

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUNYATSENISM

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At his hundredth birthday, Sun Yat-sen is cloaked in history. The image of the "father of the country" (*kuo-fu*) magnifies and conceals the brilliantly intelligent, optimistic man who planned, suffered, dreamed, underwent defeat, dreamed again, and fought until he had bequeathed mankind an important institution which stands this very day, the Republic of China.

The present speaker himself can remember the two voices of Sun Yat-sen—the soft merry voice of a medical doctor and revolutionary who greeted old friends in his home on the Rue Moliere and who spoke in a singing, cadenced English which was both idiomatic and correct and at the same time very characteristically his own; and the other voice, driving like a whiplash through a mass meeting down in a big building down on the Shanghai Bund, which wrenched the very ills of human personality with its primordial, passionate appeal for justice, purpose and pride in life. It was hard for the speaker, then a child, to remember that these two voices came from the same man; only later did he understand that the mellow, sure-footed doctor walked the same road as the wailing, raging revolutionary who could transform a mere crowd of men into a battalion of revolutionaries by nothing more nor less magical than the spoken word.

Other speakers can address themselves to the remarkable human being, the conspiratorial "Prince of the Middle Mountain," the person who was a Chinese Republican far ahead of time. They will find the topic of his personality limitlessly interesting. As in many other political and religious movements, hagiography has already overcrusted biography before biography has had a chance to take final shape.

Perhaps it should be the turn of dramatists for the stage or for television, to take over from the book-writers, and to conjure the magic of Sun Yat-sen's actual personality, shown in deeply revealing episodes, to those generations of

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUNYATSENISM

people who have never met him in person. His portrait on the stamps and banknotes is a poor substitute for the shockingly and importantly *real* man who worked in an actual world where he had to fight and cure human injustice and international shame. Let us say goodbye to the man himself for the moment, interesting though he may be as a person, and turn instead to his ideas, considered as a system.

The present presentation can be conceived as an argument before the jury of eventual history. This is the argument:

First, that Sun Yat-sen had better insights into the nature of the twentieth century than did any of his contemporaries between 1905 and 1925;

Second, that Sun Yat-sen was the first thinker in the world to formulate and integrate the necessary politico-cultural steps which the emerging nations of today will have to take before they finally mature into comfortable, seasoned modern nations;

Third, that his basic concepts become more nearly relevant and true with each decade of humanity's world-wide political experience and that they obsolesce a great deal less than do more of the contemporary ideas of Woodrow Wilson, V. I. Lenin or Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. ¹

Fourth, that although Sun Yat-sen always thought of himself as a Chinese and always worked last and first for China, he was a true cosmopolitan in the best sense of the word and that he therefore bequeathed an ideology with a program which is as important for the Congo, for Eastern New Guinea or for Bolivia as it was for China in the past or will be for China in the future; and

Fifth, that in actual historical publication Sun Yat-sen the Chinese has eclipsed Sun Yat-sen the world citizen, the economic and political thinker who foresaw almost all the problems of development forty to sixty years before the rest of the world worried much about these problems.

To meet these arguments fairly, one must take Dr. Sun's basic ideas out of their Chinese context and ask the question, "If these ideas were known, and if they were applied, would they be found relevant to the problems of the sixty or seventy new nations as they stand forth today and tomorrow?"

1. Gandhi's moral and religious ideas remain, of course, with the sheer immutability of a major religion, but his practical political concepts have weathered severely with the passing of time.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUNYATSENISM

One could not possibly argue that each of his ideas would apply equally pointedly in each foreign nation, because intellectual, historical and cultural variables would play a great part in filtering through Dr. Sun's nations to the particular terrain to which they might be applied. It would be fair and appropriate, however, to take only the major corpus of his work—say, for example, the sixteen lectures on the three people's principles as delivered in Canton, together with his book, *The International Development of China*—and then to apply these to the world of 1965 and 1966.

Even at a glance, his reconciliation of nationalism, democracy and livelihood would stand forth as a unique, harmonious combination which had been seen clearly, as separate principles, before his time by many political theorists, both Western and non-Western, but which had never been blended into such a telling synthesis before. Abraham Lincoln had foreshadowed Sun Yat-sen with his phrase "of the people, by the people, for the people," but Lincoln had never had time, in a busy life and a tragically mis-timed death, to extend his view beyond the United States to the tremendous world outside, not yet called "non-Western" by anyone on earth.

Sun Yat-sen never came near the orderliness and philosophical clarity of an Immanuel Kant; he did not try to do so. He was both a philosopher and a man of action. To him philosophy was the guide to correction and correct action was what his own beloved country had to have unless it were to risk downfall and oblivion.

Nevertheless, though not a professional philosopher, Sun Yat-sen met most of the great problems of human life outside the religious and transcendental field; he faced the problems of living, of changing awareness, or new individual and collective goals with a philosophy which had in it the coherence not of a mapped-out artificial system but the larger coherence of a purposeful, intelligent man who had the raw intellectual honesty to *make* his ideas fit one another because they would not otherwise constitute well-rounded revolutionary doctrine for himself to follow or for him to recommend to others, even to the point of asking them to stake their lives on what he, Sun, said he knew.

By contrast, the problem as to how Jesus Christ knew that He Himself was correct can be left to theologians or mystics, since Jesus spoke with the direct authority of God; but it is interesting that even Jesus, using human speech,

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUNYATSENISM

took time to put his concepts, nations and teachings into dramatic human form, persuasive and instructive in tone.

Sun Yat-sen was not only a man, but he was as modest as he was audacious; he had no authority but his own mind when he set forth his teachings and he took great pains to be understood, to be believed, and to be followed in what he preached. The cohesion of his ideas is the coherency of honesty and consistency, so that the lectures of 1923-1924 follow logically and immutably from the original lecture on the three principles delivered in Brussels in 1905.

We know now that on some things Dr. Sun Yat-sen was flatly and completely wrong, but these mistakes are few and far between when compared to the logical and historical integrity of his political-cultural formulae, taken as a family of ideas. He miscalculated the importance of imperialism to the prosperity of capitalist states, as West Germany and post-imperial France have demonstrated capitalist prosperity in the last few years. He misjudged the possibility of a mix with Communism and Communists in the realm of collaborative action. He obviously expected the old Chinese moral ideas and clan affiliations to survive into modern urban life more strongly than they actually have in three different Chinese cities such as Shanghai today, Taipei today and Singapore today. He did not foresee that Japan and Russia could not practically become allies in world strategy. These are minor points, compared to the importance of his whole theory and program, considered as both an ideology and a series of recommendations for practical action.

To approach his system fairly, it is necessary to compare it with other ideologies, to explain the role of the ideological pioneer in one or more nations going through a period of accelerated development, and to apply what Sun Yat-sen taught in the early part of this century with what leaders and nations are going to have to do in the world from now to the end of the century.

It will be found that there is a great deal of empathetic understanding with Dr. Sun outside of China, some direct copying of his system, frequent rediscovery of fundamentals which he defined decades ago, and agonized searches for formulae what—though they exist in Dr. Sun's work—have been too often overlooked by the leaders of the developing countries and even by the leaders and experts from the well-developed countries who have been seeking to help the leaders and elites of the new states.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUNYATSENISM

The root of the matter is a fair reappraisal of Sunyatsenism as an ideology, seen on a world-wide scale.

It is not necessary to honor Dr. Sun before an audience such as this, or to praise him on his own one hundredth birthday; the celebration which we solemnize here is going on in many other parts of the world at the same time. His ideas are more important than his calendar.

To make a serious guess about the second century of Sunyatsenism it is important to examine the corpus of his work, thirty-five years after his own death. The phrase "second century" of a man's work would be inappropriate for many world leaders who found their missions only in later life, but Dr. Sun told the father of the present speaker that he, Dr. Sun, was already dreaming of changing China when he was only eight years old, tending the family cow by day and resting his head on a bean-bag pillow at night. We are close, therefore, to the second century, not only of Sun Yat-sen's life but of his dreams as well.

A hundred years ago the T'ai-p'ing rebellion, with its false wild hopes of justice and freedom, had just receded in a great ebb tide of human blood.

Since then China has had many revolutions, some good and some perverse, some calm and confident, some hysterical and hateful, some preaching endless war against mankind, like the Boxers or the Peip'ing regime, and others seeking an early and real peace for the human race. The key to all these revolutions has been the correctness or incorrectness of their thought, if one measures thought as the process whereby one converts the events of today into the history of tomorrow.

Thought of this kind must not only be descriptive; it must be normative as well.

It is not enough to have ideals; one must also have ideas.

These ideas must pertain to the experienced lives (not merely the attributed lives) of men and women everywhere. More than twenty-five years ago, President Chiang set such a standard in "A Philosophy of Action." He stated that genuine action "is necessarily ordered, rhythmical, systematic and directed toward some aim." If one examines a system of ideas in immediate relation to life, it ceases to be a problem of political theory and becomes one of *ideology* instead. Theory is most effectively criticized by theory, but ideology lives or

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUNYATSENISM

dies by the human lives which follow it and believe it or else reject it and forget it.

There are various ways of going about the evaluation of an ideology: literarily, historically, sociologically, by political science, by revolutionary dogma, or as a subject fit for behavioral research. One can contrast those ideologies which are *a priori* and those others which are *a posteriori*; usually, but not always, the latter are operational and are verbalized after the social experience which they portray has already functioned for years or centuries, as in the case of John Locke's alternative theories of the origin of value; again, usually, but not always, the former are projections of experience which have been guessed at but have never been tried before, as in the case of the concept *soviet* in the thinking of the early Russian Bolsheviks.

Approximately the same contrast applies in the division of ideologies as between the pragmatic and the dogmatic. Dogmatic ideology is often found at the beginning of a new system, when its prescribers and enforcers have not yet had the rough edges of their notions smoothed over by the erosion of experience; dogmatic ideology is also found at the end of an old system, when familiar and long-standing relationships and operations are failing to work the way they should, with the result that doctrinaires volunteer their services to classes or groups who want things the way "they used to be."

It is one of the few sad comments which must be made on Sun Yat-sen's thought that he believed so wholly in the moral superiority of the old Chinese concepts of relationship that it never occurred to him that Communism could act on Chinese morality like a poisonous virus in a human body.

Dogmatic ideology is seen today in Ghana, South Africa; yesterday it was seen in Algeria. Pragmatic ideology, rarely recognized as such, is found widely in Latin America and in many countries of the Middle East.

Ideology is only potential when it is traditional, when people believe things without even recognizing what they believe. This was true of most of the Malay race seventy years ago, but the changing of political experience under Indonesia and Malaysia has precipitated the development of new, more definite *verbal* ideologies in place of the unrecognized beliefs, implicit but unlabelled, which governed and guided the behavior of the Malays while the great English-Polish novelist, Joseph Conrad, wrote about them.

In the absence of free speech on the mainland of China today, it is possible

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUNYATSENISM

that millions of families are teaching their children how to live without daring to put anti-Communist words to the actions or the relationships which they enjoy; if this is the case, it would provide us with an unusual, contemporary instance of new tradition being kept below the verbal level but still worked out of day-by-day living by the harsh experience and non-postponably everyday personal judgments of a very large number of people.

It is even possible to take the menacing Communist militarist, Lin Piao, at the literal meaning of his proclamation of everlasting war and to ask in return, who is going to win? Will it be the Communist ideology which promises much war and suffering, with material gain and historical vindication at the end of it? Will it be the Atlantic ideologies of Britain, France, Germany, Scandinavia and America, which find the Western world reasonably satisfying as it now is? Or will it be native ideologies, one for each country or for each group of countries, which will seek indigenous nationalism and try to find the best in democracy, free enterprise and socialism while confronting the crisis of their own culture in Ghana or Tanzania or either of the Congos? We can even say, "You know the answer, Lin Piao, because you are a Chinese even though you are a Communist. Communism cannot wholly subvert nationalism. If you wish to convert Latin America, Asia and Africa into the 'countryside' of war against the 'city' of Europe and Japan, you will fail."

And we can carry on our own dialogue without Lin Piao by asking, "What must the new ideologies be like if they are to carry Africa, Asia and Latin America to internationally safe and nationally proud goals?" The West, which exists? The Communist world, which is obsolescent? or Sunyatsenism, which has already provided balance, proportion and guides for the problems of revolution in our time?

One could end this speech by simply saying that Sun Yat-sen, fifty to sixty years ahead of time, anticipated most of the problems which are going to be encountered by the developing nations between the present year and, say, A.D. 2015. This is not the case because Sun Yat-sen was magical or mysteriously superior to other people; it is, instead, a reflection of the historical fact that *much of Asia underwent in the nineteenth century what Africa is now meeting in the twentieth* while Latin America, having met many of its problems very successfully in the nineteenth century, faces a repetition and recrudescence of crisis because the local institutions of independence and non-colonial ownership

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUNYATSENISM

have not been enough to meet the pressure of a world-wide revolution in literacy and communications, another world-wide revolution in technology and expectations, and the concomitant pressure of rising population. Few Americans have ever had the pain and disappointment of feeling themselves to be citizens of a proud, backward country, yet this was the central emotional fact which surrounded Sun Yat-sen most of his life, and which infuse his principles with their great sympathy, poignancy and potential relevance to the future revolutions of Asia, Africa, Latin America and Oceania.

Let us turn back to Sunyatsenism itself and see what Dr. Sun has to say about *nationalism* (remembering that it is his own term, *min-tsu-chu-i* and not the mere dictionary rendering of *kuo-chia-chu-i*.) Dr. Sun himself held that nations were to be distinguished by the five criteria of blood, life, language, religion, habits and mores.² He omits "native soil" or "ancestral ground", which some theorists of nationality include among the fundamentals of nationality. By "life" he meant the ecological background of a nation, rather than its genetic stockpile. Take his standard strictly.

How many "nations" of Africa today meet these requirements sharply, so that they consist of one "racial type," approximately speaking, with one ecology, one language, and one set of habits? Furthermore, the hypothetically ideal nation should include all of its own people, none of another people, and thus represent the ideal of national self-fulfillment. How many Africa states meet his requirement? Four, perhaps, and not one of them perfectly. These are the nations:

Somalia, because it meets the first, second, third, fourth and fifth requirements of *min-tsu-chu-i* but does not meet the implicit requirement of having one and all of one nationality within a single geographic area. And from what does Somalia, a poor but admirable nation, suffer? From the very frustration of *min-tsu* of which Sun Yat-sen spoke. Many of their people are in French Djibouti, Northeast Ethiopia and Northern Kenya, so that this new nation, with so much promise, has to be born fighting and be doomed to struggle from the very beginning.

Malta, if one can consider it either African or a nation, because the people have a language, related to Arabic but written in the Roman alphabet, which

2. First lecture on Nationalism.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUNYATSENISM

is unique to themselves. They meet the requirements of one, two three, four and five, but Dr. Sun never said how small a nation might be and still be a nation. Can one admit that Malta is a nation and deny that the Chinese city-state of Singapore is potentially a nation too? Notice that Sun Yat-sen is much closer to historical reality, though he spoke over forty years ago, than is the general assembly of the United Nations, which is not yet sure about such borderline cases as the Maldives, Tristan da Cunha, Malta, and Singapore.

Third, the Malagasy Republic, where one ("blood") applies to the dominant part of the population, and the others apply to almost the entire people.

Fourth, the Republic of South Africa, where the Sunyatsenist criteria apply brilliantly if one excludes the natives, excludes the Asiatics, excludes the coloured, excludes the English-speaking European and leaves only the Afrikaans-speaking Boers to represent the nation as a whole. What pathology of nationalism is this, which gives a part of a population the whole virtue of an obstinate and brave nationalism but leaves all the rest of the nation out of the process?

And what of the other African states today, whose representatives throng the floors and corridors of the U.N. building in New York, and who may be called on some day to vote in judgment on China? Is there a single additional nation which would qualify by all the Sunyatsenist criteria?

Not one, we may suppose.

The Arab nations lose because they are parts of a single Arab world, divided into political fractions, even though Gamal Abdel Nasser may call Egypt by the new name of the "United Arab Republic." Most of the African trans-Arabic nations are combinations of tribes, speaking different languages and having radically contrasts within their own populations if one refers to Dr. Sun's five factors. Outside the few Moslem states, factor three is a divisive element in all of them.

Does this mean that Dr. Sun was wrong? Or, alternatively, does it mean that Dr. Sun was right and the African nations therefore in a hopeless position? Not at all. Neither case obtains. It is possible for Dr. Sun to be right in the formulation of a sound theoretical case, applicable to his own China, but to expect that *min-tsu-chu-i* would work out in different ways in different historical contexts. After all, Dr. Sun himself knew the United States of America very well and he could never have supposed the United States, with its stark racial contrasts, was an *unsuccessful* example of modern nationalism in the world.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUNYATSENISM

The future application of *min-tsu* (nationalism in the special Sunyatsenist sense) as opposed to *kuo-chia-chu-i* (nationalism in the international dictionary sense) will not be found in expecting other countries to follow the example or even the admonitions of China. After all, China is the Largest country in the world and the most continuous of existing civilizations. Few others could match it as a race-nation in the special sense of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, although the Japanese might come closer than we often think.

China must not be taken as the sole expression of Sunyatsenism. It is no use holding out to African or Asian states an exemplar which their leaders, their intellectuals, and their popular activists could not possibly follow. The attribution of the Chinese race-nation to Tanzania or Pakistan would be an absurdity, but there are other aspects of Dr. Sun's teaching of nationalism which are as fresh and important today as they were sixty years ago when he adumbrated them in Brussels or thirty-one years ago when he outlined them in Canton.

Reference must be made to the intimate connection which he made between the *three* principles as the expression of a single basic and dynamic drive. Without nationalism there could be no continuity, no self-respect for the race, the culture, the language or for the individual who lived within these forces. But without democracy there could be no final fulfillment of nationalism.

Democracy is not the flat voting procedure of the mere dictionary term *min-chu-chu-i* but the ringing affirmation of the "power of the folk themselves" in *min-ch'üan*. If the people become free through *min-tsu*, they then express themselves through *min-ch'üan*. The devices of the four powers of the people over the government (election, recall, initiative and referendum) and of the five rights of the government over the people (executive, legislative, judicial, exami-native and control) are important for Chinese culture and for all future Chinese governments, but they do not compare with the organic unity which Dr. Sun gave to democracy when it is bonded with nationalism and livelihood.

The greatest European scholar on the work of Sun Yat-sen, the Jesuit father, Paschal M. d'Elia, tried to convey this idea when he called the basic teachings of Sun Yat-sen the "triple demism", reluctantly abandoning the Latin neologism "tridemism," even though the latter rang closer to *San min-chu-i*, in his tuned sinological ear, than did the former. He saw what most Westerners and many Chinese have missed—that the unity of Dr. Sun's thought was more important than its wonderful diversity.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUNYATSENISM

Look within *min-ch'üan*. What do you see? There are whole treasures of democratic thought for which nations cry out and receive no reply. The distinction between the making of a choice by the people and the capacity of the people to carry it out is fundamental—*ch'üan*, or capacity, versus *nêng*, or power—and yet the right of the people of Korea to criticize technical treaties on Japanese financial relations, or the right of the African peoples to program the details of technical advancement, are set against a background of frustration or tragedy when the people encroach on their own power, when the people themselves risk democracy or encroach on democracy by failing to follow the distinctions between their *power* to make a choice and the *capacity* to make technical decisions. Sunyatsenism could comfort and lead them toward real democracy by teaching both the leaders and the people how to discriminate between the decision-wanter and the decision-maker, not to mention the anonymous, forgotten decision-framer who (given power by the sheer pressure of time imposed on the leaders) often tells cabinets and chiefs of state what they can or cannot decide at any given moment.

The present speaker is not proposing to reproach the Kuomintang for its mistakes and its failures on the mainland. The Party Chief (*Tsung-ts'ai*) and the Central Reform Committee of the Party have done that long ago. The present speaker can reproach the party and the people of the Republic of China for failing to share with many other nations a particular kind of political doctrine which might really help them to move forward. How might Ghana not have been improved by an acceptance of the doctrine of "the three stages of revolution".

Lastly, a word about livelihood, or *min-shêng*.

Dr. Sun was always a pioneer. When Dr. Sun, in *The International Development of China* proposed a heavy circulation of capital from the advanced capitalist powers to the massive underdeveloped nation of China, he was laughed out of court. At that time General George Catlett Marshall, who was to propound the "Marshall plan" was a recent cadet with no idea of economics. United States policy was then directing its efforts toward obtaining war debts owed by its allies.

Just as Dr. Sun knew the realities of socialism better than did the socialists, he knew some of the major functions of capitalism better than did the capitalists or their economic experts.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF SUNYATSENISM

Alone in the whole world, he foreshadowed aid programs which are now followed by America, Britain, France, Germany, Japan, the Soviet Union, the Republic of China and even the Communist regime in Peip'ing.

His application of *min-shêng* in the ethical and practical field opened the way for the blessings of public effort without promising the fearful price which doctrinaire Communism charges for a wholly-public economy. You yourselves in the Republic of China are a demonstration of what he anticipated.

Treat Sunyatsenism, therefore, as a treasure to be shared with the future, not as a mere archive to be put in a glass case with the art works of the past. Take pride in the fact that Dr. Sun and his teaching have not only led China and not only hold out the "last best hope" for a Chinese civilization on mainland China. His teachings are even larger. They are a part of the inheritance of mankind. Dr. Sun was a thousand years ahead of the village in which he was born. He was fifty or seventy years ahead of the best Westerners who taught him. He was a demonstration that individual human talent cannot really be predicted, foreshadowed, prevented or encouraged. His capacities were not only great: they were enormous in their span. All these abilities came from an ordinary Chinese boy born in an ordinary Chinese village in a relatively poor part of China. Now he is no longer Chinese or at least, he should not be.

On his hundredth birthday he is a world figure, as important to mankind as he is to China. He is a part of the future to everyone in the world. In the exportation and the diffusion of Sunyatsenism you have the chance to strengthen democracy everywhere, to do honor to a great man who was born a hundred years ago, and ultimately to do honor to yourselves.

The Chinese Communists have successfully achieved every obsolete value of nineteenth-century Europe. They have accomplished every strategy which out-of-date and forgotten generals once preached, for ruinous or hopeless revolutionary or imperialist wars—wars which destroyed their own goals as the victories moved forward. The Communists have the present; they have achieved great and useless things. By their intellectual cul-de-sac, by their doctrinal senility and hatefulness, they have become the deadliest possible enemies of their own regime. They pay lip-serve to Sun Yat-sen, but they dare not understand him, preach him, teach him.

You are the orthodox heirs of Sunyatsenism and only you can help to put the theory of three principles back into its full dynamic role as an ideology for the immediate and future service of mankind.