Asian Perspectives on Liberal Democracy:^{*}

Critical Evaluation

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• Key Words: Asian Perspectives, Liberal Democracy, Communitarianism, Familism, Asian Democracy

【ABSTRACT】

In contemporary Asia, liberal democracy triggers two opposite responses. One is that the values of liberal democracy are absolutely important for Asians. The other is that liberal democracy may be in discord with local culture and traditional values. Contemporary Asians live in a culture of hybridity of both liberal values and traditional communal values. The most distinctive Asian culture seems to be an emphasis on communality originating from familial virtues. In theory, Asian familism is well expressed in Confucianism, in which we can notice two moral virtues respectively for unequal and equal human relationships. The virtue for unequal relationships, which demands more public responsibility to the advantaged than the less advantaged, was developed from the relationship between parents and children. In contrast, the Yin-Yang theory, which emphasizes interconnectedness and reciprocity in human affairs and nature, reflects the virtue for equal relationships originating from the relationship between man and woman. In order to harmonize liberal values with communal values for 'Asian Democracy', this paper seeks to advance the following three points. First, we can develop a sense of public responsibility for leaders and ordinary people from the family model. Second, the sense of human interconnectedness may contribute to enhancing mutual responsibility. Third, familial values are as important as individual freedom for human living.

I. Introduction

Most contemporary Asian countries employ liberal democracy as a political system while maintaining a background culture that is a blend of their own traditions and newly embedded Western liberal values. Even in a society that does not accommodate a liberal democratic system, liberal and democratic values are rapidly spreading into the daily lives of ordinary people. This situation leads contemporary Asians to feel an uneasy tension between liberal democratic values and traditional values originating from indigenous culture.

This paper argues that the main purpose of liberal democracy is the protection of individual rights and choice, and, thus, is not appropriate to fully realize people's life in Asia, which fundamentally depends on communal life. This does not mean that liberal democracy should be rejected from an Asian perspective, but rather as in the similar context of Yael Tamir's question,¹⁾ Asians should ask themselves the following question: Should we prefer liberal democratic values to our traditional values?

Based on a cultural explanation, I focus on the concept of familism as a crucial factor constituting the cultural difference between the East and the West. I argue that the family was a main resource, which constituted traditional concepts of person, village, region, and state, and still plays a major role in regulating human relationships and maintaining societal order in Asia. In particular, this paper underscores that the concept of familism, presented from a traditional view, is able to provide an appropriate way of regulating unequal human relationships in Asian societies, which liberal democracy fails to provide. This paper addresses that the concept of familism can be a resource to construct a new model, which is named Asian liberal democracy.

Some may argue against the significance of cultural difference between the East and the West in the contemporary world. They may argue that cultural difference is ubiquitous, both domestically and internationally, and, thus, is not convincing to distinguish between the East and the West. They may contend that the cultural difference between the East and the West is not more serious than that among Asian countries. However, in practice, it is clear that the difference between the East and the West significantly exists in political and economic life, when considering people's daily lives, religions, and behavioral patterns. For example, we may summarize this obvious difference as the following. In liberal democracy, the person is usually regarded as an 'individual,' who enjoys freedom and

1) In the beginning of her book *Liberal Nationalism*, Tamir raises a crucial question; Should I prefer my liberal beliefs to my national commitment? See Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 5.

rights, while, in most of Asia, the person can be characterized as interconnected humans, who have an inseparable relationship with their family, village, region, and state. The former conception leads to the politics of individuality while the latter, the politics of communality.

In this respect, we may employ the term 'cultural difference' even though universal values such as human rights on the basis of liberal democracy do not accept its validity. In explicating this issue, the difference of *the concept of person* between the East and the West is the most important factor. Although in most contemporary Asian countries the ideas of individualized person and liberal democracy are incorporated in the process of modernization, the cultural heritage of communality as affecting political behavior and process still remains viable. When we resort to cultural difference with a purpose to provide a critical evaluation of liberal democracy, however, the empirical fact of cultural difference itself cannot be the ground to evaluate the reasonableness of political ideas and practices.

To resolve this dilemma, there is a need to explore the theoretical justification for cultural practices. This means that we need to explore the bases of theoretical traditions such as Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism to draw out a critical evaluation on liberal democracy. In this paper, I focus on the family model in relation with the conception of person and its justifying political ideas. This exploration proceeds in line with analyses of the major Confucian texts.

II. Asian Responses to Liberal Democracy

Faced with the same question, i.e. how to successfully harmonize distinctive traditional values with liberal democratic ones, Asian countries are expected to show diverse responses to liberal democracy. This diversity may be largely due to cultural difference among Asian countries. In more detail, the different responses are conjectured to have a relationship with distinctive cultural backgrounds and political, economic situations of respective countries. However, many Asian countries share a common experience in the development of liberal democracy. Thus, it seems possible to explore the elements that constitute the main points of Asian responses to liberal democracy, which is perceived as an overemphasis on the exclusiveness of individual rights.

Liberal democracy is established on the basis of contradictory ideas: individual freedom and rights and popular sovereignty. Individual freedom and rights present private autonomy while popular sovereignty, public autonomy. The famous definition of liberty presented by Benjamin Constant shows this propensity of modern liberal democracy: 'the liberties of the

moderns' consist in the enjoyment of private independence and pursuit of particular interests while 'the liberties of the ancients' consist in an active and constant participation in collective power.²⁾ However, the nature of modern liberal democracy is strongly connected with the former. In the practice of liberal democracy, we have to employ popular sovereignty to make public decisions. However, popular sovereignty cannot be properly practiced without the protection of individual rights and freedom that comprise private autonomy. Without properly guaranteeing individual rights and freedom, there is a danger that popular sovereignty will easily be denigrated into tyranny. Furthermore, when people exercise public autonomy, i.e. popular sovereignty, they tend to consider their individual freedom and rights prior to the public good as a whole, because individual rights and freedom are directly connected to the individuals concerned whereas the public good is usually indirectly. This apprehension opens the way for the discourses of contemporary communitarianism and deliberative democracy. These discourses all agree on the problem of individualism in modern liberal democracy. Modern liberalism has a difficulty in producing substantial public values by putting individual rights prior to the public good. Proceduralism on the basis of individual autonomy displays the deep attachment of liberal democracy to the avoidance of violating individual rights in public decision.

As mentioned above, specific responses to liberal democracy may vary from country to country in Asia. Even in a specific country, there may be a change of response in accordance with the development stage. In the Korean case, since newly encountered with the ideas of Western liberal democracy in the latter half of the 19th century, we have undergone three stages of attitudinal changes in response to liberal democracy. The first stage is the accommodation of liberal democracy in the conflict between liberal democratic and traditional ideas. In this stage, Koreans were divided into two camps: one tried to exclude and the other tried to include the ideas of liberal democracy. As time passed, the latter came to gradually obtain more recognition than the former. Thereafter Koreans concentrated on understanding the ideas of liberal democracy and accomplishing its successful implementation. Liberal democracy was considered to be a standard and goal that should be completed at the state level.

The second stage is the critical examination of traditional values and adjustment. In this stage, Koreans attempted to criticize their traditional values and political ideas in the light of liberal democracy. Their concern was focused on how to successfully adjust their traditional values to the implementation of liberal democracy. However, this adjustment

2) Benjamin Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with That of the Moderns," in Benjamin Constant, *Political Writings*, Translated and Edited by Biancamaria Fontana (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 309-328.

was usually presented as excluding traditional values or putting liberal democratic ideas prior to traditional ones.

The third stage is the emergence of critical evaluation on liberal democracy. This stage involves the reinterpretation of traditional values in order to readjust liberal democracy to carry local culture and values. Korea is currently in this stage. Koreans are attempting to find out a stable balance, as a reflective equilibrium, between liberal democracy and traditional cultural values.

In my view, many contemporary Asian countries are similarly in this third stage, though, admittedly, there are slight differences according to the historical and cultural contexts that each country lies in. For example, the argument about Asian values, presented by the leaders of some Asian countries, show this critical attitude to liberal democracy, although it needs a more elaborate justification.

In providing a critical evaluation on liberal democracy from an Asian perspective, we are open to take an empirical or a theoretical approach. In an empirical approach, we have to investigate the practices of liberal democracy in Asian countries in comparison with the ones of Western countries. We need to explore the elements that constitute the differences between the two. Alongside exploring empirical differences, we can observe people's various responses to liberal democracy. In a theoretical approach, we can attempt to criticize the core values of liberal democracy in view of Asian traditional theories such as Confucianism, Daoism, or Buddhism.

The cultural explanation is basically an empirical approach. According to the cultural explanation, in the first step, it is attempted that the cultural difference contributed to the different practices of liberal democracy between Eastern and Western countries. In the second step, this explanation leads to a critical evaluation on liberal democracy, either positive or negative. The positive evaluation focuses on some aspects of Asian norms and values that can contribute to facilitating the practice of liberal democracy in Asian countries. This explanation is related to the so-called Asian values discourse. By contrast, the negative evaluation attempts to contend that the ideas and principles of liberal democracy are hardly compatible with the norms and values underlying Asian culture. This attempt is represented by the cronyism or moral hazard thesis in which major Asian virtues are degenerated into causing corruption or impairing public fairness.³⁾ In this critical turn, either positive or negative, we need an analysis of the ideas and principles of liberal

3) As for the explanations of cronyism or moral hazard concerning Asian Values, see Dwight H. Perkins, "Law, Family Ties, and the East Asian Way of Business," and Lucian W. Pie, "Asian Values": From Dynamos to Dominoes," Lawrence E. Harrison & Samuel P. Huntington, eds. *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 2000)

democracy from an Asian theoretical perspective, for example by resorting to Confucianism, Daoism, or Buddhism.

Of course, even in an empirical observation, there exist critical responses of varying degrees and scope against liberal democracy. Among these, it is worth noting that there is a concern that a successful implementation of Western democracy will eventually lead to the destruction of core values of Asian cultures. This means that the gradual assimilation of Asian cultures into a liberal one will cause an identity crisis.⁴⁾ Identity has two dimensions of both internal and external. The external aspect of identity is related to the contemporary discussions surrounding the politics of recognition. The internal identity crisis arises when the gap between originally believed values and newly accepted ones increases. When this internal crisis becomes serious, it develops into a crisis in external identity. The liberal assimilation of Asian societies may cause an identity crisis, temporarily or in a considerable duration of time. This critical evaluation leads intellectuals to search for an alternative political ideal to liberal democracy or to construct a new model of liberal democracy, which is compatible with preserving Asian values. This latter model may be called Asian democracy or Asian liberal democracy.

When we examine Asian responses to liberal democracy, we can approach them on two levels, domestic and international. These two levels are mutually interactive and intertwined. At the domestic level, Asians consider that liberal democracy is also a particular political system as a product of Western history and culture. They seem to think that values such as individual rights are undeniably important, but that they are hardly compatible with communal values formed against the background of Asian cultures. Therefore, liberal democracy based on individualism is doomed to fail in taking a proper consideration of Asian values such as communality and the family.

Internationally, liberal democracy operates as a general standard that non-democratic countries cannot but follow. This refers to the hegemony thesis. Underlying this mode of thinking is the idea that liberal democratic societies are more advanced than non-liberal political societies and that non-liberal societies should adjust or enlighten themselves to implement liberal democracy. This idea associated with the enlightenment project forces Asian people to think that liberal democracy is superior to non-democratic political cultures and principles. This logically demands the universal implementation of liberal democracy in all societies, and leads to deny the importance of local identity in a political as well

4) For detailed explanations of the problem of identity, see Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 25-29; Charles Taylor, *The Politics of Recognition*, in Amy Gutman, ed., *Multiculturalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 25-73; Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism*, pp. 48-53.

as cultural sense. Accordingly, this understanding eventually deprives Asian peoples of the self-determination of culture and politics, preventing Asian peoples from developing their own paths of political and cultural development. In other words, the ideas and values of liberal democracy become the dominant criteria in evaluating cultural and political practices. This means the homogenization and assimilation into a single system of liberal democracy in the global sense.

From Asian perspectives, this process of homogenization and assimilation is apparently unfair. That is to say, Asian people pay more cost for adjustment than the Western people. More seriously, they have to discard their cultural values in adjusting themselves to liberal democracy. Thus, in reality, this deconstructs their unique cultural identity. To contemporary Asians, maintaining a cultural identity is not so much for recognition by the outside world as for the maintenance of internal identity. This internal identity is related to the question of who we are and where we are coming from.⁵⁾

In summary, most contemporary Asian people seem to accept that individual rights and freedom and fair proceduralism for public decisions are necessary for modernization. However, in line with accepting the reasonability of the values and ideas of liberal democracy, they still want to preserve their cultural and political values. It is a simple fact that liberal values and the political ideas of liberal democracy have settled to a considerable degree into political systems and cultures in most Asian countries. This reflects that liberalism and democracy already comprise a substantial part of Asian politics and culture. Nevertheless, Asians preserve their cultural traditions in contemporary life, which is a significant part of constituting their conceptions of life and shaping their political life. Despite the controversy of the term 'cultural difference,' the reality of cultural difference still remains an important issue, which causes some significant conflict between the East and the West. I would like to characterize one of the most important Asian values, which is distinct from the values underlying liberal democracy, still deeply rooted in Asian cultures: Familism. As the sense of communality, it has been developed from the relatedness in the family life, and is enshrined in Asian communitarianism.

III. The Reproduction of the Family Model and the Consciousness of Father Image in Asian Culture and Politics

The family is the starting point for understanding the Asian concept of person.

5) Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," Amy Gutman, ed., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 33.

Fundamentally, this concept of person extends to constituting other concepts such as culture, economy and politics. The Asian concept of person lies in being part of a family, which reflects mutual interconnectedness. The *person is not an individual* who has a circumscribed sphere of freedom and rights. The person-ness lies in exercising their natural duty originating from being part of a family. In the family, we can observe an organic harmonization of hierarchical and equal relationships. Herein there are reasonable unequal and hierarchical relationships such as that between father and children while there are equal, or at least decent relationships such as that between husband and wife and between sister and brother. In preserving each relationship, there is a natural virtue that plays an important role. For example, an instinctual affection that is not controllable mediates parents and children. Brother-sisterhood also arises from this instinctual affection. And in the husband-wife relationship, there is a love and respect between man and woman, although they come from different families. Since this relationship begins between persons of different families, husbands and wives respect this difference (別). This natural love and the respect of difference become developed into the virtues of 'caring' (和) (husband) and 'respecting' (順) (wife).⁶⁾ These virtues of husband-wife relationship may be seriously criticized from the feminist perspective. But the underlying idea inherent in these virtues addresses an equality assigning different roles in the family, which mediates natural difference.

As we can see from this Confucian understanding, the virtues of the family reflect the ones developed from human existence. Furthermore, the idea of morality is naturally substantiated in the family relationship. In this Confucian understanding, it is assumed that the familial virtues can be extended to social human relationships outside the family. This idea may be similar to the ethic of 'care' in contemporary terms, which accompanies two opposite responses. Some people argue that the ethic of care and an ethic of justice are fundamentally incompatible and is, thus, not applicable outside the private realm of friendship and family, whereas, some feminists contend that it has public significance and should be extended to public affairs.⁷⁾ Confucianism addresses that the familial virtues can provide a resource for reasonable social relationships. In short, the morality inherent in the family reflects a virtue that justifies proper unequal relationships as well as equal relationships, stemming from natural affection and love.

The family is the place where the sense of morality begins and grows. When one is

6) In developing my ideas on the family in Asian culture, I am much indebted to the discussion with Dr. Woe-Soon Ahn on the Confucian virtues inherent in the family relationship.

7) See Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 400.

born, he/she finds him/herself in the familial relationship. He/she has a father and a mother and, furthermore, also has brothers and sisters. In this sense, humans are relational, being part of relatedness. This is the inevitable human existence and the model through which one can understand a society, the nature and the world.

The familial virtues and consciousness are pervasively alive in contemporary Asian societies as important factors, that affect political behavior and political process. Even in business and market process, we can observe the family model and virtues operating. In Asia, it is said that the business enterprise takes after the family model, and that in economic transactions affective networks practically work. At the same time, we can find affective networks in political process underlying the public sphere as well. In Asia, the private and public sphere is inextricably connected with each other, specifically mediated by affective networks. It is not deniable that this interconnectedness blurs the distinction between the public and the private. It is worth noting that private networks play a role in the public political decisions. This phenomenon has two opposite moral implications. One is that it is a source of impairing public fairness. The other is that it is simply a social background culture, which functions as maintaining social stability. In Asia, generally, the private relationship and network mostly resembles the familial ties and consciousness. The familial values and consciousness have been continuously reproduced in theory, especially in Confucianism, as well as in cultural practices, and is embedded in most spheres of society in Asian countries, albeit showing variance according to countries.

As with theory, especially in Confucianism, we witness familial virtues such as filial affection and brotherhood. The Confucian primary virtue, ren (仁, humanity or benevolence) has an inseparable relationship with these familial virtues. In this respect, we can say that Confucian humanity has been elaborated from the human nature expressed in the existential connectedness of the family. For instance, the *Analects* begins to emphasize the filial virtue just after the opening talks of the three major pleasures in life: to learn and practice, to have friends coming from afar, and to have self-confidence as a learned person. Confucius thinks that filial affection and brotherhood is the root of humanity.⁸⁾ He further thinks that these familial virtues grow into the moral law or *Dao* that humans should follow. He thinks that the affection between parents and children, and between brothers and sisters is not controllable. This natural affection is just given in order for humans to cultivate their harmonious life in society. Mencius also conceives of humanity in terms of familial virtues: "The actuality of humanity consists in serving one's

8) Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 19-21.

parents. The actuality of righteousness consists in obeying one's elder brother. The actuality of wisdom consists in knowing these two things and not departing from them. The actuality of propriety consists in regulating and adorning these two things."⁹⁾ We encounter many phrases that emphasize the importance of familial affection in the Confucian texts. Hence, it is convincing that Confucian ethics is developed and rationalized on the basis of familial affection.

These familial virtues are comprised into the Confucian conception of politics and worldview. The main ideas of the *Great Learning* are comprised of the 'three items' and the 'eight steps'. The three items are: manifesting the clear character of man, loving the people, and abiding in the highest good. The eight steps are: the investigation of things, extension of knowledge, sincerity of the will, rectification of the mind, cultivation of the personal life, regulation of the family, national order, and world peace.¹⁰⁾ In the three items, manifesting the clear character of man is related with the cultivation of moral sprout, which is a moral sentiment inherent in human nature and spontaneously appears in familial ties. The filial and brotherly affections are concrete examples of human moral sentiment. With this cultivated humanity, humans can love other people to abide in the highest good.

In the eight steps, the first four has a relationship with manifesting the clear character of man, while the remaining four means moral and political practice of the cultivated humanity. In this way, the Confucian conception of family is extended to society and politics, and even further to world order. The importance of Confucian familism lies in the idea that it can be extended to human relationships outside the family to cover all under heaven.¹¹⁾ The Confucian familial virtues are pervaded into social relationship and political practices, and furthermore have been historically applied to Asian international relations.

We can also read that the ideas of the *Book of Change, I Ching*, are developed from the family model. The *I Ching* relies upon the ideas of Yin and Yang, which simply means man and woman. Yin and Yang are combined to produce the four basic images, the great (or pure) Yang, the small Yin-rising in Yang, the small Yang-rising in Yin, and the great (or pure) Yin. The four basic images again generate the eight trigrams.¹²⁾ This

9) Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 76.

10) Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 84.

11) See Sor-Hoon Tan, "Between Family and State: Relational Tensions in Confucian Ethics," Alan K. L. Chan, *Mencius: Contexts and Interpretations* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), p. 172.

12) See Richard John Lynn, *Translated, The Classic of Changes: A New Interpretation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 65-66.

understanding exactly reflects the family relation. The eight diagrams are Qian(乾), Kun(坤), Zhen(震), Sun(巽), Kan(坎), Li(離), Gen(艮), Dui(兌), respectively reflecting the image of father, mother, eldest son, eldest daughter, middle son, middle daughter, youngest son, and youngest daughter. These images are employed to understand the natural order and its principles, and to construct the political order as follows¹³⁾:

The Symbols of the Eight Trigrams

Trigrams	Humans	Nature	Animals	Body	Direction	Character
乾(Qian)	father	heaven(天)	horse	head	northwest	strong
兌(Dui)	youngest daughter	lake(澤)	sheep	mouth	west	joy
離(Li)	mid-daughter	fire(火)	pheasant	eye	south	brilliant
震(Zhen)	eldest son	thunder(雷)	dragon	foot	east	moving
巽(Sun)	eldest daughter	wind(風)	hen	leg	southeast	compliance
坎(Kan)	mid-son	water(水)	pig	ear	north	sink
艮(Gen)	youngest son	mountain(山)	dong	hand	northeast	calm
坤(Kun)	mother	earth(地)	cow	stomach	southwest	mild

These eight trigrams are multiplied again into the sixty-four hexagrams, beginning with the first hexagram, Qian, and the second hexagram, Kun, respectively meaning Pure Yang, i.e. man and Pure Yin, i.e. woman. The interaction between Qian and Kun is interpreted to produce the remaining sixty-two hexagrams, which explains the diversity of changes of human affairs in time and place and of natural order. In this explanation, it is assumed that there is an inextricably relatedness between human relations and natural order. The starting point is the idea arising from the family relation.

This understanding of the family seems to have provided the justification for human ethics and political ideas as well as the schema-model for understanding human affairs and

13) See Lynn, Translated, *The Classic of Changes*, pp. 123-124; Richard Wilhelm/Carry F. Baynes, *The I Ching or Book of Changes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 357. For Korean references, see Kim Jae Bum, *I Ching and Sociology* (Chuyoksahwoehak) (Seoul: Yemoonseowon, 2001), p. 113; Kim Sookil and Yun Sangcheol, *An Introduction to I Ching* (Chuyokyipmun) (Seoul: Daeyuhakdang, 2002), p. 97.

the order of nature. The family image and virtues have been reproduced, again and again, through the family itself. In the Asian tradition, social and political practices originating from this image of the family have played a role of strengthening and reproducing these familial virtues and images. This attempts to explain how the values and the image of the family, especially in East Asia, have become embedded into the Asian culture.

In a political sense, it is very important to note that the father is the most important figure in the family. In Confucian texts such as *Analects* and *Mencius*, the Confucian virtue of humanity is centered upon the parent-children relation. In contrast, in the *Book of Change*, the explanation begins with the interaction and relationship between woman and man respectively symbolized by Yin and Yang. However, even in the *Book of Change*, the human order is also centered upon the father. The beginning hexagram Qian simply insinuates the father. Hence, the image of the father is crucially important in understanding the order of human society and nature. The father is often symbolized as the strong, political leader, nation, or state. It seems that the consciousness of father image is still extant in culture and politics in contemporary Asia. Unconsciously, people seem to employ the father image to understand political behaviors of the political leader or the policies of government or state.

In the Confucian understanding, the virtues expected as the role of the father are to provide the public good with affection. The public good in the family is the well-being of the family members. For this the family members pay respect to the father. The consciousness of father image is reproduced through the family system. The familial ties and the reproduced consciousness of the father image seem to still affect the political process in contemporary Asia.

IV. Justifying the Norms and Principles in Asian Familism for Liberal Democracy: Normative Implications

The consciousness of the familial ties and the father image have been deeply embedded in Asian cultures. This embedded culture again plays a role of a vehicle, which transmits the familial values. The value of the family lies in providing a place for individuals to habituate themselves. This habitat is most important for individuals to comprise a private life. Also in modern Asia, the Western values represented by individual rights and freedom are also embedded in people's behaviors and consciousness.

Contemporary Asians lead a life in a culture of hybridity. In other words, paradoxically, they want to preserve their traditions and local cultures, while not

abandoning the enjoyment of individual freedom. They want to realize their individual life in harmony with communal values.

From the relationship of the family, we can draw out two moral virtues, unequal and equal. The unequal virtue represented by filial affection properly mediates parents and children, while equal virtue mediates by the affectionate relationship between husband and wife. The first virtue is developed into the righteousness regulating the relationship between the ruler and the ruled in Confucianism. The husband-wife virtue has a relationship with the principle of Yin and Yang. At a first glance, the principle of Yin and Yang seems to reflect the unequal hierarchical relationship, in which Yang dominates Yin. However, taking a closer look, Yin and Yang equally operates in regulating and producing human relationships and natural order. This theory tries to explain how equal relationships are working between different persons and in diverse situations of natural order. Once these two principles for equal and unequal relationships work in harmony, we can establish a stability in human society, further to contribute to the order of the whole world.

Asian understanding on these two human relationships, specifically in Confucianism, emphasizes the importance of the interconnectedness of humans. Likewise, Buddhism emphasizes the interconnectedness of humans in a different way, i.e. relying upon the concepts of karma and rebirth.¹⁴⁾ Daoism also stresses the relationship between human beings and nature. As for unequal relationships, Confucianism emphasizes the heavier burden of the capable such as the elder, the stronger, the wiser, and the ruler in taking charge of responsibility for the public good. This idea for unequal distribution of moral responsibility has a strong implication for modern liberal democracy relying upon individualism. The idea of moral virtue governing unequal relationships was developed from the relationship between parents and children. In theory, liberal democracy does not provide the moral guideline for regulating the unequal relationship between humans. To Asians, it is just natural that there exist unequal human relationships. The problem lies in how to reasonably regulate this unequal relationship. The Confucian solution derived from familism suggests that the capable should take more social responsibility for the public good while the less capable, less. This idea demands that the capable should care more for the public good for society as a whole.

By contrast, liberal democracy tries to provide a solution for equal relationship on the basis of political equality by assuming that humans are equal. The liberal assumption of human equality is reasonable in the moral sense. However, in reality, it is common that

14) See Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-122.

human relationships are unequal and hierarchical. Confucianism notices that in regulating these unequal human relationships, we need reasonable social virtues. Liberal democracy tries to manage unfair human inequality on the basis of human rights and popular sovereignty by morally equalizing existential inequality. Despite this liberal effort, we cannot avoid human inequality in reality. To Asians, liberal democracy is associated with individualism. They think that the protection of individual rights and freedom and the principle of popular sovereignty tend to play a role of fostering individualism. Thus, this individualism fails to properly recognize the public good for a society as a whole. Furthermore, this individualism justifies making the better, better while the worse, worse. In Western individualism, when an individual faces the choice situation between the public good and the private interest, he/she is permitted to take a priority of the private over the public. In contrast, Asian virtues governing the unequal relationship emphasize human affection, i.e. humanity or benevolence in Confucian terms. Without human affection, the unequal relationship cannot be properly maintained.

As for equal human relationships, Confucian familism stresses harmony with affection. The Yin-Yang theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of human relationships by symbolizing the harmonious relationship between man and woman. This interconnectedness is bridged by human natural affection, which can be ascertained easily in the family relationship. The idea of human interconnectedness leads people to seek a harmony and coexistence between unequals as well as equals, even between the good and the bad. This idea reflects that humans need others despite difference and divergence, beyond the concept of inclusion and exclusion. By contrast, liberal democracy is constructed on the basis of independence of individuals. In liberal democracy, individuals are independent without affection. It apprehends that human affection may be a hindrance to realizing the public good, by blurring the demarcation of the public and private sphere. However, Confucianism sees that human affection can provide the underlying basis for constructing the common good. In contrast, liberal democracy stands upon the assumption that individuals are to have individual freedom and rights. With these freedom and rights they exercise their individual autonomy for personal life as well as public affairs. On the contrary, the Asian conception of person is a being of interconnectedness with affection. Individuals of liberal democracy can be mutually-disinterested while Asian persons are mutually-interested. To Asians, liberal democracy does not properly embrace the mutually-interested mind of Asian culture into a political practice such as institution and policy. Liberal individualism precludes in advance the possibility of engaging a thick consideration of the public good. Liberal democracy consists in equalizing human relationship, thus neglecting the social virtue needed for regulating unequal human

relationship.

Asian familism presents a model of combination of virtues to equal relationships and virtues to unequal relationships. Liberal democracy pays attention only to equal relationships. It also dismisses a proper consideration of the role of human affection in social relationships. Liberal democracy's heavy emphasis on individualism urges competition in politics and market, precluding common cooperation for the common good.

Liberal democracy gives a priority to individual autonomy relying upon freedom and rights, while Asian familism highlights communality on the basis of human interconnectedness. To contemporary Asians, we need to take a balance between individual autonomy and communality in politics. In line with this mind, as individuality is apparently a social value, so is the family. We also need to establish a reasonable balance between individual freedom and the value of the family. In this respect, the family is a habitat in which individuals can develop their personal and public autonomy. Also the family is an important vehicle, which carries social culture. Liberal democracy tends to encroach upon the domain of the family, eventually demolishing the vehicle of Asian cultures. This apprehension leads Asians to reflect upon liberal democracy. Thus, contemporary Asians are to face the task of harmonizing individual freedom with their cultural heritage based on communality.

V. Conclusion

In contemporary Asia, the traditional values and local cultures are encroached upon by liberal values such as individual freedom and rights. This means that liberal democracy is gradually becoming a comprehensive doctrine in Asian countries. This tendency leads to a loss in a balanced consideration and evaluation between liberal values and Asian local values. As contemporary communitarians emphasize the value of the common good and community in politics, the value of the family and familial virtues should also be seriously considered. The familial virtues and values are enshrined in Asian communitarianism that takes a serious consideration of the communal ties and the common good. Generally speaking, Asian people's emphasis on the common good and the value of the community seems to be thicker than the expectation of liberal democratic people.

Regarding the implications of the family for liberal democracy, there are some suggestions. Contemporary Asians are gradually realizing individual freedom and rights while, at the same time, wanting to preserve traditional communality deeply embedded in local culture. In this sense, they might want to harmonize individual values with communal

values. I would like to present this harmonization as 'Asian democracy' or 'Asian liberal democracy'.

First, we can develop a sense of public responsibility for the leaders and ordinary people from the family model. For example, in liberal democracy, it is natural that individuals are permitted to behave in order to maximize their own interests as well as to maximally advance their own conceptions of the good. This leads to the prisoner's dilemma, which undermines to safeguard the public good for society as a whole. This means the priority of the private over the public. Asian sense of the family may contribute in voluntarily enhancing the public or social mood for the priority of the public over the private. This idea shares a common aspect with the discourses of contemporary communitarianism and deliberative democracy in that it criticizes individualism and attempts to enhance public reasonability in public decisions. For example, contemporary theories of deliberative democracy begin with an apprehension that privatism has eroded central ideals of democratic citizenship in ways that are ultimately incompatible with the satisfactory operation of a democratic government.¹⁵⁾ While deliberative democracy, remaining within the basic assumptions of liberal democracy, attempts to seek public reasonability through reasoned discussions relying upon individual freedom and autonomy, the Asian model of Confucian familism attempts to induce public reasonability from human interconnectedness and affection.

Second, familial ties emphasize the aspect of human interconnectedness, while liberal democracy is based on the concept of humans as individuals. Asians seem to conceive humans as persons of interconnected beings. This Asian conception of humanity arising from human interconnectedness leads to a thicker emphasis on the politics of the common good rather than the politics of individual freedom and rights endorsed by liberal democracy. Also the ideas of interconnectedness and familial virtues can be employed to solve the tensions and conflicts between peoples, societies, and states. For example, the enhancement of the mood of existential human interconnectedness as suggested by the Yin-Yang theory may prevent an extreme confrontation in international competition.

Third, familial virtues should be considered seriously. The individualism of liberal democracy drives a social tendency for the criteria of individual rights to encroach upon familial affection and ties. Familial affection is as important as individual freedom for human living. In Asian democracy, it is strongly suggested that the familial virtues should be preserved. This suggests a right to the family that demand a reasonable reflective

15) Bruce Ackerman and James S. Fishkin, "Deliberation Day," *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (June 2002), p. 130; Or in James S. Fishkin and Peter Laslett, ed, *Debating Deliberative Democracy* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p. 8.

equilibrium between virtues of the family and liberal values of individual freedom and rights, as multiculturalism demands a group right to culture. This is the way for establishing a distinct democracy different from Western liberal democracy.

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