

Korean Conceptual History and Modern Paradigm

韓國的概念史研究和近代範例

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1. Introduction

Conceptual history, first proposed by the German historian Reinhart Koselleck, began with the critical self-examination of the modern history of Germany, taking Western Europe as its model. Koselleck's main work focused on exploring and interpreting the mobile meanings of the very concepts that had changed the European traditional worldview and its symbolic system.¹

Naturally, there is some doubt about applying this method of research to the non-Western world, given its European, or more specifically, German origin.² Conceptual history, however, enables us to reveal the

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¹ Inho Na, *What is Conceptual History?* (Seoul: Yeoksabipyong-sa, 2011), 20-31.

² Ilmo Yang, "Exploration and Issues of Korean Conceptual History," *Concept and Communication* 8 (2011): 11-12.

process of choice and re-creation which the so-called marginal regions—the frontier areas of Europe, East Asia, South America, and others—undertook while they were accepting concepts which had originated in the central regions—the advanced West—and also gives us a chance to shed light on the multi-layered process of independent modernization in the “marginal.” Conceptual history in the 21th century is now expanding its scope from the history of one particular state to polycentric, comparative history, and this change is very reasonable in that it reflects the natural development of conceptual history, the purpose of which is to emphasize the concrete utterance of concepts in a socio-historical context.

Conceptual history has coped with the question of modernity from the first, and its evolution is ongoing in East Asia, especially in Korea. Beginning from the 1980s in Korea, studies have appeared on the major concepts of the early modern period with a focus on political, literary and philosophical history. From the year 2000 onwards, a new trend has developed within the field. Two things contributed to this trend; first, writings about European, or more specifically, German conceptual history were regularly introduced into the country; second, long-term projects such as the publication of a series of journals began to appear in universities and publishing houses. It is expected that the studies will play a good part in revealing the modern identity of East Asia, including Korea.

We still, however, have a long way to go. Most of the concepts attracting the attention of Korean researchers are those that originated in the West and have already become familiar since their introduction during the early modern period. It would be easy for us to fall under the illusion that the translation of concepts brings about immediate modernity. This illusion will very likely help bring into relief the rupture between pre-modern and modern in Korea. To avoid this danger, we must find

a paradigm to grasp the various routes through which pre-modern and modern concepts, while flickering and evolving innumerable, were passed down. Questions such as what concepts should we emphasize during the pre-modern and modern period, and in what order should the history of these concepts be arranged, are indispensable for the self-examination of the modernity of East Asia including Korea.

This essay will examine a paradigm upon which existing Korean conceptual history has depended on, and, through some hypotheses and concrete cases, I will suggest some ways in which conceptual history can contribute to the construction of Korean modernity.

2. The Paradigm of Korean Conceptual History

The circumstances in which European civilization and concepts were introduced into East Asia, including Korea, are neatly summarized in the following quotations. They also appropriately show the paradigm of Korean conceptual history.

1. East Asian countries (Korea, China and Japan) made contact with Europe in a defensive way. Their acceptance of European civilization reached a considerable level after half a century to one and a half centuries. This rapid acceptance made it possible for them to successfully construct a Westernized modern state system.

2. This rapid and effective modern state-building was a first in the non-European world. What made it possible was the historical experience of the state, which was longer than that of Europe. The traditional culture of East Asia exerted its influence as a frame of reference during their modernization. Thus, it was not a one-sided

acceptance but rather a collision between the thought and values of a traditional and a foreign system

Paragraph 1 aptly shows the basic perspective and framework of study. Its target period is that following the late 19th century when passive contact with the West became more regular. East Asia took the West as its model and tried hard to emulate it. Only two actors appear on the stage. As a result, the dichotomy of the active and the passive is quite striking.

Paragraph 2 explains the reason why East Asia succeeded. It suggests that the historical experience, culture and values of East Asia worked well, transforming the story into that of a collision, not just a one-sided acceptance. Seemingly, the East escapes from the passive, but its autonomy is limited as its confines have already been fixed by paragraph 1. East Asia cannot break away from the framework of the West vs. the East.

The key point of the question lies in the dichotomy of “the advanced West vs. the emulating East Asia.” Generally speaking, the inflow of Western modern concepts and the relevant re-construction of conceptual systems are usually pre-supposed in nearly all individual studies, though every researcher is supposed to be alert to the dichotomy. It would be easy to overstress the introduction and settlement of Western concepts. It would also be easy for this to be reduced to tracing the origins of Western concepts familiar to us and looking for their “original definition.”

It is not that tracing the “origin of definition” of Western concepts is useless, but that its enlightening use is only partial, though it can actually be contributive to revealing refraction during the process of interpretation and the avoidance of political distortion or intentional overstatement.

The negative effect of origin-tracing is that it can establish conceptual definition as immutable from the first, even leading to absolutization and

mystification. It is quite different from what conceptual history originally intended to do. Many conceptual historians have asserted that there is no “original definition” but only the arguments over which historical concepts exist.

An interesting case as regards to conceptual history is “the theory of internal development,” which has investigated and revealed modernity in Korean history. The theory relies upon the general state of expectancy for universality and science, and has systemized national history from a developmental perspective. At its core lies the verification of the “modern embryo.” The theory, however, is now facing several kinds of criticism. Criticism points to the basic paradigm on which the theory rests. It asserts that the theory of internal development arbitrarily stresses certain phases of Korean history on the basis of its teleological intention to verify the building of the nation-state and universal development, and that it, at the same time, deliberately looks for aspects similar to Western modernity. As a result, as the criticism goes, it takes the Western modern as its standard.³ It is highly likely that the theory will stress the failure of internal development and excessive intervention by external elements after the late 19th century. Sure enough, much emphasis on pre-modern internal development can lead to highlighting the shock that the West caused in the 19th century, whereas comparatively little emphasis on it can lead to bringing into relief the contribution of the West to modernization.

The starting line is very similar in both the theory of internal development, which tries to complete the development schema by seeking for the embryo of Western modern and conceptual history, demonstrating the settlement of modern order through the successful acceptance of Western concepts. Both paradigms lead to an emphasis on Western

³ Chanseung Park, “Debates on the Paradigm of Korean Studies,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 85 (2007): 100.

modernity. It seems that this unintended result is brought about because of a deep-seated obsession with “Western universality” and “Western progress.” Now, it is time to free ourselves from these obsessions.

3. The Paradigm of Tradition-Modernity and the View from Within

Why is it so natural for conceptual history to look for the “original definition,” though it serves not only to search for defined concepts? My theory is that this trend stems from “the paradigm of tradition-modernity;” this tacit paradigm dictates that the tradition of Korea and East Asia was broken off by the shock of the West, from whence the modern began. To consider how the rupture was made, let us take a look into the case of “*siche* (時體),” which acquired a new politico-social meaning in the 18th century and was subsequently replaced with “*yuhaeng* (流行).”

In modern Korean dictionaries, the term of *siche* refers to a “custom or fashion of an age,” although it has now all but disappeared from common usage. Only a few examples are founded in the Joseon Dynasty period as referring to contemporary custom, culture and literary style.

It was in the Yeonæo (英祖) period (1724-1776) that *siche* emerged as a term referring to politico-social affairs.⁴ At that time, it meant “not knowing one’s place and following current trends.”⁵ Yeongjo used it persistently and very negatively; he mentioned as examples sumptuous

⁴ In the case of *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*, it appeared only twice respectively in 1539 (May 3rd, 34th year of Jungjong, in *The Annals of Jungjong*) and in 1611 (December 20th, 3rd year, in *Diary of Gwnghaegun*) before the Yeonæo period. The number of times increased to 19 in the Yeonæo period and 4 in the Yeonæo period (1776-1800).

⁵ *The Annals of Yeongjo* (December 21st, 33th year of Yeonæo).

moods, the slackening of social discipline, the pursuit of odd literary style, the nobility's inclination toward social fame, etc.⁶ The rise of *siche* depended on the context of Seoul-centric urbanization, the urban trend of luxury and entertainment and sophisticated cultural fashion in the 18th century. Provincial Confucian scholars had as negative a conception about it as the king. This was because the *siche* of the city was rapidly destroying rural customs.⁷

Siche, which had once been popularized by the king and several Confucian scholars in the 18th century, all but disappeared in the 19th century; an interesting point to be inquired into later.

In the early 20th century, *siche* re-appeared when everyday life was undergoing drastic changes. The following is an article defining *siche* in the 1930s.

Siche exists in every epoch and every society. We can mention *siche* of thought [the trend of the times], *siche* of appearance [fashion], and others. It is without precedent that it holds such an important place as now, though it contains a sense of change in itself. Young men and women from a class of wealth and learning rushed in a determined attitude into the *siche* of “modernism” after World War I. The so-called *siche* of “modernism” arose and matured originally from Western conditions in which people lost patriotic spirit, and took personal sensuality and pleasure together

⁶ Yeonæo himself left 31 pieces of writing criticizing *siche*.

⁷ Wibaekgyu (魏伯珪, 1727-1798), a Confucian scholar in Jeolla-do, pointed out that “*Siche*, once changed over a generation, now came to change only in a few years, and the provincial are now following the urban unconditionally.” Accordingly, as he criticized, “It stirs people’s boundless appetite for consumption, and exhausts their limited wealth, eventually leading the economy into bankruptcy.” Wibaekgye, “Owhanghae,” *Jonjae-jip* (存齋集)(vol. 17).

with money, which enables them to do so, as the only reality. This modernism was conveyed into Joseon by Japan.⁸

Siche here points to the rapid change of urban bourgeois and young people, and its meaning incorporates the spirit and style of the times. Its substance was mainly individualistic modernism as delivered from Japan. *Siche* and the modern (or modernism) had a common range of usage at that time. Accordingly, the new-coined word of “modern boy” could be expressed as “geundae-a,” “siche-a” or “siche-sanae,” and “modern girl” as “guendae-cheo-nyeo,” “siche-cheo-nyeo,” “siche-gyejibae.”⁹ *Siche* as a common noun referring to “now, present society” got mixed in usage with modern or modernism referring to a Western modern trend.

This period of mixed usage was also one of transition. “Modern” gradually came to replace *siche*, and became a proper noun referring to the 20th century, especially the 1920s and 1930s. The change of modern into a proper noun brought about the generalization of “yuhaeng.”¹⁰ Once “yuhaeng” became popular, *siche* disappeared from everyday life.

It may be a very interesting subject to examine the process in which the concept of *yuhaeng* displaced that of *siche*, that is, the rise and fall of *siche*, and to consider what inspiration the interpretation and acceptance of Western words such as “fashion,” “mode,” and “modern” stirred up and how they held their prominent position. My intention here, however, lies not in that direction, but rather in making clear the fact that Korean conceptual history has, up until now, generally overlooked this process,

⁸ “The Change of Siche (時體),” *Dong-A Ilbo*, April 27, 1931.

⁹ Jiheon Ko, “The Modernity of Colonized Joseon: the Concept of Yuhaeng,” *Daedongmunhwayeongu* 71 (2010): 369.

¹⁰ See the above-mentioned essay by Jiheon Ko for the significance of both the concept of yuhaeng and the modernity of its discourse in the colonial period.

and that its reason is that we are unwittingly too familiar with the paradigm of tradition-modernity.

For us, who are familiar with “*yuhaeng*” but unfamiliar with “*siche*,” it may be easy to retrace the context of these two concepts in the following manner; originally, *yuhaeng* implied the spread of a new social trend while also incorporating a Neo-Confucian sense, as shown in an example such as the “*yuhaeng of cheonmeong* (天命).” Following the beginning of modern times, its meaning settled as the translated word for “fashion” and “modernity.” The problem with this explanation is that it ignores the memory of *siche*, which held connotations close to “fashion” and “modern,” and more concretely, incorporated the experience of the 18th century’s urbanization and the rise of the concept of *siche*. It may easily lead to a common notion dictating that Korean society did not experience “the introduction of a new everyday life trend caused by urbanization.” To put it bluntly, the historical experience of East Asia, which showed a developmental trajectory more or less similar to that of Western modernity, may disappear. If we, modern Koreans, ignore the modernity of the East-Asian pre-modern, we will find no way out from “the notion of the Western modern and the East Asian Pre-modern.”

Now, let us look at the positive side. The usage of *siche* in the 18th century and the mixed usage of *siche* and modernity in the 1930s have common features; urbanization, novelty and change. The concept of *siche* in the 18th century, as it were, can be considered as a prototype of *yuhaeng* in the 20th century. Naturally, in this context, response from conceptual history is much needed in order to properly handle concepts or social phenomena which appeared before contact with the West. Its response, first of all, should provide a basic framework for the critical perception of the paradigm of tradition-modernity.

Paul Cohen proposed “China-itself-based history” as an alternative after radically self-examining the view of Chinese history prevalent among American academic circles. Cohen’s question is closely connected with the concern of East Asian history, which has a long critical tradition of the paradigm of tradition-modernity. It may be called the question of the “view from within.” According to Cohen, the point is to grasp history on the basis of its own context, including the given society’s view and experience of language and things.¹¹

Interestingly, this perspective corresponds with Koselleck’s methodology of conceptual history, the main point of which is to understand the tension between “past present”—what people in the past naturally considered as reality—and “present past”—the re-constructed reality of the past. We should grasp the view of the person involved, or trace events back in time in order to lay stress on not only the view from within but also the critical awareness of conceptual history.

According to the view and context of the people of those days, the West was merely a model, means or goal that could be chosen or dismissed, depending on the gain and loss it would incur, and its impact was also far from thoroughgoing. The right of choice still belonged to the people of those days. We should put more emphasis on the positive role that East Asian intellectuals, sensitive to the Western trend, played in importing and consulting Western civilization. If so accomplished, the range of choice and autonomy that East Asian people held at a given time will naturally come to the fore, and the focus of discussion will be transferred from “Western concepts” to “the main agents who accepted

¹¹ Paul A. Cohen, *Discovering History in China: American Historical Writing on the Recent Chinese Past, Imperialism of Learning* trans., Namhui Lee (New York: Columbia university press, 2003), 30, 63.

and used concepts.”

4. Modernity of the Korean Pre-modern

Korean conceptual history should determine its attitude toward the paradigm of the pre-modern and modern of Korea. This depends entirely on whether the concrete progress of conceptual history will enhance or rather pull down a specific paradigm. As stated above, Korean conceptual history should not put undue stress on the similarity between our modernity and that of the West, or on the importation of Western concepts. What should be important for Korean researchers is the appreciation of the contributions made by conceptual historians in Germany and other countries in both exposing the illusory image of the center and promoting the identity of the periphery. We have to make relative “Western modernity,” which was mystified in both the West and East Asia, and to do this, we need a new frame of conceptual history evaluating the changes of the pre-modern in a quite different way from our present methods.

In this case, how can conceptual history understand Eastern modernity in the pre-modern, thus enabling us to surmount tradition? To suggest its possibility in the following, I will cite the case of “Tang-ron (湯論)” written by Jeong, Yakyong (丁若鏞, 1762-1836), one of Korea’s most famous scholars.

It is generally assumed that Jeong, Yakyong wrote this brief essay before 1811. This is still the subject of much controversy as its contents show more radical aspects than any other writing of the same period. The controversy is two-fold. The first aspect of such, inquires into his identity of thought. This article, which is an early work, differs in direction from his later major writings such as *Mokminsimseo* (牧民心書), *HeumHeumsinseo* (欽欽新書) and *Gyeongseyupo* (經世遺表). The former stresses the status of the people

in the birth, replacement and legitimacy of power, while the latter writings go back to a somewhat conservative position supporting strong sovereignty and Confucian politics for the people. Hence, the exceptional position of “Tang-ron.”

The second aspect inquires into his relation with Western learning (西學). In his youth, Jeong Yakyong read a variety of books about Western learning, and once adhered to Catholicism. It is clear that Western learning contributed to his creative interpretation of Confucian scriptures. The range of the writings he read, however, was limited to those written by Jesuit missionaries including Matteo Ricci, and he never had contact with the writings of the Western Enlightenment following the 18th century. Korea would later encounter them just after the mid-19th century. His “Tang-ron” provides an interesting case revealing similarities with Western Enlightenment, though it was written before overall contact with Western modernity. It shows natural vitality and a possibility of the Eastern democracy.

This controversy may resolve itself by not siding with either argument, but by deploying their complexity into the context of their thought. As its title shows, “Tang-ron” deals with the actions of Tang (湯), one of the idealized emperors of ancient China. Mencius’s earlier famous explanation of King Tang’s coup is that “King Tang did not commit treason against the emperor but just drove an ordinary man out, since his expulsion of King jie (桀王) followed Heaven’s design (天命).”¹² Jeong, Yakyong’s implication and judgment are the same as those of Mencius, but his process of thinking and emphasis are quite different. The following paragraph sums up his main ideas.

¹² “King Hui of Liang (梁惠王),” Mencius (孟子).

How come there is an emperor? The crowds erect the emperor. And if he is unfit to rule, the crowds drag him down to his former position, and erect a new talented ruler instead. It is the crowds who either demote or promote the ruler. “From the lower to the upper (下而上)” was the proper way of reason in the past. However, such became contrary to the way of reason now that this is the age of “from the upper to the lower (上而下).”¹³

The logic of Mencius restricts absolute authority with the link of “public sentiment (民心)→Heaven’s design (天命)→dynastic revolution (易姓革命),” and opens the way to politics for the people (爲民) and of the people (民本). Jeong, Yakyong goes even further. He gives us a more elaborate account of the process of the rise and change of power. The rise and change of power both originate from and are led by the people. The transcendental entity of Heaven’s design, legitimizing the revolution on behalf of the people, disappears in his explanation. Here is the germ of a positive dimension “by the people (民權),” which is quite different from Mencius’s idea. The nature of government is also bilateral and contractual, not one-sided. Accordingly, the present dynastic order will be changed if the early ideal order is to be recovered. Ideas like the positive dimension by the people (civil rights), the contract between government and citizens and the affirmation of the revolution by the people are very similar to those of Western Enlightenment. It is quite fair that “Tang-ron” has often been considered as representative of an autonomous theory of civil rights and modern thought in Korea.

Arguments against it, however, are also quite serious. The argument

¹³ Jeong, Yakyong, “Tang-ron,” *Yeoyeudangjeonseo* (與猶堂全書), 1st Collection, vol. 11.

goes as follows. The ideas of “Tang-ron” still restrict themselves to the level of politics for the people and of the people, and abate only slightly the leading nature of Heaven’s design in the respect of power relations. The part that the people take also does not go beyond the boundaries of Confucian government, and does not resist one-sided government by a ruler. Despite denying the dynasty of blood ties, its conclusion ends up stressing the ancient tradition of abdication. Most of all, the examples and terms which it uses rely on Confucian phraseology, and do not lead to new conceptualization; for example, the main agent of power is called “the crowds (眾),” and their action “selection (推).” The argument sometimes claims that Jeong, Yakyong developed a reformation plan based on ancient Confucianism in his later writings.

As a result, both arguments are possible; “Tang-ron” can be read both as precursor of new thought and as an advocacy of radical Confucianism. The precursor argument gives attention to the active aspects of selection and dismissal, while the advocacy argument takes note of the Confucian thought system shown in its title, logic and phraseology. “Tang-ron,” as it were, goes beyond the traditional thought of Confucianism in content, yet the concepts and narrative style articulating its aim do not break away from Confucianism. In other words, new thought making for modernity is locked up within the boundary of the traditional thought paradigm and phraseology. Concepts integrating thoughts and social projects bring about various interpretations as they stand on both sides of the pre-modern and the modern.

East Asian intellectuals like Jeong, Yakyong, who tried to formulate modernity in its elementary form, invested the existing vocabulary with new meanings when they faced the modernity of the West, which came to inspire much imagination. For example, “democracy” was translated as 民

主(minju), providing three possible meanings; “the people as master,” “the people becoming the masters,” “a sovereign ruler elected by popular vote.” Among them, “a sovereign ruler elected by popular vote” is an interesting case in that it was traditional in word formation but modern in meaning.¹⁴ The case shows the combination of traditional form and new content.

As examples like “Tang-ron” and “a sovereign ruler elected by popular vote” demonstrate, East Asia experienced contact with modernity yet without conceptualization. Conceptual history should absorb this experience. I would like to call these changes of East Asia made without any consciousness of the Western modernity—the now so-called germs of modernity—“changes before Western conceptualization.”¹⁵ We should create a new paradigm of the “long modernity of East Asia” embracing these changes.

5. Conclusion: Creation of Long Modernity

East Asia was preparing its own way for modernity before encountering Western concepts. If we take this point of time as a starting point for long modernity, then, how do we define the end of the process or the point of settlement?

As regards to the sweeping change of Western concepts in Korea,

¹⁴ Jin Guantao and Liu Qingfeng, *What Is Conceptual History?* trans., Ilmo Yang et al (Seoul: Pureunyeokas, 2010), 52.

¹⁵ Some other cases of the “changes before Western conceptualization” in Korea can be mentioned in passing; several discussions trying to make relative Sinocentrism as East Asian world order, those advocating practical aspects in Confucianism like the “institutional approach to government (經世致用)” and “economic enrichment (利用厚生)” and those attempting to make an eclectic compromise between the East and the West through limited contact with the West.

much attention has been paid to the period from the mid-19th to the mid-20th centuries during which Korea came into contact with the West through Japanese and Chinese translation. This trend, however, is now facing a new problem as individual studies make progress. For example, Haedong Yun claims strongly that modern concepts became established after the 1950s,¹⁶ while Seungcheol Song takes the process of overcoming the system of division after the emancipation as the most determining for Korean conceptual history yet in a more cautious way.¹⁷

These arguments have some similarity with the above-mentioned issue of modernity of the pre-modern. Both cases stress the inner side of the subject before and after the introduction of modernity much more than the divide between shock and response, or between tradition and modernity. There exists, however, much discrepancy. The former emphasizes the change of thought, while the latter pays attention to the socio-political significance of concepts. Seemingly, it is not easy to connect one with the other as there is a long time lag between them. It is necessary but difficult to form a consistent theory. Where can we find a link between the two?

Seungcheol Song, a scholar of modern literature, suggests that “the object of conceptual history should have relative backwardness, and show both stability and instability at the same time.” This definition derives from the Korean historical experience following the 1950s. It is interesting to find that this definition can also be applied to the period between the 17th and 18th centuries in Korea. As a result, this period becomes a very

¹⁶ Haedong Yun, “The Separation and Combination of the Concept of Political Subject,” *Concept and Communication* 6 (2010).

¹⁷ Seungcheol, Song, “Communication toward the Future: Re-considering the Korean Approach to Conceptual History,” *Concept and Communication* 4 (2009).

attractive object of conceptual history.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, Korea (Joseon) became the stage of a heated argument over whether it should submit to or deny the Qing dynasty whom it did not consider as “the legitimate center.” It was divided between the argument for submission to the Qing and the argument for the independent realization of Confucian civilization in the 17th century. This led to the passage of another change of perception over the gap between its expectations (the collapse of the Qing) and reality (stable Qing and backward Joseon) in the 18th century. Since the 17th century, Joseon had been very sensitive about the relation between the center and the periphery and about the autonomous rights of civilization. The trouble that harassed Joseon in this period, which was both one of stability and instability, may not differ much from that of late 20th century Korea. If this is the case, Korea may be “a repository for conceptual history” in that since the 17th century, it had taken pains to find a new alternative, despite the contradiction between stability and instability.

Koselleck explains the modern era through a unique figure of speech, “Sattelzeit” (saddle period). If we apply this figure to the above-mentioned questions about Korean modernity, the result may be a very long period of modernity. To put it bluntly, Korean conceptual historians share a somewhat covert desire to consider the period that they study as a saddle period. A researcher may feel that “this is the very period when the saddle was put on the back of the horse,” regardless of whether you are studying the period after the 17th century, the period after the mid-19th century, or the period after emancipation.

I would like to embrace this desire positively. Conceptual history should incorporate a variety of elements; criticism against the Confucian worldview, reformation within the dynastic system, action and reaction

during the contact with the West, the simultaneity of colonization and modernization in the early 20th century and the democratization and modernization after World War II, among others.

Most Korean conceptual historians focus on the period after the mid-19th century, but their target period can be extended as far as the 17th century, which adds to the attractiveness of conceptual history. I hope that a more lively discussion incorporating this will ensue to set up “East Asian long modernity.”

Let me suggest a prospect in conclusion for the conceptual history of East Asia including Korea. The reason we take note of European conceptual history is that some parts of the theory are broadly applicable regardless of regional characteristics. This includes theories about conceptual and socio-linguistic contexts and about the relation between history expected from the past and history constructed in the present. It is quite natural that so-called common theory brings about some variation in different socio-historical contexts the moment when it encounters concrete and regional cases.

The crux of the matter is to determine at which point the difference between Europe and East Asia appears. My idea is that questions about how each had formed its modernity on a one-state basis and in what way it grappled with the relation between the center and the periphery are at least common; the difference is that regions other than the West continue to contend with the problem of the center (the West) since they witnessed their existing center collapse or be replaced by the West, a situation which is unique to the non-West. Accordingly, East Asian conceptual history should cut down considerable parts of the concrete methodologies of European conceptual history, and take its own line. If research on the modernizing movement, as distinct from that of the West, is performed in

non-Western regions, as done in East Asia, it will expose the dual nature of modern concepts originating from Europe, and contribute to rendering Western modernity relative and regional.

(English Editor: William Blythe)