

# Confucian Self-Identity and Self-Realization in the Modern World

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**Abstract:** In this paper I discuss the relevance of Confucianism to modern democracy. By modern democracy is meant the fullest possible participation of the greatest number of the people, regardless of their social origin, gender, race, class, religion, physical disability, and other differentiating factors, in the relevant decision-making procedures and processes of political life.

One key concept integral to modern democracy is that of individual. I discuss the Confucian variation on the Deweyan theme of social individual as contrasted with the now antiquated notion of the classical modern Western libertarian concept of atomic individual. A social individual is an individual who can make responsible choice in social context; a social individual has social responsibilities commensurate with his/her freedom and individual rights. The sort of freedom (liberty) that social individuals exercise is positive liberty as well as negative liberty (to use the expressions coined by Isaiah Berlin as evidently inspired by Immanuel Kant). I relate Berlin's positive liberty to the Mencian twin concepts of *jadeuk* (in Korean) or *tzu te* (in Chinese), that is,

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acquiring the Way by self-efforts and *jaim* (in Korean) and *tzu jen* (in Chinese), to wit, assuming one's responsibility of one's own accord. These twin concepts embody "moral individualism" (to use the expression invented by William de Bary) in Confucianism. In lieu of "moral individualism," I use the expression "holistic individualism" for similar purposes.

For Confucians, true freedom means being able to perform responsible action in specific cultural, historical, and social context. Which means that becoming thoroughly familiar with the old helps an enlightened individual to project new possibilities onto the future (*onko chishin*). *Onko chishin* has affinity with Heidegger's *Zeitlichkeit* and the Deweyan concept of social individual.

I discuss the relevance of the Confucian notion of rulership of virtue or virtuous statesmanship to modern democracy, that is to say, the relevance of practicing statesmanship to show humane care (*in* in Korean and *ren* in Chinese) for the people by nourishing them, furthering their well-being, helping them to be educated, and helping to enhance their dignity. The Confucian idea of rectification of names resonates with modern democracy's idea of separation of powers.

In Confucian society, for that matter in any civilized society, rituals (*ye* in Korean, *li* in Chinese) should have primacy over the law: self-assertion should yield to deference for pride of place in civilized society. Yet the coupling of rites/rights need not be an uneasy one. I submit that an enlightened concept of rights in modern democracy is complementary to the Confucian ideal of virtuous rulership. In particular, I discuss civil rights, political rights, and social rights as advanced by T. H. Marshall in relation to the idea of the welfare state. The three kinds of rights are inextricably interwoven with one another. Civil rights lead to political rights which in turn occasion the rise of social rights. I relate them to the traditional Confucian ideal of virtuous rulership. In fine, the rights as cast by Marshall in the mold of modern democracy resonate with the

traditional Confucian ideal of virtuous rulership, that is to say, the ideal of nourishing and educating the people, furthering their well-being and dignity, and helping them realize their full human potentialities. For enlightened Confucians and enlightened liberals alike, self-identity is self-realization, that is, fully realizing one's human potentialities. Confucianism and modern democracy are the twain that, pace Kipling, has met.

**Key Words:** Confucianism, Modern Democracy, Social Individual, Moral Individualism, Self-Identity, Self-Realization

In this paper, I propose to talk of the relevance of Confucianism to the modern world and to modern democracy. Hegel infamously remarked that the concept of individual is essential to modern society. It has been mistakenly observed by culturally regressive and factually misinformed Western thinkers such as Max Weber that Confucianism constitutes hindrance to modernization in Asia. But for my present purpose, I would overlook this sadly mistaken view and move on to address the relevant key issues. I begin by stating that moral individuals have played a key role in traditional Confucian communicative community. In Confucian community, individuals are “social individuals” (to use a Deweyan expression). The dichotomy between “rugged individual” and society as conceived by classical libertarians is disavowed by Confucians as well as by Deweyans. The idea that individuals exist prior to society and society is a loose aggregate of atomic individuals bound by social contract is a myth and snare sired by conceptual confusion. As Hegel aptly observed, the idea that society is formed by pre-societal individuals drawing up a contract is putting the cart before the horse. How would pre-historical individuals be capable of drawing up a contract which is societal in nature? David Hume, being a historian as well as a philosopher, made the pointed observation that the alleged event of pre-societal individuals getting together and forming social contract is difficult of verification. To rectify the mistake made by the classical atomistic libertarians, Dewey and like-minded souls such as George Mead helped to bring about the “social turn” (to borrow the expression from Hans Joas<sup>①</sup>), thus rightly asserting that individuals can exist only in society and as Mead affirmed, minds emerge only in social context. The “social turn” is indeed on a par with the “linguistic turn” brought about by Wittgensteinians such as Wilfrid Sellars and Peter Geach. Just as Deweyans put society before individuals, so Wittgensteinians put

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① Hans Joas, *Pragmatism and Social Theory*, Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1993.

language before individuals thus de-mystifying concept empiricism which created the myth that tabula rasa acquires ideas (concepts) by virtue of having sensations. Both atomic libertarians and concept empiricists are conceptually confused

In the tradition of Confucianism and more broadly in the East Asian setting, there has been no need for bringing about the “social turn” for the simple reason that wholesome human beings have always been conceived as social individuals, each of whom is expected to acquire the Way and to assume one’s responsibility of one’s own accord. Individuals are morally motivated social, holistic individuals. Modern Europeans created the myth of the existence of bare, pre-societal individuals as a necessary ideological weapon to revolt against medieval totalitarianism. Further, the invention by John Locke of the concept of atomic individual human beings was aided and abetted by the concept of physical atoms invented by his friend Isaac Newton. Just as according to Newton, force is extraneous to the intrinsic nature of atoms, so for Locke social relations are not integral to the constitution of complete personhood (individuality). In the West social and political thinkers have often looked upon physicists for providing their paradigms. Now that the political needs of the early Western moderns were met, the mythical notion of atomic individuals should be let wither away. More to the point, the false rumor alleging “Asiatic despotism” as propagated by the benighted Westerners and uncritically embraced by the pathetic Eastern toadeaters blinded by enthusiasm for modernization, equated in their minds with submission to Westernization, has no factual historical ground. Except for brief periods of lapse, despotism has not been the Eastern way of rulership. Since in the East Asian scene there has been no sustained absolutist religious and/or political system against which to revolt, there was no need for inventing the ideological weapon in the form of society-independent bare, atomic individual. In addition, to the robust sense of reality that East Asians have always possessed the very idea of society-independent

individual is utterly counterintuitive. The idea makes no sense to anyone with plain common sense. Incidentally, one of the most effective ways of drawing attention to the basically anti-despotic and anti-totalitarian way of East Asians is to remember that the idea and practice of the rectification of names has constituted the relational network of Confucian communicative community. The concept of the rectification of names is essentially tied up with the very idea of differentiated moral responsibility, which underlies in democratic society the very idea of separation of powers

East Asians have never been tempted to yield to the false dichotomy between isolated atomic individuals and abstract society. The life-long history of a person, that is, the self-identity of each individual is to be located in the socially constituted process of self-development and mutual sustenance. The Confucian ideal of self-identity is not only to achieve what every person is able to be (something like Heideggerian Seinkoennen) but also to help others achieve what they wish to become. Human beings are necessarily relational, interfusing, interpenetrating, and interdependent. The idea and practice of the interdependence of human beings is pervasive of all East Asian thoughts. That is to say, Buddhists, Taoists as well as Confucians have accepted the interdependence of human beings as a given. Further, what is characteristic of Eastern thoughts is that the thoughts themselves tend to be interfusing and interpenetrating. In this respect, East Asian thoughts contrast with Western religions and ideologies which are marked by exclusivism and conflict. That is because whereas the Eastern ways are pluralistic, the mainstream Western thoughts, typically informed by the Christian faith and Platonic metaphysic, as sharply observed by Nietzsche in his masterpiece titled *Die Froeliche Wissenschaft*, have spawned the monolithic tradition of affirming and propagating the (only) Truth, the Way and the Life.

In the Confucian tradition, the interdependence of human beings should be understood not in an epistemological sense but primarily in an ethico-social-cum-

political sense. The Confucian conception of the relational interdependence of human beings has affinity with the Deweyan notion of associated life. For Confucians as well as for Deweyans, self-identity and self-realization can be achieved only through participation in and development of a common form of life and sharing common goals as combined with mutual support and sustenance, valuing respect for one another's dignity and willing acceptance of one's responsibility. Development of one's capacity for self-realization as social individual requires self-cultivation and acquiring the Way in the language of Confucianism or, according to Dewey, education. Self-development as social individual is the core of a "new individualism" as contrasted with the "old individualism" of atomic libertarianism (to borrow these terms from John Dewey<sup>①</sup>) for both Confucians and Deweyans. If Locke consciously sought a parallel between Newtonian physical atomism and his own socio-political atomism, we can readily see, if not intended by either Dewey or Confucians, a parallel between the Confucian-cum-Deweyan sense of dynamically transacting processual social individuals and dynamically interacting processive quanta in quantum mechanics.

Here it seems fitting to cast the role of social individual in the focus/field model. Each individual (focus) is a unique and unrepeatable processual self-being which reflects the field (community) and every other focus in the field from his/her own perspective. The focus/field can be aptly visualized in terms of the god Indra's net. Communal goals are developed through communication, mutual sustenance, and harmony. In communicative Confucian community, every individual participates in the developmental process of community, which presupposes the exercise of positive freedom. And full participation in communal affairs is the prime characteristic of democracy. Classical libertarians focus only on negative freedom, namely, freedom

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① John Dewey, *Individualism Old And New*, New York : Minton, Balch and Co., 1930.

from gratuitous external interference and freedom from irrational drives and impulses. Negative freedom is not freedom in a full-blown sense. I will return to two concepts of liberty later. True freedom means being able to develop and realize what one is able to be and being able to perform one's appropriate roles and responsibilities. This is what Mencius means by acquiring the Way (possibly painfully) by oneself (*jadeuk* in Korean, *tzu te* in Chinese) and assuming one's responsibility of one's own accord (*jaim* in Korean, *tzu jen* in Chinese). William de Bury characterizes these twin notions as the crystallization of "moral individualism" in the Confucian tradition.<sup>①</sup> I name this Confucian, and more broadly East Asian, outlook, holistic individualism. So the Mencian dictum is in keeping with the ideal of modern democracy.

According to Dewey, democracy is best embodied in associated life in communicative community. Participation in communal affairs entails communication. Communication has transformative effect. Communication helps persons realize that true self-interest is socialized interest: true self-interest lies in the common good. Communication helps members of community form and develop common goals through fusion of horizons. Self-identity and self-realization are achieved only in dynamically interacting and interdependent social context. Achieving communicative community requires education, communication, trust, respect for others' dignity and care for their well-being. Hence the Confucian golden rule, as expressed in *choong suh* (in Korean) or *choong shoo* (in Chinese), which says that one should be truthful to one's heart/mind and treat others' hearts/minds as one would regard one's own. As David Hall and Roger Ames say echoing Dewey's view, democracy, which is the self-governing society of individuals, is the best way of achieving a flourishing society. I thoroughly agree with their view. An exemplary person (*koonja* in Korean, *chun tzu* in

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① William T. de Bury, *The Liberal Tradition in China*, New York : Columbia University Press, 1983.



Chinese) is the sort of person who, as an accomplished person, can set an example for the ordinary people to realize themselves and achieve self-identity in fiduciary community. For Confucians self-identity is an achievement, not a brute fact. And as Chapter 20 of *Focusing the Familiar* (to borrow the translation of *Zhongyong* by Roger Ames and David Hall<sup>①</sup>) teaches, every human being is able to attain sagehood, that is, able to become fully human. Attainment of sagehood (becoming fully human) depends largely on one's own efforts. Human dignity and worth are not a given but something to be earned by each individual striving for becoming a fully moral being. Whatever is to be achieved by each person depends on that individual's existential commitment to a life-long, never ending process of way-making and self-realization. Confucianism teaches that every human being, regardless of class distinctions and other differentiating factors, has equal moral capacity for becoming fully human and self-realization. Confucianism locates the primary source of human equality, not in the legally guaranteed rights or God's grace or any other source external to each individual's determination for self-realization, but in common human moral aspirations and capacity. This is a form of robust humanism which accords ultimate worth and dignity to human capacity for self-realization through self-determination and self-efforts. This Confucian outlook is what William de Bury characterizes as "moral individualism" in Confucianism. If the concept of individual is essential to modern society and modern democracy, then Confucians have practiced the noblest form of individualism for millenia. For recognition of the dignity and worth of moral individuals has always been an integral part of East Asian culture, philosophy and practice. If democracy is to work, every member of community should be able and willing to perform his/her responsibility. And the twin notions of *jadeuk*, being educated and enlightened

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① Roger T. Ames, David L. Hall, *Focusing The Familiar: A Translation And Philosophical Interpretation Of The Zhongyong*, Hawaii : University Of Hawaii Press, 2001.

(acquiring the Way) and, *jaim*, being able and willing to assume one's appropriate responsibility of one's own accord, are essential to making democracy work.

The culturally benighted and conceptually confused would-be scholars, whether they be Westerners or pseudo-Westernized Easterners, have expressed the opinion that the idea of freedom and individual has never existed in East Asia. Hegel is known for his infamous remark that Chinese and Indians do not belong to the "philosophical history" of mankind. Let us set aside the false, the now irrelevant, but not altogether innocuous, utterances. Indeed, as Richard Rorty has observed, the concept of freedom is a modern European invention, which is relatively "parochial." Further, it is plain that just because the concept of freedom did not exist in the traditional East Asian scene, it does not mean that every person was in chains in East Asia. It is just that the concept was not on the philosophical agenda of traditional East Asians, for there was no need for the concept. In East Asia, the focus was on what it means to perform morally responsible actions in situationally fitting manner. For Confucians, civilized behavior means deferring to others, not asserting oneself at the expense of others in situations riven by conflict. The civilized mode of comportment is to conduct oneself in such a way as, if at all possible, to avoid conflict with others by performing other-regarding deeds. More of it later. Hence *choong suh*: treat others' heart/minds as you would regard your own. For Confucians, having recourse to the exercise of one's rights to resolve conflict of interests should be the last resort even in modern society. Confucian society even in the modern world should not be primarily rights-centered. Deference is the preferred way. The concept of individual rights is a useful tool for combating brutal despotism, stifling totalitarianism, and systematic political repression. Yet one should be shy of invoking one's rights in comporting oneself in civilized circles. In any civilized society, East or West, it is rituals, not the positive law, which should guide one's conduct in normal everyday life. The modern European liberal Immanuel Kant has

placed primacy on ethical laws and duties over juridical laws and duties. It is better to perform one's ethical duties of one's own accord according to one's moral conviction than to be forced by the government to perform juridical duties according to the positive law. This point is precisely what *jaim* (assuming one's responsibility of one's own accord) is about.

Truly responsible actions can be performed only in a specific cultural, historical, and social context. The Confucian idea that becoming thoroughly familiar with the old helps enlightened persons project new possibilities into the future (*onko chishin*) evinces the Confucian manner of the moral individual performing responsible action in fittingly situated context. For as enlightened Western intellectuals such as Dewey, Heidegger and Rorty have remarked, freedom means the ability to perform responsible action in historical context. As Heidegger has observed, a human being (*Dasein*) finds himself/herself "thrown" onto historically, culturally, and other relevant backgrounds and then projects new possibilities by exercising freedom conditioned by thrownness. The Heideggerian counterpart of *onko chishin* is being resolute at the visionary moment (*Augenblick*), which is Heidegger's *Zeitlichkeit* (the gathering at present of having-been and what-is-to-come). East Asians have always been clearly aware of the plain fact that human beings are necessarily born onto and situated in specific cultural and historical context. The process of learning and enculturation is the process of becoming civilized through learning and performing rituals. Getting civilized through learning and performing rituals, that is, learning and being engaged in historically evolved pattern-governed behaviors, is learning how to breathe, move, think and have being in a specific cultural framework. Confucians have always recognized that without acquiring the Way (without learning and enculturation), a person is not able to make genuine choice and perform responsible action. The paradigm of the accomplished person who can so act is the exemplary person. The exemplary person knows how to perform rituals

as inspired and informed by the sense of humane care (*in* in Korean, *ren* in Chinese)-cum-the sense of situational fittingness (*eui* in Korean, *i* in Chinese). The exemplary person is the sort of person who performs ritual acts unreflectively but not blindly (to paraphrase Heidegger's phrasing) in civilized community.

In the tradition of Confucianism, if Mencians, whose view has been predominant, have affirmed the primacy of humane care (*in* in Korean, *ren* in Chinese) over rituals (*ye* in Korean, *li* in Chinese), Xunzi and his follows have tended to focus on rituals. Rituals encompass social customs, conventions, codes of manners, etiquette and other things related to "outward" human behavioral patterns. Rituals have to do with good form in conduct. Rituals are often compared to performance of music and dance because the core of ritual behavior is social harmony. Codes of ritual conduct are cumulative effects of culture and history. A person who has been thoroughly enculturated, trained, and moving around in civilized circles can perform ritual acts artfully, that is, unreflectively but not blindly. For the ritual conduct of an accomplished person is comparable to a consummate pianist playing Beethoven's Emperor Concert without trying to remember the musical notes or to an experienced carpenter engaged in hammering without straining to recall every move he/she needs to make or to a rabbit hunter who throws away the rabbit-trap after catching a rabbit (to borrow the example from *Chuang Tzu*). The artful ritual conduct of the exemplary person is *wu wei*, acting artfully, acting unreflectively but not blindly. The pattern-governed behavior of the exemplary person is implicitly "rule-governed." Moral wisdom is "knowing-how," not "knowing-that" (to borrow Gilbert Ryle's expressions<sup>①</sup>). In civilized circles, codes of ritual conduct are seldom explicitly invoked but simply assumed as shared understanding (in the sense in which the early Heidegger and the later Wittgenstein

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① Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, London : Hutchinson, 1949.

used “understanding”). Patterns of ritual conduct are aptly compared to veins of jade. The rationality of civilized conduct are immanent in history, culture, and social practice. Codes are invoked only in exigencies or when pedagogical need arises for educating children or for civilizing “barbarians.”

It is the forte of Xunzians is to stress the point that the sense of humane care can be learned and finessed only through ritual practice. Even if it is granted that the predisposition for being “good” is “innate” as Mencians have believed, it would be naive to suppose that the development of full-blown moral dispositions needs no educational process, which is a social ritual. Yet the merit of Mencians is to highlight the point that the rectification of will/mind should be presupposed if we are to make sense of meaningful ritual performance as inspired and informed by the sense of humane care-cum-situational fittingness. If ritual training is essential to the full development of the sense of humane care-cum- situational fittingness, then for the purpose of distinguishing between meaningful ritual performance and merely going through meaningless formal motions, we need to assume the primacy of the sense of human care and situational fittingness over ritual acts.

Confucians would fully agree with Heidegger who says that what makes a human being a human being is what he/she does in social context. For Confucians, a person realizes himself/herself only by playing the moral game of culture and society. Here Confucians evince affinity with the pragmatists such as John Dewey and George Mead as well as with Heidegger and the later Wittgenstein. For all of them to be human is to be relational. In the web of human relations, conceived on the focus/field model aptly exemplified by the god Indra/s net, each individual (focus) is best conceived as a center of gathering. For the early Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit*, the present is the center of gathering (of having-been and what-is-to-come). There is continuity between the living past which Dasein inherits and possibilities that Dasein chooses to project. And the

moment of vision is the moment of gathering. Similarly, Confucians talk of becoming thoroughly familiar with the old and “knowing”(projecting) the new. Here for both Heidegger and Confucians, gathering is temporality. Yet when Confucians talk of manifesting the clear character of one’s cultivated self by regulating one’s family, then moving to bring order to one’s state, and, as Chang Tsai makes the point explicit, reaching out to the edge of the cosmos to form bonds of love with all manner of beings, the cultivation of one’s personal life is the center of gathering. And when Heidegger talks of Mit-Sein (better, Mit-Dasein) that radiates Fuersorge, he is saying that Dasein manifests solidarity with fellow beings. Here Dasein is a center of gathering, and Dasein and his/her/its fellow beings (Daseins) “belong together” through gathering, just as for Confucians, each human being who manifests humane care becomes a center of gathering thus forming circles of “belonging together,” For both Confucians and Heidegger, “belonging together” through gathering are spatiality as well as temporality. Put differently, human beings, being relational, are both spatiality and temporality.

Civilized ritual conduct is not mere blind conformity to established social conventions. Accomplished persons are not like computers which mechanically and blindly conform to the punching movement of the keyboard. Nor are they like sun flowers which turn to the sun unreflectively and mechanically. As Book 3, Paragraph 3 of *The Analects of Confucius* teaches us, there is no use for rituals or music to a person who is not touched by humane care. Going through formalities of rituals unaccompanied by humane care is meaningless vacuity. If humane care is the source of inspiration for civilized conduct, the sense of situational fittingness helps to schematize the general sense of care in a manner fitting for specific situations. The exemplary person acting in a situationally fitting manner is being creative in meeting a new challenge and resolving a problematic human situation, thus making an advance over the old. There is a parallel between the Confucian sense of situationally fitting

action, on the one hand and George Mead's concept of action performed by the "I" and Heidegger's notion of projecting possibility, on the other hand. The sense of projecting possibility makes its reappearance in his *Beitrage zur Philosophie (Contributions to Philosophy)* in the form of Seynsgeschichtes Denken (beyngs-historical thinking), which is Dasein's response to the call of Beyng, more plainly, a human being's artfully fitting response to a contingent novel situation. Which is exactly what is meant by humanely concerned-situationally fitting-socially responsible individual moral conduct. Humane care, situationally fittingness, and ritual are inextricably interwoven.

For Confucians, there is affinity between the ethical and the aesthetic. Contrast this with the Kantian Rationalist view which grounds the Categorical Imperative in the logical principle of consistency. Being engaged in *in-eu-ye* moral conduct is affine to creating a work of art. "Aesthetic order" rather than "logical order" (to borrow the expressions from David Hall<sup>①</sup>) underlies Confucian thinking. Confucian morality places primacy on particularity and contingency over universality and necessity.

In politics, Confucian moral conduct is embodied in rulership of virtue or, to use a modern term, virtuous statesmanship. Rulership or statesmanship is an extension of moral life. In the Confucian tradition, the prime reason for practicing statesmanship is to show humane care for the people, to nourish them, to further their welfare, to help them to be educated, and to enhance their dignity. The overall aim of virtuous statesmanship is to provide opportunities for the people to realize their full human potentialities. Virtuous political leadership requires cultivated moral character as well as political skills on the part of political leaders whether they be monarchs, presidents, prime ministers or any other sort. The *raison d'être* of rulership is to serve the people.

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① David L. Hall, *Richard Rorty: Prophet And Poet Of The New Pragmatism*, Albany: State University Of New York Press, 1993.

And the heart/mind of Heaven is the hearts/minds of the people. That is why the Mandate of Heaven is embodied in the Mandate of the people. An unworthy leader should share the fate of the outcasts Chieh and Tchou. As Mencius pointed out, a ruler who “mutilates benevolence” and “cripples rightness” should be cast aside.

The ideal of Confucian politics has affinity with the ideal of modern democracy. The ideal of modern democracy is the fullest possible participation of the greatest possible number of the people, regardless of their social and regional origin, gender, race, class, religion, physical disability, and other differentiating factors, in the relevant decision making-processes of politics. Since the most effective way to ascertain what “the will of the people” is to hold elections, the modern democratic procedure of holding general elections open to all sane adults accords with the ideal of Confucian politics. To phrase the point more sharply, the ideal of Confucian politics necessitates holding such elections. Further, that every person should have an opportunity to gain access to the governing structure to become its active member also accords with the ideal of Confucian politics. The traditional examination system in East Asia for recruiting officials of the government was in principle open to all eligible male persons, minimizing class distinctions. This system showed egalitarianism in substantial measure. The main thing to note here is the underlying general idea of egalitarian meritocracy. So this is one more element in the traditional Confucian practice which can easily be related to the idea of democracy.

The classical Confucian concept of the rectification of names resonates with the democratic concept of separation of powers. The core of the rectification of names is that each person should fulfill his/her appropriate roles /functions without unduly interfering with others’ performance of their appropriate roles/functions and in turn without being gratuitously interfered with by others. What underlies both the rectification of names and separation of powers is the idea of differentiated moral



responsibility. Confucians and liberal democrats share the idea that each person plays (should play) an appropriate role in community/society, and by creatively playing one's roles, fulfilling one's responsibilities, and by sharing common goals with fellow beings, an individual can achieve self-identity and self-realization.

Is the Confucian idea of rituals which implies deference compatible with the idea of rights as embraced by champions of rights-based liberal democracy? Affirmation of individual rights seems to imply self-assertion, which is *prima facie* incompatible with the idea of deference. The idea of rights as conceived by libertarianism and particularly by classical atomic libertarianism which concentrates on individual rights with little regard for commensurate social and political obligations and responsibilities is clearly incompatible with the Confucian idea of rituals and deference. However, we should not conflate regressive libertarianism with enlightened liberalism. Earlier in the paper we already drew attention to this difference in alluding to Dewey's distinction between the "old individualism" and a "new individualism." "Let us talk of enlightened liberalism and cast the idea of rights positively in the mold of enlightened contemporary liberalism. In the recently published (in 2009) book titled *The Future of Liberalism*, Alan Wolfe addresses himself to three kinds of rights: civil rights, political rights, and social rights.<sup>①</sup> The three kinds of rights Wolfe discusses are due to T. H. Marshall - a sociologist and a longtime professor of the London School of Economics. Marshall put forward the idea of the three kinds of rights in his 1950 lecture "Citizenship and Social Class." According to Wolfe, this is what Marshall said in the lecture. Civil rights are meant mainly to protect, among others, the lives and the properties of individuals. This is basically an 18th century idea. Political rights are designed to guarantee the fullest possible participation of the people in politics. This is in essence a 19th century idea.

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① Alan Wolfe, *The Future of Liberalism*, New York : Knopf, 2009.

Social rights are associated with the welfare state policies. This is for the most part a 20th century idea. The important point is that these three kinds of rights are inseparable. That the three kinds of rights are inseparable is, as I think it should be stressed, to a large extent a 20th century idea.

Social rights are indeed inextricably interwoven with civil and political rights. At this juncture, I wish to make explicit the point that here lies the basic difference between enlightened liberalism and regressive libertarianism. According to liberalism, the exercise of civil rights gives rise to the need for political rights. For exercising one's civil rights fully, to wit, exercising one's liberty fully, one should be able to exercise positive as well as negative liberty – a point touched on earlier – to fall back on the twin concepts first proposed by Immanuel Kant and subsequently reconstructed by Isaiah Berlin in his "Two Concepts of Liberty."<sup>①</sup> Negative liberty protects an individual from, among others, external intrusion. Positive liberty enables an individual to fulfill his/her human potentialities. And an individual cannot fulfill his/her full capacities as a social individual without being able to take active part in the relevant political procedure including participation in elections. And the effective exercise of political rights requires educated, civilized, healthy, wholesome citizens whose well-being is guaranteed, protected and enhanced by institutional arrangement. In fact, according to Wolfe, to improve and civilize oneself is a social duty in liberal democracy. So social rights are an imperative of civilized life in liberal democracy. Meaningful exercise of civil and political rights would be incomplete without being able to exercise social rights. Social rights which are associated with the welfare state practices and policies should include, in my view, the provision of universal and comprehensive health care, old age pensions, unemployment insurance, disability compensation, suitable assistance

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① Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays on Liberty*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

for qualified persons' education at all levels, and legal aid.

Exercise of social rights does not lead to patent conflict between interests of individuals. On the contrary, social rights are instrumental in advancing the well-being of every person in civilized society, and furthering a person's basic well-being is essential for full realization of his/her human potentialities. Now and here are the time and the place to recall the teaching of Confucianism that if one wishes to realize oneself fully as a human being and achieve one's goals, so do others. So every person should do what he/she can to help others to achieve their aspirations. Caring for fellow beings' well-being and valuing their aspirations are an integral part of self-realization. In my view, social rights are a useful instrument in promoting at a collective and institutional level everyone's well-being so that he/she may live a fulfilling life. The idea of social rights connects with Confucianism. Wolfe says that the welfare state is an institutionalization of the moral idea of empathy and fulfills a moral obligation. I share his moral sentiment. After all, for Confucians, the sense of humane care actuates civilized conduct.

Now it should be clear that the ideal of enlightened liberal democracy resonates with Confucianism. Confucianism has taught that sage rulership includes nourishing the people, to wit, caring for their overall well-being and providing educational opportunities for them. Confucians with a robust sense of reality have been well aware of the plain fact that without taking care of the basic well-being of the people, it is meaningless to talk of their self-realization. Ergo, enlightened Confucians would readily agree with enlightened liberals that something like the three kinds of rights adumbrated above would be a useful tool for the people to live creative and fulfilling life. Here we can see that Confucianism and liberal democracy are the twain, *pace* Kipling, that has met.

In human situations conflicts occur. On occasion claiming one's rights by having

recourse to legal means instead of deferring to others may be necessary. However, as Roger Ames and David Hall say in *Thinking from the Han*, appeal to the law is a communal admission of failure.<sup>①</sup> It is rituals which provide refined guidance for civilized comportment, and resorting to the law in a dire situation is minimally acceptable. As Hume observed, justice not accompanied by care and sympathy is the coldest thing. That is why the Human Annette C. Baier says in her *Moral Prejudices*<sup>②</sup> that we should conduct ourselves in such a way that interests are no longer opposed. Sympathy, as Hume has reminded us, is and ought to be the source of our conduct. Human sympathy finds ready sympathy in Confucian *in* or *ren*. Remember *choong suh* (in Korean) or *choong shoo* (in Chinese): Be faithful to yourself and treat others' hearts/minds as you would treat your own. Or the following formulation of the Golden Rule: Do not do to others as you would not be done by.<sup>③</sup> Put differently: Place yourself in the position of another person.<sup>④</sup> In fine, the sense of humane care is the peaceful abode of human beings and the sense of situational fittingness is the straight path. Confucian wisdom is eminently relevant in the contemporary world, East and West.

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① David L. Hall , Roger T. Ames, *Thinking from the Han: Self, Truth, and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture*, New York :State University of New York Press, 1998.

② Annette C. Baier, *Moral Prejudices: Essays On Ethics*, Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1995.

③ *The Analects of Confucius*, Book 12, Paragraph 3

④ *The Analects of Confucius*, Book 6, Paragraph 28

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## Glossary

choong suh (in Korean) / choong shoo (in Chinese)	忠恕
eui (in Korean) / i (in Chinese)	义
in (in Korean) / ren (in Chinese)	仁
jadeuk(in Korean) / tzu te(in Chinese)	自得

jaim (in Korean) / tzu jen(in Chinese)	自任	
koonja (in Korean) / chun tzu (in Chinese)	君子	
mu yu(in Korean) / wu wei(in Chinese)	无为	
onko chishin (in Korean) / wen gu zhi xin tzu (in Chinese)		温故知新
ye (in Korean) / li (in Chinese)	礼	

## 儒教的自己本体性、自己实现与现代社会

Kwang-Sae Lee

**中文提要：**我在本论文中探讨儒教与现代民主主义的关系。现代民主主义对决定意见过程或政治性的生活，不约束于社会身份地位或性、宗族、阶级、宗教、肉体性障碍，以及任何差别性因素，追求尽可能最大的成员、尽可能最高的参与。现代民主主义所涵盖的重要的概念之一就是关于个人的。我据在儒教的多样性以社会的个人(social individual)的杜威哲学(Deweyan)的主题来，对比探讨现在已变为陈腐的现代西方传统的自由主义者的概念。作为社会性存在的个人是，在社会的脉络上能够有负责的选择的个人，并且具有自己的自由与个人的权利相应的社会性责任。作为社会性存在的个人经验的自由(freedom 或 liberty)是，我们借用深受康德(Immanuel Kant)影响的柏林(Isaiah Berlin)的话，那么有多少否定性自由(negative liberty),还有多少肯定性自由(positive liberty)。我把柏林的肯定性自由与通过自己的努力自得的“道”和享受自己责任的自任的孟子的双胞胎概念联在一起。在儒教中，这个双胞胎概念借用狄百瑞(William de Bary)的意思的话，就是“道德性个人主义(moral individualism)”，我认为，由种种原因，不称之为“道德的个人主义(moral individualism)”，而称之为“整体论的个人主义(holistic individualism)”。

对于儒学者们来说，真正的自由就在特定文化或历史上、社会性脉络上，意味着能够做出负责行动的存在。这就是使个人对未来的做出新的可能性，即“温故知新”。“温故知新”类似于海德格尔(Heidegger)的“时间性(Zeitlichkeit)”或个人概念，以杜威派的社会性存在。

我认为儒教的“德治”或“道德君子”概念与现代民主主义能够联在一起。

即参与政治的意思是照顾老百姓，并且让他们过得更好、帮助他们受好教育，让自己提高自己的尊严，给他们显示出“仁”。儒学的“正名论”相应于现代民主主义的权利分散理念。

在儒教社会当中，礼先于法，像这样，在任何市民社会当中，个人的主张要随着市民社会的高阶层。当今，惯例(rites)与民权(rights)联系起来不是那么不自然。我认为在现代民主主义中能够弥补儒教的德治概念，以启蒙的民权概念。尤其是与福利国家的理念相关能够次序的探讨马歇尔(T. H. Marshall)的公民权(civil rights)、政治性权力(political rights)、社会性权力(social rights)。这三种权力不可分离。公民权引导政治性权力，再次露面社会性权力。我把它与传统的儒教德治理念联系起来。如依马歇尔脱掉民主主义的模的民权，不仅照顾教育传统儒教的社会成员，也让他们过得更好、提高尊严性，助于他们自己尽可能实现人类的潜在能力，就符合德治理念。启蒙的儒学者与启蒙的自由主义者是相似的。自己本体性是自己实现，即完全性个人的人类潜在能力的实现。儒教与现代民主主义是应当要见面的搭档。

**关键词：** 儒教，现代民主主义，社会的个人，道德的个人主义，自己本体性，自己实现