CHAPTER FIVE

CHINA’S FUTURE ECONOMIC IDEALS

We have discussed the most important, present-day economic principles of China, but these are still not the ultimate ideals of China. The ancient scholars studied the truth embodied in the economic principles that Sun Yat-sen understood so clearly. During his lifetime, he discussed both policies and methods, and he praised the chapter, “The Great Harmony,” [Ta T’ung] in the Book of Rites, which embodies the final economic goal of the Three People’s Principles, i.e., the economic ideals that China should strive to realize.

Though world development cannot be foreseen in detail, its abstract principles should be thoroughly understood. The same holds true for economic development. No one can foretell the details, but everyone should understand the principles. Some of these principles have already become facts, while others have not yet been translated into practice. But these principles are not altered simply because all of them have not yet been put into effect. The ancient wise men of China understood all the principles of economic development, and the chapter “The Great Harmony” in the Book of Rites pictures a world in which all these principles are actually enforced.

In the world of the “Great Harmony” when human nature is developed to the highest point, no one will be able to earn a living by sitting idle and none will be unable to find work. All adults should work, and the social system will be such as to provide every adult with the opportunity to fulfill his obligation. This is what is meant by the saying: “Adults shall be of service.” Moreover, everyone should strive to earn a
living for mankind and not for himself. Thus the "Great Harmony" states: "It is regrettable if one does not work. What he does is not necessarily for himself."

The people's livelihood as described in the world of the "Great Harmony" is entirely satisfactory. All resources must be developed for the people's use, and the failure to develop these resources is a fault. The development of production will result in surplus products, but these should not be privately owned or used for satisfying private wants. Hence the statement: "It is regrettable if any resources are not developed. Such resources when developed are not necessarily for personal use."

The economic activities proposed in the world of the "Great Harmony" provide a most satisfactory basis for progress. The producers produce for the welfare of mankind and the distributors distribute according to the needs of each individual. The people as a whole have the responsibility and ability to support those who have passed or have not yet attained working age, as well as those who are unable to work. This is what is meant by the statement: "Old enabled to work, minors enabled to grow, and widowers, widows, orphans, and disabled given support."

The economics of the world of the "Great Harmony" are based entirely on the people's livelihood. In this ideal world, there are no punishments because no one commits crimes. There is no war because no nation adopts an aggressive policy. Thus the book states: "No plots, no robbers, no thieves, no rebels, and consequently no doors necessary." As explained in the Book of Rites, economic policies based on the people's livelihood constitute the only correct road to the "world in harmony." There is no other way to realize our economic ideals.¹

¹ This passage on the "Great Harmony" is perhaps the most striking example of the book's attempt (1) to portray the ancient sages of China as omniscient guides to the principles of economics, and (2) to assert the superiority of all things Chinese over all things Western. The author blandly ignores the fact that the authors of the "Great Harmony" had