

SOAS-AKS
Working Papers in Korean Studies

No. 37

The Vacillation of Culture in Neoliberal South Korea

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April 2012

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As some may have noticed, I borrow the wording of the title of my talk partly from Etienne Balibar's famous essay "The Vacillation of Ideology in Marxism." But, of course, I am here using the word "vacillation" not in the sense in which he has used it. For Balibar, the question of ideology's vacillation has to do with the instability of the concept in Marx and Marxism. According to him, the term ideology has been used rather inconsistently in various Marxist texts, suggesting that the adoption of the concept depended upon the political or theoretical situation a particular Marxist found him- or herself in.¹ "Vacillation" in the title of my talk today, on the other hand, refers to a rather different historical phenomenon. By the term, I want to call your attention to the transformations culture has undergone in recent South Korea in terms of its notion, social status, and function. Today, I would like to take a look at how the ascendancy of neoliberalism in the country has affected how culture was conceived, practiced, managed, and controlled.

Neoliberalism was first introduced in the last days of Park Chung-hee. In April 1979, Park's Government adopted a new approach to the country's economic development with the Comprehensive Economic Stabilization Policy which implemented austerity measures that cancelled most government-led public projects, thus breaking away from the earlier developmental economic policy line. But as Park was soon assassinated in the same year, it was Chun Doo-hwan's Fifth Republic that really pushed ahead with the Measures. It is known that the economic policies implemented then included the same contents later contained in the

¹ According to Balibar, however, this instability or vacillation of "ideology" does not mean that the term and concept can easily be thrown away. Rather, ideology is like something that continues to haunt Marxism, for it has to do with the inescapable difficulty the proletarian revolution faces—the problematic relationships between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the Party and the masses, or the socialist ideal and the reality of capitalist domination. Seen in this way, ideology proves to be a unique Marxist concept that reminds one of the centrality of the class struggle. In other words, as long as capitalism continues to dominate humanity, the question of ideology remains, even though the instability of its vacillation may become as extreme as it can get.

Washington Consensus. One would expect that things must have changed, after Chun's political defeat with the establishment of the 1987 democratization regime. Insofar as the keynote of government policies is concerned, however, no real change has occurred. One could even argue that it was because South Korean capital needed a soft-going, more efficient manager of neoliberalism that Chun's military authoritarianism was replaced by liberal democracy. As a result, no single president in South Korea since Chun Doo-hwan tried to cancel out the neoliberal basis of public policies. Even Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun were no exception to this tradition.

One would want to know how democratic leaders like Kim Dae-jung became neoliberal. I raise this question because more people than before would now agree that neoliberalism is basically anti-democratic. For wherever neoliberalism dominates, it is the people who lose. In order to understand this puzzle, we need to look into how the 1987 regime was established.

It is widely known that the 1987 political regime was a democratic one. I would argue that in reality, it was a "democracy by pact." "A democracy by pact can institutionalize a conservative bias into the polity, creating a new status quo which can block further progress toward political, social and economic democracy."² When the June 1987 Uprising forced Chun Doo-hwan to agree to revise the Constitution, there was hope that authoritarian forces would permanently disappear from the country's political arena. But they were allowed to survive and participate in the process of constitution revision. This was made possible by the concessions from the liberal forces that had been hegemonic in the democratic movement. One wonders why liberals agreed to the survival of authoritarian forces. The answer must be that liberals were liberals, and that they did not like radicals to become politically more powerful. In addition, they were overconfident that if only given a free election, they would easily defeat authoritarians.

The cost of this miscalculation has been enormous, for even after the June 1987 Uprising, authoritarians remained strong enough to win three presidential elections afterwards. And as can be seen in the social setbacks during the current Lee Myung-bak Government—such as the intensification of inequality, the decline of basic human rights, the destruction of the environment, the worsening of relationships with North Korea, and the general retreat of democracy—we know how bad the political survival of authoritarians can be for society. But we also have to realize that the pact with authoritarians was not a total loss for liberals. Under the old Constitution of the Fifth Republic, they had been forbidden to participate in the official

²"Petroleum and Political Pacts: The Transition to Democracy in Venezuela," in Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 198.

political process. They now regained their political rights. But the compromise between liberals and authoritarians was devastating, especially for radical students, labor activists, dissidents who most dedicatedly participated in the democratization movement, paying so many sacrifices. The room for their political activity now became even narrower, since they were increasingly sidelined as the competition between authoritarians and liberals dominated the political scene. Democracy restored by the 1987 Constitution was thus not a real democracy, to say the very least.

This is not to deny, of course, that there *were* significant differences between liberals and authoritarians. Distinguishing himself from his predecessors Kim Young-sam and Roh Tae-woo, President Kim Dae-jung tried harder to defend human rights. It was during his term that such human right institutions as the National Human Rights Committee, Presidential Truth Commission on Suspicious Deaths, and Korea Democracy Foundation were established. Roh Moo-hyun also tried to promote democratic values so that it was under the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments that South Korea achieved valuable democratic reforms including the introduction of participatory democracy that allowed civil social organizations to participate in the governance of public policies. Nonetheless, the fact remains that they made a pact with authoritarians to share the management of neoliberalism.

As a result of the pact between authoritarians and liberals, we have a very peculiar combination of neoliberalism and developmentalism in South Korea. This articulation calls for critical analysis, since it bears upon the way culture has been conceived and practiced. No doubt, there is a fundamental difference between developmentalism and neoliberalism, but as the latter became the dominant strategy of accumulation, it employed the former as a sub-partner. One can thus say that in the age of neoliberalism, developmentalism has been preserved for the sake of neoliberal accumulation.

The articulation between neoliberalism and developmentalism can be seen also in contemporary Korean culture. No doubt, it has been neoliberalism that created crucial social conditions under which culture was understood and practiced for the last three decades. But this neoliberalism was also developmental in that it utilized state power to achieve its purposes. The theory of neoliberalism suggests that the state must be replaced by the market, but as David Harvey points out, it is more often the state, “that comes to rescue the market from the crisis it often falls into, creating a good business or investment climate for capitalistic endeavors.” In the following, I will trace how South Korean culture has been characterized by this interesting consistency between neoliberalization and developmental intervention.

Developmental neoliberalism in the cultural sector was already in operation in the days of Chun Doo-hwan. One may say that at the time culture was deliberately transformed into an object of policy intervention. This was a new phenomenon. As Kim Uchang points out, “In the East Asian tradition, culture was considered not an object of state policy, but rather the determinant of that policy.”³ The high status of culture derived from the belief that culture is “an ideal order of human existence.”⁴ With Korea’s modernization under the rule of Park Chung-hee, however, this traditional view of culture lost much of its appeal. One may even argue that culture became a hand-maiden of politics, as it was so often summoned to serve political purposes. Even when it was treated as an object of social respect, it was required to fulfill more important social objectives. Thus when masters of traditional arts and crafts were nominated as “intangible cultural assets,” they were given such honor in the expectation that they would carry on the legacy of the nation. Nevertheless, in the days of Park, culture was just culture. It could be an object of state protection, but there was little effort on the part of the state to develop it for further strategic purposes. Under the rule of Chun Doo-hwan, a new policy approach to culture was taken. It seriously engaged in the process of making culture into the object of state policy, and I believe that this was a process of developmental neoliberalism. While it was neoliberal in that it turned culture into a market commodity, it was the state that actively intervened in implementing such an approach.

Of course, in its approach to culture, developmental neoliberalism was different from developmentalism under Park Chung-hee. In my college years, we used to be stopped by the police and quarantined on the street to wait for forcible haircut. Popular artists suspected of drug uses were banned from appearing in television shows, resistant writers even put in prison. Culture had little meaning for the political power unless it assisted in boosting the spirit of people as producers for the country’s economic development. For Park Chung-hee, who even composed the *New Village Song*, which was played every morning in country villages as a wake-up call, culture was meaningful only when it proved helpful in mobilizing people into productive activities.

In comparison, the Chun Doo-whan Government’s approach to culture was neoliberal in that it attempted to marketize culture by creating the mass cultural market which was non-existent until the 1980s. What is often called the “3-S policy” was instrumental here. We all know that Chun was a ruthless dictator who mercilessly killed civilian protestors in the 1980

³ Kim Uchang, “The Agony of Cultural Construction: Politics and Culture in Modern Korea, in Hagen Koo, ed., *State and Society in Contemporary Korea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1993), 164.

⁴*Ibid.*, 166.

Kwangju Uprising. But ironically, his government was the first to take a liberal approach to the cultural policy.

In 1982, South Korea began the professionalization of popular sports, beginning with baseball and *ssireum* (traditional wrestling). In the same year, the Chun regime allowed television stations to provide color television broadcasting, forbidden for energy shortage under Park Chung-hee. The sports were thus turned into a national pastime. It also allowed for the production of erotic movies. Beginning in the early 1980s, Koreans could thus see actresses and actors performing naked sex on video. Chun's neoliberal cultural policies even included some liberating measures such as the lifting of the midnight curfew which had been imposed by the U.S. Army in 1945, the permission for secondary school students to grow hair and wear non-uniform clothes.

But of course, Chun's cultural policy aimed at liberalizing culture in order to make it into an object of exchange in the market. At midnight on February 5th 1982, the very night the curfew was lifted, when a movie theater in Shinchon, Seoul, was opened to show an erotic movie for the first time in South Korea, it was packed with people, a lot of whom even came from distant country places. We can measure the success of Chun's liberal cultural policy by the rapid growth of entertainment and amusement industries under his rule. In the mid-1980s, a rumor circulated that one out of four pregnable women in Seoul was working at an entertainment spot. Chun's neoliberal approach to culture was developmental in that it wielded state power to create a non-existent market for entertainment, sex, sports industries.

With the establishment of a liberal democratic political regime, developmental neoliberalism in culture in South Korea changes its character, emphasis, and tactics. As suggested, I believe that the restoration of liberal democracy in 1987 was rather a consequence of Korean capital's calculation than a true democratic achievement. Certainly, it would have been impossible to establish without the efforts and sacrifices dedicated to the long-continued democratic movement. All the same, it is true that South Korean capitalism had to improve the conditions of accumulation, avoiding the social costs Chun's military power-based rule was incurring. Although the Chun regime tried to liberalize and marketize popular culture, its rule was still authoritarian, its culture too military oriented. That military culture was still in effect could obviously be seen in the daily flag lowering ceremony. At dusk every day, people on the streets were required to stop to pay respects to the national flag. Not only for the general population, but also for capital, this authoritarian atmosphere must have been too cumbersome. A more reliable approach for the domination of the population by neoliberalism had to be found in the democracy by pact.

As it allowed for the cooperation through competition between authoritarians and liberals, the 1987 regime took on a more loosened form of social control. And this meant a further liberalization of culture. Most crucial here was the liberalization of mass media. During Chun's rule, the nine o'clock evening news used to be called "Ttaeng-Chun News," since immediately after the time bell rang with the sound of "ttaeng," the anchor person would say "Chun Doo-hwan." After Roh Tae-woo's June 29th 1987 capitulation, the government control over the media industry also began to loosen. During this liberalization process, four national newspapers—*Hankyoreh* (1988), *KukminIlbo* (1988), *SegyeIlbo* (1989), and *Munhwallbo* (1991)—appeared.⁵ Later in the early 1990s came further liberalization, this time in the broadcasting sector. In 1991, Seoul Broadcasting Station was opened as the fourth land-based television station. In 1993, a further liberalizing measure was taken to introduce cable television services.

Clearly, this media liberalization was another developmental policy implemented by the neoliberal state to create a new market. When this measure was taken, South Korea was still under authoritarian rule, for Roh Tae-woo, handpicked by Chun Doo-hwan as successor, won the 1987 presidential election due to the rivalry between Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung. As it took place during the presidency of the former dictator's right hand man, the liberalization of the media, especially of the press, could be taken as a democratic victory. Looking back to the days of Chun when the media market was effectively blocked off, one may see the measure as a sign of the Roh regime's capitulation to the democratic demand to lift censorship and state control on the media. At the same time, however, it is crucial not to forget that the measure functioned also to expand the media market, creating further space in which culture could be turned into commodities.

It goes without saying that the sudden expansion of the mass media in addition to the markets created for sports, sex, screen, and entertainment industries by the Chun regime had an enormous impact on culture. Culture has now become more popular-oriented, showing a growing interest in the way the majority of the population conducted their lives. In earlier days, popular or mass culture was not an object of serious discussion. Until the end of Chun Doo-hwan's rule, newspapers rarely carried film criticism, for instance, even though a large portion of their revenue came from advertising films. Beginning in the early 1990s, however, the proliferation of mass media led to an exponential growth of the "cultural discourse" which often concentrated on the phenomena of popular culture. As newspapers began to expand their pages, an increasing demand was created for all sorts of writings on culture. As a result, the 1990s in South Korea used to be called "the era of culture," showing that culture has gained an enhanced

⁵The number of the local newspapers that appeared was even greater. Kwangju City, with a population of about 800,000, saw as many as about 10 new local newspapers come to existence.

social status.

It was thus no coincidence that in 1994, the then Kim Young-sam Government created the Bureau of the Cultural Industry in the Ministry of Culture. The measure was taken in response to the advice from the Presidential Advisory Board on Science and Technology which pointed out that a single Hollywood film, *Jurassic Park*, produced a sum of profit as large as that produced by the export of 1.5 million Hyundai cars. As a matter of fact, the spirit that created the Bureau was not totally new in South Korea, for, as mentioned above, South Korean Governments had been active in creating new markets for culture. With the inauguration of the Bureau, however, the state's approach to cultural policy has become strategically more systematic. As a result, culture was now conceived of as a major resource for the social, especially economic, development.

Ironically, this "rise of culture" coincided with the weakening, if not demise, of high culture. One can examine this phenomenon in relation to the neoliberal reform of the university. The change began seriously with the Kim Young Sam Government's May 31st 1995 Education Reform. For a long time, the university had been a stronghold for the Arnoldian notion of culture as human perfection. In this view, normative culture had to be high culture, something genuine, serious, worthy, and, of course, beautiful. It was high art, among other things. One sees this notion of culture not that different from the "ideal order of human existence" Kim Uchang mentioned, but it is important to understand it in its historical context: the notion of culture as "genuine high art" could receive state protection on the condition that it will not intervene in social reality. Its domicile was confined to institutions like the university, where defenders of culture cultivated the canonic modernist notion of culture as pure and ideal. They may have felt safe in the university as an "autonomous" space where they could remain undisturbed not only by commercial culture but also from the streets where Molotov cocktails were thrown and tear bombs fired. But this was a self-cocooning act, insulating culture from the life processes in society. There was no way that this high notion of culture could survive indefinitely. With the 1995 Education Reform, the university itself had to capitulate to the pressures from Capital and the Market.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the university no longer supports high culture; nonetheless, one can say that the neoliberalization of the university has put high culture in a serious crisis, for basic disciplines such as languages, literature, history, and philosophy now found it increasingly difficult to survive. A major consequence was that liberal arts disciplines, the humanities in particular, had to stoop, more often than not, to market demand, by providing themselves as "contents" which added value to commodities. In the context of this "content" industry, culture was considered valuable because it could contribute to the rise of commodity

value.

The enhanced position of culture thus proved to be a major factor for changing culture's function in neoliberal South Korea. The more important it became, the more productive it had to prove itself to be. One can say that by the mid-1990s, culture had become fundamentally economicized. And this also was an effect produced by developmental neoliberalism, for state policy played a crucial role in the change.

By the time Kim Dae-jung was elected the 16th president of the country, the economicization of culture had progressed to such an extent that almost every aspect of everyday life now became an opportunity for profit making. As culture became more important and attractive as an economic means, more people than before came out to claim to be its friends. Among them was Kim Dae-jung who promised during his 1997 presidential campaign to become a Cultural President if elected. If we accept what John Tomlinson and Louis Althusser pointed out about culture, Kim Dae-Jung was indeed a Cultural President. According to Tomlinson, culture is that social dimension in which existential human meaning is produced, while for Althusser, meaning always exists for the subject. Recalling Althusser's thesis here that ideology interpellates human individuals into subjects, one could argue that it is through the cultural process which produces human meaning that we are called into being as subjects. And if culture is thus a crucial place where the subject is called into being, Kim Dae-jung was a genuine cultural president, because he developed an efficient technology of turning South Koreans into new forms of human subjects.

True, Kim Dae-jung did not initiate the project of producing new subjects, for Kim Young-sam had already started preparing for a massive social technology of subject formation by introducing the Education Reform Act in 1995. This measure aimed at turning traditional participants in education such as students, parents, teachers, professors, administrators into two major subject forms, into consumers and providers of education services. However, what Kim Young-sam could do was just introduce the principles of the reform. His attempt to forge a new technology of subject formation was cut short because he lost much of his power after the January 1997 general strike. In contrast, Kim Dae-jung went much further in taking a radical step beyond what all his predecessors did to produce neoliberal subjects. If the latter had been more preoccupied with creating markets, Kim Dae-jung seems to have been more interested in turning people into subjects suitable for those markets.

By the mid-1990s, South Koreans had been inundated with mass media-produced information, advertisements, and other designed images. It was thus no coincidence that beginning in the early 1990s, we started seeing new subject forms come into being, the Orange Tribe, for instance, who were interested in styles and fashions more than anything else. In this

context, the creation of the Bureau of the Cultural Industry in 1994 was a sign that the government was serious in utilizing the changed situation. But before the Kim Dae-jung Government, the impact of neoliberalism on South Koreans came mostly from the “outside,” in the sense that they were confronted with commercialized products as objects physically standing outside. To be sure, we found ourselves increasingly enclosed by capitalist popular culture as a horizon of human life beyond which no alternative lifestyle seemed available. Nonetheless, it can be argued that the pressure of neoliberalism originated in the market which existed still in the external world.

After the Kim Dae-jung Government, things have fundamentally changed. The deciding moment was, of course, the 1997 IMF bailout, a national crisis that left the entire population in shock. In overcoming the crisis, however, the new government adopted a strategy to force the population to adapt to the new social order in which global neoliberalism now dominated. Although already before the foreign currency crisis, the Korean government was globalizing the neoliberalized country, it was rather autonomous in its approach to globalization, for it still had the power to control domestic policies. With the crisis, the situation changes fundamentally. To receive the bailout money, the government accepted the demand from the IMF as to the running of the country. The major consequence of the bailout package is well known: the country’s markets have been made almost totally open to foreign capital. What the Kim Dae-jung Government did to cope with this situation was make people comply with it, by turning them into neoliberal subjects. This meant among other things that neoliberalism became more an internal force than an external environment, increasingly functioning as pressure for people to change their inner selves.

Here I cannot go into the details of the Kim Dae-jung Government’s policy of turning South Koreans into neoliberal subjects, but let me present a few examples. The Education Reform, already mentioned, was arguably the most important element for the neoliberal technology of subject formation. Kim Dae-jung faithfully continued and even intensified the basis of the reform initiated by Kim Young-sam, as can be seen in the fact that during his presidency the Ministry of Education became the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, and that in 2001 its minister was promoted to Vice Prime Minister.

In addition to continuing the education reform, the Kim Government began what was widely known as the discourse on new intellectuals. Focusing on the *how* rather than *what* aspect of knowledge, the new intellectual was supposed to distinguish himself by pushing himself to find out new ways of using what he has learned. He is thus continually turning himself into a productive person inventing new methods of utilizing given knowledge. The Kim Dae-jung Government must have seriously wanted to spread the idea of the new intellectual, for it even

launched a semi-governmental organization to search for qualified individuals to nominate them as “new intellectuals.”

Finally, I would like to mention that under the Kim Government, so many people were encouraged to create new businesses on their own. This was a time when a lot of venture companies were created. Not coincidentally, it was also a time when the number of layoffs sharply increased and when small scale self-employment businesses were created by those dismissed from workplaces with some compensation money. In this context, special mention must be made of the then very popular MBC weekly program *The Age of Success*. This documentary series was aired 189 times from November 1997 through November 2001, every episode presenting an exceptional individual who perseveres despite every odd and finally snatches a personal success. The message was clear: you should never go desperate even in the times of the economic crisis.

I think that what we see here is a concerted effort to create a social technology for forming new subjects. The effect of the technology was basically cultural in that it aimed at interpellating individuals into subjects, in that the process of interpellation operates through meaning production. The new subject thus called into being was naturally a subject who identified with the neoliberal social order in which almost every field and aspect of human life is considered an opportunity to make money. The neoliberal subject is an “autonomous chooser” in the sense that he freely participates in his own formation of subjectivity. None of the students, new intellectuals, self-employees were forced to do what they did; they all volunteered to become what they were. As autonomous chooser, the subject was engaged in a never ending process of self-formation.

A prominent feature of this subject formation is that it repeats itself. Once you have participated in the process, it means that you have already agreed to form and reform your own identity for an indefinite number of times. Thus you may have so many different selves. As such, the neoliberal subject is a speculative subject: he identifies with the neoliberal world in which “every human being is an entrepreneur managing their own life, and should act as such.”⁶ The speculative individual makes a continuous investment for himself, for in the process of continual choosing, he has to form and reform himself. As a result, the speculative subject appears as a being indebted to himself, continuously feeling that he lacks something essential inside, never satisfied with what he presently is. It is not surprising, therefore, that this subject never stops investing for himself, even at the risk of an unbearable degree of indebtedness. The

⁶Patrick Fitzsimons, “Neoliberalism and education: the autonomous chooser,” *Radical Pedagogy* (2002).

kind of economy suitable for this subject is therefore a debt economy in which almost everyone lives on borrowing money.

The cycle of the debt economy began when the Kim Dae-jung Government lowered the interest rate in 2001 in order to create a real estate boom to overcome an economic recession. Ever since then, South Koreans have been encouraged to actively borrow money. At the end of the Kim Young-sam Government, the total household debt in the nation was about 211 trillion won (approximately 200 billion dollars), but by the end of Kim Dae-jung's presidency, it grew to 439 trillion won. By the end of Roh Moo-hyun's presidency, it rose to 630 trillion won. Currently it is estimated to have reached 900 trillion won. When the 2003 credit card crisis broke out, almost 10% of the population, 4 million people, became credit defaulters, and this situation has not improved since.

We can thus say that the neoliberal technology of subject formation has been a crucial connection between culture and the economy in recent South Korea, as it contributed to turning people into speculative individuals. It was these subjects who supported the neoliberal management of the country. Speculative individuals were also responsible for the liberal democratic political regime as well, for they supported liberals and authoritarians, alternatively allowing them to control the country's political power.

If I have mentioned very little about what happened in culture during the days of Roh Moo-hyun, it is because I see few significant differences with his immediate predecessor. Roh Moo-hyun was a successor of Kim Dae-jung, belonging to the same political party. Roh and Kim were more liberal and reformist than Kim Young-sam who collaborated with the authoritarian Roh Tae-woo to become the presidential candidate of the ruling party in 1992. As a result, Roh faithfully followed the footsteps of Kim Dae-jung. But this means that he also was a neoliberal, for by following Kim Dae-jung, Roh was also following the neoliberal footsteps of Kim Young-sam, Roh Tae-woo, and Chun Doo-hwan. As they were more liberal, however, Roh Moo-hyun and Kim Dae-jung's approach to culture was more flexible than their authoritarian counterparts. Thus it was under their governments that the culture industry substantially developed with the support from the government's policy. And the fact remains that cultural neoliberalism was also assisted by the Korean state's developmental stance.

Under the current Lee Myung-bak Government in which old authoritarians regained political power, the keynote of neoliberal cultural policies has not changed either. But one can say that the Lee regime is much more blunt and explicit in its implementation of neoliberalism. Notorious for its favoritism for the rich, the current government does not hesitate to support those who are already successful in the cultural sphere as well. Thus it provides huge favors, for instance, to K-Pop stars and the project companies who manage them, whereas it rarely supports

independent producers of art and culture.

Let me now wrap up this talk. I have tried to show how the notion, social status and function of culture in South Korea have been transformed in the ascendancy of neoliberalism. As a result of its subjection to neoliberalism, a whole complex way of life in the country has been made to serve what may be called the economic reason of society. However, this change does not mean that the cultural dimension of life got completely “economicized,” that all the cultural practices turned subservient to market demands. True, there took place a radical change from those days when culture was forced under the military dictatorship to serve the political power. Under neoliberalism, culture became “useful” as “contents” for enhancing the value of commodities. Nevertheless, culture could retain resistance insofar as it sustained a critical distance from that questionable alliance of neoliberal economy and liberal democracy, although today I have not discussed this aspect of culture, namely, the tradition of the cultural movement in South Korea. Beginning in the 1970s, this movement played a crucial role in the social movement in South Korea, and it still remains active, participating in various resistant movements. But today, I did not have time to take a detailed look into the relationship between the cultural movement and the neoliberalization of culture.

In addition, I also want to call attention to the fact that even the combination of the economic neoliberalization and the political liberalization that took place in the last three decades could not entirely wipe out the autonomy of culture. While the articulation forced culture to comply with the established order, it also caused a new territory to come into being, where a new conception of culture appeared. As it got “economicized,” culture not only became “productive” for the economy but also achieved a sort of empowerment. The rise of the “cultural discourse” since the early 1990s had partly to do with this new conception of culture. Culture was now celebrated as a requisite factor for national competitiveness and development. An unexpected consequence of this change was that culture became bolder in its claims, more assertive and influential than before. The continuous rise in the cultural budget in the government, the popularity of cultural studies programs at universities, the growth of cultural industry, the influence of cultural discourse are the examples. While one should not forget that culture gains importance only insofar as it can contribute to the political economy, it would seem important, nonetheless, to note that in the process, it has gained an edge with which to criticize and even subvert the established order or the dominant formation of social practices.

To conclude, I believe that the majority of South Koreans have become neoliberal subjects. This is a natural result of the fact that neoliberalism has dominated since the early 1980s. As we have seen, neoliberalism did not do away with developmentalism in South Korea, because it took on the form of developmental neoliberalism. One undeniable effect of this has been an

enormous economic growth. You can see this very nakedly. South Korea has become one of the most developed countries in the world. In 1953 when Korean War was over, the GNP per capita was only 63 dollars. Currently, the GNI per capita is almost 23,000 dollars. The country is ranked as the fourth in the world in the number of buildings higher than 40 stories. No wonder that the majority of the population have become neoliberal subjects. But the majority here should not be taken in its numerical sense. For much more people would believe that they are discriminated against by the neoliberal social order. Thus we can say that for most people, developmental neoliberalism was a development of indebtedness, of self-exploitation. It may have developed dispossession. And as we have seen, culture was also instrumental to this development. As it was developed through the intervention of the state, it functioned to intensify the commodification, economicization of human life.

