

## THE DISCONTENTS OF MODERATE POLITICAL CONFUCIANISM AND THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN EAST ASIA



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### *Introduction*

Modern Confucian political philosophy has long been divided between the more comprehensive branch of theories that prioritize Confucian classics and traditions and the more moderate branch of theories that attempt to modernize Confucianism so as to better accommodate contemporary East Asian societies.<sup>1</sup> Recently, Joseph Chan and Sungmoon Kim, two leading thinkers from the latter camp proposed their distinct approaches to advocate what for them are the most promising versions of political Confucianism. Chan advances what he calls “Confucian political perfectionism,” which is based on the belief that “Confucians should embrace modern institutions and measures if they are effective and tie them to the Confucian ideal.”<sup>2</sup> Kim introduces what he refers to as “public reason Confucianism,” which takes as its starting point the perfectionist implications of John Rawls’ famous concepts of public reason and overlapping consensus, and makes “Confucian perfectionist goods the core elements of public reason with which citizens can justify their arguments to one another and by which the state can justifiably exercise its public authority to reasonable citizens” who may adopt various comprehensive doctrines.<sup>3</sup>

The similarity between the two approaches is threefold. First, both approaches share the conviction that contemporary East Asian societies are no longer homogeneously Confucian; instead, like their Western counterparts, these societies are becoming increasingly pluralistic in that different and even conflicting comprehensive doctrines are adopted and practiced by citizens. Thus, a promising Confucian political theory must include the task of accommodating reasonable pluralism as one of its priorities. Second, both approaches, contrary to comprehensive Confucianism, argue for a middle and mutually compatible ground between Confucianism and modern democratic theories and institutions. Finally, despite their inspirations from liberal democratic theories, most notably that of John Rawls, both approaches are moderately perfectionist, which means that the state’s non-neutral promotion of the Confucian way of life is permitted.

The two approaches also differ in significant ways. For Chan, Confucian political perfectionism directly engages with both Confucianism and liberal

democratic institutions in order to reconstruct and blend the two to form something new. As for Kim, public reason Confucianism indirectly engages with Confucianism and treats Confucian doctrines and goods as shared reason among Confucian citizens on the basis of which an overlapping consensus can be formed. As a consequence, although they both reject comprehensive Confucianism, their reasons for doing so differ from each other. For Chan, comprehensive Confucianism is normatively unjustifiable, because it damages civility. For Kim, comprehensive Confucianism is empirically impossible to maintain, because Confucian citizens no longer hold Confucianism to be the only true value system. In other words, unlike Chan, who follows a more conventional path to normatively reconstruct Confucianism to better fit a modern context, Kim takes a somewhat unorthodox route and regards the empirical fact of shared Confucian mores and sentiments as the key starting point.

Despite their individual merits and shared motivation to modernize Confucianism, both approaches leave something to be desired. In this essay, I will first analyze the two theories and argue that they suffer from distinct problems. With regard to Chan's Confucian political perfectionism, I will show that it suffers from a problematic sense of instability that calls into question the validity of the approach. As for Kim's public reason Confucianism, although it represents perhaps the most promising model to date, it still needs to address problems caused when two theoretically distant doctrines (Confucianism and public reason) are combined. I will focus on three of these problems: the issue of motivation and translation, the undesirable closedness of Confucian society, and the potentially inegalitarian relations among citizens. These discontents, I will argue, point to a shared problem in recent attempts to find a moderate position in Confucian democracy. Ironically, the problem has to do with the fact of reasonable pluralism, which both Chan and Kim claim to have taken seriously. I will question this claim by analyzing empirical evidence in contemporary East Asian societies, and by arguing that the reasonable question to ask when it comes to the future of democracy in East Asia ought to be how sustainable democracies can be established and maintained while accommodating the permanent fact of reasonable pluralism among a diversity of comprehensive doctrines, of which Confucianism is only one among many. Finally, I will conclude by proposing two possibilities that will serve to open new doors for the future of democracy in East Asia.

### *The Inherent Instability of Confucian Political Perfectionism*

According to Joseph Chan, liberals "owe perfectionists an account as to why the state's enforcement of controversial decisions is problematic only in the case of conceptions of the good life and not in non-good-life issues like social justice."<sup>4</sup> In other words, liberals must show that the distinction

between social justice and the good life is so deep that they warrant asymmetric treatments. For instance, why is it not justified for the liberal state to endorse Aristotelian teleological ethics, whereas its endorsement of court decisions, policies on national defense, and education reforms that are no less controversial is considered legitimate? At the same time, Chan is also keenly aware of the negative implication of extreme forms of perfectionism that are comprehensive in their ranking of goods and ways of life, coercive in its means of pursuit, pure in its (exclusive) concern for the good life, and state-centered in its principled preference for the state as the direct and primary agent of the promotion of the good life.<sup>5</sup> These comprehensive approaches, in Chan's view, stem from a misconception of the good life.<sup>6</sup> Instead, Chan proposes a moderate version of perfectionism that is local, noncoercive, mixed, and multicentered.<sup>7</sup> Distancing itself from comprehensive and extreme perfectionism, moderate perfectionism promotes "valuable goods such as the arts, family life, and basic human virtues, and discourages people from leading ways of life that are highly deficient in these goods. For those ways of life that are roughly speaking 'good enough,' the state need not discriminate further between them."<sup>8</sup>

Under this moderate perfectionist spirit, Chan has recently advocated what he calls Confucian political perfectionism, which intends to achieve two tasks at once. On the one hand, he wishes to distance his version of Confucianism from comprehensive forms. On the other hand, he also wishes to put Confucianism, which is an obviously comprehensive doctrine, to the forefront of political philosophy and reconcile it with at least some liberal democratic ideals and institutions. With regard to the former task, Chan is at pains to point out the differences between his moderate and other extreme forms of perfectionism. Unlike extreme forms of perfectionism, which holds that the state should adopt a comprehensive doctrine of the good life as the basis of state policy, moderate perfectionism "does not seek to make fine-grained comparative judgments on many different ways of life. It looks at the broad social trends and environments that undermine or promote the good life and considers if any state action is necessary to create conditions conducive to its pursuit."<sup>9</sup> As for the latter task, Chan argues that Confucianism is better promoted through moderate perfectionism, which leads to what he calls "a piecemeal and moderate approach."<sup>10</sup>

By "piecemeal" Chan means the opposite of the wholesale state endorsement of Confucianism.<sup>11</sup> Instead, the modern state should incorporate "a number of basic institutions of liberal democracy but grounds them on Confucian perfectionism and shapes them by redefining their roles and functions. Where possible and necessary, it alters these institutions in light of Confucian values."<sup>12</sup> By "moderate" Chan means that Confucian perfectionism does not require prior acceptance of Confucianism, because "the core values of Confucianism such as virtues, human ethical relations, the mutual commitment of the ruler and the ruled, the principle of

benevolent politics, and fair rewards and punishments in the political system can be accepted or understood by many people without their adopting Confucianism as a comprehensive doctrine.”<sup>13</sup>

Overall, Chan’s approach “incorporates a number of basic institutions of liberal democracy, grounds them on Confucian perfectionism, and redefines their roles and functions,” with the hope that mixing Confucian values with liberal democratic institutions might strengthen both.<sup>14</sup> Specifically, Chan demonstrates the acceptability of certain Confucian values and principles relevant to such political issues as political authority, rights, liberties, and justice by revising, developing, and integrating them with other values and principles as appropriate.<sup>15</sup> Confucian political perfectionism, based on Confucian values and moderate perfectionism, is supposed to be the answer to the increasing dissatisfaction toward political liberalism and the neutral state.

However, there is a sense of inconsistency between Chan’s abstract presentation of moderate perfectionism in his original article and his substantial proposal for Confucian political perfectionism. On the one hand, the main point of moderate perfectionism is to show that a liberal theory of justice need not be informed by a single comprehensive doctrine. On the other hand, Confucian perfectionism is, despite its moderate connotations, unapologetically more Confucian than anything else. For instance, the Grand Union (*da tong*) and the Small Tranquility (*xiao kang*) are the two central Confucian ideals on which Chan relies to develop his political philosophy, under the impression that they are widely shared by modern Chinese people.<sup>16</sup> At this point, Chan might object by saying that his proposal *does* take other doctrines into consideration, especially when it comes to concrete legislative or policy issues. According to Chan,

Moderate perfectionism does not require ideological control by the state; instead it demands a high level of freedom of speech so that citizens can freely assess Confucianism and discuss policy in a rational manner. This free and democratic process will decide which Confucian values, if any, should be promoted or adopted as the grounds for legislation. If Confucian values are adopted in such a manner, Confucianism will win only in regard to specific policies, and its advocates will not use political power to impose a winner-take-all comprehensive package over other schools of thought. If social discussion and political procedure are conducted fairly, then those who lose out in democratic competition this time will still have the chance to regain political victory in the future. In this light, the moderate promotion of Confucian values preserves civility among citizens in a pluralistic society.<sup>17</sup>

But this response dodges the question. For Chan, the question is *which* Confucian values ought we to promote, not *why* Confucianism in the first place. In fact, Chan admits that today “those East Asian societies that have been influenced by Confucian culture have undergone modernization and become pluralistic societies marked by a diversity of religions, philosophies,

and ideologies,” and that Confucianism is “only one of the many competing forms of ideological discourse in these societies.”<sup>18</sup> So the question one ought to ask in the first place is not whether Confucianism *can* support certain liberal democratic institutions but whether it *should* play the dominant role in the way Chan imagines. If moderate perfectionism is truly committed to the avoidance of having a single comprehensive doctrine informing a liberal theory of justice, then Confucian perfectionism must first address the necessity and perhaps even the contradiction of having Confucianism as the exception.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, when the abstract meets the concrete, Chan’s Confucian political perfectionism says that we “should offer a list of items that constitute the good life and good social order—such as valuable social relationships, practical wisdom and learning, sincerity, harmony, social and political trust and care, moral and personal autonomy, and economic sufficiency and self-responsibility—and explore the implications of these items for social and political arrangements.”<sup>20</sup> Chan calls this the “bottom-up” approach, which is the opposite of the “top-down” approach that endorses Confucianism as a comprehensive state doctrine. But why stop at the level of specific Confucian values? If the avoidance of extreme perfectionism is to be fully achieved, why is it not equally reasonable, if not more so, to focus on core values that are *shared but not tied to* any comprehensive doctrine in particular?<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the initial sense of inconsistency leads to a much more problematic sense of instability in Chan’s Confucian political perfectionism: if the theory is too Confucian, it is no longer moderate; but if the theory is too moderate, it may not be sufficiently or sincerely Confucian. For instance, if Chan’s view of perfectionism puts more emphasis on agency and prudential goods than on ways of life in the hope of keeping perfectionism moderate, it risks losing its perfectionist appeal, because political liberals can make an equally compelling case for a neutral state by endorsing agency and prudential goods without subscribing to strong perfectionism.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, if Chan puts more emphasis on the Confucian way of life than on agency and prudential goods, his view of perfectionism loses its moderate appeal. Confucian political perfectionism is therefore inherently unstable.<sup>23</sup>

### *Three Problems of Public Reason Confucianism*

Realizing the problematic implications of the moderate perfectionist approach, some moderate Confucian scholars have begun to adopt the opposite approach to avoid deriving concepts and philosophical postulates directly from Confucianism. The most prominent example is what Sungmoon Kim calls “public reason Confucianism.” According to Kim, public reason Confucianism has two core premises: (1) there is a valuable Confucian way

of life that is distinct from (if not starkly opposed to) a liberal way of life and (2) it is permissible for a state to promote or discourage some activities, ideas, or ways of life on the grounds of key Confucian values such as filial piety, respect for elders, ancestor worship, ritual propriety, and social harmony.<sup>24</sup> These premises are further supplemented by six propositions that together render public reason Confucianism a kind of democratic perfectionism:

- P1: The valuable Confucian way of life refers to the collective way of living widely shared and cherished by citizens in a Confucian society.
- P2: Citizens in a Confucian society are still saturated with Confucian habits, mores, and moral sentiments, despite their subscriptions to various comprehensive doctrines, and even though they may not hold Confucianism as their self-consciously chosen personal value system.
- P3: In a Confucian society, all citizens are equal to one another public citizens and together they exercise popular sovereignty.
- P4: The Confucian (democratic) state respects constitutional rights held by its citizens, among others, the rights to religious freedom, freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, and freedom of association; thus the state has no desire either to suppress value plurality in civil society or to elevate Confucianism as the state religion.
- P5: Confucian public reason refers to the reason of the democratic citizens in a Confucian society and it is rooted in Confucian mores, habits, and moral sentiments such as, but not limited to, filial piety and ritual propriety; it delineates the legitimate boundary of state action and provides moral content (which is open for public contestation) for basic rights, duties, and liberties. A subscription to Confucian public reason (as stipulated in P5) on the part of voluntary immigrants and cultural associations formed by them is the inevitable price for the fair terms of integration into the Confucian society (such as the equal right to freedom of association). While Confucian public reason must be justifiable to all citizens in a Confucian society, including immigrants, immigrated citizens must strive to negotiate their religious or nonreligious comprehensive doctrines with Confucian public reason in order to fully exercise their constitutional rights and liberties.<sup>25</sup>

As it stands, Kim's public reason Confucianism *does* avoid the problem that Chan's Confucian political perfectionism faces, because the former does not begin from a substantially Confucian perspective and then attempt to be moderate or even neutral about it. Instead, Kim takes a somewhat unorthodox route and regards the empirical fact of shared Confucian mores and sentiments in East Asian societies as the key starting point. In addition, Kim argues that there are perfectionist implications in John Rawls' famous concepts of public reason and overlapping consensus. Kim's strategy is to



make “Confucian perfectionist goods the core elements of public reason with which citizens can justify their arguments to one another and by which the state can justifiably exercise its public authority to reasonable citizens who otherwise subscribe to various comprehensive doctrines.”<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, this approach is also problematic. In this section, I will focus on three interrelated issues: the issue of motivation and translation, the undesirable closedness of Confucian society, and the potentially inegalitarian relations among citizens.

From the perspective of Confucianism, Kim’s thin version might be “too diluted or deracinated . . . to be recognizable to self-identified Confucians.”<sup>27</sup> Kim is fully aware of this problem and attempts to address a twofold challenge to his approach: “how is public reason Confucianism properly called ‘Confucianism,’” and “what if the public moral consensus on which [he draws] heavily in theorizing public reason Confucianism changes, leaning more toward Western liberalism?”<sup>28</sup> As for the former, Kim responds by drawing a distinction among forward-looking Confucian academics, traditional Confucian classicists, and members of Confucian associations or clans. Kim then argues that for the traditional Confucian classicists, any attempt to modernize Confucianism would strike them as making it less authentic and even non-Confucian. Moreover, instead of “self-identified Confucians” whose political significance in the region is “quite negligible,” the primary addressees of public reason Confucianism are “Confucian citizens” stipulated in P1 and P2, who “share the Confucian way of life” but “may not hold Confucianism as their self-consciously chosen personal value system.”<sup>29</sup>

By terms such as “Confucian citizens” or “the Confucian way of life,” Kim does not mean that “contemporary East Asian societies are Confucian “in an institutionally guided, culturally monolithic, or philosophically monistic sense.”<sup>30</sup> Instead, Kim recognizes that contemporary East Asian societies, especially those that have been democratized, are “characterized by vibrant civil societies that are internally diverse,” and that people there are “increasingly pluralist and multicultural, subscribing to different moral, philosophical, and religious doctrines.”<sup>31</sup> For instance, even among South Koreans, a people who are arguably, historically as well as to this day, the most Confucian, only a negligible number self-consciously identify Confucianism (i.e., religious Confucianism) as their personal value system.<sup>32</sup> The once thick Confucian tradition is now only a thin “habit of the heart.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, although public reason Confucianism may seem controversial to traditional Confucian classicists or even self-identified Confucians, it is “still importantly Confucian in the *normative* sense, in that it aims to promote Confucian values in ways compatible with East Asia’s increasingly democratic and pluralist societal context.”<sup>34</sup>

This response is far from convincing, however. It is highly controversial to understand Confucianism in conjunction with the task of accommodating

pluralism, because it risks functionalizing Confucianism and prioritizing pluralism over Confucianism, which Kim obviously tries to avoid in order not to appear too liberal. Kim's response also leads to more questions than it answers. For instance, if the primary addressees of public reason Confucianism are citizens who share the Confucian way of life only unconsciously and may even subscribe to other value systems at the same time, and if the remaining Confucian lifestyle and commitments are largely confined to family settings, what will then motivate Confucian citizens to participate in a politically Confucian public reason? Kim's approach is thus confronted with a somewhat similar problem found in liberal debates, namely how should one translate or frame one's private comprehensive doctrine in order to participate in public reason? In the case of Confucian public reason, at least some Confucian citizens will face the challenge to "Confucianize" their non-Confucian personal value systems so as to be fully able to participate in Confucian public reason. In other words, there is a tension between the descriptive account of what Kim refers to as Confucian citizens in P1 and P2, and the normative account of what public reason Confucianism can achieve according to the rest of the propositions from P3 to P6.

One may object by arguing that Kim *does* take into consideration the problem of citizens and immigrants who are non-Confucians, since, he argues,

Confucian public reason is the inevitable price for a fair integration of immigrants who have joined a new political community voluntarily, with full awareness that they are entering a Confucian society, a society that cherishes and publicly promotes certain Confucian values and in which citizens give justification to one another in light of Confucian public reason. As stipulated in P4 and P5, new citizens have the right to contest the currently dominant understanding of Confucian public reason first by negotiating it with their religious or non-religious comprehensive doctrines and then by offering an alternative notion of public reason that is intelligible to other citizens. In no case, however, are the fair terms of social integration meant to embrace unreasonable pluralism that is likely to erode the society's Confucian public character and undermine the people's right to collective self-government based upon it.<sup>35</sup>

However, these comments presuppose a highly demanding view of citizenship because of its perfectionist commitment to Confucianism. First, as discussed above, there is a necessity for citizens and immigrants to "Confucianize" their personal values and commitments in order to participate properly in Confucian public reason.<sup>36</sup> Second, citizens must definitively prioritize the maintenance of Confucian public character over the right to contest and even social integration. This latter point leads to a different and even more severe problem. Non-Confucian citizens and immigrants could potentially propose an alternative model of public reason,



yet the alternative must be (1) intelligible to other citizens, and (2) unlikely to undermine the society's Confucian public character. What if a majority of citizens and immigrants propose an intelligible but less Confucian model of public reason—is it possible for this alternative to become the dominant model? Of course not, because the second requirement dictates that any alternative that could erode the Confucian public character of society will not be embraced.<sup>37</sup> As Kim puts it, public reason Confucianism will actually *prevent* society from becoming too Western because of the demanding view of public reason and citizenship, which is a logical conclusion following Kim's assumptions but also sets up an unnecessary divide between the Confucian and the Western.<sup>38</sup> What if the progression of society leads to a third possibility where the public character is beyond the Confucian and the Western? Kim's theory leaves little room for this possibility of social transformation.

One implication of this closed view of Confucian society is that public reason Confucianism risks inegalitarianism among citizens. At first glance, equality is taken into serious consideration in one of Kim's postulations (P3). In fact, public reason Confucianism is "qualitatively different from the traditional Confucianism practiced by East Asians in premodern periods and from the version some traditionalists in the region still cling to, a Confucianism that is heavily patriarchal, androcentric, and hierarchical," because equality in public reason Confucianism is guaranteed by virtue of people's democratic citizenship.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, as P3 clearly indicates, the equality of citizens is predicated upon their *public character*, which in Kim's theory almost always means *publicly Confucian*, because Confucian character is highly prioritized for the sake of the collective social outlook.

What about in the private sphere? Kim is oddly silent on this matter as if equality *qua* citizenship leads to equality *in toto*. There is no doubt that public reason influences private reason one way or another, which is why some wonder if Rawls' neutral political approach leads to indifference in people's private lives.<sup>40</sup> The same can be said about public reason Confucianism. If Confucian character dominates public reason as well as the understanding of equality, what will be the impact over privately interacting people? In the Confucian society Kim has in mind, there are bound to be self-identified Confucians, local people who are unconsciously Confucian yet consciously endorse other value systems, as well as non-Confucian immigrants. Even if they are all political equals as far as public reason is concerned, what is there to prevent the first group from discriminating against the latter groups simply because the latter groups are not as "authentically Confucian" as the first group and potentially contribute to diluting the Confucian outlook of society? Again, Kim may object, since he makes it clear that "the criterion by which to judge whether or not Confucian democratic citizens treat immigrants fairly is not so much

whether they expect immigrant groups to appeal to Confucian public reason in public deliberation processes, but whether they respect the minority groups' right to basic freedoms (for instance, freedom of association) as equally as other cultural groups."<sup>41</sup> But this is contradictory to Kim's other claim, where he says, "In no case, however, are the fair terms of social integration meant to embrace unreasonable pluralism that is likely to erode the society's Confucian public character."<sup>42</sup>

Let us assume that there are now an increasing number of local Confucian citizens who actively begin to adopt non-Confucian doctrines, and that there happens to be an influx of immigrants coming to the society who happen to adopt similar doctrines. Although the population who adhere to these non-Confucian doctrines has not yet reached the majority, it is serious enough to potentially alter the society's Confucian public character. Under this circumstance, should other Confucian democratic citizens still respect these people's right to the basic freedom of association, even if the latter can show that their values and commitments can be compatible with major Confucian doctrines? The answer is not immediately clear. To address this concern, Kim will need a more fundamental and perhaps Confucianism-independent understanding of equality, which Kim avoids for the purpose of not appearing too liberal-oriented. The issue of motivation and translation and the undesirably closed view of Confucian society, as well as the potentially unequal relations among citizens, all demonstrate that Kim's strong emphasis on Confucianism inevitably backfires on what is otherwise a step forward in moderate Confucian political theories and Confucian democracy.

### *Taking Pluralism Seriously*

It should become clear by now that the discontents with these two promising theories to bring Confucianism back to the center of political philosophy stem from the conflict between the authors' clear recognition of pluralism on the one hand, and their strong yet different emphasis on Confucianism on the other. It is somewhat contradictory to say that pluralism needs to be taken seriously, *and* that Confucianism is nonetheless going to be the dominant source of political imagination. But just how pluralistic is East Asia as a whole? It is one thing to discuss pluralism in theory, and quite another to demonstrate convincingly that theory and practice indeed match up. According to Doh Chull Shin's comprehensive empirical studies, which drew from the second wave of Asian Barometer Surveys (ABS) and the fifth wave of World Values Surveys (WVS) conducted during the period between 2005 and 2008, East Asia has already become a highly divided and pluralistic region with a diversity of traditions within which Confucianism is only one among many.<sup>43</sup> For instance, *ren* and *li* are two of the most important Confucian virtues. For *ren*, benevolence and

humaneness form the foundation of all other virtues. As for *li*, the appropriate way to address interpersonal and hierarchical relationship is central in fulfilling the duties and obligations associated with one's status.

To explore the Confucian way of life in practice, Shin tapped orientations to the two norms by asking survey questions of respondents, collected their answers, and then converted their responses to a seven-point index. Those who scored above the index mean of three were considered highly constrained by the two Confucian norms of *ren* and *li*.<sup>44</sup> In addition, Shin also conducted a similar survey concerning four out of the five cardinal relationships known in Confucianism: between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder and younger brothers, and between friends.<sup>45</sup>

The survey results are quite revealing. For the orientations to *ren* and *li*, only Taiwan (3.3), China (3.2), and Vietnam (3.2) scored slightly above the midpoint of 3.0, and they were followed by Korea (2.3) and by Japan (1.3), which scored significantly below the midpoint.<sup>46</sup> As for the attachment to family and groups, the result is even more telling:

[C]ontrary to what is expected from the Confucian ethical doctrine emphasizing mutual dependence in all interpersonal relationships, those strongly attached to either family or friends do not constitute a majority in any of the five Confucian countries. In all but Vietnam, they constitute small minorities of less than one-quarter. Only in Vietnam, do as many as two out of five people (40%) feel strongly attached to family. In Japan, fewer than one in fifteen people is strongly attached to either group. In all Confucian countries including Vietnam, moreover, those strongly attached to both groups constitute very small minorities, ranging from less than 1 percent in Japan to 13 percent in Vietnam. In Confucian Asia today, most people no longer feel strong bonds to the people they regularly interact with, including their own family.<sup>47</sup>

Based on these empirical findings, it becomes clear that "Confucian countries are culturally more divided than united in upholding what Confucius taught concerning how to live a fully human life."<sup>48</sup> This conclusion is supported by further empirical findings. For instance, South Korea is generally believed to be the most Confucian country in all of East Asia. However, according to the 1984 *Manual for Religions in Korea* published by the Republic of Korea's Religious Affairs Office of the Ministry of Culture and Information, "the number of Confucians was only slightly under 800,000, while Buddhists numbered 7.5 million and Christians (Protestants and Catholics together) totaled about 7 million."<sup>49</sup> The importance of these statistics is that they are based on self-identification (i.e., the respondents were asked to fill in their religion on the census sheet). Those who answered "Confucian" to the census "amounted to only 2 percent of the total population," whereas those self-identified as Buddhists and Christians accounted for 19 and 17.5 percent, respectively.<sup>50</sup> Beyond South Korea, David Elstein also correctly observes that "the Umbrella Movement

in Hong Kong and the Sunflower Revolution in Taiwan were entirely free from appeals to Confucian thought.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that in East Asia today, “popular attachment to Confucianism is miles wide but only inches deep: Most of the population reports attachment, but a shallow attachment, to Confucian legacies.”<sup>52</sup> Contemporary East Asian countries traditionally regarded as homogeneously Confucian are in fact highly divided in terms of cultural preference and pluralistic when it comes to different religions and value systems that exert influence on the general public. Confucianism has become one of the many sources of influence for East Asians.

Furthermore, in light of the contemporary democratic deficit and the rise of populism in recent phenomena such as Brexit and the Trump presidency, the term “reasonable pluralism,” which is popularized by John Rawls and on which both Chan’s and Kim’s theories heavily rely, might be too idealized. According to Alessandro Ferrara, the reason is that Rawls sees his project as an attempt to reconcile “the tradition associated with Locke, which gives greater weight to what Constant called ‘the liberties of the moderns’” and “the tradition associated with Rousseau, which gives greater weight to what Constant called ‘the liberties of the ancients.’”<sup>53</sup> However, “in very few places in the world can we encounter a polity where these two conceptions are embraced by a majority of citizens,” which leads to the implication that Rawls’ political liberalism is in fact drawn on for inspiration based on “a highly stylized picture.”<sup>54</sup> In the world in which we actually reside, societies are populated by people who adhere to such diverse comprehensive doctrines as Roman Catholicism, Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Hinduism, and Confucianism. The difficulty, as Ferrara correctly points out, is that some of the basic constitutional essentials—the idea of equality among all citizens, gender equality, the idea of the citizen as a self-authenticating source of valid claims, freedom of conscience, the consequent ban on apostasy, etc.—could become highly problematic at least for some of the more traditional citizens.<sup>55</sup> This condition is what Ferrara calls “hyperpluralism,” which he defines in this way: “the presence on the ground of cultural differences that exceed the range of traditions that Rawls sought to reconcile within *Political Liberalism*, and of comprehensive conceptions that are only partially reasonable, display an only partial acceptance of the burdens of judgment or make their adherents endorse only a subset of the constitutional essentials.”<sup>56</sup> This leads Ferrara to modify Rawls’ famous opening question in *Political Liberalism* as follows:

[H]ow is it possible for there to exist over time a just and stable society of free and equal citizens, who remain profoundly divided by religious, philosophical and moral doctrines some of which are reasonable and susceptible of giving rise to an overlapping consensus, and some of which are only partially reasonable, display only an incomplete acceptance of the burdens of judgment and cannot be brought to endorse all of the constitutional essentials?<sup>57</sup>

This question is especially relevant for Confucian theorists, such as Chan and Kim, who wish to maintain a Confucian overlapping consensus and constitutional essentials but are confronted with problematic implications regarding non-Confucians. In the case of Kim, even Confucian public reason may seem futile in the face of hyperpluralism, because public reason derives conclusions that are reasonable or reasonably non-rejectable from shared premises. However, it is not surprising that “under conditions of hyperpluralism public reason often might idle in utter impotence for lack of a sufficiently thick layer of ‘shared premises,’” which means that public reason, even its Confucian variant, may fail to “reach out to those citizens whose comprehensive conceptions, due to their relevance in the public discourse or to the large number of their adherents, should be included in the overlapping consensus.”<sup>58</sup> Not only non-Confucian immigrants but also unconsciously Confucian citizens may find it difficult, if not impossible, to accept the shared Confucian premises required to participate in Confucian public reason. Moreover, alternative value systems that may potentially be compatible with Confucianism could also be rejected because the former may erode the Confucian public character of society. The claim that “a subscription to Confucian public reason on the part of voluntary immigrants and cultural associations formed by them is *the inevitable price* for the fair terms of integration into the Confucian society” is destined to raise some doubts.<sup>59</sup> If “integration” is understood as living together in the same polity as free and equal citizens, then “it can never be a one-way process of adaptation of one or more ‘minorities’ to the cultural hegemony of the majority,” without thereby implying oppression at the same time.<sup>60</sup>

### *The Future of Democracy in East Asia*

Since the main source of discontents found in Chan’s moderate political Confucianism and Kim’s public reason Confucianism is their shared failure to take pluralism truly seriously, and since empirical observations of the contemporary status of Confucianism support the claim that Confucianism no longer enjoys cultural dominance in East Asia, then the more reasonable question to ask is how can we imagine countries in East Asia that can establish and maintain sustainable democracies capable of accommodating the fact of reasonable pluralism, *and* preserve the continued existence of Confucianism as well as its positive influence at the same time?<sup>61</sup> Therefore, taking pluralism truly seriously implies treating Confucianism as one of the many comprehensive doctrines in East Asia, on which the future of democracy in East Asia depends. A much lengthier discussion is required to elaborate on this point, but it is worthwhile to conclude by briefly highlighting two possibilities here in light of the discontents found in Chan’s and Kim’s approaches.

## *Salvaging Chan: Moderate Liberal Perfectionism*

It will be remembered that “moderate” for Chan means that Confucian perfectionism does not require prior acceptance of Confucianism, because “the core values of Confucianism such as virtues, human ethical relations, the mutual commitment of the ruler and the ruled, the principle of benevolent politics, and fair rewards and punishments in the political system can be accepted or understood by many people without their adopting Confucianism as a comprehensive doctrine.”<sup>62</sup> However, this moderation leads to instability when it is combined with a rather ambitious goal to justify liberal democratic institutions on Confucian grounds. What Chan calls the “bottom-up” approach, which is the opposite of the “top-down” approach that endorses Confucianism as a comprehensive state doctrine, is not sustainable unless the question of “why Confucianism” is fully answered.<sup>63</sup>

There are two ways to avoid this problem. Completely falling back to comprehensive Confucianism is certainly not acceptable to either Chan or Kim. So the more sensible option is to follow through with the liberal tendency, which leads to the first of the two democratic possibilities in East Asia that I wish to highlight. Specifically, the bottom-up approach, as I suggested earlier, needs to go still further to focus on core values that are *shared but not tied to* any comprehensive doctrine in particular, which cuts the undesirably strong tie with Confucianism. A skeptic might wonder if we are ever going to agree on any such value. Answering this question will lead our discussion in a different direction, but I *do* wish to point out that a moral overlapping consensus, at least among a majority of people, is indeed possible. For instance, we find in Martha Nussbaum’s capabilities approach a tentative list of capabilities that belong to what she calls a “moral core,” which according to Nussbaum is shared by people in different cultures, genders, and countries with different economic statuses.<sup>64</sup> The important thing to note is that such a moral overlapping consensus does not presuppose a singular and uniquely true comprehensive doctrine. Charles Larmore also favors “a [thin] core morality that reasonable people can accept despite their natural tendency to disagree about comprehensive visions of the nature of value,” which grounds not only concrete moral content but also political principles.<sup>65</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, Rawls leaves it as an open possibility to interpret the political conception of justice, which is expressed “in terms of certain fundamental ideas seen as implicit in the public political culture of a democratic society,” as moral in nature.<sup>66</sup>

These shared core values may still be too ideal to find if people are expected to endorse them either for the same (Confucian) reasons or according to compatible parts of their own comprehensive doctrines. Nevertheless, people *can* endorse these core values for partly or fully prudential reasons.<sup>67</sup> This “lowered bar” can help to avoid the instability Chan must confront when he insists that the core values of Confucianism,



such as virtues, human ethical relations, the mutual commitment of the ruler and the ruled, the principle of benevolent politics, and fair rewards and punishments in the political system must remain central in the domain of the political.<sup>68</sup> Instead, Confucian citizens may fully endorse the overlapping consensus and constitutional essentials for fully or partially Confucian reasons, if they are able to find the appropriate justification. Alternatively, they may also endorse the overlapping consensus and constitutional essentials for fully or partially prudential reasons—the stability of society for instance. The price associated with this approach, as Kim points out in his critique of Chan, is the possible reintroduction of state neutrality.<sup>69</sup>

### *Pushing Kim: A Political Liberal Horizon*

Speaking of state neutrality, neither Chan nor Kim entertains the idea because of their strong perfectionist orientation. However, one of the main problems with Kim's public reason Confucianism is its inadequacy in addressing fully the status and need of non-Confucian citizens and immigrants. On the one hand, Kim wishes to maintain some ideals and institutions of liberal democracy. On the other hand, he also holds that public reason ought to be Confucian and that the Confucian public character takes a high priority. These two positions, as discussed in a previous section, lead to problems. Given the pluralistic socio-cultural condition of many East Asian countries, one has to wonder if a neutral state is really so detrimental to these countries and to their Confucian legacy. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im's proposal that Islamic countries ought to have neutral states is a highly relevant case in point. Unlike Confucianism in contemporary East Asia, Islam is by no means an unconscious "habit of the heart" given its status as the second largest religion in the world (after Christianity). According to An-Na'im, "[the] coercive power of the state, which is now more extensive and effective than ever before in human history, will be counterproductive when exercised in an arbitrary manner or for corrupt or illegitimate ends. That is why it is critically important to keep the state as neutral as humanly possible."<sup>70</sup> Similar sentiment is shared by Kim in his criticism of Confucian meritocracy, which tends to

tie their perfectionism too tightly to political elitism by integrating meritocratic institutions into their overall normative vision, such as the nondemocratically selected upper house, justified independently of core democratic ideals. Once integrated into a perfectionist theory, elitism, working through the coercive power of the state, slowly corrodes the normative force of democratic institutions and practices from within that are only instrumentally justified, then transforms the ostensibly democratic regime into something qualitatively different.<sup>71</sup>

To see how we could push Kim's approach, it is helpful to compare it with An-Na'im's proposal to separate Islam from the state, which "does not

prevent Muslims from proposing policy or legislation stemming from their religious or other beliefs. All citizens have the right to do so, provided they should support such proposals with what I call 'civic reason.'<sup>72</sup> So far, An-Na'im sounds very much like Kim when the latter says that the (Confucian democratic) state "respects constitutional rights held by its citizens, among others, the rights to religious freedom, freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, and freedom of association; thus the state has no desire either to suppress value plurality in civil society or to elevate Confucianism as the state religion."<sup>73</sup> Like An-Na'im, Kim also rejects the possibility of having a comprehensive doctrine as the state religion. Unlike An-Na'im's approach, Kim's entire project is predicated on Confucian public reason, which "refers to the reason of the democratic citizens in a Confucian society and it is rooted in Confucian mores, habits, and moral sentiments such as, but not limited to, filial piety and ritual propriety."<sup>74</sup> In contrast, An-Na'im advocates the use of neutral "civic reason," which refers to "the requirement that the rationale and purpose of public policy or legislation be based on the sort of reasoning that most citizens can accept or reject and use to make counterproposals through public debate without reference to religious belief as such."<sup>75</sup>

When it comes to the East Asian context, although Confucianism is without any doubt the main historical source of influence in many East Asian countries, it is nevertheless one of many influential comprehensive doctrines that exist today.<sup>76</sup> The freedom for citizens to choose their value systems is even more marked in East Asia given its cultural and religious diversity.<sup>77</sup> Regardless of how Confucian scholars reinterpret classic Confucian texts or come up with novel ways to juxtapose democratic ideals and institutions with Confucian values, they are inevitably confronted with the legitimacy problem of the Confucian state. Kim comes very close to solving this problem, but his overburdened view of Confucian public reason offsets the promise. The legitimacy of state action is based almost entirely on what public reason entails, which is why Kim's insistence on maintaining the Confucian public characteristic even in the case where a majority of citizens are actively practicing alternative moral systems is so problematic. Therefore, the first step to push Kim's theory is to unburden public reason of Confucianism.

The next step is rather delicate, because it involves relocating Confucianism from the state and public reason not to the *private* sphere but to the *public* sphere, where a political role can still be played through influence rather than determination. For instance, Confucian social associations, NGOs, and think tanks can all contribute to the public discourse regarding Confucian values. The emerging civil society in some more developed countries in East Asia also provides the soil for meaningful Confucian discourses to take place. The state, on the other hand, ought to play the role of neutral moderator among competing comprehensive

doctrines in order to “ensure that institutional actors do not abuse the powers and authority of the state to impose their views on others or promote their narrow self-interest.”<sup>78</sup> In other words, the neutrality and autonomy of the state justifies its validity and coercive power. Given the authoritarian history of East Asia, this political liberal horizon might pave the road for more mature and sustainable democracies in the decades to come.

### Conclusion

In this essay, I began with two promising recent theories that advocate moderate versions of Confucianism in political philosophy. Both Joseph Chan’s Confucian political perfectionism and Sungmoon Kim’s public reason Confucianism fall short in striking the perfect balance between Confucianism and modern democratic theories and institutions. The source of their problems lies in their shared failure to take pluralism truly seriously. In addition, empirical observations of the contemporary socio-cultural condition of East Asia also support the claim that the region is no longer homogeneously Confucian but instead highly pluralistic and divided. On the basis of these theoretical and empirical discussions, the reasonable question to ask when it comes to the future of democracy in East Asia ought to be how sustainable democracies can be established and maintained while accommodating the permanent fact of pluralism among a diversity of comprehensive doctrines, of which Confucianism is only one among many. By way of conclusion, two possibilities have been briefly highlighted by remedying Chan’s theory and transforming it into a moderate version of liberal perfectionism, and by pushing Kim’s foundational framework to a horizon where political liberalism might contribute to democratization in East Asia. These two possibilities are certainly not mutually exclusive, but they serve to open new doors for the future of democracy in East Asia.

### Notes

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- 1 – For comprehensive Confucianism, see Qing Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order: How China’s Ancient Past Can Shape Its Political Future*, ed. Daniel A. Bell and Ruiping Fan, trans. Edmund Ryden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). Also see Daniel Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy: Political Thinking for an East Asian Context* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), and Ruiping Fan,

*Reconstructionist Confucianism: Rethinking Morality after the West* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010).

- 2 – Joseph Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism: A Political Philosophy for Modern Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 17–18.
- 3 – Sungmoon Kim, “Public Reason Confucianism: A Construction,” *American Political Science Review* 109, no. 1 (February 2015): 187.
- 4 – Joseph Chan, “Legitimacy, Unanimity, and Perfectionism,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 22.
- 5 – *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 6 – Chan divides the good life into three analytical parts: (1) agency goods: virtues or dispositions that constitute the good life—e.g., reason (especially practical wisdom), courage, justice, temperance, integrity, and sincerity; (2) prudential goods: goods or values that contribute to a person’s good life—e.g., aesthetic experience (music and beauty), human relationship (friendship, family), amusement and play, knowledge, etc.; and (3) a way of life: a person’s pattern of living, which embodies a particular ranking of agency and prudential goods and a particular way of realizing them. Chan argues that the first two components are not necessarily controversial and that a moderate version of perfectionism can be developed by focusing on agency and prudential goods and staying away from specific ways of life (*ibid.*, p. 11).
- 7 – For in-depth discussion of the four features, see Chan, “Legitimacy, Unanimity, and Perfectionism,” pp. 14–17.
- 8 – *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 9 – *Ibid.*, p. 201.
- 10 – *Ibid.*, p. 203.
- 11 – For an example of the comprehensive approach, see Jiang, *A Confucian Constitutional Order*.
- 12 – Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism*, pp. 199–200.
- 13 – *Ibid.*, p. 204.
- 14 – *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 15 – See parts I and II in Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism*.
- 16 – Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism*. As Kim points out, modern Chinese people are in fact under the “nonideal situations [that] quite regrettably prevent them from realizing” these ideals. See Sungmoon Kim, *Public Reason Confucianism: Democratic-Perfectionism and Constitutionalism in East Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 90. For

classic references to these ideals, see Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau, rev. bilingual ed. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1992); Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. D. C. Lau, rev. bilingual ed. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2003); Xunzi, *Basic Writings of Hsün Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

- 17 – Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism*, p. 204.
- 18 – *Ibid.*, p. 200.
- 19 – It is worth pointing out the distinction between having Confucianism as *the* doctrine and having Confucianism, among other traditions, inform a theory of justice. Given the history of Confucianism in East Asian societies, it is hard to imagine a democracy without at least some influence from Confucianism. However, it is quite another claim to argue that given this substantial history Confucianism then ought to be the sole source of justice and legitimacy.
- 20 – Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism*, p. 203.
- 21 – So doing will of course raise the risk of becoming less Confucian and more liberal, which is unacceptable to Chan.
- 22 – See note 6 above for Chan’s three-part view of the good life. Many would argue that Martha Nussbaum’s version of political liberalism, which evolves from her capability theory, is a good example of this strategy. See Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and Martha C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013). Also see *Rawls’ Political Liberalism*, ed. Thom Brooks and Martha Nussbaum (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).
- 23 – One could say the same of Catholicism and Islam, for instance. The problem of the oscillation between these two undesirable extremes (losing moderateness or losing identity) seems to arise whenever we envision the transition from one comprehensive doctrine to political liberalism. Rawls’ political liberalism begins with a plurality of comprehensive doctrines that have to coexist, not with one that wishes to “liberalize” itself for political or democratic reasons.
- 24 – Kim, “Public Reason Confucianism,” p. 191.
- 25 – *Ibid.*, pp. 191–192.
- 26 – *Ibid.*, p. 187.
- 27 – *Ibid.*, pp. 198–199.

- 28 – Ibid.
- 29 – Ibid., pp. 191, 199.
- 30 – Kim, *Public Reason Confucianism*, p. 91.
- 31 – Kim, “Public Reason Confucianism,” p. 193.
- 32 – Byung-ik Koh, “Confucianism in Contemporary Korea,” in *Confucian Traditions in East Asian Modernity: Moral Education and Economic Culture in Japan and the Four Mini-Dragons*, ed. Tu Wei-ming (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 191–201.
- 33 – Kim, “Public Reason Confucianism,” p. 193.
- 34 – Ibid., p. 199.
- 35 – Kim, “Public Reason Confucianism,” p. 198.
- 36 – To put it bluntly, this suggestion is rather assimilationist in the same sense as requiring Muslim refugees in the EU to embrace Christianity. However, it is different to require that they embrace democracy.
- 37 – Ibid., pp. 198–199.
- 38 – Ibid., p. 199.
- 39 – Ibid., pp. 193–194.
- 40 – See, for instance, Corey Brettschneider, “The Politics of the Personal: A Liberal Approach,” *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 1 (February 2007): 19–31.
- 41 – Kim, “Public Reason Confucianism,” p. 198.
- 42 – Ibid.
- 43 – Doh Chull Shin, *Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- 44 – Ibid., p. 90.
- 45 – Ibid., pp. 89–90. The relationship between ruler and subject is excluded.
- 46 – Ibid., p. 94.
- 47 – Ibid., p. 92.
- 48 – Ibid., p. 94.
- 49 – Koh Byong-ik, “Confucianism in Contemporary Korea,” p. 192.
- 50 – Ibid.
- 51 – David Elstein goes so far as to wonder “whether the continued relevance of Confucianism in modern political culture in East Asia is a scholar’s fantasy more than anything else,” and states that as far as



young people are concerned, they “do not seem to look to Confucianism as a source of political values. Liberal values are a greater inspiration.” Both claims are obviously on the extreme side, but they can find some support from empirical studies (David Elstein, “The Future of Confucian Politics in East Asia,” *Dao* 15 [2016]: 444).

- 52 – Shin, *Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia*, p. 320.
- 53 – John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 5.
- 54 – Alessandro Ferrara, *The Democratic Horizon: Hyperpluralism and the Renewal of Political Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 90.
- 55 – Ibid.
- 56 – Ibid., p. 100.
- 57 – Ibid., p. 91.
- 58 – Ibid., p. 100.
- 59 – Kim, “Public Reason Confucianism,” pp. 191–192. Kim calls it “an unavoidable price” in another paper; see Sungmoon Kim, “A Pluralist Reconstruction of Confucian Democracy,” *Dao* 11 (2012): 333. For further discussion on Confucianism for non-Confucians, see Ralph Weber, “Confucian Political Philosophy for Non-Confucians,” *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 10, no. 4 (2015): 547–567.
- 60 – Ferrara, *The Democratic Horizon*, p. 88.
- 61 – To be clear, I share with Chan and Kim the conviction that Confucianism ought not simply be dismissed as a doctrine of the past. I nonetheless differ from them when it comes to how Confucianism should be maintained within a sustainable democracy.
- 62 – Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism*, p. 204.
- 63 – For Chan, the reason why he wishes to avoid a comprehensive and extreme form of Confucianism is that “it damages civility.” However, as Steven Wall points out, the duty of civility is independent of moral content. Chan is in a difficult position to ground civility. On the one hand, if civility is grounded on Confucian doctrines, then what is so moderate about this theory? On the other hand, if civility is indeed morally independent, then the theory risks a “massive blurring of the meaningful difference between Confucian and liberal perfectionism,” which is likely to “reintroduce the state neutrality” that Chan sets out to overcome in the first place (Steven Wall, *Liberalism, Perfectionism and Restraint* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], p. 79, and Kim, *Public Reason Confucianism*, p. 46).

- 64 – However, it is worth pointing out that whether Nussbaum’s theory is as Rawlsian and politically liberal as she claims is still an open question. For this issue, see the exchange between Martha Nussbaum and Linda Barclay, in Linda Barclay, “What Kind of Liberal Is Martha Nussbaum?” *SATS: Nordic Journal of Philosophy* 4, no. 2 (2003): 5–24, and Martha Nussbaum, “Political Liberalism and Respect: A Response to Linda Barclay,” *SATS: Nordic Journal of Philosophy* 4, no. 2 (2003): 25–44.
- 65 – Charles Larmore, “Pluralism and Reasonable Disagreement,” *Social Philosophy and Policy* 11, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 74, 78. John Kekes makes a similar point when he argues that pluralists need not be committed to denying that morality makes some claims equally binding on all moral agents, and that human nature suggests the existence of “the minimum content of morality.” See John Kekes, “Pluralism and Conflict in Morality,” *Journal of Value Inquiry* 26 (1992): 38.
- 66 – John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 13. See Zhuoyao Li, “The Public Conception of Morality in John Rawls’ Political Liberalism,” *Ethics and Global Politics* 9, no. 1 (published online Mar 3, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.3402/egp.v9.28679>).
- 67 – Alessandro Ferrara recently proposed what he calls “multivariate democratic polity,” which takes advantage of both partially and fully prudential reasons to mitigate the effect of hyperpluralism and perhaps emancipate us from the trap of mutual resentment within which majorities and minorities might end up being caught. This proposal consists of “conceiving of the democratic polity as a multivariate unity that includes both overlapping-consensus-type and modus vivendi-type relations between the citizens participating in the overlapping consensus over the political conception of justice and over the constitutional essentials, as well as other groups of citizens embracing partially reasonable comprehensive conception.” I do not have space to argue further here, but it seems to me that multivariate democracy is a promising direction for accommodating pluralism and maintaining the continued existence of doctrines such as Confucianism (Ferrara, *The Democratic Horizon*, p. 106).
- 68 – See Chan, *Confucian Perfectionism*, p. 204.
- 69 – Kim, *Public Reason Confucianism*, p. 48.
- 70 – Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari’a* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 5.
- 71 – Kim, *Public Reason Confucianism*, p. 12.
- 72 – An-Na’im, *Islam and the Secular State*, p. 7.

- 73 – Kim, “Public Reason Confucianism,” p. 192.
- 74 – Ibid.
- 75 – An-Na’im, *Islam and the Secular State*, p. 100.
- 76 – One may even go so far as to argue that Buddhism and Daoism are even more influential than Confucianism today given the numbers of their active followers all over the world. For instance, Richard Madsen points out unlike Buddhism and Daoism, both of which enjoy substantial international popularity, Confucianism “has not been indigenized into non-Asian cultures.” See Richard Madsen, “Obstacles to the Globalization of Confucianism,” in *Confucianism: A Habit of the Heart: Bellah, Civil Religion, and East Asia*, ed. Philip J. Ivanhoe and Sungmoon Kim (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), p. 100.
- 77 – Shin’s empirical study shows that the desire for individuality in East Asia is even stronger than in Latin America, Africa, and the Muslim zone. See Shin, *Confucianism and Democratization in East Asia*, p. 97, table 3.5.
- 78 – An-Na’im, *Islam and the Secular State*, p. 89.

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