

Chapter 4

**Modern and Contemporary  
Chinese Confucian Studies**

## 1. Introduction

This article presents the results of a comprehensive analysis of the research outcomes related to the studies of modern and contemporary Confucianism in China among the academic papers published in South Korea in 2019. The search criteria were papers published in journals registered in the Korean Citation Index(KCI) of the National Research Foundation(NRF) and doctoral theses of individual universities.

The search period was set from January to December 2019, and the paper collections(registered and candidate journals) were classified into four categories: philosophy(25 papers), Confucian studies(four papers), other humanities(one paper), and Chinese language and literature(one paper).

Analysis of each journal and its papers narrowed down the number of articles covering the topics related to “modern and contemporary Confucianism in China” to ten. To give a clear overview of these papers, they were categorized by scholar and topic as follows:

## 2. Scholars and Topics

1. Yoo Hee-Sung: “The eastern penetration of western powers and Wei Yuan-Yan Fu“(Sogang Journal of Philosophy 2019. vol.58)
2. yun ji won: “YanFu's perception of Modernity and the Fusion of Chinese and Western Studies”(THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE 2019, vol., no.76)
3. yun ji won: “A Study on Zhang Zhi Dong's Reformation Ideology”(THE STUDY OF CONFUCIAN PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE 2019, vol., no.77)
4. Han Sung-gu: “A Study on the Science and Ethics Issues in

- Modern China”(THE JOURNAL OF KOREAN PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORY 2019, vol., no.63)
5. Chun, Byung-don, Roh Byung-Ryul : “A Comparative Study of Xiongshili, Mayifu, Liangshuming’s Mind theory in Contemporary New Confucianism”(Philosophia, Journal of Korean Philosophical Society 2019, vol.150)
  6. LEE YUN JEONG: “MaYiFu(馬一浮)’s Theory of moral self-cultivation–Chu Hsi and Lu Jiuyuan’s academic integration and their attempts at reconciliation–”(THE JOURNAL OF KOREAN PHILOSOPHICAL HISTORY 2019, vol., no.61)
  7. Jung, Jong Mo: “Liu Shuxian(劉述先)’s Interpretation on the Concept of “Li-yi-fen-shu(理一分殊)””(the CHUNG KUK HAK PO 2019, vol., no.88)
  8. Hwang JongWon: “A Critical Contemplation on the Concept of ‘Humanization of Nature’ and ‘Naturalization of Human Being’ of Li Zehou”(Journal of Eastern Philosophy 2019, vol.00, no.100)
  9. Suhk Wonho: “Chinese Neorealistic Tao’s Metaphysics”(CHULHAK-*RONCHONG*, Journal of the New Korean Philosophical Association 2019, vol.96, no.2)
  10. Keong-ran Cho: “The Possibility of Restructuring Tianxia Order and Confucian Universalism–II”,(Journal of The Society of philosophical studies 2019, vol., no.127)

The modern age in China covers the period from the late Qing to the early Republican era. In Chinese academic history, the Spring and Autumn Period(Warring States Period) and the Republican era are known to be periods during which a wealth of famous masters and masterpieces were produced. As the saying goes, heroes emerge in times of tribulation, and it was amid great pain and fear of major social transformation in China that great literary works were written to throw light onto the

troubled times. Among the prominent figures who were active during the modern age in China, those who have attracted attention of the Korean academic milieu include, in terms of the number of research papers published, Kang Youwei(康有為), Liang Qichao(梁啟超), Yan Fu(嚴復), Zhang Taiyan(章太炎), Liang Shuming(梁漱溟), and Ma Yifu(馬一浮). Newly covered in the papers published in 2019 are Jin Yuelin(金岳霖), a leading contemporary Chinese philosopher best known for his works on logic, and Li Zehou(李澤厚) and Liu Shu-hsien(劉述先).

Yoo Hee-Sung's paper "The Eastern Penetration of Western Powers and Wei Yuan·Yan Fu" and Yun ji won's paper "Yan Fu's Perception of Modernity and the Fusion of Chinese and Western Studies" examine Yan Fu's thought. The former examines it in the light of interactions between Chinese and Western studies, and the latter as an extension of Wei Yuan's thought.

Yun ji won's paper "Modern Chinese Knowledge Topography and Zhang Zhidong's Reformation Ideology, with a focus on QuanXuePian(勸學篇)" gives an overall picture of the ideology of Zangwu Yundong(洋務運動, Westernization Movement) as well as its limitations. Although it does not bring any new insight into the subject, the paper is worth reading in that it presents the reformation ideology of Zhang Zhidong(張之洞, 1837-1909) in a systematic way.

In China, at the beginning of the 20th century, there was an attempt at fundamental changes in the traditional way of living stuck in the past by embracing Western civilization, namely Ke Xuan Lunzheng(科玄論爭 Science and Philosophy Dispute). This dispute touches on questions such as whether the debate over science and views of life can lead to solving the issue of worldview(including views of life) or whether the explanations provided by science are sufficient to understanding the meaning of life or the world. The view-of-life camp was led by Zhang Junmai(張君勱), and the science camp was represented by two groups: liberalists led by Ding

Wenjiang(丁文江) and Hu Shi(胡適), and materialists represented by Qu Qiubai(瞿秋白) and Chen Duxiu(陳獨秀). Although these two camps had opposing ideologies, they shared the same orientation toward Scientism and Westernization. Han Seong-gu's paper "The Problems of Science and Ethics in Modern China—Trends of Modern Chinese Positivism and Ding Wenjiang's Epistemology" reviews Ding Wenjiang's(丁文江) Epistemology and the topics related to the Science and Philosophy Debate.

The paper co-authored by Chun Byung-don and Roh Byung-Ryul, "A Comparative Study of Xiongshili, Mayifu, Liangshuming's Mind theory in Contemporary New Confucianism," and Lee Yun-jeong's paper "Ma Yifu(馬一浮)'s Theory of moral self-cultivation—Chu Hsi and Lu Jiuyuan's academic integration and their attempts at reconciliation" cover key figures of Mainland China's contemporary New Confucianism. Chun and Roh provide a rough outline of the Mind Theory of New Confucian scholars such as Xiong Shili(熊十力), Ma Yifu(馬一浮), and Liang Shuming(梁漱溟), without going into detail. Lee Yun-jeong systematically covered Ma Yifu's thoughts, although without adding any arguments going beyond presentation.

Jung Jong Mo's "Liu Shuxian's(劉述先) Interpretation on the Concept of 'Li-yi-fen-shu(理一分殊)': Convergence of Contemporary New Confucianism and its Significance" explores the 余英時 thought of the late Liu Shuxian(1934–2016), What is the thought Liu Shuxian wanted to reveal through the philosophy of Li-yi-fen-shu(理一分殊, one principle, many manifestations). Jung summarizes this thought as follows: Liu Shuxian's classification of scholars is based on philosophical issues or conceptual tasks at hand rather than generation or succession. Whereas Groups III and IV are collectively termed "Hong Kong/Taiwan New Confucianism" in the academic milieu, Liu Shuxian positioned himself in Group IV, distinguishing that group from Group III, which enjoyed its heyday in the 1960s and 70s, as follows: the four groups

of the third generation neo-Confucian scholars spent their intellectual youth in Hong Kong and Taiwan under the guidance of the scholars of the previous generation, such as Liu Shuxian from Fang Dongmei(方東美), Yu Yingshi(余英時), and Du Weiming(杜維明) from Mou Zongsan(牟宗三). They then learned Western methodology and experienced the current of the intellectual world while studying in the United States. Driven by this academic background that was utterly different from that of their predecessors, who focused on the “defense” of Confucianism and modernity from the standpoint of cultural conservatism, they were wholly committed to the task of inter-civilization communication and exchanges. While reviewing Jung Jong Mo’s paper, I had this old scholar’s image before my eyes of when he was walking around clad in casual wear with an eco-bag on his shoulder, immersed in deep thought, at the 4th International Conference on Sinology held in 2012 at the Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica.

Li Zehou(李澤厚) is also a widely acclaimed leading scholar of contemporary New Confucianism in Mainland China. In his paper “A Critical Contemplation on the Concept of ‘Humanization of Nature’ and ‘Naturalization of Human Being’ of Li Zehou,” Hwang Jong Won characterizes his thought as follows: “Li Zehou modernizes the most important ideas of traditional Confucianism in his own way based on his philosophical viewpoints or concepts that partially acknowledge Marxism as a universal and valid ideology. The core idea of Marxism embraced by Li Zehou is that humans are able to escape from nature and cultivate their own culture through social labor, concurrently making themselves more humane. Based on this viewpoint, he foregrounds the concept of ‘humanization of nature’ proposed by Marx, thereby defending the progress of civilization and culture. Interestingly, he regards the concepts of ‘humanization of nature’ and ‘naturalization of humans’ as an attempt at new interpretation of the Tian Ren HeYi(天人合一, unity of heaven

and humanity) of traditional Confucianism.(…) What is clear is that he associates the ‘humanization of nature’ with the humanitarian or humanistic tendencies of Confucianism, which is basically affirmative of human society, civilization, and culture, and ‘naturalization of humans’ with the Confucian mind, which emphasizes the coexistence and harmony between humans and nature.” The author’s view that Li Zehou modernizes the most important ideas of traditional Confucianism with Marxian philosophical ideas and concepts is in line with Li Zehou’s approach to establishing Confucius’s Ren(仁 humaneness) as expounded in his book Kongzi Zei Pingjia(孔子再評價 A Reevaluation of Confucius), which is widely known in the academic milieu.

Suhk Wonho’s paper “Chinese Neorealistic Tao’s Metaphysics” is about Jin Yuelin(金岳霖), who was acclaimed as a leading philosopher of contemporary Chinese logic. Jin Yuelin, who remained single throughout his life, is not only celebrated as a great figure in logic, but is also famous for his personal involvement with Liang Sicheng(梁思成), who was the son of Liang Qichao(梁啟超) and a landmark figure in Chinese architectural history, and his wife Lin Huiyin(林徽因), known as the muse of the intellectuals of the time.

Suhk Wonho presents Jin Yuelin as follows: “Jin Yuelin’s metaphysics of Tao is a study on China’s neorealistic metaphysics introduced for the first time in Korea. Alongside Feng Youlan(馮友蘭), he is a leading philosopher representing neorealism in the history of contemporary Chinese philosophy. Neorealism is a school of thought influenced by positivism, one of the three major strands of modern Chinese philosophy. Positivism rejects metaphysics as a whole and emphasizes logical linguistic analysis of a proposition. Jin Yuelin’s understanding of metaphysics, which was formed under the influence of neorealism, left a profound impact on the Chinese scientific and philosophical circles. His metaphysics of Tao is evaluated as a philosophical achievement representing modern Chinese

philosophy, along with Feng Youlan's Xin Li Xue(新理學, New Rational Philosophy) and Xiong Shili's Xin Weishi Lun(新唯識論, new doctrine of Vijnānamātra).(…) In his book Lun Dao(論道 Tao), Jin Yuelin analyzes metaphysics, which is generally rejected by realists and positivists, around the concept of Tao(道) mediated by(式-能 form-potentiality), which is highly valued in traditional Chinese philosophy. In particular, when interpreting the concepts of potentiality, reality, intersubjectivity(gongxiang 共相) and particularity(殊相 shuxiang), time and space, change of individuals, infinite(無極 wuji) and finite(太極 taiji), he performs argumentative reasoning using the neorealist method of logical analysis. That is, he interprets the concepts of Western philosophy using the resources and philosophical facets of traditional Neo-Confucianism such as Deo(道 Tao) and xing(性 human nature), ti(體 body) and yong(用 use), benran(本然 inherent nature) and biran(必然 the inevitable), and infinite(無極 wuji) and finite(太極 taiji).(…) At that time, there were a variety of philosophical and social discourses contrasting Chinese and Western philosophical methods and contents such as the East-West culture debate in the early 1920s, the debate over science and view of life in 1923, and the debate on the materialistic dialectic in 1930. Jin Yuelin was not directly involved in these debates, but was practicing philosophical training while preparing his own positions toward each issue. In this context, Lun Dao(論道 Tao) is Jin Yuelin's answer to solving the major debates in the history of contemporary Chinese philosophy.”

Cho Kyeong-ran's paper “The Possibility of Restructuring Tianxia Order and Confucian Universalism- II : A Critical Analysis of the Xin Kang Youwei Zhuzi(新康有爲主義 New Doctrine of Kang Yuwei) of New Confucianism of Mainland China” provides a synopsis of the latest trends related to the revival of Confucianism currently in place in China. We understand, as a matter of common sense, that the Chinese Communist Party intends to build the Chinese version of a socialist world by fusing

Marxism and Confucianism. Would this combination be successful?

Cho Kyeong-ran, who is at the forefront of the research on modern Chinese Confucianism (as a political philosophy) in Korea, conveys her view on this question as follows: “The discourse of ‘Tianxia Order’ centered around the Confucian ideas of Hua Yi Zhi Bian (華夷之辨 Sinocentrism) and benevolent royal governance is actually an issue of ‘legitimacy of dominion.’ In the current situation where the Chinese model has not yet revealed its shape, the discourse of ‘Tianxia Order’ has become popular in China because it is in fact closely related to the issue of ‘legitimacy of dominion.’ In that case, how should we understand this ‘legitimacy of dominion’? At the present point in time in the 21st century, it is eventually securing an imperial mechanism of integration rather than a division in the process of reconstructing the universality of Confucianism. This article is a preliminary work of the scholarly clique called ‘New Confucianism of Mainland China’ in its attempt at exploring the feasibility of reconstructing the ‘Tianxia Order’ and Confucian universalism through the mediation of Xin Kang Youwei Zhuzi (新康有爲主義 New Doctrine of Kang Yuwei). It has two main foci. The first focus, a realistic one, is on the question whether they are convincingly setting up a justification strategy for the preservation of the Chinese stronghold and the recovery of a ‘civilized China’ taken on by Kang Youwei as an important issue. Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒) gave rise to the principle of imperial governance with Confucian ideas by completing the cycle of the birth of the ‘legitimacy of dominion.’ Since Dong Zhongshu completed the principles of imperial governance with Confucian ideas, Confucian has been taken as a universal, rather than ethnic, instrument, and attributed to the nation (empire) rather than to regional tribes. From then on, the idea that ‘legitimacy of dominion’ by the ‘Orthodox Great Chinese Dynasty’ has been broadly understood in China as meaning that a ruler is not judged by his or her ethnic origin but by the

leadership leading to the ‘Great Unification.’ It is in this vein that all the Chinese dynasties risked their lives to build an imperial structure and be transformed into a Chinese Empire, justifying their legitimacy with the framework of the ideology of ‘Great Unification.’ The issue taken on by Kang Youwei 100 years ago still exists in China today in its original form. However, there is no solution to this problem without a conceptual shift in keeping with the 21st century that consists of clearing discriminatory relations with the surrounding nations and establishing equal partnerships with them. The second focus, a normative one, is on the question whether it is possible to show ‘contemplative Confucianism’ by reconstructing the ‘Tianxia Order’ and Confucian universalism. The two conditions of ‘contemplative Confucianism’ are alterity and morality. Any debate on New Confucianism devoid of these two conditions can be criticized as a regression to ‘feudalism’ and cannot persuade the inner and outer realms of China. Furthermore, it is impossible to avert the misunderstanding that their plans are to pursue another form of ‘Sinocentrism.’ For the revival of Confucianism in China, the questions of ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Where are my values’ must be posed afresh now that they are back after drifting in the West. Only then can the process of real self-objectification begin, thus securing alterity. Only through this process of self-objectification and alterity can sustainable contemplative Confucianism be realized. Under these criteria, the possibility of constructing the ‘Tianxia Order’ and reconstructing Confucian universalism through Xin Kang Youwei Zhuzi (新康有爲主義 New Doctrine of Kang Yuwei) does not appear to be very high, although that is yet to be seen. If the odds for reconstruction are not high, whether with regard to a real or normative problem, it is most probably ascribable to the absence of a changed paradigm fitting the 21st-century perception after passing through the 20th century.”

### 3. Critical Analyses of Important Papers

We are living in an era of science and technology in which a philosophy discussing science, technology, and civilization is indispensable. However, it is difficult to criticize science, technology, and civilization because they are aimed at our life itself, and our lives are self-contradictory. The government's rational attitude to discussing environmental issues is a good cross-sectional example. It suggested reducing automobile emissions and fostering the automobile industry.

Li Zehou(李澤厚) is a leading Chinese scholar of New Confucianism, as can be agreed upon by any reader who knows some of the influence his intellectual legacy had on Chinese intellectuals at the time. Hwang Jong-won's paper "A Critical Contemplation on the Concept of 'The Humanization of Nature' and 'The Naturalization of Human Beings' of Li Zehou" explores the philosophy of science and technology expounded by a leading contemporary Chinese philosopher. The author's evaluation that Li Zehou "modernizes the most important ideas of traditional Confucianism in his own way based on his philosophical viewpoints or concepts that partially acknowledge Marxism as a universal and valid ideology" reminds us of the fact that contemporary philosophers as critics of civilization find a significant proportion of their inspiration in Marxism.

While fully understanding Li Zehou's position, Hwang Jong-won ventures to point to his limitations: "Despite the criticism that nature has been fatally damaged by technology, no moral remorse about technology itself takes place.(...) However, he did not recognize that this liberation from nature, that is, freedom was at the expense of nature. Thus, he failed to present an ethical ecological principle that humans must break away from the technological freedom designed to dominate nature with their moral free will." If we admit that contemporary human life is self-contradictory as mentioned above, Hwang Jong-won's criticism on Li

Zehou is not incorrect. However, whether he endorses its realistic practical power is open to discussion.

#### 4. Evaluation and Outlook

Ten papers were published in 2019 in the research area of “modern and contemporary Confucianism in China,” showing a significant increase compared to 2018 not only in the number of papers (from four to ten papers), but also in the diversity of topics. Classifying the papers by scholar, famous scholars familiar to us, such as Kang Youwei (康有為), Liang Qichao (梁啟超), Yan Fu (嚴復), Zhang Taiyan (章太炎), Liang Shuming (梁漱溟), and Ma Yifu (馬一浮), were mostly covered in 2019 as well. Newly covered in the papers published in 2019 include Jin Yuelin (金岳霖), a leading contemporary Chinese philosopher best known for his works on logic, and Li Zehou (李澤厚) and Liu Shu-hsien (劉述先). As shown in the in-depth analysis of the papers presenting two Chinese contemporary scholars Li Zehou (李澤厚) and Liu Shuxian (劉述先), it is hoped that more papers will present and analyze Korean contemporary scholars in the related Korean academic circles.

