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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TRAN DUC THAO AND HIS PHILOSOPHICAL WORK

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ABSTRACT

Prof. Tran Van Giau insisted that "In Vietnam, my colleagues and I only study and teach on philosophy but Mr. Tran Duc Thao is the one philosopher (Phạm Thành Hưng). This article introduces the outstanding contribution in terms of philosophy and the famous work of Professor Tran Duc Thao.

Key words: Tran Duc Thao, Philosophy, Piece of philosophy.

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INTRODUCTION

Prof. Tran Duc Thao (1917 - 1993) was born in Song Thap commune, Tu Son district, Bac Ninh province, Vietnam. He had excellent grades in highschool then study at Hanoi Law University. Later on, he passed the admission with very high ranking and went to France to study in Pedagogical University of Ulm City (École Normale Supérieure d'Ulm), Paris (1939), one of France's most prestigious schools at that time. In 1942, he successfully defended his graduate thesis, majoring in philosophy on "Method of Husserl's phenomenology." A year later, he received first class Master of Philosophy. At that time, some newspapers in France and Indochina considered Mr Tran Duc Thao, a Vietnamese who graduated at first place in a master course at the Pedagogical University of Ulm City as a strange and rare phenomenon of extraordinary talent. After receiving his master's degree, he became a graduate student at the Sorbonne University with the research on Husserl's phenomenology. Promised to President Ho Chi Minh, he completed his doctoral thesis in a hurry then returned to Vietnam in late 1951, early 1952.

Political activity and scientific research of Mr Tran Duc Thao in France

In the period of World War II, Fascism threatened to destroy human civilization, Western philosophers in accordance with their classical idealistic thinking, Hegel and Husserl were determined to be the ones that are able to create new pathway of innovation in socialism.

Therefore, Tran Duc Thao began to study on the two authors. In 1944, he was elected to be a political presenter in the Indochinese immigrant Congress in Avignon. And then was elected as Member of the Board of Indochina representative in France, in charge of political affairs. He wrote many propaganda leaflets on Viet Minh and the Government of Ho Chi Minh advocacy (August and September, 1945) then had been detained in the Prison de La Santé together with 50 other overseas Vietnamese (October, 1945). In the cell, the Professor wrote the Problems of Indochina article condemning the newspapers which slandered him. The article was published in February, 1946 by Les Temps Modernes magazine. At this time, he realized the fierce contradictions between colonies and capitalism – imperialism that led to Marxism - Leninism. In 1946, when France again invaded Vietnam, the professor protested by quitting from the Centre national de la recherche scientifique. In the late of 1946 and early of 1947, the professor continued to write the posts on Les Temps Modernes magazine and journal La Pensée to refute slanderous allegations of Claude Lefort Trotskyists for Viet Minh and the Party of Indochina, protest colonialist aggression for aggression against Vietnam. He wrote his first book "The philosophy has been going to where?", which was published by Minh Tan, Paris in 1950. He was paid the very high royalties, and he continued receiving the royalties in advance to write another book titled: "Phénoménologie et Matérialisme dialectique" (phenomenology and dialectical materialism). At this time and the next years, Tran Duc Thao became the professor of the Pedagogical University of Ulm City and worked for the Sèvres Pedagogical College as lecturer to make presentations about phenomenology Edmund Husserl, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel GOERG. Tran Duc Thao is one of researchers who has the in-depth study on the issue of human, direct research works F.Hegel and has deep understanding about this

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philosopher, so he was invited to discuss about human problems, especially about F.Hegel in Germany, USSR (former) and Hungary. A memorable event of Tran Duc Thao in the year 1949 - 1950 is his debate with Jean - Paul Sartre, the world-famous philosopher about existentialism and Marxism. J. Sartre said that Marxism only has political and social value, its philosophy value is negligible. Because Marx did not solve the problem of consciousness. J. Sartre questioned why it can have a different sense of basic material and physical opposition?

Since then, J. Sartre zoning proposals affected, freezing Marxism within certain political, social, and philosophical issues and valued it only in existentialism. Professor Tran Duc Thao prove the opposite and said that Marxism must be respected both in terms of philosophy. In the fifth debate between J. Sartre and Tran Duc Thao, since J. Sartre did not know about the book "Experience & Feedback" (Erfahrung und Urteil) is mainly the unpublished work of Husserl and the group D, the argument from the fundamental problem of philosophy is the issue the relationship between consciousness and physical factors which caused the halt of primitive birth. J. Sartre agreed with Tran Duc Thao is the two sides will not recount this debate. However, later, J. Sartre has put the blame of that failed debate to Tran Duc Thao. Facing to the situation that nobody protect himself, Tran Duc Thao decided to sue J. Sartre about his arbitrarily cutting off the debate, and challenges J. Sartre to publish the shorthand text of the debate. However, the students of J. Sartre kept silence and ended the hoax float about this debate. Since then, Tran Duc Thao gave up existentialism, move from phenomenology to dialectical materialism. His transformation was shown in his works Phenomenology and Dialectical materialism, was published by Minh Tan Publish House (France) in January 8/1951. Later the book was translated and reprinted in the United States.

The achievements in scientific research in Vietnam Tran Duc Thao

Returning to Vietnam in 1952, he was assigned to study two factories and the situation of schools in Viet Bac, to make the recommendations to the Party Central Committee and the Ministry of Education; to translate "The fight is sure to achieve victory" by Truong Chinh into French. From 1953 to 1958, he participated in the re-education, and reformation in land in Phú Thọ; worked as a Commissioner of Literature – History – Geography Board, the predecessor of the Committee of Social Sciences Vietnam, then worked as the Dean of History Faculty, Hanoi General University. At this time, the professor had written many articles for journals: Culture - History - Geography, University of Literature Pedagogical Education Department. Especially, in 1958-1965, he studied the classic problem of Marxism – Leninism, wrote many articles and books which were published and printed by many journals and pushish houses for example: The rational kernel in the Hegelian dialectic (La Pensée, 1965); The Movement of the Signal as Primitive Forms of Organoleptic Authentication (La Pensée, 1966); From Orienting Actions to Typical Images (published 3 times in LaPensée, 1969-1970); Interpretation of the Origin of Consciousnes (Éditions Sociales, 1973); From phenomenology to a materialist dialectics of knowledge (published 2 times in La nouvelle critique, January 1975 and September 1975); The Movement of the Signal as Primitive Forms of Organoleptic Authentication (published 2 times in La Pensée May 1981 and Jan 1983); logical dialectics in the capitalist development process (La Pensée July 1984); The

birth of the first human (La Pensée December 1986) etc. But it will be flawed without mentioning the works of philosophical lectures Tran Duc Thao. A French philosopher, Lucien Sève, consider him as "a Vietnamese philosopher whose lectures left its mark on a whole generation of intellectuals in France". The project History of Pre-Marx's Ideas, presented in 12 parts by Tran Duc Thao, including history of Pre-history ideas to the stage of F. Hegel's philosophy, is one of the major research projects with high scientific value. In his last years, he had two works which are regarded as the pinnacle of dialectical – humanistic materialism. They are: Studies on Dialectics and The logic of modern living. Tran Duc Thao's Works have been translated and reprinted in many countries including UK, USA, Spain, Hungary, Japan ... For instance, the book Interpretation of the Origin of Consciousnes by Tran Duc Thao first published in Paris in 1973 gained remarkable succeeds in France and other European Countries.

Since then, Tran Duc Thao said that "in the specific activity relationships, interactions, revolutionary men are class men of the working class and working people. The revolutionary man, as another, is the man of the human being's common doctrine; people in general with universal ideal values head towards humanity's future. He also criticized the sect of "no human reasoning" (according to the common sense of mankind) when saying that there is only the class and the man of caste, and that there is no human to human as common sense basic humans, ie apart from the living nature, human beings cannot be defined with any basic social characteristics to all mankind; this deadlocks ethnic issues, creating artificial barriers in reasonings about proletarian revolution. He cited the famous quote from Karl Marx: "The nature of man is full of social relations" (Theses VI on Feuerbach). The issues that he addressed in this work is still an evergreen topic, especially in the construction of the Constitution and the current policy.

Conclusion

With these works, it can be said that "Professor Tran Duc Thao is a great philosopher of the century" (Huy Can); "an eminent philosopher of Vietnam and the world" (Vu Khieu). However, in everyday life, he is discreet, thoughtful, simple, and pure. All his life was devoted to science. In a short business trip in France, unfortunately he was ill and breathed his last at eight past ten on 24 April, 1993 at Broussais Hospital, Paris, at the age of seventy-six. Professor Tran Duc Thao was gone, but the works and of a talented philosopher of the twentieth century will remain forever.

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