



# Historical Traditions and Contemporary Philosophy of the East

## Исторические традиции и современная философия Востока

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### Contemporary Philosophy of the East: Tradition and Innovations

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### Современная философия Востока: традиции и инновации

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To present the philosophy of the East in its glorious tradition and the current state is a task as ambitious as it is challenging. The first question arising is: what kind of East are we talking about? To answer this, the issue focuses on the

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philosophical problems of the three major regions of the East: the Arab East, India, and China.

The general inquiry of what constitutes contemporary Arab philosophy is still in the bosom of political debate and scholarly discussion. We may speak and agree on the existence of an authentic contemporary Arab philosophy. However, such a judgment is still close to a broad definition unless the specificity of this philosophy, its problems and creative energy, and then its position in the system of contemporary Arab and international thought and culture, are defined. Hence, the prospects for its existence and development.

Arab philosophy has a long-lasting tradition. Along with the Ancient Greek's, it formed a liaison in the history of world philosophy. In the past, it begot great systems and personalities that still influence the flow of knowledge, the relevance of problems, and the intellectual taste of contemporary Arab thinkers, intellectuals, and researchers. For philosophy and its traditions, it is natural to remain an essential element of historical and cultural consciousness.

However, Arab-Islamic philosophy went down after the collapse of its major political and cultural centers (Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, and Cordoba). It began to awaken at the times of the "modern Renaissance." For the most part, it was a patchwork of contemporary European philosophical schools. Hence its various and varied influences, which have directly and indirectly taken root in modern Arab philosophical thought, making it in most cases either an imitation or a repetition of what is found in European philosophical schools. Nevertheless, the rudiments of an independent rise of a particular vision have accumulated in historical condition. Here the modern *European school of philosophy* and the old traditional Arab-Islamic school coexisted in various forms of collision and harmony. Each has its path in the process of modern Arab philosophy, which has not yet been definitively determined.

This situation can be seen in the number and quality of thematic problems that have found themselves in the focus of the poignant Arab philosophy's direct and indirect interest. However, the restricted outlines have become apparent, particularly because the position and place of *Western philosophy* are starting to weaken and are losing an important place in contemporary Arab philosophical thought. Instead, the quantity and quality of problems related to the history and reality of the Arab, Islamic and global world are changing.

All this indicates gradual atrophy of problems and a state of imitation and innovation. Instead, issues of *fate* and *future* of Arab philosophy emerge. This situation can be seen in the growing interest in philosophy, its ideas, and methods among all the major branches of contemporary Arab thought. It is a dynamic and contradictory process. Some of its peculiarities can be revealed in the articles in this issue centering on Arab philosophy. Although it is an *appetizer*, so to say, one can still find signs of this trend. Hence the importance of the participation of contemporary Arab scholars in such an aspect.

The current issue boasts four research papers by professional philosophy professors from Egypt and Morocco. Among them is an article by Professor Mahmoud Mohammed Ali, Head of the Department of Philosophy at Assiut University *Mansour Fahmy, Pioneer of Islamic Feminism in Modern Egyptian Thought*. The author reveals the theoretical, practical, historical, and cultural value of Mansour Fahmy's (1886—1959) writings on feminism, freedom, justice, and equality. Professor Mahmoud Mohammed Ali reveals Mansour Fahmy's ideas and approaches to this problem, considering the specificity of the era at the beginning of the twentieth century and the traditions of national culture. There was then a heated debate, particularly in Egypt.

The Egyptian researcher Hamzawy Hamed Hassan investigates the personality of Abdalla Al-Nadeem (1842—1896), an Egyptian thinker who in his intellectual work dealt with various urgent problems of the time in Egypt and the Arab world, especially problems of Egyptian patriotism, problems of civilization and progress and their significance for Egypt in the modern era.

Two other articles scrutinize the personality and work of the Moroccan philosopher Al-Jabri (1935—2010). The first paper by Professor of Philosophy Mohammad Moustakin is devoted to the personality and work of Al-Ghazali in the works of Al-Jabri. Professor Moustakin seeks to systematize and probe Al-Jabri's takes and positions on the subject based on Al-Ghazali's works and his influence on Arab and Islamic culture.

At the same time, the work of researcher Lachkar Mohammed is intended to show the historical sequence of Al-Jabri's writings so that one can see the overall picture of his philosophy and his intellectual work as a whole.

Two exciting studies represent the rubric of Indian philosophy. Purushottama Bilimoria's article presents an analytical view of the philosophy of Bimal K. Matilal (1935—1991), a distinguished Indian philosopher who studied classical Indian logic at Calcutta University's Sanskrit College, then continued his academic philosophical career at Oxford and studied at Harvard with Quine and D. Ingalls Sr. from 1962—1965. The author draws attention to the unusual combination of Western analytical philosophy and Indian philosophy in Matilal's philosophy of language: his epistemological realism, which can be considered a continuation of Wittgenstein and Quine's critique of *private language*, also inherits and develops the logical ideas of *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika* and criticizes the ontological assumptions of Buddhist logic. The intersections of the philosophical traditions of East and West are even more pronounced in Matilal's rational moral pluralism. For instance, he uses examples from classical Indian epic as arguments in support of his ethical position: what cannot be expressed logically and discursively can be shown through aesthetic and poetic devices.

L.I. Titlin's article offers a new English translation of a fragment from *Questions of Milinda*. The author examines how this non-canonical Buddhist treatise deals with the nature of Self and debates with the reductionist interpretation of Mark Siderits. The author draws an interesting parallel between the *Avyākṛta* and

the Kantian notion of antinomy and demonstrates that the question of the existence of Self is considered in the text in at least two aspects, in the perspective of the so-called "two truths", which indicates the logical similarity of the treatment of the Self in this text with the later argumentation of Vasubandhu.

The formation of ancient Chinese philosophy from the pre-philosophical worldview culture has an important place in Russian and foreign historical-philosophical science. The scholarly and cultural mission of "foreigners" writing on philosophical thought contributes to a broader cultural and scholarly vision of contemporary philosophical ideas and research and helps to establish opportunities for collaborative creative work. Although there is no "foreignness" in knowledge, for it is the essence of the human being.

The Chinese term *Hao Xue* (analogous to the ancient Greek term *philosophy*) and the very concept of philosophy originate in the culture of Tao. The Tao is a central category of all philosophical thought in China. Based on the analysis of ancient primary sources, we define Chinese philosophy as a restoration of the harmony of Tao culture based on the structural-functional archetype. Stemming from the autochthonous Tao culture, Chinese philosophy, dispensed with any borrowings, developed its names and concepts. It has its distinctive features.

The journal's section also presents a solid block of research on contemporary issues of Chinese philosophy. The analysis and evaluation of various aspects of ancient Chinese philosophical texts utilize space in the section. Thus, A.Y. Blazhkina's *Philosophical Value of the Confucian Treatise "Kong-Zi Jia Yu"* touches on ongoing discussions about the text's authenticity and notes those problems in the ancient Chinese treatise, which even today have enduring theoretical significance for the history of world sinology. The author rightly complains that this written monument of early Confucianism is still little known to many readers, despite its academic and universal value.

Another section's article by Stezhenskaya L.V. *A Propos the Failed First Publication of the Russian Translation of Shu Jing*, is also related to the setting of the themes and problems of Confucian philosophy. The article deals with the history of the publication of the ancient Chinese classic, the philosophical meaning of which, in the opinion of Stezhenskaya L.V., lies in the fact that the addresses of rulers and the advice of subjects contained in it were actively used in Confucian literature as a reference to an authoritative source to confirm the truth of later ethical and socio-philosophical reasoning.

The significance of the influence of another of China's most important philosophical teachings – Taoism – on such a branch of art as landscape painting is examined in the article by Wang Yiqun of Sichuan University *Bodily Contemplation: On the Question of the Truth of the Perception of Physical Objects in Chinese Landscape Painting*. The author seeks to use a wide-ranging analysis of the various approaches and views of the scholarly community on ancient Chinese landscape painting to prove the idea that Taoist philosophy has determined the identity of the artistic style, the immanent spirit of landscape painting. Yet, at the

same time, painting is a work of art, not an embodiment of the Tao category. In his study, Wang Yiqun concludes that the spiritual component of landscape painting lies in the value of sensory perception, and the bodily contemplation of the landscape is impossible without the body's participation.

The article *Conception of Harmonious Union: Philosophy History Aspect* by Majorow W.M. offers an analysis of the concept of harmonious unification, expressed by the Chinese concept of *hehe*. The author notes that, despite the relatively long history of molding this concept, it remains in demand both in current-day China's political and ideological discourse. In general, as Majorow emphasizes, the concept of harmonious union (*hehe*) aims to rethink the value criteria of interaction and interdependence of objects and phenomena of the Confucius' philosophical system. In addition, *hehe* is the primary method for resolving contradictions arising within the sociopolitical cosmos.

The article *Ancient Chinese Family Education and Ideological Tradition "Tian Di Jun Qin Shi"* by Zhao Xinzhu of Sichuan University points out that family education in China has a deep and ancient tradition, anchored in the formula of honoring ancestors, parents, and rulers. The basis of harmonious family upbringing is believed to be the ethical constant of *filial piety (xiao)*. This formula, introduced into everyday life, has, according to the author of this article, for more than two millennia had a decisive influence on the educational process in China, even more, decisive than any legal practices.

The presented set of articles can hardly claim to cover the richness and diversity of modern Eastern philosophy. At the same time, the proposed researches are supposed to show the fact that philosophy is able to overcome borders and does not eliminate neither cultural differences nor the continuity of traditions.

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