

Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism and Its Lessons for Modern Times

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Abstract

In ‘Equity and Marxist Buddhism,’ Tzu-wei Hung engages with the Marxist Buddhism developed by Taiwanese philosopher Lin Qiu-wu in the 1920s, brings this underexplored theory to the table and discusses a few merits and insights of the theory. Building on Hung’s analysis, this paper elaborates on the lessons and insights that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism provides for modern times. The first three lessons are distinctive points that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism brings to the discussion on combining Marxism and Buddhism: the connections between the ethical and political, the responsibility for pursuing social justice and the nonviolence means towards social justice. The last lesson comes at the meta-philosophical level, focusing on how Hung’s engagement with Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism sheds light on the issue of diversifying the discipline philosophy. Overall, I argue that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism not only makes contributions to theoretical frameworks while providing a practical means for pursuing equity and social justice, but it also manifests the epistemic and moral values for engaging with under-represented philosophical traditions.

Keywords: Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism; Taiwanese philosophy; equity; Lin Qiu-wu; structural injustice; diversifying philosophy

1. Introduction: Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism in Context

Are Marxism and Buddhism compatible? And if so, how? Since Tenzin Gyatso, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, expressed his self-identification as a ‘Marxist’ or ‘half-Marxist, half-Buddhist’ in a public speech in 1993,¹ an increasing amount of attention has been paid to the potential connections between Marxism and Buddhism. During the past few decades, several scholars have argued that these two theories, which originate in entirely different times and places, actually agree on many aspects (though not without key differences) and may complement each other in the goal of living better personal lives and pursuing better social orders (Slott 2011; Struhl 2017; Priest 2018).

However, the idea of combining Marxism and Buddhism can be traced back to almost a century ago—to East Asia, as revealed in Hung Tzu-wei’s paper, ‘Equity and Marxist Buddhism’. In it, Hung engages with the Marxist Buddhism developed by Taiwanese philosopher Lin Qiu-wu in the 1920s, brings this underexplored theory to the table and discusses a few merits and insights of the theory. In the following, I refer to this theory as *Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism* to recognise

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dhvlnc-oKEw>

its Taiwanese origin and distinguish it from other potential forms of Marxist Buddhism. Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism, Hung argues, takes a virtue ethics approach in the pursuit of equity, suggests distributing the responsibility of achieving equity broadly to societal members instead of only to state governments, recognises the tight connections between language inequality and hermeneutical lacuna and sheds light on the developments of humanistic Buddhism, sex and gender equity and the animal liberation movement in Taiwan.

Building on Hung's analysis, the current paper elaborates on the lessons and insights that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism provides for modern times. The first three lessons are distinctive points that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism brings to the discussion on combining Marxism and Buddhism: the connections between the ethical and political, the responsibility for pursuing social justice and the nonviolence means towards social justice. The last lesson comes at the meta-philosophical level, focusing on how Hung's engagement with Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism sheds light on the issue of diversifying the discipline philosophy. Overall, I argue that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism not only makes contributions to theoretical frameworks while providing a practical means for pursuing equity and social justice, but it also manifests the epistemic and moral values for engaging with under-represented philosophical traditions.

This paper proceeds as follows: In §2, I situate Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism against the existing discussions on the dialogues between Marxism and Buddhism and provide further details about how Lin's background motivated him to compose this theory. In §3, I discuss three notable contributions that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism brings to the existing discussions. First, in contrast with the more standard picture, which treats the ethical and political as complementary to each other, I argue that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism proposes a picture of more intertwined relations between the ethical and the political, echoing some modern discussions on responsibility for structural injustice. As a practice-oriented theory, Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism provides instructions on responsibility distribution and means to be adopted in pursuing equity and social justice. Regarding its proposal on responsibility distribution, I critically examine Hung's interpretation and instead propose interpreting it as an example of highlighting the role of agents with collective ability in shaping social structure. To pursue social justice, I interrogate Hung's interpretation of Lin's claim, 'the great resistance without resistance', providing a slightly different understanding of the reasoning behind it. Finally, in §4, I analyse Hung's engagement with Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism on the meta-philosophical level. I argue that there are both epistemic and moral reasons to explore under-represented philosophical traditions, and Hung's work is a great example. From this perspective, Hung's work is laudable for its contributions to the issue of equity and for diversifying the discipline of philosophy.

2. Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism in Context

Recent scholarly discussions have revealed several ways in which Marxism and Buddhism—while having lots of disagreements—could complement each other (Slott 2011; Struhl 2017; Priest 2018). In this section, to situate Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism against this scholarly background, I first

identify some common themes in these existing discussions (§2.1) before then talking briefly about Lin Qiu-wu's approach to drawing Marxism and Buddhism into a dialogue (§2.2). These reflections will help us understand how Lin's cultural background influences his proposal on Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism, hence analysing its notable contributions.

2.1 How Marxism and Buddhism Complement Each Other

Scholarly examinations of Buddhism and Marxism have noted several common elements that are shared by both theories, suggesting a few ways that they can strengthen each other. Both theories have a similar humanistic concern: How can improvements be made to address unsatisfactory human conditions? Both theories begin from the observation of the suffering or unsatisfactory features of human lives, provide some diagnoses of such problems and propose ways to make the situations become better.

Beyond this core theme, Marxism and Buddhism have different focuses, diagnoses and proposals, highlighting the potential for them to enrich and complement each other.² For example, Buddhist theory provides an analysis via what is called the *Four Noble Truths*, which simply put, begin with the observation of the prevalence of suffering (*duḥkha*), provide the diagnosis that the causes of suffering are the illusion of the self and one's associated attachment and aversion (*trṣṇa*), go on to suggest one should get rid of the illusionary ideas and emotions surrounding the self to avoid suffering and, finally, provide some guidelines (*the Eightfold Noble Path*) to remove these illusionary ideas. In contrast, although Marxism also begins by noticing the prevalence of suffering, it gives a diagnosis that the causes of such suffering are associated with the 'division of labor, class exploitation, and alienation brought about by the capitalist mode of production' (Struhl 2017, p. 103) and suggests constructing a classless society through class struggle to improve human conditions.

The fact that Marxism and Buddhism have common concerns yet approached through different analyses has sparked scholars' interest in exploring how they might complement each other. For example, one popular point is that Buddhism provides an ethical theory (that Marxism does not) on how individuals should live their lives to reduce suffering, while Marxism provides a political philosophy (that Buddhism does not) that offers critical examinations of the social and economic structures that give rise to human suffering (Slott 2011; Priest 2018). The idea is that if we combine their diagnoses of human suffering and the suggestions for eliminating them, then we will have a more comprehensive understanding and treatment of human suffering.

Although there are multiple ways in which Buddhism and Marxism might complement each other, in his analysis of how Buddhism and Marxism might enrich each other, Michael Slott states, 'What seems more feasible is for individuals who are political activists/'Marxists' and 'Buddhists' to bring into one organizational arena insights and actions based in the other' (Slott 2011, p. 359). This, I suggest, is what Lin Qiu-wu's Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism does (more details in §3.2). With this, I now turn to a brief introduction to Lin Qiu-wu and the background for him to propose Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism.

² For more detailed discussions, see Slott 2011, Struhl 2017, and Priest 2018.

2.2 Lin Qiu-wu and the Background of Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism

Lin Qiu-wu, also called ‘Taiwan’s revolutionary monk’ (Li 1991), was born and raised during the Japanese colonised era in Taiwan. Such a historical and cultural background contributed to Lin being deeply influenced by anticolonialism, nationalism and socialism. Lin was exposed to Marxism during the 1920s, when the ethos of socialism was forming a popular wave in the world, and Japan-colonised Taiwan was no exception (Li 1991). Greatly concerned about the suffering of workers and farmers, Lin was attracted by the ‘classless society’ characterised by Marxism and even conducted comparisons between the Marxist ideal and the Confucian Ideal of the Great Harmony (Lin 1930). When Lin decided to convert to Buddhism in 1927 and received his monastic name as the ‘Venerable Zheng-fung’ (Jones 2000), he did not abandon Marxism nor become a hermit. Rather, he took a path that tried to hold on to both Marxism and Buddhism at the same time, use them to constructively critique each other and come up with a more comprehensive picture of how to mitigate suffering in society.

Among the various possible relationships between Marxism and Buddhism that one can try to hold together, it seems best to characterise what Lin Qiu-wu did as primarily using Marxism to critique Buddhist practices in Taiwan at the time and to propose a new form of Buddhism that synergises some of the core spirits of Buddhism and Marxism. For example, Lin severely criticised the superstitious practices and beliefs of excluding women that were commonly held by Buddhists during the time, and he regularly published public-facing essays in newspapers such as *South Seas Buddhist Magazine* and *Taiwan MinPao* (Li 1991). This new form of Buddhism proposed by Lin is sometimes also referred to as *Taiwanese Liberation Buddhism*, and as noted by Hung, is ‘predating both engaged Buddhism in Vietnam and liberation theology in Latin America’. (forthcoming, p. 2). Situated in the Japanese colonised background, when it came to proposing this theory, Lin’s ultimate goal was to liberate the Taiwanese and fight against the ‘looming threat of colonial assimilation’ (Hung forthcoming, p.2). Even though Lin only lived for thirty-two years, the abundant writings he left continue to inspire scholarly explorations, and the spirit of Taiwanese Liberation Buddhism continues to influence the developments of humanistic Buddhism, gender equity, LGBT rights and the animal liberation movement in Taiwan.

3. Contributions of Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism

The cultural and historical background of Lin makes his Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism especially ‘practically oriented’, as Hung (forthcoming, p. 2) describes. Most discussions concerning the compatibility of both Marxism and Buddhism pay special focus to their metaphysical views on the self or causes of suffering; in contrast, Lin’s proposal focuses more on the practical implications derived from the synergy of Marxism and Buddhism, which adds valuable intellectual resources to how these two theories might enrich each other. Below, I highlight three notable points that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism bring into the dialogue: the intertwined connections between the ethical and political (§3.1), distributing the responsibility for pursuing equity and social justice to

agents other than the state government (§3.2) and appealing to nonviolent means in pursuing those goals (§3.3). In my analysis, I compare the proposals of Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism with some other contemporary discussions and raise questions for Hung about his interpretations of the theory. By clarifying the takeaways of Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism and its relations with other theories aimed at combating social injustices, we can have a more comprehensive picture of pursuing equity.

3.1 The Intertwined Connections between the Ethical and the Political

As mentioned earlier (in §2.1), one popular suggestion about how Buddhism and Marxism might complement each other is that the former provides an ethical account giving instructions on what individuals should do to reduce one's suffering, while the latter provides a theory of political philosophy that suggests what one should do (together with others) to eliminate social injustice (Slott 2011; Priest 2018). The thought goes as follows: these two theories focus on human suffering on the different levels (the individual and social-political levels), which are both important, and when they are combined, we will have a fuller picture of how to respond to the different kinds of suffering.

Although Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism does not deny the distinction between the ethical and political, it proposes a picture that portrays their connections as more tightly intertwined than mere concerns at two different levels. This can be gathered from Hung's translation of a quote from Lin (Hung forthcoming, p. 8):

Bodhisattva action is based on living in the true self and seeking the happiness of the people in society; there is no fear of action. Altruism is the word that expresses such action. Hence, those who can practice bodhisattva action are the vanguards of social reform. Their fundamental goal is to build a paradise on earth, the Pure Land in this world. They aim to enable all humans (and then all living beings) to be free from suffering and enjoy happiness. The so-called blissful world in Buddhism has described this joyful society. (Lin 1933, II, Hung's Translation)

In this paragraph, Lin provides a revolutionary interpretation of Buddhist views on the Pure Land and bodhisattva. In contrast to a more orthodox view that regards Buddhism as focusing on the liberation of those who follow Buddhist practices, Lin suggests that it is actually about the liberation of all humans and living beings in society. Creatively combining Buddhist beliefs about the Pure Land and paradise with socialist concerns of all members of society, Lin urges Buddhists to avoid merely paying attention to their own well-being and instead carrying out the social revolution to realise the ideal of the Pure Land in this world. From this perspective, Lin's proposal points out a tighter connection between the ethical and political: the ethical actions, or bodhisattva actions, actually have a political concern and an aim of engaging with society. In other words, to act ethically, one needs to perform in a political way. This is why Lin states that 'those who can practice bodhisattva action are the vanguards of social reform.' The ethical and political are, in this sense, inseparable.

One interesting point is that the discussions on intertwined relations between the ethical and political can also be observed in the contemporary discussions on individuals' responsibility

for structural injustice. The idea of structural injustice, as first coined by feminist philosopher Iris M. Young (2011), aims to identify a type of moral wrong imposed by the social structure, which makes some groups of people prone to oppression or domination while conferring unearned power and privileges to others. Although being called ‘structural’ injustice, Young has explicitly emphasised the inseparable relationships between individuals and social structures: there is no structure without individuals’ practices; that is, social structures are only formed and sustained through individuals’ practices and interactions.

In this way, the notion of structural injustice challenges the commonly held belief that all of us are independent agents; it reveals that the agency of each individual is highly influenced, either constrained or enabled, by the resources, values or opportunities presented by the social structure. Furthermore, the idea of structural injustice emphasises that our actions do not only have their direct consequences through explicit events of interactions; rather, they also contribute to the function of social structures, making some of the structural injustices replicated, exacerbated or mitigated.

The nature of the close connections between individuals and structures, as revealed by the structural injustice framework, resonates with the illusion of the self, as pointed out by Marxism and Buddhism: the bodily boundary of each individual does not reflect the reality that each of us is actually much tightly connected with each other, which constitutes a sense of greater self. Moreover, the observations of the tight connections between the individual and structure through the structural injustice perspective motivate claims about the intertwined relations between the ethical and political.

To theorise the responsibility for structural injustice, Young proposes what she calls the social connection model (SCM), according to which all agents who are connected to social structures bear the *political responsibility* for structural injustice. This political responsibility dictates a *shared responsibility* (a kind of responsibility that can only be charged together by those who also bear the shared responsibility) for a forward-looking goal of transforming the social structure. In other words, all individuals who are connected with the social structure should join in collective actions to transform the social structure and make it less unjust in the future.

Young’s notion of political responsibility has sparked much debate on its nature and whether it is distinct from the more familiar kinds of moral responsibility. One influential interpretation of political responsibility has been proposed by Robin Zheng (2019), who argues for categorising Young’s political responsibility as a kind of accountability and suggests that the notion of political responsibility bridges the ethical with the political. Zheng highlights a few features of responsibility as accountability: it is rooted in the fact that we are all members of a moral community, it assigns the corresponding required tasks by considering the specific social roles or positions that one is situated in, and that it highlights forward-looking actions. Understood this way, the responsibility depicted by Young’s SCM emphasises, as Zheng puts it, that ‘ethics entails politics’. Considering the nature of structural injustice, Zheng states, ‘In a structurally unjust world, too complex to be fixed by the actions of any individual (however powerful), it turns

out that communicating, coordinating and working with others is built into one's duties as a moral individual' (2019, p. 15).

Although the reasoning behind Zheng's analysis and Lin's proposal differs slightly, Zheng's claim that ethics entails politics resonates well with Lin's proposal that 'those who can practice bodhisattva action are the vanguards of social reform.' In a world where each individual is actually connected with each other as part of a greater unity, pursuing one's better self cannot be done without working to improve the conditions for other beings and the entire world.

3.2 Responsibility for Pursuing Social Justice

The issue of responsibility distribution for combating injustice does not seem to receive much attention in the discussions on the relationships between Marxism and Buddhism. From this perspective, the proposal of Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism adds novel contributions.

In Hung's paper, he argues that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism 'highlights the importance of cultivating personal virtue and assigns the responsibility for social progress to each social member instead of passively relying on political elites in a representative democracy to change unjust social structures' (forthcoming, p.9). In contrast with Rawlsian theory, which mainly assigns the responsibility for social justice to the state government, Hung suggests that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism provides a valuable alternative that is more sensible for countries undergoing or that have just gone through a dictatorship and, thus, do not have much trust in the state government.

Although I agree with Hung that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism's proposal of not exclusively assigning responsibility to the state government is a valuable alternative, I have issues with Hung's interpretation. First, it is not clear that the claim of being altruistic has to be a virtue ethics claim. From the quote that Hung cites, Lin says, 'Bodhisattva action is based on living in the true self and seeking the happiness of the people in society; there is no fear of action. Altruism is the word that expresses such action' (Lin 1933, II). Just from this quote, it is not clear that Lin intends to use 'altruism' to indicate the kind of virtue that one should hold; rather, it seems at least equally plausible or compatible to suggest that altruistic actions could be done based on utilitarian or deontological reasoning. In other words, from the support that Hung cites, Lin's proposal is compatible with various normative moral theories.

Second, Hung interprets Lin's claim as suggesting that the responsibility of addressing structural injustice should be distributed to each moral agent, no matter what position one is situated in (Hung forthcoming, p. 9-10); although it seems plausible, I do not find much evidence from the quotes to support such an interpretation. Instead, from the context of Lin's writings, it seems more sensible to understand Lin as urging Buddhist people to shoulder the responsibility of addressing social injustice. After all, Lin's target audience are Buddhist people. This is consistent with where Lin's essays were published and also offers a great explanation of why Lin's argument often directly assumes that the audience has already endorsed Buddhist beliefs, for example, that there is a Pure Land or that bodhisattva action is desirable. Of course, my preferred interpretation does not conflict with Hung's. It is possible that Lin both believed that the responsibility should

be distributed to every member of society but, at the same time, because of his personal associations with Buddhist groups, he decided to emphasise more the role that Buddhist people should play.

Two observations can be drawn from my interpretation, which reads Lin's argument as mostly targeting Buddhist groups and emphasising their responsibility for social justice. First, it seems that Lin did what Michael Slott describes as a feasible way for Buddhism and Marxism to complement each other. Slott suggests that, compared with attempts that aim to directly combine both Buddhist and Marxist perspectives and practices, it is more feasible 'for individuals who are political activists/'Marxists' and 'Buddhists' to bring into one organisational arena the insights and actions based on the other' (Slott 2011, p. 359). Lin does so in both aspects. On the one hand, as a Buddhist, he brings the insights of Marxism in criticising the socio-economic system to argue for creating the Pure Land in this world and standing with the oppressed. On the other hand, as a Marxist who also believes in some forms of class struggle, he brings insights from Buddhism to propose approaching it through nonviolent means (we will get into more details on this point in the following section, §3.3). It is impressive to see how Lin was doing so back in the 1920s.

Second, Lin's urging Buddhist people to participate in social movements for justice is a good example highlighting the critical role that agents with the ability to mobilise collective actions can play. In considering the issue of responsibility distribution for addressing structural injustice, Iris M. Young (2011) proposes what she calls the four *parameters of reasoning* for individuals to decide how one might be able to contribute to the collective actions for pursuing social justice. *Collective ability*, which is the ability to mobilise groups of people, is one of the four parameters (the other three are power, privilege and interest). Some examples of those with collective ability, according to Young, are those who are members of some social or religious groups (for example, labour union, a church group) and, thus, have better chances to draw on the resources of that group or influence other members in the same group for change. From this perspective, Lin's making use of his belonging to Buddhist groups to persuade other Buddhists is a good example of how people with collective ability could act to discharge their responsibility for social justice.

3.3 Nonviolence Means towards Societal Transformation

In addition to the issue of responsibility distribution, Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism further fills in some details regarding the approach to performing social revolutions, which is another practical aspect that most of the discussions on complementing Marxism and Buddhism have failed to explore. As Hung points out, Lin synergises Marxism and Buddhism by arguing that class struggle is necessary for societal transformation (as suggested by Marxism) but, at the same time, arguing that it should be done in a nonviolent way (as implied by Buddhism). This approach is what Lin describes as 'the great resistance without resistance' (1929).

The claim of the great resistance without resistance is indeed interesting, but the passage Hung quotes does not seem to provide much support for Lin's claim:

The Buddhist attitude toward class struggle has always been consistent. It stands in the position of no-self as the great-self, with the goal of supporting the proletariat and liberating the exploited class. Its method is not the violence of armed revolution but the principle of great resistance without resistance. Compared to the drastic measures advocated by general Marxists, this is a world away. (Lin 1929, Hung's Translation)

From the quote, it does seem that the approach Lin endorses is a nonviolent revolution, but other than that, it seems that we are lacking the details for understanding this means. Here, Lin seems to leave us with several puzzles: Does 'without resistance' mean 'no resistance' or doing nothing? If so, why should we think that no resistance is the great resistance? How could no resistance be effective in bringing about societal change?

Hung interprets the 'without resistance' part as appealing to some actions that are more about sacrificing oneself or appealing to the suffering of oneself, such as fasting, hunger strikes, and self-immolation. From the context of the quotes, it is not clear whether this is the most sensible interpretation of it. However, even if we accept Hung's interpretation, it seems puzzling to suggest that these practices are the most effective ways to achieve the goal of combating oppression.

Here, I offer an alternative interpretation of the idea of without resistance: understanding it as proposing an appeal to nonviolent noncooperation practices in social movements, such as strikes, sit-ins, and boycotts. Although Hung does point out some of these practices, such as Gandhi's noncooperative protests, what should be emphasised more is the noncooperative spirit so as not to be distracted by the self-sacrificing components in some of the examples mentioned by Hung.

Below is my attempt to fill the gap in Lin's principle of great resistance without resistance. In Lin's quote, he draws a parallel between the Buddhist belief that the no-self is the great-self and suggests a proposal that no resistance is the great resistance. What are the connections between them? I suggest that it would be sensible to understand Lin as pointing to the tight connections between individuals and other social members. The Buddhist idea of the no-self as the great-self suggests that the individual's bodily boundary of self is a mere illusion. We are not completely independent beings but rather part of the great-self. If this is the case, then the following thought would be reasonable: if we want to disrupt how the great-self is doing or to resist the oppressions that the great-self imposed on some, then one effective way would be to stop conforming to the current system of the great-self, hence preventing the oppressions from being replicated. In fact, this is the core belief behind many contemporary disruptive social movements that aim to disturb the *status quo* and, in this way, motivate more people to take action in fighting against oppression (Hayward 2020).

The contemporary discussions on nonviolent violent social movements continue to add theoretical and empirical support. For example, Gene Sharp (2002) argues that, compared with a coup overthrow or waiting for international help, appealing to nonviolent political defiance is a more effective way to overthrow a dictatorship. Even though military combat might sound more powerful, Sharp argues that military struggle is more advantageous for the state government, which owns great military forces. Furthermore, although it might sound too ideal to appeal to nonviolent

movements for social reform, some empirical studies have suggested otherwise. Based on a statistical analysis of large-scale social movements between 1990 and 2006, Erica Chenoweth (2013) points out what she calls ‘the 3.5% rule’, which suggests that ‘no government has withstood a challenge of 3.5% of their population mobilised against it during a peak event’. In other words, the observation of historical events reveals that as long as 3.5% of the country’s population actively unites together to join the collective movements, their political defiance will reach success in the end. One of the attractions of nonviolent movement, Chenoweth suggests, is that it reduces the threshold for people to join movements. In contrast with the required capacity and perceived danger of participating in violent combat, nonviolent movements are seen as more accessible to the general public. With more people joining noncooperative movements, the disruptions it creates would be stronger and, thus, more conducive to success.

In sum, Lin’s Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism contributes to the scholarly explorations on equity and social justice in many ways. It portrays an alternative picture about the relationships between the ethical and political, exemplifies what people with collective ability might do to mobilise members of social groups and proposes appealing to nonviolent means for societal transformation. Furthermore, as a practical-oriented theory, Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism sheds light on issues such as responsibility distribution and a means towards societal transformation that most discussions on the complementary nature of Marxism and Buddhism do not touch upon. The exciting intellectual resources presented by Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism warrant recognition and worth advancement.

4. Taiwanese Philosophy, Epistemic Injustice and the Urge of Diversifying Philosophy

In addition to the contributions that Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism brings to the scholarly discussions surrounding the pursuit of equity and social justice, Hung’s work, which engages with Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism, has further value at the meta-philosophical level. In this section, I discuss the value of Hung’s work from the perspective of epistemic injustice and the urge to diversify the discipline of philosophy.

In ‘Diverse Philosophies: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?’ Shen-yi Liao (2021) argues that the meta-philosophical question about whether *x philosophy* (where *x* might be substituted by Latin American, African, Chinese, etc.) is *really philosophy* is the wrong kind of question to ask. Drawing a parallel from Sally Haslanger (2000)’s analysis of ‘race’ and ‘gender’, Liao argues that ‘philosophy’ is also a concept of social construction whose boundaries are constantly being collectively negotiated and renegotiated. Thus, when reflecting on these concepts, it is more appropriate to conduct *ameliorative* inquiries—that is, to ask what we want these concepts to be. In other words, instead of asking whether *x philosophy* is really philosophy, we should ask, ‘*What do we want x philosophy to be?*’ or ‘*Whether we want x philosophy to be philosophy?*’ For Liao, clarifying the appropriate questions to be asked is liberating. Doing so avoids endless and exhausting debates about what *really* counts as philosophy (where such scrutinies are only directed at noncanonical intellectual traditions), hence urging us to recognise the power that we bear to shape the world and make philosophy what we want it to be.

Building on Liao's discussions, I offer two reasons that urge people to engage with underexplored or noncanonical philosophical traditions: one is based on the epistemic value of such engagement and the other on its moral value. In both aspects, Hung's engagement with Lin's Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism serves as a great example that manifests both values.

First, engaging with under-represented philosophical traditions has crucial epistemic value. To describe the phenomenon of the currently restricted engagements with a few philosophical traditions, Alex Guerrero (2018) uses an analogy of someone looking for his keys under a streetlight, even though they lost the keys in the park across the street because 'this is where the light is'. Philosophy raises complicated questions that are difficult to answer comprehensively, and if we want to inquire about the answers seriously, then we should explore them broadly, for example, to examine the answers proposed by people from different locations and times.

The diverse cultural, historical and political backgrounds of people tend to nourish distinctive approaches and answers, and Lin Qiu-wu's proposal of Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism is a great example. In considering how to address oppression and pursue equity, Lin's background inspired him to combine Marxism and Buddhism as a response, and in many ways, his proposal is distinctive from the philosophers in modern Western societies. For example, as Hung (forthcoming, p. 10) points out, living in societies under colonial influence and governmental corruption, it is sensible for Lin not to attribute responsibility for social reform primarily to the government but instead to urge ordinary people and Buddhists to take action. Psychological studies on collective intelligence have revealed that cognitive diversity, namely, the difference in the ways people approach a problem, is the key factor that determines its quality (Page 2007). In other words, the more diverse the perspectives involved are, the smarter the collective is. If we understand philosophical inquiries as collective problem-solving projects that aim at answering various fundamental questions about the world and our place in it, then we have clear epistemic reasons to engage in philosophising from all the under-representative perspectives, which include, but go beyond, Taiwanese philosophy.

In addition to epistemic value, there is also moral value in engaging with under-represented traditions in philosophy. Hung noted Taiwan's hundred years of colonised past in his paper, and I argue that colonial history has a substantial impact on the underexplorations and under-recognition of Taiwanese philosophy. During the country's colonised period, Taiwanese people were treated as secondary citizens whose identity and esteem were constantly denied, regarded as inferior or appropriated without attribution or recognition. These unfair treatments posed challenges to Taiwanese' epistemic capacities in contributing to knowledge building. Over time, these suspicions became internalised by Taiwanese, discouraging them from attempting to contribute to knowledge production and making their voices less heard in the collective project of philosophising. These treatments constitute epistemic injustices against the Taiwanese, and they still suffer from the lasting influences of these injustices.

To ameliorate the harm of epistemic injustice imposed on the Taiwanese and work towards a more just structure in the process of knowledge production, I argue that the development of Taiwanese philosophy is nothing less than a moral requirement. In other words, pursuing and

engaging in Taiwanese philosophy is a way to perform epistemic amelioration; only through the process of epistemic amelioration can the epistemic subjectivity of Taiwanese be rebuilt, and the epistemic justice would be better ensured. From this perspective, Hung's work, which engages with Lin Qiu-wu's theory, contributes to the much-needed epistemic amelioration for Taiwanese.

Overall, Hung's work, which draws on the dialogue between Lin Qiu-wu's Taiwanese Marxist Buddhism and other contemporary theories, not only contributes to the philosophical debates surrounding equity and social justice, but also marks a meta-philosophical contribution conducive to the goal of diversifying philosophy. Although I use Lin Qiu-wu's work and the historical background of Taiwan as a central case example, my general point about the epistemic and moral values of engaging with under-represented philosophical traditions can also be expanded to other traditions. As Liao reminds us regarding the power we have in shaping the world and the discipline of philosophy, I hope that there will be more work, like Hung's paper, that uses such power in making philosophy a discipline that is home to diverse groups of people and intellectual traditions.

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