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Civic Republicanism and Democratic Politics—Michael Sandel and Contemporary Theories of Political Community*

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Abstract

This article examines the relevance of Michael Sandel's republican project in contemporary society. I first sketch Sandel's original position, then his turning from communitarianism to civic republicanism. The focus will be on "formative politics" in the civic republican tradition. My contention is that Sandel's differentiation of republican political community from traditional communities is of vital importance as it provides grounds for distinguishing Sandel's idea of constitutive community from that of Charles Taylor, another notable communitarian-republican theorist. Sandel

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emphasizes the formative capacity of democratic practices, while Taylor advocates linguistic community as the ultimate constitutive community. This ontological difference leads to democratic republicanism in the case of Sandel and an uneasy vacillation between civic and cultural nationalism in the case of Taylor. The formative politics of democratic republicanism is interpreted and expanded by way of Bruce Ackerman's dualist democracy. This article concludes by considering the practical implications of democratic republicanism for Asian countries.

Key Words: Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, Bruce Ackerman, Democracy, Republicanism

I. Introduction: Democratic Republicanism in the Age of Globalization

Political philosophy has undergone a remarkable change in the past several decades. John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971) re-established the autonomy of political philosophy as a discipline, rebutting the claim of "decline of political theory" made by behaviorists like Davis Easton (1951). Rawls's theoretical enterprise, however, was criticized as too metaphysical to be relevant for the understanding of human agency and political community in the real world. Michael Sandel is one of the most prominent critics of Rawls in this regard. This article examines the relevance of Sandel's republican public philosophy in contemporary society, emphasizing his turning from communitarianism to democratic republicanism.

The issue of public philosophy constitutes the core of his recent works, as his famous book *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* begins with the following statement:

By public philosophy, I mean the political theory implicit in our practice, the assumptions about citizenship and freedom that inform our public life. The inability of contemporary American politics to speak convincingly about self-government and community has something to do with the public philosophy by which we live. (Sandel, 1996: 4)

Sandel's analysis, acclaimed by Michael Walzer (1998: 177) as "a wonderful example of immanent social criticism," highlights the intrinsic particularity of public philosophy. A tension may seem to arise given Sandel's depiction of the "global politics" (Sandel, 1996: 338-351), especially his recognition that "Self-government today . . . requires a politics that plays itself out in multiplicity of settings, from neighborhood to nations to the world a whole. Such a politics requires citizens who can think and act as multiply-situated selves." (1996: 350)

However, the apparent tension dissipates when one explores the

very possibility of a public philosophy sensitive to the cultural contexts of non-Western countries, as well as the relevance of Western political discourses to these countries. Republican self-government and the related idea of “formative politics” expounded in Sandel’s more recent works, when interpreted *for* Asian contexts, provide an important mode of political practice alternative to both traditionalism (if not cultural or religious fundamentalism) as well as the self-proclaimed universalism of procedural liberals in these countries. Or so I shall attempt to argue.

This article is organized in the following way. I first sketch Sandel’s original position, then his turning from communitarianism to civic republicanism. The focus will be on the “formative politics” in the civic republican tradition. My contention is that Sandel’s differentiation of republican political community from traditional communities is of vital importance as it provides the grounds for distinguishing Sandel’s idea of constitutive community from that of Charles Taylor, another notable communitarian-republican theorist. Sandel emphasizes the formative capacity of democratic practices, while Taylor advocates linguistic community as the ultimate constitutive community. This ontological difference leads to *democratic republicanism* in the case of Sandel and an uneasy vacillation between civic and cultural nationalism in the case of Taylor. The formative politics of democratic republicanism is interpreted and expanded by way of Bruce Ackerman’s dualist democracy. This article concludes by considering the practical implications of the political republicanism for Asian countries.

II . Sandel’s Turning from Communitarianism to Republicanism

Sandel’s career began with *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, a most thorough critique of John Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*. The Rawlsian neo-Kantian project has been hailed as a monumental work that revived political theory, which had been pronounced dead by

David Easton during the monotonous age of behaviorism. Sandel, together with Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, and Michael Walzer, soon launched critical analyses of Rawlsian procedural liberalism and were designated as the major communitarian thinkers. Collectively, their works and debates completely changed the landscape of contemporary political theory.

The arguments of *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, though presented as criticisms of Rawls, are sophisticated and of great philosophic depth. The work elaborates two related issues: the ideas of human agency and community underlying the Rawlsian project. With regard to human agency, Rawls upholds the voluntarism that posited a self prior to the ends from which he can freely choose. This capacity to choose constitutes the core of the deontological self, that is endowed with unfringeable rights to be protected, irrespective from the goods or ends of the free choices. This ideal of autonomy, cherished dearly by liberals, was demonstrated by Sandel to be fundamentally flawed in that it detaches the self from the community and becomes an “unencumbered self” without the capacity for genuine moral dialogues in intersubjective relations with other people (Sandel, 1982: 58-60).

With regard to the idea of community, Sandel argues that these unencumbered selves can form only an instrumental union, or at most a sentimental one: the former referring to a community wholly external to individuals, the latter influencing the feelings and sentiments of those engaged in a co-operative scheme like the Rawlsian idea of a “social union.” However, neither reaches the level of “constitutive community,” which is of ultimate importance in shaping the members’ identities. The constitutive type of community describes not what citizens have but who they are, and provides indispensable moral resources or ethical attachments for individuals’ quests of self-understanding (Sandel, 1982: 148-150).

Opposed to the flawed vision of procedural liberalism, Sandel concludes his early book with the following remarks:

For persons encumbered in part by a history they share

with others, by contrast, knowing oneself is a more complicated thing. It is also a less strictly private thing. Where seeking my good is bound up with exploring my identity and interpreting my life history, the knowledge I seek is less transparent to me and less opaque to others. (Sandel, 1982: 181)

This historicist task of self-understanding is relevant for both individuals and communities, and the community and individuals' quest for identity are closely related; thus "communitarianism" was an adequate designation of Sandel's original position.

Sandel famously distinguishes three kinds of community: instrumental, sentimental, and constitutive. What distinguishes constitutive community is the fact that the others are related merely to utilitarian or emotional considerations, while the constitutive goes to the core of the agent's identity:

(This) community describes not just what they have as fellow citizens but also what they are, not a relationship they choose (as in a voluntary association) but an attachment they discover, not merely an attribute but a constituent of their identity. In contrast to the instrumental and sentimental conceptions of community, we might describe this strong view as the constitutive conception. (Sandel, 1982: 150)

As his arguments proceed, it is clear that the concept of human agency in Sandel's early communitarianism is inspired by Charles Taylor's idea of a "strong evaluator" (Sandel, 1982: 160-161). Thus, the early Sandel insists that

for a society to be a community in this strong sense, community must be constitutive of the shared self-understandings of the participants and embodied in their institutional arrangements, not simply an attribute of certain of the participants' plans of life. (1982: 173)

A philosophic quest in this direction would be characterized by seeking one's good in a historical mode, particularly through

exploring one's identity and interpreting one's life history (1982: 181).

While Rawls revised his neo-Kantian project as a "political, non-metaphysical" liberalism owing to the communitarian criticisms, Sandel moved from the pure communitarian vision to the republican ideal of self-rule. As he reflects,

A number of political philosophers writing in the 1980s took issue with the notion that justice can be detached from considerations of the good. Challenges to contemporary rights-oriented liberalism found in the writings of Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Michael Walzer, and also in my own work, are sometimes described as the "communitarian" critique of liberalism. *The term "communitarianism" is misleading, however, insofar as it implies that rights should rest on the values or preferences that prevail in any given community at any given time.* Few, if any, of those who have challenged the priority of the right are communitarians in this sense. (Sandel, 2005: 212-213; my italics)

A "pure" communitarianism may be seen in MacIntyre's defense of patriotism (MacIntyre, 1994), and occasionally be detected in Walzer's differentiated spheres of justice (Sandel, 2005: 271-272). Sandel's development after *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, however, is toward civic republicanism. He endeavors to retrieve aspects of early American republicanism, which were encroached upon and replaced by rights-based liberalism. The history of American public philosophy thus shows a cleavage between contemporary procedural liberalism and the classical tradition of civic republicanism.

It is in this context that Sandel revises his early communitarian position. Still opposed to the liberal perspective of "the priority of the right over the good," he highlights two possibilities of the antithetical position that "justice is relative to the good": One upholds that principles of justice derive their moral force from values widely shared in a particular community; the other emphasizes that justifications of the principles of justice depend on the ends or intrinsic goods they

serve for their moral force (Sandel, 2005: 253-254). Sandel designates the first version as “communitarian,” the second as “teleological” or “perfectionist.” He adopts the teleological perspective, because communitarians “make justice the creature of convention” and this deprives the communitarian idea of justice of a critical perspective on social convention. Although Sandel does not criticize Taylor’s theory, I believe that Taylor’s theories of cultural communities and nationalism are reflective of the first version of justice, as will be argued in next section.

The achievement of Sandel’s “republican turn” is *Democracy’s Discontent*. In this provocative book, Sandel reconsiders American constitutional and political history. The thematic unity of the book, in Sandel’s own depiction, is:

How the liberal conception of citizenship and freedom gradually crowded out the republican conception involved two intersecting tales. One traces the advent of the procedural republic from the first strings of American constitutionalism to recent debates about religious liberty, free speech, and private rights. Another traces the decline of the civic strand of American political discourse from Thomas Jefferson’s day to the present. (Sandel, 1996: 6)

His major contention is that contemporary discontent with American democracy is mainly derivative of this displacement in public philosophy because the result is a reshaping of citizens’ attitudes that renders them indifferent and apathetic agents in the public realm.

Sandel’s book stimulated a wide-ranging debate on republicanism, liberalism, and the requisite public philosophy for the American society (Allen & Regan, 1998). As this is a debate in the context of American public realm, the focus is inevitably on the historical adequacy of Sandel’s dualistic account of American political history as well as its contemporary implications. The terms of the debate are particularly “American”—exactly what Sandel should have expected, and believed was the adequate mode for vivid moral dialogues within a particular community.

Sandel characterizes republicanism in the following terms in *Democracy's Discontent*:

Central to republican theory is the idea that liberty depends on *sharing in self-government* . . . According to republican political theory . . . sharing in self-rule . . . means deliberating with fellow citizens about the common good and helping to shape the destiny of the political community. But to deliberate well about the common good requires more than the capacity to choose one's ends and to respect others' rights to do the same. It requires *a knowledge of public affairs and also a sense of belonging, a concern for the whole, a moral bond with the community whose fate is at stake*. To share in self-rule therefore requires that citizens possess, or come to acquire, certain qualities of character, or civic virtues. . . . The republican conception of freedom, unlike the liberal conception, requires a *formative politics*, a politics that cultivates in citizens the qualities of character self-government requires. (Sandel, 1996: 5-6; my italics)

Because of the historical mode of discourse, Sandel is not engaged in a systematic account on the theoretical elements of republicanism. For this purpose, Aronovitch (2000: 630-631) provides one succinct reconstruction:

- R1 (Civic) Republican freedom means sharing in self-government.
- ∴ R2 A self-governing republic, a kind of community, constitutes a vital common good, prior in precedence to rights and rules of justice.
- R3 Republican freedom and the self-governing republic require participation in deciding about the content of the common good.
- ∴ R4 Various civic virtues, virtues of citizenship, are required.
- ∴ R5 The formative role of politics/government: government must be committed to cultivating and inculcating the above virtues and creating and sustaining the community to which they contribute.

RF Republican Foundation/Supporting Idea: Conception of the person as an encumbered self.

As the idea of self-government is the essential attribute of, even definitional to republicanism,¹ the crucial theoretical issue is on the modality of formative politics.

III . Two Modes of Formative Politics

Sandel's inquiry is conducted in the mode of historical narrative, attempting to demonstrate the canonical status of republican discourse for an adequate interpretation of American constitutional history. In theoretical terms, it seems to echo Taylor's advocacy of *retrieving lost moral resources*, as opposed to liberal deontology (Taylor, 1989: 504). In contrast to Taylor, however, Sandel no longer deploys sophisticated theoretical conceptualizations as was the case in *Liberalism and the Limit of Justice*. This is a deliberate strategy in order to set up the terms of the ensuing debates as particularistic and historical, rather than postulating the universal principles to be applied for the country.

However, for Asian readers who are inevitably outsiders to the moral dialogues within the American society, the implications of Sandel's republican public philosophy could be work out only with greater effort. Deontologist liberals in an Asian country can always pretend to universal principles, picking up the most recent—and thus most “advanced” or at least “novel”—liberal theory from the Western context, and preaching it in their own country. The works of an array of liberal thinkers—Karl Popper, Friedrich Hayek, Robert Nozick, Rawls, and Ronald Dworkin—have been so deployed, despite their differences, not only in Taiwan, but, I believe, in many other Asian countries. No such convenience is available to those inspired by the

¹ Thus I cannot agree with the “reworking” of Sandelian republicanism by Philip Pettit (1998). By replacing self-government with non-domination as the core of republicanism, Pettit reduces the *raison d'être* of republican formative politics. See Shaw (2003) for my criticism on this juristic turn of neo-Roman republicanism of Quentin Skinner and Pettit.

particularistic discourse of civic republicanism in non-Western countries as is the case for deontological liberals. A considerable theoretical effort would be necessary to ground republicanism in the entirely different cultural context. A crucial issue to be resolved is: *What is to be done if retrieved moral resources are essentially incommensurable with the civic republican spirit?* In the American context, because civic republicanism was indeed the constitutive tradition, Sandel can easily repudiate fundamentalism and procedural liberals' "drift to formless, protean, storyless selves" as two prototypes of corruption (Sandel, 1996: 350). Confronting traditionalists and procedural liberals in other societies would not be so easily done. In the latter cases, the formative politics necessarily requires a rearticulation to adapt to a society in which republicanism is an aspiration and not historically constitutive.

I believe that there are two modes of formative politics viable for republicanism, one nationalistic, the other democratic. Charles Taylor's defense of nationalism (Taylor, 1993, 1997) represents the former, while Bruce Ackerman's dualist democracy represents the latter. These two contemporary theories will be discussed in order.

A. Charles Taylor's Pluralistic Nationalism

In responding to *Democracy's Discontent*, Taylor (1998) opts for a Herder-Humboldt line of Romantic thought, pursuing a totality that embraces difference. A modern "nation" or "people" is the embodiment of this differentiated, plural totality. Taylor explains the context of nationalism in terms of the modern political imagination of the "people," which constitutes the fount of both democratic politics and nationalism. Unfortunately, there seem to be some tensions underlying Taylor's arguments, especially that between the civic republican and nationalistic strands.

When criticizing procedural liberalism, Taylor resorts to the civic republican ideal of self-government as an alternative concept of common good as opposed to the liberal idea of rights (Taylor,

1985, 2: 217; 1995: 141-142). The good of self-rule is set against the liberal idea of rights, and their differences designated as providing a contrast between the “genuinely common good” and “mere convergent good” (1995: 141). In Taylor’s critique of liberalism, republican ideas of self-government and patriotism are posited as the second-order goods that made liberal regime viable. However, in his writings on nationalism (Taylor, 1993, 1997), republican self-government is regressively characterized as also inviable if not accompanied by the nation as a precondition of existence. The civic republican strand in Taylor’s political theory is thus overshadowed by the nationalistic strand, though he attempts to present a pluralist type of nationalism.

For Taylor, the exercise of modern popular sovereignty is mediated through the formation of an extra-political public sphere as an indirect power to check the arbitrary exercise of governmental authority. The public sphere is a “republic constituted beyond the political” (Taylor, 1995: 266). There is, nevertheless, a question for modern democracy: “What exactly are we assessing when we concern ourselves with the quality of our collective decisions?” (1995: 273) The key to solving this question, Taylor suggests, resides in citizens’ self-understanding:

The conditions for a genuine democratic decision can’t be defined in abstraction from self-understanding. They include (a) that the people concerned understand themselves as belonging to a community that shares some common purposes and recognizes its members as sharing in these purposes; (b) that the various groups, types, and classes of citizens have been given a genuine hearing and were able to have an impact on the debate; and (c) that the decision emerging from this is really the majority preference. (Taylor, 1995: 276)

Although condition (b) is a justification of his famous theory of the politics of recognition, it is condition (a) that is relevant for the present discussion. How could citizens have the self-understanding that they belong to a community and share some common purposes?

To have this self-understanding presupposes that they form a unity, a “we” that understands together (Taylor, 1995: 139). This further presumes a cultural community. The result is that the “national culture” constitutes the vital source for enhancing the self-understanding of citizens about their commonality (1995: 202-203). The nation thus becomes constitutive condition of democratic politics.

Taylor provides a succinct syllogism that recapitulates his justifications for this turn toward nationalism:

We can argue (i) that the conditions of our identity are indispensable to our being full human subjects; (ii) that, for people today, a crucial pole of identification (in some cases, the crucial pole) is their language/culture and hence their linguistic community; thus (iii) the availability of our linguistic community as a viable pole of identification is indispensable to our being full human subjects. Now, (iv) we have a right to demand that others respect whatever is indispensable to our being full human subjects (for example, life and liberty). Therefore, (v) we have a right to demand that others respect the conditions of our linguistic community being a viable pole of identification. (Taylor, 1993: 53-54)

Because of their functions in the development of individual identity, cultural and especially linguistic communities play the most prominent roles in Taylor’s nationalism and politics of recognition. It is notable that, in this conceptualization, the cultural community tacitly assumes a status beyond “condition.” It is objectified, even reified. It becomes the proper *bearer* of recognition. Cultural community, originally designated as a resource for the formation of personal identity, becomes the subject of recognition. Taylor’s “survival thesis” (1994: 52-55)—that the survival of a cultural community “trumps” the claims of individual rights—could be justified only by this reversal of subject and predicate.

The problem is that the cultural rights of minority groups not only override the pseudo-universalism of procedural liberalism, but there are also detrimental implications for civic republicanism.

Procedural liberals commit the fallacy of “bracketing” the moral attachments from individuals who engage in voluntaristic choices (Sandel, 1996: 349). By contrast, Taylor’s nationalism commits the opposite fallacy of “reifying” the national community and effectively removing it from civic deliberations. In either case, republican self-government is overshadowed by essential entities with ontological priority: unencumbered self or all-embracing nation. The *energia* of civic activities retreats backstage.

B. Bruce Ackerman’s Dualist Democracy

I believe that Taylor’s national or cultural argument is not the only viable mode of formative politics, nor is it the one most suitable to ground Sandelian republicanism. An alternative mode of formative politics for republican self-government requires a *jurisgenerative politics*, as in Frank Michelman’s stipulation:

Republican thought thus demands some way of understanding how laws and rights can be both the free creations of citizens and, at the same time, the normative givens that constitute and underwrite a political process capable of creating constitutive law. (Michelman, 1988: 1505)

Ackerman’s dualist democracy is one such example of formative politics. It distinguishes two levels of decision process in a democracy. The first is a decision by the people themselves, which is designated as higher lawmaking that embodies the general will of the people during the “constitutional moments”; the second is a policy by government, which is designated as “normal politics.”

Normal politics takes the form of governance by politicians conducting within the constitutional architecture. The “private citizens” in this arena need not concern themselves beyond their private interests. Liberal pluralism is the ideology for normal politics. Interest groups and elections are two mechanisms that characterize normal, pluralistic, democratic politics. While normal politics is the

politics of everyday life, it has obvious limitations. From the republican perspective, normal politics cannot be self-generative, nor can it maintain the liberty of private citizens. It cannot be self-generative because the issue of founding the constitutional framework within which the normal politics takes place smoothly cannot be explained by the pluralist psychology. It is not enough to elaborate certain rational and transcendental norms that would be accepted under an ideal situation; what is required is a historical condition under which citizens accept the constitutional norms. As a result, normal politics cannot maintain liberty because this task would require civic virtue (Ackerman, 1991: 230-265).

Consequently, the normal politics in the liberal-pluralist tradition must presume certain rare *constitutional moments*. During constitutional moments, citizens transcend their private interests and become devoted to the deliberation for the cause of the common good. Their objective is to participate in civic engagements and moral debates in order to devise or change the fundamental norms of the community. Ackerman further enlists three fundamental characteristics of higher lawmaking in the constitutional moment. First, a revolutionary change in constitutional order should have “the sustained support of a substantial majority.” Second, any revolutionary initiative must have gained “the considered support of a self-conscious and deliberative majority.” Third, “the dualist constitution gives the call for a new beginning special status in the legal system. The new principles will serve as higher law and will trump the outcomes of normal politics,” until the next successful revolution (Ackerman, 1992: 14-15). These elements constitute republican formative politics as opposed to both the simple majoritarianism of British *monist democracy* and the liberal *rights fundamentalism* (Ackerman, 1991: 7-16).

IV. Formative Politics and Democratic Republicanism

After sketching the two viable modes of formative politics, the

next issue to be considered is which one better grounds Sandelian republicanism. I believe that dualist democracy is more suitable, for it presents a *self-grounding and self-sustaining public realm*. Unlike Taylor's resort to nation to "constitute" the democratic public sphere, civic identities are generated and sustained by the fact that citizens *act*: They actively participate in the democratic process and deliberate. As Hannah Arendt (1977: 151-165) has highlighted, action and political freedom are closely related. Given changing circumstances, existing beliefs and fundamental norms may need to be re-articulated by all members of the community. The vitality of forming ethical bonds constitutively is achieved by elaborating the moral grounds of one's beliefs and mediated through the intersubjective discussions and deliberations, not fearing to modify or revise one's own convictions.

With this interlude into relevant contemporary theories, we are in a better position to respond to some liberal criticisms of Sandel. Will Kymlicka represents a modified liberal position (Kymlicka, 1989; 1997), but he is still against Sandel's depiction of unencumbered self:

What is central to the liberal view is not that we can *perceive* a self prior to its ends, but that we understand our selves to be prior to our ends, *in the sense that no end or goal is exempt from possible re-examination*. (Kymlicka, 1989: 52; italics original)

Textually *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* may justify Kymlicka's criticism, but the same is not true after Sandel's republican turn. For communitarians, the ends are indeed exempt from possible re-examination and revision because they are "constitutive" of individual identities. However, in republican formative politics, by contrast, *these reexaminations and revisions of ends and norms should take place in the democratic public realm, while peer citizens deliberate collectively*. This republicanism is, in Taylor's term, a form of "holistic individualism" (Taylor, 1995: 185). The difference with Taylor is that the holistic context is the public realm constituted by civic engagements, rather than extra-political culture or linguistic community that transcends and constitutes the public realm.

Another liberal critique of Sandel, raised by Richard Dagger (1999), is related to the issue of autonomy. Dagger believes that, after liberals make concession on the issues of the sense of community and civic engagement, republicans “must be also to count on a commitment to liberal principles, such as toleration, fair play, and respect for the rights of others,” otherwise “Sandel is in the danger of undercutting his position by threatening the liberal principles upon which he implicitly relies” (1999: 184). The critical issue turns out to be whether republicans must accept the *liberal* conception of autonomy without falling into the aporia of self-subverting enterprise (1999: 184, 193). As Sandel’s response clarifies (Sandel, 1999: 212-214), he rejects both the individualist concept of autonomy as well as Kantian notion of autonomy as indispensable to republican self-rule.

Discussion of republican independence or democratic autonomy can start neither from the individualist idea of preference, nor from the Kantian person who is prior to the ends, but rather must necessarily begin from Rousseau’s system (Dagger, 1999: 204-205). However, Rousseau’s unitary image of the general will would undercut Dagger’s argument for a hybrid of liberalism and republicanism (Sandel, 1999: 213-214). Sandel opts for the Tocquevillian project of decentralized republican community, while Ackerman reformulates the Publian vision into a republican theory of jurisgenerative politics. Unlike Kant’s moral conceptualization, these projects emerge from political experience rather than metaphysical speculation. The Kantian perspective reverses Rousseau’s democratic republicanism and leads to a depoliticized anti-democratic definition of the republic closer to the liberal constitutionalism, but remote from the republican tradition (Kant, 1970: 100-102; 1991: 147-149).

V. Concluding Remarks: Democratic Republicanism in Asian Contexts

The Sandelian project exemplifies the contemporary revival of classical republicanism. Public philosophy is the philosophy of *res publica*, or matters of common concern. “Common concern” relates mostly to the affairs of the community itself, but in many cases it may not be limited within state boundary. As Sandel also emphasizes the multiply-situated self (Sandel, 1996: 350), issues on all levels can be brought *into* the public realm for deliberation. Globalization has resulted in the emergence of a number of public affairs that affect humankind at large, such as the effects of global warming and the recent worldwide financial crisis. With very few exceptions, however, public affairs are still handled within the boundaries of the state, a particularistic political community.

This intrinsic particularity need not entail traditionalist fundamentalism. Pure communitarianism would be welcomed heartily by conservatives or traditionalists in the Asian countries. The reason is obvious: Communitarianism demonstrates that the cultural tradition constitutes an inescapable moral resource for the members. Any meaningful activities must be conducted from within the tradition. The traditionalists need no philosophical depth to appreciate communitarian arguments. The rising of China as a powerful state and the current resurgence of neo-Confucian fundamentalism in Chinese conservative circle provides a case in point. The main contention of this article is the problems inherent in this communitarian vision, and the intellectual reasons for Sandel’s differentiation of his thought from that of pure communitarianism.

From the perspective of democratic republicanism, formative politics in Asian countries requires the *opening up of the democratic public realm*. All members—the traditionalists, Westernized modernists, and the post-modernists—need to bring into the public realm their moral convictions and political values, and engage in their

elaboration and articulation, and attempt to persuade their fellow citizens. Moreover, the discussions would have to be conducted *teleologically*; that is, moral dialogues in the republican vein require that agents to elaborate their particular concept of justice with regard to the form of the good life to which this would contribute. Unlike Taylor's theories of cultural community and nationalism, Sandelian moral dialogue is democratically oriented and open-ended. No political or cultural values could be so "entrenched" as to be beyond challenge: The formative force of democratic deliberation will transform and shape the values of communities.

This surely does not mean that public deliberations can solve all the issues related to moral beliefs once and for all. On the contrary, republicanism confronts the risk of politics and embraces the ideal of continual dialogues, sometimes even political struggles:

Republican politics is risky politics, a politics without guarantees. And the risks it entails inhere in the formative project. To accord the political community a stake in the character of its citizens is to concede the possibility that bad communities may form bad characters. (Sandel, 1996: 321)

To borrow Arendt's metaphor, we must learn to live without banisters. The risk cannot be evaded either by liberal entrenchment or fundamentalist closure, as many proponents believe. Entrenchment and closure only lead to apathy and hypocrisy.

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公民共和主義與民主政治： 沈岱爾與當代政治社群理論

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摘 要

本文檢視美國政治哲學家沈岱爾的共和主義論述，以及其對當代社會的意涵。筆者分析了沈岱爾原始的社群主義立場，以及其後轉向公民共和主義的歷程，特別著重於分析他如何擷取共和主義傳統中「形塑政治」的思想資源。本文的主要論旨在於強調沈岱爾將共和式政治共同體由傳統社群加以區分的重要性，而此點也構成了他與另一位重要的社群主義者泰勒的重要區別。沈岱爾強調民主實踐的形塑能力，而泰勒則著重於語言社群的構成意義。這個本體論上的差異導致了沈岱爾偏向「民主共和主義」的政治理念，而泰勒則擺盪於公民共和主義以及文化民族主義兩極之間。本文進一步透過美國法學家阿克曼的「雙元民主論」來擴充民主共和主義的形塑政治潛能，最後並考慮此共和主義做為公共哲學對於亞洲國家的實踐意涵。

關鍵詞：沈岱爾、泰勒、阿克曼、民主、共和主義