

Confucianism, Perfectionism, and Liberal Society

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Abstract Confucian scholars should satisfy two conditions insofar as they think their theories enable Confucianism to make contributions to liberal politics and social policy. The liberal accommodation condition stipulates that the theory in question should accommodate as many reasonable conceptions of the good and religious doctrines as possible while the intelligibility condition stipulates that the theory must have a recognizable Confucian character. By and large, Joseph Chan’s Confucian perfectionism is able to satisfy the above two conditions. However, contrary to Chan and many other Confucian scholars, I argue that any active promotion of Confucianism will violate the liberal accommodation condition. I propose the “wide view of moderate perfectionism,” which enables Confucianism to shed light on a wide range of political and social issues without promoting Confucianism actively. Thus, I present a new approach to the long-standing question of how Confucianism may improve political and social development in a liberal society.

Keywords Confucianism · Perfectionism · Liberalism · Joseph Chan · KIM Sungmoon

1 Introduction

Confucianism began as an ethical-political doctrine more than two thousand years ago and contemporary philosophers have long contemplated the role of Confucianism in liberal societies. At times, liberal societies can seem unwelcoming to ancient doctrines and this has become a pressing problem in light of the revival of interest in Confucianism in China and other countries in Asia. Specifically, despite the merits that Confucianism may have as an ethical doctrine, it is unclear how it can transform or, to say the least, shape liberal democratic institutions in a favorable way without also altering their liberal qualities. It is also unclear how Confucianism can improve liberal

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democracy without changing itself to the point that it is no longer Confucianism. In addition, there is an obvious yet important question as to whether people living in liberal and pluralistic societies would welcome the revival of Confucianism in politics. As various incidents of authoritarianism and wars of the 20th century have shown, people are afraid of the tyranny of ideals. Thus, it remains debatable whether Confucianism is able to improve liberal democratic institutions of our times. This article explores how Confucianism can make positive contributions to social and political development in liberal societies. It also explores the limits of the contribution of Confucianism for liberal societies.

Historians and philosophers hold diverse views regarding possible contributions of Confucianism to liberal democracy.¹ However, it is worth noting that in recent years, many philosophers who are familiar with the Western tradition of liberalism have argued that Confucianism can make significant contributions to liberal politics and political institutions. These philosophers include Stephen Angle, Joseph Chan, and KIM Sungmoon (see, mainly, Angle 2012; Chan 2014; Kim 2016). They generally believe that liberal democratic institutions are fundamentally important, and therefore should not be replaced by anything radically different. However, they also think that these institutions suffer from certain inadequacies, which can be remedied or overcome with the assistance of Confucian values.

Let us call philosophers who believe that Confucianism can make significant contributions to contemporary politics and political institutions *Confucian perfectionists*.² They are called “perfectionists” because they can be viewed as supporters of state perfectionism. State perfectionism, or simply perfectionism, is the idea that the state should undertake the responsibility of promoting the good life by means of laws and public policies.³ Confucian perfectionists endorse such a view because they believe that Confucianism as a doctrine of the good life and morality can improve contemporary politics and ultimately, enable people to live flourishing lives.

Many Confucian perfectionists including Angle, Chan, and Kim believe that Confucianism can make positive contributions to liberal societies in a way that is compatible with people’s commitment to a great diversity of doctrines of value and religion. As such, these Confucian perfectionists should satisfy the following two conditions:

- (a) *The liberal accommodation condition*: Any liberal society is characterized by a wide plurality of conceptions of the good, moral outlooks, and religious doctrines. A political theory for liberal societies seeks to accommodate as many reasonable conceptions of the good and religious doctrines as possible.
- (b) *The intelligibility condition*: A Confucian political theory must have a recognizable Confucian character.⁴

¹ The historian YU Yingshi 余英時 has expressed a somewhat pessimistic view about the prospects of Confucianism in modern society (Yu 1996, ch. 4). In contrast, some Chinese philosophers, including MOU Zongsan 牟宗三 and LIU Shuxian 劉述先, hold positive views about how Confucianism can make valuable contributions to modern society (Mou 1996, esp. ch. 8; S. Liu 1992).

² Hence, in this article, “Confucian perfectionists” do not only refer to Chan and any person who endorses Chan’s Confucian political philosophy. I borrow the term “Confucian perfectionist” from Chan (Chan 2014).

³ For an elaborate definition of perfectionism, see Wall 1998: 8.

⁴ The useful term “intelligibility condition” is borrowed from Kim (Kim 2016: 45).

The intelligibility condition is one that is internal to any Confucian political theory. Confucian perfectionists invariably believe that their theories have a recognizable Confucian character regardless if they are correct in holding such belief. The liberal accommodation condition can be understood and justified in different ways. For example, Charles Larmore and Thomas Nagel endorse liberal accommodation on the grounds that a liberal state ought to give due respect to different conceptions of the good by staying neutral toward these conceptions (Nagel 1991, ch. 14; Larmore 1996, chs. 6 and 7). In contrast, Chan rejects neutrality. He has argued that the state should promote the good life by appealing to many piecemeal judgments about the good life (Chan 2000: 5–42, esp. 11–14). To Chan, political authorities ought to accommodate different comprehensive doctrines of value and religion because of the great value of civility, not the doctrine of neutrality.⁵ The liberal accommodation in its general form is endorsed by Angle, Kim, and many other Confucian perfectionists (Angle 2012: 9; Kim 2016: 3–4).

The liberal accommodation condition and the intelligibility condition may come into conflict when a Confucian perfectionist seeks to meet both conditions. On the one hand, when a Confucian perfectionist tries to accommodate as many conceptions of the good as possible, there seems little reason to not regard Confucianism as merely one doctrine among others. If so, Confucianism does not deserve to have any special status to instruct how people should run their social and political activities. However, if the political theory in question does not give Confucianism that kind of status, then it lacks a strong Confucian character. On the other hand, a Confucian perfectionist may insist that his or her theory should enjoy a special status in the sense that people in liberal societies should commit themselves to the Confucian ideals that the theory advocates. In this case, the theory will fall short of the liberal accommodation condition. Therefore, it seems difficult to satisfy the liberal accommodation condition and the intelligibility condition simultaneously.

While I believe that Confucianism can make some positive contributions to liberal politics and social policy, I am doubtful whether any political theory that satisfies the liberal accommodation condition can at the same time possess a strong Confucian character, for I think that any active promotion of Confucianism or Confucian values will violate the liberal accommodation. I shall use Chan's theory of Confucian perfectionism as a starting point of discussion.⁶ There are two reasons for choosing it to be the subject of my discussion. First, Chan's Confucian perfectionism is worth examining in its own right. It is a highly original and ambitious theory as it seeks to combine moderate perfectionism, which is his theory of perfectionism, with a broad range of Confucian ideas and values.⁷ Second, Chan's theory has attracted a lot of attention and criticism. Some philosophers have doubts as to whether Chan has, to use my terminology, managed to satisfy both the liberal accommodation condition and the intelligibility condition.⁸ A critical engagement with Chan's theory enables us to reflect on the coherence and prospects of Confucian political philosophy in the contemporary world.

⁵ Chan makes this point clearly in Chan 2014: 201–204.

⁶ For my discussion, I focus on Chan 2014.

⁷ For Chan's explication of moderate perfectionism, see Chan 2000.

⁸ See, in particular, Ci 2015; Kim 2016: 44–55.

In the following, I first present a streamlined version of Chan's Confucian perfectionism (Section 2). I then defend Chan's moderate perfectionism against certain criticisms by making it clear that perfectionists can adopt a particular understanding of civility that is different from John Rawls's (Section 3). Moreover, I argue that a Confucian perfectionism is a recognizably Confucian one as long as it seeks to demonstrate how Confucian ideas and values can make contributions to social and political development. Hence, to a limited extent, Chan's Confucian perfectionism has a recognizable Confucian character. Yet, contrary to Chan and other Confucian philosophers, argue that the active promotion of Confucianism or Confucian values by the state violates the liberal accommodation condition (Section 4). To pave the way forward, I present a new strand of moderate perfectionism, the wide view of moderate perfectionism, which enables Confucianism to make positive contributions to public policy and political deliberation in a liberal society. However, it will also be clear that there are certain limits on the contribution of Confucianism for liberal societies (Section 5). Finally, I conclude by pointing out the contributions of my article (Section 6).

2 Joseph Chan's Confucian Perfectionism

Chan describes his Confucian perfectionism as "an unusual project" for it is "a critical reconstruction of certain Confucian political ideas of the classical period for modern times" (Chan 2014: xi). The project is not only unusual, but also ambitious, since it explores the implications of Confucianism for many fundamental issues in political theory including authority, democracy, human rights, civil liberties, and social justice (Chan 2014: xi). The ultimate goal of the project, as Chan has made clear, is to provide "an attractive philosophical alternative to liberal democratic theory" (Chan 2014: 23).

Chan's Confucian perfectionism is built on his own theory of perfectionism, namely, moderate perfectionism. It is this theory that makes his Confucian political philosophy unique. Moderate perfectionism is an intermediate position between liberal neutrality and the extreme version of state perfectionism. Broadly speaking, liberal neutrality is the view that the state should be neutral between different conceptions of the good life and hence, the state has a strong moral reason to not promote the good life.⁹ Extreme perfectionism, according to Chan, is the view that the state ought to adopt a certain fully comprehensive doctrine as the basis of state policy (Chan 2000: 14).¹⁰ Following Rawls, a fully comprehensive doctrine is one that involves a systematic theorization about human life. It gives account to what is valuable in human life, why certain things are good, and usually ties these things to a particular tradition of thought (Rawls 2005: 13, 59).

Chan argues that liberal neutralists are generally insensitive to the fact that there are many piecemeal judgments about the good life that are convincing, widely accepted, and not based on any particular comprehensive doctrine (Chan 2000: 11–14). This fact

⁹ For an elaborate analysis of the idea of liberal neutrality, see Quong 2011: 12–44, especially 21–26.

¹⁰ In Chan 2000 and Chan 2014, Chan has not distinguished between Rawls's two kinds of comprehensive doctrines, namely, "a fully comprehensive doctrine" and "a partially comprehensive doctrine" (Rawls 2005: 13). Nevertheless, it is quite clear that Chan is invariably referring to the fully comprehensive doctrines in his explanation of how moderate perfectionism avoids relying on comprehensive doctrines.

makes possible an intermediate position between neutrality and extreme perfectionism, which moderate perfectionism adopts. In Chan's view, to promote the good life, the state should appeal to these piecemeal judgments about the good life rather than any comprehensive doctrine. These piecemeal judgments may be about agency goods (e.g., courage, justice, and temperance), prudential goods (e.g., human relationship, aesthetic experience, and knowledge), and ways of life (e.g., a drug addict's way of life) (Chan 2000: 11). For Chan, judgments about agency goods (e.g., "courage constitutes the good life") and judgments about prudential goods (e.g., "human relationship contributes to a person's good life") are not subjected to reasonable disagreement (Chan 2000: 12). Moreover, Chan thinks that there are many specific judgments about ways of life that are convincing and rather uncontroversial (e.g., a drug addict who chases elusive drug pleasures at the expense of most other human goods leads an impoverished life) (Chan 2000: 13–14).

A moderate perfectionist state promotes the good life by appealing to piecemeal judgments about the good life that are convincing and widely shared. In addition, moderate perfectionism is moderate in several other respects. In particular, it favors the use of non-coercive measures (e.g., subsidies and tax) over coercive measures (e.g., imprisonment) and it works side by side with civil society in order to be sensitive to the needs of citizens (Chan 2000: 14–17).

Chan points out that Confucian perfectionism can take either the form of moderate perfectionism or of extreme perfectionism. His Confucian perfectionism takes the form of moderate perfectionism and there are two levels on which it does this (Chan 2014: 23, 203). On the level of politics and policy making, Chan claims that "Confucianism can be actively and publicly promoted" in the form of moderate perfectionism (Chan 2014: 200). However, in public political discourse, citizens and government officials "should not present Confucianism as a complete and packaged conception and ask citizens to accept policy proposals as implications of that package" (Chan 2014: 203). To illustrate, he has given the following example: one should not argue that filial piety (*xiao* 孝) should be promoted because it is a central element in Confucianism; to argue in such a way is to expect other people to accept the authority of Confucianism as a comprehensive doctrine (Chan 2014: 203–204). According to moderate perfectionism, people who want to appeal to Confucian values in policy making need to justify Confucian values and their political views in terms of reasons that do not require the acceptance of Confucianism as a comprehensive doctrine.

On the level of methodology, Chan's Confucian perfectionism also takes the moderate form. He claims that Confucian perfectionism, as a political philosophy for modern times, should not be derived from any comprehensive doctrine. This is why he presents a "bottom-up" rather than "top-down" method of theorizing in his book (Chan 2014: 203): instead of starting with any comprehensive doctrine and seeking to apply it to politics, he examines a certain set of Confucian values and considers their importance for a variety of political issues including authority, democracy, human rights, and social justice. He hopes that these discrete analyses together present "an outline of a coherent and systematic political philosophy that is recognizably Confucian" (Chan 2014: 203).

The main reason for Chan to favor moderate perfectionism over extreme perfectionism is the value of civility. Civility, as he understands it, is "the attitude of fellow citizens toward each other that shows a concern for the *common bond* despite differing

opinions or conflicts of interest” (Chan 2014: 201). In his view, promoting Confucianism as a comprehensive doctrine is undesirable for it “damages civility” (Chan 2014: 201). Citizens living in liberal pluralistic societies hold different and often conflicting doctrines of value and religion. To seek a common ground for social cooperation, civility requires citizens to be open-minded, mutually respectful, and to justify their views in a way that others can understand and accept. The extreme form of Confucian perfectionism seeks to promote the entire doctrine of Confucianism, which is a doctrine that many citizens do not accept (Chan 2014: 201).

Chan believes that the moderate form of Confucian perfectionism preserves civility. Moderate perfectionism allows citizens to freely evaluate Confucian values and consider their relevance to public policy. The state may promote Confucian values in a piecemeal manner rather than promoting the entire doctrine of Confucianism. In this way, Confucianism can “win only in regard to specific policies,” and its advocates cannot “use political power to impose a winner-take-all comprehensive package” over citizens who may have very different outlooks on life (Chan 2014: 204).

Chan’s Confucian perfectionism has attracted a lot of criticism. These criticisms can be summarized into the following two points. First, Chan’s Confucian perfectionism lacks a recognizable Confucian character; given that it is built on moderate perfectionism, it is too moderate for the purpose of constructing a Confucian political philosophy. This criticism has been pressed by Angle, Ci, and Kim (Angle 2014: 797; Ci 2015; Kim 2016: 44–47). Second, it is not clear why Chan does not simply endorse neutrality if he considers civility to be so important. This criticism has been made by Kim and would be welcomed by liberal neutralists, particularly those who endorse Rawls’s political liberalism (Kim 2016: 48–52).¹¹ If considerations of civility should justify neutrality, then Chan’s Confucian perfectionism may simply be incoherent. I shall begin with this criticism in the following section. My response to it will prepare the ground for exploring the general question about the use of state power to promote Confucianism in a liberal society.

3 Civility and Moderate Perfectionism

Kim has recently argued that Chan’s attempt to put civility considerations at the heart of his Confucian perfectionism may end up justifying neutrality, which Chan rejects. Kim argues:

Chan’s idea of reciprocity in terms of shared reasons justifiable to citizens who have moral disagreements, which he believes is indispensable to achieving a common bond and common ground in a pluralist society, has *a striking resemblance to what Rawls calls the duty of civility*.... The following political questions inevitably arise: to what extent should freedom of expression be tolerated? What kinds of associations are prohibited or protected? What constitutes defamation or

¹¹ Chan’s moderate perfectionism has attracted criticism from Quong, HUANG Yong, KIM Sungmoon, and other philosophers (Quong 2011, chs. 3, 4, 7; Huang 2015: 194–195; Kim 2016: 45–51). In this article, I do not seek to defend moderate perfectionism. For a recent defense, see Mang 2013.

libel?... Chan's civility consideration, focused on common bond, common ground, common good, and shared reasons, has almost nothing to say about them. This is not to argue that the civility consideration cannot accommodate perfectionism. The point I want to make is that if, as Chan argues, the civility consideration has priority over content considerations, not only does the normative theory in question lose its perfectionist quality, but more problematically (inasmuch as the theory declares itself to be perfectionist), it ends up being more akin to liberal neutrality. (Kim 2016: 48–52; italics added)

These criticisms may seem convincing. Indeed, Chan differs from many prominent perfectionists such as Joseph Raz and Steven Wall as they have defended perfectionism as a comprehensive doctrine and none of them have put any strong emphasis on the importance of civility.¹² As Chan takes civility to be a significant value in politics, his position may appear to be closer to Rawls's neutrality than any version of perfectionism. Rawls has argued that citizens in a liberal democratic society should honor the duty of civility, which requires them to appeal to reasons that can be shared by reasonable persons in political justification (Rawls 2005: 452–453).¹³ These reasons are called “public reasons” (Rawls 2005: 453, 465–466). To Rawls, conceptions of the good are associated with comprehensive doctrines and hence, reasonable persons may disagree over conceptions of the good (Rawls 2005: 452). Therefore, Rawls maintains that citizens should not appeal to any conception of the good in political justification when matters of basic justice or constitutional essentials are at stake, unless their positions are already supported by sufficient public reasons (Rawls 2005: 452–454).¹⁴

However, I would argue that considerations of civility need not justify neutrality; it depends on which conception of civility we adopt. I here suggest that civility can be understood in the following two different ways:

- (a) *Civility as a side-constraint*: Civility is a moral side-constraint on citizens' actions. Hence, if citizens violate civility, they are morally wrong.

In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls understands civility as a moral duty of civility. He argues: “Since the exercise of political power itself must be legitimate, the ideal of citizenship imposes a moral, not a legal, duty—the duty of civility—to be able to explain to one another on those fundamental questions how the principles and policies

¹² See, mainly, Raz 1986; Wall 1998.

¹³ Notice that in this article, “political justification” is taken to mean the justification of the use of political power. As such, political justification does not refer to the particular kind of justification of the use of political power (or the justification of political principles) that Rawls endorses, namely, the justification of the use of political power that appeals to Rawlsian public reasons. Hence, there could be perfectionist political justification, that is, justifying the use of political power by appealing to perfectionist reasons among other reasons.

¹⁴ In addition, Rawls endorses what he calls “the wide view of public political culture.” According to this view, comprehensive moral and religious doctrines can be introduced into public political discussion at any time so long as in due course neutral political reasons “are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support” (Rawls 2005: 462). Some Rawlsian philosophers, such as Quong, have argued that all state action, not only when basic principles of justice or constitutional essentials are at stake, should be publicly justified in the way Rawls suggests (Quong 2011: 273–287). I think Quong has made a convincing argument to that effect, but I shall not discuss this argument in my article.

they advocate and vote for can be supported by the political values of public reason” (Rawls 2005: 217). Seen in this light, civility is a side-constraint on citizens’ actions for it is illegitimate and morally wrong for citizens to justify the use of political power by appealing to values or doctrines that cannot be adequately supported by the political values of public reason (Rawls 2005: 450–462).

- (b) *Civility as a value*: Civility is a significant value in politics. Citizens should preserve the value of civility as much as possible in their political actions, including their public political discussions and political decision-making.

According to the second view, citizens should do their best to appeal to shared reasons when justifying laws and policies because it is important for citizens to understand each other’s viewpoints, discuss and debate with each other in a sincere and respectful manner, and look for common ground in politics and public policies.

Based on Rawls’s explication of the idea of public reason, it is reasonable to believe that he also endorses civility as a value in the above sense.¹⁵ However, as we have seen, Rawls also considers civility as a side-constraint since he thinks that citizens should not appeal to perfectionist values or religious doctrines that run afoul of the political values of public reason in political justification. Chan does not endorse Rawls’s understanding of civility. (Chan 2015: 590). While Chan considers civility to be a significant value, he does not consider it as a side-constraint on citizens’ actions. He would agree that in some situations, even if a certain perfectionist policy (say, an anti-smoking policy) undermines civility *to some degree* (say, because the policy is not welcoming to many smokers), the policy may not be morally wrong when all things are considered.

Let me explain more clearly. Chan does not adopt Rawls’s duty of civility. Following Edward Shils, he has explained plausibly the great importance of civility for political deliberation and decision-making. To recall, civility may refer to the “attitude of fellow citizens toward each other that shows a concern for the common bond despite differing opinions or conflicts of interest” (Chan 2014: 201; italics removed). To seek a common ground for social cooperation in a liberal and pluralistic society, civility requires citizens to be open-minded and justify their views in a sincere and respectful manner. Hence, it is important for citizens to do their best to appeal to shared reasons in political justification. Note that this does not mean that citizens should not appeal to any reason that is controversial. Whether or not it is morally justified to appeal to reasons that are not widely shared by citizens depends on various factors, in particular, how controversial these reasons are and how important the policy these reasons intend to justify. A moderate perfectionist can argue that citizens should be allowed to appeal to many piecemeal judgments about the good life that are widely accepted by citizens. These piecemeal judgments about the good life are not totally uncontroversial, but since they are widely accepted, appealing to them to justify perfectionist policies will not undermine civility by any significant degree.¹⁶

¹⁵ See Rawls 2005: 440–490 (esp. 446–449, where he discusses the idea of political legitimacy based on the criterion of reciprocity).

¹⁶ In fact, throughout Chan 2014, Chan has not appealed to Rawls’s idea of civility, although this idea has a key role in Rawls’s political liberalism.

In addition, a moderate perfectionist does not regard civility considerations as the only important consideration in justifying laws and policies. He or she can argue that while civility considerations are important, perfectionist considerations about the good life are morally important as well. Thus, when we consider whether or not a certain perfectionist policy is justified, we should take into account both civility considerations (e.g., the consideration that some citizens may strongly oppose that policy) and perfectionist considerations (e.g., the consideration that some citizens' well-being will be effectively protected by that policy). In some cases, civility considerations may lead us to conclude that the perfectionist policy in question is unjustified (say, a very heavy tax on tobacco is unjustified as most smokers strongly oppose it). However, in other cases, the benefits from a certain perfectionist policy can be substantial enough to justify it (say, a certain moderate tax on tobacco may be deemed as morally justified when both civility considerations and perfectionist considerations are taken into account).¹⁷

I have argued that considerations of civility do not justify neutrality and that moderate perfectionism is compatible with these considerations. Surely, even if these claims are convincing, they have not shown that contemporary Confucian philosophers should build their theories on moderate perfectionism. Many critics of Chan have argued that his Confucian perfectionism does not have a recognizable Confucian character precisely because it is built on moderate perfectionism. I shall now turn to this criticism.

4 How Confucian Is Confucian Perfectionism?

Does Chan's Confucian perfectionism have a recognizable Confucian character? The more important and broader question is the following: how Confucian can a Confucian political philosophy be if this philosophy intends to accommodate as many reasonable comprehensive doctrines as possible in a liberal society?

Let us begin with Ci's comment on Chan's Confucian perfectionism:

Central to the politics of Confucian perfectionism, according to Chan, is the Confucian virtue of civility, and in Chan's reading this virtue translates under modern conditions of pluralism into the duty of respect for all those, including liberal democrats, who do not subscribe to Confucian values. Thus, in one seemingly local touch, *Chan's introduction of civility as a political virtue scotches any idea of treating Confucian perfectionism, even in its moderate version, as a comprehensive doctrine. This means, in turn, nothing less than abandoning the priority of the good*, while allowing only the presentation of reasonable arguments from the good, Confucian and otherwise, within a framework of public

¹⁷ In response, Rawlsian philosophers might argue that reasonable persons do not share any perfectionist view, while they must share certain liberal values including mutual respect and fair social cooperation. So, based on considerations of civility, citizens should refrain from appealing to any perfectionist view in political justification. Quong has pursued this argument (Quong 2011: 192–220). However, there is little reason to think that the ideas of reasonable persons can only be interpreted in that particular way. See my argument in Mang 2017.

reason founded on the priority of the right.... In the end, then, what Chan offers is not the combination of Confucian values for *ti* 體 and liberal democratic institutions for *yong* 用 but rather an argument for the usefulness of Confucian values in the realm of public reason, a usefulness that is nevertheless framed by the liberal priority of the right and implemented via liberal democratic institutions. This double subjection of Confucianism to liberal democracy means that *Chan's moderate perfectionism is no longer Confucian*, definitely not Confucian in the sense in which Rawls's political liberalism is liberal. (Ci 2015: 292; italics added)

The above comment on Chan's Confucian perfectionism is not only important in its own right, but also reveals a particular kind of difficulty involved in the construction of Confucian political philosophy for modern times. To use my terminology, the difficulty concerns the theoretical tensions between the liberal accommodation condition and the intelligibility condition. To meet the liberal accommodation condition, it is important to present a Confucian political philosophy as one that can be accepted by people living in liberal societies (for example, by taking the form of moderate perfectionism as Chan has proposed). However, this kind of effort will likely lead to the undesirable result that the Confucian political philosophy in question lacks a recognizable Confucian character. In the above comment, Ci points out that by taking the form of moderate perfectionism, Chan refuses to present Confucianism as a comprehensive doctrine and allows "only the presentation of reasonable arguments founded on the good, Confucian and otherwise, within a framework of public reason founded on the priority of the right." Hence, Ci argues that in the end, what Chan's Confucian perfectionism offers is merely "an argument for the usefulness of Confucian values in the realm of public reason" rather than a recognizably Confucian political philosophy.

Similarly, Kim has argued that Chan cannot have both moderate perfectionism and Confucian political philosophy at the same time. Kim argues:

Though Chan sees no dilemma here (hence his advocacy of moderate political Confucian perfectionism), there is one and its two horns are: 1. Moderate perfectionism as a sort of political perfectionism is only plausible when it is not tied to any comprehensive conception of the good life — thus plausible only in the context of political liberalism.... 2. Confucianism, for it to be identified intelligibly as such, cannot but be a sort of comprehensive doctrine. (Kim 2016: 45)

If Ci and Kim are right, then Chan seems to face the following dilemma: *either* he maintains his version of moderate perfectionism where Confucianism cannot have a central place in moderate perfectionism and therefore, his political philosophy lacks a recognizable Confucian character *or* he should present Confucianism as a comprehensive doctrine and as a result, he can no longer uphold moderate perfectionism.

I here suggest that we need to distinguish between two levels of discussion. On the theoretical level, I would argue that Chan's Confucian perfectionism has a recognizable Confucian character because it is a particular kind of Confucian-inspired political philosophy. On the politics and public policy-making level, however, I seriously doubt

that moderate perfectionism can support the state's active promotion of Confucianism. Let me explain these points in more detail.

Ci's comment above may not be entirely fair. Chan can argue that his theory seeks to show how Confucianism and Confucian values can improve liberal democracy and in this sense, his theory has a recognizable Confucian character. Let me recall briefly some of the arguments he has made about how Confucianism can improve liberal democracy:

- (a) *Political authority*: Through an exploration of the Confucian conception of political relationship, Chan shows that political authority is not a form of property to be owned by the ruler or the people, but a legitimate right to govern. Such right is grounded on its service to the good life of the people and on their willing acceptance of being ruled. (Chan 2014, ch. 1)
- (b) *Democracy*: Chan argues that democracy and the Confucian ideal of political relationship can strengthen each other. On the one hand, democracy can serve as a useful instrument to pursue Confucian values in a proper way. On the other, a well-functioning democracy needs virtuous citizenry and as such, Confucian ideals, in particular the ideal of humanity-based education, can make democracy ethically more attractive and practically more feasible. (Chan 2014, ch. 4)
- (c) *Human rights*: The Confucian perfectionist approach understands the importance and proper functions of human rights in many ways different from mainstream liberalism. Human rights are important instruments for protecting the legitimate interests of the people, but Confucian perfectionism would resist the development of the kind of rights talk that impoverishes people's moral vocabularies and encourages a culture of rights claims and litigation. (Chan 2014, chap. 5)

Thus, not only does Chan show how liberal democracy may be improved, but also how Confucianism actually helps us to understand the inadequacies of liberal politics and democratic institutions and how these inadequacies can be remedied by Confucian ideas and values. For this reason, Chan's Confucian perfectionism possesses a recognizable Confucian character, though its Confucian character may not be as strong as other Confucian perfectionists want it to be.

Some may argue that if Chan can present his philosophical arguments not in terms of Confucianism, then it is unclear why he needs to appeal to Confucianism to make his arguments. Moreover, if his arguments can only be accepted by those who already endorse Confucianism, then his Confucian perfectionism has not really taken the form of moderate perfectionism. I think that many of Chan's arguments, including the above three concerning political authority, human rights, and democracy can be presented not in terms of Confucianism.¹⁸ I also think that most readers can understand and appreciate the merit of many of Chan's arguments even if they do not accept the entire doctrine of Confucianism. However, for a Confucian-inspired scholar like Chan, there is little reason for him to not present his arguments in a way that makes clear the relevance and importance of Confucian values for liberal politics and institutions.

The other question is about the practice of moderate perfectionism. Chan thinks that according to his version of Confucian perfectionism, Confucianism can be actively promoted by the state and citizens. He claims:

¹⁸ For an example, see my discussion of Chan's idea of humanity-based moral education in the next section.

I think that Confucianism can be actively and publicly promoted in society. It can be promoted by citizens in civil society, businesspeople in commerce, and even politicians and state officials in the political arena. Some liberals have argued that the state and its officials should take a neutral stance toward competing conceptions of the good life.... I believe, though I have no space to argue here, that state neutrality is a mistaken doctrine, and that the state can promote conceptions of the good life in a suitable way, as I shall explain below (Chan 2014: 200).

Chan then goes on to explain two possible ways to promote Confucianism, namely, in the form of extreme perfectionism or moderate perfectionism, and he provides reasons for choosing the latter (Chan 2014: 200–204). In his book, however, Chan gives no reason as to how moderate perfectionism can support the active promotion of Confucianism by the state. If moderate perfectionism can do so, then it will give Chan's Confucian perfectionism a *strong* Confucian character, not merely a recognizable Confucian character, and there will be little doubt that his theory satisfies the intelligibility condition. Yet, I believe that Chan cannot have it both ways. As long as he maintains his stance on moderate perfectionism, he cannot endorse the active promotion of Confucianism by the state. Let me elaborate on this point.

First, Chan's active promotion of Confucianism by the state could mean either:

- (a) the state should actively promote Confucianism as a fully comprehensive doctrine, or
- (b) the state should actively promote many different Confucian values.

Chan's moderate perfectionism is evidently incompatible with (a) for in his view, the perfectionist state should not seek to promote any fully comprehensive doctrine. Instead, the state should promote the good life by appealing to those judgments about the good life that are noncomprehensive, piecemeal, and widely accepted. This leaves Chan with only (b).¹⁹ However, I think that moderate perfectionism is incompatible with the active promotion of Confucian values by the state. Let us compare the following two perfectionist judgments:

- (i) *A moderate perfectionist judgment*: human relationships contribute to a person's good life.
- (ii) *A Confucian perfectionist judgment*: filial piety contributes to a person's good life.

The first perfectionist judgment is called "a moderate perfectionist judgment" because it is an instance of judgments about prudential good, which Chan has discussed in his theory of moderate perfectionism. The second perfectionist judgment is called "a Confucian perfectionist judgment" because it is a judgment about the value of filial piety, which is a canonical Confucian value. As we have discussed earlier, Chan believes there are many piecemeal judgments about the good life, such as the one above concerning the value of human relationships that are convincing and widely shared. However, even if this is true, it does not show that Confucian perfectionist

¹⁹ Chan admitted that by the active promotion of Confucianism, he actually meant (b) rather than (a).

judgments such as the one above concerning the value of filial piety and others concerning the value of benevolence (*ren* 仁) and righteousness (*yi* 義) are as universal and uncontroversial as the three kinds of piecemeal judgments about the good life proposed by Chan. Perhaps these Confucian values are universal values, but Chan has not shown why they are, and it would be highly implausible to claim that these Confucian values are uncontroversial.

Let us think about the value of filial piety. Chan has said one should not argue that “filial piety should be promoted *because* it is a central element in Confucianism. To argue this way is to ask others to accept the authority of Confucianism as a philosophy” (Chan 204: 203–204; original italics). However, it is not clear why any person should endorse filial piety if he or she is not in favor of Confucianism to some degree. Filial piety is one particular kind of human relationship. The value of filial piety, as Confucians generally understand it, is not the same as the value of mutual respect, parental care, and some other human goods understood in a general way (Ivanhoe 2004). While many people in the West endorse the value of mutual respect, parental value, and some combination of these two values, they do not endorse the value of filial piety the way that many Asian people do. It is doubtful that these people in the West will come to endorse filial piety when they know more about how their Asian counterparts endorse and practice it.²⁰

Here, Chan may argue that people should endorse the value of mutual respect and parental care as understood in their broad sense and thus, there is good reason for people to endorse filial piety. Even if this point is by and large convincing, we should notice that the value of mutual respect and parental care can be understood in many other ways and it is likely that many reasonable understandings of these values do not affirm the Confucian idea of filial piety. In addition, if filial piety merely refers to any reasonable combination of the value of mutual respect and parental care as understood in their broad sense, it would be doubtful whether the value of filial piety in question is a recognizable Confucian value, and it would be doubtful how the promotion of filial piety can contribute to the active promotion of Confucianism.

Yet, Chan does not think the argument above demonstrates that moderate perfectionism is incompatible with the active promotion of Confucian values by the state.²¹ He thinks that people from different social and cultural backgrounds in a liberal society may adopt what he calls “the participant approach” to Confucian values. According to this approach, people discuss and debate the importance as well as content of any Confucian value, and in such a way people can modify and improve any Confucian value. Chan believes that even though Confucian values, when understood in their traditional sense, are unacceptable to most people living in modern society, these values can be transformed into contemporary ones through the above participant approach so that people can have a nuanced view of how Confucian values can make positive contributions to liberal societies.

In my view, the participant approach is appealing and can provide a nuanced view of how different Confucian values can contribute to policy making and political deliberation in our times. However, this approach does not demonstrate sufficiently that a moderate perfectionist state can actively promote Confucian values in light of the

²⁰ For a relevant discussion, see Q. Liu 2003.

²¹ I thank Chan for his response to my argument above.

following two problems. First, as Chan himself admits, the participant approach is a case-by-case procedural approach, that is, it enables people to discuss, modify, and improve different Confucian values. If so, it would be premature to claim that many traditional Confucian values can be transformed into contemporary values and that they can be widely endorsed by people living in liberal societies before the participant approach gets into gear. However, if we cannot make the above claim about the participant approach, then we cannot claim that a liberal state should actively promote Confucian values through such an approach. In fact, as the participant approach is a case-by-case procedural approach, it may in the end advise against the state's active promotion of Confucian values.

Furthermore, there is a serious problem with any active promotion of Confucian values in a liberal society. In response to my comments above, Chan may argue that I have not shown convincingly that a moderate perfectionist state should not actively promote Confucian values. He may insist that moderate perfectionism is compatible with the active promotion of Confucian values, since a moderate perfectionist state may promote many different types of values, not only Confucian values, in different policy domains over the long haul. Chan has commented that his Confucian perfectionism “fashions not a winner-take-all politics but a piecemeal politics in which both the gains of winners and losses of losers are limited and their positions can reverse in different policy domains” (Chan 2014: 23, 203). Thus, he can argue that since citizens who endorse different comprehensive doctrines can benefit from the promotion of many different kinds of goods and values, the active promotion of Confucian values by the state does not compromise the great value of civility by treating citizens unfairly.

In response, I agree that a moderate perfectionist state does not necessarily treat its citizens unfairly, since it may promote a wide range of values that are *not* necessarily associated with any particular comprehensive doctrine.²² However, there are limits as to what kinds of values a moderate perfectionist state may promote. In my view, a moderate perfectionist state should not actively promote those values that are closely associated with controversial doctrines, such as Confucianism. To see this, let us consider whether the state may actively promote Christian values. I would say that it should not do so and the chief reason is that by actively promoting such values, the state will almost certainly offend citizens who do not endorse Christianity. These citizens can reasonably argue that the promotion of Christian values results in the following dilemma. On the one hand, if the state actively promotes only Christian values, then it is being unfair to citizens who do not endorse Christianity, such as atheists. On the other hand, if the state actively promotes many different kinds of values including Christian values, Muslim values, Buddhist values, Taoist values, and Confucian values at different periods of time or in different policy domains, then, rather than making all citizens satisfied, the state will almost certainly offend them altogether. Moreover, it would be perfectly reasonable for any citizen to complain that in that situation, the state shows a terrible lack of principle, which is worse than remaining apathetic toward different religious and cultural doctrines.

Some might argue that they do not find even-handed promotion of different religious and cultural values offensive. To this I have two replies. First, the present problem is

²² For an argument for this view, see Mang 2013: 304–308.

not simply whether or not such promotion offends *them*. The problem, rather, is that it will most likely offend many people. Second, there may be two ways to articulate and interpret different religious and cultural values. On the one hand, these values may be interpreted in a very loose manner, so, for example, it may be suggested that filial piety is merely about mutual respect between family members and the value of intimate human relationships. Likewise, it can be argued that Christian values need not rely on faith in the Christian God; they are simply about the value of love and care for humans. As such, these religious and cultural values lack any strong character they are supposed to possess. That is, these values are not intelligibly religious and cultural values. They may be perfectionist values worth promoting, but conceptually, there would not be any genuine even-handed promotion of different religious and cultural values by just promoting these loosely articulated perfectionist values.

On the other hand, different religious and cultural values may be articulated in a somewhat substantial way in light of their corresponding religious doctrines and cultural practices. For example, it would be very reasonable for any Christian to claim that Christian values rely on faith in the Christian God. Some Confucians would argue that filial piety requires people to be obedient to their parents' wishes and demands in many situations. So construed, these religious and cultural values are highly controversial. It is hard to see how any kind of even-handed promotion of these values can avoid being offensive to some people, such as atheists and skeptics about Confucian values, who are subject to it. In fact, it would seem perfectly reasonable for any person who is subject to such promotion to complain that the state should choose to spend its resources in other ways, such as providing better health care and education to citizens. For all of the above reasons, I do not think that the state can actively promote Confucian values without violating the liberal accommodation condition.²³

In summary, I have argued that a Confucian political philosophy is a recognizably Confucian one as long as it seeks to show how Confucianism can make positive contributions to political and social development. Chan's Confucian perfectionism has obvious Confucian characteristics as it proposes how Confucianism can remedy certain inadequacies in a liberal democracy and the related political culture. However, contrary to Chan and most Confucian philosophers, I think that the active promotion of Confucianism or Confucian values violates the liberal accommodation condition. Some might think that in the end, Chan's theory does not possess a strong Confucian character. This may be true; it depends on what precisely is meant by "a strong Confucian character." Nevertheless, it is one thing to say that his theory does not have a strong Confucian character, and another to say it simply lacks a recognizable Confucian character.

²³ One might argue here that the state can promote Christian values and Muslim values by such policies as offering tax breaks to married couples, while also promoting the Confucian value of filial piety by providing tax breaks to those who care for their parents. It seems that the state can promote different religious and cultural values without offending different groups of people. To this, my response is the following. It is not clear that the state can *actively* promote Christian values and Muslim values by just providing tax breaks to married couples. Likewise, it is unclear that the state can actively promote the Confucian value of filial piety by just providing tax breaks to those who care for their parents. These policies (suppose that they are justified) can be justified by the fact that many citizens (not just a few of them) consider marriage and elderly care to be extremely important, and there seem to be nonreligious and non-Confucian reasons, such as the great importance of social harmony, for making these policies. It would be implausible to claim that such policies can contribute to the active and even-handed promotion of those religious and cultural values.

5 The Wide View of Moderate Perfectionism

Although moderate perfectionism is incompatible with the active promotion of Confucianism by the state, I shall show that citizens may appeal to Confucianism, as a fully comprehensive doctrine, in political justification given that certain conditions are met. In the following, I first discuss Rawls's idea of "the wide view of public political culture." On the basis of this idea, I distinguish between two views of moderate perfectionism, namely, the narrow view and the wide view. I endorse the wide view. This view enables Confucianism as a fully comprehensive doctrine to shed light on a wide range of social and political issues in a liberal society.

5.1 Rawls's Wide View of Public Political Culture

Rawls has proposed what he calls "the wide view of public political culture." According to this view, citizens may appeal to comprehensive doctrines in public political discussion given that their positions are already supported by sufficient public reasons. He writes:

[R]easonable comprehensive doctrines, religious or nonreligious, may be introduced in public political discussion at any time, provided that in due course proper political reasons—and not reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines—are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support. This injunction to present proper political reasons I refer to as the *proviso*. (Rawls 2005: 462)

It is worth noting that the wide view of public political culture gives comprehensive doctrines only a secondary role in political justification. That is, if a certain view lacks sufficient public reasons to support, citizens cannot claim that it can be justified by their comprehensive doctrines. Thus, comprehensive doctrines do not have independent justificatory force in political justification; only public reasons have independent justificatory force in political justification.

Let me explain briefly Rawls's two main reasons for adopting the wide view of public political culture. The first reason is that it can strengthen civic friendship. For Rawls, by declaring our own comprehensive doctrine, we show "how, from our own doctrines, we can and do endorse a reasonable public political conceptions of justice with its principles and ideals." Thus, "citizens who hold different doctrines are reassured, and this strengthens the ties of civic friendship" (Rawls 2005: 465). The second reason for adopting the wide view is that it strengthens the ideal of public reason. As Rawls says, "We argue from what we believe, or conjecture, are other people's basic doctrines" and try to show them that "they can still endorse a reasonable political conception that can provide a basis for public reasons" (Rawls 2005: 465–466). Thus, the ideal of public reason is strengthened.

Rawls has not mentioned anything like "the narrow view of public political culture." However, it is reasonable to think that there is such a view, according to which citizens are not allowed to invoke any comprehensive doctrine at any time of political justification. Rawls's wide view of public political culture implies his denial of such a narrow view.

5.2 Two Views of Moderate Perfectionism

Similarly, there may be the narrow view of moderate perfectionism and the wide view of moderate perfectionism. These two views can be presented as follows:

- (a) *The narrow view of moderate perfectionism:* In political justification, citizens may appeal to perfectionist reasons whose validity does not rely on the truth of any particular comprehensive doctrine.²⁴ However, citizens are not permitted to appeal to any particular comprehensive doctrine at any time of political justification.
- (b) *The wide view of moderate perfectionism:* In political justification, citizens may appeal to perfectionist reasons whose validity does not rely on the truth of any particular comprehensive doctrine. In addition, citizens may appeal to any reasonable and fully comprehensive doctrine to support their positions in political justification, given that their positions are already supported by sufficient reasons whose validity does not rely on the truth of any particular comprehensive doctrine.

In stressing the point that citizens should appeal to shared reasons in political justification (Chan 2014: 23, 203–204), Chan appears to have adopted the narrow view of moderate perfectionism. However, he may consider the wide view of moderate perfectionism, as it can also preserve civility. According to this view, citizens can appeal to comprehensive doctrines such as Confucianism only when their positions are supported by sufficient reasons whose validity does not rely on any particular doctrine. Therefore, citizens should do their best to justify their positions in terms of reasons that are freestanding from any particular doctrine.

Let me contrast briefly Rawls's wide view of public political culture with the wide view of moderate perfectionism that I am espousing. First, while Rawls's wide view is associated to liberal neutrality, the wide view of moderate perfectionism is not. The wide view of moderate perfectionism allows citizens to justify their views *at any time* in terms of perfectionist reasons that are freestanding from any particular doctrine. When and only when citizens have justified their views in terms of reasons that are freestanding from any particular doctrine can they further explain their views and their perfectionist reasons by appealing to their doctrines. Second, for Rawls, the wide view of public political culture is important, as it can strengthen the ideal of public reason and enhance the ties of civic friendship. In contrast, the wide view of moderate perfectionism has certain different merits. One important merit, as I shall explain, is that it enables citizens to consider the positive contributions of comprehensive doctrines such as Confucianism to policy making and legislation.

5.3 Confucianism and the Wide View of Moderate Perfectionism

To explain the merits of the wide view of moderate perfectionism, it may be helpful to consider the following two cases in which Confucianism is involved.

²⁴ By "comprehensive doctrine," I mean fully comprehensive doctrine in Rawls's sense (Rawls 2005: 13). I shall not repeat this point.

- (a) *Humanity-based moral education*: Humanity-based moral education aims to cultivate a wide variety of human excellence including practical wisdom, courage, compassion, and a sense of responsibility. Citizen-based civic education has a narrower focus, as it aims to educate citizens to be fair-minded and responsible social members.

For Confucian scholars, different kinds of human excellence are not only valuable in their own right, but also extremely important for good politics and social well-being. This is exactly one of Chan's main reasons for favoring humanity-based moral education over citizen-based civic education (Chan 2014: 94–100). Notice that humanity-based moral education need not be the Confucian model of education. John Dewey and Wilhelm von Humboldt probably would not endorse the entire doctrine of Confucianism, but from their works, they would probably share Chan's view of the great importance of humanity-based moral education for politics and social well-being (Dewey 1916; von Humboldt 1994, esp. ch. 6). In this light, the importance of humanity-based moral education can probably be justified in terms of reasons that are freestanding from Confucianism. Suppose that a certain humanity-based education policy has been justified by perfectionist reasons and that its validity does not rely on any particular doctrine. According to the wide view of moderate perfectionism, any citizen may further illustrate the value of the education policy in public political discussion by appealing to Confucianism as a fully comprehensive doctrine. Meanwhile, other citizens are encouraged to consider how Confucianism may offer additional insight into the education policy. However, by adopting the narrow view of moderate perfectionism, citizens will be unduly limited because they are not allowed to appeal to Confucianism or any other comprehensive doctrine that may offer additional insight into the said policy.

Let us consider another case in which Confucianism is involved in policy making:

- (b) *State promotion of filial piety*: Confucian scholars generally consider filial piety as an important human virtue. Some of them believe that the state should promote a wide range of Confucian values including filial piety.

As I have argued earlier, it is difficult to justify the value of filial piety by reasons that are freestanding from Confucianism; thus, the state should not seek to promote filial piety. The wide view of moderate perfectionism would not allow citizens to appeal to Confucianism to support the state promotion of filial piety insofar as filial piety cannot be justified in terms of reasons that are freestanding from Confucianism. The same can be said for many other Confucian values such as benevolence (*ren*) and righteousness (*yi*).

Yet, the wide view of moderate perfectionism is open to the possibility that filial piety and any other Confucian value can be justified in those terms that do not require the endorsement of the entire doctrine (or large part) of Confucianism. If citizens can justify a Confucian value in such a way, then its active promotion by the state would be justified supposing other factors are constant. Even if a Confucian value cannot be justified by reasons that are freestanding from Confucianism, allowing citizens to appeal to Confucianism in political justification in some cases would give them the opportunity to appreciate the merits of Confucianism. For example, Confucianism may

offer insight into how we can better understand familial relationship and at the same time, citizens can consider the potential contributions of Confucianism to public policy making, such as public policies that concern family matters.

A point of clarification should be made here. The wide view of moderate perfectionism not only allows citizens to appeal to Confucianism, but also other reasonable comprehensive doctrines insofar as their positions are supported by sufficient reasons that are freestanding from any particular doctrine. Some Confucian scholars may complain that the wide view of moderate perfectionism does not favor Confucianism over other doctrines and that it is regrettable. However, I would argue that in a liberal and pluralistic society, the state will likely offend many citizens who do not endorse Confucianism if it favors Confucianism over other doctrines. In light of civility and mutual respect, the state has a strong reason to remain impartial, as Confucianism is a highly controversial doctrine. In addition, it would seem very implausible to claim that only Confucianism deserves to be understood in political justification and considered for its possible contributions to policy making. It would be much more reasonable to think that many other comprehensive doctrines such as Marxism, Christianity, and utilitarianism can also contribute to our understanding of politics, morality, and the good life.²⁵

The wide view makes such contributions possible while at the same time preserving civility. But it should now be clear that this view does not support the active promotion of Confucian values. As I have argued, if the liberal accommodation condition should be met, then there should not be any active promotion of Confucian values. This view seems unacceptable to most Confucian perfectionists, but I believe that we should not expect *too much* from Confucianism for the improvement of liberal societies.²⁶

6 Conclusion

Insofar as a Confucian theory can make positive contributions to liberal politics and social policy, it must satisfy the liberal accommodation condition and the intelligibility condition. By and large, Chan's Confucian perfectionism is able to satisfy the above two conditions. However, contrary to Chan and most other Confucian scholars, I argued that the active promotion of Confucianism or Confucian values by the state would violate the liberal accommodation condition. Thus I proposed the wide view of moderate perfectionism, which enables Confucianism, as a fully comprehensive doctrine, to inform and shed light on public policy making and legislation without promoting Confucianism or Confucian values actively.

If the main arguments in this article are convincing, it makes at least three original contributions:

First, it makes clear that Confucian philosophers should satisfy the liberal accommodation condition and the intelligibility condition when justifying that their theory

²⁵ Jeremy Waldron has argued for the valuable contributions of religious doctrines to our understanding of moral and political concepts in public political deliberation (Waldron 1993: 817–848).

²⁶ The wide view *per se* does not seek to satisfy both the liberal accommodation condition and the intelligibility condition. Some Confucian philosophers might complain that the wide view does not really try to satisfy the two conditions, but I should note that the wide view *per se* is not a Confucian political theory.

can improve the politics and social development in a liberal society. Yet, it is difficult to meet these two conditions as they are often in tension with one another.

Second, my article proposes a new approach to the long-standing question of how Confucianism can make positive contributions to liberal politics and social policy. Through the wide view of moderate perfectionism, Confucianism can shed light on a broad range of social and political issues in public political discussion without compromising the value of civility.

Third, the wide view of moderate perfectionism makes an original contribution to contemporary political philosophy. The wide view is an unorthodox one in contemporary political philosophy given that most political philosophers either do not consider perfectionist reasons to have independent justificatory force in public political discussion²⁷ or maintain that it is simply unproblematic for citizens and officials to appeal to perfectionist comprehensive doctrines in policy making and legislation.²⁸ By contrast, I argue that, citizens and officials should not seek to promote any comprehensive doctrine in politics; however, I propose that citizens should be allowed to appeal to comprehensive doctrines to support their positions provided that their positions are already supported by sufficient perfectionist reasons and other reasons that are freestanding from any fully comprehensive doctrine. Thus, the wide view presents a novel and practical way as to how comprehensive doctrines may enrich public deliberation and social and political culture in contemporary liberal societies.

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²⁷ See, in particular, Rawls 2005.

²⁸ For an example, see Raz 1986, chs. 5–6, 14–15.

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