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Source: *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Jan., 2003), pp. 39-63

Published by: [University of Hawai'i Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1400054>

Accessed: 27/09/2013 07:50

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DEMOCRACY AND CONFUCIAN VALUES

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The ideological confrontation between liberal democratic societies and the authoritarian or illiberal societies of East Asia presents some interesting challenges for contemporary liberal political philosophers. Some East Asian political leaders have attributed the remarkable economic success and stability of these societies to a somewhat nebulously conceived body of Asian values. According to this view, the success of East Asian societies such as Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, and Japan is ultimately attributable to their distinct moral traditions, including, for example, Confucianism, which place high value upon family-oriented moral qualities such as filial piety and deference to authority.

Now I think that the suspicion that some East Asian governments have distorted Confucian philosophy for ideological purposes is well founded. Nevertheless, I still want to argue that the idea of "Asian," or, more accurately, "Confucian," values be taken seriously when considering ways of justifying democracy in East Asian contexts. Taking this idea more seriously may help us to understand why Western leaders' exhortations to East Asian leaders to adopt more liberal democratic institutions often fall on unsympathetic ears. It may also help us to understand the difficulties confronted by democracy activists in East Asian societies. Political philosophers such as Daniel Bell have argued that attempts to justify democracy in East Asian societies must indeed acknowledge their moral traditions; appeals to Western concepts of individualism are less likely to be successful. But I shall be suggesting a more radical strategy for justifying democracy in East Asian societies than does Bell, a strategy influenced by the thought of the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey. Bell puts forward an instrumental justification of democracy, arguing that representative "democratic governments protect and facilitate communitarian forms of life."¹

The strategy I am thinking of is in some ways more radical, because it does not limit itself to reforms in political institutional arrangements. I want to argue that in the present period of social and economic change, the democratic reform of community and organizational life, coupled with the instituting of civil freedoms, will help preserve the continuity of Confucian moral traditions cherished in a number of East Asian societies. What is envisaged here is not necessarily a liberal democratic ideal. Rather, it should be taken as a hypothesis about the beneficial consequences that may follow from fostering a democratic ethos in the community life of East Asian societies that are either engaged in the process of democratization or contemplating the democratic revitalization of their political and social institutions (e.g., South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, or Japan).

This essay will be divided into four sections. In the first section I shall discuss

briefly the classical liberal conceptions of representative democracy and liberty currently being recommended to East Asia by Western political leaders. I shall give consideration to both natural rights based and consequentialist justifications for representative democracy and individual liberty in these conceptions. The second section will discuss some Confucian values that are appealed to by autocratic East Asian leaders in their objections to Western recommendations for liberal democracy in East Asia. The third section will present a pragmatist understanding of democracy and of its ideas regarding the role of public participation in such a democratic practice. I shall consider what grounds there might be for disagreements between pragmatists and some contemporary Confucians over these conceptions of democracy and the public and over the role of expert and intellectual authority in public policy making. In the final section, I shall give a concrete illustration of how a more communitarian form of democratic practice might have appeal in societies with Confucian moral traditions.

The Background to Modern Recommendations for Liberal Democracy in East Asia

There are two classical liberal political ideals that lie behind many policy recommendations for democracy issued to non-liberal governments by Western leaders: (1) The ideal of liberty recognizes all individuals as having fundamental natural rights to life, to property, to civil freedoms of association—such as speech and religion—and to freedom of choice of their political leaders. These rights are held against all other individuals, such that those individuals are obligated not to interfere coercively with the exercise of these rights.

(2) The ideal of equality of rights recognizes that all individuals are equally entitled to exercise the rights listed above, irrespective of their sexual, racial, religious, or political status. There are, in other words, no *prima facie* moral grounds for coercively interfering with the exercise of these rights by particular individuals on the grounds of such status.

There is room for quibbling between different branches of liberalism on these points. President Clinton, in a speech at Beijing University in 1998, claimed that these rights are “universal—not American rights or European rights ... but the birthrights of people everywhere.”² Some classical liberals, such as Friedrich A. von Hayek, have argued instead that the rights described above have gradually evolved on a customary basis within liberal societies.³ But Hayek, as much as his predecessors such as Locke, shares the view that these individual rights and their corresponding obligations have priority over the particularistic obligations, values, and goods of familial and community life. Where communities, families, or organizations impose on their members obligations and conceptions of the good life that clash with individual liberties, the latter trump the former. In fact, it follows from acceptance of the rights to property and freedom of association that, provided they respect the rights of others, individuals are (1) free to enter into or leave consensually most kinds of association and (2) free to assume or quit voluntarily the moral obligations imposed by membership in these associations.

It is generally accepted by historians of liberal thought that these doctrines were gradually articulated as Western Europeans grappled with religious intolerance, political tyranny, and the emerging aspirations of the mercantile classes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, justifications for liberal democracy by Western leaders such as President Clinton do not usually make reference to these historical origins. Today such justifications are often couched in terms of the natural rights of all persons, and the economic rights of individuals and organizations. It is held that representative democratic government, with provision for regular free and fair elections, for an independent judiciary, and for laws impartially protecting civil and economic liberties will best accommodate the doctrines of individual liberty and equal rights. In *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Karl Popper famously puts the problem of classical liberal politics in this way: the problem is not “who should rule,” but rather “how can we so organise political institutions that bad or incompetent rulers can be prevented from doing too much damage?” Popper presents the case for representative democracy as the best available answer to this problem in this way: “In a democracy, the rulers . . . can be dismissed by the ruled without bloodshed.”⁴ Representative democracy provides for peaceful transfers of power; it allows for the dismissal of rulers unable to rule competently or justly in a way that is not possible in nondemocratic regimes.

On the other hand, an independent judiciary provides for an impartial rule of law, which is the other main plank in the justification of liberal democracy. A genuinely independent judiciary is able to interpret and enforce law ensuring the impartial and equal protection of individual rights. Theoretically, courts that are free from threats or interference by governments and majorities of citizens can protect the freedoms of unpopular minorities or individuals.

These arguments for representative democracy and the rule of law presuppose acceptance of the doctrines of individual liberty and equal rights. But on what grounds can the doctrines of individual liberty and equal rights themselves be justified? Two justifications are typically offered by Western political leaders: a natural-rights-based justification and a consequentialist justification. First, the natural-rights-based justification—a justification not offered by all liberal theorists, as we have seen—holds that individual liberties are given equally and universally to all individuals, by virtue of their status as human beings. Thus, there is an imperative applying to all polities, irrespective of their cultural specificities, that they organize themselves in such a way that these rights are equally respected. The liberal democratic governmental and judicial model described above best fits these requirements.

The consequentialist approach is often used to complement natural-rights-based justifications. It justifies individual liberties and equal rights from the standpoint of their ability to promote ends such as social harmony, progress, and prosperity—values that are esteemed in contemporary East Asian societies. In older forms of Western social organization, social harmony was promoted under the auspices of an overriding, usually religious, conception of the good life. Such forms of social organization were subject to disruption as competing conceptions of the good life

evolved, leading to civil conflict in the absence of any impartial system of law and governance.

In modern, large-scale "Great Societies," composed of individuals and groups with diverse and sometimes competing conceptions of the good life, such social organization is no longer desirable or possible. Social harmony is preserved through the impartial enforcement of individual liberties, ensuring the equal protection of the rights of different individuals, irrespective of the goods they pursue. Governments and judiciaries today supposedly function as neutral arbiters in the affairs of their citizens.

The protection of individual liberties provides for social and cultural progress, in that it leaves individuals free to experiment in the pursuit of their diverse life plans, both singly and in concert with others. Economically, it permits entrepreneurs, labor, and consumers to form and adjust freely their preferences in their interactions with each other, in markets where labor and commodity prices are determined by movements in supply and demand, rather than by government regulation.

Finally, impartial respect for individual liberties and the rule of law is essential for the effective functioning of a free market, which today is seen as the key to social prosperity. A consistent respect for economic liberties means leaving the invisible hand to do its work, allowing countless anonymous individuals to service each other's wants unintentionally, subject to legal constraints against coercion and fraud. Alternative ideas of prosperity, which see it as resting on the ability of governments to intervene in and manage the economic lives of their citizens, are rejected on the grounds that governments are never in a position to predict the unintended harmful effects of such ambitious, centrally planned policies.

Some Quasi-Confucian Rejoinders to Arguments for Liberal Democracy

So what have East Asian intellectuals or political leaders thought about such doctrines? In the 1980s and 1990s, when the economic success of the "Asian Tigers" was at its height, a number of East Asian leaders and intellectuals issued some very critical rejoinders to these doctrines, rejoinders that appealed to the concept of "Asian values." Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore led the charge, but other leaders and intellectuals such as the Japanese writer and politician Ishihara Shintaro also joined in. Critical philosophical responses to proposals for liberal democracy in East Asia have come from scholars such as Daniel Bell. There are two claims that are central to these arguments. First, the economic prosperity and social harmony of these societies has its basis in communitarian "Asian" (usually Confucian-based) values, which are quite at odds with those of Western liberalism. Second, these values entail conceptions of political organization, freedom, and social obligation that are quite different from those upheld by liberals in Western countries.

Now it is true that a number of modern East Asian political regimes have taken a quite un-Confucian opportunistic approach to Confucian thought, using it to justify autocratic ideologies and policies. However, I am in agreement with Daniel Bell's

claim that a Confucian ethos is also an integral part of the traditional social fabric of social life in China, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore (among its Chinese population, that is), and, to some extent, Japan. Citing historical and anthropological studies, Bell argues that while Confucianism “originated from an elite class of intellectuals and/or scholar-bureaucrats,” its spread throughout most levels of society in these countries over hundreds of years was facilitated by “ethical instruction . . . carried on primarily in the family and within local schools, ie in ways not directly dependent on the decisions of state elites.”⁵

I shall now sketch some central Confucian ideas that are relevant to contemporary rebuttals of proposals for liberal democracy in East Asian societies, through reference to the *Analects* of Confucius. We could start by summarizing the historical political and moral background of Confucianism in contrast with the historical background of liberalism. As I have said, liberalism arose out of attempts to wrestle with problems arising from political absolutism, religious conflict, and the emergence of a market order. Confucianism arose against a background of extended political strife in China in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. This era of civil instability had followed upon a semi-legendary period of unity and prosperity in China, marked by a succession of virtuous rulers. For Confucius, the political problem of his age was not how to limit the power of established political authority, or how to secure a protected realm for individual conduct free from arbitrary coercion. His problem was one of the right moral education of potential rulers, ministers, and officials that would cultivate in them the character of the “exemplary person” or gentleman (*chün-tzu*) and the dispositions or virtues essential for good, benevolent government. In contrast to Western classical liberalism, which emphasizes the rule of law and the limitation of government power, Confucian thought emphasizes a benevolent “rule of virtue.” For Confucius, unlike Popper, the crucial problem for politics is “who should rule?”

Nor did Confucius want to see individuals emancipated from hierarchically ordered social positions and their attendant social obligations. In his eyes, it was precisely these kinds of changes that were bringing disorder and strife to Chinese society in the first place. A way of behaving in which people attuned themselves to each other, deferring to those whose excellence merited deference and faithfully fulfilling the obligations associated with their status would prevent such strife. Confucius thus propounded an ideal of a meritocratic, harmonious social hierarchy in which people respected their social obligations. Such a social hierarchy allowed the wise and virtuous to rise to public office.

Confucians have developed a conception of selfhood that conflicts with that advocated by more popular forms of classical liberalism. Classical liberals emphasize fundamental individual rights to liberty and property, and the corresponding obligations to respect them, as the basis for social and political order. These rights and obligations are of a general character; all citizens in liberal societies are equally bound to uphold them at all times in their relations with other citizens. Particularistic moral entitlements and obligations in, say, family life are recognized by classical liberal theorists as providing a kind of backbone for the responsible exercise of

rights. But where there is conflict between particularistic and fundamental entitlements and obligations, the latter must prevail.

In Confucian thought, by contrast, all moral and political obligations are conceived of in particularistic, relational terms, and in this form they are central to Confucian understandings of political and moral order. The most important obligations and duties are not undertaken toward individuals as such, but to parents, children, siblings, rulers, or the ruled. These obligations have moral force, but not because of the rights claims of others and not because they are taken on as part of a voluntarily assumed role. They have moral force because fulfilling them involves exercising moral dispositions that are integral to the realization of moral character, to the cultivation of the self. A person learns to be human, acquiring moral and intellectual character through continuous interactions with others throughout his or her life in different relationships.

It is through the cultivation of virtues such as filial piety, wisdom, and courage—a cultivation itself made possible by inborn goodness or humanity (*jen*)—that the moral ideal of Confucian ethics, the “exemplary person” or *chün-tzu* is realized. This ideal is practiced in good governance. As Confucius puts it, wisdom is defined by efforts “to work for what is right for the people, and to respect the spirits and Gods from afar” through proper ritual conduct. A minister or ruler who is humane as well as wise pursues these good things for their own sake, rather than in order to “reap benefits” from them.⁶

Now it is a constant refrain in Confucius that a humane, wise, and brave minister or ruler does not rely heavily on laws or chastisements in order to make his rule effective. He governs instead by the example he sets through virtue and the discipline established by proper ritual observance.⁷ But, in assertions that modern autocratic rulers in East Asia have made much of, Confucius claims that only a few people are qualified to rule and deliberate in political affairs. Learning “the way” requires certain inborn qualities and a level of culture, education, and constant effort that are beyond the capability of the majority of “the common people” (although Confucius also emphasized that a humble birth is no barrier to virtue and wisdom). Hence, “the people may be made to follow (the way), but may not be made to know.”⁸ In an often-quoted passage, Confucius says of the ideal ruler, “When you wish for good, the people will be good. The virtues of the Lord (*chün-tzu*) are as the wind, the virtues of the people are as the grass. The grass bends to the wind.”⁹ Correspondingly, the common people are required not to take any role in the formulation of policy; as Confucius puts it, “When not in the official position, do not be involved in its policies.”¹⁰

It may be wondered how much prestige modern East Asian governments can borrow from Confucian ethics. Confucius sought to advise the rulers of an agrarian feudal society, but the success of modern East Asian governments claiming a Confucian legacy has been based on their championing of modern commerce and economic growth. The resolution to this apparent paradox has lain in the widespread adoption of the following strategy. Industrializing East Asian societies have enlisted the Confucian ideals of social harmony, deference, and virtuous government in the

formulation of a paternalistic conception of "bureaucratic state management," which requires beneficent intervention and guidance in the moral and economic lives of citizens.¹¹ Government ministers and civil servants have come to be regarded as modern embodiments of the *chün-tzu*. Respect for individual rights takes second place to an emphasis on harmonious community participation in the pursuit of the national economic and social goods established by governments.

Of course, these governments have not all needed to be autocratic in order to achieve or sustain such goals. Over the past ten years, opposition parties have acquired rather more freedom in Taiwan and South Korea than they have in Singapore, for example, and in both countries they have won elections. Japan's legal and political institutions closely resemble those of Western countries, and individual liberties are legally protected (although postwar Japanese governments have not explicitly associated themselves with Confucianism). But in most of these societies, Daniel Bell is probably right to speak of a "managerial model of democracy," in which democratic procedures such as elections are adopted, while the liberal values of individual liberty are downplayed to greater or lesser degrees where they appear to threaten community harmony. Harmony and prosperity in the community, guided by wise technocrats and government officials, take precedence over individualistic notions of autonomy.

In implementing policies that follow this strategy, East Asian governments have been able to tap into and reinforce Confucian values already existing among their citizens. On this subject, Lee Kuan Yew remarked that "we were lucky to have this cultural backdrop, the belief in thrift, hard work, filial piety and loyalty in the extended family . . . the respect for scholarship and learning."¹² Even at the level of firm management, the success of some East Asian economies is also alleged to depend upon the Confucian values of harmony, loyalty, and deference between workers and employers. According to Ishihara Shintaro, "The factory and the office are an extension of the family: the employee is a loyal and valued member of the family. . . . Just as a son or daughter know[s] that they have to forgo a personal pleasure or goal for the sake of the family, a company's staff . . . know that compromise achieves more than confrontation."¹³

Two consequences issue from this political ethos that are not acceptable from a classical liberal standpoint. Given a quasi-Confucian justification of a particular government as virtuous and beneficent, it follows that government intervention in the moral and economic lives of citizens is desirable so long as it furthers the goods of increased prosperity, social harmony, and economic growth. On these grounds, governments can exercise a benevolent visible hand in economic affairs, practicing interventionist economic policies that are not at all favored by classical liberal thinkers. Some East Asian governments have also exercised an entitlement to intervene in the moral affairs of their citizens, in order to reinforce and maintain their commitment to the national good. Moreover, the legal systems of countries such as Singapore are, far from being independent, a tool of interventionist government policy in political affairs.

Second, the concept of individual liberty has not come to be as highly valued by

East Asian governments as it has been in many Western countries. Against natural-rights-based justifications for individual liberty such as those offered by President Clinton, some East Asian leaders have taken a view that is also shared by communitarian philosophers such as Alasdair MacIntyre. They, too, would claim that “natural rights, like wigs for men, are inventions of Seventeenth Century Europe,”¹⁴ with the proviso that U.S. leaders are now their most enthusiastic proponents. Lee Kuan Yew makes this point categorically: “Americans believe their ideals are universal—the supremacy of the individual and free, unfettered expression. But they are not—never were.”¹⁵

The rejection of consequentialist justifications for individual liberty has taken the form of an imminent critique with Singaporean leaders such as Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong. I have shown that for classical liberals, equal respect for individual rights is essential for social cohesion, progress, and prosperity. Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong have claimed that unconditional respect for individual liberties has in fact failed to deliver these goods in many Western countries since, in the first place, it has eroded family life. Thus, according to Lee Kuan Yew, in the United States “The expansion of the right of the individual to behave or misbehave as he pleases has come at the expense of an orderly society,” contributing to the breakdown of the family, widespread drug abuse, poverty, and violence.¹⁶ Similarly, Goh Chok Tong says of American and British societies that they were “up to the early 60’s . . . disciplined, conservative, with the family very much the pillar of their society. Since then, both the US and Britain have seen a sharp rise in broken families, illegitimate children, juvenile delinquents, vandalism and violent crime.”¹⁷ So Singaporean leaders justify a paternalistic political system, selective recognition of certain liberties, and family oriented social and economic policies, with the object of developing “a well-ordered society [where] everyone can have maximum enjoyment of his freedoms.”¹⁸

The recent Asian economic and political crises have shaken the confidence of these self-assessments in East Asia. In 1995, Daniel Bell wrote of a managed public space in East and South Asian societies in which “The state . . . functions as the gatekeeper licensing civil discourse and managing its terms of debate.”¹⁹ Most citizens did not question the paternalistic, technocratic rule of their governments, so long as they delivered on their promises of material prosperity and security. But in the wake of the 1997 economic crisis, once-marginal public spheres expanded dramatically in many East and Southeast Asian societies. From Hong Kong to Indonesia, increasing numbers of citizens have expressed their dissatisfaction with their governments through the ballot box, street marches, strikes, and unprecedented open debate.

But if we just confine ourselves to the East Asian context, will the conceptions of democracy and individual rights discussed by President Clinton at Beijing University necessarily have appeal, even in the midst of this rising discontent? I suspect that they will not. Many people in East Asian societies, I think, do look askance at the apparent erosion of family life in Western societies, and they do look askance at what appear to be individualistic attitudes by many Western people toward familial

and social obligations. However, is liberal representative democracy the only form that democratic life can take today?

The Contemporary Relevance of Pragmatism's Communitarian Conception of Democracy, and the Grounds for Possible Disagreement between Pragmatist and Confucian Social Philosophies

It is here that I would like to introduce my discussion of the more participatory forms of democracy advocated (although not exclusively) by pragmatism. Pragmatist conceptions of democracy are not entirely unknown in East Asia. During the 1920s John Dewey's political and social philosophy enjoyed some popularity among many Chinese intellectuals, especially his former student Hu Shih. A part of the appeal of Dewey's thought at that time lay in his analyses of the formative educative influence of community life in the development of persons as agents of a democratic society. The privileged kind of public association for classical liberals is the Great Society. But for Dewey, an important problem for political philosophy was the transformation of the Great Society into a "Great Community," in "which the ever expanding and intricately ramifying consequences of associated activities shall be known in the full sense of that word, so that an organized, articulate Public comes into being,"²⁰ in which the idea of democracy "must affect all modes of human association, the family, the school, industry, religion."²¹

Rather than paraphrase Dewey's own thought here, I want to consider the import of certain Deweyan and contemporary pragmatist ideas concerning democratic participation, the nature of an articulate public, and the role of experts in policy formation for the problem considered in this essay—the problem of conserving cultural continuity in East Asian societies. If readers can detect a more conservative, or even Confucian, tincture in my presentation of these ideas, they should not be surprised. It is not my intention to present the ideas of "The Master" unalloyed as solutions to the political and social problems of different cultures. Rather, I freely admit the influence of both classical conservatism and contemporary Confucian thought in my adaptation of pragmatist political philosophy to the issues considered here.

The pragmatist understanding of participatory democracy would appear to stand the least chance of any uptake in East Asian societies. The notion of making traditionally hierarchical and deferential familial, workplace, and educational relations more democratic seems reminiscent of the most ludicrous (and ruinous) social engineering. It doesn't quite mean that. Democracy is regarded instead as a distinctive "mode of association" in which (1) members of such an association take part, to the best of their ability, in deliberating and directing the affairs of the association to which they belong; (2) such associations take upon themselves the responsibility for educating their several members with one aim being to increase their ability to participate in directing the affairs of their association; and (3) there is increasing interaction between different associations within a community, accompanied by a heightened mutual awareness of the consequences for each group of

the conduct of their affairs, and a willingness to adjust their activities in light of this awareness.

Democracy of this kind is being practiced, for example, where a family deliberates together over how best to look after their aged parents and grandparents in light of pressing work demands on family members; where employees and managers at a firm discuss the granting of paternity and maternity leave to employees in light of shared awareness of the detrimental effects on family life of excessive work hours; and where there is government-sponsored inquiry involving representatives of family associations, businesses, the general public, legislators, and expert consultants who investigate ways to reduce the impact on family life of long work hours. In all of these cases, deliberation takes the form of inquiries into possible alternative courses of action. It assesses them in terms of their likely consequences and the commensurability of means and ends for attaining desired consequences, and it assesses them through reevaluation of both those means and ends where evidence is found that unintended, troublesome consequences are issuing from chosen lines of conduct. Reflection on conduct that meets these standards is termed "intelligence" by pragmatists.

This is all well and good, but the critic of such a model of deliberation will complain that it is too rationalistic. It is indeed a failing of some liberal theories of democratic deliberation that they do not take sufficient account of the role played by traditional, inherited rules and habits in defining and limiting what may come within the scope of deliberation as a possibly desirable course of action. Some of these are of an unspoken, prudential character; others, in political and commercial affairs, have, over time, become articulated in law (including the common law). Such traditional rules and habits are the products of a gradually evolved wisdom, which can anticipate the negative consequences of flouting long-standing prohibitions and obligations in ways that reflection by itself may be unable to anticipate. So it is that, in the situations discussed above, the placing of aged family members into retirement homes or the introduction of state-operated retirement homes and child-care services may not be considered as worthwhile ends to be deliberated over. Such measures may be considered as being too destructive of much-valued traditional goods or ends in family life.

In the form discussed above, democracy represents an ideal type of social organization in which human beings can realize their capacities for intelligent cooperation in achieving their common goods, and can do so without rejecting traditional practices and habits. In this kind of association, it is not only the case that its members are more capable of being alert to the consequences of actions for themselves or for others. It is also the case that they are enabled to act cooperatively upon awareness of these consequences, by reflecting on the activities that produced them and redirecting or abandoning these activities where their consequences have been found to be problematic.

But for this idea of democracy to be at all workable, the public must become articulate, acquiring the "ability to judge of the bearing of the knowledge supplied by others upon common concerns,"²² to follow the arguments of policy formulators

and makers in at least broad terms, and criticize them from the standpoint of how proposed policies affect their own needs and interests.

So how is such an educated, articulate public to come into being? The answer to this question is, to some degree, an Aristotelian one. The inculcation of a working knowledge of the moral and political traditions of a society, of a capacity to deliberate over values and goods, and of a capacity to follow and criticize arguments ought not to be left to chance or fortune (in the case of those wealthy enough to attend schools where these capacities are inculcated). It is a truism to say that the individual can only develop in a relational social medium, a medium in which others, including parents, teachers, and peers encourage the selective molding of broad, directionless impulses into particular habits of action and belief. Mind, including its creative capacities to reflect on and generate new habits and beliefs, is not an achievement of an isolated self. Rather, as Dewey puts it, in *Democracy and Education*, "Through social intercourse, through sharing in the activities embodying beliefs, [a person] gradually acquires a mind of his own."²³ According to this view, shared to some extent by Aristotelians, pragmatists, and Confucians, important associations such as families, friendships, schools, workplaces, and voluntary, religious, and political organizations are all educative, exercising an ongoing process of character formation among their members. The problem of just how such associations are also to inculcate the capacities and intellectual virtues discussed above, and how these capacities and virtues are to be shared between diverse associations within a "Great Community," remains an acute one; but, as I shall point out presently, there are good reasons for this problem to be given serious consideration.

Finally, I want to consider how experts fit into this participatory conception of democracy. This conception is in no way anti-elitist. There is a need for technical specialists who can formulate policies drawing upon knowledge that is simply unavailable to legislators or nonspecialist members of the public, and for specialists who can inquire into the possible political, moral, medical, ethical, and environmental consequences of such policies and suggest amendments on the basis of such investigations. Finally—and this point is sometimes lost to pragmatists and other liberals captivated by the image of the expert as engineer—there is a need for generalists steeped in traditional, practical knowledge who can deliberate on the "fit" of such policies and their projected consequences within an overall political and cultural environment, and on their ramifications for established expectations and practices.

All of these needs are acknowledged. What is wanting is a set of mechanisms for communication and criticism between experts and generalists on the one hand and the public on the other. For its part, the public has to be capable of communicating its needs and problems to those in charge of policy formation and review, of comprehending in broad outline the conclusions of inquiries conducted by the latter into problems bearing upon public welfare, and of evaluating them in terms of their own and other groups' interests and needs. For their part, experts and generalists have to find ways of making their policy proposals and criticisms comprehensible to members of the public: pragmatists have long hoped that the mass media would be able

to perform this function.²⁴ One concrete proposal for a mechanism for communication and criticism between the public, experts, and generalists is a citizens' consultative council, in which assemblies of citizens chosen by lot can be convened on issues relating to public welfare to listen to, question, and evaluate presentations made to them by experts, generalists, legislators, and representatives of interest groups. The results of such deliberations could then be disseminated by the press and passed on to government ministers and departments to aid in policy formulation and amendment—and, in very pressing cases, in the formulation of referendum questions.

I shall now develop two arguments for the applicability and appropriateness of ideas of democracy in East Asian contexts that are like those advanced by pragmatism. The first argument will point to the contribution that a politically and economically educated and participating public can make to the development and review of policies bearing on economic, moral, and political problems in ways that paternalistic and conventionally representative democratic systems fail to do. This will involve some discussion of the critical differences between pragmatism and some contemporary Confucians over the relationship between experts or exemplary persons and the public or "the masses." The second argument will try to indicate the value of a democratized conception of civic and moral virtue within the conception of democracy developed above. Both of these arguments will, I hope, work to support the overall argument of this essay: that articulate, informed members of the general public in communication with each other and with policy makers will be enabled to preserve the continuity of important cultural traditions now under threat.

The Asian economic crisis and the so-called globalization of world markets have highlighted two troubling issues that are relevant to a pragmatist assessment of democracy: first, the bewilderment and rising discontent of many ordinary citizens concerning the apparently uncontrollable economic transformations in their lives, and second, the problematic epistemic infallibility often associated with the experts and bureaucrats charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the economic and social order. Now from a pragmatist perspective, neither classical liberal nor contemporary quasi-Confucian perspectives in their current form will be of much help in theorizing the conditions for the restoration and maintenance of social stability in societies facing these issues.

A prevailing view among policy makers in both the West and the East is that policy formation and review is best left in the hands of either experts or bureaucrats. Moreover, the processes of forming and debating policy must be insulated from the ill-informed, short-term majoritarian sentiments of the public and of legislators and from the sectional interests of lobby groups. Policy makers, such as those working for treasuries and Reserve Banks, sometimes need to make long-term macroeconomic decisions that involve painful short-term economic adjustments. Such a decision-making power would be chilled and distorted if subjected to interference from legislators and special-interest groups concerned only with the interests of their particular constituencies.

There is good reason to acknowledge that ill-informed majoritarian and sec-

tional sentiments, represented by legislators and special-interest groups, can have a detrimental effect on both policy and law making. The problem is that they are already beginning to exert this influence *anyway*, over and above the institutional and conventional checks on their power. Today, the economic and cultural changes associated with market liberalization and globalization are proving a source of great insecurity, incomprehension, and discontent for many citizens in Western—and Eastern—societies, who are often ill-equipped to comprehend them in a meaningful way. In the absence of mechanisms for communication between policy formulators and reformers and publics sufficiently articulate to represent their interests to policy makers, to evaluate their policy proposals, and to comprehend the interests of other groups affected by such policies, public insecurities and discontents are still finding outlets. In a number of Western countries, they are finding expression in a growing resentment against and distrust of political institutions and policy-making processes, and in populist scapegoating of migrants, refugees, and other vulnerable minorities, who are blamed for exacerbating economic and social ills. Such a populism is now also chafing at the independent policy- and decision-making powers of governmental and judicial institutions, which are increasingly perceived as acting against majority sentiments. East Asian societies are not untouched by popular discontent. In Singapore and Malaysia, for example, there is evidence of a growing radical Islamism among some Malays who are alienated from the political and economic policy processes of their respective states.

Liberal ideas of liberty, freedom of expression, and equality of rights are valuable goods for liberal democracies. They have served as effective deterrents to arbitrary and authoritarian coercion committed against often vulnerable individuals and minorities. But by themselves, they provide no guarantee that *informed* free expression and competent deliberation concerning public affairs will take place among a citizenry. By themselves, they do not temper a growing inclination to assert the sovereignty of majoritarian interests over the independence of certain political and judicial institutions. Notions of liberty and equality in rights also need to be put to work as effectuating means in developing mechanisms for intelligent practices of discussion and deliberation between policy makers, experts, and the public and between different groups and organizations within the public. But the success of such practices, for pragmatists like myself, presupposes the existence of stable communities and associations within which publics can become established and articulate. Without the “abiding attachments” of some kind of enduring local communal life (or “virtual” e-mail community life, perhaps) in organizations or institutions, there are fewer possibilities for the transmission of traditions of inquiry, and less scope for acquiring knowledge that bears on wider political and economic problems. A stable community life is needed for people to have the time to teach others the practice of inquiry, to cultivate and pass on exemplars for moral and intellectual conduct—and, more specifically, to impart to each other the habits of judgment needed for making sense of and criticizing the knowledge claims of experts.

Pragmatists, with their relational conception of selfhood, and their desire to augment liberal talk of individual liberty with the acknowledgment of the commu-

nity grounds for articulate expression of such liberty, would have many sympathies with the political and philosophical orientation of contemporary Confucianism. But there is also much room for disagreement between pragmatists and some contemporary Confucians over the paternalistic conceptions of governance advanced by the latter. One potential point of disagreement between pragmatists and some Confucian scholars concerns the way in which the *chün-tzu* is portrayed in Confucianism as an object of moral and intellectual deference for the masses. The reasons for this disagreement can be found in the discussion of experts and policy makers above. In a society without a knowledgeable public capable of communicating its needs and interests to policy makers, the latter acquire a distorted sense of infallible epistemic authority. To cite Dewey in his major work of political philosophy, *The Public and Its Problems*: "It is assumed that the policies of the experts are in the main both wise and benevolent . . . framed to conserve the genuine interests of society." However, "in the absence of an articulate voice on the part of the masses, the best do not remain the best, the wise cease to be wise. . . . In the degree to which they become a specialized class, (experts) are shut off from knowledge of the needs which they are supposed to serve."²⁵

But how could this rather platitudinous criticism be directed at the idea of the *chün-tzu*, the "exemplary person" who provides the model for modern, quasi-Confucian understandings of political and bureaucratic management in East Asian societies? The key to this disagreement between pragmatists and some contemporary Confucians over the *chün-tzu* does not lie in that ideal itself. It lies in its opposition to the concept of the masses, or the *min*. To get some sense of the problem here, let us turn to David Hall and Roger Ames' treatment of this opposition in their book *Thinking Through Confucius*.

According to Hall and Ames, the distinctive value of the *chün-tzu* consists of his ability to receive and transmit the traditions that are handed down to him, and to appropriate those traditions in order to generate and contribute new meanings to them. Through a dynamic process of self-discipline and moral and intellectual self-cultivation, the *chün-tzu* becomes authoritative in embodying the traditional, cultural inheritance of his society in his judgments and actions, and also exercises the capacity to transform traditions respectfully and creatively: "as a concrete embodiment of ritual action, and as a model of personal and sociopolitical order . . . both a source of continuity and a ground for creativity in the tradition."²⁶ The *chün-tzu's* social value lies in his ability to receive and transmit his traditional cultural inheritance. But it also lies in his ability to use that inheritance as a resource in order to be an author of it as well: to contribute new meanings to that tradition through appropriate judgment and action within his own particular circumstances. Moreover, in cultivating his self in this manner, the *chün-tzu* also contributes to the good of his society. In receiving, transmitting, and creatively contributing to his society's traditions, he is an agent of harmonious cultural continuity, and an important source of innovation that enriches the meanings and knowledge embodied in traditions.

The masses or *min* have a rather more passive cultural and political role to play in a Confucian social order. They are benevolently ruled and morally worked upon

by the *chün-tzu* in government. As Hall and Ames put it, according to Confucian scholars “they are to submit to those above whose posture in administering them is to oversee and treat them with magnanimity.”²⁷ The reason for this passivity lies in the fact that the masses, considered in their state as masses, are not individuated. They have not undertaken the difficult work of cultural self-cultivation that is the mark of the *chün-tzu*. Because of this, they cannot be generators of new meanings and values, and they are not fully capable of being recipients and transmitters of their cultural traditions. Hence, “the masses are dependent upon the culture of their superiors for a meaningful mode of living.” They can be benevolently guided to follow the way (*Tao*) but they cannot realize it, “since they do not have the resources to deal critically with the way of life provided for them.” Hall and Ames note that for Mencius, “the relationship between the ruler and the masses is repeatedly cast as analogous to that of parents and their children.”²⁸

Hall and Ames do insist that there is a positive aspect to the state of being in the “masses.” For under the benevolent guidance and instruction of the *chün-tzu*, the *min* become a matrix from which “exemplary persons” can emerge. The task of rulers is to enhance the conditions under which the emergence of such persons is encouraged, through the promotion of literacy and education among the population. We should remember that the Confucian social order is meritocratic. So, as Hall and Ames contend, “The intervention of cultured superiors is necessary if the masses are to exploit their potential as a resource out of which particular persons can emerge.”²⁹ Yet although Hall and Ames do not explicitly state this, it remains implied that those who lack the talent and capacity to become exemplary persons will remain under the tutelage of the latter as “masses.” This appears to be in some disagreement with pragmatist aspirations for the development of a more articulate public.

Now according to Confucian thought, the proper attitude of those who benefit from the greater wisdom and benevolence of others is *shu*, often translated as deference in English. Here lies a second source of potential disagreement between pragmatism and some contemporary Confucians. For many Westerners and increasing numbers of younger people in East Asian societies, the English word deference has undesirable associations with genuflection, embodied, say, in the fawning attitude of courtiers in absolutist monarchies or in the submissive attitude demanded by domineering husbands from their wives. The Confucian scholar has a good deal of hard work before her in translating and explaining the concept of *shu* and in showing to her readers that it is something more than genuflection.

In *Thinking Through Confucius*, Hall and Ames discuss deference with regard to its function in maintaining harmonious, socially hierarchical relations between elites and masses. It is this discussion that I shall criticize here. It is clear for Hall and Ames that deference should mark both the attitude of the masses for the *chün-tzu* and the *chün-tzu*'s attitude toward persons of even more superior cultural and intellectual achievement, such as the Sage. According to Hall and Ames, “Deference is a response to recognized excellence.” It is an attitude that rests upon an appropriate, relational sense of one's own excellence and the different excellences of others. The

person deferring to another, who attributes value to that other person, is led "to experience in and through" that other, while the person deferred to "experiences him or herself as a locus of value."³⁰ The understanding of who should be deferring to whom involves "first clarifying oneself in terms of others, and then either displaying excellence oneself or deferring to the excellence of others in personal relations. *Shu*, then, is both the act of deferring and the demand for deference."³¹

Hall and Ames think that contemporary Western societies have substituted a crude egalitarianism for a social order that achieves a balanced recognition of the qualitative differences between "elites" and "masses." Improved technology and the institutionalization of liberal democracy have increased the power and security of the masses, but the unanticipated consequence of this is that "the deferential relations that might obtain between the two social elements is felt to have been cancelled by the general rise in the standard of living." Buoyed by these changes, the masses come to think that they are the equal of everyone else. Rather than deferring to those who are the transmitters of their cultural traditions and who display excellence in political, artistic, or intellectual achievement, the masses "are considered and consider themselves the locus of power and the locus of decision-making."³² Moreover, social and financial rewards increasingly accrue to narrow, instrumentally rational specialists, to those who "know more and more about less and less," and who are not reflectively aware of any social goods toward which their actions are contributing.³³ Hall and Ames might point to one consequence of this attitude already discussed above: the assertion of popular sovereignty over the independent decision-making powers of unelected "elite" officials, including court judges.

It might be added to this criticism that there is an increasing tendency in Western societies for people to be excessively skeptical about the knowledge and moral claims of traditional authority, particularly with regard to the expertise of scientific, religious, legal, and political authority that has a bearing on public welfare. This skepticism is seemingly borne out by well-publicized scandals and the failure to maintain integrity, which have strongly undermined older convictions about the infallibility of those in authority. At the same time, there is an increased credulousness concerning political, economic, and scientific conspiracy theories, "New Age" medicine, and so forth. Cynicism regarding conventional political and scientific authority partly explains this credulousness. However, it is also fostered by an inability to make sense of and evaluate critically the competing claims to morality and knowledge of those experts, politicians, spin doctors, and advertisers who, in this era of "information overload," are increasingly crowding in via the mass media to attract recognition from consumers and citizens.

Yet while these are the vices of contemporary Western "mass" society, there are vices in a society strongly influenced by Confucianism as well. The deference that Hall and Ames speak of can easily shade into genuflection. The desire to invest high value in a person who is trusted to provide political and cultural leadership on one's own behalf is too often accompanied by a strong reticence to engage in critical reflection upon that person's conduct. Reverence and overly strong trust do not sit well with the detachment that is needed to evaluate critically someone's actions or

claims to knowledge and morality. Ultimately, this state of affairs is not good either for those doing the deferring or for those being deferred to. For the deferential, it means that they will be slow to evaluate and criticize the conduct of those in authority, if they do so at all, even when such conduct leads to harmful consequences for themselves. For those being deferred to, the corresponding danger is that they will lack the benefit and guidance of criticism from those who are likely to be affected by their conduct. Such criticism is beneficial in keeping the attention of experts focused on the interests of those who are potentially affected by their policies, guiding the experts to modify policies when this is required. Without such criticism experts are indeed in danger of "being shut off from knowledge of those whose needs they are meant to serve."

One response to this claim is to point out that criticism of authority is readily accepted in the Confucian tradition. Filial sons should not refrain from criticizing their parents if they act wrongly, and political rulers are not above exposure to criticism or, in the worst situations, legitimate acts of rebellion. However, it is clear that criticism of political authority can only be the business of those who are expert in such business: only the *chün-tzu* is qualified to engage in such criticism.

There is, I think, an intellectual irresponsibility that characterizes both the attitude of excessive and indiscriminate skepticism toward experts and intellectual or moral authorities, on the one hand, and the uncritical attitude of deference to elites on the other. The first attitude dampens the ability to assess effectively legislative proposals, the pronouncements of scientific and economic experts, or the public arguments of moral authorities and representatives of interest groups, from the standpoint of establishing whether these proposals, arguments, and pronouncements are supported with good reasons or evidence. In other words, it is very difficult for people to conclude that the results of inquiries conducted by such experts or authorities have the status of warranted assertability. Such skepticism also leaves people vulnerable to demagogues, conspiracy theorists, and charlatans, who build their appeal on the basis of their attacks on elites and conventional authority.

On the other hand, the attitude of deference to expert or elite authority is apt to be characterized by too great a willingness to trust in whatever is asserted to be true or false, morally right or wrong, or politically expedient or inexpedient by the expert or authority who is the object of that deference. Such belief and trust can readily be given in the absence of good reasons or evidence, of adequate support for such assertions. The deferential attitude inhibits its holder's ability to assess competently the ideas and proposals of experts and to suggest appropriate modifications that will make these ideas and proposals more attuned to the interests of those potentially affected by them. It also inhibits the ability to assess the moral and intellectual character of those who profess expertise. Hall and Ames are aware of this danger. They remind us that Confucius warns against dissemblers, who falsely profess to excellence and who demand deference on that basis.³⁴ But given the kind of characteristics that deference encourages in those who practice it, such vulnerability to dissemblers must constitute an intractable problem. We could say in Confucian terms that the ever-present danger in the practice of deference is that *li* (propriety)

will come to subsist without *jen* (goodness or humanity), that the norms and rituals of deference to elites will persist in the face of incompetent or unjust conduct on the part of the latter.³⁵

More worrisome still is the unlikely prospect of politically instituting the relationship between the *chün-tzu* and the *min* in Confucian terms in contemporary nation states. We have seen that ideally the *chün-tzu* rules over the *min* benevolently and through the moral example of his character. Thus, he doesn't need to rely heavily on laws or coercion. Some rulers in ancient China may have come close to this ideal. However, contemporary political leaders in East Asia who are committed to maintaining social harmony and order under a unified conception or vision of the good must contend with the facts of social plurality and high levels of education among their populations. They have had to develop methods for dealing with those who dissent from this vision. In practice, then, the professed moral aspirations of those modern political leaders claiming to embody Confucian ideals have been balanced by an attitude of *realpolitik* with regard to the use of force against dissent.

While a deferential majority can be ruled benevolently and with a minimum of political coercion, coercion is reserved for those who threaten social harmony with their dissent. Such has been the experience of postwar East Asian regimes claiming a Confucian legitimacy.³⁶ Given the deference that such regimes have often enjoyed from a majority, such coercion may be widely tolerated, at least for a time. But dissenters are potentially valuable sources of cultural improvement and innovation. They frequently display high levels of civic commitment and responsibility (since they are motivated by the ideal of improving their community or society), and they tend to work hard at communicating this sense of commitment and responsibility to their fellow citizens. The danger, then, is that the price of coercion against dissent will be paid in cultural sterility and in a low sense of civic belonging on the part of a citizenry.³⁷

Some Western scholars have attempted to suggest democratic political models for a future democratic China that harmonize Confucian ideals of government by intellectual elites with liberal ideals of electoral accountability of government to citizens. Daniel Bell has put forward an elegant model for "a bicameral legislature, with a democratically elected lower house and an upper house composed of representatives selected on the basis of competitive examinations," which he describes as a "House of Scholars." Such an Upper House, composed of persons possessed of general intellectual excellence and ethical insight, would probably be subordinate to the elected lower house, and act as a house of review and policy debate much in the manner of the British House of Lords.³⁸ Presumably the members of the "House of Scholars" would also be paid the same levels of respect once accorded to the members of the British Upper House. Perhaps Bell's proposal will look premature to a political leadership in China that is still content to maintain its political autocracy while pursuing market liberalization. I have no quarrel with this proposal by itself, so long as it also has room for articulate publics and mechanisms for communication between them and their intellectual leadership.

For their part, Hall and Ames have recently turned to Dewey in their attempts to envisage the kind of democracy that could be developed in China in the future with due respect for its cultural values.³⁹ This will seem odd in light of the criticisms made above. I don't know how Hall and Ames would have wanted to accommodate their earlier discussions of the *chün-tzu* and the *min* with their recent Deweyan democratic proposals. There is, in any case, room for an accommodation. The cultural importance of persons of intellectual, political, and artistic excellence in receiving, transmitting, and generating meanings and values is readily granted by both pragmatists and Confucians. For example, Hu Shih's early essay *Ibsenism* combines a pragmatist affirmation of individual creative agency in effecting social reform with a (perhaps unconscious) Confucian affirmation of the kind of socially responsible, educative disposition usually associated with the *chün-tzu*.⁴⁰

However, there is the potential for serious disagreement between pragmatists and Confucians over the characterization of the masses as the largely passive beneficiaries of the *chün-tzu's* virtuous guidance and as the anonymous field for the emergence of potential exemplary persons. From a prudential standpoint alone, pragmatists would argue that it is better if the masses do acquire the ability to articulate themselves as a public. This may appear to be an idealistic proposal, but in the present period, with xenophobic political movements and communal violence increasing in a number of countries, including Pacific Asia, it is worth consideration.

A self-styled modern Confucian leader such as Lee Kuan Yew would reject this idea of an intellectually responsible and participating public. Relatively few people have the talent and virtue to achieve this level of responsibility, he would say, and those who do will find their way into governments, bureaucracies, and corporate management. He would point to the recent political upheavals, communal violence, and appearances of terrorist networks in some Southeast Asian countries as events that merely prove his point. It is precisely in such crises, he might say, that a government needs to rein in a panicky, ill-informed citizenry vulnerable to prejudicial sentiments. In such crises the benevolence and virtue of governments appealing to Confucian models is put to the test. Now I am not going to deny that there are narrow-minded, prejudicial habits of thought that are deeply fixed in the community life of Western and East Asian countries. But from a pragmatic standpoint, an alternative way for dealing with this difficulty is for institutions and communities to enable the development of habits and virtues of inquiry into the problems affecting the well-being of communities and organizations. This would involve a kind of democratization of virtue and of practical wisdom.

The interest taken by pragmatism in the virtues and in moral character does, I think, recommend itself to Confucian thinkers. It does not present an impoverished conception of moral life that privileges rights-based contractual obligations over particularistic relations. Thus, pragmatism would have some sympathy with those Confucians who "maintain that the liberal person requires excellence of character and a vision of the good life as a precondition for the practice of rights."⁴¹ Certainly we could say that excellence of character and virtues such as sympathy are a precondition for moral competence in the exercise of rights. Such virtues allow us to

judge when it is morally appropriate to assert our rights and reject the unjust claims and demands that others attempt to force upon us—and when it is unsympathetic and downright selfish to assert our rights and reject the moral obligations that we have to others.

According to pragmatism's version of naturalism, virtues are dispositions or habits through which people interact with their social environment in ways that are conducive to the promotion of goods within it. That environment is composed of the institutions, communities, and people with whom a person interacts. Virtues are ways of acting through which we both adjust these environing factors in the light of our desires and ideals and adjust ourselves to them. They are the moral means by which we try to effect good in that environment while also attuning ourselves to what we accept as the morally legitimate demands placed upon us by that environment. We acquire the intellectual or moral virtues by continually practicing them, and by deliberating over the means and the ends toward which they are directed, in social intercourse and inquiry in families, schooling, work, and everyday community life. Moral character arises as a flexible complex of habits and capacities that are ideally open to change and improvement through their diverse interactions with the needs of other persons and institutions.

This is not to say that all people will become equally competent in such virtues or habits, or that prejudicial habits and vices will ever be overcome. In this respect, pragmatism has been too optimistic concerning the prospects of overcoming prejudice through inquiry and democratic cooperation. Recent ethnic conflicts in different parts of the world have highlighted the extent to which prejudicial habits have become deeply rooted in the values of different peoples and are handed down with other aspects of their traditions over remarkably long periods of time. But in the kind of democratic environment envisioned earlier in this essay, meliorative influences will frequently be brought to bear upon such habits. Here, then, a critical distinction between the pragmatist and Confucian visions of the role of education becomes manifest. For Confucians, mass education is required in order to promote the conditions under which exemplary persons, as potential rulers and deliberators for the public good, can emerge. But for pragmatists, mass education is required not only for the emergence of exemplary persons, but also so that the people themselves can acquire, to the best of their ability, the capacities to deliberate over what they see as good in moral and political affairs.

However, the ability of people to decide cooperatively upon the means and ends of their conduct in social life presupposes a widespread competence in practical wisdom and a level of participatory democratic practice that is far from the current reality in Western societies today. Those readers who remain highly skeptical of its prospects in East Asian societies will no doubt be asking for some concrete discussion to show how it could come about. So I want to return to the hypothesis stated at the beginning of this essay: that the habits of inquiry and democratic practice described above may provide an important means for ensuring the continuity of cherished moral traditions in periods of social transformation. A possible testing ground for this hypothesis will be discussed below.

An unintended consequence of the rapid industrial and technological growth of East Asian societies has been the rise of a generation of young women who are far better educated, more articulate, and more financially independent than their forbears. Lee Kuan Yew has expressed his concerns about this generation, in a discussion of single mothers in the West: "we are also caught in the same problems of social change when we educate our women and they become independent financially and no longer need to put up with unhappy marriages."⁴²

In a sense, Senior Minister Lee has good reason to be worried. Such women are much less likely to be filial daughters, if it means taking the kind of advice from their mothers that Mencius approved of: "When you go to your new home, you must be respectful and circumspect. Do not disobey your husband."⁴³ In the face of heavy work demands and career aspirations, many women are also less happy about taking on by themselves the burden of caring for their husband's elderly parents as a part of fulfilling their husband's filial obligations. At this point the overworked opposition between tradition and modernity might be invoked. Either tradition and the integrity of family life is preserved unchanged, it might be claimed, or filial piety will gradually disappear, as the forces of Western individualism lead to the disintegration of family life. It is indeed true that increasing stress in family life is a consequence of heightened career demands on both men and women.

But it is obvious that autocratic attempts to enforce traditional patriarchal practices in families will be a recipe for marital breakdown and a legitimate source of discontent for a more politically aware generation of women. As Senior Minister Lee admits, women today are increasingly able to afford to leave unhappy marriages—and autocratic husbands. So is this moral good, so central to the Confucian ethos, doomed to fade away? I assume here that filial piety is indeed a valuable moral good as well as a virtue. It is a valuable moral *end* insofar as it provides for the care and happiness of parents, educates children in the virtues required for such care, and provides an important locus for meaning in a person's life, situating that person in an ongoing family narrative in relation to both departed forbears and new generations. It is also an important *means* to wider community goods and values, including social harmony between generations, proper and dignified care for the aged, and community cohesion. It is a good that Confucians do well to recommend to those societies where older family members are often disregarded and neglected by their children and forgotten after their deaths.

There is, I think, a way forward for filial piety for all those who are attempting to regulate and control the consequences of economic change for family life, whether they be experts, intellectuals, or ordinary members of families. This would involve a change of received understandings of filial piety, in order to allow for a democratizing of its practice as a means for fostering the continuity of family traditions and for ensuring the care of aged parents. Through this changed moral practice, family members could deliberate together concerning how best to fulfill their filial obliga-

tions when faced with problematic situations that affect their habitual practice of these obligations.

In policy terms, it would seem that a condition for the continuance of this moral good in these societies lies in a changed sexual division of labor in the family, and in the reform of workplace practices that rest on and perpetuate this division of labor. A good deal of reflection on the part of governments, businesses, and communities would have to go into determining the scope and nature of such reforms.⁴⁴ At the level of family life, such reforms would enable families to share in deliberating over the fulfillment of filial obligations when it is necessary to engage in such deliberation, with a view to male and female members sharing more equally in caring for the emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being of older family members. Inquiry can thus come to mediate periodically, in a constructive way, in the continuation of moral traditions. Were this to be possible, it would also be in keeping with the Confucian conviction that moral character is developed through the continuity between family and wider public life. "For Confucian thought," as one commentator on both Dewey and Confucius has put it, "an absolute separation of the public and private realms is a fallacy."⁴⁵ Here, then, it would be possible for a democratic moral character to grow across the boundaries of family and community life.

I would like to conclude with the following thoughts. Pragmatists like myself think that the precondition for a public "readily able to locate and identify itself" is a stable community life. Yet the stability of community life in Western countries has been undermined in the policies of market liberalization pursued by many Western governments.⁴⁶ The increasing numbers of people in East Asian societies who want both political liberty and the preservation of the integrity of their family and community life and traditions are often well aware of this fact. Such thinking is not found equally in all East Asian countries. In China, autocratic government, economic liberalization, and nationalistic suspicion of democratic ideals with an American pedigree are likely to coexist for some time to come. But could it be that if there is any prospect for a revival of interest in the sort of democracy envisaged by pragmatism it lies not in the liberal democratic societies of the West but in the democratizing societies of the East?

Notes

I would like to thank Howard Callaway, Raymond Boisvert, and Karyn Lai for their comments and criticisms on earlier drafts of this article, and the anonymous reviewers for *Philosophy East and West*. My thanks are also due to friends with whom I have discussed many of the ideas in this essay, including Jaclyn Wong, Wai Lan Lin, Tun Mao Lin, and Yoda Miyuki.

- 1 – Daniel Bell in Daniel A. Bell, D. Brown, K. Jayusuriya, and D. Jones, *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 36.

- 2 – President Bill Clinton, “Remarks by the President to the Students of Beijing University” (The White House: Office of the Press Secretary, 29 June 1998).
- 3 – Friedrich A. von Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (London: Routledge, 1960).
- 4 – K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), vol. 1, p. 121; vol. 2, pp. 160–161.
- 5 – Bell, in Bell et. al., *Towards Illiberal Democracy*, p. 20.
- 6 – *The Lun Yu* in English (Hong Kong: The Confucius Hall of Hong Kong, 1986), VI.20.
- 7 – *Lun Yu* II.3.
- 8 – *Lun Yu* VIII.9.
- 9 – *Lun Yu* XII.19.
- 10 – *Lun Yu* VIII.14.
- 11 – For a sustained analysis of this kind of political organization, see Bell et. al., *Towards Illiberal Democracy*, pp. 1–16.
- 12 – F. Zakaria, “Culture Is Destiny—A Conversation with Lee Kuan Yew.” *Foreign Affairs* 73 :2 (March/April 1994): 114.
- 13 – Ishihara Shintaro, in Mahathir Mohamad and Shintaro Ishihara, *The Voice of Asia: Two Leaders Discuss the Coming Century*, trans. Frank Baldwin (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1995), p. 110.
- 14 – See Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 1989).
- 15 – Interview with Lee Kuan Yew, *New Perspectives Quarterly* 13 (1) (Winter 1996): 4.
- 16 – Zakaria, “Culture Is Destiny,” p. 111.
- 17 – Goh Chok Tong, “Strong Values the Backbone of Success,” *The Australian*, September 1994.
- 18 – Zakaria, “Culture Is Destiny,” p. 111.
- 19 – Bell, in Bell et. al., *Towards Illiberal Democracy*, pp. 166–167.
- 20 – John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1954), p. 184.
- 21 – *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 147.
- 22 – *Ibid.*, p. 209.
- 23 – John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Free Press, 1916), pp. 296–297.
- 24 – There have been some positive developments. The Australian Federal and Supreme Courts, for example, have made available reasonably accessible

summaries of some important civil case decisions to both the television and print media.

- 25 – Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, p. 218.
- 26 – David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 192.
- 27 – *Ibid.*, p. 143.
- 28 – *Ibid.*, pp. 143–144.
- 29 – *Ibid.*, p. 144.
- 30 – *Ibid.*, p. 181.
- 31 – *Ibid.*, p. 289.
- 32 – *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- 33 – *Ibid.*
- 34 – *Ibid.*, p. 310.
- 35 – On this problem, see Tu Wei-ming, *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985), p. 13.
- 36 – For a critical discussion of attempts to embody Confucian ideals in postwar autocratic regimes in South Korea and Taiwan, see D. M. Jones in Bell et. al., *Towards Illiberal Democracy*, pp. 69, 73.
- 37 – Daniel Bell notes that both of these problems are characteristic of contemporary Singaporean society. See his “A Communitarian Critique of Authoritarianism: The Case of Singapore,” *Political Theory* 25 (February 1997): 6–32.
- 38 – Daniel A. Bell, “Democracy with Chinese Characteristics: A Political Proposal for the Post-Communist Era,” *Philosophy East and West* 49 (4) (October 1999): 451–493.
- 39 – David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *The Democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius, and the Hope for Democracy in China* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999).
- 40 – Hu Shih, “Ibsenism,” in Elizabeth Eide, *China’s Ibsen: From Ibsen to Ibsenism* (London: Curzon Press, 1987), pp. 155–168. For Eide’s comments on the Confucian influences in this essay, see pp. 24–29.
- 41 – Seung-Hwan Lee, “Liberal Rights or/and Confucian Virtues?” *Philosophy East and West* 46 (3) (July 1996): 370.
- 42 – Zakaria, “Culture Is Destiny,” p. 111.
- 43 – D. C. Lau, trans., *Mencius* (London: Penguin, 1970), III.B.2.
- 44 – Such reforms might include the introduction of flexible working hours for both male and female employees who are caring for elderly family members, and provisions for leave in cases of family illness. Surely here there is scope for

governments concerned about maintaining the integrity of family life to provide inducements for the adoption of such practices, for example by offering tax concessions to companies that agree to implement them.

- 45 – Joseph Grange, “The Disappearance of the Public Good: Confucius, Dewey, Rorty,” *Philosophy East and West* 46 (3) (July 1996): 352.
- 46 – For some interesting contrasts between East Asian and Western (specifically, American) societies on this issue, see John Gray, *Enlightenment’s Wake: Politics and Culture at the Close of the Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 86–119.