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AN OUTLINE HISTORY



CHINA STUDIES

# AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

(I)

Xiao Jiefu and Li Jinquan



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS



# An Outline History of Chinese Philosophy

( I )

*by*

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FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

First Edition 2008

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ISBN 978-7-119-02719-7

© Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, China, 2008

Published by Foreign Languages Press  
24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing 100037, China  
<http://www.flp.com.cn>

Distributed by China International Book Trading Corporation  
35 Chegongzhuang Xilu, Beijing 100044, China  
P.O. Box 399, Beijing, China

*Printed in the People's Republic of China*

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## Foreword

In ancient China, there emerged treatises and books in which the authors made comments on the academic thought of the past ages. For instance, *Zhuangzi • Under Heaven* by Zhuang Zhou (c. 369-286), *A Treatise on the Major Ideas of the Six Schools* by Sima Tan (?-110 BC), and *Academic Cases of the Song and Yuan Dynasties* and *Academic Cases of the Ming Confucians*, both edited by Huang Zongxi (1610-1695). These works, since they summarize and analyze the sources and courses of various schools of thought from different ideological angles under the influence of the demands of different historical periods, are of reference value for present-day research in the field of the history of philosophy. However, this field was not regarded as a separate area of study until modern times.

In the West, modern bourgeois philosophy emerged several centuries ago by casting off the straitjacket of religious dogma. Contacts between China and the West led to a similar tendency in China, where independent thought had long been fettered by the Confucian orthodoxy. The pioneers of the study of ancient Chinese philosophy and its history were Zhang Taiyan (1869-1936), Liu Shipei (1884-1919), Liang Qichao (1873-1929) and some other scholars. Around the time of the May 4th Movement (1919), *An Outline History of Chinese Philosophy (Part One)* by Hu Shi (1891-1962) and *A History of Chinese Philosophy* by Feng Youlan (1895-1990) were published. In addition, Xiao Gongquan (1897-1981), Fan Shoukang (1894-1983), Tang Junyi (1909-1978), Qian Mu (1895-1990) and other scholars wrote on the subject. The results of their research prove to be great steps forward compared with the ancient academic histories and treatises. Now the history of Chinese philosophy is an independent discipline, which is making rapid advances. Since the 1930s, the works of Lu Zhenyu (1900-1980), Du Guoyang (1889-1961), Hou Wailu (1903-1987) and others have enabled the theory of historical materialism and the characteristics of the development of the history of

Chinese philosophy to be combined in a preliminary way. This laid the foundation stone for the subject to be constructed into a true science. Progress has been made in the following aspects: the reorganization of the historical data, the discussion of the problems of methodology, the discovery of important archaeological documents, the accumulation of research findings and the preliminary establishment of the scientific system. Besides, some new spheres of research have been opened up.

Firstly, in the writing and compiling of the present volume, we have taken "the dialectical developmental history of philosophical cognition" as the object of our research. As an academic discipline, Chinese philosophy has long suffered from problems of indefinite scope and unclear targets. As a result, the history of Chinese philosophy is mixed with elements of intellectual history and even cultural history, including politics, ethics, jurisprudence, religion and education. In order to bring order to such confusion, we think that a history of Chinese philosophy should focus on the task of reflecting man's cognition of the general laws of Nature, society and ideological trends in a rational way. Therefore, data on ancient and modern philosophers and their thoughts have been carefully sifted, and material of a summing-up nature has been extracted for this book. Included herein are ideas on the essence of the objective world, the possibility of man's cognition and reformation of the objective world, and the ways of such cognition and reformation. Diverse philosophers and thinkers have had divergences and contradictions on some philosophical problems. The nature of their contradictions and the features of their mutual transformation are analyzed.

Secondly, we lay stress on the "spiral structure" of philosophical development, and efforts have been made to bring to light the theoretical contributions which different kinds of philosophical thought have made in the history of the development of Chinese philosophy. Since the 1950s, people in China have become accustomed to the application of materialism and idealism, dialectics and metaphysics as "a pair of methods" to explain the history of Chinese philosophy. But such thinking ignores the fact that all philosophical ideas throughout history are indispensable links in the development of Chinese philosophical wisdom, and all have rational contents if judged from the angle of the history of cognition of the Chinese nation. Efforts have been made in this book to explain the history of Chinese philosophy by means of the "spiral structure" of its



development. Our approach is as follows: Generally speaking, there is a starting point of each and every stage of a philosophical movement, and a terminal point as well. From the raising of problems to the unfolding of contradictions, evolution of categories, progress of controversy and finally the summing up of thoughts, there is a logical process from head to tail. If there are rational elements in the thoughts of Chinese philosophers of whatever school, we affirm them to the degree they deserve.

Thirdly, a key point is that methodologically we persist in the principle of the integration of history and logic. We think that research into the history of philosophy first of all requires a sense of history. We should not adopt a non-historical attitude, and make any subjective or willful explanation of diverse philosophical thoughts. Therefore, in this book we lay stress on the integration of history and logic in two aspects. On the one hand, starting from historical facts, we take the actual historical process of philosophical development for the starting point, grounds and basis of the logic development of philosophical categories. On the other hand, it is necessary to discover the various links in the logical progress in which concepts and categories evolved, developed and finally formed a sequence from start to finish. In order to reach such a goal, we must see through the superficial phenomena of history, and get at the essence, namely, observe in what concrete manner the philosophical contradictions acted in a historical context. In this book, great attention has been paid to describing the main categories in the history of Chinese philosophy. They are, for example, "Heaven and Man," "being and nonbeing," "reason and vital force," "the Way and the vessels," "the mind and things," "form and spirit," "one and two," "to know and to act," and so on. From these main categories we bring to light the features, laws, original ideas and essentials of the development of Chinese philosophy.

Fourthly, the chapters and sections of the book are of course edited chronologically, but there are key points in each and every chapter. There are two focuses of research, each containing a number of key chapters. As for the latter, they are the last three chapters of Part I and all the chapters of Part II. These chapters constitute our first focus of research. All the chapters of Part V constitute our second focus of research.

In the Spring and Autumn (770-476 BC) and Warring States (475-221 BC) periods of Chinese history, the emperors of the Zhou Dynasty were virtually powerless, and a number of states contended for hegemony.