

An Aristotelian Analysis of Gender Role Stereotypes in the Korean Context

Lee, Sang - Hoon (Part-Time Lecturer, Baekseok University)

- I . introduction
- II. Gender Role Stereotypes in the Korean Cultural Ethos
- III. Confucian-influenced Marital Relationship and Feminism
- IV. Perfect Friendship or Inseparable Mind as a Proper Model for Marital Relationships
- V. Conclusion

• ABSTRACT •

This paper will attempt to analyze gender role stereotypes in the Korean context from an Aristotelian perspective and come up with a reasoned approach to dealing with them. The private/public dichotomy mostly entails the husband dominance/wife subjection structure in the family setting. Feminists may argue that marital relationships in the Korean society under influences of the Confucian tradition are closely associated with the private/public dichotomy that is substantially caused by unjust gender role stereotypes. This unjust gender-structured family system brings about dehumanizing husband dominance/wife subjection relations in marriage life. In an attempt to overcome these undesirable social and familial trends, feminists try to apply justice in marital relationships while redefining agapic love as complete mutuality based on equal regard. However, application of justice in connection with egalitarian ethos, in spite of its partial contribution to rectifying unjust family situations, manifest its limitation in the sense that human relations are not enforceable by way of justice or laws but rather considerably out of their reach.

This paper introduces tentative proposals derived from the Aristotelian “friendship of virtue” and the Korean “inseparable consciousness” both of which exhibit great respect for community as well as for individuals. Since neither of these models are easily put in practice, the husband and wife need to devote constant effort to improve their relationships. A mature marital relationship, possessive of moral virtues and mutuality, emerges only with full-grown character by the implementation of good habits. A co-maturity may not arise until and before the husband and wife set free from socio-cultural bondage of stereotyped gender-roles which are deeply related to the husband dominance/wife subjection structure. Within these relations, the husband realizes his self through maturing the personality of his wife in full mutuality. Therefore, ideally within marital relationship, no one’s dignity need be disregarded nor his or her worth underestimated in favor of any particular person or community.

Key words: gender role stereotypes, private/public dichotomy, Aristotelian perspective, feminism, Confucianism

I. introduction

Human beings are by nature inclined to live in community and in relation with others. Aristotle puts this point eloquently in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, no one would choose the whole world on condition of being alone, since man is a political creature and one whose nature is to live with others.¹⁾ A zoologist Desmond Moris writes in his *The Naked Ape* that the evolutionary purpose of human sexuality is to strengthen the pair-bond and maintain the family unit.²⁾ In this sense, the community-minded nature of humanity seems to find its fundamental expression in forming the family. Traditionally speaking, the family has been assumed to be a mutually supportive arrangement full of love and hope. Marriage has been regarded as a social institution of grace-infused union in a divinely intended love relationship. Many still believe so.

However, on the other hand, contemporary society exposes a great array of disharmony and antagonism. People seem to slip into more conflicts and thus feel more detached from each other than ever before in terms of nation, race, culture, religion, gender, etc. This doleful aspect of society appears to indicate a failure to confirm relation-oriented

1) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. W. D. Ross in *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), 1169b 17-18. Hereafter referred to as *NE*. All subsequent quotations from *NE* are taken from this edition and cited according to line number. From the Aristotelian perspective, this would be a rationale of the family institution which can be expanded in the following: Now if he were a solitary, life would be hard for him; for by oneself it is not easy to be continuously active; but with others and towards others it is easier. With others therefore his activity will be more continuous (*NE*, 1170a 5-7).

2) Robert Wright, Our Cheating Hearts *Time*, 15 August 1994, 45.

human nature. These undesirable phenomena appear to be intimately connected with failed human relations. More critically, these phenomena have become manifest in family, especially, into marital, relations.

The egalitarian ethos, with its emphasis on the autonomous individual, is a popular modern trend which has been adopted to highlight the rights of women and thus undercut the patriarchally biased nuclear family. The egalitarian emphasis on individual freedom has made the husband much less influential over his wife and has notably reduced his authority over his wife. As a result, women seem to have gained more respect and rights than before. It seems true that these changes in the family organization contribute to prioritizing one's own rights over responsibilities for others in pursuit of individualistic freedom, which pervades even modern marital relationships.

However, it seems that recent statistics about divorce ironically demonstrate that an egalitarian ethos may be less effective than expected in dealing with the problems of marital relationships in Korean society. According to the National Statistical Office (NSO), 326,000 couples got married while 117,000 couples agreed to end their marital relationships last year. It is noteworthy that the number of divorced men aged over 65 years increased 4.4 times over the past decade to 2,612 in 2006, and for women the figure jumped 6.7 times to 922. The divorce rate of South Koreans ranked third in the world following the United States and Sweden. However, of more concern than the rising rate of family break-up itself, is that couples have not gotten much better at staying together — not yet anyway.³⁾ Married couples who are assumed to

be committed to each other seem to gradually feel less guilty of and responsible for being separated from their partner.

It is clear that the institution of marriage made a dramatic change in its character ever since women could choose to work outside the home. Judith Wallerstein claims that radical changes in family life are silently altering the social fabric of the entire society.⁴⁾ Since financial security can no longer serve as a dependable basis for marital cohesion, marriage may now need to be redefined in such a way as to provide workable resolutions to its frequent crises. All these current state of affairs offer a rationale to take up the debate about the family crisis, especially, marital relationships. What should be the proper roles of husband and wife as partners? Why do the husband and wife not become one flesh as was preached in the church and expected of by the community? Further, why is male domination taken for granted in the marital relation, as feminists often ask?

Along the same line, when we trace back to the root of the problem at hand, male dominance and female subjection are still found to linger on in our family settings. Some may contend that feminism has largely realized its goal and we are living in a post-feminist era. However, the contention might not be as true as thought to be so. Susan Moller Okin retorts: [T]he claim is false. [For] women are still second-class citizens, very far from equality with men in various respects including familial relationships.⁵⁾ This quotation implies that the wife is still marginal-

3) Ibid.

4) Ibid., 53.

5) Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton

ized in family life that is mostly structured in favor of her husband. This unjust and unviable marital relationship is seen to result from dehumanizing gender role stereotypes and thus contributes to bringing about the husband dominance/wife subjection structure. According to some feminist theologians, it is the public/private dichotomy that is primarily the cause of putting marital relationships into conflicting situations. Where, then, does this dichotomy come from? How can we address the gender-structured family system and unjust gender role stereotypes in marital relationships?

On the basis of what was mentioned above, this paper will attempt to analyze the public/private dichotomy from an Aristotelian perspective and come up with a reasoned approach to dealing with it.⁶⁾ Current society under the growing influences of feminism is still wrestling with a male-dominated tendency in marital relationships, regardless of its degree of severity. This paper will focus on marital relationships in the Korean family which still seems to struggle with the androcentric idea of husband dominance/wife subjection relations despite an increasingly approved feminist movement to bring them to an end.

II. Gender Role Stereotypes in the Korean Cultural Ethos

As discussed above, human beings by nature are not meant for living

University Press, 1992), 309. Bracket mine.

6) In my view, the private/public dichotomy mostly entails the husband dominance/wife subjection structure in the family setting. Sometimes they are found interchangeable in this paper.

alone. This fundamental aspect of human nature has been strongly manifested in the Korean cultural ethos in its regard for the family⁷⁾ as being the foremost institution of its society. This social institution has long proven to be a place of great strength and potential, a force of progress as well as a safe haven for all individual activities.

The family is mainly formed by marriage where it is assumed that two caring adults are committed to one another. If the husband and wife are the primary elements which constitute the family, their relations should be given first place in family discussion. In fact, it seems that most of the current issues facing marriage concern modifications of gender roles. What is important in this connection is the removal of those customs and ideas which are determined as being oppressive to women. For gender-structured family culture persists in Korean society as a potent social ethos. The underlying and lingering public/private dichotomy continues to motivate the husband to enter the public world as bread winner and the wife to stay at home in her domain as house keeper. This dichotomy effectively serves to entrench gener-typed function of husband and wife in the family setting. A functional differentiation requires each of them to pursue, develop, and express differing moral virtues or goodness in their relations. Their different functions and goodness are instrumental in forming patriarchally framed marital relationships based on a husband dominance/wife subjection structure

7) Here I would like to narrow down the definition of marital relations within the case of the nuclear family because I think that the nuclear family still makes up a majority in contemporary Korean society, although we can find many different forms of family such as extended families, single parent families, child-headed families, gay and lesbian families, etc.

and ideology.

Who and what are, then, responsible for this kind of marital relationship?⁸⁾ The answer to this question would include husband and wife, social custom and ethos. What would be the intention of those responsible for the current marital relationships? The question could be asked in a slightly different way, namely, what is socially, functionally, and relationally assumed in marital relationships when they are formed? To answer this question requires an inquiry into what is going on in a given society, in this case, contemporary Korean society.

In an attempt to address this issue, first of all, we need to explore how the patriarchal ethos influences familial and marital relationships in the Korean society. In spite of all the good purposes and cultural traditions, one can still find some misguided forms of Confucianism.⁹⁾ In this connection, the Confucian political culture has resulted in a heritage of male-authority and a patriarchally structured family system.¹⁰⁾

Misguided Confucian culture has characterized Korean society by le-

8) This question is about the efficient cause according to Aristotelian analysis. Curtis N. Johnson defines efficient cause as follows: [a] thing is what it is because it came into being as the result of the activity of some producer who intended to bring into being a thing of that sort (Curtis N. Johnson's *Aristotle's Theory of the State* [London: The Macmillan Press, 1990], 7). Thus it seems that efficient causes are concerned with the motives and intentions of those responsible for marital relations in this case.

9) Of course, there are both positive and negative aspects of Confucianism. However, this paper will concentrate on the latter case in which women are treated less than men in various respects.

10) This section can be regarded as based on Aristotelian method in the sense that I will deal with the family situation in *descriptive* and *explanatory* way which is Aristotelian. For more information about this subject, see Curtis N. Johnson, 34-46.

gitimizing male-authority and institutionalizing a patriarchal family structure. Patriarchal Confucian traditions developed a cultural tendency toward unjust moral norm for women imposed as inactive and invisible members of the society. Inactive and invisible members ideology conduced to a typical image of the traditional gender-role stereotypes which helped institute the binding of women to socially unrecognized roles and keep women out of leadership positions. In addition, the androcentric ethos gave rise to a biased belief, namely, superiority of men over women. The cultural bias against women has been explicitly reflected in an enduring gender discrimination that is still extant in social interactions and family relationships. The gender discrimination finds expression in organizational cultures that is characterized by masculine orientation embedded within structure, activity, and language (e.g., sales *contests*, competitive *strategies*, price *wars*).

Many, especially among the psychoanalytic feminists, claim that there is a fixed anthropological myth behind this idea of male superiority in which women are considered to have an inferior cognitive style compared to that of men.¹¹⁾

Feminist philosophers have examined the conspicuous distinction between men's and women's ways of knowing. According to them, objective and rational have been attributed to men, while women have often been devalued as emotional and abstract.¹²⁾ This dualistic under-

11) Cf. Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 95-6.

12) Mary S. Van Leeuwen, Private versus Public Life: A Case for Degendering, in *After Eden*, ed. Mary S. Van Leeuwen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 401-3.

standing of epistemological differences contributes to the conventional role allocation for men and women. On the one hand, masculine stereotypes are maintained, if not reinforced, when men are frequently offered the high-status roles. Thus, men are given more chances than women to cultivate masculinity. On the other hand, women are expected to assume lower status roles. The expected lower status roles create stereotypes which are regarded as typically feminine; for example, invisible, obedient, dependent, inactive, etc. These gender role stereotypes have been transferred to marital relationships that are hierarchically characterized by husband dominance/wife subjection structure, without much resistance to generally agreed-upon reasonableness.¹³⁾ As a result, socially low-status roles have been assigned to the wife to the extent that her functions were regarded as less important than the husband's high-power positions. The androcentric ethos, therefore, ends up becoming instrumental in maintaining the unjust gendered-structure of husband domination/wife subjection in marital relationships.¹⁴⁾

In this context, the husband and wife are expected to engage in different qualities of goodness according to their gender roles in the family setting. In other words, their functions come to play a determining role in shaping the character of their goodness. For example, the husband is socially discouraged from doing domestic labors such as cooking,

13) By reasonableness I mean what the majority of Korean people would accept as the culture and tradition of gender roles in the family setting.

14) This would belong to the efficient cause for the marital relations in the private/public dichotomy.

laundry, and child-rearing so that he can become a virtuous person. Conversely, the wife as a virtuous woman is expected to accept house-keeping as a vocational destiny within the cosmic order.

With regard to the gender role stereotypes, however, Florence L. Geis expresses an important view that focuses on the influence of socialization on men and women: Both men and women are aware of both high- and low-status behaviors. Certain sets of traits they exhibit are determined by their relative status in any given social situation, not by their personalities.¹⁵⁾ From Geis' perspective, the husband and wife have acquired their different functions or goodness through their distinct social and psychological conditions. That is to say that they were socio-culturally and psychologically habituated to a dominance/subjection ethos through long-term education and practice. It seems correct to argue that the motives and intentions of both husband and wife who are responsible for gender-structured marital relationships are deeply influenced by patriarchal ideology from which their sense of value is derived.¹⁶⁾ Under these circumstances, self-sacrifice is liable to be idealized so that the wife alone is victimized — be it consciously or unconsciously — for the sake of her family members. The androcentric social system, in this sense, serves to foster the husband's dominance over his wife by taking for granted the self-giving love of his wife.

There is another way to explain why unjustly gendered marital rela-

15) Florence L. Geis, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: A Social Psychological View of Gender*, in *The Psychology of Gender*, ed. Anne E. Beall and Robert J. Sternberg (New York: Guilford, 1993), 25.

16) Again, this would constitute the efficient cause of the marital relations in the private/public dichotomy.

tionships persist. Namely, feminist scholars contend that the dominance/subjection relations are closely associated with the public/private dichotomy in the family setting. As mentioned above, this dichotomy is found to depend on the prejudiced conception that women are regarded as somehow naturally fitted for the private sphere and men for the public.¹⁷⁾ Psychoanalytic feminism argues that the private/public split should be attributed to the Industrial Revolution.¹⁸⁾ In other words, the Industrial Revolution brought about the separation of husband's waged work from wife's domestic labor. As a result of this socio-economic shift, home became defined as the locus filled with the piety and purity that was fitting to the female sex. The home sweet home that embodies the good and godly atmosphere is regarded as the logical place to nurture children, and the wife the proper person to undertake the task. In the environment of virtue the housekeeper is also asked to exert moral influence on her husband by supplying him with spiritual renewal. The husband, on the contrary, needs to be strengthened in conscience and spirit because he spends so much time in the world. The world is considered the realm of competition where he is led to develop an aggressive personality as his goodness suitable for rough public life.

In such a given socio-cultural situation, marriage makes the wife surrender her social identity by subjecting herself to her husband's

17) Note that here the word, naturally, is not identical with what Aristotle means by nature.

18) In case of South Korea, the 1960s, when Korea's First Five-Year Economic Development Plan was launched, marked a turning point in the development of science and technology.

authority. Much of who she is becomes submerged in who her husband is. The wife's future appears to be conditioned by that of her husband. An unbalanced power allotment comes to allow the husband the hegemony in decision-making for mutual concerns. Therefore, what is socio-culturally taken for granted here is that the husband who is given an authority to determine his wife's status should have the initiative in marital relationships. These phenomena seem to be both influenced and fostered by misguided Confucian tradition that unilaterally demands of the wife a lifelong submission and sacrifice for her family.¹⁹⁾

Moreover, the public/private dichotomy brings about exclusive parenting by the mother and the negative formation of gender awareness for the children. Young girls, on the one hand, grow up only habituating themselves to the feminine activities of their mothers as a same-sex role model. Young boys, on the other hand, who are psychologically unsympathetic with different-gender role models, struggle to escape from the influential realm of their mothers while developing misogyny and hostility toward feminine traits. Just as moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, so long and early period of exclusive mothering familiarizes young children with their respective gender role stereotypes in such a way that they take the public/private split for granted.²⁰⁾ In order to overcome gender role stereotypes, therefore,

19) Therefore, husband dominance/wife subjection relations and gender-role stereotypes seem to constitute an efficient cause of marital relations in the Korean Confucian society.

20) Cf. *NE*, 1103a 15-1103b7 where Aristotle holds that moral virtue comes about as a result of habit (*NE*, 1103a 17). This also may be counted as the efficient cause.

feminist scholars, on the one hand, emphasize children's need for paternal nurturing contact which helps them develop holistic personalities that can challenge the current unjust gender role stereotypes; and on the other hand, they elevate womanly activities such as caring for the young, nursing, social work, education, as a corrective of private/public split and husband's dominance over his wife.

III. Confucian-influenced Marital Relationship and Feminism

What motives, then, should the Korean husband and wife possess so as to maintain their marital relationships under these circumstances?²¹⁾ It seems true that the husband and wife do not for ever continue to feel romantically inclined toward one another. If romantic love constituted the only factor that held the husband and wife together, their mutual commitment would come to an end as their romantic love faded. Observation shows that there are two socio-psychological factors that help sustain marital relationships during post-romantic period. They seem to be both conjugal *jung* (Korean) and marital responsibility. First, conjugal *jung* refers to deep-rooted emotional affection found between husband and wife who have long shared their pleasures and pains of life together. The characteristics of this deep-rooted affection lie in strong emotional attachment to each other, which began to burgeon

www.kci.go.kr

21) This may belong to another efficient cause.

ever since they tied their nuptial knot. Since this emotional attachment moves the husband and wife to accept their relations as indissoluble destiny, their marital relationships can survive to remain in the face of their declining romantic love. Second, responsibility consists in a marital promise that husband and wife make with other family members. Namely, they publicly make a promise to be responsible for promoting the well-being and solidarity of their family members. It seems that this publicly-made promise allows husband and wife to be liberated from dependence on their romantic and usually temporary feelings.²²⁾ In this respect, marriage in the Korean society is not just private affair but public — extended family and community to which husband and wife belong — event as well. However, marital relationships that are sustained by means of *jung* and responsibility exhibit an incomplete state of married life; these marital relationships should be restored to reach their wholeness in harmony and full mutuality.

As all persons seem to have their own goal, so husband and wife are thought to form their relations for the purpose of achieving his and her own or their common goal. What, then, would the husband and wife aim for in their marital relationships which are marked by the private/public dichotomy and dominance/subjection structure?²³⁾ The marital goal that the husband and wife would pursue seems to rest on the well-being of their whole family because of their overarching conscious-

22) Cf. Kari Jenson, On Marrying, in *Moral Issues and Christian Response*, ed. Paul T. Jersild and Dale A. Johnson (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1993), 66.

23) Here this paper will discuss the final cause of the Korean marital relations.

ness of community. Here the family refers to the extended family by definition since Confucian culture emphasizes the importance of community and its relations. From the Confucian perspective, humans are properly understood only in relation to their fellow humans or community, in this connection, the extended family. An overemphasis on the family and its relations sometimes undervalue the worth and dignity of its individual members. The individuals are liable to suffer the reduction of personal potential so that his or her interests are often sacrificed in favor of the family community and its relations. That is to say, the husband and wife tend to prioritize the communal well-being of their whole family above and beyond individual self-realization since it is believed that a person can realize his or her self only in relation to others. It is important to note that unwelcome sacrifices are imposed more often on the wife than on her male counterpart.

In what, then, does the communal well-being of the whole family consist? A close look at the nature of the communal well-being shows that it does not lie in a mean in the sense that the well-being is disproportionately androcentric. That is to say, the well-being of the family that marital relationships aspire to fulfill seems to be identical with that of husbands. In doing so, the resources of the family are unjustly distributed to the wife when and if the family fails to gain enough resources for all members. This unjust distribution seems to be closely linked with the androcentric ethos lingering on in Korean society and family. The wife is socio-culturally so inclined that she is made content with being committed to the well-being of the husband and other family

members. It is thus taken for granted by wife as well as husband that the latter is given priority over the former in terms of their common goal of well-being. In this respect, the common goal of the family is not common for the wife in its strictest sense. Nevertheless, the androcentric well-being seems to be so overshadowed by sacrifices of the wife that it is affirmed to be common by female members as well as by male members in the Korean family.

There are two different attempts in the feminist circle to rectify these problems. First, feminists try to redefine agapic love which is often misconceived in marital relationships by dropping the unilateral self-sacrifice and self-denial. According to them, true love should carry within itself fair mutuality between husband and wife based on equal regard. All situations that call for one-sided sacrifice should be understood to suspend nature; human beings should be dedicated to so providing for human needs and so diminishing oppression that situations calling for sacrifice are reduced to a minimum.²⁴⁾

On the other hand, since complete mutuality and equal regard are very often not fully realized even in family setting, feminists assert that the principle of justice should be applied to marital relationships. Although the higher-order ethical virtues such as benevolence, mercy, and self-sacrifice, would be more appropriate for marital relationships than justice, justice still needs to be applied in marital relationships.

24) Here by nature I mean Aristotelian definition of nature. According to him, the nature of things consists in their end or consummation because the nature of each thing means that thing has completed its growth; Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, Agape in Feminist Ethics, *Journal of Religious Ethics* vol. 9 Spring 1981, 80.

For no matter how much they are concerned about each other, they are still separate persons with their own specific goals. This realistic alternative is required especially when self-interests of the partners are conflicting and sacrifice is unavoidable. It is true that even a monastic order under a life long vow of poverty and charity should depend on the principle of justice when it has to decide among conflicting claims. Besides, a variety of violent acts such as sexual, physical, and economic take place more easily than can be prevented in the marital relationships because of simple absence of justice and law enforcement in family setting. Under these circumstances, the principle of justice should play a checking role to stave off those domestic assaults against the weaker family members.²⁵⁾ Therefore, it seems correct to claim that a principle of justice helps consolidate marital relationships by improving the legal, social, and economic system in the gender-structured family, and by redefining agapic love in order to prevent the husband from taking advantage of his wife within the public/private dichotomy.

What feminists propose as a realistic model for marital relations in mutuality may be associated with — in Aristotelian terminology — the friends of pleasure and utility. According to Aristotle, [t]he friends [of pleasure and utility] get the same things from one another and wish the same things for one another, or exchange one thing for another.²⁶⁾ However, in friendships of pleasure or usefulness the husband recognizes an attribute of his wife but not *as a part* of his unique-

25) Mary S. Van Leeuwen, Family Justice and Societal Nurturance: Reintegrating Public and Private Domains, in *After Eden*, 431-2.

26) *NE*, 1158b 1-5.

ness since such friendships disposes him to pursue what is good for and pleasant to himself rather than the person as she is.²⁷⁾ When the wife does not remain like herself, i.e., wife is no longer pleasant or useful to her husband, or vice versa, the marital relationships will be faced with a crisis. Herein it is mutual pleasure or utility, not good character, that bind them together as a couple. This phenomenon seems to occur in the marital relationships that we can often find in the egalitarian ethos. For the egalitarian ethos tends to take for granted a corresponding response from one's partner.

However, the principle of justice which strives for legal and economic change does not make a significant difference unless there is fundamental attitudinal change. For laws or justice cannot pierce behind the outward act to inward disposition in human relations. For example, although well-paid parental leave is granted to both husbands and wives, a low percentage of husbands tends to participate in parental leave programs.²⁸⁾ The husband fails to enjoy the same things with his wife and to accept his wife as his other self. Herein is found a limitation to justice in that its principle cannot cover the inward disposition of human mind and attitudinal change.

27) *NE*, 1156a18, b13; *NE*, 1156a 20-b7. Cf. James H. Wilkinson, A Theory of the Family: Critical Appropriations of Hegel and Aristotle, *The Owl of Minerva*, 24, 1 Fall 1992, 25.

28) Cf. Ann-Zofie Duvander and Gunnar Andersson, Gender Equality and Fertility in Sweden: A Study on the Impact of the Father's Uptake of Parental Leave on Continued Childbearing, paper presented at Population Association of America (PAA) 2006 Annual Meeting Program, Princeton, NJ, April 1, 2006. See also Van Leeuwen, Family Justice and Societal Nurturance, 445.

IV. Perfect Friendship or Inseparable Mind as a Proper Model for Marital Relationships

What, then, can we draw on in order to bring out a proper model for marital relationships? When we consider what was discussed up to this point, it seems quite clear that the husband and wife should go beyond friendship of pleasure and utility into that of virtue which conduces them to willingly practice affection and unity of interests in their relations. There arises an identity of interest between the partners in friendship of virtue. Stated differently, seeking the good of the other for the other's own sake is tantamount to seeking one's own good under these circumstances. In this regard, Aristotle holds that as the virtuous man is to himself, he is to his friend also (for his friend is another self).²⁹⁾

A similar idea can be derived from the inseparable consciousness inherent in the Korean mind, which can develop into a Korean model for marital relationships. The inseparable consciousness is fundamentally community-oriented. This community-oriented consciousness finds self to be inseparable from others. This inseparable awareness finds its essential expression in human relations. Korean people, thus, tend to accept any person in their community as one of their family members because it is believed that they are all in the long run inherently related to each other in an ever extending family network. This

29) *NE*, 1170b 7-8. Aristotle continues to claim that perfect friends enjoy the same things (*NE*, 1157b23).

inseparable mind views each person, not just as an individual, but also as a member of the community. Herein an individual *Is* enter into a harmonious *We* with the others in organic relation. One can draw from this inseparable idea to provide a theoretical and emotional basis for restoring harmony and unity the marital relationship. For the inseparable consciousness lay hold of the husband and wife to enjoy the same things with each other and thereby they are liberated from the dominance/subjection structure. Here it becomes possible that the wife and husband accept each other as their other self in complete friendship. The wife exists so that her husband may be complete and the husband needs his wife in order to realize himself, because self can be realized through perfecting the other in full mutuality. In this context, one party voluntarily adopts the interests of the other in the altruistic attitude, and thus neither self-centered individualism nor strictly reciprocated relations are encouraged.³⁰⁾ Both models of perfect friendship and inseparable mind, however, deny equally that one would choose to attain the highest excellence, if doing so demands the surrender of one's sense of self. Neither model attempts to melt autonomous husband and wife down into a heteronomous solidarity.³¹⁾ Rather, they emphasize the importance of autonomously selected discretionary uniqueness of the husband and wife in complete mutuality.

That self is realized through perfecting the other corresponds with

30) Reciprocated relations are understood as similar to the case of egalitarian claim that we take for granted an equivalent response from others.

31) Cf. *NE*, 1166a 20-23; since the inseparable mind consists in a life-giving organism, it does not intend any form of community supremacy at the cost of individual members.

the condition that complete friendship requires the husband and wife to be good and virtuous persons. For it seems that a virtuous person is naturally inclined to hope for another virtuous person very much.³²⁾ As far as our issue is concerned, this condition lies in encouraging the husband and wife to reach a co-maturity in terms of their relations and personalities. Herein a co-maturity may not arise until the husband and wife break free from the socio-cultural bondage of stereotyped gender-roles. Further, this freedom may emerge when each of them develops his or her own holistic personality. From this perspective, the husband should not always be allowed to take priority over his wife as opportunities for vocational development arise.

At this point, it is noteworthy that Aristotle observes: every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good.³³⁾ As Richard McKeon clearly explains, a certain good that every individual pursues through all his or her acts is traceable back to moral virtues which give rise to all individual actions.³⁴⁾ It is by the character of the individual and the specific ethos and custom of every community that the nature of good is determined.³⁵⁾ In regard to this issue, Peter J. Paris makes an appropriate description:

In virtue ethics the quality of a person's character determines the quality

32) *NE*, 1170a 13.

33) Aristotle, *Politics*, tr. Benjamin Jowett, in *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, 1252a 1-2.

34) *Ibid.*, in McKeon's Introduction to *Politics*, 584.

35) *Ibid.*, in McKeon's Introduction to *NE*, 332.

of that person's actions and vice-versa..... a person of moral virtue is one who exercises good habits and, conversely, the exercise of good habits constitutes a person of moral virtue.³⁶⁾

Since an individual's moral behavior depends heavily on his or her personality and presupposes mature personality, immediate priority in connection with marital relationships should be given to the task for both husband and wife to reach a full-grown personality. Therefore, virtue ethics provides a rationale to demand cooperation from the husband and wife in developing and nurturing their respective capacities and potentials.

What would be the ultimate *telos* that husband and wife strive to reach in this context? Their ultimate goal certainly consists in realizing their selves and fostering their relations with each other, which leads to the well-being of the whole community. In this sense, this goal should be pursued in consideration of two points: namely, to avoid the errors of the excessive exaltation of the community as well as the disproportionate abasement of the individual, so as to arrive at a mutual inclusiveness of both the community and the individual. To achieve this end requires that the husband and wife internalize moral virtues. It is not easy, however, to acquire them. A person can appropriate moral virtues by means of habitual practice. For example, the husband who was educated within Confucian culture should make long-term efforts to drop his androcentric ideas and actions altogether.

36) Peter J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African Peoples: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 134.

Such efforts are bound to produce some discomfort because of necessary struggle against previous habits and value systems. However, at the same time, such efforts help to bring about a full-grown character possessive of moral virtues. In this sense, perfect friendship or inseparable mind model can arise only when accompanied by constant commitment on the part of the husband and wife in support of current marital relationships.

Along the same line, McKeon points out an important fact:

The good must be sought in actions of men, not any action, but those in accordance with virtue, and virtue is found to be a habit which is acquired by performing actions of the same as those which it in turn produces once the habit has been formed.³⁷⁾

When the husband performs sporadic positive actions in a spirit of patronization toward his wife, such actions do not constitute true virtue, because [a]ctions are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or temperate man would do, and also action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character.³⁸⁾ This assertion exposes the danger of seeking an end in the mere knowledge of the virtues which in itself makes no substantial contribution to developing morally mature character. In fact, people are prone to be self-satisfied and thus complacent with their knowledge of the virtues rather than bringing into action what they understand.³⁹⁾

37) McKeon, 333.

38) *NE*, 1105b 5; *NE*, 1105a 35.

Besides, moral virtues are to lie in a mean relative to each person because they are concerned with what is intermediate. Self-sacrifice that the wife may unilaterally make for the sake of her husband neither lie in a mean nor do they constitute any virtue in the sense that the husband continues to receive (excess) yet the wife keeps giving without any proper limitation (defect) in the dominant/subordinate structure of gender relations.

V. Conclusion

According to feminists, marital relationships in the Korean society under influences of the Confucian tradition are seen to be closely associated with the private/public dichotomy that is caused by unjust gender role stereotypes and by the Industrial Revolution. This unjust gender-structured family system brings about dehumanizing husband dominance/wife subjection relations in marriage life. In an attempt to overcome these undesirable social and familial trends, feminists try to apply justice in marital relationships while redefining agapic love as complete mutuality based on equal regard. However, application of justice in connection with egalitarian ethos, in spite of its partial contribution to rectifying unjust family situations, manifest its limitation in the sense that human relations are not enforceable by way of justice or laws but rath-

39) Cf. *NE*, 1105b 15-20. A good number of Korean husbands whom I know told me that they were very conscious of women's liberation and had a deep sympathy with feminist claims; yet their family lives actually failed to reflect what they said.

er considerably out of their reach.

Such being the case, this paper introduced tentative proposals derived from the Aristotelian friendship of virtue and the Korean inseparable consciousness both of which exhibit great respect for community as well as for individuals. Since neither of these models are easily put in practice, the husband and wife need to devote constant effort to improve their relationships. A mature marital relationship, possessive of moral virtues and mutuality, emerges only with full-grown character by the implementation of good habits. Because only a good person genuinely seek the good of others and a virtuous person seems naturally inclined to hope for another virtuous person,⁴⁰⁾ the husband and wife should help each other reach a co-maturity in personality in an attempt to develop their relations. A co-maturity may not arise until and before the husband and wife set free from socio-cultural bondage of stereotyped gender-roles which are deeply related to the husband dominance/wife subjection structure. Within these relations, the husband realizes his self through maturing the personality of his wife in full mutuality. Therefore, ideally within marital relationship, no one's dignity need be disregarded nor his or her worth underestimated in favor of any particular person or community.

40) Cf. *NE*, 1157a15-20; *NE*, 1170a 13.

Bibliography

- Andolsen, Barbara Hilbert. Agape in Feminist Ethics. *Journal of Religious Ethics* vol. 9, Spring 1981.
- Geis, Florence L. Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: A Social Psychological View of Gender. In *The Psychology of Gender*, ed. Anne E. Beall and Robert J. Sternberg. New York: Guilford, 1993.
- Jenson, Kari. On Marrying. In *Moral Issues and Christian Response*, ed. Paul T. Jersild and Dale A. Johnson. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1993.
- Johnson, Curtis N. *Aristotle's Theory of the State*. London: The Macmillan Press, 1990.
- Ruddick, Sara. *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.
- Van Leeuwen, Mary S. Private versus Public Life: A Case for Degendering, in *After Eden*, ed. Mary S. Van Leeuwen. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993.
- Wilkinson, James H. A Theory of the Family: Critical Appropriations of Hegel and Aristotle. *The Owl of Minerva*, 24, 1, Fall 1992.
- Wright, Robert. Our Cheating Hearts *Time*. August 15, 1994.
- Duvander, Ann-Zofie and Andersson, Gunnar. Gender Equality and Fertility in Sweden: A Study on the Impact of the Father's Uptake of Parental Leave on Continued Childbearing. Paper presented at Population Association of America (PAA) 2006 Annual Meeting Program, Princeton, NJ, April 1, 2006.

논문투고일: 2011. 10. 31

심사개시일: 2011. 11. 18

게재확정일: 2011. 12. 17

• 국 문 초 록 •

전통적으로 공동체와 가족의 중요성을 강조하는 한국사회는 가정과 사회에서의 남녀 성역할에 대한 고정관념 및 그에 따른 차별적이고 불공평한 사회 및 가정 문화가 실천되고 유지되어왔다. 이러한 전통적인 젠더이해 및 역할에 대한 편견과 이와 관련된 문화적 표현은 페미니즘의 영향과 의식의 변화에도 불구하고 한국의 가정과 사회에서 계속해서 발견되고 있다. 본 논문은 집 안팎(内外)의 이분법적 대립항인 공(公)·사(私) 구분과 공·사 영역의 성별화가 여전히 나타나는 한국 가정에서의 부부의 역할을 아리스토텔레스의 관점에서 분석하고 이를 극복하는 데 도움이 될 적절한 모델을 제시하는데 목적이 있다. 젠더 불평등은 남녀와 부부를 ‘지배’와 ‘복종’의 관계 틀 속에 가두고 사회와 가족관계에서 후자에게 불공평을 강요하거나 정당화시키는 경향으로 나타난다. 이러한 사회·가족적 경향을 극복하기 위해 페미니스트들은 동등한 존중에 기초한 완전한 상호성으로서의 아가페 사랑을 재 정의하는 동시에 결혼 관계에도 정의가 적용되어야 한다고 주장 한다. 그러나 불공평한 성역할의 교정에 대한 부분적인 기여에도 불구하고 평등주의적 에토스와 관련된 정의의 적용은 인간관계가 정의나 법으로 강제 되어질 수 없다는 점에서 한계를 노정한다. 본 논문은 이의 극복을 위한 이론적, 실천적 차원에서의 실험적인 제안으로 공동체와 개인 모두에 대한 존중을 강조하는 아리스토텔레스의 ‘우정’과 한국의 ‘불가분성의식’을 소개한다. 그러나 이들 모델 양자는 쉽게 실천되어질 수 없기에, 남녀 및 부부는 그들의 불공평한 관계의 개선을 위해 지속적인 노력이 요구되며 따라서 도덕성과 상호성에 기초한 성숙한 관계 및 젠더 역할과 의식은 좋은 습관의 실행에 의한 성숙한 품성의 개발과 더불어 가능하다.

주제어: 남녀 성역할, 공(公)·사(私) 구분, 여성신학, 유교, 아리스토텔레스
