

Korean Conceptual History:

Its Present Conditions and Future Prospects^{*}

韓國概念史研究的現況和課題

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1. Why Conceptual History?

In the current climate, where humanities are under pressure, it seems that there survives an obsession, dating back to the early 20th century, with worldwide historical universality and global learning. The past whose main task it was to civilize and enlighten the world on the basis of the myths of “progress,” and “evolution” is reflected in the current chaos of biased

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learning in pursuit of standardized virtue and closed competition. Once temporarily deferred, questions about the nature of virtue and its purpose have disappeared into oblivion. It is impossible to expect original thought and learning from a closed consciousness that repeats only the functional answers to essential questions. A creative breakthrough in learning can only begin with the respect for diversity and co-existence. A new prospect of learning is possible only when the subject can go beyond the dichotomy of the East and the West, and escape from the conception of history and culture as fixed entities, eventually meeting each other on an equal footing in mobile culture.

Conceptual history, which has recently emerged in academic circles, gives us a way out in this regard; that is, it is expected to make a valuable contribution toward enlarging the ground for common communication. Concepts are the expression of thought as represented through language, and with its focus on these dynamic concepts embracing both past experience and expectations of the future, conceptual history traces the historical changes of their meaning and the conditions of their use, combining itself with socio-political history. In this process, it is revealed that concepts, though once regarded as self-evident and undoubted are actually multi-layered and mobile. This revelation enables us to radically re-think the true nature of knowledge, which has been passed down and accumulated from the past. Conceptual history offers us an enticing opportunity to think in new terms about the “present past,” which is the issue at hand right here and now, not just limiting our view to the representation of the “past present.”

While the primary task of conceptual history is to represent the reality that each individual subject underwent in history, its ultimate purpose should be to identify and expand common ground for communication.

There is no doubt that it should not become removed from the socio-political dynamics that concepts have, nor should it repeat the past, where it acted to oppress the other in order to contend for concepts. Common ground is possibly just at hand, not far away. As Rolf Reichardt notes, this ground can be discovered in everyday life or at the various points where subjects dream of an escape into another world, not just settling for the present. Conceptual history will free itself from simple imitation and opportunism, and become a humanistic asset for everyone when it finds out, reinterprets and reconstructs clues not only in fields such as history and philosophy but also in those of art, literature, religion, science, among others.

Conceptual history is not a pure theory of concepts or the study of transcendental concepts, but a practice which seeks to clarify the historical semantics of concepts through a method of inquiry closely connected with social history. Thus, it does not reduce concepts to the reflection of substructure, nor does it accept the idea that the structure of language is a transcendental agent that regulates our way of being. Instead, from a social historical perspective, it makes clear the point that concepts are both an index registering social structure and a constituent element of social change, possessing both objects and users (the subjects using them).¹ As conceptual history focuses on the change of concepts as language and structure (manifestations of human thought), unlike the existing history of thought, intellectual history and social history, the concepts that it grasps are those which are closely related to changes in politics, society and culture, and characterized by “complexity,” “ambiguity,” “polysemy,”

¹ Melvin Richter, “Foreword: Approach of Conceptual History and Modern Korea” in *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction*, trans., Seuncheol Song and Yongso Kim (Seoul: Sohwa, 2010), 9-15.

“durability,” and “mutability.” Furthermore, as an index of reality, they not only contain the experience and expectations of contemporary people but also construct reality dynamically. Partly accepting the theory and methodology of historical semantics, Korean conceptual history will connect conceptual movements (propagation, collision, welding, formation and appropriation, etc) with the changes in society, politics, economy and culture in order to reveal the proper history of concepts.

2. Premises to Be Considered

Korea underwent much historical turmoil in the 20th century; the rapid dissolution of its tradition, colonial rule, the division of its territory and ideological conflict, industrialization and democratization. Amid this confusion, traditional knowledge systems and culture were forced to be dismantled and re-organized. Indeed, concepts were at the center of the change. Accordingly, it is not possible for the humanities in Korea to make a new leap forward without properly examining the practices of the subjects over concepts and the conceptual movement. Even though there has been an urgent need to re-examine the process in which each field of the humanities and social sciences has been formed as modern disciplines, much study has paid attention only to the internal elements of the given topic, comparatively neglecting conceptual matters, which is the foundation of learning. The recent trend among academic circles, however, clearly demonstrates that as a methodology, Korean conceptual history should be the basis of Korean studies and is an important field of study to be developed. It may be fair to say that the new prospect of the humanities is not possible without “the study of conceptual history.”

“An age of crisis” such as that of modern Korea certainly intensifies

the conflict over “basic concepts” such as “nation,” “state,” “citizen,” “society,” and “democracy.” The way in which modern historical individuals in Korea conceptualized these terms exercised no small effect on their patterns of behavior. Yongkoo Kim states, “the critical period in which the basic modern concepts of the humanities and social sciences were established in Korea is the one hundred years between 1850 and 1950. Concepts in this period can be divided into three; first, new concepts unknown before the mid 19th century; second, concepts referring to new phenomena after their original content was refracted; third, concepts which disappeared during the mid-19th century.”²

Korean conceptual history should naturally choose concepts vital for the formation of modern Korean society as basic units of analysis, and examine their semantic change and connections. Proper attention should be paid to the following in studies on Korean conceptual history.

First of all, studies must avoid unilaterally accepting the disseminator-adopter model, as if there were only two fixed parties, one imperialistically disseminating modern knowledge and learning and the other imitating the imperial as its model of civilization. Every culture moves in various ways regardless of the cultural hierarchy, and strictly speaking, it is natural that the assimilated bring about a change in the assimilating even though assimilation of one culture by the other does take place. So, we should pay attention to “mutual appropriation,” in which people deal with concepts according to their desire and initiative, even if it is the case of an imperial and colonial condition.

Subsequently, it should be considered that a word reflects the weight of its “tempo” and “topos” when it is acquiring the status of a concept.

² Yongkoo Kim, *Public Law of All Nations* (Seoul: Sohwa, 2008), 19.

The weight has to be measured both horizontally and vertically. While the horizontal side concerns itself with “trans-lingual practices,”³ the vertical side refers not to the study of “present past,” which was passed over from the scattered history, but to the study of the conceptual difference between “present past” and “past present.”⁴ The colonized possibly internalized the imperial as their desire; nevertheless, they could not rid themselves of their traditional knowledge system and culture. The inflow of Western modern concepts not only changed the knowledge system of Chinese Characters and Confucian culture in East Asia, but also owed much to that same knowledge system. Furthermore, the study of the conceptual history of modern Korea should consider the overlapped conditions caused by the fact that the acceptance of the concepts, which were formed in the specific time and place of the modern West, was mediated through the conditions of China and Japan.

Finally, conceptual history should be alert to the possibility of both its reverting to Eurocentric thought on the origin of modernity and its losing subject-hood to surrender itself to the other. Possible danger also lurks in the attempt to pursue “academic sovereignty” and the tendency toward “knowledge empowerment.” It is quite easy to judge ourselves according to the other’s eye when we focus on conceptual origin and universality

³ Lydia Liu opened a way to re-think both the cross-cultural interpretation of the East and the West and the form of linguistic mediation by suggesting the concept of “trans-lingual practice.” See Jeong-gi Min, trans., *Trans-lingual Practice*, (Seoul: Sohwa, 2005), 3-11.

⁴ The term “past present” refers to what people in the past believed as fact at that time and what they considered as their past and future, which is related to their experience, expectation and recollection of the past; in other words, what they had in mind when they talked of the present at that time. See Lucian Hölscher, Seongho Kim, trans., “The Concept of Conceptual History and Basic Concepts in History” in *The Horizon and Prospect of Conceptual History* (Seoul: Sohwa, 2009), 17.

itself, which is the reason why we should closely examine the potential or intentional manipulation of modern Western concepts by the subject, including the case of “creative misinterpretation.”

Whether it be literature, history, or philosophy, it is possible that attempts to trace the genealogy of one’s own learning through the modern Western concept of learning lead to a mythical interpretation of the “origin.” The origin is not an entity that exists somewhere at one time, but is only represented and repeated again and again. As a result, the study of conceptual communication in the period of modern transition should concern itself with the genealogy of literature and history, even with the genealogy of knowledge, and should go forward both vertically and horizontally in order to de-construct mythical interpretation and introspect modernity, and further go on to imagine the humanities of communication beyond a one-state basis.⁵

3. Present Conditions and the Necessity of Cooperation

Conceptual history raises the problem of independent reflection on the modern experience and modernity, and is now developing into transnational research on the trans-lingual practice of conceptual translation, cultural dislocation and the comparative history of concepts beyond a one-state level. First of all, with the formation of the European Union, it was planned to publish a common conceptual dictionary, the so-called European political dictionary project. Lucian Hölscher in Germany

⁵ Haenghoon Lee, “Understanding of the Other and Communicational Structure in the Period of Modern Transition”, *Concept and Communication* 3 (2009): 314.

proposed the comparative history of polycentric concepts, while João Feres Júnior is now leading a project to study conceptual translation, acceptance, and transformation and formation in Spain and four countries in Latin America from the perspective of comparative history. Conducted on the regions of colonial past as opposed to those of Europe, England or America, Feres's research focuses on the circumstances in which colonial rule oppressed Brazilian tradition and on the incongruity of Western concepts in the reality of Brazil. This research may be expected to have common and comparable areas with Korean conceptual history.

The Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences in China is now conducting research on the formation and change of words newly coined after the mid-18th century, and Jin Guan-Tao (金觀濤) at Taiwan ChengChi University and Liu Qing-Feng (劉青峰) at the Chinese University of Hong Kong published the *Study of the History of Concepts* (觀念史研究) in 2008. They state that concepts are “thought expressed by keywords.” The concept of a fixed keyword has a more definite and clearer value orientation and a more direct relation with social activity than thought. They place ideology on a rank higher than keywords and concepts, since ideology integrating a society comes to form through the interaction of a variety of contemporary concepts. The most prominent feature of their research is their use of lexicostatistics, hence the title “statistic school of philosophy.” To analyze the historical meaning of a given concept, they search for keywords in databases to treat the frequency of use statistically, and extract data relevant to the given keyword to grasp the type and change of meaning by time series. Their first book, *Theory and Method*, takes as its method the discussion of 100 political words from the pre-modern and modern, as the subject of statistical analysis, and the second book, *Conceptual Change and Terms*, analyzes the formation and settlement of key terms such as “right,” “individual,” “world,” “democracy,” “economy,” “science,” “revolution,” among

others, which construct Chinese Modernity. In Japan, the analyses of 20 concepts in the fields of human and social sciences have been published under the title of *One Word Dictionary* (一語の辞典, 三省堂, 1995-2001), and it is well-known that in *The Concept of 'Literature' in Japan* (作品社, 1998), by Suzuki Sadami (鈴木貞美) criticizes the history of Japanese modern literature and advocates the concept of “munye” in place of “munhak,” posing the problem of the re-organization of the concept of expression, the basis of “munye.”

Around the same time in Korea, Jonghyeon Hwang presented his essay “A Translated Word Called Munhak” (*Dongakeomunnonjip*, No. 32, 1997), which still serves well as a primer for understanding the formation of the concept of “munhak.” Most remarkable is the research that has been conducted under the influence of new cultural history, which stands apart from research on the concept and system of munhak in Korean literary circles. Much cultural research is being conducted on concepts from everyday life such as “youth,” “love,” “train,” “hygiene,” “song,” among others. From the perspective of conceptual history it is a pity that the studies on custom and culture concentrate solely on cultural representation, overlooking not only similar concepts but also the relation with social and political history in which the concepts are involved. However, they give much implication to conceptual history in that they are not overly engrossed in social and political structure, and represent the memory and narrative of individuals living in contemporary times. JihyeonKo and Chiyong Kim suggest new methods of theoretical possibility as they extend their study to concepts of everyday life beyond the category of basic concepts.⁶

⁶ Chiyong Kim tries to find a new way to study the concepts of everyday life by using a criterion of conceptual semantic change. She points out that it is very difficult to restore a systematic order of meaning in research on the

Yeongseon Ha, who has concentrated on the introduction of concepts from the social sciences in the 19th century, published *The Conceptual Formation of Social Sciences in Modern Korea* (Changbi, 2009), which sums up the products of study by “the Group for the Research on Korean Conceptual History (Propagation Research Group).” He defines conceptual history as the “history of struggle between reality and concepts,” and emphasizes the need to preempt concepts in the changing world. The book is compiled of conceptual studies by members of the group, and includes articles on “civilization,” “power,” “sovereignty,” “national prosperity and military power,” “balance of power,” “peace,” “people/race/nation,” “democracy,” “economy,” “individual,” and “hero.” Another noteworthy project in the conceptual research of social sciences is *Vita Activa: Conceptual History Series*. This series selects 30 concepts of social sciences, most basic to the understanding of Korean society and the modern world, and attempts to explain their meaning, history and practical implication. As its plan clearly states, conceptual history cannot be separated from social history, and concepts not only reflect actual history but also belong to the process of making history. These are similar to the general principles of conceptual history. Its most distinct feature is that its list includes a number of concepts, which are still active in the present society. This is in line with its aim to accommodate both “critical perception” and “practical intellect.” It divides its concepts into four

representation of custom and culture because it scrutinizes the signifying process of representation in overly complex interrelation. She gives a concrete form to the instrumental usefulness of Reichardt’s methodology in archeological approaches, inductive extraction of concepts, scrutiny on the relation between language and practice, and others, and formulates five ways of research. Chiyong Kim, “(Literary) Research on Custom and Culture and the Access of Conceptual History-An Essay on the Research into the Concepts of Everyday Life,” *Daedong Cultural Study* 70 (2010).

categories; Basic Concepts, Systems, Events and Issues; Basic Concepts includes “republicanism,” “labor value,” “nationalism,” “ecology,” “utopia,” “capitalism,” “freedom,” “imperialism,” “gender,” “intellectuals,” and “fascism;” Systems includes “modern state,” “welfare state,” “political party,” “constitutional law;” Events includes “the cold war system,” “civil revolution,” “the IMF crisis,” “the 1968 movement,” “June Democracy Movement in 1987;” Issues includes “non-regular worker,” “racism,” “internet and virtual reality,” “terrorism,” and “violence.”

Sangsin Lee, GyuhwanSeo and Inho Na have introduced the theory and methods of Western conceptual history into Korea. Inho Na, in particular, classifies German conceptual history with Koselleck as its prominent figure as a branch of the New Cultural History, which is based on the linguistic revolution, and puts great emphasis on its historical innovation. Not limiting himself to simple introduction, he takes part in critical debate, a good example of which may be found in his book review of the *The Right Use of Historical Terms* (Yeoksabipyong-sa, 2006). Here, again confirming the methods and direction of conceptual history, he states that the aim of conceptual history is not to define concepts but to interpret them, and its starting point lies not in how we are able to understand the modern experience correctly but rather in where we can find a possibility to re-interpret it. Collecting and supplementing his existing results of study, he published *What Is Conceptual History?* (Yeoksabioyeong-sa, 2011), which is expected to play a reliable role as an introductory work from now on.⁷

⁷ The book consists of the critical awareness and topics of “conceptual history,” theoretical design and the methodological strategies of research and case research. The first section (What Is Conceptual History?) explains the basic theory of conceptual history, its methods and importance. Here, he explains the difference between ideology/idea and concept, and analyzes the relation of

Two research projects are noteworthy in philosophy; *The Inflow of the Western Philosophical Thought and Its Appraisal* and *The Translation of Philosophical Texts and Our Pre-modern and Modern Times*. Both are projects that have been undertaken over several years, and offer useful information about the acceptance of the concept of philosophy in modern Korea. *The Inflow* was planned by the Institute of Philosophy at Seoul National University, and *Philosophical Thought*, its official organ, is composed in all of 23 special papers dating from 1994 to 1998. In 1998, *Philosophical Thought* (No. 8) published a special issue summing up its research so far, under the title of “Korean Philosophy for the past 100 Years: Retrospection and Prospects.” It consists of four parts; “Section 1: The Response of the Traditional Philosophy to the Inflow of the Western Philosophy and its Development,” “Section 2: The Acceptance of Western Philosophy for the Past 100 Years and the Tasks of Korean Philosophy,” “Section 3: The Acceptance of Western Philosophy: the Reality of Korea and the Tasks of Philosophy,” and “The Education and Institution of Korean Philosophy for the past 100 Years.” *The Translation* was conducted over three years from 2002 onwards, with a total of 15 researchers participating in the project, leading to the publication of a book and 21 theses in academic circles. As this work

discourse and concept, the difference between word and concept and the relation between concept and reality. Later in the first section, he examines the most typical examples of conceptual history including Koselleck’s “structural history of basic concepts,” Rolf Reichardt’s “semantics of social history,” Raymond Williams’s “study on keywords” and João Feres Júnior’s “study on concepts other than basic concepts.” The second section (Reading Modernity through Six Concepts) has case studies in which he shows the reality of main concepts driving the change of modern society; the six concepts are “modernity,” “civilization and culture,” “America and Americanism,” “woman,” “history,” “spirit of capitalism.”

is focused on the formation of modern Korean philosophy, it betrays some lack of detail in explaining how the introduction of the concept of “philosophy” affected the dissolution and modern re-organization of the traditional knowledge system. It is a pity that its system of description is also inconsistent, possibly due to the diversity of the participants’ relevant majors and research fields. Nevertheless, with its sole focus on the concept of “philosophy,” it offers useful information that the conceptual historian should refer to, unlike the existing history of thought or existing intellectual history.

Korean conceptual history, which had been hitherto conducted by individual researchers, came to a turning point around 2007. The leading agent of change was Hallym Academy of Sciences (HAS) at Hallym University, which is supervising a project titled *Intercommunication of East Asian Basic Concepts*. An effective interdisciplinary joint research group was formed when 10 rising researchers in the fields of literature, history, philosophy and social sciences joined efforts with the existing writing staff of *Korean Conceptual History Series* in 2005.⁸ The purpose of this project is to promote the intercommunication of East Asian culture by analyzing the history and meanings of Korean modern concepts. *Korean Conceptual History Series* is due to include eighty concepts in total, and has already released six of them as of 2011; *Public Law of All Nation, State-Sovereignty, Constitution, Nation-People-Citizenry, Civilization*. The series will publish the remaining items in due order.⁹ Its range of attention

⁸ “New Trend of Humanities 2, Conceptual History,” *The Dong-A Ilbo*, March 12, 2008.

⁹ The items due for release and their writers are as follows; Imperial-Imperialism (Samseong Lee), Literature (WonsikChoe), Religion (Seokman Jang), Economy (Heonchang Lee), Market (Hogeun Song), Diplomacy (Yongkoo Kim), Community (Pildong Kim), Form-Content (Seungcheol Song), Progress

was expanded more to produce the *Conceptual History of Everyday Life Series*, which covers concepts like “Cheongnyeon (youth)” (Gihun Lee), “Eorin-I (child)” (Eunsuk Jo), “Haengbok (happiness)” (BodeuraeGwon), “Gyuyang (refinement)” (JeonghwanCheon), “Byeong (disease)” (Dongwon Shin), “Yeon-ae (love)” (Chiyong Kim). Combining the conceptual history of everyday life with the history of custom and cultural history, this series will correct the excessive preoccupation with the collection of microscopic data and with the subjective interpretation of the researcher, from a historic-semantic perspective.

The translation of Koselleck’s *Basic Concepts in History*, a project hardly thinkable to an individual researcher, was produced, in part, by HAS, with the completion of five concepts; “Civilization and Culture,” “Progress,” “Imperialism,” “War,” “Peace.”¹⁰ Melvin Richter’s *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction* and Jin Guan-Tao and Liu Qing-Feng’s *Studies of the History of Ideas* and Zheng Guanying’s *I-eon* (易言) were also published by HAS as part of Conceptual Communication Translation Series. *The Horizon and Prospect of Conceptual History* (2009) was published as part of the Conceptual Communication Study Series, which serves as a guide for interested readers,¹¹ HAS’s scientific journal,

(Ilmo Yang), History (GeungabBak), East Asia (YeongseoBaek), Monarch-Monarchy (Gwangyong Park), Education (Seongchil Oh), Conservatism (YongripGwon), Independence-Self-reliance (ChanghuiChoe), Society-Civil Society (Myeonggyu Park), Culture (Hyeongju Kim), Philosophy (Jaehyeon Kim), Native Language (Byeonggi Lee), Liberty-Liberalism (Myeonghui Gang), folklore (Geun-u Nam), Labor (Gyeongil Kim), Silhak (Kyungku Lee), People (Su Heo), and others.

¹⁰ The items due for release are as follows; Aufklärung, Emanzipation, Geschichte, Krise, ModernoModernität, Revolution, Reformen, Reforme, MDemokratie, Diktatur, Konservativismus, Liberalismus, Republik, Sozialismus, Arbeit-Arbeiter, Wirtschaft, Anarchie.

¹¹ This series introduces the typical theories and methods of conceptual history,

founded in 2008, *Concept and Communication*, is now securing its status as a journal specializing in Korean conceptual history. HAS has held joint conferences together with the Research Team on “Civilization” of the Institute of Humanities at Seoul National University and the Research Team on “Humanistic Linguistics” of the Institute of Language and Information Studies at Yonsei University, and has founded an international journal, *Journal of the History of Ideas in East Asia* (東亞觀念史集刊), in partnership with Taiwan National ChengChi University.

The Academy of East Asian Studies at Sungkyunkwan University held a debate on “The Significance and Methods of the History of Conceptual Organization” as part of its *East Asian Concepts Series*, while the Research Institute of Comparative History and Culture at Hanyang University held a trans-national everyday life workshop under the title of “Modernity and Violence” and an international conference (2010) under the title of “Specialty of National History?: A Search for Post-colonial Deconstruction,” both of which are closely related to the concerns

and suggests some of the arguments involved and their respective prospects. Interrogating the relation between linguistic semantics and the change of social structure, Lucian Hölscher reveals the status of the conceptual history dictionary, which reflects political and social change in the modern world. GeungabBak, through the case of the concept of “history,” deals with the epistemology of conceptual history, which surveys the motive power of the modern world. Rolf Reichardt, who led the *Handbook of Basic Political and Social Concepts in France 1680-1820*, enriches the contents of conceptual history by introducing “the semantics of social history,” and Hak-I Kim formulates the methodological direction of conceptual history by analyzing Reichardt’s merits and demerits. Won Ko inquires into the connecting point between the analysis of “discourse” and the interpretation of “concept,” while Inho Na, through the case of “the spirit of capitalism,” shows the reality of conceptual history. Finally, Melvin Richter proposes the prospects of conceptual history in the configuration of “inter-cultural” interpretation and transition.

of conceptual history. The Humanistic Information Science Center at Pusan National University hosted a conference (2010) under the title of “Reconsidering the Korean Bilingual Dictionary from the Late 19th and Early 20th centuries” to examine the basic data of conceptual history in Korean modern times. Other noteworthy research includes the conference held by the Korea Culture Research Institute at Ewha Woman’s University under the title of “the Agent and Critical Awareness in the Acceptance of “Korean Social Sciences” during the Period of Modern Transition” (2011), the research activities conducted by the Research Team on Transnationalism and Cultural Translation at Dongguk University and the conferences held by the Center for East Asian History at Sungkyunkwan University each under the title of “The Acceptance of Western Civilization and the Transformation of East Asian Intellectuals” and “The Tradition and Transformation of East Asian Humanistic Intellectuals” (2011).

4. Foundation of Methods and their Prospects

In dealing with Korean conceptual history, we should take into consideration our unique temporal and spatial specialty. Korea was incorporated into the West-centered world history during the period of modern transition, and fell behind on the modern spectrum of time. The aspiration for civilization made it cling to the myths of “progress” and “evolution,” while the conflict between Western civilization and the traditional knowledge system brought about arguments like “dongdoseogi (東道西器, principle of preserving Eastern philosophy while accepting Western technology)” and “singuhaknonjaeng (新舊學論爭, argument about old and new learning).” After the late 19th century, Korea came to accept Western modern civilization generally through China and Japan,

and though the concepts encapsulated in Chinese characters did not cause much difficulty for Korean intellectuals at that time, the forceful occupation of the Japanese, under which Korea did not have any chance to independently interpret and translate Western concepts, became one of the reasons for the incomplete modernization of Korea.

The foreign concepts that Korea accepted had the historicity of the West, which had preempted modernity, and their collision with traditional concepts was inevitable. Some of the concepts survived but many others disappeared amid the mixture of concepts and the ruptures in their meaning. The newly acquired foreign concepts caused changes in thinking, and drove Koreans toward a modern society. Sometimes, the meaning of concepts was influenced by long-standing traditional culture and ideas, and sometimes it was distorted by the social and political elements which affected individuals. From a view of conceptual propagation and acceptance, what is remarkable in the non-Western acceptance of concepts may be its asymmetry and non-synchronism. If conceptual history aims for communication among different plural agents, we should, however, take note of the other side of the matter, that is, the aspect of “selective appropriation.”¹² This change of viewpoint will help us to understand the inter-cultural appropriation and change of concepts which is hard to grasp from a one-way view of conceptual propagation and acceptance, and is especially useful in the conceptual history of non-Western regions, in the same way as it is to the study of conceptual mixing and semantic rupture.

For Korean conceptual history to establish its own theories

¹² See Haenghoon Lee, “Yanggeonsiguikantcheolhagbeonyeoggwaseontaegjeogjeonyu” (A Study on Translation and Selective Appropriation of Kant’s Philosophy by Yang Geon-sik) in *Dongyangcheolhagyeongu (Journal of Eastern Philosophy)* 66 (2011): 123-154.

and methods of research, it should give consideration to the specific circumstances of modern East Asia and Korea, as well as to the question of to what extent the axiom of conceptual history should be applied to Korean conditions. Research on the conceptual history of modern Korea and its theoretical groping may be seen as no more than Korea's experiment on the intellectual legitimacy of conceptual history and the effort to expand its base. The common basic view of Korean conceptual history is as follows. First, it stresses that a double or three-way refraction occurred as the concepts of Western origin went through China and Japan to arrive in Korea, hence the issues of colonialism and post-colonialism. Second, one of its aims is to conduct a systematic research on the continuity and discontinuity of traditional concepts. The two processes of the abandonment of the traditional knowledge system and the re-organization and formation of Korean modern learning cannot be explained in isolation. The dividing line between the two is the origin of the chronic disruption of communication among Korean academic circles, a problem that must be solved. Third, it is very necessary to study both the semantic system of concepts and the relation between concepts. First of all, conceptual history draws attention to the movement of concepts, and it requires the analysis not only of the struggle for meaning accompanying the process of words being settled into concepts, but also of connected concepts, opposed concepts, parallel concepts, concepts of high and low rank. Fourth, a conceptual approach to everyday life culture is most necessary. Everyday life is not just a place where popular culture is consumed and circulated but also a space where social and political ideology is represented. It may open up new possibilities of interpretation for the existing study to trace the "basic concepts" in everyday life and popular culture along with the research on the concepts of everyday life themselves. Fifth, there is an

urgent need for us to have access to an integrated archive for modern academic terms and a concept-related database, both of which are now being compiled complete with their own operating systems. It is fairly difficult for an individual to conduct research with a social historical approach on language and an analysis of historical semantics. Only the accumulation of vast data and interdisciplinary research can bring about meaningful results. One of the main characteristics of conceptual history is its analysis of language in a variety of ways. Its methods of study include the cross-linking use of synchronic and diachronic analyses, overall semantics (a study on every meaning that a word has), generic semantics (a study on every word the meaning of which points to the same concept in a language), and the theories of the semantic field. It is essential for conceptual history to build a database that enables us to collect and analyze vast data in order not only to compare past usage with that of the present, but also finally to examine actual conceptual examples and their relevant changes.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Korean conceptual history is now laying the foundation of its own methodology. In conclusion, I would like to suggest several important points and demand that due attention be paid to them. Let us first take into account the question of “translation.” Kato Shuichi (加藤周一) considers translation as not just the acceptance of foreign concepts and thought but rather the transformation of foreign culture by one’s native tradition.¹³ Lydia H. Liu sees it as a “trans-lingual practice.” Douglas Howland, who has conducted research into conceptual transference from English to Japanese, asserts that cross-cultural translation is no longer dealt with as the simple transference of the word

¹³ Maruyama Masao and Kato Shuichi, *Translation and Japanese Modernity*, trans., Seonjo Yim (Seoul:Yisan, 2000), 178-179.

and text from one language to another on the basis of the so-called model of two native language dictionaries, but rather, can be understood best as a complex act of trans-lingual communication. Joachim Kurtz defines translation as the “multi-layered process of translation and appropriation,” and points out that a lot of words in the modern Chinese language which had been translated from outside, attained additional meanings with their own vitality and changed, extended and even eroded away at their Western origins.¹⁴ The focus of this research is laid not on how the original texts were translated but rather on both the cultural mutual appropriation and the multi-layered semantic development around concepts which appeared in the process of cultural negotiation.

Next, there is the issue of the relation between “metaphor” and “concept.” A metaphor has history in a more profound sense since the historical change of a metaphor itself shows vividly the meta-dynamics of the historical semantic horizon and method of observation, where concepts undergo transformation. A metaphor often exists in an undefined state temporarily “in the front yard of conceptual formation,” but itself becomes “an intrinsic object of historiography” in that it contacts the structure and totality underlying the vivid empirical world. It is a sign which can force its way into the absent space of the conceptual object revealing the real world and can manage the space symbolically in that, unlike the concept, it has a practical function rather than a designating one, pointing to the places of rupture intrinsic to the given horizon of understanding.¹⁵

Finally, there is the issue of “narrative.” While compiling the

¹⁴ Melvin Richter, “Conceptual History, Translation, and the Intercultural Conceptual Transference,” *The Horizon and Prospect of Conceptual History* (Seoul: Sohwa, 2010), 193.

¹⁵ Geungab Park, “From the History of Concepts to the History of Metaphors?,” *Concept and Communication* 6 (2010): 195-202.

Handbook of Basic Political and Social Concepts, Rolf Reichardt extended his object of study to popular data such as dictionaries, periodicals, leaflets, reports about rallies, catechisms, almanacs, satire, songs, among others. Narrative here means narrativity, not only including the semiotic system of language and text but also non-textual expression, which corresponds with the critical awareness of the *Handbook*. We can arrive at social, cultural, political and economic dynamics and implication reproducing memory and defining the future by revealing the representational narrativity of the past, present and future as represented through movies, the theatre, musicals, music, comic, dance, among others.

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