

## Taiwanese Philosophy: "Philosophical Activities in Taiwan" or "Taiwanese Philosophy with Subjective Characteristics" ? An Exploration of the Relationship between Two Semantic Divergences "

### Abstract

The examination of "Taiwanese Philosophy" is intricately influenced by the complex meanings of its terms<sup>4</sup>, fostering a range of interpretations and understandings that play a crucial role in the methodological discussions on how Taiwanese philosophical ideas are analyzed and developed. I highlight that the conventional approaches to interpreting "Taiwanese Philosophy" are mainly divided into two models: the PIT framework, signifying "Philosophical activities in Taiwan," and the TP framework, indicating "Taiwanese Philosophy noted for its unique subjectivity" (see Hung & Gao 2018)<sup>5</sup>. In the early twentieth century, Mou Zongsan's emergence of New Confucianism shaped the academic reception towards the PIT model and elicited critiques of the TP perspective. This trend guided scholars in Chinese philosophy towards the CPIT (Chinese Philosophy in Taiwan) approach for deciphering "Taiwanese Philosophy," typically viewing it as a form of "Chinese philosophical endeavors in Taiwan." The prevailing contemporary academic opinion posits that initial supporters of New Confucianism failed to recognize Taiwanese philosophy's unique characteristics and position following colonialism, reducing it to the CPIT model. This stance places "Taiwanese Philosophy" within the broader realm of Chinese Philosophy, highlighting the hierarchical differences between Chinese and Taiwanese philosophical traditions, which later drew substantial critique from supporters of Western liberalism and decolonization efforts. Recently, the importance of "Taiwanese Philosophy" and "Taiwanese Theory" has been increasingly acknowledged, with a growing agreement that "Taiwanese Philosophy," ideally interpreted through the TP model<sup>6</sup>, mirrors Taiwan's collective ethos and academic value rather than the more exhaustive PIT classification, which encompasses diverse philosophical lineages. Proponents of TP recognize the historical importance of the PIT model in documenting the evolution of Taiwanese Philosophy but strongly dispute its completeness for grasping the essence of "Taiwanese Philosophy." I intend to argue that, notwithstanding the recent criticisms against the PIT approach, revisiting PIT with the aid of extensive textual collections, cultural archives, and the study of intellectual history might offer a solid basis for a deeper appreciation of TP. It will explore how the PIT model can lead to significant misunderstandings by introducing two main biases: the belief that PIT sufficiently encapsulates "Taiwanese Philosophy," and the limitation of PIT to a mere geographical context. In addressing these biases, I offer a potential amicable reinterpretation and reassess the critical elements for a metaphysical description of the subjectivity emphasized in TP.

**Keywords:** Optimal interpretation of Taiwanese Philosophy, Subjectivity and Agency, Genealogy of Knowledge, Methodology of Constructing Theories, Characteristics of Regional Philosophy

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<sup>4</sup> Under contemporary mainstream theories of cognitive linguistics, almost all words possess polysemous characteristics, Even "proper names" have their "core meaning/reference" and "marginal meaning/reference." Although this debate is rich in linguistic philosophical interest regarding "meaning and reference," this paper will not address it due to constraints of length and topic.

<sup>5</sup> Hung, Tzu-wei & Gao, Jun-He (2018). Whose philosophy? Whose history? the past and future of Taiwanese philosophy. In Tzu-wei hung and Duen-min Deng (eds) *Enlightenment and Rebellion: 100 years of Taiwanese philosophy*. National Taiwan University Press (In Mandarin). This paper's reconstruction of (I) PIT and (II) TP, although originating from Hong & Gao (2018), does not overlap with the main context of their discussion.

<sup>6</sup> Recent Taiwanese philosophical works that have recognized the significant implications of (TP) include: Hung, Tzu-wei, (ed.) (2016), "Existential Engagement: Philosophy in Taiwan during the Japanese Era," Taipei: Linking Publishing; Hung, Tzu-wei & Deng, Duen-min (eds) (2018), "Enlightenment and Rebellion: A Hundred Years of Taiwanese Philosophy," Taipei: National Taiwan University Press; Liao(2022), "Visions of Philosophy in Pre-war Taiwan: A Journey of Existence." Taipei: Wu-Nan.