CHAPTER 2

Confucianism as an Antidote for Liberal Self-Centeredness

A Dialogue between Confucianism and Liberalism

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Premodern, Modern, and Postmodern Conditions in Asia and the Need for a Confucian-Liberal Dialogue

Today's Asian society is a dynamic melting pot in which premodern, modern, and postmodern elements coexist without having undergone any orderly process. In the West, modernization has proceeded gradually over a span of three hundred years. But most Asian countries have rushed to catch up with the West in a mere few decades, and rapid cultural change has brought confusion over cultural values and social norms. Some parts of Asian society still harbor premodern values such as patriarchal authority, family-centrism, and the preference for male offspring, while other parts are increasingly embracing modern values such as equality, individualism, and liberalism. Not only do premodern and modern elements coexist, but postmodern voices are also appearing through various channels to speak up for the environment, nature, and community.

Amid this whirlwind of frenzied modernization, Asians have had no time for dispassionate reflection on their long-term social ideal, and this has ultimately resulted in a confusion of values and a loss of cultural identity. This current confusion of values that is felt among Asians can be attributed to two interrelated processes. On the one hand, under the sweeping tide of modernization, traditional values have been altered, distorted, or applied to purely utilitarian ends. On the other hand, modern values introduced from the West have taken

root in unhealthy ways. For instance, the traditional Confucian value placed on community has been seriously distorted under the modernization process into the practices of nepotism and personal connections. Among the various values relating to tradition and modernity, Asian people have been driven to choose only those that were able to promote material profit and selfish desires, and have pursued them blindly without principled reflection. Accordingly, it is now important that Asian society leave behind its tangled strands of distorted tradition and modernity and be reborn through a creative fusion of strong ideas drawn from both tradition and modernity. Only through this kind of reflexive synthesis can Asian countries achieve modernity while preserving their cultural identity, and accept the benefits of Western civilization while overcoming the limits of modernity.

In this chapter, by employing the method of socio-philosophical comparison and mutual critique between the mainstay of the Asian traditional value system (especially Confucianism) and the central tenet of modern values (i.e., liberalism), I will try to formulate a blueprint for a new social ideal suited to the Asian society of the future. This kind of remapping project of social ideals not only will be helpful for Asian society itself, but also can shed light on other developing countries that face similar problems.

Positive Liberty and Negative Liberty

Needless to say, the most important social ideal pursued by the modern West is liberty. Liberty is the condition in which an individual is able to determine her/his own actions autonomously without interference from others. In the liberal tradition, individual liberty is set above any other normative value, to the extent that laws and norms are founded upon the principle of noninterference. One can do anything one wants to do, as long as one does not interfere with the liberty of others. The grounds for the imposition of limits upon the liberty of an individual by law are known as liberty-limiting principles. While radical liberals admit no such grounds except the harm principle,[1] those liberals who are less radical (or moderate) hold that, in addition to the harm principle, an offense principle can also be a legitimate basis for limiting individual liberty.[2]

The ultimate goals of the pursuit of liberty are to free an individual from the unjust interference of others and to maximize the scope of autonomous choice. Thus, the liberty pursued by liberalism is not a positive liberty, but a negative one that seeks only to avoid external interference. In this context, as Charles Taylor defines it, the liberty sought by liberalism is an opportunity concept, in the sense that it promises increased opportunities for autonomous choice.[3]

Liberalism stresses individual liberty over other normative values. In this

respect, it can be clearly distinguished from perfectionism, which takes individual self-perfection as its ultimate goal, and also from utilitarianism, where the highest goal is to maximize utility or efficiency. Liberals recognize the "presumption in favor of liberty," which holds that unless there is a sufficient rational basis for limiting the liberty of an individual, the law and the state should allow the individual to make a free choice. It is from this principle that liberals deduce the principle of noninterference.

John Stuart Mill considered individual liberty and autonomy so important that he believed that the only reason for the law or the state to limit individual liberty was to prevent individuals from harming each other. He argued that, even with the intention of producing better and happier individuals, the law and the state must not intervene against individuals without their consent:

> [T]he only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right. . . . Over himself, over his body and mind, the individual is sovereign.[4]

Unlike the negative liberty sought by liberalism, the liberty sought by Confucianism is a positive one. The Confucian utopia is not a society in which everyone is free from the interference of others, but one in which one's inner moral sense is in perfect accord with the objective norms of the community without the slightest alienation between the two. Thus, in contrast to the negative liberty that liberalism emphasizes, Confucianism pursues what might be called positive liberty. In describing the attainment of perfect harmony between the inner moral sense and the objective norms of community, Confucius confessed, "at seventy I followed my heart's desire without overstepping the line."[5]

The Confucian project of self-cultivation aims ultimately at mastering one's own heart to bring it into line with the norms of community. This Confucian concern with positive liberty is aptly expressed in many texts. For instance, "I neither complain to Heaven nor blame my fellow people,"[6] and "To return to the observance of the rites through overcoming the self constitutes benevolence (仁)."[7]

As Confucianism values positive over negative liberty, it focuses more on internal than external constraints when addressing the issue of removing the constraints that constitute barriers to individual freedom. For instance, Confucius praised his follower Yan Hui for preserving a sense of inner peace despite the poverty of his housing, food, clothing, and other living conditions: "How

admirable Hui is! Living in a mean dwelling on a bowlful of rice and a ladleful of water is a hardship most men would find intolerable, but Hui does not allow this to affect his joy. How admirable Hui is!"[8] Of course, Confucius here did not imply a rejection of the basic needs of life. Rather, he meant that the true sense of freedom was to be attained by liberating oneself from internal constraints, not merely from external ones. The *Zhongyong* (Doctrine of the Mean) illustrates this with an example from archery: "In archery we have something like the way of the superior man. When the archer misses the center of the target, he turns round and seeks for the cause of his failure in himself."[9]

Thus, the ideal state of the individual sought by Confucianism is not a negative liberty attained when an individual is free from the interference of others, but a positive one that can be attained by overcoming one's uncontrolled first-order desires. From the standpoint of the Confucian theory of self-cultivation, liberalism's 'free from the interference of others' does not guarantee a true sense of freedom. No matter how much an individual is free from external interference, as long as one remains a slave to one's inner desires, one is not truly free.

Conversely, from a Confucian perspective, one who correctly understands her/his own character and can manage her/his first-order desire is free regardless of external constraints. Mencius says,

> Some parts of the body are noble, and some ignoble; some great, and some small. The great must not be injured for the small, nor the noble for the ignoble. He who nourishes the little belonging to him is a little man, and he who nourishes the great is a great man.[10]

The "ignoble part" or "small part" of which Mencius speaks is a first-order desire unfiltered by "second-order reflection," and to follow this kind of first-order desire alone is to be reduced to being a slave to one's own desires.

According to Confucianism, freedom in a genuine sense cannot be attained just on the condition of noninterference, but can be fully attained on the condition of unity without alienation between the inner and outer realms. This kind of condition can be achieved when one correctly understands one's own inner nature and controls one's first-order desires. From this we can see why, in the Confucian tradition, there has been less emphasis on individual rights than on such virtues as reciprocity, benevolence, and modesty.

Human Dignity, Rights, and Virtues

In the liberal tradition, every human being possesses equal dignity from birth. Kant spelled out our duty to respect the dignity of human beings in this way: "Do not suffer your rights to be trampled underfoot by others with impunity."[11]

This notion of human dignity is founded on rational autonomy, the unique aspect of human beings to become, in Kant's famous phrase, "free and rational sovereigns in the kingdom of ends." Like Kant, Alan Gewirth also finds the basis of human dignity in the rational and autonomous capacities of humans as goal-pursuing agents.[12] Even in the utilitarian side of the liberal tradition, as set forth by John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty,* the concept of human dignity is also closely related to the rational and autonomous ability of an individual as a goal-seeking agent.[13]

In Confucianism, on the other hand, the basis of human dignity is not found in the autonomy of the human being, but in the potential of each individual to become an authentic person through self-cultivation. Confucianism seeks to dissolve the status distinctions between high and low prevailing in the class-based society through the equal potential to become an authentic person. Confucius and Mencius replaced the class-based society's hierarchical distinction between the noble and the humble with the axiological distinction between the virtuous and the un-virtuous. Mencius also taught that everyone was equal in her/his inherent possession of the potential to achieve moral perfection.

In the liberal tradition, every human being is regarded as equal from birth, regardless of social or personal distinctions. According to liberalism, having a high or low character, an elevated or vulgar personality, is just a private matter in which no one has a right to interfere. Thus, a contemporary liberal philosopher like Joel Feinberg insists that if a couple chooses to have sex in a bar, or even commit incest (providing both parties are consenting and the act is not committed in public), unless their behavior violates the liberty of others there are no grounds for preventing it. If the state attempts to prevent their behavior, it is violating the rights of the individual.[14]

In contrast to liberalism's non-moral equality, Confucianism tends to grant each individual a different degree of rights according to the quality of the person's character. Just as a sword should not be put in the hand of a man of bad character, the moral weapon of rights should not be given to someone whose character is unworthy. Commenting on the ancient story of King Wu punishing the tyrant Zhou, Mencius supported Wu's coup d'état, explaining, "Although I heard that King Wu had punished a wicked villain, I did not hear him to have assassinated his lord." This meant that a tyrant like Zhou had little value as a man of character, and that he should not be granted an amount of rights equal to what others have received.

The difference between Confucianism and liberalism in their view of human dignity produces a concomitant difference in the assertion of the means by which human dignity is to be ensured. In the liberal tradition, the device for ensuring human dignity is "rights." Only when all individuals respect each oth-

er's rights can human dignity be firmly guaranteed. As long as no one violates the rights of another, no state power or legal institution can restrict the right of the individual to act freely.

While liberalism relies on rights as a guarantor of human dignity, Confucianism focuses on providing the conditions of welfare that make it possible for each individual to achieve moral perfection within the community to which s/he belongs. Confucius clearly expressed this concern with welfare when he said that the privilege of education should be extended to everyone regardless of birth, and that the wealth of a state was less important than the equitable distribution of the wealth. Mencius also stated that only when the basic means of subsistence have been secured can morals and rites be taught.[15] In other words, to promote character building and moral self-perfection, the basic conditions of welfare must first be satisfied.

In some cases, the Confucian concept of welfare appears in the form of paternalism. In many Confucian writings, a ruler's concern for the welfare of his people is compared with parents' love for their children. For instance, the *Shujing* (Book of Documents) states, "A ruler should always treat the people like a newborn baby." This concept of welfare with its emphasis on care for the people is a positive expression of the rule of virtue, but when the people are compared with a baby incapable of autonomous judgment, there is the risk of losing all checks on the power of despotic rulers. When the people are treated as children, their free will is denied, and those in power may use virtues as a disguise for tyranny. Due to this danger, liberals hold that paternalism, no matter how benevolent its motivation is, cannot be justified unless accompanied by respect for the rights of the individual person. As Feinberg states, "If adults are treated as children they will come in time to be like children. Deprived of the right to choose for themselves, they will soon lose the power of rational self-decision."[16]

Confucian welfarism, which finds the highest responsibility of the state in welfare and well-being founded on benevolence, stands in marked contrast to the liberal view of the state as responsible primarily for respecting the rights of the individual. From an impartial point of view, there are both good and bad aspects of liberalism's exclusive stress on individual rights on the one hand and in Confucianism's stress on paternalistic caring on the other. Liberalism's excessive emphasis on individual rights may have such undesirable consequences as economic disparity, rampant materialism, fetishism, and moral decay. Meanwhile, Confucianism's emphasis on paternalistic caring may have an undue effect on an individual's free will and capacity for autonomous decision making. From this perspective, a social ideal that respects nothing but individual liberty is liable to neglect the equitable distribution of wealth, while one that stresses the common good alone runs the risk of authoritarianism.[17]

Self-interest and the Common Good

Even if liberalism cannot be directly equated with individualism, the condition in which liberalism is fostered and can flourish is surely to be a society in which individualism prevails. Society as imagined by liberals is a gathering of individuals autonomously and independently pursuing their own interests free from the interference of others. Thus, liberalism perceives human nature as fundamentally self-centered, interested solely in personal ends and indifferent to the welfare of others. Inevitably, in a society of individuals indifferent to each other and concerned only with their own self-interest, the ethical norms most in demand are fairness, procedural justice, noninterference, and respect for rights. John Locke argues that in order for these self-centered beings to live together without conflict, they establish and grant their provisional assent to the institution known as the state, using it to prevent clashes of interest or to provide compensation when such clashes do arise. Robert Nozick similarly insists that in a society in a state of nature, a proxy institution is necessary to prevent the violation of the rights of the weaker by the stronger, or to compensate for such a violation when it does occur. Thomas Hobbes goes even further than Locke in viewing society in a state of nature, considering it to be not just an assembly of selfish individuals but a battleground in which everyone is at war with everyone else. John Rawls differs from the classical liberals in his emphasis on equitable distribution and the search for a solution to the problem of the cleavages between the wealthy and the poor, but still assumes a view of human nature and society little different from that of classical liberalism. For Rawls, the original condition of human beings in need of social justice is a gathering of rational individuals each pursuing his/her own self-interest without regard for others.

Following the spread of political and economic liberty, the pursuit of individual self-interest ceased to be regarded as immoral and, on the contrary, came to be regarded as legitimate and proper. In particular, with the change of social conditions, the notion of negative liberty, which had served as a starting point for protecting the individual from the tyranny of feudal rulers (whether monarchs and aristocrats or clergy), gradually drifted away from communal concerns such as the pursuit of a common good or the welfare of society as a whole.

In contrast to the atomistic view of the self and the individual as portrayed by liberalism, Confucianism envisages humans as relational beings inseparable from the community to which they belong. In Confucianism, the identity of an individual is not to be found by separating and isolating the self from others, but by understanding one's position in relation to others. From the Confucian point of view, the abstract, atomistic, and solipsistic self imagined by modern Western philosophy (particularly in the Cartesian tradition) is a phantasmagoric being that could never exist in this real world. In the Confucian tradition,

an individual is always understood through human relationships as someone's father, someone's husband, or someone's neighbor. The "rectification of names" that Confucius speaks of can also be more clearly understood in this context. Confucius said, "Let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father, the son a son."[18] The standard by which the ruler acts as a ruler is not to be found in an abstract concept like Plato's idea of the Good, but in a concrete reality such as the relationship between ruler and subject or father and son. Similarly, the "five basic human relationships" (*wu-lun* 五倫) that form the backbone of Confucian relationship-oriented morality derive their justificatory basis from the communitarian understanding of "the self in a context."[19] This relationship-based view of humans within the Confucian tradition contrasts sharply with liberalism's self-centered view of human beings.

Within the liberal social system with its atomistic view of human beings, it is accepted as proper that each individual pursues solely his own interest without regard to others. But in Confucianism, which discredits an individual existence isolated from the community to which an individual belongs, the exclusive pursuit of one's own self-interest can hardly be justified. The ideal society sought by Confucianism is a community comprised of virtuous people who care for one another and support each other's welfare. In Confucianism, a loving and well-ordered family (which in ancient times referred to the extended relations of a clan society rather than the modern nuclear family) was regarded as the model for an ideal society, and the ideal state should be modeled on the family. The social gradation of "self-cultivation, loving family, well-ordered country, peaceful world" that appears in the *Daxue* (Great Learning) also supports the Confucian concept of a communitarian society, which regards society as an expansion of caring relationships.

Mencius described the ideal society pursued by Confucianism as follows:

> Farmers share the same well harmoniously, come and go to each other freely, pool their strength to ward off thieves or misfortunes, and when their neighbor is sick, they help and nurse each other kindly. Moreover, only after tilling the communal land dare they work in their private fields.[20]

In the ideal community described by Mencius, distinctions between yours and mine are not so clear-cut, and any behavior that deviates from the communal norms embraced by the community is unacceptable. In a communal society such as this, a man who pursues his own self-interest alone will become an object of blame, while someone who cares for another's misery before asserting his own due and supports the welfare of others will be admired as a virtuous person. The distinction made by Confucius and Mencius between the virtu-

ous (or great person) and the mean (or small person) can be understood from a socio-philosophical standpoint as a contrast between two human types: the person who pursues his interests but with consideration for the well-being of others, and the person who pursues his interests in order to satisfy his selfish desire alone. Confucius says, "Of neighborhoods benevolence is the most beautiful. How can the man be wise who, when he has the choice, does not settle in benevolence?"[21] A benevolent village is a community composed of people who are caring for each other. From a Confucian perspective, any individual engaged solely in the pursuit of self-interest without caring for others, or who sticks to his own way of living without regard for the common good of the community, is not an ideal human type.

The idea that one sometimes needs to restrain one's own self-interest for the sake of the common good leads naturally to the view that an individual's rights sometimes need to be waived for the sake of the common good, if necessary. This community-based view of rights explains clearly why the excessive claim of individual rights has not taken root in Confucian soil. In the Confucian tradition, which puts the common good above self-interest, when a conflict of interests arises it is not to be resolved through the aggressive claims of one's rights, but through a yielding of self-interest by the parties concerned, for the sake of their reconciliation and the harmony of the community. Thus, in legal terms, the ideal of Confucian society was to make an effort to resolve conflict not through an in-court system of justice administered by trials but through an extra-court system of justice that was dependent on negotiation and mediation.

The Ethics of Harmony versus the Ethics of Self-assertion

According to Feinberg, rights are valid claims that an individual may make "against" others who have a duty to satisfy those claims.[22] As the use of the word "against" suggests, rights claims would not arise unless two individuals or groups stand in confrontation. For instance, between a couple in love, as long as their love lasts there is no need for the assertion of rights. Only when they cease to love each other and compete for a limited pool of assets, or stand in confrontation over the cost of raising their children, does the discourse of rights become necessary.

Assertions of rights are necessarily founded on confrontation between two individuals or groups. In this context, Karl Marx was correct in saying that "rights-talk" is based on an antagonistic relationship in which each human being is alienated from the others. He attacked "rights" as the exclusive and selfish possession of the bourgeoisie.[23] To Marx, "rights" in capitalist society were nothing but a self-justification on the part of the "haves," a necessary evil that is bound to exist within the capitalist social order. Marx criticized the liberal watchwords of

"rights" and "negative liberty" for reducing warm and concrete human relationships to undifferentiated exchange values.[24] By converting what should be warm relationships into economic exchange values, "rights-talk" committed the error of converting human character and personhood into monetary value. Finally, Marx condemned "rights-talk" for being based on a principle of isolation that seeks to separate people from each other instead of pursuing harmony.

The Confucian emphasis on placing the common good before self-interest, and communal harmony before individual rights, has much in common with Marx's criticism of bourgeois "rights-talk." The ideal of a loving community that Confucianism pursues advocates yielding and reconciliation as a way of resolving conflicts of interest, and takes a dim view of greedy demands for one's own portion. The root of this Confucian strategy of conflict resolution through yielding and compromise can be traced back to the spirit of harmony emphasized throughout the history of Confucianism. Harmony is regarded as an important ideal to aspire to in every sphere of human life. Within each person, emphasis is put on harmony between one's words and behavior, and between personal desires and communal norms. In family relationships, great importance is attached to harmony between parents and children, between husband and wife, and between siblings themselves. Beyond the family, harmony between neighbor and neighbor, and between the individual and the community, is seen as the key to creating a community of *ren* 仁. Even the relationship between human beings and Nature should be one of harmony and coexistence without the intrusion of excessive human chauvinism. Preoccupied with harmony, social ideals attributed to Confucian culture have regarded self-righteous rights claims as an obstacle to communal harmony, and have admired the virtues of modesty and yielding instead of self-assertion in the pursuit of self-interest. The disapproval of rapacious self-assertion was expressed by Confucius as follows:

> A virtuous person, even when confronted by another, does not fight back.[25]
>
> A virtuous person has strong self-respect but does not dispute; he lives harmoniously in his community but does not form factions.[26]
>
> A virtuous person never squabbles.[27]

As we can see from these passages, the Confucian tradition disapproves of aggressive self-righteous claims. In contrast to the Confucian attitude, the representative twentieth-century liberal philosopher Feinberg says, "Not to claim in the appropriate circumstances that one has a right is to be spiritless or foolish," and again, "Having rights enables us to stand up like a man."[28] While the

liberal camp, to which Feinberg belongs, sees individual rights as a minimum condition for securing human dignity, Confucianism holds that in some circumstances it is better that the assertion of rights be restrained for the sake of harmony in the community.

Toward a Reconciliation of Liberalism and Confucianism

The foregoing comparison between the social ideals of Confucianism and liberalism can be summarized as follows. First, while liberalism aims to secure a space for autonomous choice through mutual noninterference, Confucianism emphasizes the achievement of harmonious accord by individuals for the common good of the community through the overcoming of self-centeredness. As a result, Confucianism accentuates positive rather than negative liberty, and embraces a communitarian ethic that is more concerned with caring and harmony than with exclusive claims to one's own rights. Second, the liberal conception of human dignity is founded on the rational capacity of human beings as autonomous and independent individuals, in contrast to the Confucian view of human beings as relationship-based, interdependent, and mutually caring. In terms of ethical norms, the Confucian belief in the ability of human beings to become more virtuous by overcoming selfishness leads to an emphasis on self-cultivation and self-restraint rather than antagonistic rights claims. Accordingly, it is the cultivation of virtues that is considered essential in the pursuit of authentic personhood and harmonious coexistence within the community. Third, the Confucian ideal of harmony leads naturally to a virtue-centered morality that emphasizes caring and modesty rather than self-righteous claims.

While liberalism seeks to secure the maximum scope for autonomous choice through providing a normative shield of noninterference, Confucianism seeks to achieve an ideal community through the overcoming of selfishness and the cultivation of virtues. Each social ideal has its own historical and cultural background. Within the traditional context of patriarchal family structure, agricultural mode of production, and monarchical system, Confucianism held its position in politics as a double-edged sword that served both to uphold the existing order and to restrain the monarchical power of the ruling class. Admittedly, criticisms of Confucianism as a government-patronized state ideology that served the interest of the ruling class are not without foundation from a macrohistorical standpoint, but the contribution of Confucian literati in their persistent effort to remonstrate and restrain the ruling class should not be neglected either. The historical significance of Confucianism can be found in its effort to prevent the abuse of power and the excessive pursuit of self-interest by presenting the ruling class with a blueprint for achieving an authentic personhood.

The society in which we live today no longer replicates the historical

condition in which Confucianism once prevailed. The transition from a predominantly extended family to a nuclear family structure, from an agricultural economy to industrial capitalism, and from an absolute monarchy to a liberal democracy has created a wide gulf between tradition and modernity. Conspicuous among the phenomena that arose as a result of these changes is the advent of individualism, the justification of self-interest, and the assertion of autonomy, liberty, and rights. These new values often clash with the traditional values that Asians have inherited from the past, creating serious confusion and conflict. The current situation in Asia, especially in Korea, is reminiscent of the times of turmoil and disorder when liberalism arose in the West. As human liberty and autonomy came to be valued, people abandoned their faith in the beliefs (whether moral, customary, religious, or political) that they had inherited from the past, and, under the banner of "rights," individuals secured their own space, free from interference. The historical achievement of liberalism was the freeing of people from religious constraints, political oppression, and the chains of feudal morality. However, by taking the notion of self-centeredness as its theoretical foundation, liberalism left itself ill equipped to deal with issues such as social welfare, the pursuit of the common good, and the elevation of human character.

In the case of contemporary Korea, where liberalism and capitalism have been grafted onto a five-hundred-year-old tradition of Confucianism, contrasting values are jumbled together in confusion: virtue and rights, individual and community, self-interest and the common good, et cetera. Koreans now seem to be faced with a choice between two paths. Their dilemma is whether to choose the liberal (and neoliberal) path with its disproportionate stress on individual rights, or to revive the Confucian virtue ethic with its focus on caring and harmony.

Or might there not be a third way that avoids both extremes? We have already seen that both social ideals have their strong and weak points. If we opt for negative liberty alone, we can secure an autonomous sphere free from interference, but we are liable to neglect the welfare of those in need and the establishment of a desirable community. On the other hand, if we put too much emphasis on positive liberty, we can pursue the improvement of our character and the harmony of community, but we run the risk of lapsing into totalitarianism. If we insist on rights alone, we are apt to become overnight millionaires full of selfishness and lacking humaneness, while if we emphasize virtues alone we can easily sink into spineless compliance and obedient slavery. Is there no way to discard the weak points in both value systems and combine their strong points into a new system of values?

Liberty, in an ideal sense, must be a total freedom comprising both positive and negative liberty. No matter how free an individual may be from external interference, so long as one remains a slave to one's internal desires, one is not

truly free. Conversely, no matter how well one may control one's internal desires, so long as one is bound by chains or suffers from suppression and oppression, one is not actually free. Thus, freedom in a total sense means a state in which an individual is free not only from external interference but also from internal restraints. When we define the ideal sense of freedom in this way, we are one step closer to relieving the anomie of values that currently envelops Korea and other Asian countries. Just as freedom in a total sense requires both positive and negative liberty, true human liberation means not only economic and political liberation, but also moral and spiritual liberation to deliver us from unbridled internal desires and inward constraints.

The ideal of total freedom cannot be attained solely through the insistence on negative liberty or individual rights. Rights surely perform a necessary social function, protecting innocent people from unjust power and ensuring their just share. But at times, rights can also become a powerful self-defensive measure bolstering the greedy claim of possession for the "haves." Rights serve as a normative device for defining the minimal morality by coercively extracting a minimum of duty from an opponent. But minimal morality is not enough to achieve an authentic personhood and harmony in the society. We need liberty and rights to protect us from unjust power, while at the same time we also need the virtues of caring and benevolence for the harmony of the society. We need both rights and virtues, liberty and caring, justice and benevolence. Finally, we need a reconciliation of liberalism and Confucianism. In this sense, I believe that Confucius' old teaching of self-cultivation, authentic personhood, and a community of *ren* 仁 can function as a new antidote for the cultural illness of liberal self-centeredness.

Notes

1. According to the harm principle (the only liberty-limiting principle accepted by classical liberals), the state may restrict the liberty of an individual only if that individual harms the liberty of another individual, and in no other case may the state interfere with individual liberty. See John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty,* ed. David Spitz (London: Norton, 1975), pp. 10–11.

2. An example is Joel Feinberg; see his *Harm to Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 9. In addition, the whole of Feinberg's *Offense to Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) is devoted to debating the validity of the offense principle.

3. Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences,* Philosophical Papers, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

4. Mill, *On Liberty,* p. 11.

5. *Analects* 2.4, in Confucius, *The Analects* (Lun yü), trans. D. C. Lau (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 63.

6. *Doctrine of the Mean* 14.3; author's translation.

7. *Analects* 12.1, in Confucius, *The Analects,* trans. Lau, p. 112.

8. *Analects* 6.11, in Confucius, *The Analects,* trans. Lau, p. 82.

9. *Doctrine of the Mean* 14.5, in Confucius, *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning and The Doctrine of the Mean,* trans. James Legge, 2nd rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893), p. 396.

10. *Mencius* 6A14, in *The Works of Mencius,* trans. James Legge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895).

11. Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue* (1797), trans. J. W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), pp. 98–99.

12. See Alan Gewirth, "The Basis and Content of Human Rights," in *Human Rights* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

13. Mill, *On Liberty,* pp. 10–11.

14. See Joel Feinberg, *Harmless Wrongdoing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 166.

15. *Mencius* 3A4, in Legge, *The Works of Mencius.*

16. Joel Feinberg, "Legal Paternalism," in *Paternalism,* ed. Rolf Sartorius (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 3.

17. John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* may be read as an attempt to overcome the drawbacks of both extremes (classical liberalism and welfarism) and combine their strong points into a single consistent system.

18. *Analects* 12.11, in Confucius, *The Analects,* trans. Lau, p. 114.

19. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 16.

20. *Mencius* 3A3.

21. *Analects* 4.1, in Confucius, *The Analects,* trans. Lau, p. 72.

22. See Joel Feinberg, *Social Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), pp. 66–67.

23. See Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 3, *1843–1844* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), p. 162.

24. See *Grundrisse,* in ibid., p. 42.

25. *Analects* 8.5.

26. *Analects* 15.21.

27. *Analects* 3.7.

28. Joel Feinberg, "The Nature and Value of Rights," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 4 (1970): 252.