ABSTRACT

From Ancient China to today, the Chinese have all along been preoccupied with the concept of alternation between happiness and misfortune. Whether their topic of concern is to do with the rise and fall of the dynasty, personal wealth, success or even life and death, the Chinese always think that happiness will alternate to misfortune eventually or vice versa. Though there have been many discussions on the alternation between happiness and misfortune in Ancient China, scholars tend to approach it from the dialectical point of view. They view the alternation between happiness and misfortune as the alternation of the opposites, which is the dialectical law of the development of things.

This dissertation hopes to discuss the concept of alternation between happiness and misfortune in Ancient China by looking at the development of this concept through various historical periods and adopt a more pragmatic approach. By pragmatic approach, it aims to discuss when and what causes the concept to develop in Ancient China. The study covers the periods of Shang to Han. And the different types of alternation due to different reasons, such as the behaviour of people, the law of nature will be examined.

From the observations made, it is concluded that in Ancient China, the Chinese often use morality to explain the rulers or individuals’ happiness and misfortune. If one has no moral attributes, one’s happiness will change to misfortune eventually and vice versa. Besides that, the law of nature caused people to believe that happiness and misfortune will alternate in time. Through this academic exercise, it highlights the moral attributes in the development of the concept of alternation between happiness and misfortune in Ancient China.