

Global History of Philosophy

VOLUME II

The Han-Hellenistic-Bactrian Period

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with

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CONTENTS

Foreword	Prof. T.R.V. Murti	ix
Introductory Note	Prof. A.K. Sinha	xiii
Acknowledgments		xviii
Introduction		xix
I. Eclecticism/Syncretism (200 B.C.-100 A.D.)		1
A. Rome and India		1
1. Introduction		1
2. Deity		4
3. Soul/Immortality		6
4. Fatalism/Grace		8
5. Vicarious Purgation		10
6. Renunciation		11
7. Human Nature		12
8. Nature		18
9. Politics/Society		20
10. Conclusion		25
B. Rome and China		27
1. Introduction		27
2. Tung Chung-shu		31
3. Huan T'an		38
4. Seneca		43
5. Plutarch		46
6. Ma Jung		51
7. Wang Fu		53
8. Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius		56
9. Hsün Yüeh		62
10. Ko Hung		68
11. Mani		73
II. Scepticism (100-200)		84
A. Philo and Nāgārjuna		84

B. Sextus Empiricus	96
C. Wang Ch'ung	114
III. Interiority (200-325)	125
A. Plotinus and Vasubandhu	127
1. Introduction	127
2. Schemes and Explanation	131
3. The One and Vijñaptimātra	133
4. The Ālaya and the Intelligence	137
5. Manas and the Soul	140
6. The Sensible World	146
7. The Schemes as Systems	151
8. Methods	153
9. Goals	159
10. Perspectives	160
11. Conclusion	162
B. Neo-Taoism	165
1. Introduction	165
2. Wang Pi	169
3. Kuo Hsiang	179
4. Seven Sages	183
5. Hsi K'ang	187
IV. Paths and Principles	191
A. Global Apologetics	191
1. Justin Martyr	191
2. Milinda Pañha	194
3. Mou Tzu	195
B. Upatissa Thera	199
C. The Rise of Mahāyāna	206
1. Mahāyāna Literature	206
2. Bodhisattva Ideal	209
3. Trikāya Doctrine	215

4. Tathatā Doctrine	218
5. Aśvaghōṣa	222
D. The Rise of Christianity	226
1. Clement of Alexandria	226
2. Origen and Tertullian	230
E. Jainism	243
1. Kundakundācārya	243
2. Umāsvāti	246
Appendix : The Problem of Periodization	255
Introduction	255
The Axial Period (750-250 B.C.)	257
The Pre-Axial Period	260
Earlier Axial Period (750-500 B.C.)	261
Middle Axial Period (500-325 B.C.)	262
Later Axial Period (325-250 B.C.)	263
The Han-Hellenistic-Bactrian Period (250 B.C.-A.D. 325)	265
Earlier Han-Hellenistic-Bactrian Period (250 B.C.-A.D. 50)	267
Later Han-Hellenistic-Bactrian Period (A.D. 50-325)	268
The Patristic-Sūtra Period (A.D. 325-800)	270
Earlier Patristic-Sūtra Period (325-625)	273
Later Patristic-Sūtra Period (625-800)	275
The Period of Scholasticism (800-1350)	278
The Period of Encounters (1350-1850)	285
Increasing Encounters: Syntheses and Sophistication (1350-1550)	286
Maximum Encounters: European Expansion, Exploration, and Exploitation (1550-1750)	290
Withdrawal from Encounters : Nationalism and Naturalism (1750-1850)	293
The Total Encounter	302

Notes	305
Periodization Bibliography	309
Biographical Sketches	317
Glossary	321
Index of Personal Names	329
Subject Index	333

Map : The Han-Hellenistic-Bactrian World

FOREWORD

A Global History of Philosophy is bound to be a hazardous venture in Comparative Philosophy. It requires not merely stupendous scholarship but discernment in selection, judgment and appraisal of ideas. Professor John Plott has, in a fair measure, succeeded in this attempt.

The present Volume (which is the Second Volume of the *Global History of Philosophy*) is concerned with the period from the 3rd Century B.C. to the end of the 3rd Century A.D.—a span of nearly six hundred years in the history of human thought. The area covered is where religious and philosophical activities were cultivated, in China, India, Greece, Rome and Persia. The author calls this the Han-Hellenistic-Bactrian Period. The seminal ideas which were sown in the Axial Period (dealt with in the First Volume) are elaborated, explained, systematised, synthesized and syncreticized by the thinkers during this period.

The Chinese philosophers like, Tung Chung, Ma Jung, Wang Fu, Hsun Yueh, Ko-Hung, Wang Ch'ung and some others, were concerned with interpretations, modifications and sophisticated applications to social conditions in various permutations and combinations of Confucianism, Taoism and Neo-Taoism. Buddhism had just begun to appear; its influence was marginal, but was distinctly growing.

In the Indian context, the *Bhagavadgītā* (assuming that it took final shape in the 3rd or 2nd Century B.C.) is first taken up for comment and discussion. This is followed by the Rise of Mahāyāna, the Mādhyamika (Nāgārjuna) and Yogācāra (Asaṅga-Vasubandhu) and by the Jaina system of Kundakundācārya and Umāsvāti, etc.

In the West, we have an impressive array of philosophers to consider: from the Sceptics of Academy like Pyrrho, Carneades, followed later on by Sextus Empiricus; Seneca, Plutarch and the widespread and influential Stoics like Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius; Lucretius; Philo the Jew and Plotinus; and the Rise of Christianity.