

## Foreword

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Korean philosophy refers either to the fundamental belief system of Koreans about the world and humans, or otherwise the academic work that aims to systematize and justify that belief system. In other words, the former refers to the worldview of Koreans, and the latter refers to the specific branch of the humanities currently performed in Korea.

These two do not always go together. Korean philosophy as academic research could be performed as a work to reflect or justify the worldview of Koreans. Yet it sometimes also attempts to critique and modify the traditional belief system or establish a new worldview by studying the philosophy of other nations.

Even if belief systems are fundamental, they cannot but change according to time and situation. They are influenced by the progress of individual sciences and foreign ideas, and therefore they change sometimes partially and slowly, and sometimes radically and rapidly.

Nevertheless, it is reasonable to consider that a people with a long cultural tradition would have a shared identity, somewhat like a family resemblance, even in the process of change. Korea is a nation with a five-thousand-year-old tradition and unique culture. Although there have been several ideological turning points, it seems nonsensical to discuss Korean philosophy while completely neglecting philosophical traditions. The purpose of this volume is to show the characteristics of the Korean philosophical thought.

With the advent of globalization, the development of Korean philosophy adopts three major streams. The first is the position that we should reinterpret our own traditional philosophies, such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, within a contemporary context, and systematize our own unique worldview. The second position is that we should learn from European philosophy which has prevailed in modern society, from Descartes to Postmodernism. The last position is that we should learn from analytic philosophy and the philosophy of science, which are the leading theories in contemporary society.

These positions, despite their occasional conflicts and co-operations, are prominent in current Korean philosophy. The ten essays in this volume each take one of these positions. Even though these essays do not represent the whole of Korean philosophy, each thoroughly demonstrates the ongoing philosophical investigations in Korea.

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