

## **Community without Harmony? A Confucian Critique of Michael Sandel**

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Michael Sandel has been one of the most powerful critics of liberalism in the past decades. His work, especially in *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, exposes some of the fundamental flaws of Rawlsian liberalism and shows the need for a community-based framework in order for us to adequately understand and appreciate the concept of the individual and just society. Confucians can endorse many of Sandel's critiques of liberalism. From a Confucian perspective, however, Sandel's version of communitarianism is nevertheless too thin for a robust communitarian society. Confucians maintain a thick notion of community and take it to be vital to human flourishing. In this essay, I first discuss a key point where Confucians converge with Sandel as an example of the common ground between the two philosophies before turn to one important difference between them. The key point of convergence is about the circumstances of justice; the difference is on harmony. Harmony lies in the very center of the Confucian notion of community, whereas it has been given no place in Sandel's conception of community.<sup>1</sup> This essay offers a Confucian critique as well as an endorsement of Sandel's communitarian philosophy.<sup>2</sup> It also extends a friendly invitation to Sandel for him to take harmony into his conception of community.

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<sup>1</sup> The word "harmonious" occurs once in the book when Sandel writes, "Now imagine that one day the harmonious family comes to be wrought with dissension." (Sandel 1998: 33) Here the word is used evidently in a positive sense but without conceptual significance. Sandel does not elaborate on how a family is harmonious and why harmony is an important characteristic of a family.

<sup>2</sup> I should note that Sandel cautions that he is not communitarian in the majoritarian sense that the majority is always right or in the view that "rights should rest on the values that predominate in any given community at any given time." (Sandel 1998: x)

I begin with Sandel's powerful argument on the circumstances of justice. This is important because it has to do with how we determine what value or values are primary for a good society. John Rawls's theory of justice is built on his conviction of the primacy of justice in society. Rawls writes,

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. (Rawls 1979: 3)

For Rawls, justice is not merely one virtue among many or merely one value among other values for a good society. It is the primary value against which all other values are to be gauged in any human society. As Sandel put it, for Rawls, "justice is the standard by which conflicting values are reconciled and competing conceptions of the good accommodated if not always resolved." (Sandel 1998: 16) On such a conception, in evaluating a society the first question to ask is whether it is just, regardless of the type of society in question. This understanding of justice, as Sandel pointed out, fails to take into consideration adequately the importance of the circumstances of justice. The circumstances of justice refer to a society's background conditions that necessitate certain mechanisms in order for the society to function. Following Hume, Rawls divides these circumstances into two types. The objective ones refer to such facts as the relative scarcity of resources. The subjective ones include the fact that individual persons have different interests and ends in their lives. Rawls holds, at least implicitly, these conditions are universal and thereby make justice the primary virtue of any society. However, as Sandel argues, justice is not the first virtue of social institutions absolutely, but conditionally, as physical courage is to a war zone. (Sandel 1998: 31) In this view, the decrease of the need for justice may indicate improved society. Sandel writes,

If the virtue of justice is measured by the morally diminished conditions that are its prerequisite, then the *absence* of these conditions—however this state of affairs might be described—must embody a rival virtue of at least commensurate priority, the one that is engaged in so far as justice is not engaged. (Sandel 1998: 32)

Sandel's analysis reveals the remedial aspect of justice as a virtue. Justice is called on to "fix" things when they are broken, so to speak, or at least to prevent social institutions from falling apart. However, do the circumstances of justice always and universally obtain? Sandel maintains that it is not always so, or at least not so in certain spheres in society. For instance, in a more or less ideal family situation, in which relations are governed largely by spontaneous affection, the circumstances of justice obtain only minimally. Justice in the more or less ideal family does not play a central role not because injustice prevails but because family members interact out sufficient mutual affection and care. In such a situation, it would not be appropriate to take justice as a primary virtue. (Sandel 1998: 33) We can just as easily imagine similar circumstances in a traditional tribal society when the situation is more or less ideal.

Sandel's argument in this regard is largely aligned with Confucian social and political philosophy. We find classical Confucian thinkers making their case in somewhat similar (though still different) terms as Sandel. They saw two main apparatuses in regulating and facilitating the operation of society. One is called "*fa* 法", literally meaning law. The word has been closely associated with *xing* 刑, criminal laws. The other is called "*li* 礼", usually translated as "ritual" or "ritual propriety." It encompasses a whole host of social norms, etiquettes, and ceremonies that aim to cultivate people's sense of appropriateness and affections toward one another. Cultivation though *li* leads people towards becoming

*ren* 仁, namely human-heartedness or benevolence, or a characteristic disposition of kindness towards others.<sup>3</sup> To use a perhaps overly simplified example, if you say “good morning” and smile at someone whom you pass by every morning on way to work, and he does the same back, you two will gradually develop a positive attitude towards each other and will be more inclined to care about each other. Moreover, you will be more disposed to be kind towards people in similar circumstances and in general. The Confucian ideal is to practice *li* in order to cultivate people’s sense of care and benevolence towards fellow human beings and to establish and maintain positive relationships in society. Though the Confucian notion of *fa* does not amount to justice in the Rawlsian sense, it is congruent with the general sensibilities of justice in that it sets rules against behaviors that damage social fabric. Classical Confucian thinkers did not regard *fa* as without value, however. They held that a good society should not rely on *fa* (or *xing*) as the primary measures to govern its operation. Confucius maintained that if we rely on criminal laws to manage a society, people may stay out of trouble, but they will not develop a moral sense of “shame” (*chi*), and only by way of practicing *li* can people not only stay out of trouble but also develop a moral sense of shame. A moral sense of shame will guide people to steer clear of bad behavior. (*Analects* 2.3) For Confucians, when society has to rely heavily on using *fa* or *xing*, it is an indication that social fabric has deteriorated.<sup>4</sup> The Confucian classic *Kongzi Jiayu* (“Confucius’s Family Teachings”) records that when Confucius served as the minister of justice in the state of Lu, he was

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<sup>3</sup> *Ren* is a key concept of Confucian ethics. The term has been used by classical thinkers to describe the primary quality of a person of ideal virtuosity. Broadly speaking, it can be understood as a caring disposition towards fellow human beings and beyond. See Li (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Confucius reportedly commented that, in “ancient times” criminal laws were rarely used because people’s behavior was mostly led by ritual propriety, and now they had to use criminal laws abundantly because ritual propriety deteriorated. See *Kong Cong Zi: on Xing*, section 1. <http://ctext.org/kongcongzi/xing-lun/zhs>. Accessed on 15 September 2016.

able to assist the king to achieve a social order where a penal code was made but had not to be applied as there were no wicked people.<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the historic accuracy of this record, it makes the point abundantly clear: Confucians strive for a society where justice does not have to be the primary virtue. As important as justice is, it may not be the primary measure for a society when *li* and the virtue of *ren* prevail. Indeed, promoting *li* and *ren* has been the primary concern for Confucian thinkers. Their goal has been to create a social environment where the circumstances of justice are such that justice does not have to be the first virtue of all virtues.

In the Confucian view, practicing the virtues of *li* and *ren* establishes positive human relationships. These virtues enable people to develop a strong sense of community. In such communities, the highest virtue is harmonious relationship rather than justice. It is in this regard, Confucians see a major lack in Sandel's notions of self and community: Sandel's notion of community is one without harmony as a defining characteristic.

To be sure, Sandel's conception of community is profoundly different from that of Rawls. Rawls also attaches a positive value to community, but such a value is subordinate to the value of right. To use Sandel's characterization, in Rawls, "community must find its virtue as one contender among others within the framework defined by justice, not as a rival account of the framework itself." (Sandel 1998: 64) In other words, for Rawls, communitarian aims can be pursued after the principles of justice and the concept of right are established, not prior to or in parallel with them. Coupled together with the principle that the right is prior to the good is that self is prior to community. Sandel argues, Rawls' thin conception of the self falls far short in providing a foundation for Rawls to establish

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<sup>5</sup> <http://ctext.org/kongzi-jiayu/xiang-lu/zhs>. Accessed on 5 September 2016.

a coherent account of justice in society. A well-founded conception of justice requires a conception of community that penetrates the self profoundly and defines the bounds of the self beyond what is drawn by Rawls. Sandel maintains that community is far more than an instrumental good that provides conditions for the self in pursuit of its own aims or an object of benevolent feelings that some members of society may develop and use as motivations for certain common pursuits. Rather, community is inescapably part of people's identity. In Sandel's words,

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. (Sandel 1998: 150; italics original)

In this sense, citizens of the same community do not only share communitarian sentiments and pursue communitarian aims but also conceive their identity as constituted by the community in which they are a part. Without a strong notion of an identity-constituting community, Rawls cannot bridge the gap between his conception of the individual in the original position, on the one hand, and the principles of justice, on the other. To do this, a constitutive conception of community is needed. Therefore, Sandel argues, community cannot be understood as merely an attachment to be added to the self after the original position stage when individuals begin to pursue their pluralist aims. Such a conception of the self that is grounded in community must be antecedent to any reasonable conception of justice.<sup>6</sup>

Confucians would unhesitatingly endorse Sandel's conception of community as a primary value. In the Confucian view, personal identity is in part constituted by social

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of Sandel's notion of self, see the chapter by Paul J. D'Ambrosio in this volume.

relationships and it is integral to the very fabric of the community. However, in the Confucian view, the importance of community in Sandel's philosophy makes the lack of harmony not less but even more conspicuous. To illustrate this point, I will now turn to the Confucian conception of harmony and its close connection to community before revisiting Sandel's argument against Dworkin's justification of affirmative action. I aim to show that, without a concept of harmony, not only do Dworkin and Rawls fail, even Sandel is unable to make a strong case in support of affirmative action.

Because of widespread misconceptions of harmony, I will first explicate what Confucian harmony is and what it is not. From the beginning, classic Confucian thinkers refused to take harmony as merely the absence of strife or as indiscriminate conformity to social norms. They developed a conception of harmony by an analogy to soup-making and orchestrated music. In harmony, each component (ingredient of a soup or an instrument of music) contributes to the overall condition in which each can realize its potential and yet together with others they form a whole that brings out the best of each. Understood this way, harmony (“*he*” 和) is best understood as a verb rather than a noun, indicating a productive ongoing process rather than a finished state of affairs. Instead of mere agreement or conformity, Confucian harmony is a dynamic, developmental, generative process, which seeks to balance and reconcile differences and conflicts through creativity and mutual transformation. (Li 2014: ch. 1) This Confucian philosophy of harmony was initially developed against a background of disharmony. Much of the pre-Qin Chinese philosophy during the “Spring-Autumn” and Warring States periods can be understood as various responses and proposed solutions to the problem of disharmony of that period. Disharmony is characterized by disorder and conflict. Seeking alternatives to disharmony, people found either domination or harmony. Domination exists when one

party (or more) controls the other (or others) by direct force or explicit and implicit threat of undesirable consequences. The essence of domination is power. Domination may co-exist with peace and may thus present the appearance of harmony, but such peaceful states are not examples of harmony. Domination usually comes with order, but it is a forced order with the use or threat of the use of violence, a kind of order with a high human cost. Ancient Confucian thinkers did not take domination as harmony because there is no actual mutual engagement that is constructive to all parties, nor is there an adequate measure of equity in mutual recognition and compensation, which is crucial to harmony. Besides domination, harmony is the other alternative to disharmony. In this regard, ancient Confucians promoted a form of harmony that is characterized with active engagement in a constructive fashion by involved parties, with equity between them as a crucial condition. When Confucius famously claimed that the *junzi* (君子 morally cultivated persons) seek harmony without going along with the flow un-principledly (*he er bu liu*, *Zhongyong*, ch. 10) and that the *junzi* harmonize without becoming the same with others (*he er bu tong*, *Analects* 13:23), he identified one of the most important characteristics of harmony. It is worth noting that the Confucian idea of harmony was initially developed as an alternative to domination that is disguised as harmony. In the classic text of *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, Chapter Zhaogong Year 20, the philosopher Yanzi distinguishes harmony from conformity (*tong* 同). In a conversation with the duke of Qi, the duke bragged about his relationship with his minister Ju, who was always in agreement with the duke. Yanzi pointed out that the kind of relationship between the duke and Ju is mere “being the same” (conformity) rather than harmony. Yanzi used the examples of making a soup by mixing various ingredients and making music by orchestrating various instruments as examples of harmony, in contrast to the duke’s case. For Yanzi, the relationship between the duke and the minister should be a harmonious



one, not one of conformity. Just like making a tasty soup calls for integrating various ingredients, some of which even carry opposite flavors, a harmonious relationship presupposes that people engage one another with different perspectives and different views on various issues. This is evidently not the case with the duke and his minister. The minister was without his own independent voice and was merely in conformity with the duke. In light of the above discussion of domination, we can say that it is no coincidence that the minister always held the same opinions as the duke. The duke had power over the minister. Out of fear or a desire to please the duke or both, the minister always had to agree with the duke, creating the appearance of the two always seeing eye to eye on everything. This is a classic example of domination disguised as harmony. In history, this kind of misconception of harmony has been used from time to time in place of harmony, and has given Confucian harmony a bad name. But that is not what classic Confucian thinkers have advocated when they explicated their philosophy of harmony.

While the difference between harmony and disharmony is usually obvious, the difference between harmony and domination is not always clear and sometimes can be made blurred deliberately. Dominating forces tend to disguise domination as harmony. The confusion of domination with harmony is the greatest challenge to the ideal of harmony today as it was over two thousand years ago. In his influential book *Open Society and Its Enemies*, Karl Popper made Plato's idea of justice as harmony the main target of criticism. For Popper, Plato's idea of conflict-free harmony leads to totalitarianism and it is contrary to freedom (Popper 1945). Plato's conception of harmony of the three parts of the soul and of the three classes of people in society is characterized by one element dominating others. It is a model for domination rather than harmony in the sense harmony has been understood explicated in the Confucian tradition. Largely because of this tendency in

taking harmony as conformity and domination, the pursuit of harmony in a diverse world is often regarded in contemporary West as naïve at best and harmful at worst. The Confucian conception of harmony, however, should be distinguished from not only disharmony but also from domination. Confucian harmony is based on a strong conception of community and on constructing dynamic and equitable human relationships. In harmonious communities, each individual not only forms and discovers his or her identity, but also contributes to the identity and the good of other members; in harmonizing with others, each person benefits from the contributions by fellow community members. In the Confucian conception, the community is not merely a collection of individuals with disparate aims of pursuit, as Rawls would have it. Nor is the community an identity-constituting social body without an overall defining character, as it seems to be the case with Sandel. To be sure, members of Sandel's community can be equipped with such personal characteristics of affection, benevolence, and responsibility, but these are not overall characters of the community as a whole. The Confucian conception of community is a social harmony that is to be realized by its members through mutual transformation for the common good.

Now we turn to the issue of affirmative action as a testing case. Affirmative action has been a troubling issue for some liberals because it exposes a deep contradiction between their philosophy and their moral intuition. On the one hand, their liberal philosophy is based on the "trump card" of individual rights, which supposedly allow their holders to act in certain ways, even if certain social aims would be served by doing otherwise. (Dworkin 1984) On the other hand, an understandably strong moral intuition compels these people to think certain social aims, including affirmative action, must be served, even if it results in restricting individual rights, which otherwise would have to be

upheld. Accommodating such a moral intuition, some liberals have resorted to rather creative approaches to reconcile the contradiction. Ronald Dworkin tried to justify affirmative action on the basis of its social utility, presenting a rather awkward position that does not sit well with his rights-based anti-utilitarian philosophy. Rawls would justify affirmative action on the ground that people's natural talents do not belong to individuals but are "common asset." (Rawls 1971: 101) Rawls's approach may be defensible on the ground of certain metaphysics of personhood, but it is nevertheless not commonsensical to people on the street. Few people would accept that their natural talents are really not theirs but a common asset. Moreover, as Sandel has argued, "a wider subject of possession" is needed in order for Dworkin and Rawls to make their case; without an adequate conception of community-based and community-constituted self, they cannot justify their support for affirmative action. (Sandel 1998: 149) Sandel writes,

Where this sense of participation in the achievements and endeavors of (certain) others engages the reflective self-understandings of the participants, we may come to regard ourselves, over the range of our various activities, less as individuated subjects with certain things in common, and more as members of a wider (but still determinate) subjectivity, less as "others" and more as participants in a common identity, be it a family or community or class or people or nation. (Sandel 1998: 143)

Sandel's solution is a subjective one in that he relies on the individual's exercise of "reflection" to discover her community-based identity. In the case of law school or medical school admissions, when a candidate of a racial majority with slightly higher academic score is passed over for a candidate of an underrepresented racial minority, the former's "sacrifice" is in the service of a common endeavor with the latter. Instead of feeling being used for the benefits of others, proper reflection on one's identity will

enable the former to feel that he or she is making a contribution to the community of which he or she is part. The former's "sacrifice" is justified on the ground that he or she contributes to the realization of a way of life in which his or her identity is bound.

(Sandel 1998: 143)

Confucians would support Sandel's point, but they will consider it nevertheless inadequate. Confucians would agree that, in the above affirmative action case, the candidate of a racial majority should, upon proper reflection, realize that he or she is making a contribution to a common endeavor and that by making a contribution to strengthening the community, his or her own identity is also enriched. In Confucian philosophy, this kind of community-minded understanding is not to be achieved merely through reflection, no matter how deep and thorough such reflection is. Rather it is to be achieved through a long-term project of self-cultivation. Through cultivation, one develops a proper sense of self and sees one's own success and flourishing as more aligned with those of the community, not opposed to it. But Confucians do not stop there. In the Confucian view, Sandel's solution is still very much focused on the individual person and on reflection, which is more of a theoretical than a practical virtue, to borrow a distinction from Aristotle. Confucians would offer an additional persuasion based on social harmony, extending their solution beyond focusing on the individual and beyond theoretical and subjective reflection.

In the Confucian view, social harmony is essential to the good life. Or to put it in even stronger terms, social harmony—understood in the Confucian conception of it—is the good life. In harmonizing with fellow citizens of our community (or different levels and overlapping varieties of communities), we each realize our own potentials and flourish. In

harmonizing with others, we develop relationships with others, and become a good person, a good family member, and a good citizen in our community. If the candidate of a racial majority with slightly higher academic scores has actively engaged in community-building by constructing harmonious relationships with others, including members of underrepresented racial minorities, he or she will be more likely to feel the need for racial equality and to share a strong sense of a common cause of the society. He or she will be more likely to feel his or her case as a worthy contribution to social harmony. This is not to deny that, sometimes, people may need to endure sacrifice in order to promote the common good in the community, which would in turn enrich the person's own life. A flourishing community is like a beautiful garden. One kind of plant, no matter how impressive it is individually, does not make a good garden. One kind of flower, no matter how beautiful each is separately, does not make an astonishing bouquet. In the Confucian view, a single type of thing, no matter how good it is, cannot make harmony. Yanzi emphasized that "mixing water with water" does not make a soup (not to mention a good soup).<sup>7</sup> Shi Bo, another ancient philosopher made a similar point that "one note does not make music, one thing does not generate a colorful pattern, one fruit does not make much flavor, and one item presents no comparison."<sup>8</sup> Diversity is a necessary condition for harmony. In the case of affirmative action, social harmony requires racial diversity and a balanced racial representation in stations that are highly prized in society. Persistently disadvantaging a racial minority in a society is contrary to achieving a harmonious society. Even though one person loses an opportunity to attend a particular medical school or law school, his community is strengthened; he and his children will be better

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<sup>7</sup> “以水济水，谁能食之” . <http://ctext.org/chun-qi-u-zuo-zhuan/zhao-gong-er-shi-nian/zhs>. Accessed on 9 September 2016.

<sup>8</sup> “声一无听，物一无文，味一无果，物一不讲。” <http://ctext.org/guo-yu/zheng-yu/zhs>. Accessed on 9 September 2016. “味一无果” (*wei yi wu guo*) literally means that one flavor does not make a fruit.” It may have been a type-setting error. I render it as “one fruit does not make much flavor.”

off because his community is strengthened and (more) harmonized. A more harmonious society is not only beneficial to fellow citizens but also for oneself in the long term. From the Confucian perspective, social harmony provides a strong justification for affirmative action and similar social policies. The Confucian approach goes further than Sandel's in that it not only connects personal identity to social relationships but also provides an account of what kind social relationships and what kind of community should be promoted.

Let me add a more recent example to further illustrate the point of Confucian harmony. Singapore has begun a serious national discussion about making the nation's presidency more racially representative and balanced. A multi-racial society, Singapore's population consists of approximately 74% ethnic Chinese, 13% Malays, and the rest being Indians, Eurasians, and others. Singapore has long made social harmony a central goal of its nation-building aspiration. It is no secret that such a theme has a historical and cultural connection to Confucian philosophy as does much of its political vocabulary.<sup>9</sup> For the majority of Singaporeans, social harmony is of vital importance to their nation as well as to their individual lives. The nation has a parliamentary system, with the president primarily serving as the ceremonial head of the state. Constituencies of its parliamentary election are classified as either single member constituencies or group representation constituencies. Group representation constituencies are contested by teams of candidates

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<sup>9</sup> In a 1987 interview with *The New York Times*, Lee Kuan Yew said, "Looking back over the last 30 years, one of the driving forces that made Singapore succeed was that the majority of the people placed the importance of the welfare of society above the individual, which is a basic Confucianist concept." (<http://www.nytimes.com/1987/01/04/world/western-influence-worries-singapore-chief.html>) Accessed on 28 September 2016. To this day, Singapore's Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth still hosts a National Steering Committee (NSC) on Racial and Religious Harmony, and periodically organizes a "Filial Piety Campaign," without associating it explicitly to Confucianism.

from different political parties. In each group representation constituencies, at least one candidate of each team of a party must be from a minority race (i.e., non-Chinese).<sup>10</sup> This system guarantees minorities are represented in the parliament no matter which party's candidates are elected. It also encourages (or even compels) political parties to actively recruit and cultivate minority members. The system hence directs political parties to be racially diverse and inclusive.<sup>11</sup> Since 1993, Singapore has selected its presidents by popular vote through direct election. Since then, Singapore has elected three presidents, two of whom have been ethnic Chinese and one Indian. A recent survey shows that, while people generally believe their president can come from any race, the majority of every racial group prefers a president of their own race.<sup>12</sup> This has caused concerns that, as the nation state becomes more democratic and relies increasingly on its citizenry to pick political leaders of their own preferences with less and less paternalistic influence from political leaders (the nation's founding father prime minister Lee Kuan Yew died in 2015), the chance of electing a minority president will diminish. Recently, a constitution commission proposed a constitution amendment that would guarantee the representation of all racial groups in the office of the president. One proposed solution is that, when a member of any racial group has not occupied the president's office after five continuous terms, the next presidential election will be reserved for candidates from that particular racial group.<sup>13</sup> If such a plan is materialized, proponents maintain, it will ensure that the

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<sup>10</sup> The opposition party (The Workers Party) won its first ever GRC in 2011. A recent study shows that increases in the district magnitude of the group representation constituencies also have had the effect of improving women's political participation. (Tan 2014).

<sup>11</sup> Singapore's system is in direct contrast to the one in its next-door neighbor Malaysia, where some major political parties are exclusively race-based and explicitly forbid minorities from becoming members.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singaporeans-respect-people-from-all-races-but-quite-a-number-find-racism-still-an-issue>. Accessed on 7 September 2016.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/constitutional-commission-report-released-key-changes-proposed-to-elected-presidency>. Accessed on 17 September 2016.

office of the president represents all three racial groups over a period of time and will promote social, religious, and cultural harmony in Singapore. Liberals may lament that such a move would violate individual citizens' political and civil rights. For, accordingly, if the past five presidents have been all Chinese and Indian, the next president will be a Malay. A Chinese (or Indian) person would no longer be eligible to run for president until after there is a Malay president. Furthermore, by then he or she may no longer meet other qualifications, such as experience of holding a major position not too long before the time of election, and would lose the opportunity to run for president for good. Ethnicity would make a huge difference. So far, however, there has not been much concern about such a move.<sup>14</sup> From a Confucian perspective, a mechanism to ensure all major racial groups are represented in the office of the President can be justified on the ground of harmony. One of the main roles of the president is to represent the nation. When all racial groups are well represented in the nation's highest office and no racial group feels alienated, racial equality is enhanced; individuals are more likely to develop a strong sense of ownership of the country, a strong sense of citizenship, and a strong identity deeply rooted in the community of the city-state. Hence, adopting the new mechanism of electing the president is conducive to social harmony and to building a strong national identity in Singapore. Such a move would be justified on the ground of the Confucian philosophy of harmony.

In conclusion, the Confucian philosophy of harmony not only provides an important vantage point for assessing such delicate social issues as affirmative action and racially

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<sup>14</sup> On 15 September 2016, the ruling party controlled state government accepted the above proposal along with some other amendments. A constitution amendment vote will be scheduled. See <http://www.straitstimes.com/politics/white-paper-spells-out-significant-changes-to-be-made-to-elected-presidency-scheme>. Accessed on 15 September 2016.



inclusive presidency but also gives us a vigorous account of the community and community-rooted personal identity in general. In such a view, harmonizing with others in the community is to actively engage one another in building human relationships and to form and renew our identities as community members. Constructing personal identities and building communities are meant to achieve in the same process, as are social harmony and the good life. Neither can be attained without the other. A communitarian philosophy without a concept of harmony leaves a big hole in its framework and is inadequate in producing a robust account of the individual and society. Sandel's communitarian philosophy would be greatly strengthened if he takes harmony into account and does so profitably.<sup>15</sup>

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