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# CHINESE CULTURE AND EDUCATION

(教育與文化)

A Historical and Comparative Survey

by

CHIANG MONLIN



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**CHIANG MONLIN**

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# INTRODUCTION

## CHINESE CULTURE & EDUCATION AS SEEN FIFTY YEARS LATER

Almost half of a century has elapsed since this volume was published in 1918 in Shanghai. The test of time has convinced the writer that the views expressed therein and the facts used as the basis in writing the text need little modification even after many vicissitudes of fortune and with long years of varied personal experience.

If he was asked to rewrite such a thesis as this, he would certainly present the same views, if not in identical language. As has been pointed out in this volume, the Chinese thoughts flowed along the channels of three major schools—the Confucian School of Liberalism, the Taoist School of Individualism and the Legalistic School of Collectivism.

These three major schools of thought were developed during the creative era of Chinese civilization before Chin Shih Huang founded the first Chinese Empire in the third century B. C.

Under the influence of the Legalistic School of Collectivism, Chin Shih Huang established a totalitarian government for his empire, and controlled thought by drastic methods. He forced the scholars to turn away from the past. The creative age of ancient China came to a close.

This school of collectivism was in the ascendent for a short period of some 37 years and vanished when the Chin Empire fell asunder, but it made indelible imprints on Chinese history. It lurked in the minds of Confucian scholar-statesmen and was occasionally practised in a modified form in case of expediency to meet the demands of the times.

The pendulum of thought swung one way or the other for a few centuries to come but finally settled in the middle as typified by the Confucian School of Liberalism.

The Confucian school absorbed now and then, here and there, the ideas of the other schools including Buddhistic thoughts and in recent times scientific, political and social ideas from the West as the writer has discussed in this volume.

The Confucian school enriched itself by gradually absorbing hostile elements and wove them into a unified whole. It served as a stabilizing force in the development of Chinese society and acted as a host to welcome imported ideas from time to time. At times one or another indigenous school of thought raised its head but was eventually tempered down by Confucian influence on education and on a bureaucracy drawn from national and local civil examinations, the system of which was established centuries ago. Thus the influence of the Confucian school was wide, deep and enduring because it controlled education and in turn controlled the civil examination and hence bureaucracy.

The Confucian school was a historical school. Ancient Chinese historians kept historical records meticulously and on the materials drawn from them Confucius wrote his "Spring and Autumn". "To understand the present better by learning from the past", was a common belief of Confucian scholars. The other two schools were non-historical. The Taoist School advocated returning to nature and the Legalistic School wanted to break away from the past. Hence great historians in history all rose from the ranks of Confucian scholars.

By studying history, they also had an inclination for predicting what might happen in the future. Of course, there was no certainty about it. The Confucian scholars invariably thought in terms of a curve of past, present and future, if not along a straight line; or along a recurrent circle of rise, decline and fall. Such was their view of history.

The writer was naturally influenced by that outlook from reading history. He made some predictions in this volume and

some of them have come true in the fifty years since this volume was written.

As it was written before and during the First World War, what has happened in the world since then has been left out of consideration and there is, therefore, a gap. But as the changes that took place during that period were unprecedented in history, this introduction is written to fill that gap.\*

The world has entered the atomic age. It has affected greatly man's thinking about himself and the world.

It seems but yesterday that the Chinese mainland came under a totalitarian regime following the collectivist line of Marxist-Leninist ideology. It was like the explosion of a political, social and ideological atomic bomb in China.

What is it that brought about this abrupt turn of tides? Here a review of the recent history of China will help the reader understand the course of events which have occurred on the mainland.

In China during the last sixty years the people have come under the impact of European ideas. In the first stage the West was seen by the Chinese people mainly through the Japanese eyes.

### **Growth of Nationalism**

After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, nationalism, political reform and, later, political revolution preoccupied the minds of the Chinese people. By adopting Western civilization, Japan had become wealthy and strong. Why could not China become so, too, the Chinese would ask, if she should do likewise? Hence, China was to introduce Western civilization by way of Japan. Here Western civilization was but vaguely conceived. The aim was to make China wealthy and strong by the introduction of Western civilization which was regarded then as a sort of panacea to cure China's poverty and weaknesses.

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\* A great part of the following paragraphs has been taken from the Introduction to TIDES FROM THE WEST by the same author.

## Growth of Liberalism

Meanwhile with increasing direct contact with the Western culture, the idea of Western democracy made headway in the country. Liberalism in Western democracy finds its counterpart in the humanism of the Confucian school, and *laissez faire* finds its counterpart in the doctrine of non-interference of the Taoist school. Along with Confucian humanism and the Taoist doctrine of non-interference, the idea of Western liberalism and *laissez faire* began to take shape in China.

## Freedom of Thought and Free Inquiry

After the defeat of the Central European Powers in the First World War, the impact of the Atlantic Powers in the form of Western democracy was felt in a different direction. It led the people to revolt against paternalism, medieval institutions, colonialism and, above all, imperialism.

On its positive side, the spirit of freedom of thought flourished in the institutions of higher learning. Science and democracy became the watchwords of the younger generation.

The movement for freedom of thought was later divided into two main currents, one leading to the study of problems of freedom of the individual and the other to the free inquiry into social institutions.

The first trend developed, politically, into constitutionalism over against paternalism and, economically, into the idea of *laissez faire* and free competition in the development of infant industries over against the encroachments of foreign capitalism in the form of imperialism and colonialism.

## Socialistic Thinking

The free inquiry into social institutions was later developed into socialistic thinking and planned economy in the form of state control as exemplified by the Soviet system of economy and political organization.

The two main currents of thought sometimes merged into

an eddy of confusion, or at other times came into conflict as cross currents in a state of chaos.

During the quarter of a century after the First World War, China was caught in the cobwebs of conflicting ideologies from the Western World.

As the ideas of democracy from the Atlantic countries are complex and necessarily slow and hard to be understood in a vast country of illiterate and poverty-ridden masses, the comparatively simple ideas of class struggle and dictatorship of the proletariat gradually grew in strength among the young intellectuals with a leftist leaning. A number of these intellectuals are now occupying leading positions in Communist China.

### **Backgrounds for Sovietism in China**

As the Nationalist idea of political tutelage, as mentioned above, found its counterpart in paternalism, the Communist idea of dictatorship of the proletariat found its counterpart incidentally in the political tutelage of the Kuomintang. Likewise, in the Nationalist platform of "Land to the tiller", the Communist policy of distribution of land to the landless found its counterpart.

The state control for the existing national banks, railways, oil mines, steel plants, salt monopoly, etc., under the Nationalist Government had by far surpassed the British Labor Government's state control policies. Thus it had incidentally prepared the minds of the people for the passive acceptance of the Communist policies of control.

### **Russian Support**

In addition to the above-mentioned internal factors, the external factors in the form of Soviet help must be taken into serious consideration. It has been the consistent and firm political policy of Soviet Russia to give full support to the Chinese Communists. The Chinese Communist leaders in turn have consistently complied with the suggestions and recommendations of the Communist International in Moscow in matters of



military strategy, youth training, political organization and land confiscation and distribution. It was through land distribution that the Chinese Communists gained the initial support of the poor peasants.

On military matters, by admitting the Chinese Communists into Manchuria which was under Soviet military control after V-J Day and turning over to them large quantities of Japanese ammunition, the Russian virtually handed over Manchuria to the Chinese Communists. The balance of power then was upset overwhelmingly in favor of the Communists.

### **The Bewildered Liberals**

Most Chinese scholars have been under the Confucian influence of liberalism without realizing it and therefore have been more or less liberal in thinking. Dr. Sun Yat-sen was strongly influenced by liberalism of the Confucian school. When his mind later came into more frequent contact with English Liberalism and American democracy, he combined the three elements into one unified whole—the San-Min-Chu-I.

The liberals are often willing to see the seemingly sunny side of their opponents. This is their strong point as well as their weakness. As a strong point it is readily apparent, for without open-mindedness there could be no liberalism. But in facing the Communist world of organized falsehoods supported by a strategy of cold war, the liberal's strong point turned to be their weakness when they miscalculated the real intentions of the Communists. This is the reason why so many liberal-minded people in China fell into the Communist trap. It was too late when they saw the Iron Curtain down on them. Toward Communism the American liberals have held the same liberal views as the Chinese, but they have the luck of still remaining outside the Iron Curtain.

### **An Improvised American Policy**

The liberal views held in common by the Chinese and American liberals toward the Chinese Communists during the last

World War influenced the American government's policy toward China. When the Nationalists and the Communists locked horns, General George C. Marshall was sent by the United States to effect a compromise and to suggest the formation of a coalition government as a way out of the impasse. The American government later held up the shipment of military supplies to China ostensibly to facilitate the negotiations, but this American action helped, quite unintentionally, to demoralize the already hard pressed government in Nanking.

After eight years of long drawn-out war of resistance, the country had been bled white. The middle class was ruined and the backbone of the country's economy was broken and the people in general were impoverished by devastations. Both the army and the people got tired of war and wanted peace at any price. During several decades before the war, they had seen for a number of times how the government changed hands and the armies changed commanders. After all, were not the Communists Chinese?

The intellectuals were not satisfied with the economic and political conditions existing then. They felt that a government organized by the Communists might bring a change for better days. No wonder that the morale of both the army and the people was at its lowest ebb. Under such circumstances a little gentle push at its back by a friendly nation had the force of, as it were, an avalanche and it was enough for the Nationalist government's undoing. Consequently, the army lost the will to fight and the people the will to resist, which both of them had in full measure during the Japanese invasion.

Eventually the Iron Curtain fell down on the whole of mainland China.

The first chapter possibly of a world tragedy in the future was thus written. The subsequent Korean War started the ball rolling.

### **Government Moved to Taiwan**

Meanwhile the government and a number of intellectuals moved to Taiwan and continued to build up with undaunted

spirit a democracy along the lines of the West, as the author has suggested in this volume.

Confucian liberalism still prevailed in spite of the confusion in the realm of ideas caused by a sudden change in the general situation.

*In the field of education*, a system of compulsory education to extend democratic ideas has been established and ninety-eight per cent of children of school age are now in the grade school.

Mandarin or *Kuoyu* was employed in lectures to standardize the spoken language. The students were required to converse in *Kuoyu* in school. The young generation now use the standardized language alongside the local dialects. Like Peiping, Taiwan has become a *Kuoyu*-speaking area in the short span of some fifteen years. This is extremely important for the future, because the younger generation are using *Kuoyu* as a common medium of expression among themselves irrespective of their original dialects and the language barrier for free association of the people now living in Taiwan has thus been removed once for all.

The standard of normal schools and normal colleges were raised so as to make future teachers better prepared for teaching.

The scope of school curriculum was widened. Science teaching was strengthened. Textbooks were revised to suit the needs of a modern democracy. The present liberalism in education prevailing in Taiwan today was the result of fusion of Confucian and Western liberalism through the conscious and sustaining effort of modern scholars and educators of the last fifty years on the mainland.

Most of the Western ideas in education found their counterparts in the indigenous ones in modified forms one way or another as pointed out in this volume. Rousseau's naturalistic ideas found counterparts in the Taoist School. Froebel's development theories and practices found counterparts in Mencius and Wang Yang-ming. Dewey's pragmatic approach to education felt very much at home with the general atmosphere of the Confucian

School.

In other matters, religious toleration is part of our daily life; it antedates the Western practice by many centuries. In the relation between the individual and society, the Confucian School is the middle-of-the-roader as we find in the modern West--perhaps in China it needs some strengthening at both ends.

*Communist China*, on the contrary, tried to eliminate the individual and build up a society resembling very much that of the ant.

A system of education was established with brain-washing as its main aim. The young minds are being brain-washed every hour and every day of the year. While Chin Shih Huang, as pointed out before, following the teachings of the Legalistic or the collectivist school, forced the people to turn away from the existing liberal ideas handed down through history and to obey the dictatorship of his totalitarian government of the time; the Communists have far outdone the historical antecedent by stamping out every strain of traditional liberalism in the people's minds by brain-washing.

While Chin Shih Huang tried to repel history, the Chinese Communists tried by brain-washing to shape history in the mold of a materialistic interpretation of it. But in ancient China historical forces kept on working in the people's minds in spite of the repelling.

Would history, following that example, repeat itself in the present day? May it refuse to take shape in the mold and bounce back in full force to its traditional form?

China's history proves that Chinese culture has great staying power through ages in spite of many vicissitudes of fortune. Our future, therefore, lies in having a deeper faith in the staying power of the time-tested humanistic and liberal traditions of Chinese Culture.

Chiang Monlin  
Taiwan, 1962.

## PREFACE

In presenting this volume to the public, the writer presumes that no apology is needed, as the book is primarily a pioneer study of Chinese principles of education, and a first attempt to articulate the Chinese thoughts on education which are found here and there in the voluminous works of many a Chinese thinker, to interpret the more or less vague statements in clearer language and to weave the scattered thoughts into a related whole. The unorganized and fragmentary writings of the Chinese philosophers contain so much aphoristical statements, which are little supported with detailed discussions and which, therefore, have many shades of meaning, that they allow much room for various interpretations. The writer is oftentimes really at sea to know what they precisely mean, and, therefore, he must acknowledge frankly that it is unavoidable, no matter how careful he is, a certain amount of modern ideas has probably been read into them.

While the materials used in this book are taken from the original Chinese sources, the method employed in organizing and systematizing them is more or less Western. After the scattered ideas have become better articulated and put in a better historical perspective, the writer begins to realize that much of Chinese thoughts on education of olden times are decidedly modern, and that the educational theories as advanced in those days still show unmistakable signs of continuous development and progress.

While writing, the writer has kept several points in mind. Firstly, in choosing materials, only those which have direct or indirect bearing upon the present-day problems are selected. It is hoped that to study the past is not for its own sake, but to make plain the educational theories of to-day in the light of the past. Secondly, in arranging the materials, the historical sequence is kept as far as possible, so that the influences of one idea exercised upon the other can be traced. Thirdly, whenever an opportunity presents itself, the writer is always ready to

make a comparative study of different schools of thought and also of Chinese and Western ideas. The value of making comparative studies on any subject cannot be overestimated. Fourthly, the writer realizes that thoughts on education lose their significance if detached and isolated from the general trends of thought. The different chapters are so arranged that when we desire to discuss a particular topic on education, the chapter preceding will serve as a background.

The first chapter is devoted to a general account of Chinese ideals of life and an outline of the development of Chinese thoughts, so as to furnish a background to Chinese education; and the second chapter, to a discussion of the general scope of Chinese education in order to furnish a bird's-eye view of the subject. It is hoped that these two chapters may help the reader to understand the subsequent ones better. For the same reason, the discussion of moral theories (Chap. XI) precedes that of moral training (Chap. XII), and the problem of knowledge (Chap. V) precedes the method of learning (Chap. VIII).

The problem of knowledge is a study of general methodology. Its study is indispensable to an understanding of not only philosophy, but also methods of teaching and learning.

The problem of science (Chap. VI) is a study to find out why China has not developed modern science. For modern Western civilization owes so much to modern science that its absence from China may explain much of China's perplexities.

The Chapter preceding the last is a discussion of modern Western ideas of the individual, the society and the state, in comparison with the Chinese ideas. A few suggestions have been made as to what should be reconstructed, or preserved, and what should be introduced.

The last Chapter is a discussion on the science and art of education as modern educational theories and practice have furnished us. It is intended to focus the problems raised in the preceding chapters on the present-day problems of education.

In preparing this volume, the writer has received help from several quarters. For the inspiration to write this book and for

the selection of its title, he is indebted to Professor George Dayton Strayer. The writer owes a more extensive debt to Professor John Dewey and Professor W. H. Kilpatrick, who have read the manuscript and have offered many valuable suggestions; and also to Professor Paul Monroe who has given invaluable advice and constant encouragement during the whole course of writing. The writer is also greatly indebted to Mr. J. Barrett Botsford, who has read through the entire manuscript and has suggested a number of changes.

M. C.

*New York City,*

*August, 1917.*

## PART I

### HEREDITY AND EDUCATION

The tendency of man's nature to good may be likened to water flowing downward.—*Mencius.*

The work of nourishing the mind may be likened to the work of nourishing a grain of seed in which life lies latent.—*Tsutsze.*



## INTRODUCTION

The sages from the Eastern sea have the same mind and reason as the sages from the Western sea; the sages of centuries ago have the same mind and reason as the sages of centuries to come.—*Loh Shang-san*.