

Lee, Minghui 李明輝, *Political Thought in the Confucian Perspective* 儒家視野下的政治思想

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LEE Yenyi 李彥儀

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As the author says in the preface of this book, there is a consistent concern, among its eleven essays, with political issues from the viewpoint of Confucianism; therefore the book is titled *Political Thought in the Confucian Perspective*. To be specific, in this book the author attempts to reflect the debate over whether Confucianism obstructs the establishment and development of democracy and human rights, examines the view on this issue by New-Confucianism, especially MOU Zongsan's 牟宗三 "self-negation of conscience (*liangzhi de ziwo kanxian* 良知的自我坎陷)," by comparing some ideas between liberalism and communitarianism, and then provides his own assessment of the debate. As we shall see, according to the author, beyond liberalism and communitarianism there is a third way of thinking inherent in Confucianism, namely, personalism (*ren ge zhuyi* 人格主義), which has been recently suggested by Wm. Theodore de Bary and CHANG Hao 張灝 and is related to the idea of "immanent transcendence (*neizai chaoyue* 內在超越) advocated by New-Confucianism. Different from the individualism that originated from liberalism, the individual in personalism is one who is both independent and self-determined, careful of his or her relation and connection with community, and identifies himself or herself as the cultural heir or heiress and keeps balance between individuality and community. For the author, this is the characteristic that keeps Confucianism in tune with communitarianism. The independence and self-determination of the individual can be seen as immanent, while his or her relation and connection to the community and identity as a learner and inheritor or inheritress of culture can be interpreted as transcendent. This outline is given in the first essay, "Confucius on Learning: the Cultural Consciousness of Confucianism," which serves as the introduction to this book.

Based on the foregoing thesis, the author opens the discussion on the relation between Confucianism and democracy and human rights. By referring to the argument about the notions of negative liberty and positive liberty in modern Western political thought, the author tries to comment on the judgment of traditional Confucianism and democratic politics advocated by Taiwanese liberals, who can be seen as the inheritors of the Anglo-America liberal tradition, as they disagree with the contention that democracy can be

LEE Yenyi 李彥儀 (✉)

Department of Philosophy, National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan
e-mail: 94154503@nccu.edu.tw

founded on moral knowledge (*dexing zhi zhi* 德性之知) or moral conscience (*daode benxin* 道德本心). According to the author, however, the spirit of Confucianism, especially its main idea of human nature as good, is compatible with democracy. Meanwhile, it is helpful to rethink the relation between Confucianism and democracy by investigating communitarianism. This is the position that the author takes in Essays Two, Three, and Four. In this part, the author examines CHANG Hao's idea of the "implication of consciousness (*youan yishi* 幽暗意識)" and points out that the deficiency of Confucianism in its notion of "inner-sageness (*nei sheng* 內聖)" that Chang has discovered does not naturally lead to the claim that democracy cannot be developed in Confucianism. Chang also confuses the historical development with the logical deduction of a thought. The author then starts his discussion about the relation between Confucianism and human rights with the introduction and analysis of the change and historical development of the idea of human rights. He shows that, although the primary idea of human rights, including various basic political rights of citizenship, is absent in Confucianism, the Confucian idea of "people as the foundation of a state (*min ben* 民本)," which contains the ideas of "of the people (*min you* 民有)" and "for the people (*min xiang* 民享)," is an abundant resource for the idea of human rights in the second sense, which emphasizes the economic, social, and cultural conditions and background for the self-realization of individuals. At the end of Essay Four, the author says that he does not intend to prove that Confucianism has covered all the ideas of modern democracy and human rights, but that, through the reconstruction in Jürgen Habermas' sense, Confucian tradition can contribute its resources to help integrate modern democracy and human rights into Chinese culture. This task is a kind that Heiner Rotez named as the "reconstructive hermeneutics of accommodation."

Essays Five, Six, and Seven center on the relation between ethics of conviction, ethics of responsibility, and ethics of autonomy, on the one hand, and Confucianism, on the other. Ethics of conviction focuses on the motive of one's action and takes it as the standard of the moral value of the action, as characteristic of Kant's deontological ethics as commonly understood in Anglo-American philosophy. Ethics of responsibility, in Max Weber's sense, highlights both the moral value and the consequences of an action. In the author's opinion, Kant's ethics, when properly understood and interpreted, can embrace the ethics of responsibility. As for the ethics of autonomy, according to Immanuel Kant, it regards "the autonomy of will" as the highest law of morality. The author gives his response to criticism of the New Confucians' use of certain Western philosophical concepts by exploring the implications of the ethics of conviction, ethics of responsibility, and ethics of autonomy and by interpreting some passages of the *Analects* and the *Mencius*. The author argues that the ethics of conviction in the Kantian sense is not necessarily incompatible with the ethics of responsibility suggested by Max Weber, and that the former may logically imply the latter. The author also claims that the thought of Confucius and Mencius and their followers basically contains the ethics of conviction and ethics of responsibility (Essay Five). The author defends Confucianism as a model of ethics of conviction by analyzing and discussing the relationship between Kantian ethics, commonly seen as a kind of ethics of conviction and formal ethics, and ethics of Confucianism. In his review of LIN Yusheng 林毓生 and JIANG Qing 蔣慶, the author again emphasizes the unity of ethics of conviction and ethics of responsibility in Confucianism, where ethics of conviction must be the precondition of the unfolding of ethics of responsibility. On the surface, the relation between these three essays and the main concern of this book is weak. However, their arguments are still concentrated on the link between Confucianism and modern democracy, because the discourse arguing that ethics of conviction must be the precondition of the unfolding of ethics of responsibility parallels the argument that democracy can be

founded on moral knowledge or moral conscience. This corresponds to the characteristic of the thinking of the interpenetration of “inner sagesness and outer kingship” of Confucianism.

The discussion in the above-mentioned essays can be taken as the basis for Essay Eight, in which the author discusses a political case. In this essay, by introducing and evaluating LEE Kuanyew’s 李光耀 and Christopher Patten’s opinions of “Asian values,” the author rethinks the possibility of an Asian model of “communitarian democracy,” which is modeled on personalism. In Essays Nine and Ten, the author discusses again the similarities and differences between Confucianism, liberalism, and communitarianism by presenting and dissecting the dispute about certain ideas of liberalism and communitarianism. Once again, the author indicates that, in terms of the transcendence of moral conscience, the ethical foundation and the concept of self in traditional Confucianism are compatible with liberalism; in terms of the idea of immanence (the relation between the individual and the community and the attitude toward tradition), Confucianism is compatible with communitarianism. Additionally, as he argues in the introductory essay (Essay One), the author thinks that the model of immanent transcendence of Confucianism may provide an alternative solution to the debate between liberalism and communitarianism. Essay Eleven, the last part of this book, is basically a review of three books by HE Xinquan 何信全, LIU Xiao 劉曉 and JIANG Qing respectively, which are all about the political philosophy of Confucianism. The aim of this essay is to point out that some assessments of the relation between Confucianism and modern democracy in these books are limited by their references to and understanding of western culture.

Once we grasp the obvious philosophical stance, deontological Confucianism, which the author takes in this book, it is not difficult to understand why he discusses the relation between Confucianism and modern democracy by discussing the debates between liberalism and communitarianism and by analyzing the meaning of and relation among ethics of conviction, ethics of responsibility, and ethics of autonomy. The author’s effort in this book is a painstaking but roundabout defense of the political thought of New Confucianism, especially MOU Zongsan’s “self-negation of conscience to develop democracy.” The author also attempts to show the possibility of its further development. However, a main question about the author’s discourse is: in what sense could moral conscience or moral knowledge become the basis of democracy? Further, if this is possible, how can we prevent moral conscience or moral knowledge from becoming the means of totalitarianism and autocracy? Or, put differently, how can we avoid totalitarian and autocrat from masquerading as the moral one in order to oppress people? Since this kind of danger has long been noted and demurred by Taiwanese liberalism, the relation and distinction between moral conscience/knowledge and totalitarianism/autocracy should be clarified. Nonetheless, if we steer toward the development of deontological ethics, the suggestion, first offered by JIANG Nianfeng 蔣年豐 and then mentioned by the author by the end of Essay Eleven, of considering the possibility of the transformation of the moral subjects of Confucianism into legal and political subjects (*fazheng zhuyi* 法政主體) via the approach that John Rawls inherited from Kant should be an instructive and positive one.