

Speech At Hangchow

December 21, 1965

[SOURCE: *Long Live Mao Tse-tung Thought*, a Red Guard Publication.]

I have read three articles in this issue of *Zhexue Yanjiu* [i.e., the special issue of philosophical articles written by workers, peasants and soldiers, 1965, No. 6, of *Philosophical Research*]. Those of you who are engaged in philosophy should go in for practical philosophy, otherwise nobody will read it. Bookish philosophy is very difficult to understand. For whom is it written? Some intellectuals like Wu Han¹ and Jian Bozan² are going from bad to worse. Someone called Sun Daren has written an article refuting Jian Bozan's idea of the feudal landlord class adopting a policy of concessions towards the peasants. After peasant wars the landlord class would only counter-attack and seek revenge; there was never any question of concessions. The landlord class made no concessions to the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.³ The Boxers⁴ first said: 'Oppose the Qing and eliminate the foreigners,' and later, 'Support the Qing and eliminate the foreigners,' thus gaining the support of the Empress Dowager Ci Xi. After the Qing dynasty had suffered defeat at the hands of imperialism the Dowager Empress and the Emperor ran away, and Ci Xi started to 'support the foreigners and eliminate the Boxers'. Some people say that the *Inside Story of the Qing Court*⁵ is

patriotic, but I think it is treasonable—out-and-out treason. Why is it that some say it is patriotic? Merely because they think that the Guang Xu emperor was a pitiable man who, together with Kang Youwei, opened schools, formed the New Armies and put into effect a few enlightened measures.

At the end of the Qing dynasty some people advocated 'Chinese learning for the substance, Western learning for practical application'. The substance was like our General Line, which cannot be changed. We cannot adopt Western learning as the substance, nor can we use the substance of the democratic republic. We cannot use 'the natural rights of man' nor the 'theory of evolution'. We can only use Western technology. 'The natural rights of man' represents, of course, an erroneous line of thought. Is there such a thing as rights bestowed by nature? Isn't it man who bestows rights on man? Were the rights we enjoy bestowed by nature? Our rights were bestowed by the common people, and primarily by the working class and the poor and lower-middle peasants.

If you study a little modern history you will see that there was no such thing as a 'policy of concession'. The only concessions were made by the revolutionary forces to the reactionaries. The reactionaries always counter-attacked and sought revenge. Whenever a new dynasty emerged in history they adopted a policy of 'decreased labor service and taxation'. This was because people were very poor and there was nothing to take from them. This policy was of advantage to the landlord class.

I hope that those who are engaged in philosophical work will go to the factories and the countryside for a few years. The system of philosophy should be reformed. You should not write in the old manner and you should not write so much.

A student of Nanjing University who came from a peasant family, a student of history, took part in the 'four clean-ups' movement. Afterwards he wrote some articles on the subject of the necessity for those engaged in history to go down to the countryside. In these articles,

¹ Wu Han (1909-1969) was at this time Vice-Mayor of Beijing and author of the play *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office*, published in January 1961. This play was a defense of Former Minister of Defense Peng Dehuai, camouflaged as an official removed from office by the emperor in Ming times because he had defended the right of the peasants to their land. Yao Wenyuan's attack on this drama in November 1965 is often considered the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.

² A historian who was attacked in the Cultural Revolution; at the time of Mao's speech he was head of the History Department at Beijing University.

³ A reference to the war of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. It was a peasant revolutionary war waged against the feudal rule and national oppression of the Qing Dynasty in the middle of the 19th century.

⁴ Boxers: A reference to the Yi Ho Tuan movement. The Yi Ho Tuan Movement was the anti-imperialist armed struggle which took place in northern China in 1900.

⁵ A reference to a film with that title.

which were published in the *Nanjing University Journal*, he made a confession saying: 'I have studied now for several years and have lost all notion of manual labor.' In the same issue of the *Nanjing University Journal* is an article which says: 'The essence is the major contradiction and, in particular, the major aspect of the major contradiction.' Even I have not made such a statement before. The outward appearance is visible; it stimulates the senses. The essence is invisible and intangible; it is hidden behind the outward appearance. The essence can only be discovered through investigation and study. If we could touch and see the essence there would be no need for science.

You should gradually get into contact with reality, live for a while in the countryside, learn a bit of agricultural science, botany, soil technology, fertilizer technology, bacteriology, forestry, water conservancy, etc. There's no need to read big tomes. It's sufficient to read little books and get a bit of general knowledge.

Now about this university education. From entering primary school to leaving college is altogether sixteen or seventeen years. I fear that for over twenty years people will not see rice, mustard, wheat or millet growing; nor will they see how workers work, nor how peasants till the fields, nor how people do business. Moreover their health will be ruined. It is really terribly harmful. I said to my own child: 'You go down to the countryside and tell the poor and lower-middle peasants, "My dad says that after studying a few years we became more and more stupid. Please, uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters, be my teachers. I want to learn from you."' In point of fact pre-school children have a lot of contact with society up to the age of seven. At two they learn to speak and at three they have noisy quarrels. When they grow a little bigger, they dig with toy hoes to imitate grown-ups working. This is the real world. By then the children have already learned concepts. 'Dog' is a major concept. 'Black dog' and 'yellow dog' are minor concepts. His family's yellow dog is concrete. Man is a concept which has shed a great deal of meaning. Man or woman, great or small, Chinese or foreigner, revolutionary or counter-revolutionary all these distinctions are absent. What is left are only the characteristics which differentiate man from the other animals. Who has ever seen 'man'? You can only see Mr. Zhang and Mr. Li. You cannot see the concept 'house' either, only actual houses, such as the

foreign-style buildings of Tianjin or the courtyard houses of Beijing.

We should reform university education. So much time should not be spent attending classes. Not to reform arts faculties would be terrible. If they are not reformed, can they produce philosophers? Can they produce writers? Can they produce historians? Today's philosophers can't turn out philosophy, writers can't write novels, and historians can't produce history. All they want to write about is emperors, kings, generals and ministers. Qi Benyu's⁶ article is excellent, I read it three times. Its defect is that it does not name names. Yao Wen-yuan's article is also very good: it has had a great impact on theatrical, historical and philosophical circles. Its defect is that it did not hit the crux of the matter. The crux of *Hai Rui Dismissed from Office* was the question of dismissal from office. The Jia Qing emperor dismissed Hai Rui from office. In 1959 we dismissed Peng Dehuai from office. And Peng Dehuai is Hai Rui too.

We must reform the arts faculties in the universities. The students must go down and engage in industry, agriculture and commerce. The engineering and science departments are different. They have factories for practical work and also laboratories. They can work in their factories and do experiments in their laboratories. After they have finished high school they should first do some practical work. Only to go to the countryside is not enough. They should also go to factories, shops, army companies. They can do this kind of work for a few years and then study for two years. This will be enough. If the university has a five-year system, they should go down for three years. Teachers should also go down and work and teach at the same time. Can't they teach philosophy, literature and history there too? Must they have big foreign-style buildings to teach them in?

⁶ Qi Benyu was an editor of *Hongqi [Red Flag]*. The article to which Mao refers here was entitled 'Study History for the Sake of the Revolution', and appeared in issue No. 13 of that journal, which was published on 6 December 1965, pp. 14-22. As Mao says, it did not name names; it attacked disciples of Hu Shi who had denied the relevance of class struggle to the study of history, and called for a 'supra-class viewpoint' and 'absolute objectivity', but did not identify them except by saying that they had expressed such ideas openly in 1963.

Many great inventors, such as Watt and Edison, came from workers' families. Franklin, who discovered electricity, sold newspapers: he started as a newspaper boy. Many of the great scholars and scientists did not go through college. Not many of the comrades in our Party's Central Committee are university graduates.

You cannot go on writing books the way you write them now. Take the example of analysis and synthesis. In the past books did not explain them clearly. They said, 'Within analysis there is synthesis; analysis and synthesis are indivisible.' This sort of statement may be correct, but it has its inadequacy. One should say, 'Analysis and synthesis are both divisible and indivisible.' Everything can be divided. It is all a case of 'one divides into two'. Analysis has to be applied in differing circumstances. Take, for example, an analysis of the Kuomintang and the communists. How did we analyze the Guomindang in the past? We said that it occupied extensive territory with a large population, it controlled the large and medium-sized cities, enjoyed the support of imperialism and had large well-equipped armies. But the fundamental point was that it was divorced from the masses the peasants and soldiers. Also it had internal contradictions. Our armies were small, our weapons inferior (only millet and rifles), our territory was small, we had no big cities and no foreign aid, but we had close links with the masses; we had democracy in the three main fields, we had the three-eight working style, and we represented the demands of the masses. This was the fundamental thing.

Those Guomindang officers who had graduated from military academies could not fight battles, while those who had studied in the Whampoa Military Academy for only a few months could fight. Among our own marshals and generals there are very few who have been to college. I had never studied military books. I had read the *Zuo Commentary*, the *Mirror of Good Government* and the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. These books all described battles, but when I actually went into battle I forgot all about them. When we fought we did not take a single book with us. We only analyzed the situation of ourselves and the enemy, analyzed the concrete situation.

To synthesize the enemy is to eat him up. How did we synthesize the Guomindang? Did we not do it by taking enemy material and remoulding it? We did not kill prisoners, but re-

leased some of them and retained most of them to replenish our own armies. We took all the weapons, food and fodder and equipment of all kinds. Those we did not use we have 'aufgehoben', to use a philosophical term, as in the case of people like Du Yuming.⁷ The process of eating is also one of analysis and synthesis. For example when eating crabs you eat the meat but not the shell. The stomach will absorb the nutritious part and get rid of the useless part. You are all foreign-style philosophers. I am a native-style philosopher. Synthesizing the Guomindang means eating it up, absorbing most of it and eliminating a small part. I've learnt this from Marx. Marx removed the shell of Hegel's philosophy and absorbed the useful inner part, transforming it into dialectical materialism. He absorbed Feuerbach's materialism and criticized his metaphysics. The heritage had always to be passed on. In his treatment of French utopian socialism and English political economy, Marx absorbed the good things and abandoned the bad.

Marx's *Capital* started with the analysis of the dual nature of commodities. Our commodities also have a dual nature. In a hundred years' time commodities will still have a dual nature. Things which are not commodities have a dual nature too. Our comrades likewise have a dual nature, correct and incorrect. Don't you have a dual nature? I know I have. Young people easily make the mistake of being metaphysical: they cannot bear to talk about their shortcomings. People improve with experience. In recent years, however, it is the young who have made progress; the hopeless cases are some of the old professors. Wu Han is mayor of a city. It would be better if he were demoted to being head of a county. It would be better if Yang Xianzhen and Zhang Wentian were demoted too. This is the only way we can really help them.

Recently an article was written about the law of adequate justification. What law of adequate justification? I don't think such a thing exists. Different classes have different ways of justifying their actions. Which class does not have adequate justification? Doesn't [Bertrand] Russell? He recently sent me a pamphlet which should be translated and read. Russell is now a

⁷ The communists applied the treatment which Mao characterizes in Hegelian terms as 'Aufhebung' to the Guomindang general Du Yuming by defeating him in battle and taking him prisoner after he had refused to surrender.

bit better politically. He is anti-revisionist and anti-American and he supports Vietnam. This idealist has acquired a little materialism. I am talking about his actions.

A man should work in many fields, have contact with all sorts of people. Leftists should not only meet leftists but also rightists. They should not be afraid of this and that. I myself have met all sorts of people; I have met big officials and small ones.

In writing philosophy can you change your methods? You must write in a popular style, using the language of the laboring masses. We all talk like students. (*Comrade Chen Boda interrupts: 'The Chairman excepted'*) I have been involved in the peasant movement, the workers' movement, the student movement, the Guomindang movement, and I have done military work for over twenty years, so I am somewhat better.

In tackling the study of Chinese philosophy, we must study Chinese history and the historical process of Chinese philosophy. One should first study the history of the past 100 years. Isn't the historical process the unity of opposites? Modern history is a continual process of one dividing into two and continual struggle. In these struggles some people compromised, but the people were dissatisfied with them and went on struggling. Before the 1911 Revolution we had the struggle between Sun Yatsen and Kang Youwei. After the 1911 Revolution had overthrown the emperor there was the struggle between Sun and Yuan Shigai. Afterwards the Guomindang had continual internal schisms and struggles.

The Marxist-Leninist classics not only need to have prefaces written, but also annotations. Political prefaces are easier to write than philosophical ones, which are none too easy. It used to be said that there were three great laws of dialectics, then Stalin said that there were four. In my view there is only one basic law and that is the law of contradiction. Quality and quantity, positive and negative, external appearance and essence, content and form, necessity and freedom, possibility and reality, etc., are all cases of the unity of opposites.

It has been said that the relationship of formal logic to dialectics is like the relationship between elementary mathematics and higher mathematics. This is a formulation which should be studied further. Formal logic is concerned with the form of thought, and is concerned to ensure that there is no contradiction between

successive stages in an argument. It is a specialized science. Any kind of writing must make use of formal logic.

Formal logic does not concern itself with major premises: it is incapable of so doing. The Guomindang call us 'bandits'. 'Communists are bandits', 'Zhang San is a communist', therefore 'Zhang San is a bandit'. We say 'The Guomindang are bandits', 'Chiang Kaishek is Guomindang', therefore we say 'Chiang Kaishek is a bandit'. Both of these syllogisms are in accordance with formal logic.

One cannot acquire much fresh knowledge through formal logic. Naturally one can draw inferences, but the conclusion is still enshrined in the major premise. At present some people confuse formal logic and dialectics. This is incorrect.