CHAPTER 7

Jeong (情), Civility, and the Heart of a Pluralistic Democracy in Korea

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7.1 Introduction

The relationship between Confucianism and democracy is an intensively debated issue these days. This debate takes on many forms, and the most prominent one is between the advocates of Confucian meritocracy and the advocates of Confucian democracy.[1] At the center of this debate stand the ideas of political equality and popular sovereignty. Confucian meritocrats reject political equality and popular sovereignty on the grounds that, according to Confucian political philosophy, a good government promotes the material and moral well-being of people and is best run by elites who have proven themselves to be virtuous and wise enough to serve (Bell 2006; Qing 2013; Bai 2012). By contrast, Confucian democrats emphasize the universal moral equality of all human beings according to the

[1] For a succinct overview of this debate, see S. Kim 2018: 1–5.

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Mencian doctrine of *seongseon/xingshan* (性善)[2] that human nature is intrinsically good, thereby constructing a modern Confucian idea of political equality and popular sovereignty (Ames and Hall 1999; Tan 2004; Kim 2014). Here the crux of the matter lies in the attempted transition from moral equality to political equality.

This chapter examines the notion of the Four Sprouts (Beginnings) of virtue (*sadan/siduan* 四端) at the basis of the Mencian *seongseon* thesis and explores its potential to support a Confucian theory of democracy. I develop a political reinterpretation of the Four Sprouts in terms of *jeong* 情 (emotions), which is one of the core notions of Korean Neo-Confucian moral psychology, and reconstruct it as a kind of affectionate and moral solidarity that exists in all of us as the defining human potential. I argue that this defining human potential confers upon us political equality as the basis of our right to self-rule. Further, by understanding *jeong* as a kind of political and social glue that holds together diverse groups of people with diverging interests and competing visions of human flourishing, this chapter attempts to lay the basis for envisioning a thriving pluralistic democracy sustained by a public culture of civility in Korea.

7.2 *Jeong* and the Heart-mind: The Affective Basis of Moral Equality

As is well known, the Mencian theory of the intrinsic goodness of human nature has its roots in his notion of the Four Sprouts of the heart-mind (*sim/xin* 心) (*Mencius*, 6A: 2, 6A: 6, 2A: 6). According to Mengzi, human nature (*seong/xing*性) consists in the virtue of "humanity" or "humaneness" (*in/ren* 仁), which Confucius (Kongzi), the founder of Confucianism, taught as a universal moral capacity for empathetic response to—or sympathetic understanding of—other human beings (*seo/shu* 恕) that is ritually articulated as virtuous propriety (*ye/li* 禮) (*Analects* 12: 1–2; 15: 24).[3] Being human, for Kongzi, means to be a virtuous person of humanity. He emphasized it as the universal virtue, which is tantamount to possessing a

[2] I provide both Korean and Chinese romanizations of classical Chinese characters when the pronunciations diverge.

[3] I use Zhu 1983 for the *Analects*. "Yan Yuan asked about humanity (*ren*). The Master said: 'To restrain oneself and to return to ritual propriety constitutes humanity'" (131); "Zigong asked: 'Is there a single word which one could practice throughout one's life?' The Master said: 'It is sympathetic understanding (*shu* 恕). What you do not wish for yourself, do not do to others'" (166). For an English translation, see Chichung Huang 1997: 125, 156.

cultivated self that is open, empathetic, and therefore relational (Tu 1985: 51–56). As fundamentally relational beings, humans come to be truly human as they cultivate and practice their virtue of empathy to one another in embodied moral and social actions, namely, ritual propriety (*ye/li* 禮). Ideally, ritual propriety is permeated by a spirit of mutuality and reciprocity, for humans are empathetic beings capable of being in tune with one another and hence appropriate—right (*ui/yi* 義)—in their ritualized social interactions.

Kongzi's famous definition of humanity, "Restraining the [selfish] self and returning to ritual constitutes humanity" (*geukgibokryewiin/kejifuliweiren* 克己復禮爲仁), captures the capacity of ritual propriety, when enacted correctly, to produce social concord and harmony (*Analects*, 12: 1). It is for this reason that the rites of honoring and venerating one's ancestors, including one's parents, function as the most significant touchstone for one's possession of humanity (*in/ren*) as the virtuous emotion (*jeong*) of empathy**.** These rites are supposed to manifest filial piety (*hyo/xiao* 孝) as an expression of the virtue of humanity present in the parent-children relationship; that is, the most fundamental of all human relationships. Hence the symbolic action of honoring parents and ancestors formed the very first, foundational component in Kongzi's educational program of learning to govern by means of ritual propriety.

Mengzi took over this idea of humanity as empathy and gave it a moral-psychological grounding in his theory of human nature and heart-mind. For Mengzi, human nature is universally endowed by Heaven as a kind of "seed" that sprouts and grows, to use Mencius' beloved agricultural moral metaphor (*Mencius* 6A: 7).[4] From within the human heart-mind (*sim/xin* 心) there emerge four "sprouts" (or "beginnings") (*dan/duan* 端) of moral virtues, namely, the "heart-mind of sympathy (or compassion)," "heart-mind of shame and dislike," "heart-mind of deference and compliance," and "heart-mind of approval and disapproval," all of which are affirmed by Mencius as *jeong/qing* (emotions). When these innate empathetic emotions are nurtured in and through ritual propriety and not neglected, they culminate in the four (cardinal) virtues of benevolence, rightness, ritual propriety, and wisdom (*inuiyeji/renyilizhi* 仁義禮智), respectively (*Mencius* 2A: 6; 6A: 6). In other words, the Four Sprouts testify to an open and mutually empathetic selfhood that exists as the core innate human potential to be developed and perfected by everyone. In this

[4] I use Zhu 1983 for the *Mencius*. See 329. For an English translation, see Lau 2003: 126.

way, Mengzi affirms the intrinsic presence of what may be called universal moral sentiments that confers upon all humans moral equality *de jure*, while acknowledging their moral inequality de facto because in reality this shared moral potential can be developed to varying degrees (*Mencius* 6A: 7; 6A: 8). This is why Mengzi declares that if people simply put in enough effort and do not give up, they can potentially all become sages like Yao or Shun (*Mencius* 6B: 2; 6A: 7; 3A: 1).

Neo-Confucianism took up Mengzi's theory of the innate goodness of human nature and formulated a moral-metaphysical[5] account of the human being at the center of what appears to be a reciprocal and affective ontology of the human self. The first—and historically dominant—school of Neo-Confucianism, the Cheng-Zhu school, captured the essence of this ontology of the self with the celebrated dictum, "The heart-mind unites and commands human nature and emotions (*simtongseongjeong/xintongxingqing* 心統性情)." The heart-mind here functions as a synecdoche for the self which, like any other being, consists in a union of pattern (*i/li* 理; principle) and vital energy (*gi/qi* 氣; material or psychophysical force); that is, *i/li* is the normative metaphysical principle and structure of reality whereas *gi/qi* is the actual energy and "stuff" that actually brings each phenomenon into concrete existence and also determines its transformation.[6] The (human) nature stands for the pattern/principle of being (*i/li*) as it is "incarnate" in and among human beings, namely, insofar as it mandates the way psychophysical energy (*gi/qi*) individuates to form human persons—their bodies and heart-minds—as they come into being in relation to one another. True to the Mencian heritage, the Neo-Confucians identify human nature and *i/li* with *in/ren* (仁) and accordingly regard the human heart-mind as in principle empathetic and responsive. Emotions (*jeong/qing* 情), on the other hand, designate the dynamic manifestations of psychophysical energy within the heart-mind that function as the structuring force in concrete human relations, which may or may not follow the harmonizing mandate of human nature. Because psychophysical energy's spontaneous movements are bound to

[5] The phrase "moral metaphysics" was coined by Mou Zhongsan to highlight the Neo-Confucian attempts to provide a metaphysical basis of human existence as moral agents. See Tu 1982: 10.

[6] See the succinct description of the Neo-Confucian moral psychology in Kalton 1994: xxii–xxv. For the relationship among the heart-mind, the human nature, and feelings, see Zhu 1986, 1: 89, 92, 94–5. A helpful summary of Zhu Xi's positions is given in Chung 1995: 46–7.

have excesses and deficiencies, they inevitably give rise to individual psychophysical configurations that are opaque, impure, turbid, indolent, and therefore less open and communicative. When human beings are born with these kinds of psychophysical configurations—that is, psychophysical endowments (*gipum/qibing* 氣禀 or *gijil/qizhi* 氣質) in the sense of physical, dispositional, and intellectual endowments—their emotional dispositions are prone to be less empathetic and therefore more self-centered.[7] In other words, in contrast to human nature, emotions by themselves are morally neutral or ambiguous—they can be either good (moral) or evil (selfish) depending on the kind of psychophysical endowments from which they emerge.

This morally ambiguous account of emotions, however, calls into question the intrinsic goodness of the Four Sprouts of virtue at the basis of the Mencian *seongseon/xingshan* thesis. The signature contribution of Korean Neo-Confucianism is its development and articulation of the precise role of emotions in manifesting and sustaining inherent human goodness. Zooming in on the Cheng-Zhu distinction between the Four Sprouts and the Seven Emotions (*chiljeong/qiqing* 七情), Korean Neo-Confucians led by one of its most prominent spokespersons, Toegye, argued that the Four Sprouts of virtue constituted inherently moral emotions, namely, the affective responses of the heart-mind to others that do not deviate from the innate goodness of human nature.[8] Toegye insisted that, while the Four Sprouts of virtue are always mixed in with and hard to distinguish from other ordinary human emotions—here represented by the notion of the Seven Emotions of pleasure, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hatred, and desire—they are distinct in terms of their origination. In the case of the Seven Emotions, it is psychophysical energy (*gi/qi*) that "issues (*bal/fa* 發)" in those ordinary human emotions that may or may not follow the

[7] See Zhu 1986, 1: 69: "Human nature is always good, yet there are some who are good from the time of their births, and there are those who are evil from the time of their births. This is due to the differences in their psychophysical endowment …. The goal of learning is to transform the psychophysical endowment, although such transformation is very difficult." For Zhu Xi, desires are intensifications of emotions; and people have evil desires when their emotions become excessive and unbalanced to the point of being uncontrollable (93–94). See also Ching 2000: 98–101.

[8] The Four Sprouts and the Seven Emotions have their respective roots in *Mencius*, 2A6 and the *Liji* (*The Book of Rites*), chapter 9. See the distinction found in Zhu 1986, 4: 1297. For Toegye's innovative formulation of the same distinction, see Yi 1989–1994, 5: 24, 63–4; 9: 21. For a detailed look into the history of the distinction and the whole debate surrounding it, see Chung 1995: 37–52 and Ivanhoe 2015: 403–13.

harmonizing mandate of human nature. By contrast, in the case of the Four Sprouts it is pattern or principle (*i/li*) as human nature that actively manifests itself and issues in those four special emotions unconditioned by the dynamism of psychophysical energy, although psychophysical energy is still involved in the sense of it following pattern's initiative and guidance.[9] According to this thesis of "mutual issuance (*hobal* 互發)," the Four Sprouts are intrinsically and unambiguously good, as they issue forth directly from human nature without being conditioned by psychophysical endowments at the point of their origination.[10] As intrinsically empathetic emotions or moral sentiments that are other-oriented, and therefore relationally measured and appropriate, the Four Sprouts excel in structuring harmonious human relations as they issue forth in the form of ritually correct actions. The task of self-cultivation, as Korean Neo-Confucians saw it, was to nurture the Four Sprouts of empathetic emotions, while bringing under control the non-empathetic ones by means of intentional deliberation and judgment, so that one could act in a ritually appropriate manner toward others with a spirit of mutuality and reciprocity.

By putting up a robust philosophical defense of the existence of intrinsically moral emotions unconditioned by individual psychophysical endowments, Korean Neo-Confucianism renewed and revitalized the Mencian

[9] Toegye's precise formulation of the distinction between the Four Sprouts and the Seven Emotions is found in Yi 1989–1994, 5: 63: "If we contrast the Seven Emotions with the Four Sprouts and discuss each in terms of its distinctiveness, then the Seven Emotions are connected to psychophysical energy just as the Four Sprouts are connected to pattern. Their issuances each have their own systematic framework; and their names each have their respective points of reference. It is possible, therefore, to follow their respective predominant factors and classify them accordingly, that's all …. And the Four Sprouts move in response to things, and in that sense are definitely no different from the Seven Emotions. It's only that, as for the Four, pattern issues them and psychophysical energy follows; as for the Seven, psychophysical energy issues and pattern mounts them." Toegye adds that, although there can be no Four Sprouts outside of the Seven Feelings, there is a difference in their respective meanings according to their respective origination (Yi 1989–1994, 5: 64). See also his *Seonghak sipdo* (*The ten diagrams on sage learning*) in Yi 1989–1994, 3: 46–7. For English translations and commentaries, see Kalton 1988: 126–7, 132–141, 1994: 65–6.

[10] Toegye's "mutual issuance" thesis is found in Yi 1989–1994, 5: 62: "In general, pattern and psychophysical energy combine and produce the human body. The two, therefore, mutually have an issuing function, and their issuing adhere to each other. Because it is a mutual issuance, one can see that each has its predominant role; because they adhere to each other, one can see that they are included in each other's issuing. Since they are included in each other's issuing, one can certainly speak of them as mixed; since they each have their predominant role, it is not impossible to speak of them separately." See Kalton 1994: 63–64.

affirmation of the moral equality of all human beings. Furthermore, its historical reinforcement of the Confucian idea of moral equality strengthens the case for its potential contribution to developing a Confucian notion of political equality today, given the organic interconnection between morality and politics that is a hallmark of the Confucian political tradition. As outlined in the *Great Learning*, the path of Confucian self-cultivation runs through a series of ever-enlarging concentric circles of human relations that starts from familial relations and—expanding through the larger human community or the state—comes to rest at the entire world or "all under Heaven (*cheonha/tianxia* 天下)."[11] One who is on this path simply needs to extend to others one's familial moral sentiments (such as one's natural love of the parents and one's spontaneous respect for the elder siblings), as Mengzi taught, and do so in ritually appropriate manners predicated on sympathetic understanding of others (*Mencius* 1A: 7; 7A: 15; 7A: 45). This is in fact no other than nurturing to the fullest the Four Sprouts of empathetic emotions until one's humane heart of empathy, which initially was just enough to serve one's parents, becomes large enough to care for the entire world, like the sage's (*seongin/shengren* 聖人), often called "the heart-mind of the Way" (*dosim/daoxin* 道心).[12] The sagely learning of the Confucian tradition serves as an unerring guide here, because the sages found and instituted the most unsullied ethico-political articulation—patterning (*li*)—of the humane heart of empathy and also entrusted it to the care of the morally cultivated "superior persons" (*gunja/junzi* 君子) who are expected to employ it as the blueprint for benevolent socio-political organizations.

The one constant aspiration that runs through the entire tradition of Confucian political thought and practice has been a rule by such superior persons or sages—self-cultivated human beings—who possess the unobstructed moral capacity to manifest and extend the humane heart of empathy to all beings. The Confucian program of classical learning and moral-ritual cultivation has aimed at educating rulers to become "sagely

[11] See Zhu 1983: 4–5. For an English translation, see Gardner 2007: 4–5.

[12] Originating in the *Dayumo* (Counsels of Great Yu) chapter of the *Shujing* (*Classic of history*), "The heart-mind of the Way (*daoxin*)" became a widely used term among the Neo-Confucians to designate the human heart-mind fully enacting the human nature within and therefore fully in control of ordinary selfish cravings and emotions. See Zhu Xi' preface to *Zhongyong zhangju* (*The chapters and sentences of the Doctrine of the Mean*) in Zhu 1983: 14. For a discussion of the distinction between the human heart-mind and the heart-mind of the Way, see Chung 1995: 85–87.

inside, kingly outside" (內聖外王 *naeseong oewang/neisheng waiwang*),[13] who could earn, by means of their benevolence and empathetic care, the allegiance and voluntary submission not only of people but also of all creatures so that the world may be at peace.[14] Equally important, it has endeavored to produce the minister-cum-ritual masters who are versed in the ethico-political patternings of human-heartedness as instituted by the ancient sages and who can therefore ably assist the sage-kings in the task of helping "all under Heaven" flourish. In light of this organic integration of morality and politics found in the Confucian political tradition, the fact that the Confucian program of ethical self-cultivation has always in principle been open to all people regardless of their social station becomes a salient point in the debate on Confucian democracy today, together with the underlying belief in the moral equality of all *de jure*.[15] Can the Confucian affirmation of the nascent moral equality of all be translated into a Confucian idea of political equality? If yes, how? In answering these questions, Korean Neo-Confucianism's philosophical articulation of the role of innate moral emotions in making moral equality possible could provide important conceptual resources.

7.3 From Moral Equality to Political Equality: A Confucian Theory of "Civil Democracy"

It is important to note that, like Kongzi and Mengzi, Chinese and Korean Neo-Confucians faithfully followed and did not question the traditional system as well as the prevailing norms and customs of their times. They are well known for developing, systematizing, and institutionalizing clan law (*jongbeop/zongfa* 宗法) and family rituals (*garye/jiali* 家禮) that reflected and reinforced the traditional social hierarchy and gender division.[16]

[13] The term first appears in the 33rd (*tianxia*) chapter of the Daoist text *Zhaungzi* (Zhuangzi 1961: 1064), although the idea may have originated earlier. See Angle 2009: 182.

[14] See *Analects* 2: 1, where Kongzi describes a virtuous ruler: "He who conducts government with virtue may be likened to the North Star, which, seated in its place, is surrounded by multitudes of other stars."

[15] The Confucian principle that the path to moral learning and sagehood is to be open to all regardless of one's social station or background goes back to Kongzi himself who says, "To anyone who spontaneously came to be with a bundle of dried pork, I have never denied instruction (*Analects* 7: 7; Chichung Huang 1997: 87).

[16] Joseon-Dynasty Korea—perhaps the most Confucianized country in East Asia historically—is a showcase for this Neo-Confucian social conservatism (Deuchler 1992).

Nonetheless, they carried forward the Mencian affirmation of the intrinsic moral equality of all, thereby acknowledging the potential of anyone to become a sage regardless of one's physical endowment or socio-political status. They did so despite the fact that the *li-qi* metaphysics that undergirded their relational and affective ontology of the human self was prone to obscuring the seminal ideal of moral equality. It tended to devalue the "turbid" and "impure" psychophysical endowments, with which the vast majority of people were understood to be born, as non-conducive and even resistant to a proper nurturing of the innate moral sentiments.[17] Such a metaphysical construction was indeed prone to disparage the moral potential of women, the working mass of commoners, and the nomadic tribes of "barbarians." Nevertheless, the Neo-Confucians assigned to the category of the "stupidest" who "do not change" (*Analects* 17.2)—that is, those without a hope of moral advance—only the two categories of people named by Mengzi: "those who do violence to themselves" and those who "throw themselves away" (*Mencius* 4A: 10), the former designating ones who reject that such moral potential exist, and the latter those who give up without trying.[18] In other words, the Neo-Confucians insisted that, as long as people believe in their moral capacity and keep making an effort, all of them may hope to become a superior person or even a sage one day.[19] By laying out a metaphysical and moral-psychological argument for innate moral emotions unconditioned by psychophysical endowments, Korean Neo-Confucianism in particular strengthened the Confucian case for the inherent moral capacity of all people.

[17] See the Zhu Xi's commentary on the *Analects* 16: 9, where he interprets Kongzi's four categories of people's capacity for moral self-cultivation as four kinds of psychophysical endowments (Zhu 1983: 173). Zhu Xi observes that transforming one's physical endowment is very difficult if not impossible (Zhu 1986, 1: 69). Toegye distinguishes three types of people (the wisest, the middling, and the stupidest) and explicitly assigns to the stupidest those who have received their psychophysical endowments that are "from the earth," that is, both turbid and mixed (Yi 1989–1994, 8: 94–5).

[18] This is how Cheng Yi (1033–1107), perhaps the most influential of Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian predecessors, interpreted the two categories of people named by Mengzi in *Mencius* 4A: 10. See Zhu 1983: 175.

[19] Some later Neo-Confucians such as Li Zhi (1527–1602) in China and Yi Sangjeong (1710–81) in Korea, and female Neo-Confucians such as Madame Liu (Liu Shi; *c.* sixteenth century) in China and Im Yunjidang (1721–1793) and Kang Cheongildang (1772–1832) in Korea particularly stand out in vocally espousing moral and spiritual equality between men and women, tracing women's inferiority back not to their physical endowments but to their limited opportunities. See Lee 2012; Kim 2011.

When paired with the extremely porous nature of the boundaries between the moral and the political in the Confucian tradition, this long-standing and remarkably persistent Neo-Confucian affirmation of the intrinsic moral equality of all enables us today to see a path leading from it toward a Confucian theory of political equality: anyone who treads the path of self-cultivation to be a sage can aspire to be a political agent and participant, including serving in the government to work for people's material and moral well-being. No matter what concrete form it takes, insofar as the path of self-cultivation consists in nurturing one's empathetic feelings, such as extending one's familial affections and care to others within the larger polity, it entitles those who tread it to the right of political participation. In short, if the Mencian thesis of intrinsic moral equality could be named the democratization of the ideal of *sagehood* (Kim 2016: 220), its meaning could be expanded to imply the democratization of the ideal of *sage-ruler* as well.[20]

The democratization of the ideal of sage-ruler can be envisioned in two steps. First, the moral equality thesis could serve as an incipient affirmation of popular sovereignty when combined with the double Mencian affirmation of the ruler's political accountability to Heaven and the people's vicarious manifestation of the will of Heaven (*Mencius* 5A: 5; 4A: 9). In a celebrated passage in *Mencius*, Mengzi grounds the political legitimacy of the Son of Heaven (king) in his double acceptance by Heaven (the unspeaking ultimate cosmic power) and by the people (his subjects), and clarifies the meaning of the people's "acceptance" of him as their being desirous of and being content with his governance. Whereas for Mengzi it is only Heaven that has the power to bestow the throne, people's acceptance can stand in for the will of Heaven, as Mengzi's quote from the *Classic of History* indicates: "Heaven sees through the eyes of my people; Heaven hears though the ears of my people" (5A: 5). Even if the idea of the ruler's direct political accountability to the people is neither explicitly formulated by Mengzi nor found within the traditional Confucian political discourse, as long as the ultimate political authority, Heaven, can be said to display its will in and through the sentiments and actions of the people, it falls within the orbit of the Confucian political tradition to speak of the ruler's political accountability to the ruled.

[20] Sungmoon Kim argues that, in order to confer potential sagehood on all people, Mengzi decoupled the ideal of sage from the ideal of sage-ruler. What he and I attempt to do, in our own ways, is to reconnect the two ideals so that the latter could be democratized also.

Certainly, the ruler's political accountability to the ruled, as expressed in the idea of the people's acceptance of the ruler's governance, does not by itself translates into popular sovereignty as a principle or democracy as an institution, since it could simply mean that the political legitimacy of a monarchy rests on how satisfied the people are with its rule—a common sentiment featured within the traditional Confucian political discourse.[21] Nevertheless, if the moral proposition that everyone can become a sage implies the moral-political proposition that everyone can become a sage-ruler, the ruler's political accountability to the ruled can be reconstructed to mean the people's political accountability to one another. Anyone who has trodden the path of moral self-cultivation to participate in government must obtain the recognition and assent of the very people whose material and moral interests one is to serve, because the people themselves are potential sages who form a reserve army of candidate co-rulers. The road to rulership passes through—and is made up of— successive encounters with ever-less-familial and therefore ever-less-familiar others, who relentlessly present one another with the task of extending the empathetic heart within. Put differently, the path of moral self-cultivation, as outlined in the tradition of Confucian moral politics, points to the possibility of reimagining it as the path of affective co-constitution of virtuous people entitled to rule one another and therefore to rule themselves, collectively speaking, and in so ruling answerable to one another and therefore to themselves. This fluid and reciprocal construction of the ruler-subject relation enables us to venture what may be called a *Confucian theory of popular sovereignty*, on the basis of the spirit of mutual affection and accountability present in the idea of the people as virtuous co-rulers.

Joseph Chan, who advocates combining elements of Confucian meritocracy and of Confucian democracy (what he calls "moderate Confucian perfectionism"), grounds his political vision in a similar reciprocal construction of the ruler-subject relation, while rejecting the ideas of political equality and popular sovereignty on that very reasoning. His "service conception" of political authority (Chan 2014: 30) decouples the institution of democracy from the moral-political principles of political equality and popular sovereignty, which he sees as based on the misguided liberal notion of people's natural right to rule, and connects it to the Confucian political ideal of mutual commitment and trust between the ruler and the people (Chan 2014: 34–45). Political authority, he argues, should not be

[21] This is also Joseph Chan's reading of the *Mencius* 5A5 and 4A9 (Chan 2014: 230–231).

understood as deriving from the people's ownership of any natural fundamental right to rule, but as conditional upon the ability of the rulers to safeguard and promote the people's well-being on the one hand and the people's willing endorsement and approval of the rulers on the other (Chan 2014: 29). A Confucian democracy should be one that expresses such a conception of political authority by establishing itself on the constitutive relation of mutual responsibility and care between the governing and the governed. Democratic elections, being the paramount institutional mechanism of a Confucian democracy, accordingly, have the dual function of selecting the "rulers" who are committed to serve the well-being of the people and of demonstrating the people's trust of those who are so selected and commitment to support them. As the indispensable cornerstone of democratic elections, the right to vote then is to be justified not by being the people's natural and inalienable possession, but by the critical role it has in allowing the people a chance to found together and share in political authority that is conceived first and foremost as a responsibility to one another (Chan 2014: 85–86).

Chan's proposal for a Confucian democracy, founded upon a service conception of political authority, offers groundbreaking insights that resonate with and augment the reciprocal construction of the ruler-subject relation attempted in this study and the concomitant idea of the people as virtuous co-rulers who are politically accountable to one another. I would like, however, to question the necessity of his rejection of the notions of political equality and popular sovereignty, because I do not think that those notions are incompatible with the Confucian political ideal of mutual commitment and trust between the ruler and the people, which his service conception of political authority brings to light so adroitly. I agree with his rejection of the liberal justification of political equality and popular sovereignty, but would like to argue at the same time that it is possible to establish those principles on a specifically Confucian basis. In other words, the Confucian theory of political equality and popular sovereignty suggested in this study has as its cornerstone the Mencian and Neo-Confucian theory of innate moral sentiments, that is, the Four Sprouts as the humane heart of empathy, from which the idea of the people as mutually accountable co-rulers is derived. Let me explain in more detail.

While the Confucian theory of democracy proposed here is at variance with the dominant liberal theory on many points, particularly noteworthy is the relational and affective register in which it could construct the idea of citizenship. In the liberal democratic theory, the twin core democratic

concepts of political equality and popular sovereignty are based on the notion of individual human beings as rational and autonomous subject-agents naturally endowed with the right to self-determination and self-rule. By contrast, in the Confucian theory of democracy adumbrated in this chapter, the idea of equal and sovereign citizens is to be grounded in the intrinsic capacity of people to relate to one another in sympathetic understanding—that is to say, people's natural possession of mutual empathy that potentially enables them to be "civil" to one another, even across deep differences. People have the capacity to connect with one another and co-exist in peace because their possession of the moral emotions of sympathy and compassion is not conditional upon their sex, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, educational level, and physical or mental disability—that is, their physical, dispositional, and intellectual endowments. The right to vote in elections, which is the minimal right of political participation in a democracy, could be premised on this inherent potential to be civil held by everyone.

Furthermore, when cultivated and expressed in multiple overlapping contexts, ranging from the domestic context to the political context of the state, this capacity for civility could serve as the ground of the right to deeper and more intensive levels of political participation, such as working in the government as public servants, running for public offices, taking part in public policy-making processes, even taking to the streets for rallies and public protests. The second step of envisioning the democratization of the ideal of sage-ruler consists precisely in articulating this right to deeper levels of political participation which, like the right to vote, bases itself on the intrinsic potential to be civil and together with the latter right buttresses the idea of political equality and popular sovereignty.

The reason for civility so being able to serve as the basis of political equality and popular sovereignty lies in the fact that, as a public and political expression of the empathetic heart, civility is much more than mere etiquette and courtesy. While politeness, with its pacifying function especially in situations of rancorous contention, would certainly be an important feature of civility, it would lose its political significance without the animating core of civility, namely, the concern for the common good, as Edward Shils has argued (Shils 1996: 43, 1997: 4). To say that civility is a public expression of one's heart of empathy is tantamount to saying that civility is a public expression of one's empathetic concern for the well-being and flourishing of all, that is, one's concern for the common good, as articulated through ritual or symbolic action. As such, civility stands for

civic virtue, that is, civic-mindedness (*gong/gong* 公 in traditional Confucian terminology), or what today's so-called New Confucians such as Xu Fuguan and Mou Zongsan call "concerned-consciousness" (*uhwanuisik/youhuanyishi* 憂患意識), a central notion of Confucian political thought in their reckoning (Huang 2009: 149–167).[22] It is in this sense that people's possession of the intrinsic potential for civility can be understood to provide the basis of political equality and the minimal right of political participation, since such intrinsic potential is no other than people's natural predisposition to be concerned about the common good, however undeveloped and unarticulated it may be. The presence of such a natural disposition in people would justify faith in their capacity to form themselves into a collective political actor in the spirit of mutuality and reciprocity and hence provide rationale for their intrinsic entitlement to the right to vote. By the same token, civility, when cultivated and enacted in social interactions, serves as the barometer of one's readiness or qualification for political participation on deeper levels as mentioned above, because it serves as a witness, to the presence within oneself, of actively functioning concern for the well-being and flourishing of all. The features commonly associated with cultivated civility—that is, trustworthiness, humility, respect, deference, flexibility, tolerance, and so on[23]—can all be understood as outward expressions of an all-embracing and resolute concern for the common good fully in force.

At this juncture, a question needs to be posed: what is the common good in the context of value pluralism—a prominent feature of the landscape of many modern democracies? If citizens live according to various ways of life, holding divergent sets of beliefs and values, as is the case in modern pluralistic democratic societies, what does it mean for the citizens to be concerned about the common good? How is civility, as concern for the common good, to be practiced when there are competing visions of what constitutes the well-being and flourishing of all? Sungmoon Kim, a pioneer theorist of Confucian democracy, makes an innovative and provocative claim that Confucian civility would necessarily involve incivility,

[22] Chun-chieh Huang notes that, lacking the idea of and institutionalization of the people as the collective political actor despite the seminal insight of the people as the foundation of the country (*minbon/minfun* 民本) classical Confucianism mainly focused on the presence of concerned consciousness in the ruler as the sole political actor. This flaw can be remedied, he adds, if democratic elections are introduced into the discussion of concerned consciousness (174–5; 181–2).

[23] See Shils 1996: 67–9.

like the two sides of the same coin. The primal expression of the humane heart of empathy in which Confucian civility has its basis, namely, familial moral emotions (such as filial piety), encompass not only affections but also *affective resentments* (Kim 2014: 67). A family is often filled with psychological tensions and moral disagreements because included in the family members' love of one another is not only their love of the virtues they observe in one another but also their dislike of the injustices they wittingly or unwittingly commit to one another (Kim 2014: 149). The classical Confucians, Kim argues, saw filial and fraternal responsibility to include gentle remonstration and admonition, and when extended to the political sphere of the ruler-subject relation, the subjects' "loyal and faithful incivility," that is, their practice of moral-political remonstrations (2014: 68). A Confucian family, as well as the Confucian family-state (*gukga/guojia* 國家) as its public extension and mirror image, "is not a static haven of enlarged affection but a dynamic ethical arena in which each member experiences personal moral growth through dialogic interactions" (Kim 2014: 67). Kim contends that in the context of a modern pluralistic democratic society, Confucian civility-cum-incivility could be translated into a kind of "critical affection" (2014: 132) or "critical familial affection" (2014: 137) that forms the core of public culture. Critical familial affection empowers the citizens to regard one another as members of a quasi-family even when disagreeing with one another, often passionately (Kim 2014: 150). In the presence of a plurality of dearly held beliefs, values, and practices, Confucian civility, as critical affection, serves as *bridging capital* that "bonds citizens horizontally across their deep differences" rather than *bonding capital* that "cements the existing social fabric of moral community" (Kim 2014: 148).

Relating this notion of Confucian civility to the specific context of South Korea, Kim highlights the Korean notion of *jeong* as a case of critical familial affection. *Jeong* points to the sense of closeness and mutual affection which the deeply Confucianized Koreans feel toward one another as if they were all members of one big family. Since *jeong* enables Koreans to regard the Korean nation as one extended family, it serves as the bridging capital for Koreans who hold and are beholden to different sets of beliefs, values, and practices in the pluralistic-democratic context of South Korea today. More specifically, it nurtures in them a sense of ethical responsibility toward one another, which Kim calls "*uri* (we)-responsibility." Like the sense of mutual responsibility and care which family members have towards one another despite all the psychological tensions and

moral disagreements, *uri*-responsibility allows Koreans to maintain bonds of affection even when disagreeing with one another across deep differences. As a moral-political expression of the Korean *jeong*, *uri*-responsibility is a Korean form of Confucian civility as a concern for the common good articulated across differences and as such is "a uniquely Korean-Confucian mode of general will" (Kim 2014: 222).

Sungmoon Kim's keen analysis of familial moral sentiments and creative reconstruction of Confucian civility on its basis point to an effective resolution to the dilemma of envisaging civility as concern for the common good in the context of value pluralism. Civility need not be predicated on the presence of a single common good agreed upon by all parties; rather, it emerges from the moral sentiments—the empathetic and other-oriented heart—intrinsically in all humans as the defining human potential. The development of the moral sentiments, in and through the extension of familial affections to strangers, takes the concrete form of the *ritual practice of humility, respect, and deference*, precisely because the empathetic heart works as a restraint on the passion with which one's interests, values, and cherished ideals are pursued.[24] This is the political meaning of one of the most famous of Kongzi's definitions of humanity as empathy quoted earlier, "Restrain oneself and return to ritual" (*Analects* 12: 1).

Civility enunciates one's concern for the common good in the form of a steadfast commitment to search for the common good *in concert with others*—a form of cooperative or social inquiry, to quote Sor-hoon Tan (2004: 91–2)—that is sustained by unwavering patience and readiness to yield when one is wrong. As a civic virtue that "relaxes what counts as an assault upon the sacred," civility would foster an "ethos of sovereignty" that "pluralizes the number of legitimate existential faiths" and instills into the institutions of popular sovereignty "agonistic respect between diverse constituencies," as the political philosopher William Connolly admirably put (Connolly 2005: 145, 147). This is why, to quote Sungmoon Kim's felicitous phraseology one more time, civility functions not only as *bonding capital* that reinforces the organic fabric of a moral community, but also as *bridging capital* that holds together the citizens of a pluralistic society horizontally, across chasms of differences, by fostering a sense of solidarity. In this sense, when Kongzi says that "the superior person seeks

[24] The idea of civility as the practice of self-restraint is advocated by Edward Shils (Shils 1997: 4).

harmony, not sameness" (*Analects* 13.23), the teaching can be interpreted today in a way particularly relevant to the context of modern pluralistic democracies: "harmony" here would mean not the kind of organic harmony in which the differences among competing beliefs, values, and ways of life are minimized and resolved, but a sense of affectionate and moral solidarity that does not give up on the long, arduous, and often quarrelsome task of seeking the common good, even across what might seem to be unbridgeable divides.[25] Here Joseph Chan's ruminations on the civic virtue of civility, his rejection of popular sovereignty notwithstanding, offers a helpful summary:

> Civility is the attitude of fellow citizens toward each other that shows a concern for the *common bond* despite differing opinions or conflicts of interest. Civility tries to diminish conflict by seeking *common ground* underlying opposing opinions and a *common good* transcending partisan interests. (Chan 2014: 201)

7.4 Conclusion

What I have attempted in this chapter is to derive an idea of political equality (and the concomitant notion of popular sovereignty) from the historical Confucian affirmation of moral equality based on the alleged presence of intrinsically moral emotions or sentiments in all humans. I am aware of a possible criticism that, while there is strong evidence in the traditional literature for Confucian affirmation of moral equality—that anyone can be a sage, the same is not the case for the idea of political equality.

My effort is analogous to the liberal constructionist undertaking in the legal sphere to derive contemporary legal principles from the text of the US Constitution in contrast to the strict constructionist adherence to the legal meaning of the same text in the historical context of its original framing. I have tried to avoid the pitfalls of eisegesis by showing that there is no necessary logical relation between the Confucian principle of moral equality and the hierarchical political ideas and institutions in and through which the aforementioned moral principle was historically realized. Differently put, my argument is that the Confucian principle of moral

[25] Both Joseph Chan and Sungmoon Kim offer similar readings of this passage from the *Analects* (Chan 2014: 91–2; Kim 2014: 60–2).

equality can *remain Confucian* even if decoupled from the traditional hierarchical socio-political ideas and institutions and made to serve as a basis for egalitarian socio-political ideas and institutions. A case in point is my translation of the Four Sprouts—the humane heart of empathy—into the intrinsic moral sentiments animating the public culture of a Confucian democracy in order to justify the compatibility of the notion of popular sovereignty with it.

What is then the point of it all, namely, the significance of sketching such a vision of what might be called Confucian civil democracy in the contemporary global context? In a pluralistic democracy like the United States today, "we the people" are heterogeneous, reflecting the nation's tumultuous, dynamic and often violent history of immigration, displacement, and transplantation. Nevertheless, even with all their genuine differences from one another, the American people are still charged by the founding spirit of the nation with the hard work of "forming a more perfect union," to quote the preamble to the Constitution. As Martin Luther King Jr. reminds them, they "are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny" (King 2000: 87). President Barack Obama, in one of his memorable speeches to the nation, called for "bonds of affection," quoting Lincoln—the bonds based on the "common creed," that consists in the values of "honesty and hard work, kindness and courtesy, humility, responsibility, helping each other out," (Full Text 2016) which the American people share across their differences. Such a clarion call has become all the more urgent in the present age of Trump, in which the American people find themselves living under a white nationalist government, which has made an us-vs.-them mindset, a Schmittian friend-enemy distinction, the defining category and *modus operandi* of the political.[26]

In some aspects, the political scene in South Korea resonates with the US one. Whereas South Korea today enjoys the benefits of robust forms of democratic institutions and public culture, the Korean people are increasingly divided along the frontlines of the ideological politics of the Left and the Right. Civic groups, public institutions, and the press and media are all engaged in daily wars, involving rhetorical battles, institutional power plays, and mostly—and fortunately—non-violent street

[26] Carl Schmitt defines the essence of the political as consisting in a friend-enemy distinction, publically conceived, and the existential struggle of the people to survive against external and internal threats (Schmitt 2007: 26–7).

confrontations, to inflame the passions, prejudices, and mutual loathing of the antagonists. Those who simply have ideological differences do not hesitate to label each other enemies, hurling the labels of "lefty-zombies," "fascists," "femi-nazis," and "reactionary idiots," to name a few, in order to score a hit and to gain a political advantage, especially in online battles for public opinion. While all this could be seen as signs of a healthy and well-functioning pluralistic democracy, one is also driven to wonder what could sustain South Korea as a polity and commonwealth once the nationalistic myth of one consanguineous Korean nation, whose grip on Korean people has been loosening for quite some time now, is largely and irrevocably dispelled.

I would like to suggest, in closing, that given the deep-seated Confucian heritage of Korea, my modest attempt at theorizing the affective grounds of a pluralistic Confucian democracy offers a way of distilling a cardinal civic virtue, namely, civility, from the Confucian moral virtues still widely accepted and practiced by the Korean people, such as filial piety, respect for the elderly, humility and deference, loyalty and trustworthiness, and social harmony, among others. If one may offer a Confucian philosophical interpretation of these moral virtues, they are communal-social articulations of the empathetic heart— that is, the universal moral emotions of sympathy and compassion—that is nascently present in all Koreans as part of the human race. Insofar as the empathetic heart takes the form of *critical* familial affection, as Sungmoon Kim argues, the aforementioned moral virtues would not simply reinforce the existing organic fabric of Korean society based to a large degree on kinship ties and group/ regional loyalties that tend to breed corruption (e.g., favoritism, nepotism, and cronyism) when elevated above public norms of fairness or even the rule of law. On the contrary, those moral virtues would have the potential to coalesce into the civic virtue of civility that would enable Koreans to dispute and contend with one another on the public norms of fairness and justice while maintaining affective solidarity across socio-political and cultural divides. At the same time, since my Confucian reconstruction construes civility as the moral-political articulation of the heart of empathy found at the core of our common humanity, not just rooted in the sense of a shared national history (whether Korean or American), it could serve as a helpful interlocutor for those of us here in the US who endeavor to theorize the "bonds of affection," to which both Lincoln and Obama appealed, in order to hold together this fractious democratic commonwealth.

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