

BOOK REVIEW

Self-planting of Spiritual Roots: Chinese Philosophy and Chinese in the World (灵根自植: 中国哲学与世界华人). Edited by Chenyang Li and Hong Xiao. Singapore: Confucius Institute, Nanyang Technological University, 2019. 430 Pp.

This lively volume, as Chenyang Li and Hong Xiao note in their foreword, contributes to the relation between Chinese diaspora experience and Chinese Philosophy, and it raises and explores important pertinent questions. These questions are crucial for both overseas Chinese and Chinese Philosophy. In the current world, it is still a question to be pondered how to settle down for overseas Chinese. The rise of China is accompanied by the globalization of Chinese people and Chinese Culture. What is the relationship between Chinese culture and overseas Chinese under the trend of China's globalization? What role does overseas Chinese play in the globalization of Chinese philosophy and Chinese Culture? What kind of spiritual resources can Chinese who migrate across the world get from Chinese Philosophy? How to rethink the significance and status of Chinese philosophy in the process of rapid transmission of global culture? How should Chinese Philosophers study and teach Chinese philosophy in a foreign context with the West as the mainstream? Recognizing that overseas Chinese and Chinese Philosophy are vast and diverse subjects, authors of the eleven essays collected here give us specific cases and issues to savor and contemplate.

The first chapter, "Cultural China: Periphery as the Center", a reprint of Tu Weiming's seminal article originally published in 1991, sorts out the major stages of interpreting Chinese Culture in recent decades and proposes three symbolic worlds of Cultural China. The emergence of the term "Cultural China" shows that Chinese intellectuals around the world are gradually forming a new understanding of China in terms of its cultural existence and they have incorporated it into their own self-awareness. The author considers that the meaning of being Chinese not primarily as a matter of political identity but a humanistic concern with moral and religious significance. Furthermore, this chapter considers not taking the geographical mainland China as exclusively the center, but also taking into consideration of the great influence of the outer culture in the three symbolic worlds of China, which will unavoidably influence the shaping of the cultural China in the coming years. Various economic, political, social and cultural forces outside China have and will continue to shape the vibrancy of cultural China.

In chapter 2, entitled "Chinese Philosophy in Diaspora and the Meaningfulness of Life for Chinese Overseas," is by the late Vincent Shen, to whom this volume is dedicated. Shen discusses several major ideas about the meaning of life for Chinese diaspora that have been proposed by Chinese philosophers over the past fifty years. The first is Tang Junyi's idea of the "self-planting of spiritual roots," proposed at the time when Chinese were fleeing overseas after the Communists came to power in China in 1949; the second is the idea of "balance in conflict" or "dialects of

harmony” proposed by Profs. Antonio Cua and Chung-Ying Cheng at a time when Chinese philosophy was being established as a formal discipline in the North American academic world together with its own journals and associations, and Chinese Cultural values were in competition with the values of other cultures. Vincent Shen proposes a third idea, namely that of “Mutual Enrichment” through the method of “Mutual Strangification,” in response to the impact of globalization and post-modernism and the new dialogues with different diaspora communities from different cultural origins.

The fascinating third chapter, “On *Jing*: Thinking through Tang Junyi on Chinese Culture in Diaspora,” by Kwongloi Shun, starts with Tang Junyi’s observation about a certain mindset regarding western superiority in areas in which such a view is not justified, a mindset that results in a failure to recognize what is distinctive and valuable within one’s own culture. Such a mindset can be found in the tendency to approach Chinese thought from western philosophical perspectives in contemporary comparative studies. Using the early Confucian conception of *Jing* as an example, this chapter shows how assimilating *Jing* to the western concept of respect for persons can lead to a misunderstanding of the Confucian concept. What we need to do is to attend to the relevant texts on their own terms, relating the ideas in the texts to our own present experiences to understanding their contemporary relevance, before we bring Chinese and Western tradition of thought alongside each other for mutual illumination.

Chenyang Li and Hong Xiao contributed the fourth chapter, titled “Chinese Diaspora as People of Their Own Countries and Chinese Philosophy as a World Philosophy,” This chapter explores issue related to Chinese diaspora and Chinese philosophy. Instead of following Tang Junyi’s earlier call for overseas Chinese to establish themselves in their “homeland”, China, the authors argue that many Chinese people outside China have now legitimately established themselves in their own respective countries. In this connection, the authors advance a view of future Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy rooted in China as well as in the world at large. In their view, although Chinese immigrant thinkers in the past century have played a major role in promoting Chinese philosophy outside China, the importance of such a role is likely to decline along with the success of Chinese philosophy in becoming a world philosophy.

Chapter 5, “Confucian Universalism and the Chinese Diaspora Experience,” by Xinyan Jiang, argues that major Confucian thinkers such as Confucius, Mencius, and Xunzi all believed in the universality of human nature and therefore were all committed to universal moral values. In this essay, “Confucian Universalism” refers to the Confucian belief in a common human nature and universal moral values. Such Confucian Universalism is supported to a great degree by experiences of the Chinese diaspora. Jiang also argues that in the contemporary world the universal value of Confucianism and Liberalism can work together and complement each other. They are two parts of the totality of universal values. On the one hand, Confucian virtues and moral principles can be practiced better in a democratic society than in a non-democratic society and the fuller realization of Confucian Universal values presuppose the prevalence of core liberal values such as human rights, democracy, liberty, and equality. On the other hand, Confucian universal values can help

overcome excessive individualism in a democratic society and therefore play a positive role in building more balanced and harmonious families and communities. Although she considers these aspects, her discussion focuses on the need for the Confucian tradition to incorporate liberal universal values and on the reasons of why the Confucian ideals cannot be realized in a non-democratic society.

In the sixth chapter, “How to do Chinese Philosophy in a western philosophical context: introducing a unique approach to Chinese Philosophy” Yong Huang introduces a unique approach to Chinese philosophy in a Western philosophical context. The central question of such an approach is on why a Western philosopher ought to care about, or what he or she can learn from Chinese philosophy. For this reason, instead of comparing and contrasting some aspects of Chinese and Western philosophy, as is usually done, a comparativist should first be familiar with the issues Western philosophers are interested in, the representative views that they have developed on each of these issues, and problems that exist with each of these views, and then try to see whether Chinese philosophers have anything new or better to say on these issues. Since this approach is inevitably comparative, this presentation is preceded by a discussion of the possibility of comparative philosophy; since such a methodological discussion is necessarily abstract, it is followed by a case study adopting such an approach to Chinese philosophy.

Chapter 7 is on “Chinese Philosophy in France through Aesthetics and the Arts,” by Yolaine Escande. This essay shows Chinese philosophy was discovered by a very large audience in France via aesthetics through the best-known works of an overseas Chinese figure, Francois Cheng and how Chinese philosophy was put into practice in France by another such Chinese figure Hsiung Ping-ming. Escande explicates the role of aesthetics and the arts relative to philosophy and analyses different tapes of methodologies with reference to the western path chosen by Francois Cheng.

The eighth chapter is Johanna Liu’s “Text and Image in Movement: Studies on Chinese Art Thought and Aesthetics in North America.” She discusses the development, transmission, and influence of the study of the concepts and aesthetics of Chinese art in North America and investigates the image of Chinese art and aesthetics as presented by Chinese sinologists and art historians through their translations, reading, and interpretations of the classics of Chinese art theory, and in particular the journey taken by Chinese art in the process of its transmission across cultures. Liu first explores the ways Chinese art theory has been mistranslated or misunderstood, and then in the following section tackles various questions pertaining to Chinese aesthetics in diaspora, in particular how “Chinese art” is understood as an aesthetics category or genre (*lei*) in a western cultural context, the interplay between text (*wen*) and image (*xiang*) in classical Chinese poetry, painting, and calligraphy, and the tendency towards an ethico-aesthetics attitude in the appreciation and appraisal of Chinese art. Liu contrasts various contemporary artworks and reflections on philosophy and aesthetics, to explore the thinking of Chinese scholars, sinologists, and art historians in North America regarding the artifacts of Chinese literature and their artistic qualities. In discussing the ways in which Chinese art exists and is recognized, and whether the question of tones in Chinese literati poetry, calligraphy, and painting and its purpose in edification is one of ethics, market value, or political

awareness. The author also explores the modern implications of the contributions of Chinese scholars.

Fengchuan Pan's stimulating essay, "Writing Home from Afar: Julia Ching's Nostalgic Writing and Her Identity as a Confucian Christian in Diaspora," makes up the ninth chapter. Centering on her published work, this chapter discusses Julia Ching's 秦家懿 (1934-2001) sinology, reconstructing her academic and spiritual journey under four themes: dual identity, double nostalgia, diaspora and return, and metamorphosis. As a sinologist living in another country, Julia Ching has a dual nostalgia for learning and thinking, on the one hand, there is nostalgia for the roots of Chinese culture; on the other hand, there is nostalgia for ultimate reality or heaven of ideals. This paper is mainly from the background of Julia Ching as a Confucian Christian in diaspora and provides a wealth of materials for the current research topics of overseas Chinese.

Chapter 10 provides a Southeast Asian perspective to the volume. In "Lim Boon Keng and the Early Confucian Revival Movement in Southeast Asia: Overseas Chinese Revival of Traditional Culture (1899-1911)," Chinghwang Yen focuses on the Confucian Revival Movement that emerged from the Chinese community in Southeast Asia from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. This paper explored the great role of Lim Boon Keng in the Confucian Revival Movement in Southeast Asia and illustrated his own identity crisis and cultural dual roles. Yen also analyzes the characteristics of the spread and development of Confucian traditional culture in Southeast Asia and shows that the Confucian Revival Movement in Southeast Asia was stimulated by the Chinese Confucian Revival Movement but had a strong spontaneity and autonomy. The former is essentially the result of interaction and conflict between Eastern and Western cultures and politics.

The last chapter of the volume presents "Succession and Spread of Confucianism in Southeast Asia: Comparative Study of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia," by Lee Guan Kin. Firstly, Lee combs the historical context of the development of Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. She vertically focuses on the development and evolution of each in the colonial era and after the founding of the country. After then, she combines with a horizontal inspection and outlines an overview of the development of Confucianism of the same rail with a different track. Her research shows the spread of Confucianism in Singapore and Malaysia is based on the Chinese population in these countries. Such a movement differed from places such as Vietnam, which is mainly geographically transmitted. From the context of historical development, Lee considers that the inheritance of Confucianism in Singapore and Malaysia has undergone two major stages, colonial rule and independence. Before and after, Chinese and local elements dominate its development. In the essay, Lee Guan Kin proposes three development models of Confucianism, that is, Singapore's Confucianism model is dominated by national politics; Malaysian Confucianism model dominated by Chinese school education and Confucian organization; Indonesian Confucianism is dominated by the theme of religion. These models help us understand the development of Confucianism in Southeast Asia and the characteristics of various countries.

This volume is dedicated to Vincent Shen, the late Lee Chair professor of Chinese Culture and Philosophy at the University of Toronto. An exemplary of Chinese philosophers residing in North America, Shen made significant contributions to promoting Chinese philosophy to the world. His untimely death incurred a great loss to the international community of Chinese philosophy. This volume ends with four memorial articles of Shen by four leading scholars of Chinese philosophy, Guo Qiyong, Chen Lai, Yong Huang, and Chenyang Li.

This is the first volume with a focus on the theme of “Chinese Philosophy in Diaspora.” That makes this book significant. The authors of the eleven papers have enriched the study of Chinese diaspora experience in connection to Chinese philosophy. Their researches highlight some important issues, views, characters and ideas in connection to Chinese diaspora Chinese philosophy, and Chinese Culture. Several questions remain to be addressed more fully. With the development of the times, China's economic and political status has undergone tremendous changes. Is the positioning of Cultural China still reasonable in the current era? What are the new contents of overseas scholars' thinking on the problems of the relations between Chinese diaspora and Chinese Philosophy? How does Chinese Philosophy provide guidance for ways of settling down for Overseas Chinese? What is the significance and status of Chinese Philosophy in contemporary international community? We must think further about both Chinese diaspora experience and Chinese Philosophy, then describe the relations between Chinese diaspora experience and Chinese Philosophy.

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