

INTRODUCTION: WHERE EAST REALLY MEETS WEST

Ray Wang*

Journal of East-West Thought (JET), an academic quarterly, included in the noted *Philosopher's Index*, is 10 years old this month. A 10-year-old tree, depending on species, is generally huge with wide foliage. A 10-year-old human being is already in middle school, ready to spread wings of intellectual curiosity. A 10-year-old quarterly, however, is a weighty forty-volume collection of sweat, tears, sorrows, frustration, and alas, joy!

10 years ago, almost to the day, Zijiang came to my office at California State Polytechnic University and shared with me a proposal to start an academic journal. I had met Zijiang only a few days earlier at a gathering by the Chinese American Faculty Association Southern California and was struck by his enthusiasm on academic scholarship and teaching. Zijiang has an impressive academic record – author or editor of some 25 books and more than a hundred articles, with an equally impressive pedigree of academic preparation from Peking University to Purdue. But to start an academic journal? I had been somewhat involved with a literary journal before and witnessed firsthand how the editor had to “beg” any potential donors for support constantly.

Stories of publishing business make people lose their shirts are sad, but often true, to the extent that our Taiwanese friends have a saying – if you want to have someone destroyed, persuade him to start a magazine! And this is worse because it's an academic journal which by its very nature is not for profit! But Zijiang is unwavering. He showed me a list of scholars he had asked to serve on the editorial board, and they all agreed. A lineup of preeminent Eastern and Western scholars in their respective fields entered my view. These scholars are almost exclusively in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences, and they are indeed from all over the world. Many are Chinese scholars, except for a few in mainland China; most are overseas in North America, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Then as if hit by lightning, I realized that almost 80 percent of them did their undergraduate studies in China and now serve, in many ways, as a backbone in their respective institutions in teaching and research in the Western world.

Since Yung Wing (容闈) graduated from Yale in 1854¹ hundreds of thousands of Chinese students who studied in the West and Japan came and went. Among noted figures were Yan Fu (嚴覆), Hu Shieh (胡適), Chiang Monlin (蔣夢麟), Lu Xun (魯迅), Feng Youlan (馮友蘭), Chen Yinque (陳寅恪), Qian

* Dr. RAY WANG, Professor of English and Chief Information Officer at The University of New Orleans. He is also current president of the International Association for East-West Studies.

¹ Yung Wing, [Yung Wing \(1828-1912\) | Connecticut History | a CTHumanities Project](#) accessed on September 3, 2021.

Zhongshu (錢鐘書), Xu Zhimo (徐志摩), Liang Sicheng (梁思成), Phyllis Lin (林徽因), Frank Yang (楊振寧), Tsung-Dao Lee (李政道), Chien-Shiung Wu (吳健雄), Samuel Chao Chung Ting (吳健雄), Daniel C. Tsui (崔琦) and many more. As one can see, most scholars of Humanities and Social Sciences returned and most scientists stayed. There is even a theory that foreigners, especially Chinese, in soft sciences can't really find comparable positions in the western world. However, returned students from the West were treated as absolute authority on anything from the West, even though they might have just received their terminal degree and had never taught or done serious research in the country where they were trained.

In sharp contrast, this current impressive lineup of Chinese scholars not only received training in highly respectable universities, many ivy leagues or comparable, but also were hired through cut-throat competition to teach in similar universities, received highly coveted tenure, and led their fields as true experts, a phenomenon never witnessed before in the recent history of diaspora! These same scholars belong to a rare generation in China where they literally went through hell growing up. Many self-taught and made it out to the West through tenacity, perseverance, and exceptional academic and intellectual acumen. The significance couldn't be over emphasized if a platform could be created for this group of fine scholars to share their scholarship. It was precisely inspired by such a prospect, Zijiang, Xunwu and I decided to launch *Journal of East-West Thought*.

Jürgen Habermas, arguably the most noted living philosopher, asked by Xunwu Chen, the Co-editor of *JET*, wrote the first article for our inaugural issue, and the rest is history.

Over the last 10 years *JET* has grown from a relatively unknown journal to an academic powerhouse well regarded in North America, Europe, India, Japan, and mainland China. On this platform, thoughts of East and West met, clashed, discussed, critiqued, and celebrated. The current special issue is but one such example. In this anniversary issue, six prominent thinkers, Josef Seifert, William McBride, Yang Ye, Devendra Nath Tiwari, Suzuki Akiyoshi, and Zijiang Ding, are featured, and they are from Europe, North America, Japan, and India. Their scholarship represents some of the finest reflections on philosophy, culture, literary and political theory, and overall world view.

As I'm writing this introduction, New Orleans, the city where I live, has been hit by the worst storm ever, Hurricane Ida. But New Orleans has risen again from the rubbles of devastation. This victory over adversity is exactly how I expect to see in the future for *JET*. Like in front of a 10-year kid, the future might be treacherous, but, in the end, it will be bright, because *JET* is resilient, treasured, and loved by its readers, writers and supporters. Happy anniversary *JET*!