

<<中国古代哲学批评史>>

图书基本信息

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前言

Some years ago , I was asked by the publisher to prepare a book for Western readers on the history of philosophy in China. Ever since accepting this invitation. I have pondered how the work should be done and in what form it should be presented. On this topic there were innumerable works and papers in circulation. And foreign works (including those by Chinese scholars) in this field are already more than one might expect. So where should I begin my task and how should I deal with it ?

Systematic theoretical thinking has existed in China for more than twenty-five centuries , since Confucius , undoubtedly one of the earliest and most brilliant thinkers of world civilization. The late Prof. Feng Youlan summarized it into two periods : the period of the philosophers and that of the scholastics. I regard this division as one of Prof. Feng ' S keenest insights , though it was the same path taken by Western intellectual history. The antiquity of the West was an epoch of classical civilization. while in the Middle Ages all that was entitled learning was scholastic study , and all thought was brought forth in the form of scholastic exegesis. This mediaeval feature was the same both in China and the west. The sole difference lay merely in the fact that China was in need of a modern age. But when considering traditional thought , the classical age certainly played a more important role than the scholasticism of the middle ages. Hence it was more worthy of our concern.

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内容概要

Philosophical ideas of different schools such as Confucian , Taoist , Legalist , Mohist , Nominalist , Military Strategist , Yin and Yang , and Agriculturist in periods prior to the Qin Dynasty (221-202 B.C.) are expounded and analyzed against their times in the book. Advantages and disadvantages of different theoretical constructs and their social and historical functions are also investigated from a critical perspective. In addition , the book presents the authors personal views on the category of Chinese philosophy and the relations between traditional Chinese thoughts and modern sciences.

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作者简介

He Zhaowu is Professor Emeritus in the Department of History at Tsinghua University , Beijing. His many publications include *Essays in Critique of Historical Reason and Reflections on the History of Intellectual Intercourses Between China and the West*. He is one of the CO-authors of *A General Intellectual History of China* and *A History of Neo-Confucianism in the Song and Ming Dynasties* (with Prof. HOU Wailu as the Editor-in-Chief) . He has also translated many western classics into Chinese, including the works of Kant, Pascal, Rousseau , Edmund Burke and Condorcet. Peng Gang is Associate Professor in the Department of History at Tsinghua University, Beijing. He is the author of *Spirit, Freedom and History : A Study of the Philosophy of History of Benedetto Croce* and *The Narrative Turn ; Recent Developments in Contemporary Western Historical Theories*.

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The "second test" of the Mohists, i.e. "the senses of hearing and seeing of the common people" should be recognized as bringing some positive factors into their epistemological theory, because it afforded proper room for our experience, from which all our knowledge is derived.

But when considered in synthesis with the first and the third tests, its validity may appear to some extent less assured. Without doubt, all our knowledge comes from experience. But experience alone does not lead to knowledge. Experience provides only raw materials which only after a process of our mental manipulation can result in a definite form of knowledge. Pure empiricism or knowledge through experience alone can never be tenable in any sense. Thus the second test of the Mohists had to resort to the first and the third tests for its availability and validity. The first test is wholly a priori by its very nature as shown above. The third test means that a truth should be tested by its political effects. Of course, the political effects are their "benefit to the country and the people," as the Mohists would claim. But what exactly constitutes the "benefit to the country and the people" would depend after all on how one would like to define or interpret it. Each person may have his own view and his own interpretation. The Mohists have their own views on happiness and on the value of human life, as stated in the foregoing paragraphs. There is a peculiar kind of utilitarianism which can hardly be accepted by most people, for it would benefit only those who share the same idea of happiness that the Mohists did. If happiness be accepted as a common measure of the benefit of any policy, then this idea of happiness should have to be common to all. But if every one has an idea of happiness in his own way, then purporting to use happiness as a common measure would come to nothing. Furthermore, if one could be happy only with the provision that one must first have one's idea of happiness converted and recast so as to match others, then it would rather be a matter of ideological remolding and reforming than a pursuit of happiness in the ordinary sense. We find in the Mohist doctrine a strange mixture of empiricism, asceticism, utilitarianism and transcendentalism in a fashion grotesque and impracticable, which went so far as to even approach the opposite of itself. These inherent shortcomings helped to explain why the Mohist school was so ephemeral and short-lived. Its utilitarianism was pushed to such extremes as to throw out all things that would not bring forth immediate and direct utility (e.g. music). A man under such circumstances, where utility is carried to such an extreme, would not be a human being but a mere instrument that could hardly enjoy happiness in any sense. An end may perhaps justify means, but means can never justify an end. A theory like the Mohists professed, when extended far enough, would turn to its own opposite. A truth overstated or overdone may run into absurdity. The Mohist teaching and practice would tend toward negating precisely the ultimate end which they emphatically professed to serve. Bees and ants toiling and moiling their whole life are mere instruments, and they can hardly be said of having any intrinsic value in their lives. But human life ought to be otherwise; it has its inalienable value, intrinsic in and proper to itself. It is not and ought not to be a mere means whose value exists simply and entirely in its utility to serve some end. Otherwise, where does the difference between a human being and an ant or bee lie, in respect to their morality as well as to their nobility? For humans, we ought to assign a human use, and not treat them simply as tools. Consider the bees and the ants laboring year in and year out for the benefit of their community, far more dedicated, concentrated and earnest than human beings, never a moment for their individual enjoyment——is this the highest perfection of the Mohist ideal?

The Mohists, it appears, lacked a sense of any humanistic value which alone could constitute the core of human life. A human being is more than a means to some utilitarian end. He is an end in himself and by himself. Man is an instrument only conditionally, by no means an instrument alone. He has to labor in order to earn his living, but he is not a machine existing simply to earn that living. If he were only such then life would be worthless. In the last analysis, the highest state of life the Mohists preached would precisely reduce human beings to plain instruments. Such a utopia, once realized, would be a state in which all existed for one, while the one exists for none, or rather a fascist regime in ancient dress. This is just where a demand of unconditional dedication would lead. Some persuasive talkers may say that the value of life exists in wholehearted consecration.

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Perhaps so. But this can never be unconditional , that is a man cannot and should not consecrate everything of his.

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编辑推荐

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