Reflexive Modernity and Reflexive Informatization: A Critique on the Informatization of South Korea

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Abstract

In the wake of unbridled competition, institutionalized through indiscriminate capitalism and globalization, modern civilization, although it has brought us much to celebrate, has tightened up the intrinsic freedom of human beings. In this essay, we have reviewed problems and implications of the "reflexive modernity and informatization," shedding light on "human alienation" and "binding human consciousness." Were a visionary society dreamed in the upcoming century to be the one that opens the possibility to achieve individual freedom and creativity, it would boil down to the issue of "self-actualization" for the actors of society. If an information society has a new "paradigm," clearly different from the one in an industrial society, the new principle should offer a hope to solve the problem of "human alienation" textured in an industrial society. This was a key theme examined in this essay.

In this essay, we termed "reflexive" informatization for the informatization pointing to such direction. We then elaborated on its vision and ideas as well as its concepts and dimension and tried to organically connect its "theoretical paradigm" to the logic of an information policy.

The major findings and implications, analyzed in this essay, can be summarized as follows.

First, whatever advanced information superhighway, if there were no truly matured individuals armored with subjective personalities, will be useless to accomplish a "humane community." A matured society requires independence and subjecthood of the member individuals, and to build this nature of an information society, above all, we need to make efforts to implement a project boosting 'individual' consciousness, so that a truly autonomous personality can first accomplished.

Second, the opportunities for social communication, that is not distorted, should be promoted on the basis of information sovereignty and independence. For this kind of existential communication, mutual trust is prerequisite among the various actors in society, whether it is between individuals and individuals, or organizations and organizations.

Third, reflexivity on humans and nature should be heightened through deepening existential

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communication. And this kind of informatization efforts should be fortified by a social reform that is aiming at *autonomy and originality, trust and empowerment, and coexistence and coprosperity.*

Finally, to achieve reflexive informatization, endowed with the above-mentioned attributes, a new approach and perspective is required. Above all, the government, free from bureaucratic eliticism, should focus more on social values that emphasizes individual freedoms, independence, and subjectivity. On a policy matter, the perspectives on individual information should be drastically changed, and in this vein, *information sovereignty and privacy* issues need to be reemphasized. In addition, the government should promote NGO activities by empowering them, particularly in the sphere of information and *civic culture.*

The essence of an information network is in the spirit of "doing something together." The quintessence to the "net" should be in the "spirit of collaboration." Reflexive informatization will be fulfilled when social reform progresses on the basis of this spirit, that is, the credos of "sharing together, growing up together, and reaping together."

Introdution

Throughout the world, information and communication technologies are already generating a new revolution as significant and far-reaching as those of the past. Information plays a major role in shaping economic, political, and cultural dimensions. A wide variety of new "information-oriented" books, highlighting the power of digital and the "net" has decorated the shelves and stacks of every book stores.

No one would raise serious objections about these seemingly obvious facts and trends. Beyond superficial observations, nevertheless, it is quite imperative to address some fundamental queries, for example, "would an information society, a society driven primarily by the dynamics of information and knowledge, be qualitatively different from an industrial society?" The difference being defined, not just from a mere technology-oriented or industrial-history perspective, but from an "authentic" sense of human civilizations.

If the information society has a new "paradigm," genuinely disparate from the one in the industrial society, as some writers(Bell, 1979; Masuda, 1981; Toffler, 1980; Negroponte, 1995; Gates, 1996) actually argue, the new principle should provide a clue to the dilemma of "human alienation" ingrained in the texture of the industrial society. Is this really the case?

In what follows, I will try to shed light on these questions and analyze the problems and implications of "modernity and informatization." To this end, this essay is organized into three parts. In the first part, I will briefly review the issue of "modernity," paying particular attention to the works of Habermas(1981), Giddens(1990, 1994), and Beck(1986). After discussing

"reflexive modernity," I will derive the issues and implications that a "new" type of modernity will cast on the functional issues of informatization.

I will then move on to the issues of "individuality" and "self-identity" in an information society and discuss some empirical facts and implications casted from the informatization process in South Korea. The point to be highlighted here is that a "matured society" requires a sense of 'independence' and 'self-identity' among its member citizens and, therefore, to make an information society a genuinely civilized one, social project, boosting the sense of "individuality," is prerequisite. In Korean society, individuals, to a large extent, seem to be captives to their traditional and social relationships, and thus, the "individual," in its true sense, is virtually nonexistent. As a result, social communication in Korea is very counter-productive, and "compensated" types of communication have been increasing.

This discussion points to the urgency of "reflexive informatization," highlighting the "existential communication" founded upon the consciousness of "independent personality" and "autonomous identity."[1] In the final part, accordingly, I will elaborate on the concept and dimension of "reflexive informatization" and, subsequently, attempt to integrate its "theoretical paradigm" to the logic of "our policy program."

The Issue of Modernity

Modern civilization, with its core basis of reason, rationality, and institution, has given us much to celebrate. As human societies move along the path laid down by modern civilization, we are blessed with material affluence as well as social freedom. However, in the wake of unbridled competition, institutionalized through rapid industrialization and globalization, modern societies are now inundated by various 'modern problems'(Kyung Hee University, 1998).

Modernity, along this line, has been critically reexamined by contemporary scholars and thinkers(Beck, 1986; Giddens, 1994; Habermas, 1981; Morin, 1993; Rifkin, 1993 & 1996). The concept of modernity, however, as a coalescence of diverse social phenomena, has been used in a much extensive manner(Choue, 1997: 3-4). For some, it simply signifies the process of 'Western civilization' at whose core lies in "industrialization" and "institution" that resulted from the deepening process of the complex social division of labor(Habermas, 1981; Beck, 1986; Morin, 1993). Others emphasize the importance of "rationalization process," expressed in the form of "reason" and "causality" which are believed to be an essential stimulus for our modern science

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1) The point, i.e., the existential basis of communication and reflexive informatization, is indebted to the discussions of Seung Kwan Park(1997) and Young Min Yun(1997), and I would like to express my heartful gratitude to them in that regard. For a detail thesis, see Park, Yun and Kwon, *Myth of Information, Logic of Reform*(Seoul: Nanam, 1998).

and technology(Rifkin, 1993; Tae Joon Kwon, 1997:38-50; Chang, 1997:121-138).

It may not be prudent to review all the aspects of this encompassing concept, modernity. I will focus on the works of Habermas(1981; 1996), Giddens(1994; 1990), and Beck(1986), as these writers insightfully presented the issue of "reflexive modernity," the point to be stressed here.

Reflexive Modernity

Beck(1986) originally proposed the concept of "reflexive modernisierung," which denotes to contemplate and introspect all the ill practices and unfortunate outcomes which stemmed from the so-called "simple modernization" trajectory in the past.

In a modern world of 'fundamental indeterminism,' Beck vividly demonstrates how menacing the "laboratory science," would be, which exclusively emphasizes "regularities" and "causalities" under tightly controlled laboratory settings. Pointing out the limitations of this "laboratory science," he instead underscores the significance of "interpretative science," where actual experiences play an essential role by functioning as an antibiotic to the various modes of scientific catastrophes.

Beck recognizes the modernized society, in a simple sense, as an 'industrial society,' motivated by the "belief of advancement." But the problem was that this kind of belief hardened as a dogma that does not have any plan or consent from the people on in overall sense. This doctrine, without raising any question of "how" and "for what," strives for a perennial but unknown social change. The resultant modern industrialized society, therefore according to Beck, is featured as an "artificial society," foredoomed to self-destruction.

Manufactured Uncertainty

Giddens(1994) refers to this kind of peril as "manufactured uncertainty," which originates from the reinforcement of our globalizing trends, the emergence of post-traditional order, and the extended possibility of "social reflexivity."

To cope with this kind of "manufactured uncertainty," he proposes, as a solution, an *utopian realism,* which in essence organically combines 'philosophical conservatism' and 'political radicalism.' As a radical program, Giddens proposes to invigorate "life politics," "generative politics," "dialogic democracy," "positive welfare," and "repudiation of social violence."

Modernity: Unfinished Project

Habermas(1981) also accentuates the pliant coalescence of "historical realism" and "utopian thought," that opens the possibility to pose alternatives by which realistic constraints can surmounted in our social life.

Habermas maintains utopian reasoning and rationality, the core thought of Western rationalism,

and criticizes postmodernistic thoughts[2], Foucault(1974) for example. He argues that the things to be finished is a particular mode of utopia and the points to be criticized is a specific fashion of rationality. Therefore, according to Habermas, the utopian project, expressed in the form of "social idea and dream," which the enlightenment thinkers aspired at the end of the eighteenth century, should not be underestimated. Because only this kind of imagination could work as a real motive to pursue historical progress and a more secure future.

The academic ambition for Habermas is to establish a "critical social theory," which could pose a historical direction for a thoroughly divided society symbolized by the "postmodern." His main theme was how to make the society rational and humane and he attempted to realize this by synthesizing and sublimating the linear and closed patterns of human intelligence deepening through the process of social differentiation. If human alienation, intensified through the process of social division of labor, was anti-rational, the *new mode of rationality* to be required would be to achieve mutual trust and cooperative ties by synthesizing differentiated communication networks. To this end, Habermas proposes that the paradigm of a functional society, suppressing the nature and human personality, should be modified to the paradigm of "communication society," that opens a possibility to transform impersonal social relationships into humane and reflexive ones.

Implications

Serious discussions on "reflexive modernity," as addressed above, give a warning to the "superficial" narratives of information society. This criticism is true for both technology-oriented optimism and structure-based criticalism.

Optimists, with varying spectrum of tones and nuisances, argue that the digital network, characterized by individuality and diversity, will fundamentally cure the problems of "mass-production and mass-consumption" and "standardization," the core nature ingrained in the paradigm of industrial society(Toffler, 1980; Masuda, 1981, 1982; Negroponte, 1996). These kind of perspectives, based on futuristic insight and vision, are facing some serious criticisms in that they could give people a misleading illusion about information technology and its application capability, before their whole connotations are evaluated in an overall social and cultural context.

Criticalists raise doubt about the proposition that the paradigm of an information society would be entirely different from that of an industrial society. Schement(1989), for example, raises the question about whether we could find any substance in an information society. She argues that the information society is not essentially different from the industrial society: it is just an extension of an industrial society characterized by capitalism and industrialism. If there is any differ-

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2) The thought of "Postmodernism," featured as repudiating reason, was elaborated by Foucault, who follows the thought of Nietzsche and Heidegger. For exemplar works, see Foucault(1973, 1974).

ence, it is merely the type of commodities that the two societies are based on. Another group of scholars, following Schiller(1989), raises the issue of "unequal structures" ingrained in the capitalist society. They argue that before rectifying the uneven conditions, it is inadequate to claim that information technology would bring "social benefits" to our society.

These critical perspectives widen a cognitive horizon of information societies by comprehending the social waves of information technology in a broad context of political, economical and social order, which exists in our current world system. These views, nonetheless, tend to underestimate the potential values that information technologies could bring to our society because they are focusing on the social or industrial structures in a very narrow sense.

What made this author most frustrated in the process of this literature review, however, was that there was virtually no discussion, both from technological idealism and from structural skepticism, squarely addressing the issue of "human consciousness" and/or "human alienation," a core theme of modernity. I argue that any narratives about information societies, in which the theme of "individuality" was not sufficiently deliberated, could misguide, in a fundamental sense, the direction of *social innovation* at which our future society aims.

The enlightenment philosophers aspired an ideal society where liberty, equality, philanthropy, and peace would be realized. This society, reinterpreted in a modern sense, signifies a society that opens a possibility to achieve individual freedom and subjectivity and, further, to enhance self-consciousness.

As widely recognized, the paradigm of industrial society, at whose core places the social principle of "massproduction-massconsumption-standardization," impedes the consummation of "individualized self-consciousness" of the social actors. Then, what kind of solution does the information society provide to these problems? If the information society has a new "paradigm," genuinely different from the one in the industrial society, we should find some solution to the *emancipation of ego*, captive to the structure of our modern society.

The Issue of "Individuality" in Korean Informatization

In this section, we will continue to raise the same theories as stated above, and evaluate the substantive issues evolving in the process of informatization in South Korea. We will examine the issue of the 'individual' in Korean society, and discuss how the fact that the "individual is nonexistent," to be argued, has brought about "compensated" patterns of informatization in Korea. In particular, we will carefully assess if informatization could substantiate people's "creative minds" in Korean society and, discuss how the "existential communication" stands at the cross-

roads. We, then, move on to explore the theoretical paradigm of "reflexive informatization" to surmount this kind of crisis and to redirect our efforts to concretize a "genuinely civilized" Korean information society.

Nonexistence of the Individual and the Identity Crisis

The modern society, from a historical point of view, is the age of the individual. In other words, the spirit of the modern ages is one of individualism. If the Renaissance, the dawn of modern civilization, reidentifies *human being*, the modern ages actually begin with the birth of *individual* at whose core lies the modern philosophy of enlightenment. The Korean society, nevertheless, does not seem to have this nature of "individuals" that have acted upon as a primary actor in the modern ages: It is only constituted of "elements"(Park, 1997).

The 'individual' is born through the emancipation of the shackles of society and tradition. The individual, in this sense, is a subject of freedom and responsibility. Individuality, therefore, is a subjecthood and independence. When Korean society is scrutinized within the lens of this perspective, it is very skeptical that this kind of autonomous individuality, independent of social ties, has been truly realized in Korean society.

Convict of Tradition

The individual in Korean society is a sort of prisoner, captive of nepotic relations and traditional institutions from the cradle to the grave. Korean adults, therefore, are grown-ups in a biological sense, but are infants in the perspective of social freedom. Korean individuals, until they die, always read another's face with an anxious look and, therefore, people in Korean society, feel free only in the chains of a social group. They persist in the state of perpetual loneliness.

The ego retained by the Korean people, accordingly, is other-oriented. Other's views are always important to them, and therefore, the criteria of their decision and choice could not go beyond the commonly accepted notion in Korean society. As a result, the social extension of their egos cannot help but be incomplete, premature and precarious by nature, and the self-identity of the Korean people is in a state of constant crisis in a fundamental sense.

Excessive Competition

The other social structure to distort individuality is an excessively competitive system. From a throat-cutting college entrance exam, especially notorious in Korean society, to an employment exam, and to promotion, the competition for success constantly unfolds.

The relationship among colleagues becomes more impersonal and solidarity in the work place gets diluted. Korean people learn, through socialization, that they should be aggressive to survive.

They come to realize, by experience, that they should be selfish and as cold as stone to deal with others as a competitor, not as a colleague, and to be an ultimate winner.

While this might be a general phenomenon that we could see in any other modern society, in Korean society, this trend is so widely pervasive that it brings about personal solitude and social ailment. People feel uneasy, fretful, and restless, although they are always busy as if haunted by something. They do not know how to respond to this kind of "uncertainty" and their souls are seized with an infirmity ailing. Besides, this mental sickness sneaks into people's inner "cave," remaining in contraction, they always feel acutely the symptoms of respiratory disease, gastric ulcer, and insomnia.

In this social setting, we could rarely find an "open" communication system, on the basis of mutual understanding and trust. Moreover, it needs scarcely to be said that one's true self could not be socially matured.

The Crisis of Productive Communication

The distortion of ego and the frustration of communication desire bring about a pathological mode of social communication in South Korea. Numerous examples of such aberrant behavior can easily found. To take a few, a representative Korean illness, called "hwa-byung," a pent-up ailment suffered from a stifling sensation in the chest, is, none other, such a case of a so-called communication disease, engendering from the *distortion of 'Kommunikationswille.'*

In addition, it is not so difficult to find the case in which communication between parents and children, and husband and wife are "choked", not to speak of the cases between employers and employees, and among colleagues in work places. According to one study, of which the Korean teenagers were the subject, the case of "Parents absent when they returned from school" was about 72.3% for whose mothers are working and 39.4% for the other case. For the question whether they tend to have open conversations with their parents, 60.3% of the respondents answer "no" in the case of "career" mothers and 52.2% in the other case. Moreover, the case of "Not wanting to go back home" is no less than 49.4% and 45.0% respectively.

The Culture of "Norae-Bang" and "Bbee-Bbee"

The dissatisfaction of our communication needs breeds a form of *"compensated communication"* in South Korea. For example, the lonely souls, fatigued from their daily lives and hurt from the shackles of convention, visit the "Norae-Bang," a Korean Karaoke. In the cocoon of a closed space, the souls scream themselves out of breath to console their exhausted spirits.

To take another example, it is not unrelated that a beeper called "Bbee-Bbee," or a cellular handphone(PCS) is spreading at an unprecedented rate among Korean teenagers. It is because these modes of networks could be construed as an "existential" struggle for the Korean youth to set themselves free from the fetters of daily competition and the college-entrance examination

(Park, 1997). It is their desperate endeavors to establish a *dyad network*, operated and controlled by themselves, to assure their own self-hood as an independent subjecthood, which has been rejected and damaged from the society, either at home or school.

"Chonhwa-Bang" and PC Communication

The computer-mediated entertainment is another form of pathological communication in Korean society. PC communication is an example. Teenagers, the major users, are emersed in "chatting" for about 89.88 minutes on average per day and not a few of them sit up all night in doing that. Many of them (60.5%) do not want to think seriously and just want to "lead a life as their friends do" (Jungang Daily Newspaper, May 4 1997, (5)).

"Chonhwa-Bang," a Korean telephone-mediated entertainment room for adults, is another example. The lonely crowds visit the closed commercial space to meet other unattended partners.

However, no one expects that meetings in those places could lead to a "genuine union," in which an open-mind association and communication take place between personality and personality. It is merely a "pseudo-union" and a "delusive exchange system" among the secluded souls.

Precondition of Existential Communication

Karl Jaspers once said, "One can not find one's true self without performing communication, but one can not also have a true communication without going through absolute solitude." Existential communication, from Jaspers's perspective, is realized only when two individuals, as a *truly self-autonomous being*, meet. Meeting itself is important but what is more important is the capacity of silence for the two independent parties. Therefore, true independence and subjecthood are the preconditions of existential communication(Park, 1997).

This discussion implies that whatever splendid information technologies would be, unless the members of a society are not truly autonomous, they could hardly be useful in realizing a "matured community," because the community with this nature requires independence and sub-jecthood of the member individuals. To construct a matured information society, therefore, efforts should be first exerted to perform a project boosting 'individual' consciousness so that individuals in a society can achieve truly independent personality and a matured ego.

Implication: Reflexive Informatization

These discussions, cast some crucial implications on the concept of informatization.

First, as argued, efforts should be made to promote individual personality and subjecthood. It means that the essence of informatization should be found in a socio-cultural context, not in technological determin-ism. Government, for this purpose, needs to encourage the activities of NGOs(non-governmental organiza-

tions) by *empowering* those organizations, especially in the sphere of information and civic culture.

Second, the chances and channels for social communication should be broadened on the condition of the information sovereignty of individual citizens. Social communication, not perverted fashion, should be reinforced on the basis of genuine independence and *mutual trust* among the various social actors whether they are between individuals and individuals, or organizations and organizations.

Finally, reflexivity on humans and nature should be enhanced through diversification of social communication. And all these kinds of informatization efforts should be bolstered by social reform in pursuit of *coexistence and coprosperity*.

The concept of informatization focusing on these three elements is termed "reflexive informatization" in this essay. A society needs to observe and analyze, on a continual basis, the current state of operating social relationships and the natural environment and to adapt and incorporate the analyzed results. "Reflexivity" signifies these kinds of social efforts.[3]

Communication is essential for the daily life of a social member. Real-time telecommunication, aided by new media, can extend the possibilities of social communication. Still, as argued, technology is not sufficient; autonomous citizen consciousness is a prerequisite for a matured society. Information technology, from the standpoint of reflexive informatization, is an instrument to facilitate participation of citizens and organization members in all kinds of social environments. On the foundation of social force, generated from the broadened participation and mobilized from the "bottoms," we should perform a social renovation for a matured society such that the member citizens are empowered to bring their individual creativity into full swing.

Reflexive Informatization:
Theory and Praxis

In this section, based on the observations and implications discussed above, we will first

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3) For an insightful contribution to the concept of reflexive informatization, see Yun(1997:4). This viewpoint agrees with the communication theory proposed by Habermas(1981). With a theme of "Modernity: Unfinished Project," Habermas posed an inquiry that how could a society synthesizes the linear and closed pattern of human intelligence deepening through the process of social differentiation. If human alienation, intensified through the process of social division of labor, was anti-rational, the new mode of rationality to be required would be to fortify *mutual cooperative ties* by utilizing differentiated communication networks. For this purpose, Habermas argued that the paradigm of functional society, **suppressing the nature and human personality**, should be modified to the one of *"communication society,"* that opens a possibility to transform human relationships to rational and reflexive forms.

elaborate on the concept and dimension of "reflexive informatization." Then we will attempt to integrate its "theoretical paradigm" to the logic of "policy programs."

Reflexive Informatization: Idea & Dimension

What kind of society are we dreaming of? What type of information society should we be aiming at? In the past, with the changes of the times, a new ideology and value system, fitting for the new era, emerged and offered a fresh vision for the human society. As agricultural society transformed into industrial society, new ideology such as freedom, equality, and democracy emerged as a dominant spiritual paradigm to guide a society. As information society progresses and advances in the upcoming 21st century, should we expect a new ideology, completely different from the one in the industrial society?

It seems not. That is because, even if information technologies are entirely different from those used in industrial society, technological change itself could not be a sufficient motivation to originate a totally new doctrine. Moreover, the mentioned modern value and ideas seem to be still widely supported by the people, unlike the times from agricultural to industrial society, and still remain to be realized.

This essay argues that "social dreams and vision," that the enlightenment thinkers opened for historical progress and a consummate future, should also be projected to the blueprint for the future. The "unfinished vision," expressed in the term of freedom, equity, philanthropy, and peace, should also be the spirit of the contemporary times, as those ideas have a universal value that could not be despised as an anachronism(Yun, 1997:2-3).

On a realistic level, nevertheless, what is more important is a strategic method; for example, how we should reformulate those epistemological visions into a conceptual framework upon which a feasible policy set could be concretized. This theoretical paradigm should incorporate the diverse dimensions of unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral relationships, and it can be expressed as empowerment, trust, and coprosperity, as we will discuss in the following sections.

Empowerment

This concept, in a literary sense, denotes "a process of making all societal actors equitable" by "delegating power" and "conferring authority." It highlights the vision that a civil society should be the one in which individuals and organizations could exert their full autonomy and originality without any discrimination and exclusion, or alienation and indifference.

The supreme values, associating with this dimension, are *freedom, democracy, independence, and subjectivity*. To realize this vision, instrumental efforts should be made in the area of informatization. As argued, the information project boosting *individuality and subjectivity* should be reinforced and NGOs(non-governmental organizations), especially in the sphere of information

and civic culture, should be empowered.

Trust

Earlier we maintained that social communication should be diversified on the basis of the independence and subjectivity of the social actors, and, through these efforts, 'existential communication' could become functionally rooted in our social system. For this goal to be realized, mutual trust among societal actors is prerequisite.

Trust provides 'ontological security' and 'human stability,' thus presenting a leeway to explore one's true self(Giddens, 1990: 94). Were it not for building this kind of trust, people would lack the confidence in their identities, falling into an enduring restlessness in an existential sense. Therefore, trust, ontological stability, and self-identity are fundamental elements for realizing a mature personality. In addition, trust serves to form a *social equity, cooperation, and cohesiveness*, and, further, to foster a functional social order.

Coprosperity

The final concept we need to elaborate on is coprosperity. While empowerment and trust are unilateral and bilateral concepts, emphasizing independence and mutual relationships, coprosperity is a multilateral concept, focusing on *philanthropy, peace and solidarity.*

Communication in a society is intimately coupled with the history and culture unique to the community, and therefore could not be conceivable apart from the life style of the community members. The vision of information society does not exist in making a chemical blending of the people's diversity, but in building a cohesive social community with individual traits fully respected. The project of information infrastructure tying a social community should be pursued based on this spirit of coprosperity. Furthermore it should be a strategic instrument leading to a social reform that will help to promote coexistence and coprosperity.

Reflexive Informatization: Logic & Index

These three ideal values provide a crucial guideline to derive the logic of our information policy. The policy network should be organically connected with these visions, as worked out in what follows.

Empowerment

• Information Education

Information education is a key policy instrument to enhance people's individuality and subjectivity, which is a precondition for an existential communication. This education, however, does not mean a technology-oriented computer education. While not repudiating the significance

of computer education, more importantly, information education should focus on nurturing human personalities. Educational efforts should be exerted more on the philosophical education required to cope with a technological society. This education should cultivate students' independence and subjectivity on the one hand, and the spirit of voluntarism on the other.

• Empowering NGOs

The changes in the communication mode affect the pattern of life in a society. New media and communication technology weave people in a different way and the changed patterns of human relationships bring about social changes. As the existing mode of social community changes, traditional way of life is more likely to fade away(Noam, 1994).

Some distressed classes or groups, swept away by the information waves, will be more alienated from our society. The most extreme cases are, to name a few, the aged, the disabled, or the welfare facilities in an isolated area. These people or organizations are intrinsically vulnerable to informatization as they lack not only funds and technology but expertise and impulse. Therefore, an information policy caring these estranged groups, universal service for example, should be implemented in a more systematic way.

Most of the non-governmental organizations, to a certain degree, have some kinds of financial or technical problems. Therefore, the more fundamental solution needs to be contrived for supporting NGOs in a way that they could stand alone and grow spontaneously. These efforts should lead to enlighten the consciousness of civil autonomy and reinforce the spirit of civic community. Policy networks stimulating civil activities, thus strengthening the civil society from the grass roots, will be the key to the idea of empowerment.

Trust

• Trust Building

In the cyberspace, lack of face-to-face contacts, netizens are not required to disclose their own identity. In other words, anonymity is tightly maintained in the on-line network. This anonymity, however, tends to make people irresponsible, thus acting as a serious barrier to form a genuine trust in human relationships, although an existential communication requires trust between communication actors. From legal, institutional, and ethical standpoints, efforts need to be exerted to deal with this kind of anonymity so that trust building in an information society could be bolstered.

• Privacy

For mutual trust, true independence and autonomy is essential among communication actors. Insuring privacy, in this case, is a minimum requirement for productive social communication but the chances of infringement of privacy become more prevalent in an information society. Public networks, access to databases, group-ware, telework, cellular phones, personal digital assistant, agent software, interactive television and home shopping all create opportunities for infringement of privacy and information sovereignty.

International rules and regulations as well as domestic policy measures need to be fortified to

protect individual freedom and independence, which will help to foster mutual trust.

Coprosperity
   • Information Ethics

In the 1970s Marshall McLuhan foresaw that the 'global village,' an intimate, congenial, and peaceful community, would be realized as information society progresses. When we carefully observe the unfolding patterns of information society currently proceeding, nevertheless, it is not the warm-hearted, caring community in which people could share opinions on a broad basis but the completely specialized, fragmented telecommunity in which each group looks to its own interests.

People are losing their community-based solidarity, while absorbing in making their friends of the same tastes in cyberspace. The work environment is also changing and losing its traditional ties. People tend to work increasingly more in cyber enterprises, networked in an electronic community, not in a traditional location, feeling more and more isolated and alienated. At this moment these issues should be seriously taken care of, and, most of all, we need to deliberate information ethics and cultural norms that could be approached based on the principle of coprosperity.
   • Information Sharing

One of the critical elements for a 'social reform' program is to create a social culture in which information sharing and joint utilization are encouraged. Open access and sharing is a key to the success of our information policy. It is quite essential to establish a network environment that everybody can easily and freely "log in."

〈Table 1〉 Dimension and Index of Reflexive Informatization

DIMENSION	VALUE	CONTENT	POLICY INDEX	SCHOLARS
EMPOWERM ENT	Freedoom Democracy Subjectivity	* Indepedence and Subjectivity * The Spirit of Civil Autonomy * Caring the Distressed Groups	* Information Education * Empowerment of NGOs * Universal Service	Bates, 1989; Negroponte, 1996 Gandy, 1989; Kellner, 1990 Noam, 1994; Jones, 1994
TRUST	Equity Cooperation Cohesiveness	* Social Communication Based on Mutual Trust * Reflexivity on Human and Nature	* Legal and Institutional Approach for Trust Building * Information Sovereignty and Privacy	Giddens, 1990 & 1991; Dertouz, 1996 Westin, 1982; Branscomb, 1994; Noam, 1994
COPRO SPERITY	Peace Philanthrophy Solidarity	* The Organizing Priciple of Coexistence and Coprosperity * Government and Social Reform	* Information Ethics and Norms for Coprosperity * Information Sharing and Joint Utilization	Brin, 1998; Dizard, 1997 Kapor, 1994; Craig, 1979; Nimmo, 1985

The essence of our information society is in "networks." Networks generate a new type of knowledge, production, and business. The quintessence to the "new" should exist in "doing something together," which can be labeled the "spirit of collaboration." Reflexive informatization will not be realized until social reform proceeds on the basis of this spirit.

Up until now, we have discussed the various aspects of reflexive informatization, from its vision and dimension to the logic and policy instruments. The gist of the argument is summarized in Table 1.

Conclusion and Implications

In the wake of unbridled competition, institutionalized through indiscriminate capitalism and globalization, modern civilization, although it has brought us much to celebrate, has tightened up the intrinsic freedom of human beings. In this essay, we have reviewed the problems and implications of "reflexive modernity and informatization," shedding light on "human alienation" and "binding human consciousness." Were a visionary society dreamed in the upcoming century to be the one that opens the possibility to achieve individual freedom and creativity, it would boil down to the issue of "self-actualization" for the actors of society. If an information society has a new "paradigm," clearly different from the one in an industrial society, the new principle should offer a hope to solve the problem of "human alienation" textured in an industrial society. Is this really true?

To answer this query, we have theoretically reviewed the nature of self-ego and identity as well as the empirical issues of "individuality" in the informatization process in South Korea. The answer addressed in this essay was unfortunately, "no." Worse yet, in an information society, it becomes more and more difficult to identify and promote one's individual subjectivity, a precondition for a matured society, not to speak of elevating "human consciousness." If informatization can not substantiate humankind's "creative minds" for the future of social life, a new pattern of informatization, in both theoretical paradigms and policy programs, should be explored. This was a key theme to be examined in this essay.

In this essay, we termed "reflexive" informatization for the informatization pointing to such direction. We then elaborated on its vision and ideas as well as its concepts and dimensions and tried to organically connect its "theoretical paradigm" to the logic of our information policy.

The major findings and implications analyzed in this essay can be summarized as follows.

First, whatever advanced information superhighway, if there were no truly matured individuals armored with subjective personalities, will be useless to accomplish a "humane community." A matured society requires independence and subjecthood of the member individuals, and to build this kind of information society, above all, we need to make efforts to implement a project boosting 'individual' consciousness, so that a truly autonomous personality can be first accomplished.

Second, the opportunities for social communication, that is not distorted, should be promoted

on the basis of information sovereignty and independence. For this kind of existential communication, *mutual trust* is prerequisite among the various actors in society, whether it is between individuals and individuals, or organizations and organizations.

Third, reflexivity on humans and nature should be heightened through deepening existential communication. And this kind of informatization efforts should be fortified by a social reform that is aiming at *autonomy and originality, trust and empowerment, and coexistence and coprosperity.*

Finally, to achieve reflexive informatization, endowed with the above-mentioned attributes, a new approach and perspective is required. Above all, government, free from bureaucratic eliticism, should focus more on social values that emphasizes individual freedoms, independence, and subjectivity. On a policy matter, the perspectives on individual information should be drastically changed, and in this vein, the *information sovereignty and privacy* issue needs to be reemphasized. In addition, the government should promote NGO activities by empowering them, particularly in the sphere of an information and *civic culture*.

Socio-cultural aspects are the key to the success of our information policy. For a social reform to be accomplished in an information society, it is vital to create a social culture in which *information sharing* and joint utilization are stimulated. *Information education*, for this purpose, should not focus on a technology-oriented computer education but on elevating social 'informat-ion minds', to foster the culture of "information sharing and joint discussion."

The essence of an information network is in the spirit of "doing something together." The quintessence to the "net" should be in the "spirit of collaboration." Reflexive informatization will be fulfilled when social reform progresses on the basis of this spirit, that is, the credos of "sharing together, growing up together, and reaping together."

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