



Confucian Role-Ethics with Non-Domination: Civil Compliance in Times of Crisis

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Abstract

In this article, combining the Confucian notion of relationality with the republican principle of non-domination, I will shed new light on the ethics of civil compliance in an emergency situation. More specifically, first, by exploring the culturally biased distinctions between individualism and collectivism in the current debates on ‘pandemic’ nationalism, I will put forward the need for a relationality through which civil cooperation with emergency governance can facilitate the enhancement of both individual freedom and democratic commonality in the long run. Then, by supplementing the moral vision of role-constituted relationality in Confucian role-ethics with the principle of liberty as non-domination in neo-Roman republicanism, I will suggest an ethics of civil compliance which can steer emergency governance toward the consolidation of democratic accountability.

Keywords Pandemic nationalism · Relationality · Non-domination · Civil compliance · Confucian Role-Ethics

1 Introduction

Many governments have implemented an extraordinary range of emergency measure in these times of Covid-19 pandemic. By Spring 2020, more than half of the world’s population had experienced lockdowns or social isolation rules. Digital technologies for tracking the locations of patients infected with the virus, initiated by a few countries in East Asia at the beginning of the pandemic, are employed by almost all countries. And governments at all levels have adopted an unprecedented post-pandemic recovery package. For instance, EU leaders agreed on a 1.8 trillion Euro financial package to help the economy recover from the pandemic-driven slump in December 2020, and the President of the United States signed a 1.9 trillion US dollars Covid-19 rescue package in March 2021. In many respects,

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it is obvious that the Covid-19 pandemic crisis has led to the rise of big government all over the world.

With this recent comeback of big government, there are growing concerns about a new form of authoritarian governance, particularly in Western societies where a consensus on small government has been strongly absorbed into sociopolitical and daily life for decades. Agamben (2020), warning that the pandemic will provide governments with an excuse for normalizing a state of exception, maintains that the emergency measures driven by collective fear of the pandemic have sacrificed individual freedom for biological security. He goes further to argue that those emergency measures will ultimately suspend all civil affairs and normal political life in favor of biological survival. In similar vein, putting forward the dangers of digital tools for constraining the pandemic, Byung-Chul Han (2020) laments that the virus gets governments back to the immunological paradigm in which we are fighting against “the invisible enemy that comes from outside” by closing borders. Klein (2020) also worries about the emergence of a “technology-based form of government,” particularly with respect to its rapid outgrowth beyond the actual capabilities of democratic accountability and citizen monitoring.

Along the same lines, there are growing concerns over the rise of “pandemic” or “crisis” nationalism. Based on the premise that a crisis often gives rise to the degeneration of a collective commonality into an exclusive solidarity, the potential impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on democracy and globalization have been scrutinized (Woods et al. 2020; James and Valluvan 2020; Yi and Lee 2020; Wang 2021; Beaton et al. 2021; Bieber 2022) Despite the differences that exist among scholars, their accounts of pandemic nationalism tend to conflate various sociopolitical phenomena, such as populism, ethno-centrism, isolationism, racism, and authoritarianism. No one argues that the rise of nationalism is inevitable in these times of Covid-19 pandemic. But their concerns about pandemic nationalism are mostly anchored in questions of the role of pandemic-driven crises in reinforcing preexisting nationalism or enhancing the correlation between nationalism and authoritarianism.

Needless to say, these considerations of pandemic nationalism are not without merit. As we can see from Hungary and the Philippines, the response of governments to the pandemic crisis in some countries harbors the potential dangers of exacerbating authoritarian governance or amplifying ethnic and national conflicts. However, it is problematic that little attention has been paid to the imperative virtues of civil compliance with a democratic state in crisis. Particularly, the civil compliance of citizens in East Asian countries during the pandemic have been underrated as nothing but an inherited habituation to a collectivist culture or authoritarian mentality, and the civil commonalities of those countries in times of crisis have been unduly simplified with the resurgence of nationalism. Furthermore, a culturally biased comparison of the West and the East, corresponding to the groundless distinction between individualism for the former and collectivism for the latter, has been frequently applied for empirical inquiries. While the cultural aspects are important in understanding the relative successes of Northeast Asian countries, they are neither spurred by nor limited to an authoritarian mentality or a homogeneous national commonality.

Based on these observations, reconciling the Confucian notion of relationality with the republican principle of liberty as non-domination, this article will seek an ethics of civil compliance in an emergency. More specifically, first, by exploring the culturally biased distinctions between individualism and collectivism in the current debates on “pandemic” nationalism, I will put forward the notion of relationality through which civil cooperation

with emergency governance can facilitate the enhancement of individual freedom and democratic commonality in the long run. Then, by supplementing the moral vision of role-constituted relationality in Confucian role-ethics with the principle of liberty as non-domination in neo-Roman republicanism, I will suggest an ethics of civil compliance which can steer emergency governance to the consolidation of democratic accountability.

2 Individualism and Collectivism

A distinction between Western individualism and Eastern collectivism is often taken as a basis of support for scholarly and journalistic accounts of the success of East Asian countries in containing the Covid-19 virus. In this distinction, Western individualism refers to a way of viewing the self as separate and independent from others, while Eastern collectivism indicates a view that sees the self as an integral part of the collective (Markus and Kitayama 1994). And such an excessively dichotomized view of Western individualism and Eastern collectivism has frequently led to a mistaken tension between Western egocentrism – that prioritizes individual autonomy over the common good – and Eastern sociocentrism – that emphasizes the relation between the self and society as a necessary condition for self-realization (Kusserow 1999). What counts as crucial in these accounts is determined on the basis of what individualistic and collectivistic orientations are deemed to be the differences in the cultural values of Eastern and Western societies. At this juncture, the swift responses of governments in East Asia are portrayed as possible because of the democratic deficit and authoritarian persistence in East Asian cultures, in which citizens are nothing but blindly obedient and loyal individuals who are habituated to allowing governments to restrict individual freedom and basic rights in the name of public security.

This kind of reductive cultural explanation of the success of East Asian countries in coping with the pandemic is not limited to non-scholarly Western literatures. Scholars characterize the populations of East Asian countries as billiard balls, whose community-oriented customs, unrelated to other cultures, have never changed. Furthermore, not a few scholars, who were born in East Asia and are now living in Western societies, presuppose an authoritarian culture or a collectivist culture as a crucial root of East Asian countries' success. For example, Byung-Chul Han puts forward an authoritarian mentality, “which comes from their cultural tradition (Confucianism)” (2020), and Lilee Ng tries to find a viable impetus for civil compliance with governments in a collectivist culture that “pushes societal needs to the forefront in Asia” (2020). However, in their explanations, they consciously or unconsciously use the overly dichotomized view of Western individualism and Eastern collectivism. As Confucian democratic theorists maintain (Angle 2012, pp. 36–57; Tan 2003, pp. 157–208), Confucianism has its own sources according to which it can be understood as a political doctrine that not only opposes authoritarianism but prevents individuals from thoughtless conformity to an authoritarian order. Furthermore, as will be explained later, the Chinese way of maintaining interpersonal harmony is such that its meta-ethical centrality cannot be simplified by a collectivist culture that justifies the imposition of self-negating communal needs on individuals in a society. In other words, their views are not so much based on what Geertz once defined as “the native’s point of view” but on the problematic framework that unduly differentiates Eastern culture from Western culture (Geertz 1974).

Even if different trajectories of modernization or democratization across East Asian countries are taken in empirical researches, the rise of big governments in the region is chiefly ascribed to a variation of Eastern collectivism. For instance, a recent case study of the South Korean response to the pandemic does not provide us with reasonable grounds for defining the “South Korean model” as nationalist and authoritarian (Yi and Lee 2020). They may be right to say that nationalism has a significant role in mobilizing citizens in South Korea, while they cannot simply identify South Korea’s Covid-19 response with another “leftist-nationalist” Chinese model in terms of nationalist mobilization and authoritarian governance. What they describe as a nationalistic or highly politicized mode can be interpreted as a civil or democratic mode of participation in politics. For instance, emphasizing the transparency of the South Korean government, another case study suggests the South Korean model as an example of striking a balance between democratic accountability and efficient governance in an emergency (Yang 2021).

The distortions that beset the dichotomy between Western individualism and Eastern collectivism give us reason to reject culturally biased approaches to the rise of big governments in Western societies. It is certain that problematic restrictions on basic rights during the pandemic should be prevented for the sake of protecting individual freedom and democratic procedures. But individualistic approaches that consider all restrictions on individual freedom a violation of liberty call into question the validity of Western individualism. Such an extreme version of individual liberty, which may presuppose what Isaiah Berlin called a “negative” conception of liberty in which individual liberty consists in the absence of external interference (Berlin 1971, p. 122), is neither applicable nor desirable in times of emergency. As Philip Pettit points out, in the history of Western political philosophy, government interference has not been always regarded as an obstruction that harms individual liberty, particularly when it is carried out according to the laws created by citizens for liberty (1997, pp. 35–41 & 63–66). And as Maria Cahill points out (2020), the notion of negative liberty often trades off individual freedom for universal security, when it is too self-oriented to be considered compatible with responsibility for the lives of others. Briefly, any criticism of the rise of big government during the pandemic cannot be couched in the culturally biased distinction between Western individualism and Eastern collectivism.

Recent literatures on crisis or pandemic nationalism also use a similar pattern of individualism and collectivism. Although they do not assume the culturally biased distinction between Western individualism and Eastern collectivism, such accounts of a “defensible” nationalism in times of crisis more or less remind us of Hans Khon’s long-standing framework of “liberal, civil Western” and “ethnic Eastern’ nationalism” (2005 [1944], pp. 3–24 & 329–576). No one in the recent literatures on pandemic nationalism openly implies the contrast of Western with Eastern, but the division of individualistic “liberal” and collectivistic “ethnic” is habitually used for elaborating an acceptable mode of civil solidarity in a crisis. For example, Kok-Chor Tan and his students, presupposing that liberal values are more beneficial or more morally justified even in a genuine crisis, seeks to find a way of reconciling partial loyalty to compatriots with impartial loyalty to humanity (Beaton et al. 2021). At this juncture, a “defensible” nationalism is a “liberal” nationalism that can meet the general demands of cosmopolitan justice by taking seriously the basic responsibility of global justice – that is, “protecting individual rights and civil liberties and to treating all individuals with equal concern” (Tan 2004, pp. 1–15 & 85–106). Despite differences from this approach in the sense that liberal values are not put forward, Florian Bieber also looks at the danger

of crisis nationalism through the lens of the symbiotic relationship between nationalism and authoritarianism (2022, pp.16–18). In a similar vein, empirical researches on the effects of the pandemic on Western societies have been chiefly conducted with a division between nationalist or populist and globalist or liberalist (James and Valluvan 2020; Wang 2021). Even if their conclusions agree in defense of individual freedom and democratic accountability, it is difficult to attain the ethics of civil compliance in a crisis from their researches postulating the dichotomy between individualism and collectivism.

The problems in the distinction between individualism and collectivism in recent accounts of pandemic nationalism give us an opportunity to pursue a more systematic approach to the ethics of civil compliance which has led East Asian countries to their success in constraining the pandemic. The more systematic approach suggested in this article consists of investigating two ethical sources in cross-cultural dialogue, “role-ethics” and “democratic accountability.” The former, which will be elaborated in the next section, refers to a long-standing view of personhood in Confucian philosophy the very nature of which presupposes an associational self in the presence of others rather than an atomic individual in the absence of others. Unlike the culturally biased view of Eastern self-sacrificing collectivism, Confucian role-ethics will shed light on a distinctive way of civil compliance which has been shaped through self-assessment of roles in interpersonal relationships with other persons and social orders. The other indicates an on-going demand for justice and institutional reform in modern societies. Although the traditional notion of good government – people judge the legitimacy of government chiefly in terms of the capacity to provide for basic services to citizens – continues to come into the evaluation of government, democratic accountability is also taken seriously these days in the demand for responsible governance in East Asian countries. As we saw in the last section, this observation has led me to offer liberty as non-domination as a regulative direction for the ethics of civil compliance in times of crisis, which helps better protect us from a possible misuse of the role relational ethics for imposing oppressive emergency governance.

3 Role-Constituted Relationality

Wide-ranging discussions of “relationality” or “personhood” in terms of the presence of others, as different from the individualistic view of selfhood which takes account of individuality in terms of the absence of others, were held in various disciplines before the pandemic. Reconceptualization of “collective intentionality” with the notion of an “extended” or embodied self in phenomenology reflects a recently reinforced shift from an individual approach to a relational approach to interpersonal understanding (Zahavi 2021). Feminist theorists take up relationality as a way to investigate the origin of morality or resist injustices grounded in human relationships (Butler 2005; Gilligan 2011). The recent revivals of neo-Roman republicanism, based on the conception of liberty as non-domination, pursue social individualism that helps better overcome liberal social atomism and communitarian holistic self-mastery (Pettit 1997). All in all, rich explorations of relational personhood – which aim to offer an alternative relationality that is at once anti-atomic and anti-collective – can be found in various scholarly literatures concerning ethical and sociopolitical life.

“Confucian role-ethics,” initiated by Henry Rosemont and Roger Ames, also presents an alternative to individualistic approaches to personhood (Rosemont 1991, 2015; Ames

1991, 2011, 2018). Different from the Anglophone literature mentioned above, Confucian role-ethics tackles not only the dominant individualist views of relationality in general but also Western orientations to Northeast Asian cultures. Specifically, first, Confucian role-ethics holds the notion of relational personhood to be crucial to the Confucian ideal of self-cultivation, the ethical life of which does not consist in an independent self but in the interpersonal relationship with others. Henry Rosemont, who first articulated the notion of the role-relational person in Confucianism, argues that the Confucian model of relationality can help us overcome libertarianism, the on-going triumph of which is chiefly reinforced by the thoughtless acceptance of Western individualism that sees human beings as independent and autonomous selves (Rosemont 2015, pp. 33–56 & 77–87). Second, the pan-Asian ideal of “selflessness,” which has been frequently used for describing the sense of relationality in Northeast Asian cultures, is vividly rejected in Confucian role-ethics. Although Confucian role-ethics puts forward family or community in its discussion of interpersonal “virtuosity,” it does not suggest a model of relationality in which individuality should be or can be effaced. Roger Ames, for instance, developing the unique sense of interpersonal individuality in Confucianism, maintains that “to eschew selfishness does not necessarily entail a doctrine of selflessness” (Ames 1991, p. 109).

At first glance, the affirmation of interpersonal “virtuosity” in Confucian role-ethics appears to be continuous with the communitarian endorsement of the fulfilment of human beings in the relation between the self and community. Both defend the pursuit of self-realization through the roles that constitute individuals in a community. And they assume that personhood is shaped through interpersonal relationships and thereby all members of a society are integral to an interdependent system. But Confucian role-ethics is distinctively different not only from what Eastern collectivism signifies as cultural schemas but from the communitarian notion of social role. First, Confucian role-ethics does not presuppose any fixed form of roles in interpersonal relationships. Emphasizing the importance of actual experience rather than any culturally determined social role, Confucian role-ethics disclaims any sort of collectivism that postulates the realization of a “real self” by imposing the priority of commonality over personhood (Ames 1991, p. 108). Second, Confucian role-ethics focuses on “virtuosity” rather than “virtue”. For Confucian role-ethics, the basis of moral competence or humanity shaped through interpersonal relationships is not “virtue” in the sense of a character trait but “virtuosity” or “achieved skill” in relational activity (Ames 2018, pp. 174–177). At this juncture, Confucian role-ethics underscores a pragmatic process that is marked by continuing growth in interpersonal relationships.

What we need to pay more attention to in Confucian role-ethics is its distinctive notion of “role-relational” normativity. Particularly with the respect to the civil compliance of citizens in times of crisis, the notion of “role-relational” normativity in Confucian role-ethics has two imperative features. First, it posits the “correlative self” in an on-going process of self-transformation through interdependent correlations with others (Rosemont 1991; Ames 2018). At this juncture, individuality is not construed in an ontological sense of fixed human nature or an existential set of human psyches. Instead, the notion of individuality in Confucian role-ethics is anchored in “human becomings,” and thereby the ideal of individuality developing the capacity for relational activity can be achieved only through interpersonal relationships with others (Ames 2018, pp. 162–166). At the same time, the ideal of individual “virtuosity” cannot be predetermined by the totality of an “embedded self” in a community. Different from the communitarian understanding of communal relationality in which

contexts or traditions are considered more or less as the origin of identities or patterns of social behaviors (i.e. MacIntyre 2007[1981], pp. 204–225), the correlative self in Confucian role-ethics does not proceed from an archetype of the individual which is presupposed by public goods in a given community. In Confucian role-ethics, although the correlations between individuals and traditions or cultures are taken seriously, the constituted self is postulated as an amorphous personhood whose spontaneous self-transformation cannot be actualized prior to having relationships with enviring others and sociopolitical environments (Rosemont 2015, pp. 33–56).

Second, in Confucian role-ethics, it is not the “relationship” itself, regardless family or community, but the person’s specific “roles” that can provide individuals with a normative basis for their self-cultivation. As Roger Ames maintains, “where association is merely descriptive, roles are normative” (2018, p. 176), Confucian role-ethics presupposes a “role-bearing” person or a “role-constituted” self whose normative consideration or justification of moral goodness is rooted in roles in relationships. In this unique conception of personhood, personal identity is shaped through roles in a relationship – such as son to father, neighbor to neighbor, teacher to student, and citizen to citizen –, and its change corresponds to the change of a person’s relational role in accordance with time and place (Rosemont 1991, pp. 89–90; 2015, pp. 94–98). By the same token, Confucian role-ethics lays strong emphasis on the capacity of a person’s knowing his or her place in relationships and his or her roles in those relationships. In other words, the capacity of individuals to cultivate themselves can be achieved through the development of a personal recognition of roles in relationships with others and social orders. For instance, in Confucian role-ethics, familyhood cannot be automatically achieved by the existence of family association but through a learning process by family members in their interactions with one another. At this juncture, the ideal of relationality in familyhood is expressed not by obedience or loyalty but interpersonal reverence, and the consummate model of moral conduct can be found in exemplary persons whose achieved virtuosity is observed through deepening and promoting their embodied roles and relations (Ames 2011, pp. 257–268).

Confucian role-ethics provides an imperative alteration in our understanding of civil compliance in Northeast Asian countries during the pandemic. In contrast to the culturally biased frame of Eastern collectivism, Confucian role-ethics, constituted by the notion of relationality in which individuality and commonality are coterminous and mutually promoting, can shed light on the cooperative interactions in Northeast Asian countries without deprecating them as authoritarian cultures or democratic deficits. Here, a proper individual collaboration with others or a government cannot be found in either a self-effacing collectivism or a selfish individualism. Instead, the full expression of relational virtuosity in Confucian role-ethics can be found in the ideal of the harmonious society – that is, all individuals are striving to realize their roles in relationships with neighboring others and social orders –, and their interpersonal conduct conduces to enhancing harmonious relationality (Ames 2011, pp. 159–210). With this respect, consider this interview:

“I felt very humiliated and misunderstood,” says Man, a 20-year-old student and research assistant who is ethnically Chinese. Man also feels the stigma at her workplace, where she keeps her mask on. None of her colleagues wear a face mask, and some of them have asked her if she is sick. “Why do they think it’s about me? It’s a civic duty,” she says. “If I have a mask on, and if -touch wood- I’m infected, I could cut the chain off where I am. That could save a lot of people” (*Time*, 12 March, 2020).

Cheryl Man, the Chinese interviewee currently living in New York, employs two terms relevant to Confucian role-ethics in the interview: “humiliation” and “civic duty”. What she describes as “humiliation” can be translated into one of the terms designating “shame” (*xiu kui*) in Chinese, which is not linked exclusively to dishonor but is also grounded in respect for others. More specifically, in Confucian role-ethics in which “the ideal of communal self-ordering is to be achieved through the development of a personal sense of shame” (Ames 2011, p. 272), there is a sense of openness to being ashamed through self-assessment when we fail to achieve propriety in role-constituted conduct in relationships with neighboring others and environments. In a similar vein, “civic duty” in her narrative signifies the achieved propriety of interpersonal conduct with which individuals conduct themselves to realize their relational commitments to family and community. Needless to say, both the relationally constructed sense of shame and the priority of mutual commitment are rooted and embedded in the promotion of relationships starting with family and extending to communities.

Through the lens of Eastern collectivism, Cheryl Man’s sense of shame may appear to be a psychological maladjustment to cultural conditions under which wearing a face mask can be perceived as abnormal. However, as Van Norden points out in his comparison between Western and Chinese discussions of shame (2002, pp. 60–62), the sense of an unpleasant feeling in response to the violation of conventional interpersonal rules cannot be separated from the sense of shame in response to the acknowledgment of failure to live up to personal standards of the good life. Likewise, to the extent to which we concede that there is a constructive and positive form of ethical shame that does not serve to impose a bad standard of discrimination (Nussbaum 2004, p. 176), her manifestation of shame can be seen differently in Confucian role-ethics. She feels ashamed not simply through the recognition of different cultural norms or conventions but through the command of self-assessment over her “righteous” roles as well as “personal” ideals in relationships with neighboring others in times of crisis. For her, wearing a face mask to protect the people around her from the Covid-19 virus is a “civic duty” that drives her to avoid performing a set of shameful behaviors in relationality. By the same token, civil compliance by citizens in Northeast Asian countries during the pandemic crisis are not entirely constituted by a consideration of biological security, the moral recommendations of which are grounded in a person’s needs and interests. They are shaped by the self-assessment of a person’s sense of modesty or righteousness in relationality rather than by a collective or authoritarian culture. Briefly, in Confucian role-ethics, civil compliance in Northeast Asian countries during the crisis can be interpreted as the propriety of interpersonal conduct which is rooted in public as well as personal standards in role-constituted relationships with others and environments.

4 Relationality with Non-domination

Confucian role-ethics is ethically more attractive than the liberal individualistic conception of personhood, particularly during the pandemic crisis. Liberal and contractarian views of individuality, based on epistemological presuppositions of an autonomous and discretely individual personhood, tend to find the normativity of relationality chiefly in the possibility of realizing individual rights or a persons’ free and unobstructed choice. Thus, in this notion of solitary individuality, the justification for emergency measures that interfere individual

liberty or individual rights rests more or less in a person's actual consent in terms of responsiveness to personal needs and interests. By the same token, justification of a mandatory policy without individual consent in actual liberal democracies is usually posited as a state of "exception" or a matter of political "discretion" swinging around a boundary between individual liberty and universal security (Lazar 2009, pp. 1–18).

On the other hand, Confucian role-ethics offers an alternative view of relationality that is attentive to both individual freedom and universal security. As we have seen in the previous section, the notion of the "role-constituted" self in Confucian role-ethics helps better create room for the normative commitment of individuals to mutual cooperation in times of emergency without inviting both individualist and collectivist entailments. In Confucian role-ethics, justification for mutual cooperation even in times of crisis does not have to resort to individual longing for biological security, although it is firmly anchored in the individual self-assessment of moral behaviors in terms of a person's roles in relationships with others and social orders. By the same token, Confucian role-ethics suggests a notion of relationality that does neither forfeit the normativity of individuality even in times of emergency nor require an additional principle justifying a dichotomy between norms and exceptions. Shortly put, the notion of the "correlated" self in Confucian role-ethics helps us avoid endorsing the culturally biased framework of collectivity, while remaining continuously committed to the general demand that the justification for mutual obligation lies in the moral qualities of individuality in interpersonal relationships.

However, with respect to the growing concerns about the rise of big government and crisis nationalism during the pandemic, Confucian role-ethics should also clarify how to prevent a possible abuse of political power. Although it is certain that the ideal of civil compliance in Confucian role-ethics is not a passive deference to social orders, it is not clear that an ethically unacceptable relationship can be counteracted by their contributions to the process of communal self-ordering. This problem of corrigibility becomes vividly serious if we consider Confucianism in its historical role in justifying unjust hierarchical structures and reproducing unduly habituated patterns of unequal interpersonal conduct (Ci 1999). Furthermore, when we draw the question of corrigibility upon the abstraction of individual virtuosity in Confucian role-ethics, in which the content of moral values and virtuous actions is exclusively constituted by roles in a particular relationship, we become more skeptical of the corrigibility of relationships in Confucian role-ethics that does not allow for taking any external moral principles but singles out our roles as the only source for directing us to seek what is good (Bell 2012). One possible response is a pragmatic vision that a good relationship evolving together with individual promotion will flourish, while a bad relationship failing to promote personal realization cannot be sustainable in the long run. But this sort of evolutionary vision is feasible only when all the correlated selves are normatively committed to a general direction of good relationality.

More importantly, Confucian role-ethics sees the ideal of good relationships only from one particular example, that is, the family. For instance, Roger Ames purports to lay out a Confucian vision that transforms all relationships into a family, saying that: "To transform the world into a family, according to this Confucian sensibility, is to promote a model of interdependent relationships" (Ames 2011, p. 261). But, as Stephen Angle points out, we can hardly single out the family as the ideal of relationships from those various relations requiring a distinctively different justification for good interpersonal relationships (2014, pp. 246–248). Furthermore, if a proper standard of adjudication of what is "good" in Con-

fucian role-ethics is constituted by a particularly unique role in a particular unique quality of relationship (Ames 2018, p. 183), we should consider a situation in which the correlated selves cannot find their appropriate roles in their relations with a state in a normatively justifiable way, particularly with respect to the civil compliance of citizens in times of crisis. Particularly, seen in the light of the on-going demands for justice and institutional reforms in modern societies, the appropriate model of morally justified governance in actual democracies cannot be analogically identical with the ideal of the good parent in Confucian role-ethics that “the rulers serve for the people.” By the same token, even if we concede that filial reverence in Confucian role-ethics is different from a blind obedience or loyalty to abusive parents or tyrannical rulers (Ames 2011, pp. 183–188), we as citizens in a democracy can hardly be content with a moral vision of reciprocity that presupposes or imposes a hierarchical relationship between the rulers and the people.

More specifically, given the moral vision of Confucian role-ethics, in which ‘becoming’ a consummate person (*ren*) depends on cultivating one’s roles in relations that “locate the trajectory of one’s life force within family, community, and cosmos” (Ames 2011, p. 87), the development of self-cultivation requires us to pursue an appropriate ‘direction’ of reciprocity in those intrinsic relations. In this respect, Confucian role-ethics postulates the model of familyhood as a regulative direction aimed at rectifying an imperfect relationship pragmatically (Ames 2011, p. 267). But, as I have already mentioned, the model of familyhood is not very adequate to meet the demands for social justice and institutional reform in modern democracies. The problem becomes more acute when we take political representation into account (Pettit 2013), as it is difficult to see in Confucian role-ethics how state policies that are neither “responsive to” nor “beneficial for” the people can be rectified to be accountable. Surely, as we can see from the current revitalization of Confucian political ideals, a more abstract regulative ideal, such as harmony (Sor-hoon Tan 2004, pp. 194–199; Li 2014, pp. 117–133), can be taken from sources indigenous to Confucianism. However, as David B. Wong points out (2004, pp. 43–36), any simplistic idealization of Confucian ethics may underestimate the complicated lessons in Confucianism regarding the need for reconciliation between different opinions in sociopolitical relations. In other words, although “becoming” a consummate human (*junzi*) in Confucianism is a lifelong project that shouldn’t be relegated to an imposition of teleological goals in the process of communal self-ordering, Confucian role-ethics needs a regulative ideal that helps better achieve both the peaceful accommodation of fundamental disagreements in harmonious sociopolitical relationality and the rectification of asymmetrical relationships depriving citizens of their chances for self-cultivation.

My intention in this paper is not to offer an additional principle from Confucianism that helps better supplement Confucian role-ethics in relation to the problems of corrigibility and accountability. These tasks have been carried out by scholars on Confucian democracy, including Sor-Hoon Tan (2004, pp. 1–16), Sim (2007, pp. 166–193), Angle (2012, pp. 36–57), and Kim (2016, pp. 35–68). And it is not my goal here to reconstruct Confucianism to meet the current demands for justice and democratic reform in Northeast Asian countries. However, given the possible infeasibility of the moral vision of familyhood drawn from Confucian role-ethics, it is at least reasonable to seek an ethical principle with which appropriate sociopolitical habituations that are proposed by Confucian role-ethics can be steered to contest the abuse of political power. Suppose that the best possible model of relationality in these times of the Covid-19 crisis can be drawn from Confucian role-ethics, and

if Confucian role-ethics does not intend to preclude a cross-cultural dialogue for finding a more efficient way to actualize its moral vision of good governance, it is worth considering a regulative principle through which the suggested proprieties of interpersonal relationality in Confucian role-ethics can be prepared to better check the arbitrary use of emergency power in times of crisis.

In this respect, the principle of liberty as non-domination, advocated by neo-Roman republicans including Philip Pettit, is particularly worthy of notice here, since it can offer a mode of reciprocity through which the normativity of relationality in Confucian role-ethics can be directed to resist any possible abuse of political power. No doubt the moral vision of individual self-cultivation through relationality in Confucian role-ethics can serve as an important bridge between personal and interpersonal selfhoods. In contrast with the communitarian ideal of intersubjective selfhood that looks for the essence of liberty in collectivity, the ideal mode of familyhood in Confucian role-ethics can provide us with much more pragmatic conditions for ensuring selfhood in relationality. But, it is equally undeniable that Confucian role-ethics is excessively inclined to authorize a hierarchical relationality the moral and political justification of which chiefly consists in the reciprocal nature of role interactions between being benefactor and being beneficiary.

Particularly, we need to pay attention to two aspects of the neo-Roman republican principle of liberty as non-domination. First, it brings the state back into our consideration of individual freedom by endorsing liberty as “non-domination” as the most important task that the state should accomplish in the first place. At this juncture, in contrast to the extreme version of individual liberalism, it regards lawful interference of government not as an obstruction to individual liberty but as a vital means of promoting a condition in which all citizens can enjoy liberty as non-domination (Pettit 1997, pp. 35–41). At the same time, it doesn’t trade off individual liberty for collective security. Any state action, no matter how it is significant or emergent, should be limited or disciplined by the people, and, by the same token, any emergency measure of government should be justified by the same principle of liberty as non-domination that gives the people protection and power in relation to the state (Pettit 1997, pp. 183–205). Different from communitarian republicanism, in which active participation in creating public power is proposed as the duty of citizens, not everyone needs to take part in politics in neo-Roman republicanism. But an appropriate form of public vigilance for securing liberty as non-domination should be institutionalized as a way of actualizing the contestability of the people against the abuse of political power (Pettit 2012a, pp. 239–292).

Second, according to the neo-Roman republican approach, liberty as non-domination is not the single supreme principle with which all ethical and political values must be justified but a regulative principle that guides public opinion in ongoing contentions for the requirements of social justice in specific contexts. Pettit explains this regulative characteristic of liberty as non-domination in terms of a “modest” consequentialism that consists of two different but intertwined stances to the question of what values are important. The first stance takes a non-consequentialist approach to values (Pettit 1997, pp. 82–92; 2014, p. xix). Unlike the utilitarian principle of utility, he does not endorse liberty as non-domination as a single, first principle with which to choose values but suggests it as a “gateway” principle the realization of which helps better establish a deliberative stance between agents to discover the best ways of realizing their ends. At this juncture, the principle of liberty as non-domination accords with a pluralist view to the extent to which it focuses on delibera-

tion rather than justification. However, when he comes to the question of social and political justice, he takes a consequentialist approach to values (Pettit 1997, pp. 92–109; 2012a, pp. 122–125). In this second stance, liberty as non-domination becomes a reason-giving strategy for the right choice that directs what the state seeks to advance and promote. By the same token, liberty as non-domination is upgraded as the guiding principle according to which a decision taken through the democratic process can be justified. Here, liberty as non-domination is the righteous ideal that promotes other goods better than any alternative and thereby instantiates an intuitive set of appropriate interpersonal actions Pettit 2012b, pp. 42–43).

From the stance of Confucian role-ethics, the neo-Roman republican approach to relationality might still be too individualistic in the sense that it does not pay much attention to a person's roles in relations, but rather to the relational conditions for a person's choice. And it appears to have a typical Western ontological conception of human "being" as opposed to the Confucian conception of human "becoming". Despite these differences, liberty as non-domination can provide a proper regulative "direction" with which Confucian role-ethics can be better equated to the demands for social justice that require both the peaceful resolution of conflicts through democratic deliberation and citizens' contestability against the abuse of political power. As Chenyang Li points out (2020), the Confucian ideal of "active" harmony – that the involved parties are more active in promoting harmony within society while striving for a reciprocal equity between themselves – retains the idea of freedom from domination, and thereby its actualization nowadays can open up possibilities of not simply having a good government or a peaceful coexistence, but also of seeking democratic means to secure non-domination. A harmonious relationship in this sense cannot be forged through hierarchical conformity or collective uniformity, and the propriety of interpersonal conduct for harmony can be construed through Pettit's definition of non-domination.

More specifically, first, given the need for relationality that is at once anti-collectivist and anti-atomist, the normative ideas that are intrinsic to the principle of liberty as non-domination can be accommodated in the requirements of Confucian role-ethics for self-cultivation. In the sense of liberty as non-domination, the realization of individual moral worth cannot be separated from the promotion of communal self-ordering, since the latter is at least instrumental in the maintenance of individual liberty. Should a community be defective, persons living in it cannot enjoy their individual liberty. Second, when we consider Confucian role-ethics in terms of the possible dangers of social and political oppression, the principle of liberty as non-domination helps to regulate a hierarchical order the justification for which relies on the extension of filial reverence in Confucian role-ethics. The principle of liberty as non-domination, directed to secure the equal status that everyone enjoys in relation to each other, will help rectify the abuse of political power. By the same token, the principle of liberty as non-domination, which is neither monistic nor relativistic, can help to cultivate a relational civility that serves the necessary purpose of establishing a discursive stance of democratic deliberation between citizens, without jettisoning the moral vision of harmonious reciprocity in Confucian role-ethics.

5 Conclusions

The crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic requires a unique blend of communal relationality and political accountability that combines to create an ethics of civil compliance. On the one hand, it implores us to reconsider individuality in terms of our relationship with others and social orders. Rights-oriented individualist approaches to the pandemic crisis fail to provide an appropriate mode of interpersonal conduct in which individual freedom and collective security can mutually contribute to one another. By the same token, community-centered collectivist approaches are also flawed. My argument here is that the notion of the “correlated” self in Confucian role-ethics can provide us with a proper direction of individual collaboration with others as well as governments. More specifically, Confucian role-ethics shows the proper conduct of civil compliance, the essential dynamics of which are shaped by the self-assessment of a person’s roles in relations with others and governments, positing a notion of role-constituted relationality that is neither a contractarian partnership based on individual needs and interests nor a self-effacing solidarity which is vulnerable to the enticement of collective schizophrenia. Through the lens of Confucian role-ethics, I have maintained that the civil compliances in Northeast Asian countries during the crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic can be interpreted as a sociopolitical propriety of interpersonal conduct in times of crisis.

On the other hand, the emergence of big government during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis calls for a regulative direction through which the moral and sociopolitical visions of Confucian role-ethics can be steered to meet the demands for justice and institutional reform in modern societies. If we agree that any hierarchy, no matter how morally justifiable and politically accountable, could cause a serious violation of the democratic value of equality, the moral vision of familyhood that guides the direction of good governance in Confucian role-ethics is not sufficient. Thus, I suggested liberty as non-domination as a regulative principle for rectifying a possible abuse of political power. However, this was not in order to find similar directions in Confucian role-ethics by simple borrowing from neo-Roman republican visions of democratic governance. Rather, my argument at this juncture is that if Confucian role-ethics does not preclude a cross-cultural dialogue, liberty as non-domination can be a regulative principle that helps realize its moral vision of good governance more adequately according to the demands of sociopolitical justice in democratic societies. Liberty as non-domination will guide different opinions in democratic deliberation between citizens without imposing a comprehensive principle. And by the same token, liberty as non-domination will direct the rectification of illegitimate relationships between the state and citizens through actualizing the contestability of citizens against arbitrary political power even in times of crisis.

The relative success of Northeast Asian countries in constraining the Covid-19 virus has aroused public concerns over an ideological war between Western individualism and Eastern collectivism. But, as I have elaborated, such a perspective is based on fallacies that beset the culturally biased framework which ascribes all patterns of civil compliance in Northeast Asian societies to a democratic deficit or an authoritarian mentality. In similar vein, I have contended that although the growing concerns about “pandemic” nationalism give us reasonable warnings with respect to an anti-democratic trade-off of individual freedom for biological security, they become problematic when they are too much anchored in questions of individual rights to seek an ethic of civic compliance in emergency. As I have demonstrated,

Confucian role-ethics combined with liberty as non-domination can provide us with an ethics of civil compliance in times of crisis. It does so through the actualization of the ideal of good governance in Confucian role-ethics in such a manner that the principle of liberty as non-domination regulates interpersonal collaboration as well as emergency governance. My argument is that such a combination as outlined above is a possible East-West dialogue in coping with the on-going challenges driven by the Covid-19 pandemic.

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