

## Editorial

### Welcome to the fifth volume of the Irish Journal of Asian Studies (IJAS).

This issue consists of papers submitted following the sixth annual conference of the **North American Korean Philosophy Association** (NAKPA), which was held at University College Cork (UCC) from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019. It was hosted by the **Irish Institute of Korean Studies** at UCC, and was attended by international scholars from South Korea, the United States, Australia, as well as different European countries. The conference was a great success, not only because of high profile philosophers, such as Professor Jin Y. Park, but also because it was very well attended by students, who actively participated in discussions, highlighting the fact that ‘Korean’ philosophy represents philosophy that is accessible to everyone, and not delimited to ‘Koreans’. Rather, the papers at the conference demonstrated how ideas that stem from Korean philosophy can help to break down barriers, and open us up to new modes of thinking and, more importantly, action. A recurrent motif in Korean philosophy, that of ‘mindful’ thought, which shapes and modifies one’s ‘conscientious’ actions, was evident during the conference, and in the papers in this issue.

The first article is an interview with one of the most important contemporary Korean philosophers, Jin Y. Park, author of important texts such as *Women and Buddhist Philosophy* (2017); *Makers of Modern Korean Buddhism* (2010); *Buddhism and Postmodernity* (2008). Her work attempts to dissolve the fixed borders between ‘east’ and ‘west’, and embodies the intersectionality that she sees in Buddhism and postmodernity, often focused on deconstructing pre-conceived biases relating to Korean philosophy in particular, highlighted in her interview. This engaging interview also questions the privileged position of West-centred philosophy, and, more significantly, acknowledges how Park herself is marginalised ‘four times over’ as an Asian woman dealing with non-Western philosophy. Park also introduces the ideas of two modern Korean philosophers and demonstrates how their historical context shaped their convictions and identities.

Bongrae Seok’s ambitious article manages to delineate complicated ideas relating to moral metaphysics and moral psychology in a straightforward manner, while also highlighting the originality of Korean philosophers who engaged with complicated Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucian philosophy. This leads to an in-depth discussion of one of the greatest metaphysical debates of the entire Chosŏn dynasty (1392-1910) the Four-Seven Debate: why and how certain emotions (the Four Beginnings, *sadan*) are good, while others (the Seven Feelings, *ch’ilsŏng*)

are only contingently good. This also draws us into a discussion on *li-ki* metaphysics, as well as explanations of the moral goodness of the heart-and-mind (*sim*) and the nature (*sŏng*), and their different interpretations by the titans of Korean Confucianism, T'oegye and Yulgok.

Maria Hasfeldt's article provides us with an important comparative study of theories related to feelings and emotions in the works of a Korean philosopher and a Western philosopher: Kobong, Ki Taesung (1527-1572), who had motivated T'oegye to reconsider the metaphysical underpinnings of his own philosophy (greatly influencing the Four-Seven Debate), and Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776). Hume, himself having written on 'Human Nature', has been compared to Mencius, while Kobong directly develops key Mencian ideas. This study highlights how philosophers from the 'east' and 'west' can share similar ideas, and more significantly, suggests that Asian philosophy may have made a much greater contribution to the Age of Enlightenment than previously assumed, gesturing to the idea of intersectionality highlighted by Jin Y. Park.

Kiri Paramore's article on the relationship between Japanese Confucianism and Korea until the end of the sixteenth century, traces the earliest accounts of interaction between both countries in the *Nihon Shoki*, a historical text dating from the early eighth century. Confucianism was then used in early Japanese statecraft to provide frameworks for mediation between Japan and other states, as well as to justify state violence against 'barbarians', who did not adhere to Confucian norms or use the Chinese script. Later, in medieval Japan, Neo-Confucianism was not as deeply entrenched in the Japanese state as it had become in Korea, nor was its study so deliberately separated from centres of Zen Buddhist learning, indeed it was often used by scholar monks to fulfil diplomatic roles. Paramore suggests that this symbiotic intellectual environment seems to have influenced the emergence of Shinto in Japan, also argued in studies by Mark Teeuwen.

The research article in this issue, by Constantin Holzer, critically examines the changing position of Chinese companies in relation to i) social responsibility and ii) social credit. It provides a clear and comprehensive overview of China's discourse on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) since the early 2000s, while highlighting how the CCP in China effectively controls companies' financial, ethical, legal and political credibility using an integrated digital rating system. The author suggests that the social credit system does not necessarily have to be an obstacle for political reform within China, but rather could be used to create a level playing field of transparency, and could even promote further political reform in the future.

Finally, Till Weingärtner reviews Inuhiko Yomota's, *What is Japanese Cinema* (2019), translated by Phillip Kaffen. The text encourages the readers to start thinking about Japanese cinema in terms of a 'national' cinema developed independently from its global historical background, while providing readers (especially students!) with useful overviews of the different themes, genres and personalities of Japanese film.

IJAS continues to make significant contributions to the field of Asian Studies, not just in Ireland, but internationally, proof of which is the willingness of senior scholars to contribute their articles and ideas to the journal, which also continues to reflect its interdisciplinary objectives.

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