

Editor's Foreword

Modern and Contemporary Taiwanese Philosophy

Jana S. ROŠKER

The topic of this special issue deals with the development of a certain stream of the Chinese philosophical tradition. Yet this philosophy did not originate in mainland China, and thus in some supposedly logical “centre” of Chinese culture, but on its alleged “periphery”, namely on the beautiful island of Taiwan. One of the incentives for our decision to compile an issue of *Asian Studies* which is devoted entirely to the philosophical developments in Taiwan was an international conference, entitled *Taiwanese Philosophy and the Preservation of the Confucian Tradition*. This interesting academic meeting was organized in October 2019 in Ljubljana by the Center for Chinese Studies at the National Central Library in Taiwan in cooperation with the East Asian Research Library (EARL) and the Department of Asian Studies at University of Ljubljana.

The main goal of this issue is to show the broader academic audience dealing with the fields of Philosophy, Chinese or East Asian studies that Taiwanese philosophers have played an important role in the development of modern Chinese philosophy, and especially in the second half of the 20th century.

In contrast to the mainland, Taiwanese philosophy of that time had almost no connection with either Marxism or any of the many streams of post-Marxist philosophy. While theorists from the People's Republic of China were mainly dealing with various forms, issues and innovations in the field of the Sinization of Marxism,¹ those working on Taiwan devoted themselves to the exploration and adaptation of other forms of Western modernity, especially those deriving from Kant and German classical philosophy (Elstein 2015, 90). They wanted to modernize their own (i.e. Chinese) traditions through the ideas of the European Enlightenment. While in the 1950s the Chinese conceptual tradition (in particular, Confucianism) fell into disrepair and was often prohibited, or at least severely criticized, on the mainland (see e.g. Kam 1980), Taiwanese

1 However, the Sinization of Marxism has also been thoroughly treated in the journal *Asian Studies*. Namely, its first issue of Volume 7 (January 2019) was entirely devoted to this topic. In a narrower sense, the Sinization of Marxism has been analyzed in Tian (2019, 13–37), Rockmore (2019, 55–73), and Altinok (2019, 75–96).



philosophers were constantly striving for its preservation and development (Rošker 2015, 43ff).

However, at issue was not only the preservation of tradition; in the second half of the 20th century, several complex and coherent philosophical systems emerged in Taiwan. The creation of these discourses is proof of the great creativity and innovativeness of many Taiwanese theorists. Here, it is particularly important to highlight the Modern or New Confucianism and its most famous Taiwanese representative, Mou Zongsan.

Nevertheless, Confucianism is not the only stream of thought that was developed and subjected to innovation in post-war Taiwan; during the same period, we could witness many other forms of investigating and developing traditional Chinese thought on the island. In this regard, the Neo-Daoist currents and the Taiwanese Buddhist studies are certainly worth mentioning. Besides, modern Taiwanese philosophers have also enriched and advanced the originally Western medieval scholastic thought by establishing a specific school of the so-called Taiwanese Neo-Scholasticism, which was founded at the Fu-jen Catholic University. In the second half of the 20th century, specific schools of logical thought (including both Western and Chinese logic) also developed in several Taiwanese universities.

It is also important to highlight that even though the philosophical currents in modern and contemporary Taiwan belong to the most influential and important streams of thought in contemporary East Asian theory, they are still unrecognized as specifically Taiwanese. Moreover, the main reasons for the immense importance of Taiwanese philosophy for East Asia and the contemporary world are twofold.

First, they can be found in its contributions to the preservation of traditional Chinese, especially Confucian thought. Secondly, its development of specific innovative philosophical approaches and systems profoundly influenced the theoretical discourses in the entire East Asian region. The philosophical currents in modern Taiwan were mainly developed during the second half of 20th century, in which the philosophical theory in mainland China was, as already noted, largely limited to the Sinization of Marxist thought. Hence, for many decades, Taiwanese philosophy represented the only driving force of developing, modernizing and upgrading traditional Chinese thought and its syntheses with Western thought. As such, they soon gained a widespread popularity in most of the other East Asian societies that were traditionally influenced by classical Confucian thought, as for example Japan and South Korea.

The present issue of *Asian Studies* aims to introduce its important contributions to the wider international academic public, and to discuss and exchange knowledge

regarding their philosophical approaches, ideas and methods. Given the fact that numerous Taiwanese philosophers belong to the pinnacle of contemporary theoretic achievements in Chinese-speaking world, and because there is still an almost complete lack of awareness of this fact in European academic circles, this issue aims to clarify and present several important aspects of modern and contemporary Taiwanese philosophy, which have been summarized into three scopes of contents. The first deals with the revitalization of Confucian philosophy, while the second introduces Taiwanese philosophy from broader East Asian perspectives. The third scope is entirely devoted to one modern Taiwanese philosopher. It critically introduces Fang Dongmei (also known as Thomé Fang), who is still practically unknown in the Western world, even though his remarkable works show he was an important, original philosopher and a brilliant scholar, who might well be compared with the most famous Taiwanese theoretician, Mou Zongsan. The fourth and last scope traces the innovative Taiwanese transformations and modernizations of Chinese logic and Chinese Buddhist as well as Daoist philosophy from the beginning of the 20th century to the present.

The first scope, entitled *The Confucian Revival* includes three articles. It opens with Huang Kuan-Min's paper "Dissemination and Reterritorialization: Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan, and the Renovation of Contemporary Confucian Philosophy". It reveals that, as a philosophy, Confucianism returned to prominence in the second half of the 20th century, with the establishment of modern social and state institutions. The author focuses on the introduction and a critical analysis of the work of two Confucian philosophers, who were—each in his own way—significant for the establishment and development of contemporary Taiwanese philosophy, namely Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan. He describes their creativity through the lens of two concepts, dissemination and reterritorialization, that were borrowed from Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari. The second article in this scope was written by Ady Van den Stock under the title "The 'Learning of Life': On Some Motifs in Mou Zongsan's *Autobiography at Fifty*". As one can see from the title, this paper is also devoted to the work of one of the theoreticians who is at the centre of Huang Kuan-Min's article. Van den Stock's contribution treats the work of Mou, perhaps the most influential Taiwanese philosopher of the 20th century, through the lens of his own life and its relation to his philosophy, a topic that has hitherto not been investigated in the Western literature. In this context, the author concentrates upon the Confucian concept "learning of life", and then explores, on such a basis, Mou's notion of "life in itself", arguing that it is instrumental for gaining a better understanding of his philosophy. The third paper in this scope on Taiwanese Modern Confucianism is Ali Forkan's "Connecting East and West through Modern Confucian Thought: Re-reading

20th Century Taiwanese Philosophy”, which critically introduces the establishment and development of the Modern New Confucian stream of thought and its dialogues with Western philosophy.

The next scope of contents is entitled *Taiwanese Philosophy from a Broader East Asian Perspective* and comprises two articles. Marko Ogrizek's paper “Huang Chun-Chieh and Comparative Philosophy: Multiple Ways of Studying Confucian Ideas and Notions across Texts and Contexts” introduces the importance of the work of the Taiwanese theoretician Huang Chun-chieh in the field of East Asian Confucianisms. The article examines his hermeneutic and analytic methods, and shows how and why they represent a significant alternative to the more nationally motivated studies of the Confucian traditions in the 20th century. The second and last paper in this scope was written by the Korean researcher Kang Byoung Yoong under the title “Review and Prospects of Taiwanese Philosophy Scholarship in South Korea: A Historical Survey of Academic Publications from 1994 to 2018”. The paper is a result of a thorough investigation of the methods of perception, research and categorization of Taiwanese philosophy in South Korea since its beginnings to the present day. Both articles are significant with respect to the international interactions of Taiwanese philosophy, although both are mainly limited to its spread to two directly neighbouring countries, i.e. Japan and Korea. However, the awareness of its significance definitely started from its influence in the Sinitic regions of Eastern Asia, and this important fact cannot be neglected.

The third scope is devoted to Fang Dongmei (or Tomé Fang). Under the title *Fang Dongmei and the Philosophy of Creative Creativity*, it explores the significance of a philosopher who is—unfortunately and unjustifiably—still not very well known in Western academia. The scope opens with Jana S. Rošker's article “Modernizing the Philosophy of Creative Creativity: Fang Dongmei's Fusion of Holism and Individuality”. The paper represents a general introduction of his work and its crucial concepts. This paper is followed by Téa Sernelj's article entitled “Different Approaches to Chinese Aesthetics: Fang Dongmei and Xu Fuguan”. The author elaborates upon Fang Dongmei's development of Chinese aesthetics and places it into a contrastive analysis with the work of another member of the second generation of Modern New Confucianism, Xu Fuguan, who is also renowned for his theories on Chinese aesthetic thought. This scope of contents ends with a third paper which was written by Wang Keping. In this intriguing contribution, which is entitled “Thomé Fang's Pursuit of a Cultural Ideal”, the author investigates Fang's philosophical theories, which are, as Wang reveals, largely directed to the possibility of humane enculturation. Wang Keping shows why and in which way this kind of enculturation can be compared to the Greek idea of *paideia*, which

is not surprising, given the fact that Fang's thought was based upon a thorough reflection of both Western and Chinese philosophies.

The last scope of contents is dealing with *Modern Transformations in Logic, Daoist and Buddhist Philosophy* in Taiwan. It begins with Fabian Heubel's article "Within the Spinning Stillness of the Present: Reflections on Transcultural Zhuangzi-Studies in Taiwan". It introduces the significance of contemporary Daoist studies in the context of modern Taiwanese intellectual history and transcultural philosophy, focusing upon the work of the contemporary Taiwanese philosopher Yang Rubin, and particularly upon his innovative and subject-related interpretations of the *Zhuangzi*. This article is followed by Jan Vrhovski's paper "Qinghua School of Logic and the Origins of Taiwanese Studies in Modern Logic: A Note on the Early Thought of Mou Zongsan and Yin Haiguang". This contribution likewise introduces a hitherto very poorly investigated aspect of Taiwanese philosophy, namely the development of logical thought on the island. It concentrates upon the early thought of Mou Zongsan and Yin Haiguang, first showing how their ideas were originally connected to the so-called Qinghua School of (Mathematical) Logic in the late mainland Republican China, and then systematically introducing their contribution to the formation and development of studies in logic in post-1949 Taiwan. The last paper in this scope, which also concludes this special issue, is Bart Dessein's article entitled "The Heritage of Taixu: Philosophy, Taiwan, and Beyond". It deals with the Taiwanese Buddhist studies and their specific reaction to global modernization processes. Proceeding from an extensive analysis of the writings of Taixu, a great reformer of Buddhism from the early 20th century, the author shows that the modernization of Buddhism was at first seen as an undertaking that was inextricably connected to political and social reforms of the time, and has in this sense also had a great impact on the specific developments of modern Taiwanese intellectual history.

With this rich palette of different topics that are all linked to modern Taiwanese thought and reveal the multifarious richness of its ideas, this intriguing volume will doubtless show that Taiwanese philosophy can be seen as a bridge that links different discourses across time and space by illuminating and exposing various otherwise neglected traditions of Chinese philosophical thought. I also believe that it will show why this connective function and dialogical nature is precisely the greatest significance of contemporary Taiwanese philosophy, and sincerely hope that it will raise awareness of this among the wider circles of European academia. And last, but not least, my sincere wish is also that this special issue of our journal may serve, similar to Taiwanese philosophy, which is its subject matter, as a bridge connecting many different ideas, viewpoints and values.

References

- Altinok, Ozan Altan. 2019. "Mao's Marxist Negation of Marxism." *Asian Studies* 7 (1): 75–96.
- Kam, Louie. 1980. *Critiques of Confucius in Contemporary China*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Elstein, David. 2015. *Democracy in Contemporary Confucian Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.
- Rockmore, Tom. 2019. "Hegel and Chinese Marxism." *Asian Studies* 7 (1): 55–73.
- Rošker, Jana S. 2015. *The Rebirth of the Moral Self—The Second Generation of Modern Confucians and their Modernization Discourses*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.
- Tian, Chenshan. 2019. "Mao Zedong, Sinization of Marxism, and Traditional Chinese Thought Culture." *Asian Studies* 7 (1): 13–37.