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PO BOX 1536 NEW YORK NEW YORK 10017

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**THE MAKING  
of the  
NEW HUMAN BEING  
in the  
PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

THREE ARTICLES

by

Dr. K. T. Fann

Philosophy in the Chinese  
Cultural Revolution  
China and the Ethics of  
Liberation

An Interview With Professor  
Fung Yu-lan of Peking  
University: Philosophy  
in the New China



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Dr K T Fann was born in Taiwan in 1937 and came to the United States in 1955. He received his MA in Philosophy from the University of Illinois, and a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Hawaii.

Dr Fann has taught at Cleveland State University and Florida State University. Presently he is a full professor at Atkinson College, York University, Canada.

Dr Fann has published books on Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy" and "Pierce's Theory of Abduction"; he has edited many books, including "Readings on US Imperialism" and a forthcoming Anchor book "From the Other Side of the River, A Self-Portrait of China Today".

In 1973 Dr Fann founded an international and interdisciplinary quarterly of social thought, "Social Praxis".

In 1972 Dr Fann visited the People's Republic of China for a month, during which time he was privileged to have an extended conversation with Premier Chou En-lai.

The articles by Dr Fann published in this issue of FAR EAST REPORTER are some of the results of his trip to China. He is currently working on a book on the philosophy of Mao Tse-tung.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

These three articles are printed with the permission of the author.

"The Ethics of Liberation: The Example of China" appeared in the April 1974 issue of the Monthly Review (New York) and is reprinted with their permission. Far East Reporter, with the concurrence of Professor Fann, has made some changes in the article.

The "Interview With Professor Fung Yu-lan" appeared in Social Praxis (Vol 1/2 1973)

## THE MAKING of the NEW HUMAN BEING in the PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

*Dr. K. T. Fann*

### FAR EAST REPORTER INTRODUCTION

The timely articles of Professor Fann on philosophy and on ethics and the interview with Professor Fung Yu-lan, an outstanding historian of Chinese philosophy, lucidly and concisely present many key aspects of the revolutionary changes in philosophy and ethics occurring in socialist China. These articles provide insights as to the profound advances being made by millions there in these basic ideological spheres. These advances are a guide and spur to peoples elsewhere striving to win their way to a socialist future.

Dialectical materialism as scientific philosophy, comprising very general aspects - especially the laws of dialectics - present in all things and processes, is therefore also a very general method which uses these very general aspects as a guide in investigating and solving problems. Frederick Engels, co-synthesizer with Marx of this philosophy, termed it "our best weapon, our sharpest tool."

Much of prior philosophy, including even most of those who made scientific contributions, was elitist, written for a select few. Thus Plato advocated telling the free citizenry of Athens (slaves were excluded as nonpersons) "noble lies" and Kant declared his contempt for "the applause of the multitude of which a philosopher should be ashamed." At the same time in class society - whether slave, feudal or capitalist - the bulk of philosophy is such turgid, obscurantist jargon that the few hardier enquirers seeking enlightenment frequently reject philosophy as beyond their powers or as nonsense, and in any event of no practical significance. In this context Ambrose Pierce defined philosophy as "many roads from nowhere to nothing."

Philosophy in the People's Republic of China, Prof. Fann makes clear, is fundamentally different. Instead of the many thousand year-old separation of practice from theory or the subordination of practice to theory (correlated with the separation of manual from mental labor and the subordination of the former to the latter), in China the mass of people are learning to comprehend them in their interdependence, with practice as preeminent. Millions there already, and the number is rapidly growing, are learning and applying dialectical materialism to their daily as well as to their most profound concerns. This provides a happy marriage of the preeminence of practice and of the mass line, and gives a powerful impetus to the dissemination and development of dialectical materialism.

The cultural revolution was a milestone in this direction, one of many that will be necessary to fully and finally cast off the deeply ingrained ideological carryover from class society. This involves a complex and protracted struggle, preserving what is positive and casting aside all that is backward and outworn: the habits, customs, superstitions, and modes of thought of a prescientific or anti-scientific character as well as values that tend to preserve exploitive society. The process is all the more difficult in that socialist transition, like all transitions in nature and society, has powerful forward and backward tendencies locked in conflict, the latter being to some extent nourished by a still limited level of production and by capitalist encirclement.

Currently the claim is being widely made in the United States about "Philosophers are back on the job" (title of a New York Times magazine article 7/7/74). But the job they are back on, asserting they are better able to be "relevant" is not one of proselytizing dialectical materialism. Essentially they are proclaiming to the powers-that-be - in a situation fraught with popular upsurge seeking theoretical answers - the need for their services in keeping philosophic instruction in the United States in bourgeois limits, in trying to conceal even the existence of dialectical materialism. No jail is more secure than one whose existence is unknown to its inmates. Equally, the ignorant are nearer knowledge than the misinformed. In starting, as Mao Tse-tung declared, with clean white paper (rather than the scrib-

bled over one typical of people in bourgeois society) the hitherto uninformed Chinese peasants are forging intellectually ahead (and materially, in that none go hungry or fear for their livelihood).

The People's Republic of China, by completing further cultural revolutions in coordination with raising the productive level so as to remunerate people according to their needs, can attain the historic honor of becoming the first nation of worker-philosophers. Marx foretold: "Our philosophy will become a world philosophy, the world will become a philosophical world." And such a leap forward from the realm of necessity to that of freedom of nearly one fourth of humanity will augur well for the future of the rest.

PHILOSOPHY  
IN THE  
CHINESE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

K T Fann

The Chinese Cultural Revolution is the most radical transformation of society ever attempted on such a vast scale; no wonder its development involves the most radical transformation of philosophy. This essay attempts to trace the development of this unprecedented revolution in philosophy which is profoundly affecting the lives of a quarter of mankind.

A proper appreciation of the transformation of philosophy in China requires some understanding of the origin, the development, and the goal of the cultural revolution. The Chinese revolution is conceived by Mao as a continuing revolution to be carried out in stages. There are three main stages: new democratic, socialist, and communist. The first stage was mainly anti-feudalist and anti-imperialist. It aimed at completing the democratic revolution led by Dr Sun Yat-sen in 1911. It is called "the new democratic stage" because it is different from the old one in that the working class played the leadership role rather than the bourgeoisie. Being an appendage of imperialism, the Chinese bourgeoisie was incapable of making the revolution. The revolution, however, was carried out by a

united front of all anti-feudalist and anti-imperialist elements, including the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. According to Mao, the working class leadership was necessary to guarantee that the revolution would move beyond the new democratic stage.

The political victory in 1949 was only the beginning of the transition from the new democratic to the socialist stage. To reorganize and rebuild a vast war-devastated land, the Communist Party needed all the help and cooperation it could get - including the national bourgeoisie and especially the intellectuals. The whole cultural field or the superstructure - especially the artistic and educational institutions - was staffed by these intellectuals. Even though the majority of the intellectuals were not Marxists, Mao said, "They can serve the new China as they did the old, and serve the proletariat as they did the bourgeoisie."

Meanwhile, the economic life of China was transformed step by step into a socialist one. By 1958, with the communization of the countryside, a socialist economic system was established at the base. The commune is to become the basic social, economic, cultural, educational, political and military unit of the socialist society. It is the solution to the contradictions between the city and the countryside, between the industrial worker and the peasantry, and between the intellectual and the worker. In the commune of the future Communist society there will be no distinction between

peasant, worker, soldier, and white collar staff, no division between industrial, agricultural and intellectual labor.

The transformation of the economic base, however, is only half of the task. The superstructure or the cultural institutions must also be transformed before the revolution can advance to a higher stage. In his essay "On Contradiction", written in 1937, Mao said that "When the superstructure" (politics, culture etc) "obstructs the development of the economic base, political and cultural changes become principal and decisive." In anticipation of the question whether this goes against materialism, a question many Marxists now ask about the cultural revolution, Mao answered no. "The reason is that while we recognize that in the general development of history the material determines the mental and social being determines social consciousness, we also - and indeed must - recognize the reaction of mental and material things, of social consciousness on social being and of the superstructure on the economic base. This does not go against materialism, it avoids mechanical materialism and firmly upholds dialectical materialism." (1)

The cultural revolution aimed at transforming those cultural institutions which were inherited from old China and copied from the West by terminating the intellectuals' control over these institutions. The united front was broken up and the working class was to assume leadership in all fields.

The transformation of culture requires a different form of struggle.

As Mao puts it: "Ideological struggle is not like other forms of struggle. The only method to be used in this struggle is that of painstaking reasoning and not crude coercion." (2)

The transition from Capitalism to Socialism involves a gradual replacement of coercion with persuasion as a means of resolving contradictions. This process requires the constant politicalization of the masses, on the one hand, and the re-education of the intellectuals, on the other.

As a prelude to the cultural revolution, a vast "socialist education movement" was launched on a national scale in the early sixties. This campaign started with discussion meetings in the communes and factories on the issues involved in the Sino-Soviet split. Every major Soviet document attacking China was translated and published in daily newspapers without comments, after which throughout China peasants and workers would hold discussion meetings. A few weeks later the Central Committee would publish its reply to the Soviet attack followed by more discussion sessions. At the same time, an intensive study of Mao's writings was urged. The goal of this movement was

to make the masses ideologically conscious, to make them aware of the political issues which would affect their future. As was described by Engels in his anticipation of the time when the economy of a society would be socialized, "The whole sphere of the conditions of life which surround man, and which have hitherto ruled man, now comes under the dominion and control of man....The laws of his own social action, hitherto standing face to face with man as laws of nature foreign to and dominating him, will now be used with full understanding and so mastered by him. Man's own social organization, hitherto confronting him as a necessity imposed by nature and history, now becomes the result of his own free action....Only from that time will man himself, more and more consciously, make his own history." (3)

Mao believes that the time has arrived in China when the masses can consciously decide the kind of society they wish to construct. As he pointed out recently: "Line and viewpoint must be talked over constantly and repeatedly. It won't do to talk them over with only a few people; they must be made known to all the revolutionary masses." (4) The masses, having participated in the discussions of the international struggle between revisionism and socialism, were therefore very aware of the existence of the two-line struggle within China. The socialist education movement thus prepared the masses ideologically for the next stage of the revolution, i.e. the cultural revolution.

This campaign culminated in a grand debate on philosophy in 1965. The role of philosophy in socialist society was under discussion by peasants and workers, on the one hand, and by the intellectuals, especially professional philosophers, on the other. To understand this debate, we must first look at Mao's conception of philosophy. Mao says: "Ever since class society came into being the world has had only two kinds of knowledge, knowledge of the struggle for production and knowledge of the class struggle. Natural science and social science are the crystallizations of these two kinds of knowledge and summation of the knowledge of nature and the knowledge of society." (5)

(Mao, in "Where Do Correct Ideas Come From?" says that correct ideas come from "Three kinds of social practice - the struggle for production, the class struggle, and scientific experimentation.")

This conception is similar to the one expressed by Marx in the German Ideology, where he envisioned the day when "philosophy as an independent branch of activity loses its medium of existence. At best, its place can be taken only by a summing up of the most general results, abstractions which arise from the observations of the historical development of man." (6)

As the generalization or summing up of the knowledge gained in the struggle for production and the class struggle, the major job of philosophy, for Mao, consists not only in organizing a body of theoretical knowledge but above all in being a guide to action. Echoing Marx's famous 11th thesis on Feuerbach, Mao says: "The most important problem does not lie in

understanding the laws of the objective world and thus being able to explain it, but in applying the knowledge of these laws actively to change the world." (7) His major contributions to philosophy, On Practice and On Contradiction, consist of general methodological guidelines for revolution. On Practice analyzes the relationship between theory and practice with emphasis on practice. It is, in fact, a summation of what we call the scientific method. On Contradiction introduces a system of distinctions between principal and non-principal contradictions, and between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions. This constitutes, as he says, "an essential method by which a revolutionary political party correctly determines its strategic and tactical policies." (8)

The vital essence of Marxism lies in its method. Engels emphasized, "(Marx's) way of viewing things is not a doctrine but a method. It does not provide ready-made dogmas, but criterion for further research and the method for this research." (10) Lenin also emphasized again and again that Marxism is not a dogma but a guide to action. One needs to realize the primacy of methodology in Mao's thought in order to understand the transformation of philosophy in China. In Mao's writings, materialism and idealism are not just theories about the world but are primarily methods of inquiry. When Mao speaks of changing a person's world outlook he does not mean only changing his ontology but changing his way of thinking. Thus he

says: "The dialectical world outlook teaches us primarily how to observe and analyze the movement of opposites in different things and, on the basis of such analysis, to indicate the methods for resolving contradictions." (11) Again, "It is necessary to educate our comrades in the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge, so that they can orientate their thinking correctly, become good at investigation and study and at summing up experience..." (12)

The "Socialist Education Movement" was a movement to teach peasants, workers, and soldiers how to philosophize, to think for themselves, to debate, and to reason. They began by reading the works of Mao, since his writings constitute a first-hand summing up of the experience of the Chinese revolution, a successful revolution in which they themselves participated. The mass movement to propagate Mao Tse-tung's Thought places special emphasis on the creative application of Mao's method in the analysis and solution of concrete problems arising from their work.

Not only are the workers studying philosophy and applying it, they are also encouraged to write philosophy and to sum up their experience in their own fields of work. Thus since 1965, innumerable philosophical essays by workers, peasants and soldiers were published in newspapers and collected in anthologies. These are typical titles: "The Dialectics of Bus Driving", was written by a bus driver; "Philosophy at the Counter", by

the manager of a department store; "Unity of Opposites and Leading A Brigade", by the commander of a brigade; "The Contradiction Between Offense and Defense in Ping-Pong", by the world champion ping-pong player; and "The Dialectics of Growing Peanuts", by the now famous peasant farmer who is one of the favorite guest lecturers being invited to different philosophy departments. These essays are written in a lively style, devoid of footnotes and philosophical jargon. They are strikingly different from the professional writings of career philosophers.

In contrast with the traditional philosophy which begins with wonder, it may be said that for the Chinese philosophy begins with a task. Bourgeois philosophers wonder about how to prove the existence of the external world, or wonder about the existence of other worlds. With good reasons, these problems do not exist for the workers and peasants of China; the masses in China learn philosophy so that they can apply it creatively to solve specific problems. Contrary to the widespread belief in the West that the intensive mass study of Mao's writings breeds dogmatism in thought and conformity in action, it, in fact, inculcates open-mindedness and introduces the scientific attitude to the masses for the first time. Thus when a ping-pong player or a peasant farmer attributes his success to his diligent study of Mao's writings, it is not an act of reverence, but an indication that he indeed finds Mao's method of analysis helpful.

The intensive study of the dialectical method has a most noticeable and beneficial effect on the attitude of the people. For example, a drilling machine operator who invented a new-type drill bit says, "Everything in the world is changing and manifests itself at a certain stage in the process of its development. Therefore our thinking should not overstep the given stage of the objective things, and we should not do at present what can only be done in the future, dreaming of accomplishing everything at one stroke. Nevertheless as the objective things change, our thinking must change accordingly, so that we will not lag behind the development of objective reality and not use old experience to solve new problems". (14) This same attitude I encounter everywhere in China. It is this aspect of the Chinese revolution in philosophy I find most impressive.

While the masses were learning to philosophize a simultaneous debate on the role of philosophy went on among professional philosophers. Professional philosophy in China up until 1966 was quite similar to what exists in Soviet Russia and the West. There were philosophy departments in the universities, staffed by professional philosophers giving courses in the history of philosophy, Marxist classics, and Chinese philosophy. Philosophers would write scholarly essays and publish them in philosophical journals, and they presumed a special role for themselves in the future society. Thus Chou Yang, the former deputy head of the Propaganda De-

partment of the Party, said in a widely circulated and translated pamphlet: "Workers in philosophy and social sciences are spokesmen of the ideology of a class; they are an important force in creating intellectual values and influencing the minds of the people," and he looked forward to the day when "a powerful contingent of theorists, with the professional theorists at the centre, will grow relatively rapidly." (15) He was denounced as a revisionist and removed from his post during the Cultural Revolution. His conception of a powerful contingent of professional theorists playing the role of being spokesmen of the ideology of the working class is quite contrary to Mao's mass line in philosophy.

Since, according to Mao, philosophy is the summation of the knowledge gained in the social practices of the class struggle and the struggle for production, only those who are experienced in these struggles are entitled to philosophize. And since in Mao's theory of knowledge the primacy is placed on practice, the relevancy of and the justification for the existence of a group of theorists without practice is called into question. For Mao, the essence of the Marxist theory of knowledge can be summarized as follows: Practice without theory is blind, theory without practice is empty. The masses are rich in practical experience but deficient in theory; thus, they must learn the theory. Intellectuals, especially philosophers, learn only empty theories; they must acquire practical experience.

The debate on philosophy ultimately resulted in following this direction.

The rapid transformation of philosophy under the impact of the cultural revolution is already manifested in the publications of the Institute of Philosophy in Peking. This Institute, the highest philosophical institution in China, used to publish six issues of 'Che-Hsueh Yen-Chiu (Philosophical Research) annually. The first five issues of 1965 include articles on dialectics, revisionism, ethics, Feuerbach, Confucius, Neo-Hegelianism, Buddhism, etc. After reading a few articles in this journal, Mao gave this advice: "When you write on philosophy you must write on practical philosophy. Who wants to read abstruse, bookish philosophy?" (16) Meanwhile, a number of articles written by workers began to appear and there were discussions among the philosophers on the necessity of establishing connections with the masses. As a result of all these discussions, the editor of the journal finally urged the philosophical workers, especially the younger ones, to organize themselves in groups of six to ten to go down to communes or factories for six months or a year to work, to observe, and to teach the workers philosophy. The last issue of the journal in 1965 was devoted to twenty essays by workers, peasants, and soldiers arising from their studies and applications of Mao's thought in their own fields of work. Moreover, the whole of the second issue in 1966 was devoted to essays covering various practical applications of dialectics by workers.

The first issue of 1966 contained the reprint of an important editorial concerning philosophers which was published in the People's Daily. It is entitled: "Philosophical Workers, Pack Up and Go Among the Masses".(17) A number of points in this document should be noticed. First of all, it states that the aim of this movement is to realize Mao's mass line in philosophy and to break the monopoly of philosophy by intellectuals. An indirect reference to Soviet philosophy is made when it asserts that this is the first time Marxist philosophy has gone out of classrooms and seminars. Secondly, the editorial states that the content of this movement to emancipate philosophy consists in learning and applying the Marxist method of analysis through the writings of Mao. Thirdly, it maintains that the masses are already doing better philosophy than professional philosophers, and hence philosophers must go among the masses and learn from them. Instead of six months or a year Mao now advised philosophers to live among the masses for a few years. The debate in philosophy has since then been submerged in the cultural revolution. The third issue in 1966 of Philosophical Research, which included reports of workers' discussions of the cultural revolution, was the last published by the Institute. True to their words, the whole Institute packed up and went among the masses.

On May 25th 1966 a mild-looking lady philosopher and six students from the Department of Philosophy at Peking University posted their now famous big character

poster, denouncing the President of the University as a revisionist. Some specific complaints were that the President advocated following the Soviet education system, that some courses were taken over almost verbatim from similar ones in capitalist universities; that in the Department of Philosophy only 5.1% of the time was spent on the study of the writings of Mao; that young people of worker and peasant origin were systematically kept out of the university by entrance exams which gave advantage to applicants of bourgeois and landlord origin; and that many students who had protested before had been expelled or persecuted because of it. At first these protestors too were suppressed by the administration, but they sent copies of it to the newspapers; and when the local newspapers refused to publish it, they sent it to Mao. Mao called this poster "the first Marxist-Leninist poster" and ordered it to be published in the People's Daily and broadcast over the National radio network.

Soon students all over the country started to put up wall posters, to hold meetings, criticizing officials in schools and in the Party. Suddenly the slogan "Revolution is no crime! Rebellion is right!" appeared on walls elsewhere, based on a statement Mao made in 1939: "All the many truths of Marxism-Leninism in the last analysis may be expressed in one sentence: 'Rebellion is justified'". (18)

The famous Red Guards organization sprang up on every campus. Using Mao's Thought as their weapon the students criticized their teachers, school princi-

pals, and government officials during public criticism meetings. Regular classes in schools were suspended. Most schools were shut down and not reopened until a few years later after a thorough evaluation and reorganization of the whole educational system. Meanwhile the students engaged themselves in political activities, in what is called the tasks of "struggle-criticism-transformation". These refer to "the struggle against and the overthrow of those persons in authority taking the capitalist road; the criticism and repudiation of the bourgeois academic authorities; and the transformation of education, art and literature and all other parts of the superstructure not in correspondence with the socialist economic base". (19)

The first task aimed at destroying the bureaucratic administration machinery built up over the years. This aspect of the cultural revolution had essentially been completed by September of 1968 with the setting up of what were called "Revolutionary Committees", in all provinces. These are new governing bodies consisting of representatives from the mass organizations, the Party and the military.

What concerns us here are the other two tasks of the cultural revolution: the repudiation of the bourgeois academic authorities and the socialist transformation of education. These are two aspects of the 'revolution in education'. The old educational system in China, largely an import from the West, was continued

after the establishment of the new China in 1949. As mentioned before, the then available educational personnel and authorities, the products of this bourgeois education, were allowed to exercise de facto control over the educational system. Mao declared that "education should be revolutionized, and the domination of our schools by bourgeois intellectuals should not be allowed to continue." (20) The first task in this revolution in education is therefore to take education out of the hands of the intellectuals. This was done when colleges and universities were closed down, and a campaign to reeducate the intellectuals was initiated. Instead of the tokenism of the past in sending intellectuals periodically down to do manual work for a few weeks or months at a time, the slogan now is that the intellectuals should "integrate" with the masses. Educated youth or young intellectuals who in the past chose to remain in the city are now encouraged to go to the countryside and remain there permanently. Mao says: "How should we judge whether a youth is a revolutionary?... There can be only one criterion, namely, whether or not he is willing to integrate himself with the masses and does so in practice. If he is willing to do so and actually does so, he is a revolutionary; otherwise he is not a revolutionary or is a counter-revolutionary." (21)

The professors were required to participate in the cultural revolution. Most of them were objects of criticism by students and Red Guards during the early

stages of the Revolution. Many traditional privileges were abolished. One of the first things the Red Guards did was to abolish the faculty club. Instead of the high salary of around 300 yen per month some professors used to receive, they were given a subsistence allowance of 30 yen per month instead. With the exception of the old, the disabled, and the sick they were all sent down to do manual work in the countryside. They turned some wasteland into farmland and built their own dormitories. These were later organized into an entirely new educational institution - i.e. May 7th Cadre Schools (named after Mao's instructions issued on that date) where bureaucrats and intellectuals go periodically to do manual work and receive further political education.

The universities and colleges began reopening in the fall of 1968. Various universities began locally to experiment with new forms of education. Selected reports of these experiments and some tentative programs have been published and widely discussed. One of the most important changes is that the working class has assumed the leadership role in education. Workers and peasants who were prepared during the socialist education movement are now organizing propaganda teams to go into schools to give political and ideological instruction. They call themselves "Mao Tse-tung Thought

Propaganda Teams". The first team entered Tsinghua University in Peking in the summer of 1968. Since then such teams have entered not only schools but also art and literature centers, publishing houses, science and research centers, and many other institutions. An old worker who took part in the revolutionary war and is now a member of a propaganda team was quoted in Peking Review as saying: "If we don't hold power in the cultural field, who should?...For thousands of years the practice has been that those who do mental work rule over the rest, and those who labour with their hands are ruled over. Chairman Mao has sent us workers to the colleges and thoroughly reversed the reversal of history." (22) And Mao was quoted as saying: "In carrying out the proletarian revolution in education, it is essential to have working-class leadership; the workers' propaganda teams should stay permanently in the schools and take part in fulfilling all the tasks of struggle transformation, and they will always lead in the schools." (23)

This direct working-class control of the schools is a necessary step in re-structuring the educational system. Philosophy will no longer be the monopoly of the "professional theorists" who consider themselves "mental workers" and the "spokesmen of the ideology of a class". A passage in Marx's The German Ideology is relevant here: "For philosophers, one of the most difficult tasks is to descend from the world of thought to

the actual world.... We have shown that thoughts and ideas acquire an independent existence in consequence of the personal circumstances and relations of individuals acquiring individual existence. We have shown that exclusive, systematic occupation with these thoughts on the part of ideologists and philosophers, and hence the systemization of these thoughts, is a consequence of division of labor..."

To abolish the present division of labour is the proclaimed aim of the Chinese revolution in education. Mao says: "Our educational policy must enable everyone who gets an education to develop morally, intellectually and physically and to become cultured, socialist-minded workers." In contrast with the bourgeois educational system with its departmentalization of knowledge and production of specialists to perpetuate the present division of labour, the new Chinese educational system aims at what Marx called "the all-around development of the individual," or "producing fully developed human beings." The educated, scientific-minded, socialist worker who can plant and plow, write and discuss philosophical issues and also handle a gun or a machine is the new human which the new society must create. He is a worker-intellectual and an intellectual-worker. The creation of this new human being has only begun. As Mao emphasized: "The present cultural revolution is only the first; there will inevitably be many more in the future."

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op cit p 9

## THE ETHICS OF LIBERATION: THE EXAMPLE OF CHINA

BY K. T. FANN

What is the relationship between ethics and liberation? This is a question of central importance to any liberation movement. Living in bourgeois society, we are justified in viewing the moralizing of politicians and the preachings of ministers with extreme cynicism. And when we encounter a similar moral tone of voice in the pronouncements of liberation movements and their leaders we instinctively react with suspicion. But the apparent similarity is deceptive and we should try to be clear about their essential difference if we are to understand the meaning of liberation.

"Liberation" said Marx, "is a historical not a mental act."<sup>\*</sup> It is a real, historical movement of the oppressed to gain freedom. Revolution is the politics of liberation. Its goal is freedom. Counter-revolution is the politics of oppression. Its goal is exploitation. For a revolution to occur, the oppressed must be dissatisfied with the status quo, with what is the case; and must desire something "better," something that should be the case but is not. The objective condition of misery in itself

This is a revised version of a paper presented at the third Annual Conference on Philosophy and Contemporary Society at Morgan State College on May 2, 1973. K. T. Fann teaches philosophy at York University, Ontario, Canada, and edits the quarterly *Social Praxis*.

\* Notes will be found at the end of the article.

does not give rise to a revolutionary situation. If the oppressed are brainwashed into accepting their fate as a natural state of affairs they will not rebel. Perception of the "better" and belief in the possibility of change are prerequisites of any revolution. Consequently, liberation implies movement toward a goal, an ideal. Every true revolution is inspired and guided by an ideal of a better society. Traditionally, ethics deals with the goals, or the *telos* of human life. It deals with what ought to be the case as opposed to what is the case. It should be remembered that Aristotle wrote a treatise on *politics*, and what we call his *Ethics* was just the first part of his treatise on *politics*, the part that defined the goals, the most inclusive concepts and methods. For him it would be impossible to talk about how to organize a society without first settling the question of "what for?" Politics and economics deal with the "how" of society and ethics deals with the "what for" of society. It's obvious that any liberation movement must not only criticize the status quo but must also have a fairly clear idea of the new social order it wishes to bring about. Politics and ethics must be intimately connected in a revolution. To provide a real example, I shall describe the essential role of the new socialist ethics in shaping the Chinese Revolution. However, before I do that, I would like to analyze the separation of ethics from politics in bourgeois society and outline the main features of the bourgeois value system as an object for comparison.

In bourgeois society, since the goal of the economic system is the exploitation of the majority, it is best for the ruling class if people do not question the status quo—if the people do not ask how things ought to be. Since the whole economic system is unethical, it is best that none ask ethical questions. Under capitalism, alienated human individuals are bound to each other and to society by an invisible umbilical cord: the economic law of value. As Marx and Engels wrote in the *Communist Manifesto*:

[The bourgeois] has left remaining no other bond between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment." It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless inde-

fensible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom, free trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has established naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation. The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-laborers.

The motivation for every activity and every profession is self-interest, profit. Money becomes the bond of all bonds. It acts upon all facets of our lives, shaping our needs and our destinies. We no longer ask the question "what for?" The profit motive becomes the dominant force in our lives and is reflected in our thinking. People became physicians not because they want to help the sick, but because they want to make money. The worth of things and persons is measured mainly in terms of money. The capitalist way of looking at things is so ingrained in our thoughts that we cannot even recognize that there are legitimate reasons for doing things other than making money. There is no human activity that cannot be turned into a business enterprise. Even a hobby such as stamp collecting has become a multi-million-dollar business. People cannot appreciate the value of an object of art in itself unless a price tag is attached to it. In their bourgeois way of thinking, everything has a price; otherwise it is worthless.

The capitalist mode of thought is applied not only to things but also to persons. A person's worth is calculated according to the amount of money he possesses. Marx described this succinctly in his early manuscript:

The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money's properties are my properties and essential powers—the properties and powers of its possessor. Thus, what *I am* and *am capable of* is by no means determined by my individuality. I *am* ugly, but I can buy for myself the most *beautiful* of women. Therefore I *am* not *ugly*, for the effect of *ugliness*—its deterrent power is nullified by money. . . . I *am* bad, dishonest, unscrupulous, stupid; but money is honored, and hence its possessor. Money is the supreme good, therefore its possessor is good. . . . I *am* *stupid*, but money is the *real mind* of all things and how then should its possessor be stupid? Besides, he can buy talented people for himself, and is he who has power over the talented not more talented than the talented? Do not I, who thanks to money *am* capable

of all that the human heart longs for, possess all human capacities? . . . If *money* is the bond binding me to *human* life, binding society to me, binding me and nature and man, is not money the bond of all *bonds*? Can it not dissolve and bind all ties? Is it not, therefore, the universal *agent of separation*? It is the true *agent of separation* as well as the true *binding agent*.<sup>2</sup>

Money binds us all together as selfish, egotistical, atomized, and alienated economic animals. It separates us from each other, from the community, from our human needs over and above our animal needs. We no longer know how to relate to each other on a human level. We treat others and ourselves as commodities, products. Professors speak of their own marketability and regard their students as products. At his inauguration a university president recently said, "We ought to think about the quality as well as the quantity of our products." At the back of his mind he sees the university as a factory producing certain products to be sold on the market. Unfortunately, this inhuman view of the educational system is an accurate description of reality. And how often do we make friends not because we like them, but because we want something from them? Persons are treated as objects, as use values. Alienated, egotistical individuals are incapable of relating to each other even on a man-and-woman basis. The perverse obsession with sex in the bourgeois world is not a sign of sexual liberation but a symptom of final alienation in a decaying society. The increase of pornographic literature and movies and the general liberalization of sexual behavior is not an indication of sexual fulfillment but an expression of sexual frustration. The individual in this decaying society is isolated, each pursuing a chimera called self-fulfillment, or individuality. Loneliness becomes epidemic. In bourgeois ideology this state of affairs is sanctified as individualism.

Recently I received a letter from a white friend of mine who is working in a community project in the South. She said: "In living with a black family I see and am beginning to accept a communal type environment, in which everybody helps everybody to their well being or worse being. Everybody thinks everything is their business. I haven't accepted that yet; it goes against the very grain of my nature." What constitutes a com-

munity is precisely the fact that everybody thinks everything is their business. This goes against the very grain of our "bourgeois" nature. We are taught from an early age "not to talk to strangers." But in a community no one is a stranger. We are always told to mind our own business, to do our own thing, etc. All this culminates in the alienation of individuals from each other, in the loss of community. The result is that in the bourgeois society each person looks out for his or her own interests without regard for the common good, and consequently becomes easy prey for the capitalists.

There is another aspect of this matter. In bourgeois society any time someone else minds your business the purpose is "domination." But in a community the motivation is "concern." It is ironic that in the world today "community" exists only among the poorest, most oppressed sectors of the world—in the ghetto, the jungle, the rice paddies, and so on. The reconstruction of human society will, above all, depend on these people. Bourgeois individualism, with the attendant loss of community, serves the class interest of the capitalists. The atomized individual family, cut off from a community, seeking only its self interest, provides a mobile work force and prevents the formation of a sense of community or class consciousness which could question and challenge the status quo. Bourgeois individualism is the old imperialist trick of divide-and-rule pushed to its logical extreme.

This same divide-and-rule strategy is even more successfully applied to the ideological sphere. The separation of ethics from politics, economics, sociology, and the natural sciences has become a dogma in the bourgeois educational system. Science (natural or social), we are told from our first day in college, is value free. The first chapter of many textbooks in social science starts with a distinction between "fact" and "value," between "is" and "ought," and then makes it clear that it is the job of science to deal with facts and not values. To be a scientist, to be objective, one is supposed only to describe the functioning of a system but never to evaluate it as good or bad. Marx was most forceful in his critique of political economy:

If I ask the political economist: Do I obey economic laws if I extract money by offering my body for sale, by surrendering it to another's lust? . . . Then the political economist replies to me:

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You do not transgress my laws; but see what Cousin Ethics and Cousin Religion have to say about it. My *political economic* ethics and religion have nothing to reproach you with, but whom am I now to believe, political economy or ethics? The ethics of political economy is *acquisition*. . . . The political economy of ethics is the opulence of a good conscience, of virtue, etc.; but how can I live virtuously if I do not live? And how can I have a good conscience if I am not conscious of anything? It stems from the very nature of estrangement that each sphere applies to me a different and opposite yardstick—ethics one and political economy another. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Let us see what Cousin Ethics and Cousin Religion have to say about values and morals. The first lesson in any ethics course is that Ethics does not teach moral values, it only talks about ethics—it analyzes the meaning of words such as “good,” “right,” etc., and it argues about whether you can derive an “ought” from an “is.” Cousin Ethics has nothing to say, and when you ask him about a real moral issue he will recommend that you see Cousin Religion. But Cousin Religion only works on Sundays and he sells the “opiate of the people.” He sells you an entrance ticket to a place you can go only after you are dead and for which you have to pay cash now. Besides, he runs his business according to the same capitalist principle as political economy. You deposit your good deeds now, and cash in later, in Heaven. What has this to do with Morality? Nothing. So where do we go to learn moral values? Absolutely nowhere. And this is exactly the way the ruling class wants it to be—a thoroughly unethical society where acquisition and exploitation rule supreme.

Liberation from this oppressive system requires, first of all, the reintroduction of ethics as a motivating force of the revolution. Commitment to a new ethical order is the first prerequisite of a revolutionary. This implies that the revolution must not only change the economic structure of the society, but also change man himself in the process. Marx himself always emphasized that “to work out their own emancipation . . . [the working class] will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historical processes, transforming circumstances and men.”<sup>4</sup> To over-emphasize the role of circumstances over man is mechanical materialism. Marx explains: “The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, there-

fore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is man that changes circumstances and that the educator himself needs educating.”<sup>5</sup> To over-emphasize the role of man over circumstances is philosophical idealism. Marx says, “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.”<sup>6</sup> Liberation is a long historical process whereby both men and circumstances are transformed. Initially, a vanguard group of revolutionaries form a political party to effect changes in the society and in the process change themselves. Marx was most impressed by this process in his youth when he participated in workers’ organizations in Paris. He observed: “When Communist artisans associate with one another, theory, propaganda, etc., is their first end. But, at the same time, as a result of this association, they acquire a new need—the need for society—and what appears as a means becomes an end. . . . Such things as smoking, drinking, eating, etc., are no longer means of contact or means that bring together. Company, association, and conversation, which again has society as its end, are enough for them; the brotherhood of man is no mere phrase with them but a fact of life. . . .”<sup>7</sup> The new human relationships, the new moral order practiced by the vanguard of the revolution are then transformed into the new moral order for the whole restructured society.

Unless and until man is transformed into the antithesis of the selfish, egotistical, and aggressive capitalist man, capitalism will be restored. Changed circumstances alone do not change man. This is the important message of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Orthodox Marxists assumed that after the means of production were socialized the new socialist man would naturally emerge; so they concentrated on the building of a socialist economy and neglected to change man actively. Learning from the experience of Soviet Russia, Mao observed that even under a socialist regime there is a “selfish spontaneous tendency towards capitalism.”<sup>8</sup> Why is this so? Because, as Marx said: “The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem en-

gaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirit of the past to their service. . . .”<sup>9</sup> Thus, in an attempt to increase productivity and to catch up with the West, Russia resorted to using capitalist means of stimulating workers by material incentives among other measures. But it must be emphasized—you can’t bribe a man to become an un-bribeable new socialist man. A new incentive for work must be introduced—the moral incentive.

The lesson the Chinese Revolution learned from what they call revisionism is that it is not enough to replace a capitalist economy with a socialist one, you must replace the selfish, acquisitive ethics of capitalism with a new socialist ethics. Thus, the slogan for the Cultural Revolution is: “criticize revisionism, fight selfishness.” Bourgeois individualism is the main target of this revolution. Unlike the violent revolution of 1949 which aimed at socializing the economic base, the Cultural Revolution aimed at changing the consciousness or the soul of people. The people’s consciousness cannot be changed by force. As Mao puts it, “ideological struggle is not like other forms of struggle. The only method to be used in this struggle is that of painstaking reasoning and not crude coercion.”<sup>10</sup> This requires a long educational process to replace the “I” as the center of reference with the “we,” and to replace the profit motive with serving the people as the motive. Edgar Snow, who visited Mao in the 1930s while the Liberation Army was hiding out in the caves of Yen-an, noticed that in giving an account of his life Mao unconsciously started to use the pronoun “we” instead of “I” when he talked about his activities after joining the revolution. Instead of saying “what I did” and “what I thought” he began to talk about “what we did” and “what we thought.” Edgar Snow noticed the same transformation among other leaders he talked to.<sup>11</sup> This transformation reflects the essence of the transformation from bourgeois ethics to the new socialist ethics. During my recent visit to China, I noticed the same type of transformation in talking to old intellectuals and listening to their accounts of their experience during the Cultural Revolution. There can be no liberation movement until the isolated indi-

viduals in the bourgeois society purge themselves of the bourgeois hang-ups of individualism through a revolutionary transformation from “I” to “we.” Too many so-called radical movements have disintegrated because of the failure of the individual members to make this transformation. The old imperialist trick of divide-and-rule has proven to be especially effective in this ideological form. \*

The Cultural Revolution in China aimed at instilling in the whole population the spirit of Yen-an, the new morality which inspired and guided the vanguard party. The main features of this new ethics are embodied in what is called “three constantly read articles of Mao,” written in the 1930s while he was living in the caves of Yen-an. They are: “Serve the People,” “In Memory of Norman Bethune,” and “The Foolish Old Man Who Removed Mountains.”\*\* “Serve the People” needs no explanation. Instead of the profit making of the capitalist society, “serving the people” is the primary motive for every activity and profession. A student wants to become a doctor because he wants to serve the people and not because he wants to make money. This is as it should be. Only those who are not perverted by bourgeois values can understand that. “In Memory of Norman Bethune” was written to commemorate a Canadian doctor who went to help the Red Army in 1938 in their war of resistance against Japan, and who died while performing his duty. Mao says, “What kind of spirit is this that makes a foreigner selflessly adopt the cause of the Chinese people’s liberation as his own? It is the spirit of internationalism, the spirit of Communism, from which every Chinese Communist must learn. . . . We must all learn the spirit of absolute selflessness from him. With this spirit everyone can be very useful to the people. A man’s ability may be great or small, but if he has this spirit, he is already noble-minded and pure, a man of moral integrity and above vulgar interests, a man who is of value to the people.”<sup>12</sup> The emphasis here is selflessness and internationalism. Service to the people means service not only to the Chinese people but to the oppressed people of the whole world. Thus, peasants in the remotest village of China will tell you, with all sincerity, that they are working hard to support the world revolution. They consider it their duty to donate the fruits of their labor to the

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Vietnamese people, as they are doing. The bourgeoisie fosters chauvinism and racism as a part of their divide-and-rule strategy of oppression. The new socialist ethics must foster internationalism to counteract that strategy.

"The Foolish Old Man" is an ancient Chinese fable about a man in front of whose house were two great mountains, blocking the way to the city. He decided to lead his sons to dig them away. Another old man known as the Wise Old Man saw them and laughed, "How silly of you! It's impossible for a few of you to dig up these two huge mountains!" The Foolish Old Man replied, "When I die, my children will carry on; when they die, there will be my grandchildren, and so on. High as they are, the mountains cannot grow any higher and with every bit we dig they will be that much lower. Why can't we clear them away?" Mao used this fable to instill in the people a sense of perseverance. Not only should we serve the people in China and widen that service to the peoples of the world, but we must also serve the people of the future.

A revolutionary must take the long view of history. Liberation is a long historical process which requires a cooperative effort of many generations of individuals. The bourgeois notion of quick return for an investment is ingrained in our consciousness. We ask ourselves, "Will there be a revolution in my lifetime?" "What's in it for me?" "If I don't get to enjoy the fruits of the revolution, why should I waste my energy?" We are still thinking in terms of capitalist logic when we ask these questions.

The new ethics of liberation is the negation, the opposite, of bourgeois ethics.

However, it must be pointed out that socialist ethics is a *transitional* ethics. A socialist society is a society in transition from capitalism to communism. Because there is conflict between individual and collective interest in the present world, the socialist ethics gives primacy to the collective interest. In the communist society of the future where "the free development of each is the pre-condition for the free development of all,"<sup>13</sup> where there is no longer a conflict between individual and collective interest, the socialist value of selflessness will rise to a higher level. \*\*\* China is not yet a communist society but it is consciously moving in that direction. It may take generations before the new socialist

ethical order is realized, not to mention the as yet undefined communist ethical order. As Mao emphasized, "The present Cultural Revolution is only the first; there will inevitably be many more in the future."<sup>14</sup>

## NOTES

1. Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), p. 56.
2. Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), p. 167.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.
4. Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), volume 2, p. 224.
5. *Ibid.*, volume 1, p. 13.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 398.
7. Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, pp. 154-155.
8. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Readings* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), p. 347.
9. Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, volume 1, p. 398.
10. Mao, *op. cit.*, p. 376.
11. Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), p. 175.
12. Mao, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
13. Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*.
14. Mao, quoted in *Peking Review* (September 26, 1969), p. 9.

## NOTES

- \* page 35 should read:  
"A revolutionary transformation from the bourgeois "I" to the socialist "we"
- \*\* page 36 should read:  
"The Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains"
- \*\*\* page 36 should read:  
"China is not yet a fully Communist country"



"Be selfless and be devoted to service to others" (Mao)

## Philosophy in new China: An interview with Fung Yu-Lan, Peking University

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Canada

### Summary

*Professor Fung Yu-Lan is the foremost historian of Chinese Philosophy. His History of Chinese philosophy (1930) has been translated into many languages and has been the standard work on Chinese philosophy for many years. Since 1949 he has continued to teach at the Peking University and has been writing a New history of Chinese philosophy. What follows is a translation of my taped interview with him last August at Peking University.*

Fann: Would you tell me your experience since Liberation?

Fung: I don't know where to start. There is too much to talk about. Why don't you ask me some specific questions first?

Fann: I read the first two volumes of your *New history of Chinese philosophy*. Have you finished writing it or are you still working on it?

Fung: Have you read the first two volumes? Did you read them in the United States?

Fann: Yes, I read them in the United States but not in English. I ordered the Chinese edition from Hong Kong.

Fung: I had just finished the second volume when the Cultural Revolution started. During the Cultural Revolution all professors in the university participated in the revolution. Consequently the work of writing books came to a temporary stop. Now I am beginning to write again. The second volume covered up to Han dynasty. The third volume begins with the Three Kingdoms. I have just started on the third volume this year and have finished only a part of it. My plan is to cover the whole history in five volumes. The third volume will cover up to Tang dynasty. The fourth volume will cover Sung, Yuen, Ming and Ching. The fifth volume starts with the Opium War and ends with Sun Yet Sen's old democratic revolution. Chairman Mao has said that in

studying the history of Chinese philosophy we should summarize the whole history from Confucius to Sun Yat Sen. These five volumes cover precisely from Confucius to Sun Yat Sen.

Fann: Do you have any plans to translate the *New history of Chinese philosophy* into English?

Fung: I haven't thought of that yet since I haven't finished writing it. As to the first two volumes I have discovered many mistakes in them which need to be corrected. Consequently they won't be translated into English until I've had a chance to correct the mistakes.

Fann: What was the most important influence the Cultural Revolution had on philosophy? Could you tell me from your personal experience?

Fung: Let me just talk about philosophy from my own experience. As far as I, myself, am concerned, the greatest effect of the Cultural Revolution is the realization that Marxism is a great revolution in philosophy. Of course, many have said this before, but I was a product of the bourgeois class and did not really understand this. I regarded Marxism as just another school of thought in philosophy. Many philosophers thought so too. This attitude I now think is mistaken. I feel that the appearance of Marxism was a great revolution in philosophy and not just an addition of one more school of thought. My understanding is based on something Chairman Mao said. He said, 'All the many truths of Marxism-Leninism, in the last analysis, may be expressed in one sentence: "Rebellion is justified".'

This is a truth derived from the experience of the proletarian revolutionary movement. This is something all philosophy students should understand first. All past philosophies, in the final analysis, advocate this: Rebellion is not justified; oppression is justified. Marxism turned the whole thing upside down and advocates: Oppression and exploitation are not justified; rebellion is justified. This is why Marxism is truly revolutionary. All past philosophies, whether feudal or bourgeois, appeared to be complicated, but in the final analysis they all advocate the preservation of the status quo and forbid rebellion. If you want to preserve the status quo then you must believe that oppression is justified. Let's take Chinese philosophy in the feudal era as an example. In essence, all Chinese feudal philosophies are concerned with the preservation of what Chairman Mao called 'the four thick ropes binding the Chinese people – namely, political authority, clan authority, religious authority and male authority' (in *Report on investigation of the peasant movement in Hunan*). For example, in Chinese feudal philosophy the concepts of royalty and filial piety are very important. Royalty is concerned with political authority; to be royal to the emperor is to maintain the feudal political power. Filial piety is concerned with clan authority. The concept of filial piety was very broad; it was not limited to the parents but was applicable to the whole ancestral tradition. On top of these there was the concept of

Heaven which is concerned with religious authority. And then women were subjected to a whole gamut of prohibitions – all for the purpose of preserving male authority. Feudal moral concepts are all concerned with preserving these four authorities.

Fann: You are using the Marxist standpoint and method of analysis to look at the history of Chinese philosophy and to analyze philosophical concepts ...

Fung: That's right. This way of analysis turns the traditional standpoint upside down. This is true of western philosophy too. Let's take a philosopher from the period of slavery, Plato, as an example. He thought the system of slavery was most reasonable. He divided human beings into the following groups: Philosophers and rulers were 'men of gold', ministers and generals were 'men of silver', and ordinary citizens were 'men of iron'. As to slaves, they weren't even regarded as human beings.

Fann: I remember Chairman Mao saying somewhere that there are only two kinds of knowledge; knowledge of the struggle for production and knowledge of the class struggle. Natural science and social science are the crystallizations of these two kinds of knowledge, and philosophy is the summation of the knowledge of nature and the knowledge of society. But to be able to summarize these knowledges one must have practical experience first. Philosophers, especially those trained in the old society, typically lacked practical experience. Chairman Mao's philosophy is the summation of his revolutionary experience. Students in the natural sciences can gain practical experience by joining productive activities, by going to the factories for example. But how about the liberal arts students, especially philosophy students, how do they get practical experience?

Fung: My previous quotation from Chairman Mao and what you have just quoted should be joined together. One deals with the class origin of philosophy; the other deals with the sources of knowledge. In philosophy today, our main concern is with the problem of uniting theory with practice! But the most fundamental question is the question Chairman Mao raised at the Yenan Forum on literature and art – 'for whom?' This question is even more appropriate for philosophy. The first question in philosophy is 'who do you serve?' – Does your philosophy serve the interests of the oppressor or does it serve the interests of the oppressed? – Does it advocate 'rebellion is justified' or does it advocate 'oppression is justified'? For example, if you propagate bourgeois ideology then you are serving the powers that be. If you propagate Marxism and the thoughts of Mao Tse-Tung then you are serving the proletariat. Once this basic problem is solved we can then deal with the problem of uniting theory with practice. In the past, philosophy students learned only book knowledge and did not know how to solve practical problems. Now the most important task in the educational revolution is to unite theory with practice. Students in the natural sciences can gain practical experience in a factory, for example. But there is no such thing as a philosophy factory. What should liberal arts students do? Chairman Mao said that they should

regard the whole society as their factory. It is not that there are no factories for liberal arts students, it is just that their factory comprises the whole society. There are all kinds of struggles going on in the society. Philosophy must be connected with those struggles. That is why teachers and students spend a part of their time away from the university in factories or people's communes to learn the class struggle.

Fann: How much time do they spend every year for that purpose? What do they do when they go to a factory or a commune – to observe or to teach philosophy?

Fung: They spend one third to one half of their school year in the society. Their activities are many-sided. For example, when we go to a factory we join their political discussion and criticism meetings. If there happen to be philosophy classes in a factory or a commune our students attend them to help and to learn. Above all the students receive re-education from the workers and the peasants by living among them and learning their standpoint and outlook.

Fann: Do you go with the students?

Fung: Yes.

Fann: Is this practice a product of the Cultural Revolution?

Fung: Yes. This is our present policy. Of course Chairman Mao recommended this before the Cultural Revolution but under the influence of revisionism in education this policy was not implemented until recently.

Fann: The Institute of Philosophy in the Academy of Science used to publish a journal called *Che Hsueh Yen Chieu* (Philosophical investigations) but it ceased publication in 1966. Is there still such an institute? Is the journal still being published?

Fung: 1966 was the year when the Cultural Revolution started. They all went to the May 7 Cadre School during the Cultural Revolution and have just returned to Peking. They are in the process of reorganizing the Institute and have not started to publish *Che Hsueh Yen Chieu*.

Fann: Did you go to the May 7 Cadre School?

Fung: I did not go. Chairman Mao's policy on the intellectuals did not allow the old, the infirm, the sick and the disabled to go. In terms of age (77) I can be considered old. The leadership in the University would not let me go. Consequently my learning during the Cultural Revolution lagged behind – I did not have the experience of going down among the masses. I could only learn by the method of 'comparing the past to the present'. I am thoroughly familiar with the conditions of life in the semi-feudal and semi-colonial society of old China. Now the people have stood up. Not only is China no longer a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society, she has become the leader of the world revolution. How could China effect such a great change in such a short time? This is because we have the leadership of Chairman Mao and the Communist Party. From the philosophical point of view this is because we have Marxism and the thought of Mao Tse-Tung as the guiding force.

Fann: How many philosopher teachers are there at Peking University?

Fung: There are more than 200.

Fann: That many! How many philosophy majors do you have?

Fung: There are about 300. The whole university has about 4,000 students. We plan to have 10,000 eventually. We have the total of more than 2,000 professors. A few days ago a foreign professor remarked that the teacher-student ratio here is too large. I tried to explain the situation to him. First of all, one third of our teachers take turns going to the May 7 Cadre School. This is a long-term policy and not a temporary measure. Secondly, our teaching method has changed. Unlike in the past when a single teacher was responsible for a course from the beginning to the end, we now emphasize collective teaching. Also unlike in the past when we used the same lecture notes year after year, we now change the contents of our courses every year. Since we are concerned with connecting theory with reality and since reality changes every year, our teaching must change accordingly. Consequently, we have to prepare new lecture notes every year. Another point is that, in the past, a professor would lecture according to his prepared notes and at the end of the class he would pick up his satchel and leave. Whether the student understood or not was not his business. Most bourgeois universities are like that. If you don't understand it is your fault – comes the examination I will simply flunk you. Now our teaching method is different. There is more togetherness between teachers and students. Students may come to a teacher with questions at any time. We also give a lot of individual tutoring. Consequently we need more teachers. Even though the teacher-student ratio looks large we are actually busier than before.

Fann: How do you prepare your teaching materials?

Fung: Teaching materials are prepared collectively after a long process of discussion and revision. The materials are printed and given to the students before the class. After reading the assignment, students come to the class to discuss what they have read with the teachers and among themselves. Very few teachers *lecture* to a class now. In the old society teachers always felt superior to their students. Whenever a student asked you a question, even if you did not know the answer, you pretended to know the answer and tried to give an answer. Now if I don't know the answer, I simply say so and try to find the answer when I go home. Meanwhile, other students can help to find the answer. This is what we call the new teacher-student relationship – the comradeship. Why do the students come to the university? They study for the Revolution. The teachers teach for the Revolution and not for honor or fame as in the past. They have the same goal – they are both for the Revolution, for the building of socialism. From this point of view they are all comrades. But this does not mean there is no distinction between students and teachers. They still have different tasks: The teachers teach and the students study. However, this division of labor is based on the premise of comradeship. \*

Fann: This is possible only under socialism. Under capitalism students and teachers have different aims. Students want to get high marks so that when they graduate they can find well-paid jobs. It's difficult to have comradely student-teacher relationships under this system.

Fung: That's right. All social problems, in the final analysis, are problems of social system. The comradeship between teacher and student is the most natural thing under socialism, but it is impossible under capitalism. Under feudalism the teacher-student relationship was patterned after the father-son relationship. There used to be a saying 'Master and disciple are like father and son. If you are his disciple for one day then he should be treated like your father for life'. Under capitalism the teacher-student relationship is a business relationship. I sell my knowledge and you pay tuition to buy knowledge. As to whether the knowledge I sell you is of any use at all it is not my problem. This is just like the way capitalists sell their commodities – once the goods go out of the door they are no longer responsible. Teachers are only interested in fame and money. For example, if I publish an article in a famous journal then my marketability goes up immediately. This will bring me a raise and maybe a promotion. I may even get offers from bigger schools with higher salaries. As to the students, they pay their tuition in return for some knowledge and diplomas so that they can find jobs. It cannot be otherwise under their social system. Some foreign visitors are impressed by some of the specific measures in our educational system. They say 'this way of doing things is not bad; we should try it when we go back'. But this is nothing but daydreaming. What we are doing in China cannot be done in a capitalist society.

Fann: You cannot reform the educational system alone. To revolutionize the educational system one must first revolutionize the whole society.

Fung: That's right. It's a social problem and not an individual problem. Everything depends on the whole environment, the whole social system, and not on the whim and wishes of an individual. This way of looking at things is historical materialism. Some people think: 'I have a free will. I want things to be the way I want them to be. If I try hard enough I can accomplish anything.' This way of looking at things is idealism. 'Idealism' has a much broader meaning in Marxism than the restricted meaning the bourgeoisie give it in their philosophy books. Idealism is an attitude which manifests itself everywhere.

Fann: How do you teach collectively?

Fung: The philosophy department is divided into many 'teaching and research' groups. Each group has about ten teachers and is responsible for a course. We have the following courses: Marxism-Leninism, the writings of Chairman Mao, history of the Communist Party of China, history of the international labor movement, logic, history of western philosophy, history of Chinese philosophy, etc. Each course is then divided into different sections. For example, in the history of Chinese philosophy, we

divided up the course into sections according to historical periods. Two or three professors would be responsible for a period. They would then divide up the job among themselves – for example, someone would draft the lecture note on Confucius and someone else would work on Mencius. After the first draft is done they get together to discuss and revise the material before it is mimeographed. The mimeographed material is then distributed among all members of the 'teaching and research' group. After further discussion and revision it is printed and given to the students. Hence an individual professor is no longer in charge of a single course.

Fann: May I look at some of your teaching materials or take some of them home with me?

Fung: The teaching materials are only available to the students at present. We haven't even distributed them within the country. There are still many problems we haven't been able to clarify completely. We dare not consider what we have done in the last two years as completely correct. When we are satisfied with the materials then we will have them published by the People's Publishing House and made available to the public.

Fann: Do philosophy students specialize – for example – in the history of Chinese philosophy?

Fung: There are no specializations now. Before the Cultural Revolution the students chose a field of specialization in the fourth year and concentrated on the special field in the graduate school. Now all our old students are gone. We only have first and second year students and according to our present plan they will graduate in their third year. Perhaps we will have a graduate school again in the future but we haven't decided yet. We are still in the midst of the educational revolution. Many things are still in the experimental stage. The general direction of the educational revolution has been decided – for example, the unity of theory and practice, and making the whole society our factory. But when we try to put these principles into practice we do encounter small problems. We try to solve these problems by our experiments and the experiments of other universities. We exchange our experiences with others and learn from others through publications and through the National Conference on Higher Education.

Fann: What do you expect your students to learn from philosophy, and what do they do after graduation?

Fung: We emphasize two things in our philosophy teaching: 1) To develop the students' ability to analyze and solve problems independently; 2) to develop their ability to unite theory with practice. Our students are selected by the university from among workers, peasants and soldiers after they have been recommended by their units of work. Basically they go back to their original units of work after graduation. But, of course, there are exceptions. For example, if we have a graduate school in the

future some will become graduate students. Or some may go to other units where they are needed. Philosophy in China is no longer restricted to a small minority. Everyone can learn philosophy. Everyone studies Chairman Mao's writings and the writings of Marx and Lenin. But in the mass movement to study philosophy some people need help, and philosophy graduates are there to help. Also, there is ideological work in every school and unit. When graduate students return to their original units of work they do ideological work to propagate Marxism-Leninism and the thoughts of Mao Tse-Tung. Some others go to work for a newspaper or a magazine.

Fann: There is another point I would like to ask you. Marxism is an all-embracing system of thought. In it philosophy, history, economics, politics, etc., are all intimately connected. Chairman Mao's thought is like that, too. But there are still departments in your university. Why do you need to have different departments? Some of us are trying to promote interdisciplinary studies.

Fung: It's true that Marxism is an all-embracing philosophy, but there are different emphases within it. For example, the central emphasis of Marx's *Capital* is economical problems, even though you will find dialectics and historical materialism in it. The central emphasis of Lenin's *State and revolution* is political problems. *On practice* and *On contradiction* deal mainly with philosophical problems. If we did not have different departments the students would have difficulty in studying.

Fann: It's true there are different emphases but everyone should study these writings. The question is whether you need specialists – philosophers, economists, etc. – to teach them.

Fung: What we call 'specialists' is quite different from bourgeois 'specialists'. For example, a bourgeois economist can specialize in the monetary system or banking and pay no attention to politics. Our so-called specialists are not like that at all. First of all everyone must achieve a certain level of political awareness. Everyone is familiar with Chairman Mao's philosophical essays and the major writings of Marx and Lenin. Still, there are different emphases. For example, economics students concentrate more on *Capital* and their understanding of the Marxian economics is bound to be more profound. There is a course on political economy in the philosophy department, but we mainly study problems such as the relationship between the forces of production and the relations of production, between the superstructure and the economic base, and so on. We do not deal with other economic problems which the economics department deals with. It's true everyone studies Chairman Mao's philosophical writings but philosophy students study more. For example, we try to link up Chairman Mao's philosophy with problems in the history of philosophy. Students in other departments need not study the history of philosophy. Therefore, each department has its special emphasis, otherwise we will all be studying the same thing. But, first of all there is a division between the arts and the sciences. The sciences are, of course,

divided into physics, chemistry, etc. The arts have different emphases too. It's still necessary to have certain people having more knowledge in a certain field than others. The important thing is to avoid producing the bourgeois-type specialists who have no political awareness.

Fann: Are Chinese philosophers keeping up with the philosophical developments in the West?

Fung: During the Cultural Revolution we all participated in the revolution and did not have time to read foreign journals. Consequently, there was a gap in our study of foreign developments in philosophy. Now we are beginning to catch up with our reading again.

[After this Professor Fung turned the tables and asked me about the state of philosophy in the West, the courses I have been teaching, etc.]

#### Résumé

Le Professeur Fung Yu-Lan est le plus éminent historien de la philosophie chinoise. Son *Histoire de la philosophie chinoise* (1930) a été traduite en de nombreuses langues; elle a constitué pendant de nombreuses années l'ouvrage de base sur la philosophie chinoise. Depuis 1949,

Fung Yu-Lan poursuit son enseignement à l'Université de Pékin, et il a écrit une *Histoire nouvelle de la philosophie chinoise*. L'article donne la traduction de l'interview enregistrée qu'il m'a accordée en août dernier à l'Université de Pékin.

#### NOTE

\* Should read: "Teachers primarily teach and students primarily learn"  
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Worker-Intellectuals ---Intellectual-Workers

