

## BOOK REVIEW

Qi Zhixiang, *The Complete History of Chinese Aesthetics* (《中国美学全史》五卷), Shanghai People's Press, 1958.

In 2018, A five-volume, 2.57 million-words *The Complete History of Chinese Aesthetics*, independently completed by Shanghai scholar Professor Qi Zhixiang, was published by Shanghai People's Publishing House. This is an epoch-making event in the world aesthetics.

This book records the history from the beginning of the Qin Dynasty to the beginning of the 21st century and analyzes and describes the history of the ancient Chinese aesthetic spirit in the ancient times and its transition to modern aesthetics in the 20th century. It reveals the complete historical trajectory of the evolution of Chinese aesthetics. As far as I know, this is the first book that links ancient and modern times, combining history and theory.

This book consists of three parts. The first part is the first volume: the first comment on the spirit of ancient Chinese aesthetics. The ancient Chinese aesthetic spirit the author understands is the basic view of beauty in ancient China and the special views of beauty of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism, three major cultural subjects in ancient China. The combination of history and theory is a major feature of this book. The theoretical elaboration of this book and history is precisely reflected in the first volume. It is a streamlining of books on the history of ancient Chinese aesthetics and a theoretical guide to sorting out the history of ancient Chinese aesthetics.

The second part is second to fourth volumes, describing the history of the ancient Chinese aesthetic spirit in ancient China. The author believes that the common essence of aesthetics in ancient China is embodied in the complementation of the beauty of taste, the beauty of the soul, the beauty of morals, the beauty of culture, the beauty of the unity of nature and human beings. They show different characteristics of the times. In the second to fourth volumes, the author divides the history of ancient Chinese aesthetics into four periods: foundation, breakthrough, development, and synthesis based on the birth, variation, loop-back, and end of Chinese ancient aesthetic essence. The period from the pre-Qin to Han Dynasties was the foundation period, the Six Dynasties was the breakthrough period, the Sui, Tang and Song Dynasties was the development period, and the Ming and Qing Dynasties was the comprehensive period. The third part is the fifth volume, describing the transition history of Chinese ancient aesthetics to modern aesthetics. The author reveals that there is no independent disciplinary concept in ancient Chinese aesthetics, and aesthetic thoughts are scattered and distributed in various clues of philosophical and literary theories. It was not until the May Fourth New Cultural Movement that the Western concept of aesthetics spread to China. Since then, aesthetics has become an independent discipline. Aesthetics focuses on the philosophical thinking of beauty and aesthetic experience in reality and art. Therefore, the narrative of the history of modern and contemporary Chinese aesthetics ended the coexistence of multiple lines

in ancient times and began to advance in a single line. In the description of the history of modern aesthetics, the author divided the history of Chinese modern aesthetics into two by using the proletarian revolutionary literature debate in 1928 as the timeline. This chapter reveals the variation of the value orientation contained in the banner of the May Fourth New Cultural Movement held by the Proletarian Revolutionary Literature and the transition from the subjective aesthetics in the early period to the materialistic aesthetics in the later period. The history of contemporary aesthetics is divided into three stages by the author: the first great aesthetic discussion, the second aesthetic climax, and the deconstruction and reconstruction of aesthetics since the new century.

The Complete History of Chinese Aesthetics not only runs through ancient and modern times in time, but also refers to the content of the text. After reviewing the common essence of beauty in ancient China, the first volume comprehensively discusses Confucian aesthetics, Taoist aesthetics, and Buddhist aesthetics, which are different from each other but origin in the same. In the narrative of this book, Confucian aesthetics, Taoist aesthetics, and Buddhism aesthetics are always three philosophical aesthetic clues that go together at the same time. According to the birth and death of the times, Mohist aesthetics, legal aesthetics, and metaphysical aesthetics are also described in this book. The history of ancient aesthetics also specifically examines the performance of philosophical aesthetics in various art theories, and extensively examines poetry, literary theory, sociology, song theory, novel theory, book theory, painting theory, and music in each era. The aesthetic thought reflected in the theory and garden theory. In modern times, various Western aesthetic theories have influenced China, and Chinese aesthetics have changed. Since the history of modern and contemporary Chinese aesthetics covers both Chinese and Western aesthetics, we must study Western aesthetics while studying Chinese aesthetics. Professor Qi is not only familiar with Chinese aesthetics, but also Western aesthetics. Therefore, his research can cross the boundary of Chinese and Western aesthetics, comprehensively grasp the ideological resources and theoretical concepts of modern Chinese aesthetics and make an in-depth interpretation of modern and contemporary aesthetics. With a comprehensive knowledge advantage, the author objectively reveals this historical phenomenon: Although the theoretical ideas of Chinese modern and modern aesthetics accepted Western aesthetic ideas, they also inherited the Chinese aesthetic tradition to varying degrees. Finally, Chinese aesthetics carried out the fusion of Chinese and Western aesthetic ideas and the modern transformation of Chinese aesthetic tradition.

In this way, Zhixiang uses the time from the pre-Qin to the early 21st century as a clue. In ancient times, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Xuan, and other schools of philosophy and aesthetics and prose, poetry, opera, novels, calligraphy, painting, music, gardens and other clues to connect the full text. In modern and contemporary times, using theoretical works such as 'Introduction to Aesthetics' and 'Introduction to Literature and Art' as clues, an academic palace with a grand and meteorological history of Chinese aesthetics was created.

Accordingly, we find Zhixiang not only makes a serious comprehensive inheritance of the various selected materials of the publication, but he also has an in-depth professional grasp of the representative aesthetics of each era. On the basis of mastering a large amount of first-hand information, the author has made many new discoveries on the aesthetic materials in ancient Chinese cultural classics based on his unique aesthetics, such as the beauty of the rebirth of Buddhism, the beauty of taste, the beauty of perfection, and the beauty of number ten beautiful, the beauty of bright is etc. Many aesthetic thoughts that have been ignored by past aesthetic history, including some little-known aestheticians in modern history, have been discovered, making the construction of history full and full. Facing such a huge number of materials, the author is simple and easy to control. He arranges various characters and works in an orderly and decent way. It shows his super ability to control materials and provides readers with a great convenience in grasping the contents of aesthetic history.

The author writes a history book, using characters as historical coordinates. The criterion for the selection of characters by the author is a representative person who has systematic thinking, achievements, and innovation in terms of aesthetic principles and general introduction to literature and art. As long as the achievements with academic value are created, even if the preacher does not have a prominent academic status and right to speak, the author is included in the history books, such as Xiao Gongbi, Jin Gongliang, Wang Jisheng, Wang Mingju, etc. On the contrary, if academic achievements are not created, even if these scholars have a high status and a great reputation, they will be undesirable. The author's objective discourse and true evaluation highlight the spirit of seeking truth and being pragmatic and harmonious. At the same time, he also took the stand of respecting the research object and dialogue with the historiographers and expressed his reflection in a suspicious and deliberate manner, thus reflecting the spirit of understanding and tolerance. From the comments on Zong Baihua, Zhu Guangqian, Cai Yi, Li Zehou, to Zhou Laixiang, Jiang Kongyang, Ye Lang, Zhu Liyuan, Chen Bohai, etc., a series of important figures in the history of modern and contemporary aesthetics, you can feel author's sincere reflection and wisdom.

During the 40 years of reform and opening up, a number of philosophical and social science achievements with Chinese characteristics have emerged, responding to the needs of the times. In the field of aesthetics, there is no lack of valuable achievements. This book is a great masterpiece of great value that shows Chinese style and Chinese manner. As a fellow, I applaud the birth of this book sincerely and recommend it to all academia.

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