

Distinguished guests, dear colleagues and friends!

This conference, has been jointly organized by the Center for Chinese Studies at the National Central Library in Taipei, the EARL, and the Department of Asian Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Ljubljana University. The meeting is entitled *Taiwanese Philosophy and the Preservation of Traditional Chinese Philosophy*, and it promises to become a stimulating meeting, full of intriguing presentations and hot debates that will hopefully turn out to be not only interesting and informative, but also thought provoking and inspiring. This time, we have gathered in Ljubljana over 25 speakers from various European and Asian countries and we are proud to announce that most of them are well-known and internationally influential scholars in the field of Chinese philosophy. Therefore, we are proud and happy that they have accepted our invitation.

The topic of today's conference deals with the Chinese philosophical tradition. Yet this philosophy did not originate in mainland China, and thus in some supposedly logical "center" of Chinese culture, but on its alleged "periphery", namely on the beautiful island of Taiwan. The main reason for organizing this conference is to show the broader European academic audience 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 Sinification of Marxism, 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. 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, Taiwanese philosophers were constantly striving for its preservation and development.

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.

But in post-war Taiwan we can also witness many other forms of investigating and upgrading traditional Chinese thought. In this regard, the Neo-Daoist current 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.

However, the rich palette of philosophical thought that emerged in Taiwan in the second half of the 20th century cannot be limited to these few streams of thought. Therefore, the present conference includes and critically introduces many more currents, streams of thought and individual philosophers, who have decidedly contributed to the creative blossoming of modern Chinese philosophy.

Therefore, this conference 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 that this connective function and dialogical nature is precisely the greatest significance of contemporary Taiwanese philosophy, and I sincerely hope that it will raise awareness of this significance among the wider circles of European academia. And last, but not least, my sincere wish is also that this conference may serve, similar to Taiwanese philosophy, which is its subject matter, as a bridge connecting many different ideas, viewpoints and values.

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