

**Classical Commentary as the Core of Philosophical Discourse in  
Traditional China: A Lecture by Prof. Andrew Plaks 浦安迪**

As part of its ongoing Chinese Studies Lecture Series, on October 17, 2011, the National Central Library invited Prof. Andrew Plaks to the New York TECO Culture Center (the New York branch of Taiwan Academy) to give a lecture. In his lecture, entitled Classical Commentary as the Core of Philosophical Discourse in Traditional China, he talked about philosophy and thought in ancient China. Prof. Plaks is a renowned American sinologist and Emeritus Professor of East Asian Studies and Comparative Literature at Princeton University. He is also currently a professor in the Department of Asian Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His field of research covers Chinese-Western comparative culture, classical Chinese fiction, Chinese narrative, and traditional Chinese thought and culture. His books include *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* and *The Four Master Works of the Ming Novel*. His is well-known Chinese language work *Zhongguo xushixue* (中國敘事學 Chinese Narrative) single-handedly overturned Western scholarly opinion on the structure of Classical fiction and also the commonly held view of Chinese scholars since the May Fourth Movement that the origins of the four masterpieces of the Ming Novel lie in popular literature.

In his lecture, Prof. Plaks explored commentaries on the Four Books and Five Classics of Confucianism by scholars from each dynasty, explaining that despite the fact that scholars of different eras interpret them differently, they do not disagree with Mencian and Confucian doctrine in their core thinking. At the same time, Prof. Plaks stated that the commentaries on the classics cannot be simply taken to be

commentaries in the conventional sense, but rather should be regarded as extensions of the classics themselves.



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