

**EVENTS IN INDOCHINA, EASTERN EUROPE AND COMMON VALUES
CRISIS OF CULTURE**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel rather puzzled to find myself before an audience like yours. I never spoke, or rather I never dared to speak in front of philosophers and I did not choose to study cultures as my area of expertise.

However, an Asian in my generation cannot escape entirely from philosophical reflections because his education always started from childhood, with references to the close links between Heaven, Earth and Man. Our notion of the intellectual-educated man-is that of "sĩ." This ideogram represents Heaven, Earth, and the link between the two, Man. (See illustration). I learned from my childhood that the main concern of a man who wants to be respected is to become "sĩ", a man who has a deep understanding of the things of Heaven, Earth, and Men, and their relations. So, it is around this conception of "sĩ" that, willingly or unwillingly, revolve constant reflections of those of my generation.

I do not know if one can speak of philosopher training. In high school, I had a philosophy professor who said in his first lesson that each of us is a philosopher without knowing it. If this is true, my posturing to philosophy, or at least to philosophical reflections, is legitimate. But, I consider myself a political scientist, perhaps a sociologist, who chose history as his "focal point" as we would say today, a term which I prefer to "major theme" or "dominant interest".

In this regard, I not only benefit from my adolescent education, as in Asia, the history was, and still is, regarded as a serious matter; I also benefited from the teachings of my European master, Professor Jacques Freymond; he introduced me to the historical methodology. Since it is through Mr. Freymond that I am here today; allow me to mention a personal recollection that justifies this presence.

I did my thesis with Mr. Freymond, but only in 1959. My first thesis director was Mr. William Rappard. I came to the Graduate Institute of International Studies in 1952, but the circumstances – the Geneva Conference on Indochina and its aftermath - have not allowed me to finish my studies before returning to my country. When I returned in 1959, Mr. Freymond was appointed director of the Institute, replacing Mr. Rappard, who has retired.

I had not taken a course with Mr. Fremond before. But in 1954, he invited me to attend a special seminar with a few others, including Harish Kapur, who was of Indian origin. In retrospect, I think Mr. Freymond chose us because we were Asians, because the first thing he said to me at our first meeting under the big chestnut tree at the entrance of the Institute was: "I will make the Institute a truly international institute."

Being Asian, I was used to the prejudices of the time, not only in Europe but also in Asia (and we would say today, in the Third World) whereby when an Asian comes to Europe, it is to learn. The relationship was not a rapport of equality and dialogue, student- teacher and teacher- student, but only one of inequality, student-teacher only.

Today, this concept is no longer suitable, that is why I recall the story because this idea of dialogue, vulgarized, and likely to be vulgarized following the big gyration by Mikhail Gorbachev; if it is considered as a fundamental principle, a salvation of mankind today, it was not so in the postwar years, World War II, and especially World War I. So, the fundamental principle and human salvation were that of confrontation and Revolution - national and global - by Leninism-Bolshevism.

This is to say that the idea of dialogue--between peoples, races, cultures, continents--had already resided 200 meters from here, at the Graduate Institute of International Studies, and it was inaugurated 36 years ago by Mr. Freymond; it is probably not by accident that he is the director of this center today.

If I mentioned this fact, it is to explain my presence here today, but also to give a background setting to what I have to say. This idea of dialogue confirmed a belief

instilled in me by my high school English teacher. It caught my ears one day when he told a story about a contest he had participated in Paris, in 1930, for a scholarship in Oxford. When asked to talk about Socrates, he said that Socrates was "the Confucius of the West," And this idea germinated in me that our philosophers had their correspondents in Europe, and vice versa, and that we could talk and get along. In other words, a dialogue between cultures is possible. But I had to wait fifteen years to see the idea come to fruition in Geneva, in my meeting with Mr. Freymond.

This is a very long diversion to get to Indochina and Eastern Europe. But do not be impatient. I am getting there.

I think we owe a big debt to Gorbachev. Indeed, whatever his real motives, he brought the world, and especially the modern political and social philosophers, to a great truth that many had thought about perhaps, but had not dared to express because it seemed not fashionable, not "progressive" as it was said in the past four or five decades.

This great truth is that the adoption of Leninism-Bolshevism was a big mistake. The Soviets began to admit it publicly, and some even said that this was a disastrous mistake. Gorbachev was one of them. The most significant statement from him was the one he made on April 27 in Sverdlovsk. "If we do not drop the way we have continued to the present," he said, "everything that is alive in our society will be destroyed. We will die of suffocation." So it was a big mistake to have chosen the path of confrontation and revolution instead of dialogue and evolution. Between "revolution" and evolution, there is a superfluous R, and R here means error.

Obviously, Gorbachev and other Soviets were thinking especially about the economy and politics. But, culturally, what can we say? If one refers to the writings of Lenin, the central idea of Bolshevism-Leninism is the rejection of European culture that had prevailed until then, and the incitement to accept a new culture based on the systematic, continuous, and ruthless use of violence in its most extreme form, and the rejection of all morality except the communist morality, which is to consider as good anything that advances the communist cause. In other words, the rejection of thousands, even tens of thousands of years of human evolution, especially cultural progress. It is a rejection of the idea of civilization.

I was intrigued for a long time by this term "civilization". I was taught that "civilization" comes from "civis", meaning city. But neither "civilization nor "civis" is telling me anything. It is from Confucius that I came to understand the deeper meaning of these terms, starting from the derivative term "civilized." "The civilized is the man who abandoned jungle practices and adopted those of the city, dismissing the behavior of creatures that live in the jungle to adopt the behavior of creatures that live in the cities. And he has adopted reason as a guide. It is a victory of reason, or to paraphrase Descartes, common sense.

In rejecting the result of thousands of years of human evolution, Bolshevism-Leninism brought us, or rather brought back those who practiced or highly praised this theory, to the bestial stage . We know the consequences of this aberration today, because it is the most serious victims of this aberration, the Eastern Europeans and especially the Soviets, with Gorbachev leading, who have told us about them. There was aberration, a word with two R: a double error - rejecting civilization and refuting reason.

Today, the Russians and the peoples of Eastern Europe are paying a heavy ransom for their rejection of Western cultural traditions. Unfortunately for the people of Indochina, they have had the same fate for last 45 years, especially the last 16 years, because the master of the Indochinese communist leaders, Ho Chi Minh, was formed in the Soviet Union, trained in the thoughts of Lenin and Stalin, and he was a wholehearted Leninist-Bolshevik.

The Indochinese also experienced the Leninist-Bolshevik aberration, but unfortunately, the current Vietnamese communist leaders refused, at least to date, to ditch the path, which according to the grand communist master, Gorbachev, is the path that leads to destruction.

The Indochinese as well are paying a costly ransom because their leaders have rejected the Confucian culture. I do not mean mandarinal Confucianism--vulgar Confucianism--which is a distortion, a vulgarization, or rather a vulgarization of Confucianism. But as uncovered by our great authors Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chu Trinh, the grand master's teaching is something nobler and finer.

The central concept of Confucianism is that of "Nhan," Chinese Jen (Ren pinyin). This ideogram is the combination of two ideas: man and two. (See box). I searched for years, but I have not found any exact translation of the term. It has been translated as "humanity", "compassion", "charity", "love", "humaneness", etc ... "Nhan" is virtue, the principle which must govern relations between human beings,

and by extension, among men, if they really want to be men. To understand this, we must know that in his writings, Confucius constantly contrasts the behavior of men with that of the "birds and animals." This is important because what the teacher wanted to say here was that men should not behave like "birds and animals." Nhan" is the behavior between two men who no longer live in the jungle. Here, we reach the notion of "civilized" from "civis" of the West. The man with the "Nhan" in the East is the equivalent of a civilized man of the West.

A second concept of Confucianism is much less well known in the West. The reason is that it is formulated in "Đại Học" (The Great Learning: in Chinese Ta Hsue), which is interpreted as a policy or ethics manual. However, the big idea in "Đại Học" (Ta Hsue) is that of Chi "Thien" (Chinese: Zhi Shan), which means the best, the highest degree of perfection. Generally, it is applied to morality, as part of the Confucian concept of moral necessity, of the need for the constant improvement of rulers. But, it can also be applied to the intellectual sphere (realm Ke).

This concept is part of the rule "cách vật chí tri" (in Chinese: wu zhi zhi): Analyze things to know the deeper causes, a capital rule that is equivalent to "cognoscere rerum causas" (the motto of the London School of Economics), which is also complemented by a second rule: in all things, we must know exactly where the "bản" (in Chinese: ben) and where the mast (in Chinese: mo), that is to say, where is the root and where is the peak, where is the "chung" (Chinese: zhung), where is the "thủy" (Chinese: shui), ie, asking where is the beginning and where is the end. Know where to start, do a rigorous analysis, go to the end of things. This is, in my opinion, the most rigorous scientific technique .

In the Confucian notion, the judicious "quan tu"(in Chinese Kun tzu) has another quality, which is vital. This quality is the subject of the second great book of Confucius, "Trung Dung" (Chinese: Zhung Yung). It is the quality of the right measure. Like the term "nhân" (jen), this term has been mistranslated. The current translation is "justice medium" or "golden mean." But actually, it is not about "milieu" here, just the right amount. "Trung Dung" is a right measure: "Neither too much nor too little; neither not far enough nor too far." It denotes reason, common sense at its most perceptive, its sharpest, finest. For this reason, only the Kun tzu, whose Western equivalent is the honest man, can do it, because only he can know how far he should go and where to stop.

The Vietnamese communist leaders rejected Confucian notions to embrace Bolshevism-Leninism, which is a doctrine preaching extreme in everything, be it in

terms of revolution, violence, discipline, independence, or social justice. The ransom of rejecting the cultural Asian roots is evident today. Reports on Indochina described the hopeless situation in which the countries of this region find themselves. Description of the situation in these countries is beyond the scope of my talk. So, I will not go into details.

Nevertheless, thanks to Gorbachev Europe discovered its two disastrous mistakes. Thanks to Gorbachev, it is no longer "reactionary" and "shameful" today for an intellectual to think and say, or rather to dare say aloud, that Lenin and Revolution no longer necessarily represent, or rather not at all, the pathway of salvation for humanity. We must backtrack after 70 years of Leninist errors, as Anatoly Butenko, a Soviet philosopher emphasized at a conference in Moscow, in early April, to discuss Lenin's errors.

Eastern Europe and Indochina are currently immersed in a crisis. Like it or not, this crisis is a cultural crisis. It is the consequence of the rejection of their cultural background. The big question now is: How to get out of that?

At a conference between Asians in Penang, Malaysia, in 1972, on progress, I presented an idea that attracted much interest. I resubmit it to you today. The idea that sometimes progress means back tracking, in any case backtracking first, to go back to the point where the fundamental error was committed, before continuing, before being able to move forward. Graphically we have three situations, as illustrated in the drawings below.

Figure 1. Shows the situation in which there are countries like the Soviet Union. If we continue in the Leninist way, we will eventually be asphyxiated, as Gorbachev himself said.

2. Shows the easy way, the refusal to make a big effort to turn the corner quickly. But, when the moment of truth arrives, the effort required will be very hard: The slope to climb will be perpendicular, or it will require a long walk back and the loss of much time.

3. Shows the solution backed by Gorbachev: Make a big effort right now to turn the corner more quickly, and resume the path of progress more quickly and with less pain.

These illustrations show the turn confronting the governments of a number of countries - with the Soviet Union leading--but it is certain that they also represent

the shift that is needed by intellectuals, especially those intellectuals who considered themselves as "progressists" and who, therefore, allowed themselves to vilify and terrorize the intellectuals who tried to make their voices heard, in support of civilization and reason.

I do not know if dialogue between the two groups is possible. Self-esteem will be a major obstacle. The lack of intellectual integrity will be another. But it is certain that conditions now exist to allow such a dialogue, not only at the European level, but also worldwide, since the grand communist master himself, Gorbachev, has allowed the "progressists" to self-contradict without fear of being accused of treason or feeling intellectually immature.

Figure 1. Current Situation

Figure 2. Facilitation Situation

Figure 3. Quick Solution but momentarily painful

Ideograms of "If" and "Nhan"

In the box below, in the ideogram "sĩ" (in Chinese: shi), the upper line represents the sky, the bottom line represents the earth, and the perpendicular line represents man linking heaven and earth .

In the ideogram "nhân" (in Chinese: ren) there are two components on the left, "nhan" (in Chinese: ren) meaning man, and on the right, "Nhị" (Chinese: ehr), which means two .