

**HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT OF A COMMON STANDARD:
PENGCHUN CHANG AND THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

PINGHUA SUN

(Singapore: Springer, 2018), 506 pages

ISBN: 978-98-11083-68-6

Wei-Chih Liou*

Pengchun Chang (hereafter P.C. Chang), who spearheaded the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) has been unjustly neglected by most researchers for a long time. In the book, *HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT OF A COMMON STANDARD: PENGCHUN CHANG AND THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS*, Dr. Pinghua Sun used all existing literature about and by P.C. Chang, along with official records of the United Nations to explore P.C. Chang's life, ideologies, and actions, especially the important speeches and actions he made in drafting the UDHR. The historic meaning of P.C. Chang was thereafter analyzed and evaluated. Based on Dr. Sun's research, P.C. Chang's achievements are in the establishment of a human rights standard with universal values, not simply Western values. In his publication, he not only represents the outstanding contributions of P.C. Chang, but also those of the Chinese people and Confucianism.

Among books about P.C. Chang, this book contains the most complete and thorough information, which makes it a necessity when studying P.C. Chang and the UDHR. This book also clarifies historical facts and restores the status that P.C. Chang deserves. Furthermore, the author provides concrete explanations about the unique contributions of Confucianism to the UDHR. Nonetheless, as with all research efforts, there are certain areas in the book that deserve further examination. Since P.C. Chang's background was in education, the following will

* Dr.rer.soc., University of Mannheim, Germany; Professor, Department of Education at National Taiwan Normal University. She may be reached at: caminoliou@hotmail.com.

explore the origins and characteristics of Chang's ideologies, hoping to promote more discourse in the academic community.

The first area concerns the origin of P.C. Chang's ideologies. Dr. Sun and researchers such as Sumner Twiss consider Dewey to have had a great impact on P.C. Chang, a conclusion which could be debated. Although Dewey's philosophy appeared in P.C. Chang's dissertation, P.C. Chang also strongly promoted "education as control and conditioning" and "duplicating Western experiences" so as to modernize Chinese education later on in his career. The latter are actually the prevailing ideologies of the behaviorist and the social efficiency school of the progressive education in the United States at that time, respectively, which Dewey criticized. For instance, P.C. Chang considered education to be "a conscious kind of control": using the most efficient methods to shorten the natural process to achieve that control. To modernize Chinese education, the same conditioning circumstances, which enabled the successful modernization in the West, had to be in place of the Chinese schools. This kind of control would help Chinese learners to develop modern abilities economically and efficiently, and avoid waste of time and energy. These reflected ideas of behaviorist psychology and the social efficiency school of American progressive education, which were considered scientific and efficient and could convert the field of education into a real science. It is very "not" Dewey, if not simply anti-Dewey.

Therefore, the relationship between the origin of P.C. Chang's ideologies and Dewey's philosophy is still unsettled. After this is clarified, the diverse, confusing, or even contradicting characteristics of his early ideologies can be resolved, and this could be the same rite of passage for fellow Chinese when confronted by the Western cultural shock. In other words, it took a lot of preparation and exploration for P.C. Chang to reach the ideological breakthrough. Claiming P.C. Chang as a Dewey-ist because Dewey was P. C. Chang's advisor-without further evidence-might be thus somewhat questionable.

Secondly, as an education scholar, P.C. Chang was only an ordinary educator who tried to borrow and replicate Western experiences to modernize Chinese education. Nevertheless, he was able to lead the drafting process of the UDHR at a critical stage of human history. Where did his cross-cultural knowledge background and ability come from? I think the key to this is in his expertise in the comparative research method and his knowledge about modern Western history.

In his dissertation, there is a list of references on the chief conditioning circumstance of modern progress, including 63 books in three areas. Each area contains diverse research topics and author backgrounds, covering the development of modern history, politics, economics, society, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and anthropology in Europe and the United States, and the analysis and discussions based on the philosophical perspectives of empiricism, utilitarianism, pragmatism, and idealism - far beyond the area of his major in education. His comments during the process of establishing the UDHR, concerning enlightenment, reaching worldwide cooperation with pragmatic and rational measure, balancing personal rights and responsibilities, and the limitations of Western ideologies, all could be traced back to his learning when studying in the United States.

As a result, the inception for P.C. Chang to acquire and transfer Western knowledge was when he used comparative research method to study the progression of modern Western history during his doctoral studies. While formulating the UDHR, in contrast to the representatives of most other countries who only understood their own cultures and spoke based on their own cultural values, P.C. Chang had an advantage of understanding the Western cultures. This was why he could always find pragmatic and compromise solutions amidst representatives from different countries, cultures, political and value systems. It was because, for P.C. Chang, the importance was not on who was better or correct. Rather, He focused on rising above disagreements, being empathic and understanding, and giving in to each other at times so as to realize the higher common purpose, vision and ideal. This might be why people resonated with his speech. Thus, to explore the historic influences and contribution made by P.C. Chang, the starting point might not be on his knowledge about Chinese history and culture, but should be on his understandings about the Western world he acquired while working on his doctoral degree, applying comparative research methods to study modern Western history.

The key to P.C. Chang's influence comes from his knowledge and keen grasp of Western cultural traditions, and his ability to constantly sift, compare, and mediate between cultures. The above is a little supplementary discussion of Dr. Sun's comprehensive work, hoping to enrich the discourse in the academic community.

