

Chinese Diaspora as People of Their Own Countries
and Chinese Philosophy as World Philosophy¹

Chenyang Li and Hong Xiao

漢學研究 *Chinese Studies*

Vol. 31 No. 2 June 2013

pp. 63-84

Abstract

In this essay, we will follow Tang Junyi's lead in exploring issues related to Chinese diaspora and Chinese philosophy. While we largely endorse Tang's call for overseas Chinese to establish themselves in their adopted lands, we will argue for a more nuanced view on the identity of Chinese people outside China: they are not marginalized individuals scattered out of "homeland" China, rather they are people legitimately established in their own respective countries. In this connection, we will also advance a view of future Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy that takes roots in China as well as in the world at large. In our 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 becoming a world philosophy.

Keywords: Chinese, diaspora, Chinese sojourners, Chinese settlers, genealogical Chinese, Chinese philosophy

¹ The essay was inspired by Vincent Shen's article of "The Concept of Centrality in Chinese Diaspora," *Religion Compass* 6/1 (2012): 26–40. Vincent Shen drew our attention to important issues raised by Tang Junyi's 唐君毅 work on the relationship between Chinese diaspora and Chinese philosophy. An earlier version of this essay was presented at the International Conference on "Communication and Creation: Dialogue between Chinese and Western Philosophies" on 8-12 June 2012 at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, China. The authors would like to thank audience at the conference as well as two anonymous reviewers for this journal for valuable comments and suggestions. This essay is dedicated to Tang Junyi (1909-1978), a respected 20th century Chinese philosopher. Research for this work was supported by Nanyang Technological University Research Grants M4080394/M4080408.

Half a century ago the philosopher Tang Junyi (1909-1978) published a seminal essay regarding Chinese diaspora and Chinese philosophy in the world. In “The Scattering of the Chinese People” (1961), Tang lamented the fact that, since 1949, many Chinese relocated overseas. He wrote,

This trend today as a whole indicates that the Chinese social political life, Chinese culture and the Chinese heart, have lost its force of solidarity. This is like after a huge tree fallen in a garden, its flowers and fruits became scattered with blowing winds. They had to survive in other people’s gardens, evading the burning sun under other trees. They receded to wall corners in order to absorb nutrients, [having to] share soil and water with others plants. This is nothing but a huge tragedy of the Chinese people.

(Tang, 424)

Three years later, Tang wrote a related essay, in a more uplifting spirit. While his main concern was still how these “scattered flowers and fruits” can return to their homeland and to re-root themselves again (Tang, 466), he also raised the question of how overseas Chinese can establish themselves in their adopted lands and benefit not only themselves, but also other peoples, their country, and the entire world. For him, the highest goal is to wait until the right time when Chinese people, both in China and abroad, can rebuild the Chinese nation and the Chinese cultural world (Tang, 480).

Tang’s essays raised important questions about the identity, purposes and aspirations of Chinese people outside China and about the need to join forces in building and re-building Chinese philosophy, which is the core of the Chinese culture. In this essay, we follow Tang’s

lead in exploring related issues. While we largely endorse Tang's call for overseas Chinese to establish themselves in their adopted lands, we argue for a more nuanced view on the identity of Chinese people outside China; we also advance a view of future Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy that takes roots in China as well as in the world at large. In what follows, we first discuss the identity or identities of Chinese diaspora and distance them from the common perception of them as rooted in China. We also differentiate two kinds of Chinese diaspora, those who are culturally Chinese and those who are merely genealogically Chinese. Second, we analyze and discuss Chinese immigrant thinkers' significant contribution to advancing Chinese philosophy at world stage in the last century, particularly in Northern America, as they assumed their cultural identity. Third, we advance a view of Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy. In our 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 becoming a world philosophy.

From “Chinese sojourners” to “Overseas Chinese” to “Genealogical Chinese”

The English word “Chinese” has manifold meanings. It can mean the people of China, things (such as language) related to the people of China, as well as persons of Chinese ancestry. The last category includes people living in various parts of the world outside China. Since the 19th century, these people have been called “*hua-qiao*” by people in China, literally “Chinese sojourners.” The term is accurate in describing most Chinese who went overseas in the 18th to early 20th centuries or even earlier. These people went overseas to work rather than settle. The ultimate goal, for most if not all of them, was to return to their motherland after making money overseas. Chinese coolies in the 19th century, for example, went to America to labor in order to

send money back home in support of their families, with the intention to return home eventually (regardless of the United States' anti-Chinese immigration policy). Until quite recently, a large portion of Chinese in Southeast Asia still considered Fujian and Guangdong as their homelands, as evidenced in their enthusiastic support of Sun Yet-sen's revolution and many other China-related events. For many of them, sending money back to their home villages in China was a good way to retrace their roots and to maintain their ultimate connections. These people were indeed "*hua-qiao*," in the sense that they were dislocated from their homeland, temporarily stayed overseas, and would eventually return to China. For the most part, they were in the kind of situation that Tang described and deplored in his 1961 essay. It was correct for Tang to say that their ultimate goal (for the most) was to return to and re-settle in their motherland. This strong desire was natural for people of agrarian society who identify themselves strongly with the land, which of course is fixed in the same place, namely their homeland. An apt metaphor of these Chinese is the lotus. No matter how far their flowers drift on water, they are strongly corded to their roots, which are established deeply in the same place no matter how far their corded flowers float.

Situations began to change during the 20th century and continue to change until this day. In the second half of the 20th century, more and more Chinese went overseas to settle in their respective countries. While many returned to China, others decided to live in their new countries for good. For those permanent settlers, the term "*hua-qiao*" is no longer accurate (even though people in China continue to label settlers overseas as such for their own purposes), for they are "settlers" rather than "sojourners." Gradually, the term "overseas Chinese" or "Chinese overseas"² became the common label for all Chinese living outside China, including both

² In this essay we do not differentiate these two expressions.

sojourners and permanent settlers. More and more permanent settlers have now been naturalized and become citizens of their new countries.

“Overseas Chinese” can be rendered in Chinese language as either “海外中国人” (overseas people of China) or “海外华人” (Chinese people overseas). The former means Chinese nationals overseas, whereas the latter includes all overseas people of Chinese ancestry. Obviously, while all overseas people of China are overseas Chinese, the reverse is not true. Because of this reason, considering all overseas Chinese as “海外中国人 (overseas people of China),” as they are often referred to in China, is inaccurate at best and forced labeling at worst. Furthermore, even the term “海外华人” (Chinese people overseas)” is not fully appropriate. The term carries a strong “China-centric” outlook, implying that these people are somewhat dislocated from their proper native-land and “scattered” overseas, to borrow Tang’s expression. The term may be appropriate denoting the first (and second) generations of Chinese who went overseas only to make a living, but is not appropriate for subsequent generations. This is because subsequent generations of Chinese who live permanently beyond the boundaries of China may no longer take China as their homeland. They have re-centered in their new countries. The singer Zhang Mingmin (张明敏) has a song called “My Chinese Heart” (我的中国心, literally “My Heart of China”), which has been popular in China for decades. From the mouth of overseas Chinese, its lyric claims the fact that China is their “motherland” can never be changed. While this is true of many overseas Chinese, it is not true of all of them. To force this label on all Chinese living outside China is not only inaccurate but also can be an insult to some.

Over the past half a century or so, people of Chinese origin in various parts of the world have changed considerably. Many of them, particularly the third and subsequent generations, have given up their status as “sojourners” and become permanent residents or even citizens of

their adopted countries. This change of identity is not only political but also socio-psychological. For many, the issue is not merely a matter of a convenient passport, but also one of ownership of their adopted countries. Chinese Americans in California are offended when Caucasian neighbors compliment their English skills. Imagine the following brief conversation in Santa Monica, California:

“Mr. Wong, you speak very good English!”

“Yes, Mr. Giuliani, your English is also very good (as we both were born in California)!”

Complimenting someone’s English in the above context implies that person has less a claim to the American land. Chinese Americans no longer consider them having less a claim to the country of the United States than Italian or German Americans or those of any other origin. If Barack Obama, son of a Kenyan, can become the president of the United States, why cannot, in principle, sons and daughters of Chinese Americans become presidents? Furthermore, if one wants to become a president of the United States, or for that matter, of any country outside China, should he or she have a heart of that country rather than the country where his or her ancestors lived? When Lee Kuan-Yew and, later, Lee Hsien-Loong became prime ministers of Singapore, did they have a heart of China or a heart of Singapore? Which heart should they have?! We can say the same about Maria Corazon Aquino (former president of the Philippines) and Benigno Aquino (current president of the Philippines), and Abhisit Vejjajiva (former prime minister of Thailand).³ For them and for a vast number of Chinese around the world, their centers are no longer China, a place their ancestors once lived and called home, but their new homelands in their adopted countries. For that reason, they are “Chinese” in the sense of “*hua-ren*” (华人,

³ Some of these people may not have pure Chinese blood, but they are recognized as overseas Chinese along with people of similar backgrounds.

“ethnic⁴ Chinese”), not “people of China 中国人.” Moreover, they are “*hua-ren*” on their own, not “overseas.” As a Singaporean scholar once told the authors: “I am not an *overseas* Chinese (海外华人); I am a Singaporean *hua-ren* (新加坡华人).” To be described as “Chinese overseas” carries a strong dose of Sinocentrism. Both as individuals and as collectives, they should be recognized properly as “Chinese people (*hua-ren*)” as such.⁵ They are people of their own respective countries.

For Chinese people outside China, their new identity can be positive and liberating, even though perhaps mixed with daily life struggles. Like grown-up children, they are now established on their own in their adopted countries. For them, China may have a special place in their heart as their bloodline is traced back to the land of the Dragon (in this sense, they may still have “a heart of China”). However, they are first of all citizens of their own countries, Singaporeans, Thais, Filipinos, Canadians, and Americans; they are ethnic Chinese in the secondary sense. Furthermore, they may not even be “culturally Chinese,” if by that we mean the Chinese culture largely associated with Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Blood may always be thicker than water, but Peking opera may be very foreign to them. While it may be a good thing for Chinese people to hold on to their cultural heritage wherever they move, after a few generations in their adopted lands, their offspring may have completely immersed in the culture of their adopted countries and become culturally “non-Chinese.” Although their genealogical roots are traceable to China, they themselves, particularly being outside China for several generations, may no longer be connected to Chinese culture. They should be described appropriately as “(mere) genealogical Chinese.” Hence, Chinese people outside of China may fall into various

⁴ “Ethnic” refers to a population with either a common national or a common cultural tradition. When the term is used in contrast to “cultural,” it refers to people of a common national origin. A more accurate description of this category is “(mere) genealogical Chinese” as will be discussed next.

⁵ For discussion of related issues, readers can see Liu and Huang (2000).

categories. First, they are either Chinese sojourners or Chinese settlers outside China. The latter can further be divided into those who are culturally Chinese and those who are merely genealogical Chinese. Presumably, Chinese sojourners (at least for the most) have “a heart of China 中国心”; culturally Chinese settlers outside China possess “a heart of the Chinese tradition”; mere genealogical Chinese are endowed only with a Chinese look and Chinese blood genealogy.

For the vast majority of people inside China, this reality may be hard to bear at first, as if their distant relatives have become lost overseas. For the former, the “heart of China” of overseas Chinese is always a virtue and may always be appreciated and encouraged. This sentiment, however, should not be used as a primary basis in evaluating overseas Chinese, especially those of subsequent generations. There are approximately 40 million people with Chinese ancestry outside of China.⁶ After adopting their new identities, overseas Chinese may no longer possess such a “heart of China.” And there is nothing wrong with that. People inside China should not use the “heart of China” as the criterion of judgment on their relatives in other countries. Instead, people in China should be proud of the establishment and accomplishments of their fellow *hua-ren* re-rooted in various parts of the world. By all standards, Gary Locke 骆家辉 is a very successful Chinese American, but not so if we gauge him on the criterion of a “heart of China.” While he is undoubtedly Chinese in the biological sense, he is hardly culturally Chinese (not for the most part anyway). While his blood may be one hundred percent Chinese, Peking opera and the likes may not be his cup of tea at all!

Tang Junyi may have been right in deploring the scatteredness of Chinese overseas in the mid-20th century after communists took over mainland China. But, for a vast number of Chinese

⁶ According to Li and Li (2011), there are about 39 million Chinese overseas in 2007.

residing outside China today, such bemoaning may be completely misplaced. An appropriate metaphor for them is not a huge tree fallen in a garden, with its flowers and fruits scattered into other gardens as Tang put it, but dandelion seeds with flying wings that look for proper soil to enroot themselves, whether in the same garden or beyond—wherever they go, they find a suitable place to settle as their own home for good.

Given this new reality, then, what are the connections between Chinese diaspora and Chinese culture? Tu Weiming has elucidated “Chineseness” or the Chinese identity in terms of Chinese culture, or “cultural China” as a more meaningful concept in understanding Chinese civilization extends far beyond the geographical “central kingdom.” (Tu 2005; Tu 1990) If the geographical center of China is always fixed in the “central kingdom,” the center of cultural China is not. As a matter of fact, Tu argued that “the phenomenon of Chinese culture disintegrating at the center and later being revived from the periphery is a recurring theme in Chinese history.” (Tu 2005: 154) In a seminal essay of “Cultural China: the Periphery as the Center,” Tu articulated a view of three symbolic universes of cultural China:

The first consists of mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—that is, the societies populated predominantly by cultural and ethnic Chinese. The second consists of Chinese communities throughout the world, including a politically significant minority in Malaysia and a numerically negligible minority in the United States... The third symbolic universe consists of individuals, such as scholars, teachers, journalists, industrialists, traders, entrepreneurs, and writers, who try to understand China intellectually and bring their conceptions of China to their own linguistic communities.

(Tu 2005: 154-5)

Tu noted that, although people in the second “universe” are often referred to by the political authorities in Beijing and Taipei as *hua-qiao*, more recently they tend to define themselves as members of the Chinese “diaspora,” meaning those who have settled in communities far from their ancestral homeland.

The “second universe” of cultural China, however, is ambiguous. “Chinese” can be a cultural designator and/or a genealogical designator. Not all people of Chinese descent are culturally Chinese. If we use the concept of “Chinese” in a consistent manner without equivocating on its application, we must not conflate different designations under the term of “Chinese.” Just as genealogical non-Chinese in Tu’s “third universe” may belong to cultural China, genealogical Chinese in various parts of the world may not belong to the “second universe” of cultural China. Whereas some of the Chinese diaspora, such as most of those in Malaysia, undoubtedly belong to the “second universe” of cultural China, others, such as Maria Corazon Aquino, Benigno Aquino, and perhaps Gary Locke, are simply outside the entire realm of cultural China.

The diverged cultural identity of Chinese diaspora and Tu’s insights regarding the “third universe” of cultural China demonstrate that genealogical “Chineseness” and cultural “Chineseness” do not necessarily coincide. We must bear this in mind as we discuss Chinese diaspora and the promotion of Chinese culture and philosophy in the world.

Overseas Chinese Advancing Chinese Philosophy

A principal component of the rich Chinese culture is of course its philosophy. By “Chinese philosophy,” we mean the kind of philosophy originated in China as represented in

Confucianism, Daoism, and Chinese Buddhism.⁷ The migration of Chinese people from China to other countries is not merely a demographic or economic phenomenon, but also a cultural phenomenon. When migrating from China to various parts of the world, people brought and continue to bring their culture with them. People coming out of China, with few exceptions, are also culturally Chinese. Wherever they go, Chinese cultural seeds are spread.

The spread of Chinese philosophy beyond China in a systematic way began with Western missionaries introducing Chinese thought back into their own homelands. Among them were Matteo Ricci (1552—1610), who translated the *Four Books* in the Latin, and James Legge (1815-1897), whose translation of the Chinese classics *Sacred Books of the East* series in late 19th century was the most prominent. Subsequently, Chinese thinkers followed suit and began to introduce Chinese philosophy and culture into the West. Lin Yutang's (林語堂 1895-1976) *My Country and My People* (1935) and *The Importance of Living* (1937) were exemplary in propagating Chinese philosophy in the form of cultural dissemination. Serious work on promoting Chinese philosophy by Chinese academic thinkers in the West was launched in the second half of the 20th century. Prominent among these thinkers was Wing-Tsit Chan (陳榮捷, 1901 - 1994). Chan spent a large part of his academic life as a professor of Chinese philosophy and religion in Dartmouth College. He published numerous books and articles in both English and Chinese on Chinese philosophy and religion. Among these is his *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* by Princeton University Press, probably hitherto the most widely used English book of Chinese philosophy and arguably the most influential work in the field of Chinese philosophy in the West. Subsequently, Chinese thinkers like Tu Weiming and Cheng Chungying have played a large role in disseminating Chinese philosophy in the English-speaking world. Eloquent

⁷ We leave out from discussion the possibility that an entirely new civilization may arise in the land of China.

and charismatic, Tu was a professor of Chinese philosophy and history at Harvard University and the director of the Yenching-Harvard Institute for many years until he became the president of Institute of Advanced Studies at Peking University in 2010. His active promotion of the “Third Epic of Confucianism” has generated a profound impact in the 20th and 21st centuries. Cheng has been a professor of philosophy at the University Hawaii-Manoa, founder of the International Society for Chinese Philosophy and the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*.⁸ More Chinese thinkers joined forces in the last two decades, and vastly expanded the magnitude of promoting Chinese philosophy by Chinese thinkers residing in the West. We can name Vincent Shen (who moved to Canada from Taiwan in 2000), Kwong-Loi Shun (who had been in Northern America for decades until his recent move to Hong Kong), Peimin Ni, Robin Wang, Xinyan Jiang, Yong Huang, Jiyuan Yu, among many others. For several decades, Chan, Tu, Cheng, and many other Chinese thinkers living in the West have been effective spokespersons for Chinese philosophy. They grew up in China (Taiwan, Hong Kong) and were fully immersed in Chinese culture and philosophy before going overseas. Their Chinese heritage is deeply embedded both in blood and in heart. Many of these people see their work in Chinese philosophy not only as a profession but more importantly as a mission. Inspired by the Confucian ideal of “advancing the *Dao* 弘道” (*Analects* 15.29), they served, wholeheartedly, as a vehicle for advancing Chinese philosophy in the English-speaking world.⁹ In the last three decades, China became an economic and geopolitical power and exerted great global influence. Along with it, Chinese philosophy also drew considerable interest in the world. Increasingly overseas Chinese philosophers played an extensive role in promoting Chinese philosophy.¹⁰ In her study of the

⁸ Other important figures include Antonio S. Cua (1932-2007), a Filipino Chinese in the United States, and Julia Ching (1934-2001), whose work on Chinese philosophy has exerted a noticeable influence in the West.

⁹ For more discussion of related matters, see Chenyang Li (2006).

¹⁰ For an insightful discussion of this trend, see Vincent Shen (2012).

development of Chinese philosophy in the English-Speaking World (“ESW”), Xinyan Jiang notes that, prior to the 1990s, Chinese philosophy was rarely taught on university campuses in Northern America, but the situation changed significantly since the early 1990s. One of the reasons, Jiang writes, is that,

More and more Chinese who have finished their graduate studies in philosophy from universities in Northern America and stayed in Northern America to teach. These Chinese scholars make up the bulk of the membership of the Association of Chinese Philosophers in Northern America (ACPA, established in 1995) and the International Society for Comparative Studies of Chinese and Western Philosophy (ISCWP, founded in 2002). *Tao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* (started in 2001) is associated with ACPA, and has offered a new forum for studies of Chinese philosophy in ESW.

(Jiang Xinyan 2011)

Jiang’s study provides a good reflection on how Chinese immigrants in Northern America have played a significant role in promoting Chinese philosophy in the world.

Two points are due to be noted here. First, the above-mentioned philosophers are all first-generation immigrants to the West. Second, they are both ethnically and culturally Chinese. A genealogical Chinese, of course, may not understand or endorse Chinese culture and therefore may be unequipped for promoting Chinese philosophy due to lack of knowledge or willingness or both. What distinguishes these above-mentioned Chinese thinkers is not only their ethnicity but also personal cultural background and professional training. While their ethnicity may have given them additional credibility, having been born and growing up in China have given them a deep cultural background and personal commitment. Furthermore, rigorous professional training rendered them a scholarly capacity, including both the tool and the skills, in advancing Chinese

philosophy. In the 20th and 21st centuries, overseas Chinese thinkers have played a key role in promoting Chinese philosophy beyond China. Without their dedication and contribution, the landscape of Chinese philosophy in the (Western) world would have been entirely different.

Chinese Philosophy as World Philosophy

In all likelihood, the important role played by overseas Chinese thinkers in promoting Chinese philosophy is to continue in the future, particularly by people who continue to move overseas from China. New immigrants are cultural ambassadors. Living their ways of life, new immigrants bring with them cultural practices from their original countries and are often viewed, willingly or unwillingly, as exemplars of respective cultures. Their ways of life, accordingly, are often taken as the practice of respective philosophy. Children's attitudes toward their parents in the Chinese immigrant community in the United States, for example, are often seen as exemplifying the Confucian value of filial piety. Immigrants who specialize in the philosophy of their original country naturally play a role of spokespersons for the respective philosophy. In this consideration, overseas Chinese, especially those of the first generations, can play an important role in promoting Chinese philosophy in the world. In his 1964 article, Tang Junyi advocated that, when overseas Chinese establish themselves in their adopted countries, they can and should set out to advance Chinese culture and philosophy. Tang is undoubtedly right. Being culturally Chinese, new Chinese immigrants who wish to contribute to the world harmony of cultures should play meaningful roles in promoting cultural exchange in their new countries. The thesis we wish to establish here, however, extends beyond Tang's. We wish to argue that, in the global age, the goal of Chinese philosophy in the world is to become a world philosophy; as such, Chinese philosophy in the world should not depend on overseas Chinese as its primary overseas

promoters. Thus, our conclusion may appear paradoxical: for overseas Chinese who have been the primary promoters of Chinese philosophy in the world, their ultimate success lies in their ceasing to be primary promoters of Chinese philosophy in the world, when Chinese philosophy is no longer a regional philosophy but a world philosophy.

By “world philosophy,” we mean a philosophy that is studied, researched, and promoted as a philosophy of universal significance rather than merely as that of a particular culture. Admittedly, any philosophy has its own cultural origin, and it evolves in a historical context. When it acquires broad significance beyond its own cultural tradition, it is however no longer limited by its cultural bounds and has become a philosophy for the world rather than a particular country or culture. This is not to say, however, that such a philosophy is subscribed and endorsed by everyone in the world, rather that it has secured a position to vie for audience on the world stage as a respectable contender on equal footing with other philosophies. It is our contention that Chinese philosophy has the substance to become a world philosophy as (ancient) Greek philosophy has. The value and significance of Greek philosophy, manifested in the teachings of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and so forth, lies in its being a philosophy with relevance to the real world in general. Similarly, when Chinese philosophy becomes a world philosophy, its primary value lies in its relevance not only to China but also to the world. In addition, as a world philosophy, the teachings of Chinese philosophy are part of education for all people, not just assigned readings for students specialized in China/Asian studies.

As Chinese philosophy progresses on its way towards becoming a world philosophy, the role of overseas Chinese thinkers in promoting Chinese philosophy will gradually and inevitably abate, for a number of reasons. First, the status of Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy cannot be achieved by Chinese thinkers alone, inside China or abroad. A world philosophy is a

philosophy studied by people all over the world, not for its present relevance to a particular country or region, but for its significance for the world at large. As such, Chinese philosophy becoming a world philosophy is predicated on the increasing role of non-Chinese thinkers in its study and promotion. To a large extent, of course, this process has already begun. In recent decades, more and more non-Chinese thinkers have entered the force of Chinese philosophy. Notably, Roger Ames's pragmatic and process interpretations of Confucianism and Robert Neville's "Boston Confucianism" have already generated a significant impact on the studying of Chinese philosophy in Northern America. The most productive center of doctoral students in Chinese philosophy who have a large presence in the field of Chinese philosophy over the world is the University of Hawaii at Manoa, not in China. Nowadays, at professional conferences of Chinese philosophy outside China, non-Chinese thinkers are often the majority; books on Chinese philosophy in Western languages are authored by more ethnic non-Chinese than Chinese thinkers. In all likelihood, this trend will continue. Perhaps we can say that the age for overseas Chinese serving as the main force or leading force, as has been the case in the past half a century, in promoting Chinese philosophy overseas will come to an end in foreseeable future. This is not to say, of course, overseas Chinese thinkers will no longer play a significant role in promoting Chinese philosophy outside China. They may, but only in the mix of others and with much less certainty. For the sake of Chinese philosophy, the increasing role by ethnic non-Chinese thinkers in its promotion is to be celebrated rather than deplored. It is an indication of not only the success of Chinese philosophy at world stage but also the success of early overseas Chinese philosophers, as making Chinese philosophy relevant and interesting to non-Chinese people has been part of their goal from the very beginning.

The second reason is that, given what has been discussed in the first section of this essay, future offspring of first (and perhaps second) generation Chinese immigrants are not a likely force for playing an important role in promoting Chinese philosophy. As a matter of fact, they may well gradually lose their Chinese cultural heritage. While new immigrants from China may continue to campaign for Chinese philosophy overseas they are not the majority of people of Chinese ancestry outside China in comparison with subsequent generations of earlier immigrants.

Third, the possible role for new Chinese immigrants to play in promoting Chinese philosophy outside China will largely depend on China's relevance to Chinese philosophy. China's relevance can exist in two aspects. The first is historical; the second is cultural. Its historical relevance is secured, as that of Greece is to Greek philosophy. With Greek philosophy being a world philosophy, the significance of Athens has become mainly, if not exclusively, historical. Surely students still go to visit the Parthenon in Athens, but merely as a historical site. For them, the place is no longer sacred. A Greek scholar is not presumed with more authority in explicating or defending Greek philosophy than anyone else. In universities over North America or Europe, those teaching Greek philosophy are mostly ethnic non-Greek. To international conferences on Greek philosophy, organizers may still invite scholars from Greece, just as they invite others from Australia, England, Japan, and the United States. A person's being Greek does not possess any particular significance to doing Greek philosophy. Greek scholars are invited not because they are Greek, but because they are experts in Greek philosophy in the same way as German or English scholars are. When Chinese philosophy becomes a world philosophy, students will still go and visit Qufu in China for its historical significance. If China's relevance is to be merely historical, scholars from China will still be invited to international conferences on

Chinese philosophy, but their ethnic Chinese identity may not be of particular significance. They may be invited just as scholars from Australia, England, Japan, and the United States.

Of course, China's relevance to Chinese philosophy may remain well beyond its historical significance. It can continue to be culturally relevant. This means that the Chinese philosophy as we understand it continues to play a living role as the soul of the land. That, however, is not a certainty. As Thomé Fang has said well: we should not think that "because Chinese culture has a glorious history it will continue forever." Such a future still awaits "further examination." (Fang, 602) A land is culturally relevant if it possesses social resources that exemplify a particular culture or cultural force. In this sense, China today is no longer relevant to much of Mohism, even though Mohism originated there. Joseph Levenson's trilogy on *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate* raised real worries of the museumization of the Confucian heritage. (Levenson, 1969) Needless to say, if Confucianism fades away in China, a significant part of the Chinese heritage will be lost.

There is no guarantee that China will remain culturally relevant to Chinese philosophy (as we know it). Take Confucianism as an example. This rich tradition extended throughout most of the time in China's history. In recent times, however, Confucianism has encountered major challenges. The May 4th Movement gave it a first major blow. The Cultural Revolution constituted another onslaught on the tradition. It is worth noting that this kind of attack from Western influence, whether liberalism or Marxism, has continued in various forms even to this date. In criticizing the negative aspects of Confucianism in its historic form, many contemporary Chinese thinkers wish to eradicate Confucianism altogether. Their success would be the demise of Confucianism and a large part of Chinese culture. Furthermore, in the last few decades, the impact of Western ideology obviously has placed Confucianism on another test. In conjunction

with increasing Western influence is the attack by what we call “the glorious cat.” This attack began in the 1980s when two ideas became the dominating ideology in China. One is that “To get rich is glorious (致富光荣).” The other is “catching mice makes a good cat.” Both ideas have been attributed to Deng Xiaoping. Although there is no conclusive evidence that Deng actually expressed the first idea in these words, there is no doubt that both ideas were key components of his philosophy. Arguably Deng Xiaoping’s philosophy is broader than these two ideas. But these two are undeniably the most influential in the past decades. Combining these two ideas, we have what may be called the “glorious cat” doctrine. The doctrine says that the glorious goal in life is to get rich, and that one can use any means possible as long as such a goal is achieved. Such a doctrine is diametrically opposed to the Confucian belief that material wealth should be pursued only with ethical means.¹¹ While the “glorious cat” doctrine may have contributed to the economic success in the past decades in China, it also undeniably contributed to the severe moral deterioration in the country recently. Its assault on Confucianism (and Daoism to some extent) is not direct and may even not have been intentional. Its consequences are nevertheless devastating. While efforts to revive Confucianism have been launched repeatedly, mainly in the academic realm, the social environment in the wake of the onslaught by the “glorious cat” has made it particularly challenging for Confucianism to renew itself.¹² This, of course, does not necessarily mean that Confucianism will not be able to survive in its homeland. If Confucianism, along with other traditional philosophies, survives another challenging time, China will remain culturally relevant to Chinese philosophy in the world today. With its cultural relevance intact, the significance of China to Chinese philosophy will remain more important than contemporary Athens is to Greek philosophy. Beside its historical significance, China can still be the cultural

¹¹ For more discussion of this matter, readers can see Li 2014.

¹² For more discussion of this matter, readers can see Li 2012.

center of Chinese philosophy, and overseas Chinese migrating from China will continue to play their role of cultural ambassadors in the world. Thinkers among them will continue to play an important role in promoting Chinese philosophy.

If we can summarize our essay in a nutshell, we will say the following. The number of 40 million strong ethnic Chinese outside China is likely to increase continuously; a large portion of their offspring will likely gradually lose Chinese cultural heritage that was once dear to their forebears. Chinese immigrant thinkers have played a major role in promoting Chinese philosophy in the world and in promoting Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy. Their role, however, is likely to decline as Chinese philosophy gains increased status as a world philosophy. Future Chinese thinkers who move overseas may continue to play this important role in promoting Chinese philosophy in the world. The degree of the importance of their role, however, depends mainly on two factors, the continued cultural relevance of China to Chinese philosophy, and the success of Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy. The more culturally relevant China remains to Chinese philosophy, the more likely for new Chinese immigrant thinkers to play an important role in promoting Chinese philosophy. Conversely, the more successful Chinese philosophy is in becoming a world philosophy, the less likely it is for Chinese immigrant thinkers to be the primary force in promoting Chinese philosophy as a world philosophy. We hope for China's continuing cultural relevance; we hope for the success of Chinese philosophy in becoming a world philosophy.

References

- Chan, Wing-Tsit (1963). *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Fang Thomé 方东美 (1992). 《生命理想与文化类型》 *The Ideal of Life and Cultural Types*. Beijing: Zhongguo Guangbo Dianshi Chubanshe.
- Jiang Xinyan (2011). “The Study of Chinese Philosophy in the English Speaking World.” *Philosophy Compass* (6:3) 168-179.
- Levenson, Joseph (1969). *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Li Chenyang (2014). “Material Wellbeing and Cultivation of Character in Confucianism,” in *Moral Cultivation and Confucian Character: Engaging Joel J. Kupperman*, eds. Chenyang Li and Peimin Ni. Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press (forthcoming).
- (2012). “Five Contemporary Challenges for Confucianism.” *Journal of East and West Thought* (1.2): 53-68.
- (2006). “北美学界对中国哲学的分析和比较研究——论一个兴起的潮流” (“On the Analytic and Comparative Study of Chinese Philosophy,”) *Journal of Nanking University* (43.2) 2006: 103-110.
- Li, Peter S. and Eva X. Li (2011). “Changes in the Chinese Overseas Population, 1955 to 2007.” *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie* (48:2) 137-152.
- Lin Yutang (1937). *The Importance of Living*. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, Inc., (A John Day Book).
- (1935). *My Country and My People*. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, Inc., (A John Day Book).

- Liu Hong 劉宏, Huang Jianli 黃堅立 (2002) 《海外華人研究的大視野與新方向--王賡武教授
論文選》 *New Horizon and Directions for Study Overseas Chinese—Selected Essays by
Professor Wang Gungwu*. River Edge, NJ: Global Publishing Co. Inc.
- Shen, Vincent (2012). “The Concept of Centrality in Chinese Diaspora,” *Religion Compass* 6/1:
26–40.
- Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1992) 《文化意识宇宙的探索》 *Exploring the Universe of Cultural
Consciousness*. Beijing: Zhongguo Guangbo Dianshi Chubanshe.
- Tu Weiming (2005) “Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center,” *Daedalus* 134.4: 145-167.
----- (1990) “文化中国”初探 (Probing “Cultural China”), 《九十年代月刊》 (*The
Nineties*) 245: 60-61.

內容摘要

在這篇文章中，我們隨著唐君毅先生開闢的道路，探討分布在世界各地的華人以及他們與中國文化和哲學的關係。雖然我們大致同意唐先生鼓勵海外華人在世界各地紮根立足，並為推廣中國文化做出貢獻的觀點，我們對世界各地的華人之身份認同做出與現實更合適的認定。我們認為，這些華人並非失去故鄉、散落世界各地的流浪者。他們是紮根其自己國家的不同國度的公民。從這裡出發，我們說明，世界各地的華人在推廣中國哲學成為世界哲學中的作用會逐漸減少。在過去大半個一個世紀里，在促使中國哲學成為世界哲學的過程中，海外的華人思想家做出了、並在繼續做出重要的貢獻。但是，隨著世界各地華人的身份的轉變，隨著中國哲學越來越成為一種世界哲學，海外的華人思想家在推動中國哲學方面的作用會逐漸減輕。這兩者之間存在一種成反比的關係。

關鍵詞：中國，中國人，華人，華僑，華人移民，血緣華人，中國文化，中國哲學。