PARADOXICAL MODERNITY AND THE QUEST FOR A NEO-COMMUNITARIAN ALTERNATIVE[1]

HAN SANG-JIN
Seoul National University

The paradoxical nature of modernity as being embedded in institutional and cultural developments in history has been noted by many scholars. In that sense, it can be said that modernity has both bright and dark sides. Not only in the West, but also in Asia, the paradoxical nature of modernity has made people pay attention to communitarian alternatives to liberalism combined with modernity. By the way, two types of communitarianism can be discerned. One is more or less authoritarian, whilst the other democratic and participatory. In this paper, the latter type of communitarianism is called 'neo-communitarianism,' which has been expressed in such recent experiences in South Korea as NGO's participation in the 2000 General Election, soccer team supporters in the 2002 World Cup Games, the 2002 presidential election, and the emergence of the 386 generation as a self-conscious political agency which pursue participation and democracy by the help of the Internet.

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Discourses of modernity are abundant. Many distinguished scholars with diverse intellectual backgrounds have engaged in an attempt to criticize the fundamental deficiencies of Western modernity. What comes out of this systematic confrontation with the Western tradition of enlightenment and modernity, however, is far from being uniform. On the contrary, the proposed solutions are so divergent that one is liable to end up highly confused. For instance, conflicting philosophical positions with such labels as deconstruction, post-modernism, late-modernity, contextualism, multiculturalism, and so on have been declared and are busy contesting each other. Meanwhile, the idea of "multiple modernities" has become quite popular among sociologists and historians, amongst others, sensitizing us to the role of traditions in the process of modernization. Consequently, discourses of modernity have become rich in historical substance, embracing diversity when interpreting the patterns of mediation between modern and traditional

institutions and values. This already implies that modernity in its concrete existence is always historical and hence cannot be reduced to any unmediated essence. Furthermore, it has been persuasively argued that Western modernity, however instrumental and destructive it has turned out to be in history, still carries within itself an unfinished normative project towards an enlightenment-oriented moral-ethical and aesthetic deliberation. Much care is needed when we talk about modernity.

With such complexity in mind, however, I would like to take up a straightforward social-scientific perspective (rather than a philosophical one) and examine why and how the promise and the peril of modernity arise. This holds true not only in the West but also in the East where the enthusiasm of catch-up modernization prevails. I shall try to be as simple as I can in focusing on the paradoxical nature of modernity as being deeply embedded in the following institutional and cultural developments, which can be summarized by ten points.

TEN POINTS OF PARADOXICAL MODERNITY

1) Modernity has been deeply associated with the rise of nation states. Nevertheless, the idea of territorial sovereignty itself was not new. What has made modernity distinctive was the fact that political, economic and socio-cultural integration was made possible by the expansion of citizenship, and not through the imposition of feudal, class or tribal identities. It is in this sense that we can say that modernity has a very fundamental connection to the establishment of nation states, in turn opening up a new age of competition and cooperation among citizens. This holds as true in the East as it does in the West. However, significant changes have recently taken place in the direction of social transformation as we move ever further into the age of globalization. Knowledge, information, and capital move across borders freely, and the steady expansion of the network of global communication via satellite and the Internet has had a transformative effect on our sense of time and space. Against the background of such changes, the role of the state seems to be under siege. This is particularly so when a country remains highly dependent on, and thus vulnerable to, external conditions. The movement of international capital, for example, seems to be too macroscopic and unpredictable for individual countries to control effectively. Existing modes of resolving conflict within the institutions of nation states and the existing international system no

longer suffice given the tendency of globalization to make heighten disparities and tensions betwixt and between countries and peoples everywhere.

2) Modernity means industrialization everywhere and hence invites the rise of the labor movement. As industries spread all over the country, the workers become the largest collectivity in terms of number and the potential capacity of action. Since labor issues have tended to stand at the forefront of social conflicts awakened by modernity, the ideological and political landscape has been powerfully shaped by the competition between the left and the right. In the Western world, especially in Europe, industrial labor conflicts gave rise to the social democratic parties that made a great contribution to the establishment of the welfare state. There is no doubt that the welfare state has meant an important progression for a mankind attempting to constructively combine the ideas of freedom and equality, or productivity and welfare. The situation, however, is now in flux. The period marked by left-right confrontation is now largely gone and the welfare state is under siege, even in cradles of social democracy such as Scandinavia. More often than not, the labor movement and left-wing organizations appear to be rigid, power-oriented, preoccupied with securing their narrow group interests withoutpaying enough attention to other pertinent issues such as the environment, rights of minorities, various risks imposed on ordinary citizens, and so on. It is questionable, therefore, whether the labor movement can still be considered as the shining symbol of human emancipation as it was in the past.

3) Characteristic of modernity is the expansion of the bureaucratic regulation of human interaction and the role of professional experts. The rule of law is also constitutive of bureaucratic regulation, facilitating an efficient hierarchical control from above. As Max Weber has succinctly argued, the process of bureaucratization plays an integral role in the generalization of a comportment towards the world characterized by rationality and efficiency. Not only the administration of the state and business corporations, but also labor itself became increasingly organized along these lines, as can be seen in the giant factory. But here too fundamental changes are taking place today. Bureaucratic organization is relatively slow to adapt to changes in the environment and thus more costly in comparative terms hence it is commonly regarded these days as being contrary to principles of rationality and efficiency, posing obstacles to participation and creativity and leading to a general atmosphere of alienation and powerlessness. In

the age of the knowledge-based economy, the once ascendant paradigm of bureaucratic rationality turns out to be detrimental to human prosperity, cooperation and wellbeing.

Consequently, post-bureaucratic reforms have been sought from many directions. The concept of team-work bringing with it an emphasis on collective responsibility, autonomous decision-making, and continuous learning has been brought into institutions together with those of flexible modes of production, ongoing human resource development, and empowerment. In addition to communication by means of a hierarchical 'top-down' command structure, more emphasis is being placed on 'bottom-up' communication from the lower echelons of an organization to the top rungs, as well as horizontal communication among various components of the organization. This means that unbridled faith in the superiority of bureaucratic rationality as a key element of modernity has largely faded away, while the need for decentralized and yet consensually oriented forms for the structuring of organizations is keenly felt everywhere.

4) Modernity has been synonymous with a specific civilizational form in which science and technology reign supreme. A seemingly boundless faith in science and technology has been a hallmark of the modernist mentality. Science has been exulted not only as the most important means for procuring productivity but also as the driving force for the liberation of mankind. Science encourages the pursuit of rationality and progress. Yet here too changes are obvious: increasingly, there is a widespread disillusionment with the subjugating nature of scientific civilization. Although science has contributed in countless ways to human happiness and welfare, it is high time that science also take some responsibility for the increasingly numerous misfortunes and disasters befalling mankind, such as can be seen from the enormous damage wrought by the wholesale destruction of the environment and the carnage of war spread through the use of weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore, the scientific mentality tends to narrow the horizon available for human emancipation by subjugating normative concerns to those of technical management, in the process delegating to secondary place the increasingly desperate call of the moral-ethical, emotive, and aesthetic dimensions of human life. Thus, we can no longer with a clear conscience subscribe to the myth that science is identical to progress and emancipation.

5) Another distinctive trait of modernity is its tendency to reinforce a movement towards representative democracy. Political parties and

parliaments have been hailed as "the flower of representative democracy." It must be pointed out, however, that there is at present a surprisingly high degree of dissatisfaction over and mistrust for institutional politics among the ordinary populace. The rate of participation in polls by registered voters is alarmingly low in both East Asia and the West. Politics is widely deemed to be easily corruptible, and under the sway of powerful lobbies for sundry self-motivated interests. In spite of the existence and institutionalization of the structural forms for the exercise of popular choice in the form of elections, 'real politics' is widely written off as being manipulated behind the scenes by sinister forces. Consequently, voters are now seeking ways to participate in a more direct manner (for instance town-hall meetings, plebiscites, referendums, and ballot initiatives as in, say, Swiss cantons, and also in California). Innovations in Internet communication and e-government are fuelling these initiatives on the part of the masses. As a landmark of modernity, representative democracy now faces the challenge of answering the call of 'anti-politics' from all quarters, reflecting the general apathy and cynicism of the people everywhere.

   6) The modern family system is the nuclear family. The family has traditionally been regarded as the last bastion of an order with even some semblance of humanity. No matter how much change a society underwent, it was assumed that the family would firmly anchor the highest ideals of a society, in the process providing the basis for stability. Today, however, tremendous changes are taking place even in this most private of spheres. This is because the age-old relationship between the two sexes — love, marriage and the institution of the family based on it — has been undergoing a fundamental transformation. The divorce rate is climbing by the day and thereis a noticeable increase in the number of both divorced and never-married single mothers. In some countries, furthermore, homosexual marriages have been legalized. These may be seen as unintended consequences of women's emancipation. However, a balanced view is needed to see clearly the impacts of risks placed upon the life of the concerned individuals. The state has been largely powerless to control the unfolding of these developments. That the number of youths who spend their childhood under the same set of parents is steadily decreasing is indicative of an enormous shift in the wider society, a shift that shakes an individual's sense of order to its foundations. A serious question in this context is whether and to what extent the East Asian countries should follow the

Western road to paradoxical modernity.

7) Modernity has meant the transformation of human relationships, freeing them from the bondage of traditional status based distinctions andintroducing a new and more flexible system of social relationships and contracts providing increased social mobility as well as security and life-long employment. Social relationships uprooted through the process of transition from tradition to modernity once again attained an element of stability with the spread of the standard 'social mooring points' of modern society, such as occupation, class, sexuality, and so on. It was expected that the vast majority of people tread a fixed course of life once they take on a particular occupation or enter into the labor market. The stability of expectations and accountability was made possible on this basis. Gradually, however, society is once again becoming more 'fluid' with the disappearance of the *idée fixe*; it has been pointed out that our future lives will seem more 'nomadic' as people diversify their knowledge, tastes, and inclinations. People are becoming freer than at any other time in history to enter or leave various jobs as they see fit. Thus, the stability of the infrastructure of life under modernity in terms of occupation and social positioning is significantly decreasing and tends to be replaced by increased uncertainty and fluidity.

8) Modernity entails a sharp distinction between the private and the public, on the one hand, and between exchange value and use value, on the other. The market necessitates rational computation and a cold money-minded calculation of one's self-interest. The exchange value of a thing is held to be more important than the value of its inherent utility. Everything is reckoned in terms of money value or else calculated in accordance with an index that offers some standard of measurement. For this reason, women, who value the emotional and relational aspects of life more than men, have been forcibly relegated to remaining in the private and personal (as opposed to the public) realm in the society.

Here too the times are changing such that women are now actively resisting the notion of a fundamental division between the private and the public spheres as well as the assumed essential division between the male and the female sex, in the process challenging the tendency of phallocentric thinking to subjugate the human and non-human environment around it and impose its own mode of instrumental rationality. The various voices representing hitherto repressed feelings and sentiments, desires and aesthetic experiences are all speaking out, sometimes loudly and aggressively. Modernity characterized by male

domination in terms of formal and instrumental rationality faces today serious challenges.

9) Modernity fosters functional specialization and differentiation, as systems theory well describes. We can say that modernity was originally marked by the differentiation into the spheres of science, morality, law, and arts, a *weltanschauung* that was once unified by religion. Society has since then evolved in an even more specialized and differentiated fashion. Countless types of professions, functions, industries, organizations and systems of knowledge have emerged anew. A flood of information is being released and circulated in line with the distinct modes of choice and classification that belong to each category. Along with the process of differentiation, however, new counter-trends emerge calling for re-integration, recombination, and de-differentiation out of which new syntheses, fusions, hybrids, mutations, and so on are made possible. The fields of genetic engineering, the life sciences and the information industry are good examples of this new trend as much as are the various kinds of destructive restructuring of business corporations. The products of hybridity, mimesis, and fusion can be easily found in the realms of music and the arts, above all.

10) Originating from the idea of individual freedom and sovereignty, modernity has witnessed the constant expansion of individual choices and self-determination. Communism, which refused to admit individual freedom, autonomy, and democracy has fallen. The theory of human rights, which entails the notion of human beings as possessing natural rights that no one can take away, is now universally accepted. On the other hand, it is also true that the freedom and choice of the individual has grown out of all proportion with its relationship to individual and collective responsibility and duty, giving rise to numerous pathological consequences. The idea of the community is collapsing, with the consequence that age-old virtues such as consideration of others and an ethic of caring are weakened. Among the negative side effects are the surge of materialistic values, a self-centered egoism of various kinds, drug use, violent crime, and corruption. Thus, there has emerged a deep need to reconcile the individual and communitarian aspects of human rights, human responsibility, and human well-being. As the saying goes, the pathological phenomenon of "too much individual freedom" has been a bane for modern man.

LIBERALISM AND COMMUNITARIANISM

The paradoxical nature of modernity is as conspicuous to us in the East as it is to those in Western societies. China and Korea are no exceptions. Due to the rapid-paced progress of catch-up modernization that has occurred in these two countries (a phenomena that is possibly unprecedented in world history), the dark side of modernity (bringing with it an increased incidence of risk) is deeper and more sharply defined here than it is in other regions of the world. We here in East Asia must be quite honest to ourselves in focusing our attention to this fact.

In this context, it is necessary to draw attention to the communitarian attempts to overcome the deficiencies of an anthropocentric modernity by emphasizing the value of collective goods and interests to be preserved for the benefit of future generations. This issue is important to us as East Asians, since many problems of Western modernity stem from an undue emphasis on, and preoccupation with individuality as a core value of modernity, which is at odds with the socially embedded nature of human life. Thus, one of the key questions we need to raise is how to cultivate and re-establish a communitarian *Weltanschauung* and orientation in a balanced manner so that, with this as a basis we might pursue a dialogue with the west at the same time as advocating neither relativism nor fundamentalism but a more encompassing perspective firmly footed on our cultural traditions. This brings us to the well-known debate between liberal and communitarian streams of political thought.

The leading principle of liberalism lies in the concept of the individual sovereignty, which means that individuals are equally entitled to pursue their interests freely as long as their actions and expressions do not harm others. According to this position, "each is equal as a moral being and should enjoy substantial personal independence immune from coercion by the will of others" (Nagel, 1995: 94). As far as the concept of sovereignty is concerned, the same logic is applied to state and individuals alike: "Just as a sovereign state rules over its territory, onto which no other state can trespass, a sovereign individual rules his or her own life and action so long as the actions do not harm others" (Chan, 1999: 231). According to versions of strict liberalism, individual sovereignty is as comprehensive as state sovereignty in that "one is entitled to absolute control of whatever is

within one's domain however trivial it may be" (Feinberg, 1986: 55). No state power can be legitimately used to control this individual freedom.

Of course, it does not make sense to reject individual sovereignty outright. Yet, there arise problems if individuals remain overwhelmingly preoccupied with pursuing their private interests with little consideration for the negative consequences of their actions on the community at large. For instance, the American failure to deal with the problems of drugs and guns effectively may be seen as closely related to an overly individualistic interpretation of the concept of human rights. The question that follows is how then to prevent this kind of moral decay and nurture the value of community. It is normally at this point that a communitarian argument in sharp confrontation with liberalism is put forward, a position that asserts the need to defend the integrity of communities and the shared values characteristic of such communities. Those with a communitarian orientation may find it difficult to accept the liberal idea of individual sovereignty due to the fact that they would be more concerned about the negative social consequences of pursuing individual interests. In contrast, communitarians put forward the argument that the liberal version of human rights destroys community insofar as it fosters an extreme egocentric pursuit of interests. One case in point is pornography, which may not harm others but is argued to be morally corrupt or debased. These communitarians would welcome individual sovereignty insofar as the concomitant rights are instrumental for promoting a moral and ethical life, but such support for individual sovereignty would be withdrawn if these rights were to be used to promote the bad instead of the good. Simply put, "Individuals do not have the moral right to moral wrongdoing" (Chan, 1999: 232).

Such communitarian arguments may sound more appropriate to East Asian contexts where the liberal tradition is lacking whilst excessive individualism as a cause of moral decay in the community is felt strongly. Likewise with the case of materialism, which tends to accompany crony capitalistic development. To make a critique of paradoxical modernity from a communitarian standpoint, however, involves intrinsic ambiguities and difficulties. Upon closer scrutiny, we come up against the key question of who is in the legitimate position to decide and safeguard the well-being of the community, and the methods that may be used to do so. For instance, liberals would either oppose or at least raise strong doubts when any individual or group states that he or she is entitled to define collective well-being and/or

national interests, for the good reason that this kind of claim may quickly lead to an authoritarian leadership which prefers order and stability (Donnelly, 1999). Thus, we should ask as sharply as possible which kind of communitarian alternative we wish to defend in our effort to go beyond Western modernity.

   To cut a long story short, I think it possible to outline two types of communitarian approach to paradoxical modernity. One is authoritarian, and the other is basically participatory. The authoritarian model is characterized by an institutional solution in which the role of the state or the political leadership is decisive in defining collective interests. Chua's point is penetrating in this respect:

> Central to communitarianism is the idea that collective interests are placed above individual ones. Logically, what constitute the collective interests should be based on 'consensus.' However, as suggested earlier, the technical difficulties of soliciting opinions from every interested and affected party tends to be resolved, in practice, by a conflation of state/society, in which the elected political leadership assumes the position of defining both the consensus and the national interests by fiat (Chua, 1995: 191).

   We should not presuppose, however, that all communitarian approaches are logically geared to an authoritarian style of government and leadership. On the contrary, it is possible to explore a participation-oriented pathway to communitarianism, one that is significantly different from the road that leads us to authoritarianism and paternalism. Of crucial importance in this regard is the question of whether there is any method within the proposed communitarian alternative by which we can get out of the danger of a rationalized and centralized state power, which is assumed to be central to the authoritarian pathway.

SINGAPORE AS A COMMUNITARIAN ALTERNATIVE?

   Probably, the best example of the communitarian road to authoritarian government today may be found in Singapore. In his keynote address at the Create 21 Asahi Forum on November 20, 1992, for instance, Lee Kwan Yew (1997: 380) pointed out three pathologies of American modernity which include: 1) a law and order out of control, leading to riots, drugs, guns, muggings, rape and other crimes,

2) poverty in the midst of great wealth, 3) excessive rights of the individual at the expense of the community as a whole. Explaining why the US has been unable to deal effectively with a particularly sensitive problem, namely drugs, he proudly declared that Singapore has been able to contain its drug problems owing to "Asian values." "To protect the community," said Lee (1997: 380), "we have passed laws which entitle police, drug enforcement or immigration officers to have the urine of any person who behaves in a suspicious way tested for drugs. If the result is positive, treatment is compulsory." In the U.S., however,

> Such a law will be unconstitutional, because it will be an invasion of privacy of the individual. Any urine test would lead to a suit for damage for battery and assault and invasion of privacy.... So in the US the community's interests have been sacrificed because of the human rights of drug traffickers and drug consumers. Drug-related crimes flourish. Schools are infected. There is high delinquency and violence amongst students, a high dropout rate, poor discipline and teaching, producing students who make poor workers. So a vicious cycle has set in (Lee, 1997: 381).

Indeed, Singapore presents an interesting example of a communitarian response to the pathological consequences and risks of Western modernity. Certain Confucian ethics have been selectively used (Tu, 1984; Kuo, 1996) to establish a clean society and a corruption-free government that protects the interests of the community. Beginning with the premise that what people want is good government, Lee argues that good government depends on the values of a people, which assumes that Asian values are different from American or Western values. "As an Asian of Chinese cultural background, my values are for a government which is honest, effective and efficient in protecting its people, and allowing opportunities for all to advance themselves in a stable and orderly society where they can live a good life and raise their children to do better than themselves" (Lee, 1997: 380). He then listed seven requirements for good government as follows: 1) people are well cared for, in terms of their food, housing, employment, and health; 2) there is order and justice under the rule of law, and not the capricious arbitrariness of individual rulers; 3) as much personal freedom as possible but without infringing on the freedom of others; 4) growth in the economy and progress in society; 5) good and ever improving education; 6) high moral standards of rulers and of the people; 7) good

physical infrastructure, facilities for recreation, music, culture and arts; spiritual and religious freedoms, and a full intellectual life.

Here we find a communitarian path to another modernity characterized by the expanded role of the state and benevolent leadership ready to intervene into the political, socio-economic, and cultural affairs to protect the collective interests of the community. Human rights are not flatly rejected. Rather, the step-by-step incremental approach is recommended with heavy emphasis on community interests as the state conceives of them. In addition, a process of consultation among diverse interest groups is created to secure social consensus. However, in our view this path of communitarian development is actually more likely to lead to paternalistic authoritarianism than democracy in the participatory sense (Chua, 1995).

WHY DO WE NEED A NEO-COMMUNITARIAN APPROACH?

In opposition to the authoritarian version of the communitarian approach I examined above, I would like to explore another possible solution to the problem of Western modernity, namely a participatory form of the communitarian approach. This approach relies on neither the primacy of the role of markets (as in neo-liberalism), nor the primacy of the state (as in models of governance-based communitarianism). Nor does it lead to absolute relativism either. Rather, such an alternative conception of communitarianism presupposes and fosters the role of civil society in which diverse, grassroots-oriented, bottom-up trends of participation emerge and expand. In other words, according to our conception, the principal axis through which we might attempt to overcome the profoundly paradoxical nature of modernity is neither the market nor the state, but civil society and participatory movements as the engine of a distinctively communitarian approach. I call this pathway "neo-communitarian" in the sense that its characteristics differ from classic communalism on the one hand, and from the semi-authoritarian version of communitarianism referred to above on the other.

To move away from the increasing philosophical and theoretical tone of our discussion, let me continue to elaborate our neo-communitarian approach through exemplifications. Let us turn firstly to the World-Cup street cheering in June 2002, and examine the implications that it holds for the Korean people and society. I can say with confidence that I

joined the street cheering at the *Gwanghwamun* area in Seoul every time a match involving the Korean team took place, wearing a red shirt and a red turban, and I personally witnessed how a new communitarian sense of cohesion and solidarity emerged from the people spontaneously for the first time in the history of Korea. For instance, even when the street was packed with hundreds of thousands of supporters, there was no sign of serious trouble or disorder. After the game was over, people willingly helped cleaning the streets. I was surprised to see such a large crowd gather together to cheer their team without making any collective incident tainted with violence or criminality.

Based on these observations, I wrote an essay in the *Korea Times* on July 5th, 2002. Let me cite the pages wherein one can see what I mean by a neo-communitarian culture.

> The most valuable asset we have gotten from the World Cup is the experience of sharing together and a sense of belonging as Koreans whilst at the same time overcoming the barriers of age, sex, class, and region. In a red wave flowing across the grand plaza, we became one, shouting the soul-stirring slogan of "*Dae~han-min-guk*."
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> Another asset is the forward-looking value orientation of our younger generation. By the street cheering, they proved that the worries of their elders were wrong. They were no longer an impudent new generation who dye their hair yellow or spend the entire night pounding on computer keyboards. Instead, they drape the national flags around their necks and bodies, and even make shirts or skirts with them. The *Taeguk* flag is no longer an ornament for national holidays. Our young people are full of youthful vigor and know how to rejoice in a festival. But at the same time they do not lose self-control or a sense of order. In their bright faces, we can see the future of this nation. In their pure passion, we can find the possibility of a new communitarian culture. The strong collective ethos of the Korean people has been fully displayed.
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> The final asset that we have gained is our national confidence and dignity .... Since the time of Japanese colonial rule, we Koreans have been used to denying and distrusting ourselves. Over the course of hard struggles with foreign invasions, dictatorial rule and age-long poverty, we have developed our national traits of patience and self-defense. But we could not afford to enjoy self-realization in a positive sense. Such negative realization has had a negative influence

on our national competitiveness. In this respect, the 2002 FIFA World Cup served as an occasion for us to wipe away such self-destructive legacies and regain our confidence and dignity as a nation.

We are proud of no longer suffering from poverty, dictatorship or foreign invasions. This country is now leaping into the rank of advanced nations, outpacing western countries in many aspects. However, we must remember that what strengthens our national solidarity is not one-sided chauvinism but a genuine patriotism with which we can overcome authoritarianism, the cold-war mentality and class distinctions, thereby building a new nation and contributing to the promotion of human peace and well-being.

In order to maintain our newly-inspired patriotism and solidarity, all the leading elites of this society should pool their wisdom and take the initiative in making this nation a better place to live in. There are rising demands for the nation to further develop its politics, economy, society and culture in such a way as to gather our newly-found energy and utilize it in order to invest in building a positive future.

If our leaders fail to read the minds of people, their leadership will be surely in peril. At this critical juncture, we should take account of the factors that impede the actualization of our national potential. The leaders of our society (especially politicians), who have been blamed for clinging to their own interests by exploiting regional and factional prejudices and their own personal connections, need to reflect on what they have done. They should learn from the younger generation. In order to meet the demands of people, they are required to transform themselves and realize their own obligations as leaders.

Amid the heat of June, there was truth on the streets. It clearly showed that our society stands at a great turning point. The reward we got from the World Cup cannot be calculated in monetary value alone. For the first time in history, we are given the opportunity for serious self-reflection and dignity in collective joy and enthusiasm.

There are, of course, important conditions that underlay these new developments, to which I will return later. What is suggested above, however, is that the surge of neo-communitarian solidarity led by younger generation was backed up by the IT revolution. Quite distant from the anachronistic chauvinism of the past, this new stream of youth can potentially develop an open-minded global attitude. In fact, the behavioral pattern of young people at present is individualistic in

nature and cynical about established forms of authority. While defying collectivism of the traditional variety, the youth nevertheless emerged as the core of national solidarity and the upcoming neo-communitarian culture. It is, therefore, necessary to pay careful attention to this new trend.

The ground-breaking participatory form of communitarian culture began to manifest itself in Korea since 2000 when "the Citizens' Alliance for the 2000 General Elections" (as an umbrella organization of NGOs), was formed and wielded great influence. This signaled an important change in the paradigm of governance. As an editorial in the *Korea Times* noted on April 16, 2000, "politics has remained by and large the exclusive business of parties and politicians. It was rather insignificant for the citizens to take meaningful part in politics. The idea of popular sovereignty has meant in all practical purposes nothing more than one-time voting rights of individuals during election time." However, an important shift began to take place:

> This no longer appears to be the case. The emergence of the civil society sector has had a powerful impact upon our political process as to profoundly modify such a conventional governing paradigm. Certainly, politics in Korea is no longer a monopoly of parties and politicians. The parliamentary elections last week powerfully demonstrated that this new governing paradigm has set foot in our political system (*Korea Times*, April 16, 2000).

Composed of about 600 individual NGO groups, the Citizens Alliance published a 'blacklist' of 86 candidates they concluded unfit to run for the National Assembly and waged aggressive campaigns through various media including the Internet. They collected all the information of candidates' military service, tax payments, criminal records, and other public records and disclosed the hitherto unknown facts through the Internet. These campaigns were so successful that 59 of the 86 candidates targeted lost, including several political heavyweights. This clearly indicates the increasing potentiality of participatory democracy in Korea.

The success and influence of the civil society organizations in Korea today owes a great deal to the strong student movement during the 1980's, whose cultural origins can be traced back much earlier to the Confucian tradition of the public sphere from the sixteenth century (De Bary, 1991; Kim, 1994). This implies a close affinity between past and

present: as Confucian scholars (*sonbi* or *sarim*) formed a reform-oriented social force in the Choson dynasty only after several decades of Confucian education and campaigns. Similarly, civil society organizations, their value orientations, leadership as well as supportive constituency were made possible today only after several decades of strong popular social movements beginning in the 1960s. These developments in the realm of Korean civil society suggest the possibility of a communitarian approach towards development that is of a more participatory and deliberative nature than authoritarian one, for this reason differing substantially from the experience of Singapore.

The participatory pathway to cultural awakening through the World-Cup street cheering was soon linked to many on-line campaigns and candlelight marches, which in turn wielded significant political influence. In Korea, state power and the establishment have long colluded with each other to serve the vested interests of the powerful. Only as democratization has proceeded, have a few signs of change begun to be felt among the people and the political circles as well. Yet the democratically elected government represented only a minority government, and the reform efforts faced intransigent resistance from the powerful interests of the establishment, which mobilized their substantial resources to impede reform. This raises an important question of how to see the relationship between the formal and official circuits of power working at the level of the government on the one hand, and the informal and substantive circuit of power working through various connections to regional and ideological cleavages in support of the establishment, on the other. And it is precisely in this historical context that a neo-communitarian movement by the younger generation backed up by the Internet played a powerful role to control the hitherto privileged influence of the forces of the establishment.

The presidential election in December 2002 was a good case in point. The young generation proved very capable of collective action in support of political reform, struggling against the conservative media, culture, and society. They organized nationwide on-line activities and astutely combined online and offline campaigns, a strategy which turned out to be very effective and almost cost-free. From November 2002, furthermore, massive protest rallies continued to take place throughout Korea until just before the day of presidential election, demanding for a rewriting of the agreement governing the legal status of American troops in Korea (SOFA). Triggered by the acquittal by a U.S. military court of two American soldiers charged with the death of

two Korean female students, these rallies were initially led by young netizens but rapidly gained enthusiastic mass support all over the country cutting across differences of age, gender, class, and religion. On the Saturday night of December 14th, for instance, more than three hundred thousand Koreans rallied at no less than 57 locations across the nation, including the Seoul City Hall Plaza, holding votive candles and singing songs. They announced 'the day of restoration of national sovereignty', while demanding a fair and equal partnership between Korea and the U.S. These participatory civil moments with a communitarian orientation greatly aided in keeping the influence of the conservative media at bay. The current President Roh Moo-hyun's victory, in fact, owed much to the voluntary participation of these young people and their effective campaigns for mobilization of the supports to the ballot box.

The democratizing effect of candlelight marches by the youth was demonstrated even more vividly by the general elections of April 2004. Since 1998 when the first transition of power from the ruling to the opposition power took place in Korea, democratically elected governments suffered a great deal from their minority position in the National Assembly. Against this background, the conservative opposition parties united to impeach the President for reasons that were perceived by the majority of the people to be politically motivated. The fact that the impeachment happened to coincide with a period when public investigations were under way to examine alleged widespread corruption within these parties further reinforced the perception that the conservative parties were to blame for the political confusion. Profoundly shocked by the National Assembly's act of impeachment, the young people re-launched a series of candlelight marches once again to save the President and to protest against the National Assembly's dictatorial power against the will of the people. The party associated with the president and holding office that time was nothing more than just a small minority party when the general elections took place. However, owing much to the support of the young people who were mobilized to a level equal to the presidential elections in 2002, the ruling party finally won more than half the seats in the national assembly. In this way, the candlelight march (as a symbol of a pro-democratic communitarian movement) paved the road to escape from entrenched authoritarian influences and the oppressive legacy of the establishment on civil society, at the same time as enabling the people to move beyond entrenched Cold-War mentalities and

ideological polarization.

The traditional form of communitarianism with its authoritarian (hierarchical) inclinations, when applied to the problem of paradoxical modernity, may give rise to, at best, an efficient administration with benevolent leadership and the expanded capacity of the state for top-down intervention. One might easily advocate this position in the name of Asian values or Asian traditions. In contrast, the neo-communitarian approach outlined above with its participatory (discursive) orientation casts new light on the reciprocal relationship between structures of governance and the citizens' power of deliberation, as the key condition for overcoming the problematique thrown up by paradoxical modernity. Here the focus is on bottom-up communication emerging from the sphere of civil society. Incidentally one could advocate this neo-communitarian position on the basis of a strong indigenous grounding, being able to make an equal claim to being rooted in authentic Asian traditions and philosophies as the more traditional interpretation of communitarianism. According to the neo-communitarian response to the question of paradoxical modernity, the source of imagination for our future lies primarily in the arena of citizens' participation and deliberation, not in sole dependence on either the market and/or the state.

SOCIO-CULTURAL BASIS OF A NEO-COMMUNITARIAN ALTERNATIVE

So far I have discussed ten salient aspects of paradoxical modernity and three possible pathways that outline alternatives or resolutions to its ambivalences, and I finally argued the case for why we need a neo-communitarian alternative. To substantiate this point, I examined the debate between liberalism and communitarianism in the West and argued that, although there are good reasons for us in East Asia to advocate a communitarian approach, there are inherent dangers to be avoided: the traditionally close link in our region between the communitarian critique to Western modernity and authoritarian leadership and state power, as can be seen in the case of Singapore. I moved further to explore the reasons why we need to develop a neo-communitarian approach, and made use of some examples from recent Korean experiences, such as the World-Cup street cheering and the candlelight marches, in order to clarify the ways in which the neo-communitarian approach differs from the more widely known form of communitarianism with authoritarian inclinations. Finally, the issue

of national identity and democratization was examined from the point of view of overall historical developments, from which vantage point we noted that the pro-democratic candlelight marches should be seen as a concrete case of neo-communitarianism in Korea.

In what follows, I would like to take a more detailed look at the socio-cultural bases of the neo-communitarian approach, which include 1) the formation of pro-democratic, participation-oriented societal forces, 2) the development of the internet as an alternative public sphere, and 3) the subjection of taken-for-granted assumptions to the validation of a post-conventional examination, a cultural process deeply influenced by the waves of globalization.

Each of these points has something to do with different dimensions of the neo-communitarian alternative. It must be stressed, however, that all communitarian movements, whether new or old, view human beings not as isolated individuals but as members of a community, and hence these movements should be seen as a collective actor promoting the achievement of 1) agency and solidarity within itself and between other groups as well, 2) a specific cultural mode of strengthening the shared identity of community, and 3) the extension of the concrete means of communication available in a society. Different combinations of these goals may bring about different historical types of communitarian approach. Having said so, I would like to examine these three conditions in the context of Korea, which will allow us to comprehensively understand the meaning of the neo-communitarian alternative. I will examine the first point in detail and touch upon the remaining two only briefly.

Concerning the question of agency touched on by the first point, I would like to pay attention to the characteristics of those who have been called the "386 generation" in Korea, that is, those in the 30-40 age bracket who entered college in the 1980s and who were born in the 1960s. Today this age-bracket has become the mainstay of the society, leading the IT-related industries as well as many other areas. Through devotion and struggle, this generational grouping has been the initiators of the nation's democratization in the 1980s and 1990s, and they have consequently laid the solid foundations for a tradition of civic participation. In-depth analyses of this generational grouping reveal a lot of interesting details (Han, 2001). First, as they grew up and reached maturity in the midst of a culture of political protest in the 1980s, they have maintained and shared a collective identity as a reform-oriented social force even after their maturation during adulthood. Second, the

386 generation understand themselves as part of the "People" or the "Grassroots," rather than as part of the Establishment. Third, they tend to understand history and society critically from the point of view of their keen attention to the rights and welfare of the common people, rather than merely acquiescing to the monopolization of historical and social process by a handful of power elites looking after their narrow interests. Fourth, they are able to better understand (through their broad social vision) the difficult situation facing such social minorities as women, foreign laborers, the handicapped, the poor, the incarcerated, homosexuals, North Korean defectors, and those stigmatized by being labeled ideologically dangerous such as those on the political left. The 386 generation try their best to embrace these various minorities instead of simply excluding them. Fifth, they are able to maintain a sense of their national sovereignty in contrast to adopting subservient attitudes toward powerful states. Sixth, they show their support and respect to leaders who would rather live up to principles than surrender to unjustifiable and unacceptable compromises. Finally, they are in favor of structural reforms in accordance with global standards, rather than clinging to parochialism and uninformed nationalist preoccupations.

An interesting hypothesis in this regard concerns the formation of a distinctive social force, which I have named the "middling grassroots" (*jungmin*) by which I mean those who understand themselves as part of the middle class whilst at the same time identifying themselves as "People" and/or "Grassroots." The "386 generation" referred to above would constitute the rational core of the middling grassroots. This specific segment of the middle class in Korea can be seen as an outcome of the unique Korean pathway of economic development that has occurred concurrently with the development of the student movement since the 1960s (Han, 1997). It is no accident that the student activists of the 1980s are today most active in defending public interests through NGO activities, at the same time as they are powering ahead in developing IT-related venture firms. It is perhaps due to the 386 generation's disillusionment with the state of party politics and the mass media today, that they seem to be very enthusiastic in developing the Internet as an alternative forum for discussion.

One outcome of compressed modernization in Korea is the existence of marked differences between different generations, and in this sense the middling grassroots and the 386 generation are differentiated quite visibly from the conservative segment of the middle class (largely in their late forties to sixties). The latter have shared the experience of

absolute poverty in their childhood, and have thus been strongly driven to dig themselves out of a situation of material deprivation by any means. Equipped with high energy and motivation with this goal in mind, they have been the major carriers of rapid industrial modernization. Therefore, this older generation has been largely preoccupied with materialistic values, being eager for upward mobility. With a strong concern to maintain the status quo of economic development, they preferred political order and stability rather than change, whilst subjecting themselves to an authoritarian rule which they took for granted. What makes the middling grassroots distinctive in this regard is the fact that they have continued to maintain their reformist identities even after their entry into mainstream social institutions. They have remained critical of the authoritarian aspects of politics and society, while being predisposed to support political reforms and reconciliation with repressed others. Since they have enjoyed a childhood relatively free from poverty, it is natural for them to prefer such values as self-expression and participation.

The reason why we can see these people as being the major actor capable of pursuing the neo-communitarian approach is two-fold. Firstly, they share a common identity, a sense of mutual empathy and belonging. Thus, they are psychologically predisposed to join, or at least to support the various movements for participation initiated by their members, neither through the force of any formal organization or collective interests, but purely through a calling emanating from a shared sense of identity. In this sense, we might say that they are embedded within a neo-communitarian culture the extent of whose impact may nevertheless differ from one section of the group to another. Secondly, this generation is far better placed than any others to understand the problems of socially marginalized people, minorities, the poor, and so on, and thus are capable of constructing an inclusive community with extended solidarity. Let us examine the self-understanding of the 386 generation on the basis of results from a recent survey.[1]

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[1] These data were collected from the students who had taken my class 'Introduction to Sociology' at Seoul National University from 1981 to 1989. Each semester I gave the students an assignment of preparing one's own biographical analysis by focusing on the conflicts and strains imbued in the transition from the stage of conventional morality to that of a post-conventional one. The reports collected were about two thousand and four hundred altogether. As of 1999 when the first longitudinal research started, only half of them were identified of their current addresses and workplaces. Thus, an intensive

TABLE 1. SELF-UNDERSTANDING OF 386 GENERATION

Questions	Agree(%)
The members of the 386 generation are highly critical of their established surroundings	90.9%
The 386 generation suffer from a tendency to bestow too much "meaning" on everything: they are too ideologically conscious	75.8%
The 386 generation are more sympathetic to and understanding of marginal groups than any other generation.	75.2%
The 386 generation feel they live somehow "in debt" to the '*minjung*' or the common working-class people	73.8%
There exists a close sense of identity and of deep solidarity among the members of the 386 generation.	72.7%
The 386 generation are more rational in their thinking and more democratic in orientation than any other generation.	63.7%
The 386 generation draw a clear distinction between good and evil, friend and foe.	54.3%
The 386 generation do not discriminate against or dislike others on the basis of differences of opinion.	51.9%
The 386 generation lack specialization of knowledge as compared with those who are currently in their 20's.	45.3%
The 386 generation are relatively free from "geographic and academic favouritism." (bestowing favours on those from the same geographical origin or academic background as oneself.)	42.9%
The 386 generation is an unfortunate generation unable to realize its ideals and dreams	42.3%
Currently the 386 generation value the individual more than the group.	39.6%
The members of the 386 generation are hypocritical.	33.4%

The self-image depicted in Table 1 clearly indicates that the members of the 386 generation have developed a strong sense of identity, being quite conscious of their own potentials and limitations. An absolute majority of respondents admit to being critical of the Establishment.

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questionnaire was sent to them together with a copy of their reports written in the 1980s. Of 1200 samples for a longitudinal analysis, about 650 returned the questionnaire.

They admit that they are more inclined to identify with ordinary people than with the ruling elites, enabling them to nurture a sympathetic understanding of, and solidarity with the plight of repressed minorities. At the same time, three out of four admit that they are conscious of being too ideologically biased. In addition, more than half of them admit that they are still not free from the clutches of regional and/or educational favoritism.

The second socio-cultural basis for the neo-communitarian approach concerns developments in the technological dimension of communication. What attracts our attention first is the explosive increase in the number of internet subscribers and its widespread use. In 1999, the number of internet subscribers was merely 3.7 million, but this number had soared up to some 4 million by 2000, 7.8 million by 2001, and 10 million by October 2002. By the end of 2001, Korea stood at the world's top in terms of its internet subscription (with a rate of 17.2 per 100 people), followed by Canada (8.4%) and Sweden (5.0%). At present, Korean users spend more time on the internet than their counterparts in any other country. Furthermore, the increase in Internet use from October 1999 to December 2001 was explosive from 33.6 percent to 93.3 percent in the age group from 7 to 19; from 41.9 percent to 84.6 percent among people in their twenties; and from 18.5 percent to 61.6 percent among people in their thirties. As of December 2001, 88.4 percent of elementary pupils, 99.8 percent of middle school students, 99.0 percent of high school students, and 99.3 percent of college students are using the Internet. The impact of the Internet on society at large cannot be underestimated.

In this regard, care must be taken to take note of the similarities and differences between those in their thirties (who facilitated the nation's democratization) and the succeeding digital generation. One might define the former as a 'politicized, social-movement generation' and the latter as a 'relatively conservative depoliticized generation.' Others might say that the former catalyzed the political eruption of the June uprising in 1987, while the latter created the "cultural eruption of the 2002 World Cup." Despite so many empirical differences, however, these two groups share one important common characteristic, that is, an underlying motivation to escape from the constraints of the established order and its norms. In other words, those in their thirties have spearheaded the struggle against the military dictatorship while the succeeding digital generation is in the midst of attempting to critically verify a variety of moral and cultural issues through their daily lives.

On the surface, the former seems to be collectivistic and ideologically oriented whilst the latter appear to be highly individualized. But both of them share a post-conventional way of thinking and, as a consequence, are strongly motivated to critically re-examine through experience their own taken-for-granted assumptions.

Does the Internet foster a participation-oriented communitarian culture? It can be argued that the Internet does indeed make possible a new form of direct democracy by opening up a space for two-way debates. Given the fact that democracy is founded on the free acquisition and verification of information by which citizens can make their own decisions, horizontal exchange and free access to information through the Internet and the ensuing political participation that it makes possible is sure to promote and facilitate democracy. In particular, issues excluded from the major agenda-setting political process for certain reasons can be actively raised on the Internet. Many instances can be cited of this having occurred in the Korean context.

But the communitarian implications of the Internet need further specification, as the on-line campaigns differ significantly from off-line organization. One may argue that the Internet actually promotes egocentric behavior without consideration for others, as may be the case with e-shopping, e-banking, e-gambling, internet pornography, and so on. But when and where the Internet provides alternative public spheres working effectively, a countless number of people voluntarily participate in on-line hearings and debates while seeking the information that they need. They are free to communicate with each other. Entry and Exit is totally open and free of obligations. While dealing with a specific topic on an issue site, on-line alternative communities are built which presuppose neither a fixed identity nor consistent organizational behavior. Instead, the flow of communication continually moves back and forth, forming an ever-changing on-line public opinion and encouraging voluntary participation. On-line communities of this kind are flourishing everywhere in Korea cutting across regional, class, generational, and educational boundaries. In short, the on-line community fostered by the Internet is more based on individual choices and decisions than off-line organizations, is more voluntaristic than mobilized, more flexible than fixed. Thus, we can conclude from all this that the Internet fosters a participation-oriented communitarian culture, especially when the leading force of the Internet culture is one firmly committed to the progress of democratization.

The third background condition for the neo-communitarian alternative

is related to a post-conventional re-examination of societal norms, which presupposes the increase of a reflexive attitude. Traditions then can never be simply taken for granted, due to the fact that they persist only "in so far as they are made available to discursive justification and are prepared to enter into open dialogue not only with other traditions but with alternative modes of doing things" (Giddens, 1995: 105). In this context, Giddens speaks of the "post-traditional society" as "the first global society."

> A post-traditional society is not a national society — we are speaking here of a global cosmopolitan order. Nor is it a society in which traditions cease to exist; in many respects there are impulses, or pressures, towards the sustaining or the recovery of traditions. It is a society, however, in which tradition changes its status. In the context of a globalizing, cosmopolitan order, traditions are constantly brought into contact with one another and forced to 'declare themselves' (Giddens, 1995: 83).

The ability to verify accepted norms and values through a post-conventional re-examination implies the possibility of deconstructing some taken-for-granted assumptions whilst at the same time reconstructing some other long abandoned or un-popular traits with normative validity. The proper way to assess the significance of Confucianism in East Asia is a good case in point. In Korea, for example, empirical research shows that the young people are disposed to be far more critical than the older generations over the control-oriented (authoritarian) aspects of Confucianism, whereas they are more in favor of the humanistic tenets. This implies that the young people are neither totally rejecting nor accepting in an uncritical and conventional manner the Confucian heritage as a whole, but are drawing selectively from the pool of inherited wisdom with the benefit of a global perspective. This also means that the emergent neo-communitarian alternative is not synonymous with the old style of nationalism and ethno-centrism, but is an entirely new kind of phenomenon in which an individual choice is harmonized in an organic unity with the principles of collective solidarity.

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HAN SANG-JIN is Professor of Sociology in Seoul National University. He was President of the Academy of Korean Studies and Chair of the Presidential Commission on Policy Planning in South Korea. He got Ph. D. from Southern Illinois University. His academic concerns include Political Sociology, Social Theory and Civil Society. He is author of a number of books, including Jungmin iron-ui tamsaek *(Searching a Theory of Middling Grassroots) (1992).*