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CHAPTER XIII

RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS:

TRADITION IN CHINESE SOCIETY

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In this era of historic change Chinese society is confronted with a reevaluation of values. As a whole, Chinese culture needs to be clarified by reason and animated with new vigor. The long history of Chinese civilization gives it a heritage which is both very rich and very heavy. It cannot go forward smoothly without conscientious and sober reflection and re-reflection on the traditions which affect present Chinese society. I choose this topic, responsibilities and rights, for a number of reasons. The first is because this is an urgent problem in the reconstruction of Chinese society: we need badly to construct a new balance between responsibility and right. The second is because the question is unavoidable in this study of "the place of the person in social life."² On the one hand, individuals should have their rights and fulfill themselves as human beings. On the other hand, society always demands that the individual assume responsibility. The balance of these two is a crucial question. Thirdly, both theoretically and practically, this is commonly a crucial problem for societies throughout the world. In this paper, I will attempt a brief description and analysis of the ideas of responsibility and rights in the Chinese traditions, which I will divide into two: ancient traditions: Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism (Taoism); and modern traditions: revolution and enlightenment.

ANCIENT CHINESE TRADITIONS

Chinese culture, before the Xinhai Revolution (1911) which overthrew the last Chinese feudal dynasty and founded the Republic of China, was an organic whole constituted of many traditions or theoretical schools. Among them, Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism were generally acknowledged as the basic traditions (The Trinity of Three Teachings) while Confucianism occupied a dominant position.

The Confucian Tradition

Confucius (551-476 B.C.) was the actual founder of Confucianism, although its origins can be traced back far earlier to the legendary monarchs, Yao and Shun. Confucius lived in the period of Spring-Autumn and the Warring States (770-221 B.C.) when China was being torn apart by constant civil wars and the whole Chinese society was in a state of chaos. At the same time, it was the period of the "contention of a hundred schools of thought." Among these numerous and varied schools, Confucianism was but one. Confronting this chaotic society, Confucius

devoted himself to restoring social order. After failing to seek an official position, he concentrated his effort on editing classic traditional literature and teaching what he thought to be the oldest as well as the best tradition. After Confucius' death his disciples continued to spread his teaching. When the first emperor (Shi Hungdi) of the Qin (Ch'in) dynasty (221-207 B.C.) unified China through force of arms, he sought unity in the political and intellectual spheres as well as in other spheres through controlling thought by the notorious decree of "burning all writings and burying alive the scholars." Soon, however, in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), Confucianism became the state ideology while all the other schools of thought were banned with the proposition of the great Confucian Dong Zhongshu (Tung Chung-shu, c. 179-104 B.C.). Henceforth, Confucianism was to be the dominant orthodox ideology of China until the Xinhai Revolution (1911).

The Confucian classics are of two kinds--"The Five Classics," namely, *The Book of Songs (Shi Jing)*, *The Book of History (Shu Jing)*, *The Book of Changes (Yi Jing, or I Ching)*, *The Book of Rites (Li Ji)*, and *The Spring and Autumn Annals (Chun Qiu)*, which were edited by Confucius himself; and "The Four Books," namely, *The Great Learning (Da Xue)*, *The Doctrine of the Mean (Zhong Yong)*, *The Analects of Confucius (Lun Yu)* and *Mencius (Meng Zi)*, which were collected or written by the disciples or early followers of Confucius. All, especially "The Four Books," were the basic textbooks for the examination through which intellectuals obtained an official position since the Han dynasty.

Since the Han dynasty, Confucianism was not only taught in school, but drilled into the people by every possible means--homes, theaters, proverbs, stories, etc.--until this system of ethical ideas became the people's habits in daily life. As a dominant ideology, Confucianism articulated the ethical or moral feature of almost every sphere. In this paper, I will discuss only the main ideas which concern our subject.

As mentioned before, Confucius worked to restore social order. He thought that order on a large scale would not be maintained unless it existed first in the basic unit of society, i.e., the family, then between one family and another, and so on. Only when one orders his family well can this good order be transferred to his work in public administration. The life of the family was seen as the base of the life of society, indeed, society was seen as an enlarged family. Both in the family and in society people should live in peace and harmony; neither superiors nor inferiors should have any complaints. How could this be possible? The way is to let everyone know what his/her role is and what he/she should do. Generally speaking, the meaning of "person" in Confucianism always has a special designation. Everyone is socialized or stratified and has a particular fixed position: ruler, subject, father, son, etc.

This stratification of "person" was believed to be according to the order of nature (Dao) and everyone must behave according to this Dao, i.e., the Confucian principles and the special norms or rules for each person. Throughout its long history Confucianism stipulated for every

role the particular norms or rules: "monarch must behave as a monarch, a subject a subject, a father a father, a son a son." Confucius thought that an harmonious relationship in the family should be maintained by the love (*ci*) of parents and the filial piety of son, and that an harmonious relationship in the state should be maintained by the kindheartedness (*ren*) of the monarch and the loyalty of the subjects. However, Confucianism stresses especially the virtue of filial piety rather than of love, and of loyalty rather than of kindheartedness.

Especially, it emphasizes the virtue of filial piety. First of all this means serving and obedience to one's parents and grandparents. In the Chinese language the words "filial piety" are always combined with the word "obedience" (*shun*). Second, it means protecting one's own body because this is bequeathed to one by one's parents. "When his parents having given birth to his body whole, he returns it to them whole, this may be called filial piety."³ Third, it means bearing and bringing up children in order to carry on the life of the parents. Mencius said, "There are three things that are unfilial, and to have no posterity is the greatest of them."⁴

Filial piety also commands perpetuating the activities of one's parents and carrying on their uncompleted goals, or to realize something new and become famous so that thereby the names of one's parents will be widely known and they will gain immortality among others. This aspect of filial piety sometimes is seen as more important than others. Zeng Zi said, "There are three degrees of filial piety. The highest is the honoring of our parents; the second is not disgracing them; the lowest is being able to support them."⁵

Since Confucius regards the state as an enlarged family, filial piety as the virtue of family is regarded as the source of all other virtues.

If a man in his own house and privacy be not grave, he is not filial; if in serving his ruler he be not loyal, he is not filial; if in discharging the duties of office he be not serious, he is not filial; if with friends he be not sincere, he is not filial; if on the field of battle he be not brave, he is not filial. [Because] if he fail in these five things, the evil [of the disgrace] will reflect on his parents.⁶

So "The fundamental lesson for all is filial piety."⁷ "It commences with the service of parents; it proceeds to the service of the ruler; it is completed by the establishment of one's own personality. . . . Yes, filial piety is the Way (Dao) of Heaven, the principle of Earth, and the practical duty of man."⁸

When the basic virtue of family was extended to the society as an enlarged family in which the emperor was the patriarch, officials were the parents, and the ordinary people were the children, filial piety to one's parents and ancestors became loyalty to the emperor and governors who sometimes were regarded as the symbol of the state. Only when someone orders his family well can his good order be transferred to his

public administration and thereby produce an ordered and harmonious society.

In an ideal Confucian society, there could be order and a kind of harmony, but the price was human rights and freedom. In such a hierarchical structure and ethical system of family and society everyone had a fixed social role and had to fulfill various heavy duties, but they had little, if any, human rights. Only the duties or obligations cannot be shirked. Confucian identity is had through reducing oneself until one merges into the whole--the family and/or the state. The models in Confucianism are the ones who sacrifice their personal interests to their family and/or state. Almost everything done by an individual was regarded as his/her duty as a son or subject to parents or sovereign. Generally speaking, in Confucianism duty or obligation means that the lower served and obeyed the higher. What was done by the higher--father, sovereign or governor--was regarded as a favor generously bestowed upon the lower--son, subject, or common people--and was regarded as fulfilling their duty to their superior. (Even for the emperor, this was due to his ancestors and to Heaven as the emperor is called the Son of the Heaven). People cultivated in this social context usually have a strong sense of responsibility and mission and are deeply grateful. But appropriate personal interests and rights are neglected or even denied. In Confucianism one often finds the word "power" and "privilege," but there is little room for "right."

The more such a society developed, the more its system of norms became sophisticated, and the more heavily the duties weighed upon individuals. There should be a balance; in ancient China this balance came in the form of Daoism and Buddhism.

The Daoist Tradition

The origins of Daoism (Taoism), like Confucianism, can be traced back very early in Chinese history. Nevertheless, the systematic theory of Daoism did not exist until the Warring States period (476-221 B.C.). Lao Zi (Lao Tzu), a contemporary of Confucius, and soon Zhuang Zi (Chuang Tzu, 369?-286? B.C.) are regarded as the founders of Daoism.

Daoism, which advocates spontaneity and opposes society and artificiality, arose as a rival of Confucianism. When Confucianism became the official ideology in the Han dynasty, the Daoist philosophy evolved into a form of religion and was transmitted continuously alongside the official teachings. After Buddhism was introduced into China, Daoism absorbed much from Buddhism and became a popular religion. Meanwhile, the ideas of Daoism were learned also by people through art and literary works. Hence, even though its religious form declined in the late dynasties, Daoist philosophy still influences the people.

Among others, the important Classics of Daoism, both as philosophy and religion, are the *Lao Zi* (*Lao Tzu*), also known as *Dao De Jing* (*The Way and the Power, Tao-Te Ching*), and *Zhuang Zi* (*Chuang Tzu*).

The primary meaning of the word Dao (Tao), one of the most

important terms used by many ancient Chinese philosophers, is "road" or "way" along which something or someone proceeds. Later it was extended to mean "method," "principle," "truth" and finally "reality." According to the well-known historian of Chinese philosophy, Fun Yu-Lan, before the *Lao Zi* the meaning of Dao "was always restricted to human affairs, whereas when we come to *The Lao-tzu [Lao Zi]*, we find the word *Tao* being given a metaphysical meaning."⁹ The Dao in Daoism is an absolute being, a first principle which is formless, nameless, eternal, all pervading and all embracing, "The thousand creatures owe their existence to it, . . . like a garment it covers the ten thousand things and brings them up, but makes no claim to be master over them."¹⁰ It is through Dao that all things are enabled to be, but "Tao never does, yet through it all things are done."¹¹ So, what Dao accomplishes is not done purposefully, but is simply spontaneous. As the first principle of all things, "Tao produced Oneness. Oneness produced duality (*yin* and *yang*). Duality evolved into trinity (*yin*, *yang* and the harmony resulting from the interaction of these two), and trinity evolved into the ten thousand (i.e., infinite number of) things."¹² This is the Daoist view of cosmos and on this cosmology Daoism builds its entire theory.

Unlike Confucianism which stresses everyone's duties to keep the social order, Daoism emphasizes that everyone should live according to Dao. Man's origin is not in society but in nature, so "man's standard is earth. Earth's standard is Heaven. Heaven's standard is Tao. Tao's standard is the spontaneous."¹³ So man's goal of life is following Dao (the spontaneous) and through Dao to reach Oneness of man and nature (*Tian Ren He Yi*). This is the highest state of human life. When man unites himself with nature to form Oneness, since nature has no beginning or end so too shall man be without beginning and end: the universe is eternal, and so is man. When a man reaches this state--Oneness of man and nature--he can be called a True Man (*Zhen Ren*). This man is happy, because he has the freedom of always and only following his own spontaneous nature. Nothing then can be a bondage for him.

The True Man of old knew neither to love life nor to hate death. Living, he felt no elation; dying, he offered no resistance. Unconsciously he went; unconsciously he came; that was all. He did not try purposely to forget what his beginning had been, or to seek what his end would be. He received with delight anything that came to him, and left without consciousness anything that he had forgotten. This is what is called not preferring the conscious mind to Tao, nor supplementing Nature with man. Such is what we call the True Man.¹⁴

Daoists believe that when everyone follows Dao and pursues Oneness of man with nature (both outside and inside nature), a perfect harmony will be achieved. This is a common goal of Chinese philosophers. Confucianism stresses the harmony in human society through education,

morality, politics and all arts of man. But Daoism emphasizes the harmony in the entire cosmos through following Dao: spontaneity, or back to nature. Daoists thought the Confucianist way artificial and incapable of building order and harmony in society; on the contrary, it could only harm the harmony and make things worse. Lao Zi said, "The people are difficult to keep in order because those above them interfere. That is the only reason why they are difficult to keep in order."¹⁵

The more restrictions and prohibitions there are in the world, the poorer the people will be. The more sharp weapons the people have, the more troubled will be the country. The more cunning craftsmen there are, the more pernicious contrivances will appear. The more laws are promulgated, the more thieves and bandits there will be.¹⁶

So the best way of ruling is to get rid of laws and of the traditional virtue of human-heartedness (*Ren*) and righteousness (*Yi*), and to act through non-activity (*Wuwei*). Non-acting reverses itself to a condition in which there is nothing that is not done (*Wu Bu Wei*).

Obviously, this Daoist view of society is sharply opposed to the Confucian view, but in the Confucian society the Daoist view is only a grievance or grumbling concentrated upon the individual. The Daoist individual should take a detached attitude toward the society and human life. Many Daoists left society and became monks living in out-of-the-way places. The more ideal way, however, is to live in society but not to engage in society. Thus, one retains one's own being despite being overwhelmed by worldly life, just as the water lily grows out of the mud but keeps its beauty pure. So "A small hermit finds seclusion in a deep wilderness, while a great hermit can seclude himself in a city." This does not mean living in solitude, but living in this world while not being engaged in worldly affairs. This way of life does not escape from the world, but is detached from the world and plays with life. No pain or suffering can make one sorrowful. For example, when one receives an injection usually one feels pain, but if with a humorous attitude one observes his pained look in a mirror his pain may be replaced by humor.

Daoism is a rival which challenges Confucianism. A Daoist should cherish no social stratification and take no related duties; he is free by nature. However, as Daoist freedom is so absolute that it must have no conditions it is also impossible to realize in this conditioned world. Freedom can be realized only when it is sought as a right, but Daoism has no idea of human rights. Daoist freedom comes from the training of his own body and mind: only when a person is rid of his desires and needs can he have this freedom. Hence, although Daoism came as a rival of Confucianism, it was so weak and incompetent that finally it came to assist the ruler. Lao Zi said, "Therefore the Sage rules the people by emptying their minds, filling their bellies, weakening their wills, and toughening their sinews, ever making the people without knowledge and without desire."¹⁷ A simple people is easy to rule.

Buddhist Tradition

Buddhism was introduced from India via Central Asia to China around the beginning of the Christian era. At that time the absolute position of Confucianism had just been established and Daoism gradually becoming an institutional religion. The early spread of Buddhism in China met many difficulties, and even was banned officially several times by the state. However, it acquired an ever wider and more profound influence since the Han dynasty and developed many Chinese sects or schools. "Beginning in the fourth and fifth centuries and continuing until the early part of the Sung dynasty (roughly around the year 1000), Buddhism absorbed the best energies of most philosophically minded Chinese, while the native philosophies suffered comparative eclipse."¹⁸ The Chinese not only translated and edited the numerous books of Buddhist *sutra*, canon and essays, but also wrote numerous interpretive books, some of which are even regarded as holy scriptures.

Although there are numerous Buddhist schools the basic doctrine is the same. This is the so-called "Four Noble Truths": "The Noble Truth about suffering; The Noble Truth about the cause of suffering; the Noble Truth about the cessation of suffering; and the Noble Truth about the path that leads to the cessation."¹⁹

Buddhism concentrates on human suffering. The first Noble Truth indicates that human life is full of suffering: birth, decay, disease, death, union with the unpleasant, separation from the pleasant, etc. The second Noble Truth explains the cause of suffering: craving or desire, i.e., craving for the gratification of the senses, for existence and so on, which leads to rebirth and being enmeshed in the endless *samsara* (transmigration of life and death). The third Noble Truth tells that suffering can be extinguished: man can break down the chain of causation of *samsara* and reach *nirvana*--a state of no suffering. The fourth Noble Truth shows the Eightfold Path to *nirvana*: right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right mode of livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Simply speaking, the path to *nirvana* is acknowledging and understanding the Buddhist truth and acting accordingly.

Buddhism insists that everything in this world, including material things and social and human affairs, is transient and illusory; hence, we should not cling to them or crave them which can only cause the various sufferings. This view about society and human life is so passive that the best way is to escape from this world and live in the wilderness. "The Buddha was convinced that suffering overbalanced pleasure in human life so much that it would be better never to have been born."²⁰ Apparently, this pessimistic attitude is sharply opposite the positive attitude of Confucianism. In Buddhism there is no social stratification. As to responsibilities, since everything is regarded as transient and illusory, the relationships of people (ruler-subject, father-son, etc.) are also transient and illusory; hence, we should not cling to them but rather pursue self-

enlightenment through the path shown by the Buddha. This is a negation of any responsibility in social life. So Buddhism considers that it is best to leave the turmoil of the world and live in solitude in the deep wilderness.

Although later Buddhism developed a more positive attitude toward the significance for human life, especially in the Mahayana (big vehicle) school which was accepted by the Chinese after amendment, the basic teachings could not be changed. Orthodox Confucian society could not permit the spread of such a negative religion. Buddhism not only was banned by emperors several times because it challenged the regime, but the Buddhist monk's life also was denounced by Confucians as anti-filial piety and anti-loyalty. However, despite all these painstaking efforts by the authorities and the Confucians, Buddhism was never wiped out. Instead, it developed quickly and spread widely, finally becoming one of the popular religions in ancient Chinese society. This is telling proof that Buddhism was a very necessary complement to Confucianism, enabling people to escape from the heavy burden of responsibility in orthodox Confucian society.

A Reflection

These three ancient Chinese traditions: Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, complemented each other and composed as an organic whole the "Trinity of Three Teachings" which ruled China for almost two thousand years. Roughly speaking, Confucianism emphasizes society based on the family as the basic unit, while Daoism and Buddhism emphasize the individual. As a social being (in Confucianism) every person must undertake various responsibilities; but as an individual one is justified in pursuing his/her own objective; for Daoism this is living spontaneously according to the nature, both outer and inner nature; for Buddhism this is extricating oneself from suffering. While Confucianism commits people to a strong sense of responsibility and obligation, Buddhist separation and Daoist detachment justify shirking or evading one's duties. So there was a balance between responsibility and irresponsibility. This balance enabled society to maintain itself and develop.

Nevertheless, although both Daoism and Buddhism emphasize individuals, there remains many differences between them. Comparatively, the Confucian attitude toward life and the world is positive and one of participation, the Buddhist attitude is negative and one of escape, while the Daoists stand at the middle and vacillate between these two extremes. By entering further into society a Daoist can become a Confucian, and by withdrawing further from society he may assume the position of Buddhism. It is sometimes difficult to define a person as a pure Confucian, Daoist or Buddhist. In the long co-existence of the three teachings each has absorbed more or less from the other. Also while brought up and educated with Confucian values and ideas, people often took something from Daoism, Buddhism or both.

Although there was a balance in ancient Chinese society between

responsibility and irresponsibility, it was unstable and fragile. When Neo-Confucianism was developed in the Song dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) after long and widespread turmoil since the end of the Tang dynasty (618-907 A.D.), this weak balance was lost. Great Confucians such as the Chen Brothers and Zhu Xi further absolutized the doctrines and rules of the Confucian traditions, while assimilating some doctrines from Buddhism and Daoism. Neo-Confucianism transformed the emphasis on individuals in Daoism and Buddhism into part of the preparation to assume duty and obligation to the family and the state. The goal of human life in Neo-Confucianism should be to preserve one's body, to cultivate one's character and personality, to support and regulate one's family, to administer and govern state affairs and to pacify the world. Here individual persuasion becomes duty.

As soon as Neo-Confucianism was initiated, Daoism and Buddhism began declining. The ideological changes in the Song dynasty reflected the decline of the whole ancient Chinese civilization from its culmination in the Tang dynasty. The reinforcement of duties and social orders in Neo-Confucianism smothered the people's creativity and vitality, as did the society. This situation remained until mid-nineteenth century when Western gunfire smashed the dream of the "Central Kingdom." A new page was turned in Chinese history.

MODERN CHINESE TRADITIONS

Modern Chinese history is one of liberation; it is full of both pain as well as enthusiasm for in the process of liberation human conflict must be acknowledged. Here I would distinguish two kinds of liberation: that of the whole (nation, people) and that of the individual. The former, in modern Chinese history, was a very urgent task because China was so weak that internal decay and external aggression seriously imperiled the existence of the Chinese nation. The task of the liberation of the whole was fulfilled in revolutionary or violent form. The latter, the liberation of the individual, is a more difficult and more profound liberation which has been in the process of realization through enlightenment thinking. Here I refer to the liberation of the whole as "revolution" and to that of the individual as "enlightenment" in order more easily to distinguish and relate to them.

The Revolutionary Tradition

Revolution, in modern Chinese history, was the only choice to save and rejuvenate the Chinese nation. In the late years of Qing (Ching) dynasty (1644-1911) the Manchu rulers were corrupt; the government suppressed the people in a bloody manner while yielding to foreign powers. Since the middle of the 19th century the Manchu government was impotent to resist the aggression of Western invaders and was forced to sign infamous bilateral treaties with the great Powers, including Western countries, Tsarist Russia and Japan. Though some officials of the Qing government tried to reform, every attempt ended in failure; revo-

lution became an inevitable necessity.

In 1911 the Xinhai Revolution, led by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen (1866-1925), overthrew the Qing dynasty and founded the Republic of China. This emancipated the people from the rule of the feudal system. In 1945, victory in the War of Resistance against Japan (World War II) after eight years of arduous struggle through the cooperation of the Nationalist Party (the Kuomintang) and the Communist Party, marked the liberation of the Chinese nation from the rule of colonialism and imperialism. In 1949, the liberation of the country, led by the Chinese Communist Party headed by Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-Tung), and the foundation of the People's Republic of China, emancipated the people of the whole country from an unfair social and economic system. The "Great Cultural Revolution" from 1966 to 1976, although a very complex phenomenon, had among its effects the liberation of the people from the Confucian (feudal) ethical system and worship of the authorities, thereby preparing the way for arousing the individual.

Revolution is a massive movement and "it is common in such a movement to demand from its members surrender of individuality to the movement."²¹ Through all these revolutions in modern Chinese history the sense of the wholeness of the nation, people or class was required. In his analysis of China's situation, Dr. Sun Yet-sen said,

even though we have four-hundred million people gathered together in One China, in reality they are just a heap of loose sand. Today we are poorest and weakest nation in the world, and occupy the lowest position in international affairs. Other men are the carving knife and serving dish; we are the fish and the meat. Our position at this time is most perilous. If we do not earnestly espouse nationalism and weld together our four-hundred million people into a strong nation, there is danger of China's being lost and our people being destroyed. If we wish to avert this catastrophe, we must espouse nationalism and bring this national spirit to the salvation of the country.²²

This nationalism required everyone to be loyal to the nation and the people.²³ During the war the Chinese Communist Party also emphasized the whole, and especially stressed self-sacrifice. In *The Cultivation of Communist Party Members*, Liu Shaoqi, one of the leaders of the Party, provided a "good Communist ethics" for the Party members, namely, that one should "show loyalty and ardent love for all his comrades, revolutionaries, and working people, help them unconditionally, treat them with equality, and never harm anyone of them for the sake of his own interests."²⁴ Also Mao Zedong said,

A Communist should be frank, faithful and active, looking upon the interests of the revolution as his very life and subordinating his personal interests to those of the revolution, .

. . . he should be more concerned about the Party and the masses than about the individual, and more concerned about others than about himself.²⁵

After the foundation of the People's Republic of China, responsibility to the state and nation, to the people and the so-called "class," and to the Party was stressed again and again. It was not only an ethics for the Party members, but was imbued in the entire people. The official slogans were: "Work without thought of self"; "Be public-spirited, forget yourself." Many models or pacemakers were held up, among them Lei Feng was particularly praised as a person who devoted himself to the service of the people, forgetting his own interests and never being a rusty screw in the state machine.

Undoubtedly, collectivism played a very important role in the liberation of the Chinese nation and her exploited and oppressed people. But carrying this collectivism to an extreme after the liberation of the whole nation or people seriously damaged present Chinese society.

The Tradition of Enlightenment

While the revolution which required collectivism broke out at the beginning of the 20th century, another orientation arose, namely, the enlightenment which called for more individual rights and freedom.

With the "May Fourth Movement" in 1919 came the New Culture Movement, which was an attempt to destroy what remained of traditional Confucian culture and required a whole new culture. Its slogans were: "Destroy the old curiosity shop of Confucius!" and "Overthrow Confucius and his progeny!" At the same time two Western teachers or ideas were introduced: "Mr. D (Democracy) and Mr. S (Science)." Equal rights, individualism and woman's emancipation became popular. Chen Duxiu (Ch'en Tu-hsiu, 1879-1942), one of the most famous leaders of the New Culture Movement, proposed individualism (although he was to found the Chinese Communist Party three years later). In 1918 he wrote:

The civilization and happiness of society are created by individuals and should be enjoyed by individuals; . . . the will and happiness of the individual should be respected. . . . To carry out one's will and to satisfy one's desires (including everything from food and sex to moral reputation) are the basic reasons for an individual's existence.²⁶

"If we are totally to sacrifice ourselves to benefit others, then we exist for others and not for ourselves. This is definitely not the fundamental reason for man's existence."²⁷ By such expressions, the interests and rights of individuals were emphasized. Another leader of the New Culture Movement, Hu Shi (born 1891-?), declared that concepts such as loyalty should be cast aside as useless.²⁸

This awakening of individuality in Chinese society, which had been ruled by Confucianism for almost two thousand years, marked the

rising of a modern consciousness. However, the serious crises of the Chinese nation overrode everything else. Revolution or salvation of the whole (the nation and its exploited people) was the pressing matter of the moment. Only after this task was fulfilled, could the Enlightenment be revived; more than half a century later this revival came slowly and haltingly.

Since the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, especially after the nationwide discussion on the "criterion of truth" which emancipated the people from the dogmatism and the absolutism of established authoritarianism, there has been an atmosphere of active discussion about issues of human life and society. In the last ten years (1979-1989), many people have been involved in a series of so-called "hot topics." Among them I will discuss briefly only those concerned with our theme.

The Meaning of Life. In 1980 a letter entitled "Why is the Road of Human Life Getting Narrower and Narrower?" was published in the journal, *Chinese Youth*. This letter resulted in a nationwide discussion about the meaning of human life--the relation between benefitting oneself and benefitting others, the ideal and the real, the individual and society, fame and gain, etc. This discussion justified the individual in pursuing his or her own goal, including material enjoyment and fame.

Humanitarianism and the Theory of Alienation. Humanitarianism had a basically negative meaning before the 1980s in China. But now some scholars have published articles to defend humanitarianism and many novelists have developed this idea in their novels and stories, which have a wide and profound influence. Meanwhile, Marx's early writings such as "Manuscripts on Economics and Philosophy: 1844" were reevaluated and the theory of alienation became an effective weapon to criticize the *status quo*. Although humanitarianism and the theory of alienation were officially criticized under the name of "spiritual pollution" from the beginning of 1984, such ideas as humanitarianism, respect for the individual, and the critique of a depersonalized social system and ideology took root in the hearts of the people.

The "Shock Wave" of Existentialism. In China, J.-P. Sartre's existentialism was introduced and criticized in the 1960s when it swept across Europe and America. But after the madly ruthless struggle among people during the "Cultural Revolution," the statement "Hell is other people" produced wide repercussions, while the proposition "Man's existence precedes his essence" roused the enthusiasm for the pursuit of freedom. Self-design, self-choice, self-determination became popular slogans among college students. Along with this awakening of the consciousness of freedom, the right of freedom was demanded.

Freudian Psychoanalysis. In 1984-1985 many books by and on Freud were translated and published in China as were many literary works employing Freudian theory. This hot topic justified the right to sexual love and criticized social repression of human nature.

Nietzschean Theory. Nietzsche had been regarded as a fascist philosopher and criticized as a theoretical representative of imperialism. However, as his books were translated and published or reprinted, his spirit of critique and reevaluation of all traditional values, his rejection of everything authoritative, and his powerful will for life infected many people, especially young scholars and college students. Since 1985, more and more people have begun to reflect upon and criticize traditional Chinese culture. This discussion of culture continues, although it has been disrupted by the official movement "against bourgeois liberalization" since the beginning of 1987.

Student Movements. Since the early 1980s the consciousness of participation in politics has become universal and strong, especially among college students and young people. All the student movements have demanded political reformation, democracy and such civil rights as freedom of speech, press, etc.

During the 70 years since the May 4th Movement in 1919, and especially in these last ten years, enlightenment has been a very important subject and has become more and more significant. The result has been the emancipation of the individual from the ancient tradition dominated by Confucianism and from the established social system and ideology which emphasized society and the collective while reducing and depreciating the individual. This liberation of the individual has meant the acknowledgement of ever more individual rights and interests.

A Reflection

Modern Chinese history began with a sharp conflict between East and West, involving armed forces, economies, politics and culture; it was also a conflict between the ancient and the modern. Although these conflicts gave the people many painful memories, modernization actually means some degree of Westernization. The theoretical foundations of the modern Chinese traditions of revolution and enlightenment are borrowed from the West. Dr. Sun Yet-sen was taught Western science in a Western context, while the Chinese Communist Party's guiding ideology of Marxism and Leninism also originated from the West. In the process of liberating the whole (nation, people), the revolutionaries found in ancient Chinese tradition some important sense of responsibility, i.e., to the nation, the state and the people. But for the enlightenment since the May 4th Movement, the ancient tradition is almost only an obstacle and target for criticism. Some people have worried about the eclipse of Chinese culture due to this radical criticism. However, the task for the Chinese at present is, I think, still the enlightenment--the liberation of the individual. The ancient tradition, mainly Confucianism and the present social system still strongly restrict individuality. We are living in this cultural tradition and cannot jump out of it, but we can clarify it through thorough criticism, after which a new vigorous and creative Chinese culture must be developed.

As to the relationship of the revolution and the enlightenment, seen as the same liberation of man, there should be no contradiction. Actually, the liberation of the whole (revolution) is the essential prerequisite for the liberation of the individual (enlightenment) for which it has laid the foundation. The liberation of the individual, in turn, is a continuation and deepening of the liberation of the whole. If there was no independence of the nation, how could we speak of the rights of the individual. If the rights of the individual cannot be guaranteed, what is the purpose of the revolution, and how can the society exist and develop healthily?

PRESENT SITUATION AND PROBLEM

In China today every tradition discussed above is functioning in some way, while everyone is in some kind of crisis. This is a period of confusion or chaos, of deconstruction and reconstruction. We look forward to great thinkers and to a charismatic theory which can lead the people beyond the painful conflict of values in everyone's mind. Along with the tradition of enlightenment, human rights and individuality must gain little by little. This is historical progress and probably must be long and painful. However, in many cases, overemphasis upon the freedom and rights of the individual confronts the family, nation and society who often are neglected or even negated and cast aside; irresponsibility has become a quite universal social phenomenon. I think that this is not because people have too much freedom or too many rights; rather, when people cannot balance responsibilities and rights, some have to try to escape too heavy a burden of responsibility by irresponsibility in their search for psychological balance.

With this social crisis comes a crucial theoretical problem: What is a right; What are the personal rights of individuals? What is a responsibility; What are the personal responsibilities; How, if possible, could personal rights and personal responsibilities attain and retain a mutual balance? The theoretical solution of this crucial problem might be implied in a new metaphysical reflection about the relationship between responsibility, human rights and freedom. Such a discussion will require another article.

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NOTES

1. Mr. Chen Na helped translate the outline of this paper into English and cooperated in its original presentation.
2. The theme of the study.
3. *Li Ji*, quoted in Fung Yu-Lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. I, trans. by Derk Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 385. (Having compared several English editions of Confucian classics and Daoist classics, I prefer to adopt the Fung translation.)

4. *Meng Zi*, quoted in *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, p. 359.
5. *Li Ji*, p. 359.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 360.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Xiao Jing*, quoted in *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, I, p. 361.
9. Fung Yu-Lan, I, p. 117.
10. *The Lao Zi*, quoted in *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, I, p. 177.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
18. Fung Yu-Lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, II, pp. 239-240.
19. *Mahabarinbhan-suttanta*, quoted in *Buddhism in the Modern World*, Heinrich Dumoulin, ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1976), p. 13.
20. Hajime Nakamura, "The Basic Teachings of Buddhism" in *Buddhism in the Modern World*, p. 5.
21. Alan P. L. Liu, *How China is Ruled* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986), p. 35.
22. Wm. Theodore de Bary, Wing-tsit Chan, Burton Watson, *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963 [1960]), p. 769.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 771.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 916.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 928.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 830-31.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 830.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 832.