

NEW CHINA AND CHINESE
PHILOSOPHIES¹

China took greater pride in her “hundred philosophers” than in her religions. Three principal footpaths can be distinguished within this forest of thought: Taoism, Confucianism and legalism, which Arthur Waley outlines in an excellent work: *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*.²

Western Marxists rarely speak of the legalists. It happens that in studying Taoism they touch upon Marxist dialectics (this is true of Thalheimer, for example): *yi yin yi yang chih, wei tao*—the alternation of yin and yang is Tao, Hegel told them. And then there is the pre-Marxist trinity: thesis-antithesis-synthesis. It was Confucius whom they found the most congenial. Guilty of evidencing some predilection for Tao, Jean Grenier found himself accused of doing the people’s cause and that of the Revolution a disservice. “It’s a curious thing,” a Marxist-Confucianist wrote, “all these gentlemen remind me of the opera choruses that sing *China is a charming country* except that they sing *China is wisdom and wisdom is Tao*.” Now China is wisdom but wisdom is Confucius because “what persists of an-

Translated by Elaine P. Halperin.

1. This article is a sequel to one by the same author, “New China and the Chinese Language” that appeared in *Diogenes*, No. 8.

2. London, Allen & Unwin, 1939.

cient Chinese philosophy is its essential agnosticism. The salt of Chinese wisdom is a salt that comes from the earth.”

From La Mothe Le Vayer,³ who praised him as “the Chinese Socrates,” to Voltaire, Turgot and the other Encyclopedists, the friends of the Confucianists in our country were actually always men of “reason” and sometimes of “progress” (since they made of progress, if not a reality, at least a positive value). In his *Précis* of Chinese philosophy, Fung Yu-lan praised Master K’ung as the “first master” of the Chinese, first in time, first in importance, the one who tried “his best” to “reform the world,” a kind of “revolutionary.” Herrlee G. Creel also says, in his recent book, *Confucius*,⁴ that he believes Master K’ung to be an enemy of the feudal barons, a courageous reformer, the one Chinese thinker who offers an equivalent of the “democratic” idea.

However, to the unacknowledged but obvious amazement of the Marxist-Confucianists in France, to the embarrassment of Fung Yu-lan, Mao Tse-tung no sooner had taken over power than he announced a “struggle to the death” against Confucius and Confucianism. To honor Master K’ung and to read the classics became, in the space of a day, a “feudal” crime.

In the space of a day, Fung Yu-lan, who professed to be a neo-Confucianist, published his retraction and then “Mao Tse-tung and Chinese Philosophy,” the French version of which appeared in *La Pensée*.⁵ Although the *Précis* defined Confucius as “the Master,” and the Chinese philosophers in general as indifferent to epistemology, Fung Yu-lan, having seen the light, now could smell from afar an annoyingly “idealistic” epistemology in Confucius, ideas so wild that action and science are considered independent of each other, and the “practical” is regarded as of little moment—this same “practical” which we know since Mao Tse-tung⁶ constitutes the “essential source of all knowledge.” In the space of a day, Claude Roy was thanking Mao Tse-tung for finally raising the leaden lid that Confucius, that most reactionary of philosophers, had placed over China: “three thousand years of lessons in resignation and obedience, the immutable mes-

3. François La Mothe Le Vayer: *Œuvres* (Dresden, Michel Groell, 1757), Vol. I, Part I, pp. 311–24.

4. *Confucius, the Man and the Myth* (New York, The John Day Co., 1949). Read particularly chaps. X, “The Reformer,” and XV, “Confucius and Western Democracy.”

5. May–June, 1954, pp. 79–87.

6. *Œuvres Choisies*, Vol. I, pp. 347–64, “A propos de la pratique” (Paris, Editions sociales, 1955). One can see by this that the logician, the disciple of Stalin, more than yields to the strategist, the statesman.

sage of Confucius: *remain where you are and bow down to the decree of heaven, all this is about to be snatched away, destroyed.*"

And yet it was in the works of the Confucianist, Han Yu, that I read the *Biography of the Mason Wang Ch'ên-fu*;⁷ and it is this same man who becomes irritated when the Buddhist and other Taoist monks live like parasites off of the workmen and artisans. "Why wouldn't the people become indigent and thieving?" Faithful to Master K'ung, it is this same man who teaches that the wise man trains his spirit and his heart to "act." This agrees with the views of a learned Sinologist, Herrlee G. Creel, who in his latest book, *Chinese Thought, from Confucius to Mao Tse-tung*,⁸ declares that "Confucians, as far back as Confucius and Mencius and continuing over the centuries, have denounced the economic exploitation of the masses" (this is attested notably by Huan K'uan's *Discourse on Salt and Iron*). When *Europe*, the quasi-socialist review, published in 1936 a translation of the chapter "Ju Hsing" of the *Li Ki*, on the *conduct of the literate man*, can one believe that Jean Cassou did not recognize in it a bible of the "feudal"?

Alas, the history of ideas is woven with misconceptions. In condemning Confucius, Mao Tse-tung purposely confuses the philosopher's thought with Confucianist orthodoxy and the temples of Confucius.

After the persecution inflicted upon them by Ch'in Shih Huang Ti, Master K'ung's disciples soon took their revenge, a vexatious one, since its consequence was to make them the favorites of the emperors under the Han. However, it must be clearly understood that those of the nobility who were punished for having mistreated their slaves during the reign of this dynasty, were so chastised in the name of Confucianist values and at the instigation of Confucianist advisers. Later on, under the T'ang, the system of examinations, whose mechanism Robert des Rotours has interpreted for us,⁹ accorded the lion's share to the Confucianists. As for neo-Confucianist orthodoxy, which in diverse forms from the Sung dynasty on attempted to conciliate (eclectically rather than synthetically) Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianist teachings—it is sometimes compared (favorably or unfavorably) without too much impertinence to our neo-Thomism. After T'ai Tsun of the T'ang, who fixed for a while the official meaning of the classics, Wang An-shih, the quasi-socialist reformer, prepared

7. *Biographie du maçon Le kou wen chinois* (Paris, Geuthner, 1926), pp. 195–98.

8. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1935, pp. 245–46.

9. *Traité des examens traduit de la nouvelle histoire des T'ang* (Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises), chaps. XLIV–XLV, P.U.F.

“new interpretations” which the Emperor Shên Tsung decreed in 1075 to be the sole official ones. Then came Chu Hsi (1130–1200) who wrote his commentary on the *Four Books* (*Lun Yü, Men Tzü, Chung Yung and Ta Hsüch*). The Emperor Jên-Tsung of the Yuan included it in the curriculum of the state examinations and in 1313 he decreed that it alone would be considered orthodox. One can imagine to what errors, contradictions and compromises the philosophy of Confucius was exposed: “more Taoist than the Taoists, more Buddhist than the Buddhists,” the neo-Confucianists made use of Master K’ung’s name only with the greatest presumption. And yet they did not refrain from so doing.

Still less entitled to speak in the name of Confucius were those who worshipped him in the temples as an equal of Buddha or of Lao Tzü. That a few bad boys in the *Chin P’ing Mei* swore in front of the statute of Confucius to lead a life of disrepute and mockingly perverted his generous acceptance of the formula of fraternity itself—*ssü hai chih nei chieh hsiung ti ye* (within the four seas all men are brothers)—should not concern the *Lun Yü* any more seriously than it does the Gospel that some of the faithful pray God to make the atheist examiners of candidates for the bachelor’s degree blind to the errors of their pupils.

Mao Tse-tung may ban the religion of Confucius, he may outlaw any official commentary, yet he will still have all the Confucianists on his side; but if, proceeding by “amalgamation,” he should jumble the anecdote of the *Chin P’ing Mei* and twenty others of similar value, with the teachings of the *Lun Yü*, then all the Confucianists of China, all those of Europe¹⁰ and America will ask themselves if the head of present-day China wants to shatter the only Chinese thought capable of withstanding him.

It is useless for the Marxists to say that “for twenty-five centuries, deified by power,” Confucius deserved this opprobrium: “the authoritative state has never had a better theoretician, nor the aristocracy a better defender” than he. Granted that they might have misled a few ignorant people; but what well-informed man would agree with them that the reformer plays the tyrants’ game? By attempting, with the aid of pleasure, gifts, or special treatment, to win the favor of the *chün Tzü*, the truly literate man, “one does not affect his virtue”; if one should do him violence and arrest him, “his conduct will not change”; one can obtain his friendship “but not force it,” “one can kill him but not dishonor him.” However

10. In Geneva there is a Société d’Etudes confucéenes, Case 26, Grange Canal, whose *Bulletins* I receive: Nos 25–26, dated the fourth and fifth months of the Confucian year 2506.

tyrannical the government might be, the literate Confucianist does not modify his principles in any way.¹¹

Confucianists until 1949, when they quickly modified their principles because they were eager to curry favor, Fung Yu-lan, and Claude Roy now confess that they usurped the title. Sun Yat-sen, whom they must respect in order to humor Mao Tse-tung,¹² did not scorn Master K'ung. In the last chapter of his *Confucius*, Creel examines the influence of Confucianist thought on the "San Min Chu I, the three popular (or democratic) principles." As smitten as he was known to be with Western philosophy, Sun Yat-sen nonetheless made use of the canonical virtues; he would readily quote a passage from the *Ta Hsüeh*, which seemed to him "a national treasure" of political philosophy, unequalled by any other nation.

Moreover, some of the most influential among the Chinese communists consider Master K'ung as an ancestor, a precursor, the leader of the liberal left; before he embraced the Leninist orthodoxy, Kuou Mo-jo admired in Master K'ung the champion of the rights of the little people and the promoter of armed rebellion. And Kuou Mo-jo, the author of the *Ch'ü Yüan*, not only figures among the most famous writers of today; he is at present vice-president of the Council of Ministers. A second vice-president of the Council, Liu Shao-ch'i, drew up a pamphlet to explain to the young Chinese *How To Be a Good Communist*:¹³ "There are some people who assert that none can equal those revolutionary geniuses named Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin. . . . If one were to believe them, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin were marked from birth with a mysterious stamp. . . . Of course not!" because in *Mêng Tzū*,¹⁴ whom we call Mencius, it is written: "Anybody can become Yao and Shun." Yao and Shun, the perfect emperors, the models for any great prince. This pamphlet, which should be translated into French for the enlightenment of zealots, is packed with references to Mencius, to the classics, to traditional virtues: even when nobody is watching him, observing him, the good communist works for the party I recognize in this the pure Confucianist: "alone, in his home, a literate man observes and supervises himself." This obvious sympathy for Confucianist thought that Liu Shao-ch'i demonstrates has struck all those who are closely interested in the Chinese evolution, and understandably so,

11. *Li Ki, Ju Hsing*.

12. "Is the Communist Party in agreement with the three principles of the people? We answer yes." *Œuvres choisies*, "Les Taches du Parti Communiste chinois" (Paris, Editions sociales, 1955), p. 320.

13. Peking, Foreign Language Press.

14. *Mencius*, IV, 2, 32.

since the latter is supposed to be the most influential, after Mao Tse-tung, of the party's theorists. Creel, on pages 256–57 of his *Chinese Thought*, David S. Nivison, in his essay on “Knowledge and Action in Chinese Thought since Wang Yang-ming,”¹⁵ Arthur F. Wright in “The Chinese Language and Foreign Ideas,”¹⁶ all agree that the text of Liu Chao-ch'i is an attempt to achieve a Marxist-Confucianist synthesis. “In recent years,” Nivison writes, “essays and pamphlets on ‘cultivation’ (*hsiu-yang*) have become almost a fad in party circles”; and Wright says: “Certainly Chinese Communist leadership has been greatly concerned to transmute Communist doctrine into guiding principles of self-cultivation. . . .” Even the Marxist-Leninist concept of struggle, of conflict (*tou-chêng* in Chinese), is being given an almost psychological and personalist meaning. Will this communist notion of ethics, much neglected in the west, come to us from China? Some serious thinkers believe so, and that it will owe much to Master K'ung's teachings.

To add to our confusion, the doctrinaires who condemn Confucius as a reactionary professor accept the Taoist philosophers with unexpected enthusiasm.

Several works have just been published which give us much to think about in regard to this mysterious Tao. Besides the first seventy pages of Arthur Waley's book (*Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*) which deal with metaphysics and politics in accordance with the *Chuang Tzŭ*, we can reread, in a new edition that is bilingual with juxtaposed texts, the earlier work of Weiger on the *Pères du système taoïste*:¹⁷ *Lao Tzŭ*, *Chuang Tzŭ*, *Lieh Tzŭ*. Furthermore, Mr. Duyvendak published in the Dutch language and then in English a translation of the *Tao Tê Ching*, while the Eastern publishing house of Adrien Maisonneuve gave us this work in a French version by the same scholar, with a revised Chinese text, and numerous notes. It proved so upsetting that the impious author's life was threatened.¹⁸ Having reread these important texts, we must look at *Le Taoïsme* by Maspéro and Fung Yu-lan's chapters analyzing the three phases

15. *Studies in Chinese Thought*, edited by Arthur F. Wright (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1954), pp. 140, 300.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Leyde, Brill; Paris, Belles Lettres, with the collaboration of Editions Sulliver, 1950.

18. Tao Tō King, *Le Livre de la Voie et de la Vertu* (Paris, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1953), with Chinese text verified and translated by J. J. L. Duyvendak, with his critical notes and an introduction.

of ancient Taoism. Once again and more than ever we wonder how it is that present-day Marxists, the very ones who disparage the Zen in Buddhism, continue to show as much singular tolerance for Tao as those who believe the Dalai Lama to be a champion of socialism: "As for the ordinary man whom you see on the lake near the river, who appears to be fishing in a flat barge but who, in reality, is indolently taking a sun bath, listening to the birds, watching the clouds float by and seeing neither the peasants busily picking rice nor the important functionary issuing orders, nor the old lady in the house—this man wants no traffic with all this activity and bustle. He believes that it is wise to remain quite inconspicuous, quite withdrawn and mute, to keep oneself strictly apart from worldly turmoil, to lend an ear to the small birds and the strong wind. Yes, this inoffensive fisherman is surely a Taoist."¹⁹ Idyllic Taoist! It is true that Claude Roy knows the *Tao Tê Ching* only through Father (Christian) Huang Chia-chêng's translation, "a marvelous translation" it seems, "one which preserves the poetic accent, the great rhythm, the sententious lyricism of the work."²⁰ A translation that embellishes but retains nothing, it is the language of Mr. Pierre Leyris, a translation which all those who know both Chinese and Taoism find unacceptable. Thanks to it, the *Chuang Tzŭ* is contrasted with Confucius in the same way that the air of freedom is contrasted with submission, that quasi-anarchical quietism is contrasted with rigorism. "I confess that always and in every instance I prefer the ethics of the birds singing in the heavens to what the master teaches to his kneeling serf."²¹ In annexing this Taoism which they only recently denounced, our Marxists feel obliged to distort it just as unfairly as they had twisted the meaning of the *Lun Yü*.

Marxist-Taoists are fortunate. They do not even suspect a thousandth of the difficulties that an honest use of the *Tao* implies. They treat Lao Tzŭ, Yang Chu, Chuang Tzŭ as if they were historical personages; they treat the *Tao* as if there had not been a good half dozen versions of it. Actually, we know nothing of Lao Tzŭ; we don't even know if he ever lived. Yang Chu's identity has remained almost as vague. The genius of a writer that one can call, if one wants to, Chuang Tzŭ, colors so uniquely the *Nei P'ien*, the *internal section* of the *Chuang Tzŭ*, that it is probable that

19. *Clefs pour la Chine*, pp. 240, 244, 246. Whoever does not know the Chinese language admires in *Lao Tzŭ* a "great rhythm." Those who know the language are still looking for the real rhythm of this work.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

this part of the work was written by a single great artist. *Lao Tzŭ* and the *Chuang Tzŭ* are merely “collections of Taoist writings and sayings, authored by different people at different periods.”²² For centuries it was believed that the *Chuang Tzŭ* followed the *Tao tē ching*, and the latter was supposed to have been written around the sixth century B.C. According to this, the old Lao Tzŭ would have ironically demonstrated to the young Confucius that the latter did not know how to govern either men or his thinking. Who would dare to perpetuate these hagiographic fables? Arthur Waley identified several schools of thought in the *Chuang Tzŭ*; Takeuchi Yoshio discovered several types of style and obviously contradictory ideas in *Lao Tzŭ*; Ku Chieh-kang deciphered in it a wealth of material written during a period that extends throughout at least three centuries. Yet, depending upon whether you fix the birth of Taoism in the sixth or the third century, the historical situation of the doctrine and its very meaning, from the Marxist point of view, must change. Trotsky, whom I questioned in Mexico about this very serious problem, answered me with a frivolity that I still find amazing: “How could a Chinese, living in a tiny field that just sufficed for his family, rise high enough to conceive of himself as economically dependent on anybody in this world?” And it is for this reason that Taoism preaches anarchy! Why had he not read the ode of the *Shih Ching* which asks for “rain on our public fields and on our private ones”? Under the Chou, that is the dynasty during whose reign the beginnings of Taoist thought are traditionally fixed, the system of landed property, far from encouraging the peasant to anarchy, inspired him with a sense of solidarity. Since the land was divided in accordance with the ching system²³ (eight private fields in the center of which was a public one), the eight families, each of which owned a private field outright, helped without pay to cultivate the public field whose output went to the state. Inasmuch as public granaries where food was stored for emergencies had been in operation in China ever since this very same period,²⁴ Trotsky’s explanation of Taoism as an expression of the peasants’ selfishness is ridiculous! Why wouldn’t it be better to say, as Fung Yu-lan did, that the Taoist philosophy transforms the immutable rhythm of the seasons into the *yin-yang* rotation and that Master K’ung idealizes the immutable structure of the peasant family, which must live as a group? In effect, for centuries the Taoism of Lao Tzŭ

22. Fung Yu-lan, *Precis*, p. 84.

23. Cf. Henri Maspéro, *La Chine antique* (Paris, de Brossard, 1923), pp. 108–11, and Chen Yao Lung: *Le régime agraire en Chine* (Lyon, 1933).

24. Cf. Liu Lien-tching’s thesis in the *Greniers publics de prévoyance*.

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was expounded as a Platonic idea, as an eternal archetype. It is beyond understanding why Mao Tse-tung, who anathematizes the Confucianist formula *Heaven is unchanging, the Tao does not change*, encourages his disciples to prefer to it another doctrine of the immutable Being, one which, of all the Chinese epistemologies, is certainly the most "idealistic."²⁵ Does he do so because he too believed that he could deduce the "second law" of Marxist dialectics from the *Lao Tzŭ*, that "of the negation of the negation," and derive from the *yin-yang* rotation a vague foreshadowing of the *Natur Dialektik*? Because he guessed the revolutionary meaning that the Duyvendak translation of *tao k'o tao fei ch'ang tao* would confer upon the *Tao Tê ching*? If "the Way that is truly the way is other than a constant way," if Taoism is the opposite of immutability, if it coincides with perpetual mutability, then of course, it would never cease to disappoint those whom Paul Demiéville ironically calls "the fine souls smitten with *comparative mysticism*";²⁶ but it might offer to Mao Tse-tung's faithful at least the shadow of a reason: this Tao strongly resembles the ebb and flow of history.

Moreover, one would have to be sure of the translation. Demiéville believes it contains dependable evidence, notably in the fourteenth chapter of the *Chuang Tzŭ*; but Creel writes me that he cannot agree with this, and he, too, refers me to the *Chuang Tzŭ*. I do not believe that our Marxist-Taoists have seriously questioned the six mysterious characters; they put their trust in their "inoffensive fisherman."

And so I ask them: how do you explain the fact that Ch'ên Tu-hsiu, when he headed the Chinese Communist Party, deplored the power of Taoist thought among you, and that it turned so many Chinese away from Marxism? I ask them too how they reconcile their fondness for the Tao with their idea of a future paradise, the Communist paradise; like the Confucianists, the Taoist golden age belongs to the past when "nobody did anything, and everything happened by itself," when no criminal had subdued fire, invented weaving, agriculture, the art of pottery or of masonry. The Marxists should go back to the *Chuang Tzŭ*, to the anecdote of the Taoist gardener who refuses to use an implement which a Confucianist had suggested and which would enable him to sprinkle one hundred squares of vegetable fields a day: "My master said: for a cunning invention an astute act; and an astute act means an astute heart. . . . It is not that I do not know of this invention, but I would blush to use it." Would they still regard as

25. Mao Tse-tung, "A propos de la Contradiction," *Œuvres choisies*, Vol. I, p. 368; Fong Yeou Lan: *Mao Tse-toung et la philosophie chinoise*, p. 82.

26. Review of Duyvendak's translation, in *Toung Pao*, Vol. XLIII, bks. 1-2, p. 103.

inoffensive those gentle fishermen of the *Chuang Tzŭ* when they came to know that, because technicians and other engineers had corrupted the hearts of men, it was important to “bind their fingers,” to “demolish their arches and their leads, throw far away their compasses and their squares.” What kind of aberration makes the Communist legislator trust men who deny every law and give their followers permanent, unconditional instructions to sabotage? Never, as far as I know, has Leninism sought in either black magic or white the drug of immortality. What other preoccupation, that of Pao P’u Tzŭ? Etc., etc.

Would the Taoism with which the Chinese Marxists implicitly sympathize be that which Creel describes as *purposive*, something similar to active?²⁷ Actually, in the confusion of primitive Taoism two incompatible tendencies²⁸ can be traced. Sometimes they are not easy to distinguish, as in this text of the *Chuang Tzŭ* which asserts that the men of earlier days, the accomplished men, “liberally inflicted the penalty of death” (did they inflict it easily, that is to say liberally? Did they inflict it with moderation, thus showing themselves to be liberal?). Elsewhere the contrast is defined more clearly, without ambiguity: very clever is the man who can find in the *Lao Tzŭ* any other policy than recourse to tyranny: “The saint, in his government, empties the hearts of men and fills their bellies, weakens their will and fortifies their bones. In this way he constantly makes sure that the people will be without knowledge and without desire, and that those who know will not dare to act.” “In antiquity, those who excelled in practising the Way did not use it to enlighten the people, but to bestialize them. The people are hard to govern when they know too much. That is why he who governs a country by means of knowledge is a scourge for the country.” One can quibble about Duyvendak’s rendition. Instead of “to bestialize them” Wieger translates “to keep them simple-minded”; Fung Yu-lan says “keep them ignorant” (in the sense of simple, innocent). Jean Grenier, who among the French writers doubtless understands Taoism more than anyone else and who certainly has had the most intimate experience of it, also quarrels with Duyvendak’s version, saying it is more brutal than those of Legge, Stanislas Julien or Huang Chia-chêng. But I cannot ignore Paul Demiéville in the *T’oung Pao*; according to him it is “the most authorita-

27. What we need in this instance is one word that would mean both *intentional* and *active*. We don’t have such a word.

28. “Contemplative Taoism and purposive Taoism are not merely different. Logically and essentially they are incompatible.” Herrlee G. Creel, “On Two Aspects in Early Taoism,” *Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zinbun-Kagaku-Kenkyusyo* (University of Kyoto, 1954).

tive of all those that have appeared and that continue to appear in all languages; one must from now on refer to it, to the exclusion of the preceding ones, as the only one "that takes sufficiently into account the recent progress of philological exegesis."²⁹ Jean Grenier concedes that the Dutch scholar's theory would become acceptable if one could bring the text of *Lao Tzŭ* back from the sixth to about the third century.³⁰ One can; one must, for a large part of the collection. Takeuchi Yoshio, Kuchieh-kang, Arthur Waley and Fung Yu-lan claim that the *Tao Tê Ching* was compiled after the death, in the third century, of the man who is usually called Chuang Tzŭ.

I do not wish to insinuate that the Chinese Marxists support Duyvendak's *Lao Tzŭ* and the active tendency, the Tao in *inconstantia constans*, this Tao which would herald the dialectical movement of nature according to Engels, which would justify totalitarian systems (as Richard Wilhelm noted a long time ago). Let us suppose, with greater fairness, that Mao Tse-tung does not care to alienate for the moment the apolitical dreamers and those strongly tinged with the kind of Zen Buddhism with which he compromises for the reasons already stated. The President of the Chinese Democratic Republic doesn't care a fig for the meaning of the first six characters of the *Lao Tzŭ*, for the content of Taoist concepts or intuitions. Not once does he refer to this in his philosophical writings, nor in his essay *On the Practice*, nor in the one *On Contradiction*. But, actually, Lao Tzŭ gave us the answer once and for all, and plainly: "he who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know." From which I conclude that the Marxist-Taoists who speak so much, who write about everything and more, have not read the *Tao Tê Ching* all the way to that sentence in chapter lxxxii, the last of the little book. If they have read it and thoroughly understood it, why have they not burned either their writings or the *Tao Tê Ching*?

The Chinese Marxists, concerned with their reputation for certitude, would do better not to invoke a doctrine whose essential vagueness is recognized by Herrlee G. Creel, Derk Bodde and all those who have the

29. *T'oung Pao*, Vol. XLIII, bk. 1-2, p. 95. It is evidently to this passage of the *T'oung Pao* that the American Sinologist Derk Bodde answers in "Two New Translations of Lao Tzŭ," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. LXXIV, No. 4, Oct.-Dec., 1954, pp. 211-17: "Two major points are abundantly clear: Why, on the one hand, these translations are so excitingly different from all previous Western study on the *Tao Te Ching* and open for it revolutionary new possibilities; yet why, on the other hand, they cannot be regarded as 'definitive' translations and fail to make the work of previous translators obsolete."

30. Review of Duyvendak's translation, in *La Nouvelle N.R.F.*, Feb. 1955, pp. 324-28.

slightest knowledge of it.³¹ They should find some other Founding Fathers, which is what Fung Yu-lan, in his essay on *Mao Tse Toung et la philosophie chinoise*, is trying to do.

He discovers in Mo Tzū (around 480–380 B.C.) “the most eminent adversary of Confucius,” hence a highly estimable thinker who “attributed to experience all of its importance as a source of knowledge,” and who “in a meaningful way, emphasized the role of knowledge in the service of the practical.” The philosophers of the *Fa Chia* and their most illustrious figure, Han Fei Tzū (280–233 B.C.), commend themselves to us also for their “epistemological materialism.” “To form a judgment without testing it,” Han Fei Tseu wrote, “is hardly wise, and to put trust in such a hazardous judgment is to go astray.” Here at least is someone who expresses “the ideology of the rising class,” that of “the landed property-owners,” the “new force” of those times; it is not at all surprising that he inclined toward “materialism.” Finally Wang Ch’ung, the author of the *Lun Hêng*, maintained and even “developed” under the Han dynasty the “materialist tradition.”³²

Under the mutilated name of “Wang Choung,” Wang Ch’ung equally seduces Claude Roy, who also invokes Wang Yang-ming (1472–1528 or 1529): “A thinker like Wang Yang-ming seems very interesting to me because he already foreshadows the great themes of thought that are at the core of the European and Chinese Marxist works.” Besides Wang Yang-ming, the Communists can invoke Chen Yi-chouan (*sic!*) and Chu Hsi; mainly the latter, thanks to whose materialism the Sino-Marxist synthesis “will be achieved and will spread.”³³

The works of Wang Shou-jên, called Wang Yang-ming, remain almost inaccessible to western readers, but they do have access to the work of Henke, to the thesis of P. Wang Tc’h’angtche, S.J., on this famous pre-Marxist philosopher. From them one learns that Wang Yang-ming admires in the universe “a spiritual whole,” that “the extension of intuitive knowledge” is the *condition* of all philosophy. This too is the opinion of Fung Yu-lan in his *Précis*: “*The extension of intuitive knowledge* became the key term of Wang’s philosophy and in his last years he mentioned only

31. “Dogmatic certainty is never appropriate when one is dealing with Taoism” (Creel); “many . . . statements must probably remain veiled forever in uncertainty” (Derk Bodde).

32. Cf. *Mao Tse Toung et la philosophie chinoise*, p. 82.

33. *Clefs pour la Chine*, p. 238.

these words.”³⁴ In spite of his conversion to Communism, Fung Yu-lan has not changed his opinion about Master Wang, that champion of “the idealist tradition of Confucianism,”³⁵ against which Mao Tse-tung and Claude Roy together wage a sacred war. As for Chou Hsi, this is the English transcription of letters which, transposed into French, read Tchou Hi. But our Marxist-Sinologists are unable to perceive, beneath these two legal disguises, the same name of the same Chinese Chou Hsi; so that on page 244 they applaud in Chou Hsi the representative of “materialist and democratic philosophy—solid, insolent and daring,” which they hope “will go far,” while on page 232 they execute in Tchou Hi the man responsible for “neo-Confucianism,” an ideology which, on page 237, plays the abominable role in China that neo-Thomism does in the West. In short, he is the worst kind of reactionary and the agent of the feudal barons. In accordance with your being known as Chou Hsi or Tchou Hi, the court’s verdict pronounces you black or white!

Claude Roy and Fung Yu-lan are hardly more inspired when they annex Wang Tch’ong. In the days when he was still thinking, Fung Yu-lan lovingly saw in this writer “the greatest of the school” of the Ancient Texts, a Confucianist school if you please, an “iconoclast who possessed a remarkable spirit of scientific scepticism.” Always taking a stand against the stupidities of his times, he liked to think that he “shook current ideas,” that he weighed the pros and cons, that he maintained an even balance, like that of a supporting beam, and achieved perfect impartiality. The man whom Zenker describes as “the Chinese Montaigne” and not without apparent reason (if I am not wrong in linking, by my predilection for them, the two essayists), Fung Yu-lan³⁶ speaks of as a “materialist”! To transform Wang Ch’ung into a Father of Communism one would have to change him at least as much as Wang Yang-ming.

But Mo Tzū? Did not this hero of the-love-that-embraces-everything preach peace? When I was twenty I read Mo Tzū with passion to confirm my own deep hatred of all war; I soon drew away from this fierce and confused mind who believed in ghosts, who demanded that one be “always in agreement with the superior,” “never with the inferior,” who, as the Grand Master of a religious and quasi-military order, decided whether his companions should live or die. A strange friend of men! I was able to

34. *Précis*, p. 320.

35. *Mao Tse Toung et la philosophie chinoise*, p. 85.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 82–83, and *Précis*, p. 221.

see clearly what one might do to develop the *Hsin Sheng Huo*, but I could not really reconcile it with the theory (as distinguished from the practice) of Marxism. According to Mo Tzū, and I quote the *Fong Yeou Lan* of the period before 1949: "The state must be totalitarian, and the authority of its head must be absolute. . . . By simultaneously resorting to political and religious sanctions, Mo Tseu hopes to convert the entire world to the principles of the-love-that-embraces-everything."³⁷ His disciples lived in religious communities³⁸ strangely confusing the values of the *hsieh*, those errant knights, with those of the most rugged ascetics (who went so far as to proscribe music and singing). Alarming people, and, for the Marxists, poor risks.

Even more dangerous, if that is possible, were the doctors of the *Fa Chia*, realistic or methodical jurists and legalists. The most famous of these was Han Fei Tseu, presumably the inventor of "epistemological materialism." Also there were the author of the *Book of Lord Shang* and Li Ssū, Chin Shih Huang Ti's minister. In Chinese *fa* signifies *means, method* and *law* (*mei yu fa-tzū*: it is not possible). The people of the *Fa Chia* suggested to the prince a safe way to govern: an infallible organization supported by a penal code.

Fung Yu-lan, the Marxist, teaches that Han Fei Tzū tended toward "materialism" because he expounded the ideology of the rising class, that of landed property-owners. But Fung Yu-lan, the free and scholarly historian of Chinese philosophy, explains far better the meaning of and the reason for the realist school. At the end of the Chou dynasty, in the midst of the chaos of a declining feudalism, the rulers were not interested in the Confucianist virtues and felt the need, in order to preserve power, of efficacious methods, "realistic" ones, the only kind capable of solving the problems that a period of upheaval presented. "Certain men" who had analyzed "practical politics," who were called the *fang shu chih shih*, the "methodists," offered their services to the prince. They received a warm welcome and were appointed ministers, sometimes prime ministers. Han Fei Tzū, who was a direct descendant of a royal house of the State of Han in Shansi, codified the "methodists'" philosophy; even I will admit that the "theory and practise" are still useful, "but only if one has decided to follow the totalitarian line."³⁹

37. *Précis*, p. 78.

38. E. V. Zenker, *Histoire de la philosophie chinoise* (Paris, Payot, 1932), p. 194.

39. *Précis*, p. 171.

Read the *Book of Lord Shang*, in the Duyvendak translation,⁴⁰ Waley's fifty pages on the *Han Fei Tzŭ*, and on the "realists,"⁴¹ the fourteenth chapter of Fung Yu-lan's *Précis*, and you will agree that this severe judgment is the only fair one: not that one fails to find serious thought in these Machiavellians who preceded the *Prince*. While the schools of Chinese philosophy pushed back their golden age and their courageous sovereigns into a more and more fabulous past, the realists consented to live in their own times. Just as in *Han Fei Tzŭ* and, almost word for word, the *Book of Lord Shang* asserts that new times call for new values. When everywhere government weakens and feudal ties loosen, it is necessary to create fresh ones. An art of governing (*shu*), which depends upon authority (*shih*) and laws (*fa*), will take the place of the allegiance owed by gentlemen. The prince has no need of Confucianist virtues. Anyone will know how to reign provided his method is good. The prince commands: the severest penalties will keep these imbecilic masses, fascinated by authority and terrified by punishment, in submission. "Not only do we need very detailed laws, but the penalties they decree must be heavy."

This "method" will provide the prince with an aggressive people of workers and soldiers, the kind that wage lively and victorious wars: "It is a misfortune for a prosperous country not to be at war. . . . A prince who can get his people to delight in war will become the king of kings." To do this he must rid himself of the aristocrats, the artisans, the merchants, and above all the moralists, because he who governs a virtuous people is constantly exposed to rebellion, while he who governs a wicked people "easily insures order at home and triumph in war." The prince will make victory all the more certain by shamelessly doing things which he knows are repugnant to his adversary, and by dividing his subjects into small groups in which each one knows that he is "responsible" and "must inform" against the others.

By putting these proud principles into execution, Ch'in Shih Huang Ti unified the principalities. This merely cost the shopkeepers their shops, the Confucianists their heads, and instilled terror in everyone. But by a just reversal of things, which Claude Roy and Fung Yu-lan would do well to ponder, Han Fei Tzŭ, the emperor's adviser, perished in the prison where Li Ssŭ, his colleague in "realism," had placed him. As for the surviving

40. Probsthain Oriental Series, 1928.

41. *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, pp. 199-247.

Confucianists, they were to recover their prestige under the Han dynasty and to triumph for a long time over their temporary victors.

Because of his apparent inconsistency Mao Tse-tung finds himself the protector of two foreign religions, Islam and Buddhism, and the leader in China of a struggle “to the death” against the one Chinese philosophy that the sons of Han and the white devils have always identified with Chinese culture. Except for the fact that foreign policy enlightens us a little about his indulgence toward monks, it could be that Mao Tse-tung, in defending imported religions, pleads for his own saint. Read *On Practise* and *On Contradiction*, his two “philosophical” treatises. You will find in them not Chinese philosophy but an unwavering Leninist catechism. It proceeds by rather elementary questions and answers, the answers always coming from Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin: what Fung Yu-lan now calls a “definitive” solution of the “problem of the relations between knowledge and action in Chinese philosophy.” I really would like to know how, since Chinese thought is never involved. In the *Chuang Tzŭ*, in the sophists Hui Tzŭ and Kung-Sun Lung—to say nothing of all the other Chinese philosophers—there is more than enough to sustain a discussion on *practise* and *contradiction*. Nonetheless, Mao Tse-tung gives the impression of ignoring such thought because it is for him corrupted by “feudalism.” If he triumphs there will be an end for a while (for how long?) of the *cultural heritage*. For the present head of the Party reacts to Chinese thinkers in accordance with other motives than those of wisdom or of politics: didn’t he confess to Robert Payne that when he was only eight years old he already “hated” Master K’ung? Because of his love for Lenin? Because of filial rebellion, it is rumored, against a petty, limited, brutal father, insensitive to his son’s genius and who, in order to obtain his passive obedience, always quoted Confucius or some saying of the school to him. Who doesn’t understand the little Mao and his revolt? The President of the Chinese Democratic Republic refuses to forget the grievances of the young Mao. He nurtures his rancor and, to satisfy it, renounces his past, one of the richest ever known. What weakness and what a mistake!

I sometimes wonder what Han Yü would think in 1955. Wouldn’t he write to Mao and respectfully point out that Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, a German, a Russian, and a Georgian, are perhaps not among the most qualified Chinese to serve as models for the body, the heart and the spirit of the sons of Han? It seems to me I can hear him: “Your August Wisdom would not lower itself to this kind of credulity.” “Yes, you organize this amazing

spectacle only for the joyous amusement of your fine capital. . . .” But I realize that literate Confucianists form a body of intellectuals, of specialized functionaries, and that, in ancient China, they played a role analogous to that which the Party now assumes.⁴² A Confucianist Party would be a dangerous competitor for the Communist Party, all the more so because the ethics of the *Chün Tzŭ*, that of the accomplished man, orders him to raise his voice and to do so without any consideration of the consequences. “The best Confucians have always spoken out fearlessly for what they believed to be right, whether the cost might be exile, prison or death.”⁴³

Numerous are the authors of the *Ku Wên* who have well deserved to be called *Chün Tzŭ*. Quite recently, Wên I-to, the most famous annotator of the classics, preferred to die rather than to express approval of Chiang Kai-shek’s policy. The Confucianist, Fang Hsiao-ju owed it to himself not to draw up a defense of Ch’eng Tsu, the usurper. If he preferred to die and did so rather than dip his pen in a lie, the Party is not wrong to beware of Confucianist historians. What disciple of Master K’ung would agree to write the history of China in accordance with Stalinist norms? “It is understandable that a regime which invokes Marxism-Leninism,” I wrote in 1950, “should decide to eliminate from China the doctrine of Confucius: does the white man of today realize the worth of this aristocratic radicalism, of this modest rationalism that had confidence in itself and in human nature? More and more numerous are the French moralists who imitate the *chêng ming*, and the doctrine of *correct denominations*; there is even an American Sinologist, Herrlee G. Creel, who, in *Confucius, the Man and the Myth*, honors in Master K’ung the only teacher of men who would like to be free but governed; the only theoretician of a Western type of socialist democracy.”⁴⁴ Couldn’t they have put Confucius to sleep? Did they have to slander him, accuse him of “feudalism”? Yes, without doubt, if he is so close to the heart of the masses, if he sticks so powerfully to the spirit of Kuou Mo-jo and of Liu Shao-chi.

May free discussion, which we are assured animates the life of the Party, permit the two vice-presidents to enlighten Mao Tse-tung! We wish present-day China the good fortune of a new Chu Hsi (of a Saint Thomas, of a Père Teilhard de Chardin, of a Diderot, let us say) who might at last

42. George E. Taylor understood that the Chinese Communist Party “stems from the traditional bureaucratic leading class.”

43. H. G. Creel, *Chinese Thought*, p. 180.

44. *Les Ecrivains illustres* (Mazenod, 1951), Vol. I, p. 229.

succeed in achieving the synthesis we hope for between the best of the yellow man's past and the least bad of that the West can contribute. J. R. Levenson⁴⁵ has deplored the miscarriage of empiricism in the thinking of the sons of Han, but the West will know how to fertilize it afresh. I know nothing of this hero about whom I dream except that he will scarcely resemble the zealots who, in order to serve the present master (and serve him poorly), insult Confucius, misconstrue the Tao, sweep away truth and invoke a few brutes in their favor. I see him rather with the features of a *Chün Tzŭ*, of a Han Yü, as someone who, at the daily risk of his life, considers his country's needs without worrying about whether he pleases or displeases. Only the "realists" were able to imagine the end of the Chou. This, unfortunately, is true. Is it written that only the "realists" will conceive the present era? The Confucianist, too, "must live with his times," but he believes in the virtues of virtue and example. May a descendant of either the line of Kouo Mo-jo or of Liu Shao-chi soon express himself. Then Creel's expectation will be realized: then we will see China reconciled and Master K'ung celebrated as the precursor of Marx, Lenin, Mao Tse-tung:⁴⁶ a strange precursor and a precious one, since he would rectify the errors of his heirs; his vocation would still be to rise and contradict the prince each time that the prince is wrong.

45. *The Abortiveness of Empiricism in Early Ch'ing Thought*.

46. *Chinese Thought*, p. 257.