

## CHAPTER VI

# THE DIALECTIC OF POWER AND INTERESTS IN CHINESE EDUCATION

### INTRODUCTION

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* made a classic remark on the nature of the dialectic of power: "myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology."<sup>1</sup> With Adorno and Horkheimer, one could say that education is both a myth and an enlightenment: the myth is based on the blind belief that education in its omnipotent power, can produce or transform a human being like the magic wand in fairy tales. But education is also the unique means of enlightenment as Tzu-hsia, a disciple of Confucius forcefully argued: "To study extensively, to be steadfast in one's purpose, to inquire earnestly, and to reflect on what is at hand, humanity consists in these."<sup>2</sup>

Being both a myth and an enlightenment, Confucian education has been destined to inevitable ambiguity if not misunderstanding, and subjected to the manipulation of the ruling cliques or the State. In fact, the nature of education has never been clearly understood; there may be no definitive and absolutely authoritative definition of education. Any adequate (not necessarily acceptable) definition of a concept or thing has to fulfill at least the following conditions: (1) it has truly to describe its most essential characteristics (or, as the phenomenologists insist, its nature as such); (2) it has to grasp correctly its main functions; (3) it has exactly to pinpoint its motives, and perhaps more difficult (4) it has to establish a scientific law of its course. The scientific advance has made a great deal of clarifying the nature of a thing and hence has contributed to a better definition in terms of (1) its peculiar characteristics and (2) its functions. Science, however, could not explain, predict or calculate (3) human motives and interests without degrading human beings to the level of things or animals (as the behaviorists have done). But such a degradation, or equalization of man and things, man and animal, does justice neither to man nor to science because human interests (motives) are not invariable and present: human interests are growing, appearing, disappearing or simply changing (in the sense of varying, enriching or impoverishing). They can be suppressed or developed; they can be transformed or deformed as seen in the

case of aspirations, passions and feelings. Thus, (4) to formulate a law predicting and calculating their course is tantamount to engaging in an impossible mission. The efforts of scientists (natural and social) in searching for such a law have been less than successful. At this moment, all they can claim is a dim hope for such a universal law.<sup>3</sup> The critiques of the post-modernists, though questionable, make a point: our belief in a universal law that can predict, calculate, and dictate the human course is utopian.<sup>4</sup> However, the temptation of a universal law of the human sciences is so great and irresistible that it could not be suppressed.

In this work, we will not delve into such an ambitious project, but rather be content with a critical examination of the dialectic of power and interests that could be of help in gaining a more comprehensive and less ideological understanding of education. We subject the present education adopted by the Chinese government to our critique not for the sake of critique, but for the tactical reason that only through critique of the inauthentic, phenomenal characteristics of present education can one approach its authentic nature. Our critique begins with an examination of the confusion between the objects and objectives of education, then with a critique of its adoption of an instrumental method in dealing with its objects, and finally with our plea for a more scientific discovery of its objectives in terms of discovering human needs (interests). Since we have discussed at length the ideological essence of Chinese education above,<sup>5</sup> this chapter is restricted to revealing the capricious dialectic of power and interests in education.

## **OBJECTS AND OBJECTIVES OF EDUCATION**

The textbook of education adopted by most teacher preparation colleges in Taiwan follows the Chinese Confucian tradition and the Western concept of education, though vaguely, as most educators acknowledged.<sup>6</sup> Let us begin with Chinese traditional education.

In *The Great Learning*, the textbook of Confucian education, the first definition of education states: "The way of learning to be great consists in manifesting clear character, loving the people and abiding in the highest good."<sup>7</sup> It follows with an explication of the method of education:

Only after knowing what to abide in can one be calm. Only after having been calm can one be

tranquil. Only after having achieved tranquility can one have peaceful repose. Only after having peaceful repose can one begin to deliberate. Only after deliberation can the end be attained.<sup>8</sup>

It then states its metaphysical foundation: "Things have their roots and branches. Affairs have their beginnings and their ends. To know what is first and what is last will lead one near the way."<sup>9</sup>

We find a great number of definitions of education expressed in this way, not only in the classic literature, but in the present textbooks adopted by the government. Albert Chao traces the concept of education back to Mencius who confirmed that "all elitists are due to education" (literally): "all talents and learners in the world are possible thanks to education, how joyful it is."<sup>10</sup>

We are concerned not with the origin of the concept of education, but with how this is understood by the Chinese. Let us follow further Albert Chao's description of the concept of education. He begins with Mencius's restriction of education to the work of training the ruling elites: "education aims at fostering the talented in the world."<sup>11</sup> He then examines analytically the two concepts of "*chiao*" and "*yu*" found in Chinese classic literature as: 1) self-education (from internal forces), and (2) education received from external forces. These two kinds of education mutually reinforce each other.<sup>12</sup> Actually, such a definition of education is still insufficient because of it lacks the objective of education. Thus, at the end, Chao seems to return to the common understanding of education in Confucianism by placing the ideals of *chun-tzu*, a person of "great loyalty and absolute rightness," as the ultimate objective of education.

Such an objective of education no longer plays the dominant role, because the business of education is no longer restricted to moral education. Chao admits for example the important role of knowledge which helps to increase human capacity and ability for development. Thus, education aims at both morals and knowledge.<sup>13</sup> But why knowledge; as we know, the original Confucian education laid less emphasis on knowledge as such. To Confucius and his disciples, it is moral knowledge and not pure knowledge that counts. Thus, the turn toward pure knowledge could not be explained without an understanding of its hidden reason. Actually, Chao does not mention the inner relationship between power (interests) and knowledge. Confucius always believed in knowledge, especially practical knowledge, as a kind of solution to social problems. If

moral knowledge could serve to pacify the world, to govern the state, to run the household and to correct the individual himself, then such knowledge has to have a certain power. Here the concept of power in its broadest sense emerges in education: education to moral life means also education to power. In time, moral knowledge might have been diminished in power and replaced by political or legal power (as seen in the case of legalism), but the concept of power is kept intact. Since the Han dynasty, it is no longer knowledge which produces power but the power which makes knowledge as knowledge.<sup>14</sup> Hereafter, knowledge is identified with power. It does not matter which kind of knowledge. What counts is only that such knowledge can produce some power. Consequently, if the objective of education is knowledge, then it also is power.

Such an understanding of education was notorious in the Han dynasty when the examination system was introduced and rigorously executed. The Confucian examination system was designed not to promote moral knowledge, but to select the bureaucrats whose main duty was to safeguard the regime and to administer its empire. Here, knowledge is extended beyond the range of power to the sphere of interests. Knowledge is valued for its power in safeguarding the interests of the rulers. Similarly, education is valued for the same purpose.

Our present educational system appears to follow such a pattern, and our rigorous examination-apparatus is designed to select the best brains for such purposes. It is no surprise that Chinese parents lay such emphasis on education; they never question the national policy of considering examinations as the sole way for job-selection, promotion, etc.

One may argue for the examination system by insisting upon its effectiveness, and that is true. We do not advocate its abolition, since it is universally practiced and appears to be the fair way for any competition. The question is whether education is for examinations, or are examinations the only way to further education?

Dissatisfied with the Confucian examination-system, and with its over-emphasis on moral education (which sounds hypocritical), most of our educators turn toward the Western concept of education, as Chao noted.<sup>15</sup> Though they take the Western concept of education in its original meaning of *Educere* or the art of leading and following, they reduce it to the technical level of how to learn and how to make those being educated to follow. In a word, education seems to be destined to be the art of methodical training. In combination with the original sense of education, modern education

serves rather as an art, training those being educated to acquire some technical knowledge to gain power, or to defend acquired interests and to gain new interests, etc.

Here, one discovers two different kinds of objectives for education: the first is the one for which Confucius called, which is moral, and the second one promoted by politicians, industrialists, business people, etc., which is rather professional and legal. However, in both definitions of education, one notes the absence of the object, namely the educated person him or herself.

Such an understanding of education has been entrenched for a thousand years, and sanctified by the ruling monarchs. It became so sacred that no one dared to challenge it, and has served since as the backbone of national policy. It dictated all the textbooks required for national examination. Thus, we can say that education in China plays rather an instrumental role in training bureaucrats on the one hand, and in keeping the people in order on the other hand. However, such a verdict is too hasty. One needs to provide historical evidences and logical arguments.

## THE MISCONCEPTION OF EDUCATION AS INSTRUMENTAL IDEOLOGY

Let us begin first with national education in junior and senior high school. Here we chose the textbook prepared by a committee nominated by the Ministry of Education (or equivalent authority). The basic course given in primary grades is named "*Civic and Moral Education*," which consists of six parts elaborated in six volumes. One notes with surprise that, with exception of the fourth volume which reserves a very small part to explain the relationship between the individual and society,<sup>16</sup> all but a few sentences are devoted to national interests. Let us take a glance at its contents:

The first volume places 'perfect education' at its center, the second one deals with 'harmonious society', the third volume discusses 'civic laws', the fourth concerns itself with 'democratic politics', the fifth explains 'prosperous economics', while the sixth treats 'harmonious culture'.<sup>17</sup>

One may object to our understanding arguing that such purposes would aim rather at the individual him or herself. Let us go into the contents of the first volume to see what "perfect

education” is, and how it functions.

The purpose and the nature of “perfect education” could be seen from four interests: individual, social, national and global. In a word, it follows the Confucian model in the *Great Learning*: in the first place education aims: (1) to accumulate knowledge and technical ability, (2) to develop capacity, and (3) to gain moral knowledge.<sup>18</sup> In the second, third, and fourth aspect, one can hardly notice the place of the individual in education: here the world, nation and society are the objectives of education. But let us not be over optimistic that the individual is treated in the first place: actually the individual is treated as a social individual, and not an autonomous one. One reads: “In order to understand moral knowledge, the individual is not allowed to be independent from society. He has to co-live with others, and to understand how to morally live. Only so, can one live harmoniously with others. To learn a moral life, one has to be educated *a posteriori*.”<sup>19</sup> In this context, even if the individual is treated as the objective of education, he is eased into society very soon as its member and for its common purpose.

In a word, for traditional education it is not the individual as such but the nation or society that are the objectives of education, while the individual is mentioned as a proper object not of education, but of the state (society).

The situation does not change for the better in the second grade curriculum. Though the title “Civic and Moral Education” is replaced by a shorter version “Citizen” (or “Civic Education”), its contents remain almost the same with, of course, a more sophisticated explanation. At bottom, it sounds like an advertisement for the government’s educational policy. In the first volume, e.g., there is found only a chapter devoted to “personality.”<sup>20</sup> The rests deal with the national policy of education. That would be good news, however, compared with the contents for the first grade. Let us take a look into its content to see whether the concept “personality” is properly understood, and whether the student as a person has been taken to be the objective of education. The definition of “person” runs as follows: “person is a man who, in dealing with others, with himself, with things and with the natural environment, manifests particular, unique characters which are formed from his peculiar structure of body and mind, and which are permanent and homogeneous.”<sup>21</sup>

That is not quite a false definition, but certainly insufficient and too general. According to this definition everyone has a certain personality because one is unique and peculiar. Even an animal would

have a personality too if judged from the characteristics of particularity and uniqueness. The mistake lies not only in this weakness but elsewhere in its behaviorist explanation. It seems that the "person" can be discovered and formed after the patterns of behaviors, body-structure, etc. According to this definition, the person consists of two fundamental concepts: character and particularity. Each person has a certain character; but to form such a character, there are a great number of particularities. In general, human particularity could be described from its physical and mental structures. The physical structure is varied according to human outlook, health, age while the mental is measured by human capacity, interests, attitude, ideology, motives, ideals, belief, etc."<sup>22</sup>

As we see, the "peculiarity" referred is not at all peculiar. If personality is judged by human physical or mental structure, then we no longer have the claimed uniqueness, because persons can be divided into groups according to age, body-structure, ideology, educational level, etc., and as such one should be understood in terms of one's class and not one's uniqueness. The point here is not to contest such a definition, but to show that even if Chinese educators stress "personality," *they understand it in terms of class, genus or species*. Such an understanding of person leads to a kind of education of class and not of persons. It is not the person but the class, the state that is the objective of education. The study of national laws, constitution, economics, culture, etc., aims rather at shaping or molding the student in a certain model adopted by Chinese society. Our suspicion that the student as the object of education is not properly treated is quite verified by these textbooks. The one being educated is simply ignored or bypassed.

## THE PURPOSIVE-INSTRUMENTAL METHOD

Therefore, it is important to raise the question of why Chinese educators reserve so much time for the objectives and not the objects of education. Such a question may critically point to some hidden motives which the ruling group tries to conceal and which we would identify as the interests of the rulers. Before arriving at such a conclusion it is necessary to examine the methods used by Chinese educators. Since methods in education are not randomly but intentionally chosen and used, one may say that they must be rational.

Chinese educators adopt the same rational pattern which Max Weber once diagnosed as that built on the model of means and ends.<sup>23</sup> Unaware of the danger of reducing human potentiality to a

certain pattern of conduct, and of simplifying reason,<sup>24</sup> Chinese educators believe that a sound education must be judged by the method that can help attain the determined goal. Here, the method appears to be an effective instrument.<sup>25</sup> As such, it has to be constructed not from the perspective of those being educated but in accordance with presupposed goals. The point is that these goals are either the ones of the ruling class or the abstract values. Thus, one may say that the method is neutral and relies only on the purpose of education. To be more concrete, educators are concerned less with those being educated, but more with the effect resulting from the method.

Chinese educators adopt such a purposive-instrumental method without questioning its legitimacy. Here, we would like to raise the distinction between the effectiveness and the legitimacy of method. There is need perhaps to argue not about the effectiveness of a method, which can patently be measured by its degree of success, but only about the purpose itself. If the ultimate purpose of education is the ideal *chun-tzu*, then a successful method is the one which can help the educated to become *chun-tzu*. It does not make any difference how violent, dogmatic or unscientific such a method is. It makes sense only if it is successful. The famous saying of Teng Hsiao-ping, a paramount leader of "modern" China—"It does not matter how a cat looks (white or black) but whether the cat can catch mice"—expresses the pragmatic role of method in education. Hence, it is clear to most educators that the effectiveness of a method justifies and legitimates the method. Here, we discover a logical pattern of Chinese education: the necessary relation between the means and the ends which then decides the course of education. One finds nowhere the role of the educated in this relation. Once, the objective of education is predetermined by society or the state, and the pedagogical method is dependent upon the objective, the educated has no more to say, only to blindly follow.

However, effectiveness does not automatically generate legitimacy and science. A method could be effective, but be both unscientific and illegitimate. Overemphasis on the effectiveness of method could therefore undermine other objectives of education, such as the search for truth, justice, etc. A method is legitimate not because it is taken for granted, but because it can stand the permanent test of scientific objectivity and scientific truth. Lying could benefit someone sometimes, but it is illegitimate in the sense that it fails the test of truth and scientific objectivity. The geometrical proposition of "the shortest distance between two points is a straight



line" is legitimate because it follows the ruled calculus. Similarly, violence, dogmatism, ideological indoctrination could be effective for some people and in a certain society, but they are not legitimate in the sense that they can not stand the permanent test of truth and objectivity.

Such a shortcoming of purposive-instrumental method was foreseen by Weber himself when he tried to distinguish the "purposive rationality" (*Zweckrationalitaet*) from the "value rationality" (*Wertrationalitaet*). The "value rationality," unlike the "purposive rationality," is not judged by the relation between means and ends, but by the social actors who share common values found in nature (natural scientific) or in the human community (social scientific).<sup>26</sup> Thus, any claim to legitimacy should involve a conscious belief "in the absolute value of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior, entirely for its own sake and independently of any prospects of external success."<sup>27</sup> In this context, we can say with Weber that the legitimacy of education and its method is grounded on commonly accepted values, scientific or social, and not on method alone.

More than Weber, we see in the predetermination of method the logical consequence of ideological belief in the absoluteness of the objectives of education. If *chun-tzu*, if all kind of virtues such as loyalty, benevolence or obedience are so sacred that they cannot be put into question, then there would be nothing left to discuss but some variations on the method. Whatever the method, it could not afford to be independent from educational objectives. It has to mold itself to fit them in order to achieve the set goals. Hence, it is not a question of method, but of objectives which decides the fate of education. Our criticism of the instrumental-purposive method adopted by Chinese educators reveals not only its shortcoming, but a more troublesome, hidden reason behind the innocent and holy appearance of our educational system. This reason explains also the attitude of the ruling body which concedes some methodological mistakes, but is firm in not being willing to put the objectives of education on the table for discussion. Such a hidden reason is now identified as human interests.

## THE DIALECTIC OF POWER AND INTERESTS

Through an analysis of the objectives and the methods of education, one discovers grave negligence towards the educated. Educated persons have not been properly studied and are treated

like things or animals who can be manipulated, molded, dictated and transformed. First, we contend that a study of (1) the characteristics and (2) the functions of an object remains insufficient, not only because of the difference between man and animal, man and thing, but because even these characteristics and functions do not come solely from the object. They could be assigned to it by one's community, environment, etc. They can be fully understood only in their own context. Second, more than just a grasp of characteristics and functions, it is the motives and the conditions which constitute the main concern (objectives) of education. That means that we have to deal with human motives (or interests) in a more scientific way.

Since the idea of person is inseparable from the concept of integral humanism, an ideal education must take into consideration the life-world with all its aspects (culture, religion, values, heritage, identity, and so on).<sup>28</sup> However, such a work would require a more comprehensive and detailed study beyond our capacity. Hence, we will restrict our study to a single object of education, namely the educated person.

In examining the objectives of traditional education, one always finds some motives behind them. There is no objective without motive. Confucius urged moral education because of his belief in it as the most effective way to pacify the world. Thus, when he stated: "The Way of learning to be great consists in manifesting clear character, loving the people, and abiding the highest good,"<sup>29</sup> he has in his mind a certain motive, namely, "bringing order to their state."<sup>30</sup> Similarly, education as extension of knowledge aims at "peace throughout the world."<sup>31</sup> In this sense, *chun-tzu* as the purpose of education is cultivated because of its power to transform society for the better. The integrity, responsibility and honesty of *chun-tzu* can help in realizing humanity,<sup>32</sup> in giving security and peace,<sup>33</sup> and in maintaining social order.<sup>34</sup> The benevolence cultivated by *chun-tzu* has a greater effect than just being beloved by the people. It helps in perfecting oneself, pacifying the world, etc. In the same context, Confucius exalted virtues such as harmony, rightness,<sup>35</sup> loyalty, seriousness,<sup>36</sup> the observance of rites, etc., which certainly have effects on the arts of ruling, on conflict-solution, and so on. Thus, undeniably education is intended for human interests. The point to be discussed therefore is not an asocial, unreal education, but an education oriented by human interests. Hence, the questions of "which kind of interests," "whose interests" and "how to regulate interests" should be the central

theme in modern education.

As we have stated in our introductory remarks, any adequate study of human phenomena has to be based on: (1) a phenomenological study of its characteristics, and (2) its main functions. More than that, we have: (3) to discover human motives (or interests), and if possible (4) to construct a law-like rule predicting, calculating and regulating the genetic course of interests and human action. Up to now, most social scientists have spent more time on the first and second parts, while neglecting or ignoring the third. Thus, their social laws appear more like natural laws than human laws. The study of Habermas has partly restored the third dimension of human study.<sup>37</sup> He is quite right to establish a necessary linkage between interests and knowledge, which applies to education and could explain more adequately the common saying: "knowledge is power." The role of education is irreplaceable because it is the most effective and legitimate way to acquire power.<sup>38</sup> In the frame of this work, we will discuss the first question of "which kind of interests" and "whose interests?"

In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Habermas claims three kinds of different, but related interests: the theoretical, the practical and the emancipatory. He then proves that these kinds of interests correspond to three kinds of knowledge: the purely scientific, the practical (moral, political) and the aesthetically creative. That is true enough. However, to divide human interests into three consecutive, and clear-cut genres is too academic, if not dangerous. Actually, pure knowledge has not been the central point of either Aristotle or Confucius, Jesus or Buddha. Pure knowledge does not produce force. It generates power only if it is properly applied. A mathematical proposition would be no more than a simple game in the mind if treated *per se*. The propositions "the distance between the sun and the earth is 8 million km," or "the speed of light is 300.000 km/s" are true, but meaningless to a peasant, or to all but a few astronomers or related scientists. Its meaningfulness or meaninglessness thus come from its possible or real application to human life. In this sense, education aims at pure knowledge but does so for the sake of application. In other words, knowledge could transform itself into power because of its force of application to human life. One can say therefore that the basic foundation of knowledge is not pure knowledge as such (as Plato and his followers mistakenly took for granted), but human interests themselves. Consequently, any knowledge is firstly human knowledge about nature, human beings, etc. This phraseology is important because it

clearly states our point: to understand human beings and their society, one has to understand their interests.

Unlike Habermas, we see in practical knowledge (which is born in practical interests) the dynamic force or motives for the development of pure knowledge. This position is not Marxian, in the sense that we do not claim the priority of praxis or theory, nor do we follow the naive view that theory is born in praxis. Nor does Habermas share that Marxian view. Here, we follow Karl Popper's description of scientific progress in some aspects, and apply it to understanding the genesis of interests.

In a paper dealing with the logic of the social sciences presented to the *German Conference of Sociology* in 1961 Karl Popper proposed 27 theses on the methodological question in social science. His main thesis sounds as if it claims that only through a rational and permanent criticism of error does scientific knowledge develop.<sup>39</sup> The so-called "trial and error" brought forward earlier in *Conjectures and Refutations*<sup>40</sup> is slightly modified in verbal expression, but remains unchanged in its substance. According to this view, knowledge is in a constant process of development through criticism of one's mistakes. Popper's idea of the emergence of mistakes is more relevant to the arguments backing our explanation of the incessant development of new interests and, hence, new purposes as well as the extinction of some of the old ones in human life. According to his view, our discovery of mistakes is implicit in our criticism of existing knowledge, and of new emerging knowledge, etc.<sup>41</sup> This means that the development of new knowledge is possible because of the discovery of new mistakes and so on. In effect, one can say with Popper that one discovers mistakes prior to solutions, during the process of searching for solutions, and even after solutions. Analogically, our discovery of new interests and purposes follows the same pattern, not only through criticism but through new human relationships resulting from our contact with a new world (object, human being, society) or through self-reflection.

We contend that human interests grow in proportion to new human relationships, and that it is these relationships which stimulate, generate and refine human activity. The multi-dimensional relationships could be measured by the multiplicity of interests, which then stimulate new interests and consequently new relationships. Human activities born in human relationship or stimulated by human interests have a double function of satisfying (or searching to satisfy) interests, and maintaining, furthering or shattering human relationships. Such a function is guided by a rational process of

calculation of the ends and means, of relationship and interests, and so on. To clarify this position, we wish to go a step further to examine Habermas's linkage of human interests to human knowledge.

Prior to our critique of Habermas's thesis, it is necessary to say something about the nature and meaning of relationship. The expression "relationship" unfortunately is insufficient to describe the Hegelian concept of mediation and reconciliation and the Marxist concept of medium and its conditions. Our use of the term bears not only the ordinary sense of intercourse or linking; by it we mean: (1) the whole medium and its conditions, (2) the act of mediation and reconciliation, and (3) the state of intercourse, interchange and so on. Thus, when one talks about human relations to nature, to other human beings, or to man himself, one expresses not only (3) the state of relation, but (a) its essence and (b) its nature and activity.

The relationship comes gradually first as a casual contact, an accidental or intentional meeting or confrontation, an unconscious or conscious arrangement, etc. Such a contact could be developed into a normal or intensive intimate relationship depending on whether and how the subject discovers in the contacted subject some of his or her interests. In accord with the degree of interests is the intensity of relationship. A relationship can be cool or warm, intimate or superficial, friendly or hostile, indifferent or attentive.

Second, the relationship is in a process of changing, for better or worse. Such a change can be measured by the degree of understanding, receptivity and new discovery of the interests of the contacted subjects. It is also motivated by the mutual discovery and receptivity of both partners. Its success or failure is determined by how the subjects regulate, divide, etc. their interests, and its progress is seen in how the subjects solve the problems that arise from interests-conflicts.

The concrete example of human-nature relationships clearly solidifies our view: the primitive person saw nature as god or semi-god, and his or her relation to it was one-way or one dimensional as dictated by the latter. The modern person's relation to nature appears also as one way, but this time in a reverse order. Nature serves one simply as an object to be exploited, to serve one's interests and so on. Thus, between humans and nature, there is only a simple one-way relation. Among people, one could easily find the same kind of relationship, that of master and slave, of alienated subjects, etc. But this is not the one sought by human beings, and such a relationship could hardly change or develop the person. The kind of relationship called for by Hegel or Marx sounds as romantic as if sought by a

poet. Nature and persons are no longer simple objects to be exploited or plundered. They are partners in a partnership relationship just as in a love-relationship. Nature serves both as human medium, and the human condition in which and with which humans develop. Nature contributes its resources to help human beings survive. Nature and humans no longer play the war-game of search and destroy, but appear as partners in a reconciliatory and mediating mood and position (Hegel). Of course, this kind of human-nature relationship is still wishful thinking. But such a wish is far from unreal or utopian. It is in the process of realization which one cannot ignore for it is the process that determines human fate.

With relationships come human interests, which Habermas divides into three categories: theoretical, practical and emancipatory.<sup>42</sup> There is no need to confirm Habermas's accurateness by systematizing them in a dialectical form. Indeed, the attempt to put interests in a table of categories not only suffocates them, but also contradicts the nature of interests seen in their dynamic growth and in the power of creating and shattering existing categories. Thus, we venture to object to Habermas's explanation of human knowledge in terms of methodical inquiry dealing with three kinds of interests; we regard them as insufficient and dangerous. It is not difficult to share Habermas's explanation of the birth of knowledge in terms of human interests. However, could we satisfactorily build a law linking interests to knowledge without questioning the status and the nature of interests themselves? Unfortunately, Habermas does not go farther than a sophisticated explanation of knowledge. He seems to adopt a kind of meta-theory of interests, which plays the *de facto* point of departure for an escape from any inquiry. Thus, he regards interests as both the purposes and motives of human life which guide our acts, and which determine our ways (or methods). As a consequence of the search for an adequate method, knowledge is born.

Here, Habermas seems to confine himself to the myth of positivism which he had vehemently rejected. His mistake is easily detected. He first has not distinguished purpose from motive. In his study of Sigmund Freud,<sup>43</sup> and in his attempt to reduce Nietzsche's program of new philosophy to the field of cognitive interests,<sup>44</sup> Habermas seems to take purpose to be motive, e.g., when he interprets Freud's description of human motives: "It is a system of self-preservation that serves two functions in particular: self-assertion against nature and the organization of men's inter-relations."<sup>45</sup> We would follow Peter Winch's distinction between

motive and cause in his critique of Stuart Mill and other positivists to point out Habermas' confusion of purpose and motives. Winch argues: "A dispositional, just as much as a causal, statement, is based on generalizations from what has been observed to happen. But a statement about an agent's motives is not like that: it is better understood analogous to a setting out of the agent's reasons for acting thus."<sup>4 6</sup> In another respect, purpose is mostly conscious while motives are often unconscious, as Freud showed. Purpose could be difficult to replace while motives are often changed during the course of searching for purpose.

Thus, more than Habermas, we insist that human motives and purposes are not transcendental, but in a genetic process. This means that human interests are in a process of growing and expiring. The birth of human interests depends on the social medium and the natural milieu, on its conditions as well as on specific relationships. Knowledge does not give birth to interests but can intensify and render them explicit. In this sense, the traditional definition of philosophy in terms of love of wisdom, which Habermas still embraces, appears wrongly constructed. It is not that wisdom gives birth to philosophy, because such wisdom does not exist prior to philosophy. In fact, wisdom is implicit in philosophy; it cannot be thought of independently. The same could be said of education: wisdom, or whatever, regarded as ideals is not prior to human interests or human activities. Wisdom, ideals, etc. are thus neither the motives nor the causes of our education or our philosophy. This point appears radical because of our suggestion to understand philosophy and education as a process of discovering new interests, and of regulating them. This means that philosophy, education, etc. are born precisely in the process of the discovery and regulation of interests. That is the reason for our criticism of traditional education as laying too much emphasis upon wisdom, ideals, sainthood, *chun-tzu*, etc. at the expense of the educated and their interests. In this context the slogan "knowledge is power" appears ridiculous and negatively ideological. We know for sure that knowledge in itself is neither power nor wisdom. It produces wisdom or power only if it is related to the question of human interests; or more specifically, to the question of how man discovers interests, of what part interests play in human life and how to regulate them.

Our claim that knowledge produces power demands further clarification: First, not all knowledge, but only that born in, and dealing with, interests can produce power. Our argument that a scientific knowledge, for example, Bernouilli's equation-theorem which solves

the aero-dynamic paradox, would lose its meaning if it is treated as pure theory, inapplicable to the field of aerodynamics, confirms our point. Second, knowledge produces nothing if it is incomprehensible and impractical. A man living in a rural region where no infrastructure is built or a man who has no need to travel could hardly imagine the Newtonian calculus of speed. And even if he has learned something from Newtonian laws of gravitation, such knowledge is useless in solving his immediate problem of gathering food and growing vegetables. Therefore, knowledge would be incomprehensible if placed in a "transcendental" place or assigned to a meta-role. Habermas attempts to do exactly what we are criticizing.

Similarly, we can say education in itself does not generate power or wisdom. Rather, it is the education of interest-discovery and interest-regulation that count. Thus, an effective education could not be judged by its noble, perfect ideals or purposes, but by its fruitfulness in discovering, regulating and distributing interests. In traditional Confucian education, the way of regulation and distribution was monopolized by the *intelligentsia*. They sought to dictate human interest by restricting and regulating them. As a result, there was barely any human progress. The poverty of our education or the sterility of our knowledge can best be seen in this light: a lack of new interests could not generate the dynamic which is the cause of progress. But, new interests can be born only in a free society where human relation is not restricted and where human interests are respected. In short, the growth of knowledge is measured by the continuous birth of new interests, which in turn are possible in new human relationships. The intercourse of this trinity (if we can borrow the religious language that Giambattista Vico "abused") is not only reciprocal, but dialectical. Its force involves shaping its generative relationships that are not one-dimensional, but immanently multi-dimensional.

Thus, the dialectic of power and interests should be understood not solely from the point of view of knowledge, but from the way one learns to regulate and distribute interests. The more effective a way is in dealing with interests, the more powerful it is. To put this idea in a simple manner, we would note that the power of the father in a family has more to do with his capacity in solving most of the problems in his family and less with what most of sociologists explain in terms of ideology (patriarchalism). In most families, especially in rural areas and in lower income classes, the father enjoys a greater authority, while in industrialized countries where both male and female have to work, the power of the father



is reduced visibly. In some case, the father has no authority at all, which is possessed by his wife. Our explanation of such a phenomenon is that the one who could solve the problems of the family, in terms of quality and quantity, has power. In the traditional family in which the man works and earns money while the woman keeps household (no salary, of course), it is the man who has the say. In the case of the modern family in which both partners work and make money, the power is often divided in a more balanced way. And if the man runs the household, he has even less say. (Of course, there would be some exceptions, but this is true in most cases). Such an explanation may seem a bit unsophisticated and some intellectuals may dismiss it. But the evidence of rigorous statistics should have the last say. They show that the rural man has more power than the urban one, that the one who is working has more say than the one who is not working, that the modern wife (who is working) is more independent and respected than the traditional one, etc. Such statistics are fully understood in the context of problem-solving capacity: the one who can solve problems has power. The problems could be economic, social, intellectual, physical, religious, etc. and consequently, the powerful men are often industrialists, politicians, intellectuals, doctors and priests. They are those who can best solve the related problems.

From other aspects, power could be accumulated through manipulation, coercion, and cheating. Such phenomena of power-accumulation are unscientific and dangerous. To explain this way of power-accumulation: First, one supposes that there are only permanent, fixed interests. Second, that the best way to deal with these interests is to keep them as they are. Whenever some problems arise, the ideal method for dealing with them is to suppress them by violence, or to make the people forget them by ideological indoctrination. Third, by combining violence with indoctrination, the ruler or the educator gains access to a power not based on capacity for solving problems but for suppressing them. Thus, the ruled or the educated is fearful of the ruler or educator. Due to his or her ignorance, and to the fear of being punished, the ruled person worships the ruler and consequently, he (she) exposes himself (herself) to the ruler as an instrument (or as merchandise). One *de facto* and *de jure* acknowledges the power of the ruler as legitimate. In this sense, the feudal prince, in order to govern, has to cheat the ruled by means of violence, manipulation, intimidation and, paradoxically, by empty promises of peace, love and prosperity. Machiavelli's *Realpolitik* has brilliantly demonstrated such a kind

of human relationship, the kind of *homo homini lupus*.<sup>47</sup>

Here, we have two approaches to power: the first through a rational process of problem-discovery and problem-solving. Success in problem-solving (often by a just and fair distribution of interests, rational regulation of relationships and interests, and precise prediction of coming problems) determines the degree of power. The second approach proceeds by a systematic cheating, manipulation, intimidation and indoctrination which also culminates with power too. But unlike the first, the problems cannot be solved, but instead are suppressed. Thus, one cannot predict the coming problems and foresee possible solutions. Again, they stick to violence and manipulation to keep power intact.

As a corollary, we have two kinds of education: the first is rational, the second ideological in its negative sense. In the first case, education is considered as a sacred work to help the educated to discover his or her own problems (by a knowledge of human relationships and emerging human interests, and by a reflection on problems arising from relationships and conflicts of interest), and then to search for adequate solutions (by means of communication, fair distribution, rational regulation, scientific method, etc.). In the second case, education is regarded as an effective instrument of manipulation (by means of indoctrination) to keep the educated in the *status quo*, or to force them to believe in the present situation and its principles (by inventing an ideology). Both ways generate power. But as we witness, while in the first case, the acquired power is uncontested and praised, in the second case power is often involved with corruption. It could be embraced, but often is despised.

## CONCLUDING REMARK

In any education, particularly Chinese education, power has been and is the objective sought by the educated. We are by no means against such a kind of understanding which we see as inevitable. The point that we plead for is, that only power acquired by rational method can survive the test of history. Its legitimacy is grounded neither on violence nor on intimidation, neither on indoctrination nor negative ideology but on its validity and effectiveness in discovering-solving problems. Consequently, a sound education has to be built on such a principle: the principle of rational criticism (as Popper may say), which consists of learning to discover human problems and searching for adequate and effective solutions. Since, human problems are growing or diminishing, emerging or

disappearing in proportion to human relationships, the educator has to understand human relationships, to maintain or further them, and more importantly, to cultivate and enrich them.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. J. Cumming (Boston: Continuum, 1972), p. xvi.

<sup>2</sup> *The Analects*, 19: 6; English translation of Chan Wing-tsit in *A Source of Chinese Philosophy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> See P. Filmer ed., *New Directions in Sociological Theory* (New York: Collier - MacMillan, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Memphis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

<sup>5</sup> See chapters 2 and 5 in this volume.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *The Contemporary Currents of Education*, ed. by the Chinese Society of Education (Taipei: Normal University Press, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> *The Great Learning*, 1; Chan, p. 86.

<sup>8</sup> *The Great Learning*, 1

<sup>9</sup> *The Great Learning*, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Mencius, Ching-hsin, 1; Albert Chao, "On Chiao-yu," in the *Proceedings of the International Conference on The Philosophical Foundations of Moral Education in China* (Taipei: Fugen University Press, 1985) (Chinese), pp. 44-59, esp. p. 44. Hereafter as Chao. The English edition edited by Tran Van Doan, Vincent Shen and George F. McLean, *Chinese Foundations for Moral Education* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Chao, p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> Chao, p. 48.

<sup>13</sup> Chao, p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> Hans Bielenstein, *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Wang Zhong-shu, *Han Civilizations*, trans. Chang K. C. (New Jersey: Yale University Press, 1982); Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> Chao, pp. 47-48.

<sup>16</sup> National Compile Institute ed., *Civic and Moral Educa-*

tion (Taipei, 1985, rev. ed.), 6 volumes, vol. 4, pp. 1-8.

<sup>17</sup> *Civic and Moral Education*, vol. 1, Editorial Guide-line, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Civic and Moral Education*, vol. 1, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Civic and Moral Education*, vol. 1, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Civic and Moral Education*, vol. 1, pp. 16-22.

<sup>21</sup> *Civic and Moral Education*, vol. 1, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> *Civic and Moral Education*, vol. 1, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1., part 1.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Tran Van Doan, *Reason, Rationality, Reasonableness* (1989) (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2001); Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame University Press, 1983).

<sup>25</sup> Weber called it the purposive-instrumental method.

<sup>26</sup> Max Weber, "The Concept of Social Action," pp. 78-79.

<sup>27</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Jacques Maritain, *Humanisme inteùgral* (Paris, 1936); See also Tran Van Doan, "The Idea of Integral Humanism," in Oliva Blanchette, Tomonobu Imamichi, George F. McLean, eds., *Globalization and Philosophical Challenges* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2001), vol. 2.

<sup>29</sup> *The Great Learning*, chap. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *The Great Learning*, chap. 1.

<sup>31</sup> *The Great Learning*, chap. 1; Chan, pp. 86-97.

<sup>32</sup> *The Analects*, 15: 8.

<sup>33</sup> *The Analects*, 14: 45.

<sup>34</sup> *The Analects*, 13: 6.

<sup>35</sup> *The Analects*, 13: 6.

<sup>36</sup> *The Analects*, 14: 45.

<sup>37</sup> Juergen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975). Hereafter as *Knowledge and Human Interests*.

<sup>38</sup> The ideology of "knowledge as power," once taken by philosophers like Francis Bacon and the Enlightenment, is uncritically embraced by Habermas. His critique of Gadamer's acceptance of tradition (1978) seems hypocritical. In our view, no one can be free from the Mannheim paradox. This is the reason of our attempt to understand ideology in its dialectical process, from the positive to the negative, etc. See chap. 1 in this volume.

<sup>39</sup> Karl Popper, "The Logic of Social Sciences," in Theodor Adorno, ed., *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, trans. G. Adey and D. Frisby (London, 1976), pp. 87-104.

<sup>40</sup> Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (London, 1968).

<sup>41</sup> Karl Popper, "The Logic of Social Sciences," p. 88.

<sup>42</sup> *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Appendix, p. 311.

<sup>43</sup> *Knowledge and Human Interests*, pp. 214 ff.

<sup>44</sup> *Knowledge and Human Interests*, pp. 274 ff.

<sup>45</sup> *Knowledge and Human Interests*, pp. 276-277.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy*, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513), (London: Bantam, 1966).

