Alfred Schutz on Communication:
— Implications for Korean Society

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I. The Social Life-World as the Social Communication-World

We, as human beings, are born into and living in the world already inhabited by other human beings. But the world of others we are living in is not simply a world of pure strangers totally independent and disconnected from one another; and now the world of others transforms into the social life-world as the sphere of “We,” on the basis of the intersubjective interconnection between/among its members. The “others” in the daily social life-world exist from the outset as “fellow men,” intersubjectively networked in “a world common to all of us” (Schutz, 1970, p. 163).

The daily life-world for Schutz denotes, therefore, a socially constructed world of mutual relationship and an order of intersubjective commonality. And from this social world of everyday life, there automatically originates “the communicative common environment” which can be principally characterized by “the possibility of intercommunication” oriented toward mutual understanding among its members (Schutz, 1970, p. 164). In the social life-world, as Schutz

1) An earlier version of this paper was presented at “The Legacy of Alfred Schutz: International Conference on His Centennial” held at Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan, March 26 - 28, 1999.
(1970) describes:

"Thus, relationships of mutual understanding and consent and, therewith, a communicative common environment originate——.. The persons participating in the communicative environment are given one to the other not as objects but as counter-subjects, as consociates in a societal community of persons. Sociality is constituted by communicative acts in which the I turns to the others, apprehending them as persons who turn to him, and both know of this fact."(p. 165).

At this point, it can be safely argued that Schutz’s notion of “the social life-world” is in its essence equivalent to a concept of “the social communication-world.” The “we,” for Schutz, live in the social communication-world. For him, the social life-world means nothing practically different from the social communication-world, a sphere of continuous human interactions and mutual correlation directed toward realizing communal visions and perspectives. “We” live in the social communication-world. Those people who are born into the daily life-world are exactly the same people who are living and growing older in the social communication-world.

Therefore, keeping in line with Schutz’s general perspective on the social life-world, we can further develop and explicate our concept of the social communication-world. It can be theoretically defined as the public’s common sphere of communication, socially and collectively established, developed, maintained, and transformed by the members of a society within their daily life-world. It describes a communal space of social representations in which social members interact with each other on the basis of individually internalized and socially shared “interpretive schemata” or “intersubjective meaning-relations” (Schutz, 1967, 1970, 1973). In this world of social communication, social members can (a) express their personal needs, hopes, desires, and expectations; (b) encounter, accept, and understand those of other members; (c) they thereby formulate a kind of generalized meaning systems (d) and refer to these meaning relations for further development of their social relationships. It can be described as a collectively established social space fabricated by a “common system of typifications and relevances” (Schutz, 1970,
p. 82), and whereby diverse needs and opinions are reciprocally expressed, mediated, exchanged, interpreted, contended, and transformed.

For this reason, the social communication-world exists and functions as a principal pivot of the daily human life-world, reflecting and regulating the actor's patterns of social interaction. Being grounded on the mutually shared "common definition of the reciprocal situation" (Schutz, 1970, p. 83) in the social communication-world, the identity of the individual actor can be socialized and expanded to incorporate more horizons of the outer world.

The social communication-world is a subjective and at the same time intersubjective domain of social constitution. In the social communication-world, the one and the same object can mean an infinite of different things in accordance with the individual’s situational and purposive differences. But at the same time the social communication-world offers rich opportunities by which these differences in individual subjective perspectives can be reciprocally readjusted and overcome. All discrete and ambiguous experiences are actively arranged into "meaning-contexts, classified into "motivation-contexts" (Schutz, 1970, p. 168), and reframed into intersubjective understanding and reconciliation.

According to Schutz (1970, p. 183), overcoming the differences in individual perspectives can be achieved by two basic idealizations: (a) the idealization of "the interchangeability of the standpoints" and (b) the idealization of "the congruency of the system of relevance." Individuals having private concerns and perspectives can encounter in the social communication-world as "fellow men" and see things in the same typicality and can build up a common cognitive and interpretive framework. The social communication-world in this sense can render a possibility of transcending from the world of solitary consciousness. The "mundane sphere" based on subjectivity and ambiguity of perspectives now can turn into the "transcendental sphere" of intersubjectivity and "reciprocity of perspectives (p. 183)". Solitary people possessing different perspectives and different systems of relevances can become members of the "We" in the social communication-world.

This transcendental possibility of human interaction within the social communication-world enables us to realize a "We-relationship" in which each of us can sympathetically participate in each other’s subjective meaning
-contexts. Thus, “I can live in your subjective meaning-contexts only to the extent that I directly experience you within a We-relationship” (Schutz, 1970, p. 188).

The world of “We-relationship” for Schutz means by no means just a closed dyad relationship. The “We” include not merely you and me, but “everyone belong to us, namely everyone whose system of relevances is substantially in conformity with yours and mine.” (Schutz, 1970, p. 184). The “We” in the social communication-world are “united with Other in a community of persons” (p. 164).

II. The Structures of the Social Communication-World

The analysis of the social communication-world of a given society can allow a set of different approaches employing many different theoretical and methodological perspectives. But, I, in this paper, assume that the social communication-world of a certain society is composed of two main axes, i.e., “the vertical structure“ and “the horizontal structure” (cf. O’Donnell, 1986).

The vertical structure of the social communication-world is an axis of social communication, corresponding to the hierarchically organized social order by which social members are put into a top-down, dominance subordinacy, and central-peripheral relationship. As an instance, people’s communication behaviors that unfold when they are submitted to the hierarchical class relationship or those resulting from their resistance against it are related mainly to the vertical structure of the social communication-world. Alfred Schutz does not seem to give us much useful conceptual tools for investigating this vertical structure.

On the contrary, “the horizontal structure” is an axis of the social communication-world, evolving from the horizontal social order in which individuals meet on an equal basis of power as contemporaries or as We. When individuals encounter others as mere “contemporaries,” the Other remains always as a generalized other and there can arise no serious communal solidarity
between them. But if we meet in a We-relationship, the Other is anticipated, understood, and encountered as a neighbor, possessing a collective identity shared by all of us.

It can be criticized that conventional communication research has mainly focused its attention on the vertical structure of the social communication-world (e.g., Curran & Gurevitch, 1991; Curran, Gurevitch, & Woollacott, 1977; Curran & Seaton, 1991); only least amount of emphasis has been allotted to the investigation of the horizontal structure. I think this asymmetrical distribution of scholarly attention has resulted in the overemphasis given to the description of the one-way and unidirectional process of mediation between the top and the down, thereby having left the problem of communication between diverse social groups lying autonomously and independently within the same social horizon considerably unaddressed.

Although everyone can willingly and easily consent to the view that the vertical structure is one pivotal axis of the social communication-world, there are also some critical reasons why the horizontal structure has no less theoretical importance than does the vertical structure.

To be sure, the fact that a significant (and often the most) portion of human daily lives is manifested within the horizontal network of independent individuals makes the theoretical importance of the horizontal structure self-evident. But a more important reason lies in the tendency that, although each of the two structures can be analyzed as an independent dimension of the social communication-world, they are at the same time structurally and dynamically interrelated with each other. In this line of reasoning, we can safely assert that for deeper understanding of the social communication-world, an approach dedicated solely to just one of the two axes is insufficient and we need at the same time the investigation of the dynamic interrelationship between the two structures.

For instance, there is a possibility that when the vertical structure is enforced, the horizontal structure can be more easily undermined. And conversely, often the recovery of the horizontal communication structure among independent social members is required before any profound change in the vertical structure can be anticipated (cf. O’Donnell, 1986). And in some other cases the demise
of the horizontal structure can result in the strengthening of the vertical structure.

The two structures of the social communication-world can be dynamically dependent on each other. To the extent that social members in the horizontal structure are mobilized and their voicing capability is raised, the vertical structure of the social communication-world will be more affected in the direction of de-hierarchicalization, and vice versa. If it is the case, we can safely sayjj that the vertical structure and the horizontal structure seem to be dynamically connected with each other.

This dynamic intercorrelation between the two structures of the social communication-world can suggest some vital practical implications. When we think about a social project for the democratization of our social communication-world, mobilizing and voicing capability of social members grounded on their communal solidarity can become an essential prerequisite for the transformation of its horizontal and vertical structures. In some other cases, for the analysis of the vertical communication structure of an authoritarian society, we are also in urgent need of understanding the horizontal structure.

To summarize, we should realize that “the horizontal structure” of the social communication-world, which has been largely neglected by critical communication scholars, can suggest a highly attractive research area having ample implications for the study of social communication.

III. The Korean Way of Economic Development

Korean society has experienced highly speedy socio-economic development and modernization for the last several decades. The change accomplished by Korean society in less than one half of a century, unprecedented in its scope and rapidity, can be interpreted as a model case of “condensed growth.” That means, within this relatively short period of time, Korean society has achieved economic development and industrialization comparable with the experiences that would have taken for a couple of centuries in cases of other countries.
However, construction often, though not necessarily, tends to entail destruction. The process of this exceptional success in economic development has also resulted in the severe distortions in the other domains of Korean society.

In spite of this phenomenal success in the condensed economic growth, Korea’s domestic politics has long failed in establishing legitimate democracy and dominated by a series of military authoritarian political rules. The military authoritarian rule, as in many cases of other developing countries (O’Donnell, 1973, 1988), was even believed to provide a powerful basis for the sustained economic growth (Im, 1987). Under the domination of authoritarian military rule, top policy priority was given to economic growth alone, and the belief that everything else could be sacrificed for the sake of it has prevailed in Korean society. As a political consequence, authoritarian political rule was justified as a requirement for the efficient pursuit of the plan for economic development; and the principle of democratic rationality was largely ignored in Korean society. In the Korean way of modernization, democratic procedural rationality grounded on active discussion initiated by diverse civic sectors has gradually succumbed to the state’s coercive, centralized, and exclusive leadership.

The ideology of economic growth has become deeply and gradually imbedded in every corner of Korean society. Korean society has witnessed widespread social diffusion of a unimodal value system which places an overriding emphasis on material accumulation, at the expense of all the other thinkable standards of achievement and progress. From the perspective of economic growth ideology, the democratic process of consensus building based on the massive political participation of diverse sectors of people was conceived of as an unproductive luxury, or often as an obstacle to the way of rapid development. As a result, in the Korean path toward modernization, grassroots sectors were neither included nor allowed to participate, but merely mobilized into the authoritarian politics.

These basic features of the development process described so far have led to the diffusion of some very special key “organizing principles” (Kim, 1993) or “systems of relevance” (Schutz, 1970, p. 120) into Korean society. They
have deeply taken root in cognitive and behavioral patterns of Korean people. They are deeply institutionalized in Korean society in that they can exert a normatively binding force to regulate the value system and behavioral patterns of Koreans. Those “systems of relevances” are collectively shared by the whole society insofar as they work as the standards by which the beliefs and behaviors of others are anticipated and evaluated. In Schutz’s terms, they are seated in Korean society as “the paramount reality” (Schutz, 1970, p. 253) of everyday life-world, whereby ordinary people’s collective experiences of social participation are shaped and guided.

I can suggest the three most prominent “systems of relevance” permeated into the whole Korean society in its process of economic development. The first and foremost system of relevance shared by Korean people seems to be related to their extreme orientation toward “material achievement.” In its developmental process Koreans society has internalized a system of relevance that glorifies material attainment. This system of relevance tends to justify the pursuit of material achievement regardless of the means employed. Social success of an individual is now gauged monolithically by his or her level of material accumulation; and any other dimensions of social achievement and contribution are scarcely recognized in recent Korean society.

The second system of relevance is the one of mutual distrust and exclusion. Traditional Korean value system based on mutual trust and coexistence has been substantially undermined in the process of economic development. The social climate of mutual respect and understanding has been steadily collapsed and replaced by one of mutual exclusion and discrimination. The collapse of the legitimacy system at every level of Korean society witnessed in the modernization process has accelerated the settlement and diffusion of this system of relevance. At the system level, the legitimacy of the state has been severely undermined due to its coercive authoritarianism and widespread corruption. At the individual level, every social member tends to view others as a potential enemy met in the arena of severe competition for material achievement, rather than as a trustful member of a community who is supposed to have a common system of feelings and companionship.

The third most prominent system of relevance prevailing in current Korean
society seems to be the primacy given to individual rationality over collective rationality. In the social climate of extreme competition for economic achievement, people tend to depend on a system of relevance that makes them think and behave according to egoistic selfishness and familistic values, discarding a collective and communal perspective.

These systems of relevance which has gradually permeated into Korean society have produced some tremendous impacts on its social communication-world as a principal axis of the daily life-world. The social communication-world has seemingly undergone serious distortions as these systems of relevance have become internalized in the daily lives of Koreans in the process of economic development.

IV. Weakening of the Horizontal Communication Structure

As we suggested before, the Korean way of industrialization and economic development has resulted in serious distortions in the social communication-world. Then, in what way have the systems of relevance distorted the social communication-world of Korean society? My argument is that the most obvious and important impact of the Korean way of development on the social communication-world is the weakening of its horizontal structure.

Although Schutz does not render us a set of useful conceptual tools to investigate into the distortions of the horizontal structure, I will suggest some key aspects of the distortions imbedded in the social communication-world of Korean society due to the economic development process.

1. Communication Endogamy

Given that the ideal of human communication lies in the horizontal exchange of information between multifarious, and often competing meaning systems, genuine communication is expected to take place across social boundaries. Communication in this sense denotes the act of tapping the possibility of
intercommunication between multiple realities, directed toward mutual understanding and consent.

The one and the foremost form of distortions easily found in the horizontal structure of the social communication-world can be termed “communication endogamy” (Park, 1996). By communication endogamy I mean human communication taking place “within” particular social boundaries of any kind. Contrary to this, for me “communication exogamy refers to human communication taking place “across” particular social boundaries. Of course, each of these two patterns of human communication can naturally arise in the social communication-world of any given society.

But if a social communication-world of a given society is healthy and sound, social actors will view others as fellows, and thereby they can easily transcend their psychological and social idiosyncrasies and social distinctiveness. People participating in the authentic social communication-world are willingly accept others as “consociates in a societal community” (Schutz, 1970, p. 165). I is to be united with the Other, forming a we-relationship. When thou becomes “the other I” in the social communication-world, we experience the expansion of social horizons. In this way, when the horizontal structure of the social communication-world of a given society is vitalized, the possibility of intercommunication between multiple actors and realities is reinforced. On the other hand, communication endogamy, as a form of within-boundary communication, tends to limit the “interchangeability of the standpoints” (Schutz, 1970, p. 183), and to hinder the open and free formation of We-relationship, thereby weakening the horizontal structure of the social communication-world. This line of reasoning leads to the intuition that the sound basis of the social communication-world depends on the vitality of communication exogamy as opposed to communication endogamy.

Communication exogamy, as a form of cross-boundary communication, presupposes “interchangeability of the standpoints,” (Schutz, 1970, p. 183) deferentially distributed across social boundaries, thereby making transcendence of limited and individualized perspectives possible. Communication exogamy can be possibly built upon the openness, intersubjectivity, and mutual trust between diverse subuniverses of a society. It is also a form of human communication
established upon the mutual inclusion and commensurability. On the other hand, communication endogamy depends on the culture of closure and mutual exclusion. It resides in the domain of subjectivity and incommensurability. More often than not, the social climate of mutual distrust and antagonism breeds this form of social communication. Exogamy differs from endogamy in the dimension of the communication mode. Communication exogamy is typically two-way and transactional, while endogamy implies one-way and oppositional. Discussion and persuasion are distinctive nature of communication exogamy, while control and ordination are an ordinary form of communication endogamy.

Exogamy shows orientation toward solidarity and community building; endogamy reveals orientation toward isolation and individuality. Exogamy is, it can be argued, mainly tuned to we-relationship, whereas endogamy is a type of communication directed toward they-orientation. Exogamy is more likely to be directed to mutual sharing and consensus building than endogamy.

Apparently both of these two forms of communication arise from the social communication-world. But insofar as we can assert that two-way, cross-boundary communication has greater affinity with the genuine sense of the term communication and modern democratic ideal, we can suppose that the degree to which communication exogamy as compared with endogamy is activated can imply the soundness of the social communication-world of a particular society. If this is the case, the activation of communication exogamy relatively to endogamy can be supposedly indicative of communicative soundness of a given society.

When this way of theorizing is applied to current Korean society, we can find ample evidences indicating that communication endogamy is overwhelming in the social communication-world, as opposed to the relative underdevelopment of communication exogamy. Our phenomenological observation suggests that the social communication-world of Korean society is dominated by a multitude of isolated circuits of communication, each of these closed circuits being communicatively self-sufficient and independent from others; and no effective boundary-crossing social communication flows flourish across these mutually isolated and closed circuits. Our everyday experiences are testifying that the endogamous communication is penetrating into the whole system of Korean
society. The endogamous communication structure tends to make Korean society communicatively closed. In Korean society, infinite arrays of social boundaries and distinctions in terms of education, place of birth, occupation, generation, to name only a few, turn into impermeable barriers jeopardizing the free and open flow of social communication across these social boundaries. Effective communication flows across organizations and social sectors, and their collective cooperation based thereupon are largely restricted, even when they are performing very similar social functions.

The functional breakdown of the social communication system due to communication endogamy becomes most conspicuous in cases of social crises. One incident actually took place in Korea eloquently illustrates this loss of effective co-ordination. On morning in May, 1993, a man in his fifties fell down with paralysis in a subway station on his way to the workplace. He was brought to a nearby police office by the station’s employees. No practical and effective care was taken for him in the police office. After about 30 minute negligence, the police returned him to the original subway station, for the alleged reason that the police was not responsible for the incident which had taken place in the subway station. Subway station employees left him alone in the platform. Neither the police nor the subway station informed his family of the incident, even though they identified his name and address. Not until the midnight did anybody take care of him. It were his family members, informed by another source, that finally found him, after 16 hours from his falling down (Park, J. H., 1993).

The implications of this occurrence for the social communication-world of Korean society are obvious. Each of the social units, the subway station, the police, and the citizenry didn’t want to be actively involved in the accident. There was no effective cross-boundary communication among these three social units: and the build-up of a coordinative communication system impossible. The three social units were compartmentalized and each of them existed as an isolated entity. Each of them strategically sought to avoid or lessen the burden of taking care of the patient. In this way, endogamy outweighed exogamy in the social communication-world of Korean society.

Overall, there are extensive evidences indicating that endogamy, rather than
exogamy, constitutes the “paramount realities” of the social communication-world in the present Korean society.

I take the view that this prevalence of endogamous communication in Korean society is a legacy of its previous development process. The above-mentioned systems of relevance internalized in Korean society can be cited as major contributory factors responsible for the expansion of extremely competitive, discriminative, mutually exclusive, and antagonistic modes of social interaction. And as horizontal companionship has diminished, commensurability between social units also has withered; and accordingly, the horizontal structure of the social communication-world has weakened.

A similar concept of “communication closure” can be suggested to describe the weakening of the horizontal structure of the social communication-world of the present Korean society. Because communication is a useful resource and tool for obtaining and maintaining social power, some limited number of social members who hold positional advantages over others concerning certain communication resources tends to formulate an inner circle and devise a set of rules designed to restrict the accessibility of out-group members to the communication resources. In Korean society, social groups are in general closed inner circles, exclusive to out-group members.

2. Immobilization of Social Opinions

When the horizontal structure of the social communication is severely undermined, no social members are sincerely motivated to put himself or herself imaginatively in place of others, and the likelihood of successful transmission of a social opinion to other people, however righteous it may be, tends to be generally restricted. It is possible because the establishment of a “common definition of the reciprocal situation” (Schutz, 1970, p. 83) becomes difficult to be achieved when the horizontal communication structure does not have a sound basis. It can be argued that the immobility of social opinions is one key feature of the social communication-world in Korean society (Park, 1993, 1994).

As a Korean saying goes, a talk, though not having a feet, can run a thousand
miles. But in today’s Korean society, this inborn remarkable mobility of a talk is not fully realized due to the prevalence of the social climate of mutual distrust. We can reason thus that the weakening or breakdown of the horizontal structure of the social communication-world will ultimately undermine the mobility of social opinions. It will probably hinder the possibility of social issues to be freely voiced and organized in an open arena of public discussion; and eventually blocks the formation of communitarian efforts to solve them.

The immobility of social opinions unfolds taking four successive steps. The first step is the debasement of opinion initiation. When the horizontal communication structure is crippled, nobody has enough willingness to initiate a social “talk” to suggest an opinion to solve a latent social problem. The most imminent effect of the debasement of the horizontal structure of the social communication-world is in this sense the closure of social “mouths.” As “mouths” are closed, the society becomes voiceless. Creative and innovative ideas and opinions gradually disappear from the social communication-world. The ratio of speakers to listeners also tends to diminish as the society becomes voiceless (Mills, 1956).

At the second step, the breakdown of the horizontal structure of social communication makes a society “earless.” Even when a reasonable opinion is openly submitted to the public arena there are no other people who willingly and sympathetically pay sincere attention to the lonely voice. This situation is not uncommon in the real world of Korean society where mutual distrust is prevalent. Social opinions, even when voiced, tend to have very limited reachability to the Others.

The third step of the immobility of social opinions is the debasement of opinion literacy. Social members tend to lose the reflective mind to deliberate the adequacy of a given opinion. The systems of relevances based on the materialistic values, and mutual distrust, and egoistic individualism have gradually destroyed people’s psychological basis for reflective deliberation. Even when a social opinion is voiced and heard, no social members evoke an empathic concern, if it looks not apparently conducive to the individual’s own material attainment.

The final step of the immobility of social opinions culminates in the state
in which no social members actively participate in the action program suggested by a social opinion. At this step, if there is no material gain, then there is no active participation.

In a communicatively endogamous society, nobody is sincerely motivated to put himself or herself imaginatively in place of others, and in usual cases, the likelihood of productive and successive transmission of a social opinion to others strictly restricted. It is because the establishment of a "common definition of the reciprocal situation" (Schutz, 1970, p. 83) becomes difficult in an endogamy-prevailing social communication-world. Therefore, the greater the degree of communication endogamy, the lesser the mobility of social opinions. The immobilization of social opinions tends to impede the manifestation of latent social problems and their entry into the open arena of public discussion.

3. Debasement of Collective Corporatist Mobilization

As Cherry (1978) put it, "when members or elements are in communication with one another, they are associating, co-operating, forming an organization" (p. 6). A desirable social function of communication is to unite and network the parts into a purposeful and goal-seeking whole. On the contrary, one ultimate consequence of the breakdown of the horizontal communication structure seems to be the debasement of the social foundation for "collective corporatist mobilization" to face a common problem of a community. Faced to a critical social problem in the social space, autonomous and collective mobilization of diverse social members for the pursuit of its communal solution becomes more difficult as the horizontal structure of the social communication-world is thwarted.

The weakening of the horizontal structure of the social communication-world has promoted the privatization of social problems and disturbed the collectivization and socialization of individual problems and grievances, thereby curtailing the chance of formulating a sound basis of collective corporatist mobilization and successful social movements. As Korean society has gradually witnessed the weakening of the horizontal communication structure, individuals rapidly lost empathic contact with the social and
psychological worlds of others. As people gradually lost sight of the lives of their neighbors, a sort of social illiteracy has prevailed in Korean society. And as soon as individuals learned not to trust their neighbors, they locked themselves in a circuit of mutual immobilization.

As an inevitable result, Korean society is now experiencing the collapse of autonomous collectivity and horizontal/communal solidarity. The debasement of the horizontal solidarity framework that is to be sustained by autonomous and independent social members can ruin the possibility of their collective mobilization for the pursuit of communally coordinated problem solving. Under these circumstances, the willingness of social members to organize collective solidarity, and make voluntary sacrifices or contributions for a common purpose is severely diminished. A significant point is not that there exist multiple systems of viewpoints, but that these multiple systems of distinctions stay incommensurable, atomized, antagonized, compartmentalized and lose reciprocity, nullifying real possibility of mutual sharing through the intercommunication between these subuniverses.

In this situation, even when socio-political conflicts become salient, individual grievances tend to remain private, and not easily grow into a collective organization of grievances. However, collective mobilization of individual grievances supplies the basis of a successful social movement (Gaventa, 1980). Grievances that cannot be organized cannot produce active participation. When the horizontal communication structure of a society demises, all grievances tend to be individualized.

V. Discussion and Conclusion

Contrary to the weakening of the horizontal structure of social communication in the present Korean society, the original meaning of communication reminds us of the rich significance of the horizontal nature of human communication. The term communication, according to Colin Cherry (1978, p. 30), originates from the Latin word, communico, signifying to share. Insofar as we are in a genuine
mode of communication, we never simply send or receive messages, but always hold them in common. One-way communication, in which messages are uni-directionally sent from the source to the destination, is by definition ostracized from the authentic meaning of the word communication. Thus, to Schutz and Luckmann (Schutz, 1970; Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, 1983/1989), communication invariably denotes and always requires a process of intercommunication, a two-way process of interaction and mutual understanding between autonomous social beings and units.

Once communication implies a bi-directional process of communality building, it logically presupposes the existence of multiple universes and realities within society. The very foundation of human communication, it can be safely asserted, lies in the reciprocal co-orientation of diverse, and often competing, voices and viewpoints. Indeed communication symbolizes nothing but the realization of the interchangeability of different socio-political standpoints. In this sense of the word, communication means relating distinct subprovinces of social reality to each other; the legitimate social function of communication is based on the role of networking these different social worlds into an organic universe, making each of the these discrete social worlds interdependent and commensurable.

But, communication endogamy implies the functional breakdown of communication channels between social units, degrading the basis of their effective co-ordination. Under the endogamous communication structure, every unit of social communication tends to stay as an isolated island, seeking the maximization of its own interest, and not easily motivated to be engaged in active co-ordination with other units to further the interest of the whole system of which it is a part. Communication endogamy tends to make the part selfish and prosperous; and the whole lethargic and impoverished. To say differently, it often enables sub-system level rationality to override total-system level rationality. In an communicatively endogamous society, every social unit becomes inclined to the strategic pursuit of its selfish interest, at the sacrifice of the benefit of the system as a whole.

The conception of communication as a two-way process of building communality also epitomizes the modern principle of liberal democracy. The
modern dream of democracy stemmed from the notion of the open and free market place of ideas, within which a variety of opinions are publicly voiced and freely contended, finally culminating in the formation of the true and rational public will (Milton, 1951; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). It is safe to claim that the essence of modern democracy abides in the vitality of free and open discussion between contending views. In other words, the sound basis of democracy eventually depends on active and effective two-way communication between different beliefs and ideas within a society. One of the most significant functions of social communication, in this sense, is to correlate disparate parts of society into an organic whole (Lasswell, 1960). By exploring the social communication-world, and especially scrutinizing its the horizontal structure, we can shed light on the distortions of the democratic dream of genuine communication in real Korean society.

In the process of modernization and economic development, the social communication world of Korean society has undergone serious distortions. The modernization process itself seems to have debased communicative rationality of Korean society in one way or another. The process has contributed to the internalization of highly endogamous communication structure in the social life-world of Korean society.

The endogamous communicative environment can be supposed to weaken the horizontal structure of the social communication-world, degrading the communicative foundation of liberal democracy. We can safely say that communication endogamy resulting from the breakdown of the horizontal structure of social communication clearly contradicts the classical ideal of liberal democracy. It tends to undermine the activation of horizontal communication circuits linked to diverse social units. While across-boundary social communication, i.e., exogamous communication can imply the dynamic exchange of persuasive discussions across social boundaries, endogamous communication suggests that the political function of social communication is limited to the role of the “reinforcement” of each social unit’s preexisting point of view.

In a society where endogamous communication prevails, nobody is inclined to active pursuit of sympathetic participation in other’s unique provinces of
relevances; distinct horizons of social units are to remain by and large static and intact. If the ideal of liberal democracy is to build up a system of coordination through networking these diverse sectors of a society and making them mutually communicative, the breakdown or weakening of the horizontal communication structure in Korean society can be expected to perform just the opposite function of the communicative dream of democracy.

It this is really the case, a developmental project of Korean society should include a clear plan to rehabilitate the distorted social communication-world. From our point of view, the question at stake is how to make a communicatively more sound society. To this end, we are in immediate need of developing a practical plan to re-process widely diffused social distrust of Korean society into a moral resource. In other words, what is needed is recycling of the diffused distrust and the antagonistic social atmosphere and remobilize and reorganize them as a repertory of yearnings for a better society. At the same time, Korean society should make a plan of institutional rearrangement to build up more effective communication circuits that are to be utilized to relate multiple views and realities to one another and to transform them into a larger universe.

Bibliography


