

these artificial concepts are both “benevolence” and “righteousness”, but for Rawls, an unrealistic one is “benevolence” only and he needs “the right”. Lastly, both assume an ultimately free society. If either version of society is realized, the members will be liberated from any stress which we are currently experiencing under many circumstances such as work, school and relationships. Freedom is not mere liberation. Chuang Tzu and Rawls teach us that true freedom is not just escaping from constraints, but to become aware of our innate human nature.

### Notes

- 1) *The Book of Chuang Tzu*, Translated by Martin Palmer, et al. Penguin, 1996, e-book edition, No. 1456.
- 2) *ibid.*, No. 1462.
- 3) *ibid.*, No. 1472.
- 4) *ibid.*, No. 1477.
- 5) *ibid.*, No. 1493.
- 6) *ibid.*, No. 1513.
- 7) *ibid.*, No. 1518.
- 8) *ibid.*, No. 1523.
- 9) *ibid.*, No. 1529.
- 10) Samuel Freeman, one of the most important defenders of Rawls, says, “Rawls believes … that to attribute to the parties moral motivations or benevolence towards each other would not result in definite choice of a conception of justice”. (“Original Position”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/original-position/>])

and acts on the basis of the right. Selfishness and altruism is toward specific persons in either oneself or others. On the other hand, the reasonableness assumes a universal view of human being, practices duty and obligation, and pursues the right society and tries to realize it. That is why Rawls does not rely on benevolence to choose a right principle, since the benevolence demands too much and people cannot support the principle which they select from the benevolent motivation. Without people's long-term endorsement, the society which the principle creates is unstable.

But unlike Chuang Tzu, Rawls needs the concept of the right (in Chuang Tzu's term "righteousness"), because without the right, in other words, the sense of justice, people cannot sustain the social order for the right reason. By "for the right reason" is meant both that the basic structure of society should be compatible with each member's good and that the principle which embodies the basic structure should be sustained by each member's sense of justice.

Rawls accepts that one's own good is much more important than others' good and that it is human nature. Though the contents of "human nature" are different between Chuang Tzu and Rawls, they agree that a social world should be built on the basis of human nature, because social rules contrary to human nature are not sustainable. Rawls considers humans as innately moral beings, but for him "morality" does not mean benevolence. "Benevolence" here is taken as sacrificing one's own good to advance others' good. Rawls insists that for a society to be stable, both the rational and the reasonable endorse the principle, and that under the original position, the rational is slightly more important than the reasonable, since under the completely fair condition, people choose a right principle with only the rational. Complete fairness guarantees the right choice even only from rationality. And also, according to Rawls, it corresponds with human nature.

Through these investigations, we have learned the similarities and the differences between Chuang Tzu and Rawls. First of all, they agree that we have to build a social world with listening to human nature. For Chuang Tzu, they are Way and Virtue and for Rawls, it is the good, namely a rational plan of life. Secondly, both of them make the same argument that social rules contrary to innate nature are not sustainable, but for Chuang Tzu,

For a principle to be fair, the principle should give benefits to anyone equally. To find the solution, we must forget all specific knowledge on our own situations. At the same time, they are indifferent to each other under the original position. Indifference is not the same as self-centeredness. They regard family, friends and their community as important. In that sense, they are partially altruistic. "Partially" means that they do not sacrifice their own interest to advance strangers' benefits, but they take care of their loved ones. They are indifferent to each other in terms of not putting others' benefit first, and also not doing harm to others from a purely evil intent. In addition, a rational person is not driven by jealousy.

However, the rational person is not necessarily completely indifferent to others' purposes, and he or she might help friends to accomplish their purposes. But it is ultimately to advance his or her own purposes. If people around him or her get good results, that is also good for him- or herself.

Human beings have two moral powers: the reasonable and the rational. The reasonable is the power which distinguishes between the right and the wrong, and the rational is the power which selects appropriate means to accomplish purposes. The reasonable is about the right and the rational is about the good. The good is a collection of values, and the ultimate good for the person is a rational plan of life.

Any human being has both of the reasonable and the rational. They are innate nature. People may think that if someone exhibits the reasonableness more than the rational, that person is respectable. But we cannot and should not disdain the good. The important thing is that the rational is consistent with the reasonable. People cannot abandon the good and devote him- or herself to the right only. That is too unrealistic. If a right principle imposes only the right on people, they soon discard the principle, which means that the society is unstable because people do not want to support the principle on which the society is based. For the society to be stable, the principle should be realistic, and for the principle to be realistic, it should consider the people's self-interest. And the self-interest in this case is a rational plan of life.

The reasonable is not altruism. Altruism takes care of others' good and sacrifices his or her own good in order to accomplish others' good. The reasonableness considers the right for human and the right for the society,

the two moral powers in everyday lives and for that we need freedom, and also to choose a principle under the original position, we utilize the two moral powers to find the best one. But in the latter case, we need the rational at first, since unless the principle is cohesive with the people's self-interest, the principle cannot deliver a stable society.

Humans in everyday lives make numerous decisions and act based on them. And they reflect their own past behavior and try to improve the results the next time. Calling this sequence of thinking, action and reflection "practical reasoning", the basis of the practical reasoning are the two moral powers: the reasonable and the rational.

Rawls thinks that humans are innately moral beings and the moral powers are the reasonable and the rational. And freedom is the necessary condition in which we use, cultivate and develop the powers.

For Rawls, a rational person is not self-centered. He or she cherishes associations with family and friends, and knows that to get identity we need to belong to a community. Therefore, they do not advance only their own interest and not ignore the interest of the community. But they are not benevolent in a sense of sacrificing their own interest to advance the interest of the community. They are rational in terms of making contributions to the community, but that does not mean that they are benevolent and altruistic. They are rational and think about their self-interest since to sustain their identity they need to support the community.

To choose a right principle, Rawls assumes the original position. That is the fairest way to compare principles. "Fair" in this context means that people under the original position do not know specific information such as his or her identity, who they are, their social status, where they live, their health conditions, which generation they are born into, their family's financial abilities and so on.

The reason why they should be ignorant of particular knowledge about themselves is that if they know some or all information, they make decisions on the basis of the knowledge. If you are rich, you will endorse free market economy because that system makes you richer. If you are healthy, you will not accept the universal health care, because you pay for the insurance more than you get for the treatment.

us move on to Rawls. For him, to build a peaceful society we do not need “benevolence” but do need “righteousness”. Rawls uses “the right” instead of “righteousness”. He says that to build a peaceful and stable society, we must endorse a right principle. Here “stability” is a very important concept. For a society to be stable, the members of the society should actively support the principle, which establish the basic structure of society. To guarantee the stability, the principle has to be right.

However, when a rational person chooses the principle under the original position, benevolence is not needed<sup>10)</sup>. Rather, if he or she does not select a principle which is cohesive with his or her self-interest, that principle cannot sustain stability.

Chuang Tzu does not mention “freedom” but his simple life has a lot of freedom. But that freedom is different from freedom in the western sense. Chuang Tzu’s freedom is just to live a simple life according to human nature. On the other hand, the western freedom means being without constraints, especially prohibiting the violation of human rights by states. That is why modern western political philosophy has dealt with liberty, democracy and the justification of state’s intervention.

What is interesting in Rawls’s argument is that his freedom is slightly different from the traditional notion of freedom. From the age of enlightenment to the present, freedom has been defined as “liberation from state’s intervention”. Rawls talks about freedom in terms of to realize the human nature. For Rawls, freedom itself is not a purpose, but rather it is a means to use human’s innate powers. Freedom is a condition in which human beings exert their own abilities.

Rawls does not consider humans as empty beings liberated from any constraints from outside worlds. Usually, freedom is taken as no regulation, and no matter what people put into the empty inner space after being liberated, that is not the true meaning of freedom. On the other hand, Rawls supports a specific worldview. Rawls insists that human beings innately have two moral powers: the reasonable and the rational. The former is the power which distinguishes the right and the wrong, and the latter is the power which finds appropriate means to ends.

The two moral powers are fundamental abilities for human, because we use

to live up to this. Is this not because benevolence and righteousness have changed our basic nature?"<sup>4)</sup>

Chuang Tzu argues that by bringing "benevolence" and "righteousness", the society lost order and became chaotic. He also mentions "wisdom" and says that it has no relation to "benevolence" and "righteousness". He challenges the common sense again. "My description of wisdom has nothing to do with benevolence and righteousness, it is to do with being wise in one's own virtue, nothing more. My description of being wise has nothing to do with benevolence and righteousness, it is that one should be led by one's innate nature, nothing more."<sup>5)</sup>

Chapter 9 begins with the story of horses' hooves. It is about "the innate nature of horses". Then, a man called Po Lo appears and tries to train horses, but many horses died. Chuang Tzu concludes that he killed the horses because he ignored the inner nature of horses, and says "I think that someone who truly knows how to rule the world would not be like this. The people have a true nature, they weave their cloth, they farm to produce food. This is their basic Virtue. They are all one in this, not separated, and it is from Heaven. Thus, in an age of perfect Virtue the people walk slowly and solemnly. They see straight and true."<sup>6)</sup> The contemporary Japanese must listen to Chuang Tzu. We have forgotten our nature and that is why we are struggling to live everyday lives under a lot of pressures.

Chuang Tzu continues, "In this time of perfect Virtue, people live side by side with the birds and beasts, sharing the world in common with all life."<sup>7)</sup> We might think that to establish peace we need an artificial contract among people. But according to Chuang Tzu, we do not need this type of agreement. All we have to do is just to live our lives with following our human nature, and the human nature is not special things but just to live a simple life. Therefore, he questions; "If the Tao and Te -Way and Virtue -had not been ignored, how could benevolence and righteousness have been preferred?"<sup>8)</sup> We do not need "benevolence" and "righteousness" to establish a peaceful society. Rather, they are harmful because they are the opposite of the inner nature. "The abuse of the Tao and Te -Way and Virtue -to make benevolence and righteousness, this was the error of the sage."<sup>9)</sup>

After discussing Chuang Tzu's "benevolence" and "righteousness", let

is that Chuang Tzu uses the words “benevolence” and “righteousness” and Rawls also talks about these two concepts. As I said, the eastern and western thoughts are different. The best way to understand the differences is to investigate the same words which both camps use and to find the similarities as well as the distinctions. For Rawls, “benevolence” and “righteousness” (in his case “the right”) are very important to build his society. In this sense, their ideas are very different, but their purposes are the same. To see the differences of each usage must be interesting.

Chuang Tzu deals with these two concepts mainly in Chapters 8 and 9. Chapter 8 starts with the story of webbed toes. Chuang Tzu affirms being natural and denies being artificial, and takes “benevolence” and “righteousness” as contrived, not arising from human nature. He writes “Perhaps then, benevolence and righteousness are not an inherent part of human nature? For look how much anxiety is suffered by those who wish to be kind.”<sup>1)</sup>

“The benevolent person of today looks at the evils of society with distressed eyes, while people who are not benevolent uproot their proper inborn nature and rush after wealth and honour. The conclusion, therefore, is that benevolence and righteousness are not part of the true nature of humanity!”<sup>2)</sup>

Chuang Tzu does not talk about society construction but this story can be interpreted as how to build a peaceful society. For Chuang Tzu, to make a society based on “benevolence” and “righteousness” is not appropriate, because it is not natural. Rather, a society should be constructed based on human nature, and the nature is to live according to Tao and Te, which are translated as “Way” and “Virtue” respectively. He says “There is no point in holding to benevolence and righteousness, like a mixture of glue and varnish, ropes and bands, as a means of trying to journey in the Tao and Te –the Way and Virtue –for this merely confuses everything under Heaven.”<sup>3)</sup>

Chuang Tzu emphasizes the contrast between naturalness and artificialness of “benevolence” and “righteousness” using the example of the Emperor Shun. “A minor deception alters the sense of purpose. A major deception alters the very nature of a thing. How is it that I can be so certain this is so? Ever since the time of the ruler Shun, who began to teach about benevolence and righteousness, everything under Heaven has been troubled and distorted by this and everything under Heaven has never ceased rushing about trying

western political philosophy, Confucianism should be the representative of the eastern corner, because Confucianism's "virtue" has been studied in the comparison with Aristotle's "virtue". However, Confucianism's way of seeing the world is based on the concept of hierarchy. Even though there are some similarities between Confucius's and Aristotle's virtue, and Aristotle's worldview is also based on hierarchy, this kind of study seems old-fashioned from the contemporary point of view both in the east and the west. This essay's purpose is to understand the eastern thoughts from the western way of thinking, which means that we have to choose an idea which has the concept of equality. It is sure that any society needs the leadership education and Confucianism is the best textbook to train leaders. But Confucianism is too practical and it lacks cosmology and metaphysics. We need an idea that includes a worldview and the concept of human equality. Confucianism's hierarchy does not deny the human equality. Confucianism deals with the real and present society. In that society, any organizations are inevitably hierarchical. Given that, Confucianism talks about practical issues such as management and work ethics. The reason why we need the concept of human equality is that to discuss a primitive situation, we have to bring the concept of equality. To investigate the fundamental circumstances before human society is built, we hypothesize the human equality. That is, the concept of equality is not ethical, but metaphysical.

And lastly, as I said, this essay's purpose is to understand the eastern ideas from the western point of view, not to get practical solutions for our society's problems. Therefore, we need to investigate worldviews, which means that we have to deal with metaphysics and epistemology as well as ethics and morality. I am not sure that Taoism is the best one, but it is the most accessible in terms of availability of materials. But it speaks a lot. That it is easy to get books means that the ideas which the books are expressing are popular. Taoism has both ontology and ethics, and still has many followers. That is why Taoism can be seen as one of the most important ideas in the eastern thoughts.

As for John Rawls, some comments are required. If you choose Chuang Tzu, you must bring Kant or Hegel from the western corner. One of the reasons why this essay ignores both of the greatest western philosophers is just that their ideas are too big for the present author to talk about. The other reason



## How to build a Social World——Rereading Rawls in an Eastern Way

HigashiNippon International University  
Affiliate Professor Hiroyuki Morita

We do not have to emphasize the difference between the eastern and the western thoughts, because they are definitely different. Eastern and western ways of thinking are incompatible in terms of how to see the world as well as history and tradition.

Because of, not in spite of, the differences, it is good to reflect one's own way of thinking from the other point of view. The problem is that for Japanese it should have been natural to see our thoughts from the western point of view, but what has been happening is exactly the opposite in modern Japan. We have been completely accustomed to the western way of thinking and are not familiar with the eastern ideas and thoughts.

Then, sometimes it is a better way to know the eastern ideas from the western point of view. If we get used to the eastern thoughts through the comparison with the western thoughts, we might be able to rediscover our soul which is based on the eastern way of seeing the world.

This essay deals with Chang Tzu and John Rawls. Many people may wonder why these two thinkers are put in one article. There are three reasons. Firstly, from an outsider point of view (that is, a novice on Chinese philosophy), there are three factions in the eastern thoughts; Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Buddhism is too vast for the present author to deal with. Buddhism includes not only ontology and epistemology but also ethics and other practical issues such as ways of living and other lessons on human relations. Also as Buddhism is geographically widespread all over the half hemisphere, it is difficult to specify one integrated doctrine. Before starting to discuss Buddhism, we have to understand the difference between Indian Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism. Then I have to skip Buddhism this time.

Secondly, many people might think that to compare the eastern and the