Summary

Han Yu (768-824 A.D.) was a great literary theorist and a leader of the Classical Language Movement of the Tang dynasty. He was also a staunch proponent of Confucianism. Hence, most research discussed his role in the literary history in China or his contribution to Confucianism. However, as a prominent scholar, Han Yu had his own ideas in economics. Since there is little research in this area, it is the purpose of this thesis to present a thorough and detailed examination of his economic thought so as to have a better understanding of him, other than as a great literary theorist, a philosopher and a politician in Chinese history.

Chapter one deals with the aims, scope and methodology used in the thesis as well as research questions. There would be a comparison with other scholars of Han Yu's times so as to reflect the economic significance and value of his thought. A review of literature of Han Yu's economic thought is also included. It is noted that contemporary scholars unanimously criticized his proposed monetary solutions in dealing the sustained and grave economic problem of low commodity prices and high purchasing power of money (possibly similar to contemporary definition of deflation). For this research, materials would be drawn from original historical records and some other secondary materials so as to provide a most thorough discussion.
Chapter two consists of a brief account of the factors contributing to the formulation of Han Yu's economic thought. These include the socio-economic background of his times and the influences from pre-Qin philosophers' economic thought, especially Confucianism, in the early period of his life.

Chapter three is a comprehensive study of Han Yu's economic ideas. His ideas on the social equality of peasants, artisans and merchants, and the division of labour, agriculture, industry and commerce and taxation are a reflection of Han Yu as a pragmatic person with the unmoving Confucian concept of loyalty to the ruler. These are distinguishing features of his economic thought and they differentiate him from other scholars and thinkers of his times.

Chapter four carefully evaluates and analyzes the effectiveness of his proposed financial solutions (namely taxation and monetary) in solving the sustained and grave economic problem of low commodity prices and high purchasing power of money. This is explored through comparison with other scholars of his times.

The final chapter serves as a conclusion of the thesis. The findings of the thesis suggest that although there are limitations to his ideas and flaws in his proposed financial solutions to the existing monetary problem, Han Yu still occupies an important place in the history of the Chinese economic thought.