but that of Barbarism:

This gentle constitution is wonderful in all its childlike simplicity! Everything runs smoothly without soldiers, gendarmes, police; without nobles, kings, governors, prefects and judges; without prisons, without trials. ... There can be no poor and needy – the communistic household and gens know their obligation towards the aged, the sick and those disabled in war. All are free and equal – including women. ... That is what mankind and human society were like before class divisions arose.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>58</sup> Engels was inspired by Morgan's theory of the stages of social evolution, whose resemblance to Han Feizi's views is discussed above.

<sup>59</sup> Friedrich Engels, 'Origins of the Family, Private Property and State,' in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (above, note 53), XXVI, pp. 202–203.

Engels adds:

This organization was doomed to extinction; ... the power of these naturally evolved communities had to be broken and it was broken. But it was broken by influences which from the outset appear to us as degradation, a fall from the simple moral grandeur of the old gentile society. The lowest interests – base greed, brutal sensuality, sordid avarice, selfish plunder of common possessions – usher in the new, civilized society, class society; the most outrageous means – theft, rape, deceit and treachery – undermine and topple the old, classless, gentile society. And the new society, during all 2,500 years of its existence, has never been anything but the development of the small minority at the expense of the exploited and oppressed great majority; and it is so today more than ever before.<sup>60</sup>

Some critics of social injustice in the twentieth century, Marxists and non-Marxists alike, continued to look back at primeval society as a possible (should we say imagined?) alternative to the class divisions, oppression, and inequality embedded in modern society. Idealization of society without state thus remained a powerful tool for critiquing the vicissitudes of the present.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>61</sup> See Ernest Gellner, *State and Society in Soviet Thought*, Oxford 1987, pp. 18–38, for Soviet scholars' admiration of primordial societies devoid of class, state, and the exploitation and inequality characteristic of class society; cf. Akademiia Nauk SSSR, Institut Gosudarstva i Prava, *Marksistsko-Leninskaia Obshchaia Teoriia Gosudarstva i Prava: Istoricheskie Tipy Gosudarstva i Prava*, Moscow 1971. In China, archaeological debates regarding the sociopolitical makeup of those primitive societies, and especially the status of women and the type of family relations that prevailed in them, have been invoked both to support rigid Marxist dogma and to challenge it and to champion traditional 'Chinese values'; see Gideon Shelach, 'Evolution or Continuity? Marxist and Post-Marxist Paradigms for Gender Archaeology of the Chinese Neolithic Period,' in K. Linduff and Sun Yan (eds.), *Gender and Chinese Archaeology*, Walnut Creek, Calif., forthcoming. Curiously enough, eighteenth-century idealism, and even a westernized version of Chinese Daoism, reappear in modern anthropological writings on hunter-gatherer societies. For instance, Marshall D. Sahlins claimed that hunter-gatherers lived in the 'original affluent society' and followed the 'Zen road to affluence.' In such societies, 'human material wants are finite and few, and technical means unchanging but on the whole adequate. Adopting the Zen strategy, a people can enjoy an unparalleled material plenty – with a low standard of living' (Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, Chicago 1972, p. 2).

The view that the state emerged to allow humankind to fulfill its basic needs appeared in the West at an earlier stage of intellectual development than in China. Plato and Aristotle apparently were the first to propose this idea; in Aristotle's view, 'the *polis* ... completes and fulfils the nature of man; it is natural to him ... it is the presupposition of his true and full life.'<sup>62</sup> He was echoed more than fifteen centuries later by Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), in words strongly reminiscent of Xunzi's:

It is natural for man, more than for any other animal, to be a social and political animal, to live in a group. This is clearly a necessity of man's nature. For all other animals, nature has prepared food, hair as a covering, teeth, horns, claws as means of defense or at least speed in flight, while man alone was made without any natural provisions for these things. If, then, it is natural for man to live in the society of many, it is necessary that there exist among men some means by which the group may be governed. For where there are many men together and each one is looking after his own interest, the multitude would be broken up and scattered unless there were also an agency to take care of what appertains to the commonweal.<sup>63</sup>

The moral justification of the state promulgated by Aquinas remained influential in later stages in the development of European political thought.<sup>64</sup> In the nineteenth century, for example, Adolf Lasson (1832–1917) echoed Aquinas's ahistorical view of the state in terms quite similar to Xunzi's:

There are no men without continuity of social life. There is no continuity of social life without order. There is no order without law. There is no law without coercive force. There is no coercive force without organization. And this organization is the State.<sup>65</sup>

Just as Xunzi's a-historical view helped him undermine Zhuangzi's arguments, so did Aristotle's and Aquinas's modern successors

62 *The Politics of Aristotle*, p. 2 (above, note 37).

63 See Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship: To the King of Cyprus* (English transl. by G.B. Phelan), Toronto 1949, pp. 4–6.

64 For a detailed discussion of Aquinas's impact on later theoretical thinking, see Thomas Gilby, *Principality and Polity: Aquinas and the Rise of State Theory in the West*, London 1958.

65 Sicker, *The Genesis of the State* (above, note 38), p. 51.

abandon history in order to facilitate their polemics with anarchist and Marxist critics of the state.<sup>66</sup>

Many other European scholars, from Hegel (1770–1831) to Marx and Engels, rejected Aquinas’s a-historical approach but in one way or another shared his – and Xunzi’s – belief in the advantages of the state as the only appropriate means for humankind to cope with nature.<sup>67</sup> An eminent Marxist anthropologist, Gordon Childe, reinforced the view that organized society is an adaptive mechanism enabling the human race to compete with other animals and cope with the harsh environment:

The rabbit carries paws to dig with, the lion claws and teeth for tearing his prey, the beaver carpenter’s tusks, most beasts hairy or furry coats to keep in warmth. ... Man has very little equipment of this sort. ... It is replaced by tools. ... [The child's] parents and elders will teach it how to make and use equipment in accordance with the experience gathered by ancestral generations. And the equipment it uses is itself just a concrete expression of this social tradition. A tool is a social product and man is a social animal. ... In practice even the rudest savages live in groups organized to cooperate in getting food and preparing equipment as well as in performing ceremonies.<sup>68</sup>

In China, as we shall see below, Xunzi’s views marked the beginning of the end of the debates about the origin of the state. The age of rapid reforms ended, and the state was increasingly understood as a natural entity. On the other side of the Eurasian continent,

66 ‘A-historicism’ was the major accusation directed by Soviet scholars against ‘idealistic views’ that tried to conceal the nature of the state ‘as a tool of class oppression’ (Akademii Nauk, *Marksistsko-Leninskaia* [above, note 61], pp. 113–119, *passim*).

67 Hegel conceived of the state as the only rational way to satisfy human needs. For him, as for Xunzi, society without state was meaningless; see his *Philosophy of Right* (English transl. by T.M. Knox), London 1967. Hegel’s view of the state as reflecting the division of labour in human society and of the state’s importance in the satisfaction of human needs also influenced Marx and Engels, notwithstanding their criticism of the state as a tool of class oppression; see Engels, ‘Anti-Dühring,’ in *Collected Works* (above, note 53), XXV, pp. 166–167.

68 Gordon Childe, *What Happened in History*, New York 1942, pp. 8–16. Notably, Childe’s theoretical model was not a-historical, like that of Xunzi, but evolutionist, like that of Morgan and Han Feizi.

views like his appeared at the very dawn of Occidental political thought, and by the nineteenth century they were partly sidelined by competing evolutionary theories. Yet in the twentieth century, Western political thought gradually came to endorse the idea of the naturalness of the state. Western and Chinese political thought developed along distinct trajectories, but similarities between them are undeniable. We shall now try to explain both the similarities and the differences between these two discourses on the origin of the state.

*Comparing and Contrasting Chinese and European Theories of the Origins of the State*

The comparisons suggested above should not obscure crucial differences between the sociopolitical theories developed in China during the third quarter of the first millennium BCE and those current among Western thinkers. One such difference lies in the tendency of Western thinkers to emphasize individual freedom as a basic, God-given right; as John Milton forcefully asserted: ‘No man who knows ought can be so stupid to deny that all men naturally were born free, being the image and resemblance of God Himself.’<sup>69</sup> This attitude is much less evident among Chinese thinkers.

Furthermore, the Chinese descriptions of the development of the state offer no theory of diffusion, an idea advocated, for example, by Adam Ferguson (1723–1818). Such theories were widely held by many Western scholars through the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>70</sup> China’s geopolitical situation apparently forestalled the development of such a notion. Similarly, China lacked the notion of inter-societal conflicts having prompted the emergence of the state, traceable in the West back to Hobbes and advocated by many later thinkers, through Spencer to Robert L. Carneiro.<sup>71</sup> That such ideas are absent from

69 John Milton, ‘The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,’ in *Complete Prose Work of John Milton*, ed. D.M. Wolfe, New Haven, Conn., 1962, III, p. 198.

70 An extreme example of this type of explanation appears in G.E. Smith’s *The Ancient Egyptians and the Origin of Civilization* (London 1923), in which the development of all human civilization is explained as a process of diffusion from Egypt.

71 On the Western theory that inter-societal conflicts catalyzed the formation of the state see the brief summary of Elman R. Service, ‘Classical and Modern Theories of



Chinese discourse may be attributable to the explicitly inclusive nature of China's political culture, which viewed the unification of All under Heaven under a single ruler as the only reasonable and desirable outcome of political developments. Under this paradigm, inter-society conflicts were treated as a temporary anomaly and not as a meaningful factor in human history or, particularly, in state formation. With the single exception of the 'Dang bing' 蕩兵 chapter in *Lüshi chunqiu*, Chinese thinkers of the Age of Warring States refused to associate war with such a positive function as the generation of political order.<sup>72</sup> Finally, Chinese thinkers lacked anything resembling the notion of class struggle engendering the state as a tool of class oppression, as advocated by Marx and Engels.

On the other hand, a distinctive aspect of the Chinese models of state formation that is essentially absent from modern Western theories appears in the role played by the sages (*sheng ren* 聖人), China's cultural and political heroes. While Chinese political thought, with the major exception of Mozi, attributed no significant role to Heaven and other gods, the sages commonly appear as demiurges whose achievements bring about the creation of the state and other social institutions. The role ascribed to them reflects the Chinese thinkers' deep belief in the extraordinary importance of leaders whose intellectual and moral qualities made them counterparts of Heaven – the highest deity in the Chinese pantheon. That notion is largely absent from Western thought.<sup>73</sup>

There are further differences between Chinese and Western theories of the origins of the state. Even the parallel models that developed in China

the Origins of the Government,' in idem and Cohen, *Origins of the State* (above, note 38), pp. 23–25. See also Robert L. Carneiro (ed.), *The Evolution of Society*, Chicago 1967, pp. 32–33; and idem, 'Theory of the Origins of the State,' *Science*, 169 (1970), pp. 733–738.

72 See *Lüshi chunqiu*, 'Dang bing' 蕩兵, 7.2:383. On the paradigm of political unity and its impact on China's political culture see Pines, "'The One that Pervades the All" in Ancient Chinese Political Thought: Origins of "The Great Unity" Paradigm,' *T'oung Pao*, 86 (2000), pp. 280–324. Notably, even in this passage from the *Lüshi chunqiu* the outcome of military conflict is the complete unification of the world under the Son of Heaven, and not the existence of separate states.

73 For more on the role of sages in Chinese political thought see Liu Zehua, *Zhongguo chuantong* (above, note 1), pp. 477–496. On the sages as creators of culture and their interactions with Heaven see also Puett, *The Ambivalence* (above, note 1), pp. 9–140.

and the West are not necessarily employed to further similar political positions. For example, evolutionary models were often proposed in the West in support of either liberal or Marxist political theory, while in China they were invariably advanced by advocates of autocratic rule. Yet, notwithstanding these and other differences, one cannot ignore the striking similarities demonstrated above. These cannot be explained merely on the basis of the psychological uniformity of humankind, regardless of historical period. The need to address similar sociopolitical issues is rooted in the concrete political situations in which the thinkers under discussion lived and worked. The fifth to the third centuries BCE in China and the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries CE in Europe were periods of extensive sociopolitical transformation, during which views of the past were closely connected to views of current affairs. In both societies, technological innovations coupled with the breakdown of traditional social institutions created a fertile ground for the flourishing of contradictory sociopolitical theories. Conservative laments over the lost 'golden age' and, conversely, paeans to the 'progress' of human civilization, in China and in the West, may be seen in this context as attempts to use the past as a way to make sense of the ever-changing present.

This by no means suggests that the controversy over the development of human society was merely a scholarly disguise for political debate. In both societies, the rapid development of new political forms seems to have given rise to genuine questions about sociopolitical processes in human society. These were periods of vigorous intellectual discussion, as the thinkers discussed above and others engaged in private argument and public controversy. This atmosphere formed the background to a genuine interest in the past, which encouraged ingenious intellectual attempts to explain the development of human society.

In the periods under discussion, the rapid broadening of cultural horizons apparently contributed to the theories of state formation that each society evolved. In the process of territorial expansion, both Chinese and Europeans came into contact with alien societies less complex than the ones into which they were born. The descriptions of the customs and social institutions of these societies that were available in China and in the West were an important catalyst in the formulation of sociopolitical models. The intuitive conclusion that these less complex societies represented primitive phases out of which contemporary society had developed seems to have been shared by

Western and Chinese scholars. Often, such schemes were not merely intellectual exercises; they also served to legitimize the paramount position of the powerful societies to which the scholars belonged.<sup>74</sup>

Beyond this, increased contact with foreign cultures led in both China and Europe to the development of an elaborate tradition of ethnographic writing (to use the Western term). Systematic accounts of tribes living within and beyond the political boundaries of imperial China are to be found in the historical books of the Han dynasty (漢, 206 BCE to 220 CE),<sup>75</sup> and similar, albeit less detailed accounts are scattered throughout Zhanguo texts. As the passage cited above from the *Lüshi chunqiu* suggests, observation of the lives of neighbouring peoples and tribes may have been a major source for the Zhanguo depictions of primeval society. In the West, too, expansion and contacts with non-Western peoples were an important stimulus to the development of anthropological thought. As Regna Darnell has pointed out, ‘although the results were not immediate, the increased cultural contacts that followed the Age of Discovery ultimately resulted in a revision of the traditional European view of human nature.’<sup>76</sup> The varying human societies, cultures, and customs encountered through the West’s colonization of the New World and its intrusion into the interior of Africa had an impact upon the consciousness of European intellectuals.<sup>77</sup> Explicitly and implicitly, the need to ‘make sense’ of this chaos and variability was one of the important forces spurring the debate on the origins of the state and the evolution of sociopolitical organization.

74 See, e.g., Edward B. Tylor’s outspoken statement in his *Anthropology* (1899) on historical lessons that favour the Old World nations, quoted in Harris, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (above, note 38), p. 140.

75 For instance, Chaps. 110 and 123 of the *Shiji* (史記, ‘Records of the Historian,’ written by Sima Qian 司馬遷, c. 145–90 BCE), respectively, give detailed descriptions of the lifestyles of China’s northern and western neighbours.

76 Regna Darnell (ed.), *Readings in the History of Anthropology*, New York 1974, p. 79.

77 Those contacts had a much broader impact on European popular culture. Through popular travel literature, descriptions of ‘primitive’ cultures reached a large audience, beyond the narrow circle of intellectuals and social thinkers (*ibid.*, pp. 79–88).

*Epilogue: Decline of the Chinese Discourse about the Origins of the State*

In the West, the theories regarding the origins and development of the state developed between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries CE matured into an independent field of study, anthropology. In China, on the other hand, interest in these questions seems to have subsided after the imperial unification of the late third century BCE. Although descriptions of foreign people continued to appear in dynastic histories, they no longer stimulated hypotheses about the development of the society in which the Chinese themselves lived. The long period of political stability under the Han dynasty was a blessing to the people, but it was less conducive to vigorous debate on fundamental sociopolitical issues. The growth of intellectual orthodoxy as from the second century BCE likewise discouraged scholars from seeking new departures. The new imperial establishment promoted specialists in the ‘classical’ texts, not proponents of new political theories. The resultant lack of creativity in imperial political thought is reflected in the rapid decline of interest in the process of state formation. The orthodox view of state formation was adopted from a commentary on one of the main classical texts, the *Yi jing* (易經, ‘Book of Changes’). The anonymous authors of the *Xu gua* 序卦 commentary (compiled around the third century BCE) claimed that the state was the natural product of the process of human society’s emergence:

After Heaven and Earth, myriad things appeared. After myriad things, male and female appeared. After male and female, husband and wife appeared. After husband and wife, father and son appeared. After father and son, ruler and ministers appeared. After ruler and ministers, superiors and inferiors appeared. When there were superiors and inferiors, ritual and music were established.<sup>78</sup>

The authors of *Xu gua* viewed the process of state formation as one of mechanical evolution, which began with the appearance of humankind and concluded with the establishment of ritual and music – the ultimate attributes of civilized society. This approach sounds rather simplistic in comparison with the ideas discussed above. Nevertheless, it efficiently undermined the criticisms of Zhuangzi and other detractors of

78 Zhou Zhenfu 周振甫, *Zhouyi yizhu* 周易譯注, Beijing 1994, ‘Xu gua 序卦,’ p. 295.

organized society. For later thinkers, state and social distinctions were as essential as the distinctions between male and female; they were irreversible, natural, and beyond any reasonable criticism. Though they lacked Xunzi's sophistication, the *Xu gua* authors effectively reached the same conclusions: They justified the state as a natural, presumably eternal social mechanism.

Although the West did not undergo anything similar to China's imperial unification, we may suggest that here, too, a prolonged period of stable state society may be associated with decreased interest in the debate over the origins of social complexity. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries such issues were important both in the formulation of sociopolitical theory and in the public debate over current political issues. Like their Chinese counterparts, Western thinkers 'used the past to serve the present.' Different political thinkers used theories about ancient societies and the evolution of the state either to legitimize imperialist intrusions into Africa and the New World or to naturalize socioeconomic gaps; to encourage class struggle or to justify the institutions of the nation-state. Today, theories regarding the origins of the state no longer play an active political role. The ongoing debate on these issues is conducted among professional anthropologists, and in the field of anthropology it is confined mainly to the discipline of archaeology. This can be blamed on the professionalization of the social sciences, but we argue that it also has to do with the fact that for most people, including scholars and social thinkers, state society is the only conceivable way of life. Under such conditions, without ever coming into contact with other types of living societies, this discussion has lost its relevancy.