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Early Confucian Concept of Yi (议) and Deliberative Democracy

Sor-hoon Tan¹

Abstract

Contributors to the debates about the compatibility of Confucianism and democracy and its implications for China's democratization often adopt definitions of democracy that theories of deliberative democracy are critical of. Attention to deliberative democracy is timely given its importance in democratic discourses and recent experiments in "deliberative" or "consultative" democracy in China. Would Confucian understanding of political deliberation help or hinder deliberative democracy? This essay compares the concept of yi in the early Confucian texts with a contemporary concept of democratic deliberation. The differences between the concept of yi in early Confucian texts and the concept of democratic deliberation show that the presence of deliberation, even when they meet stringent norms, does not guarantee that the politics would be democratic. Rather, the political environment and processes must be democratized for deliberation to be democratic. This comparative study considers how the similarities between two concepts, and other aspects of Confucian philosophy might be deployed to close the gap between early Confucian view of ideal government and deliberative democracy. At the same time, it does not simply embrace all aspects of the chosen democratic theory, but argues that Confucian deliberative democracy may differ significantly, for example, in approaching politics from the perspective of a comprehensive ethical theory. In doing so, it offers a different conception of deliberative democracy and shows how the chosen theory is limited by certain assumptions specific to its own

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context and that the understanding of deliberative democracy needs to be expanded and modified to approach genuine universalism.

Keywords

Confucianism, deliberation, Confucian politics

Democratic Aspirations in the Politics of Civilization¹

There has been considerable talk of the need for political reforms to complement economic reforms in official statements from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) top leaders, and a lively discourse about democracy in China in recent years. Claims by CCP and academics with close links to the Party about China’s democratization may be met with skepticism, but they testify to the rising popular demand for democracy, for ordinary Chinese citizens to have more say in political decisions and policies. Surveys conducted in the last two decades on Chinese political values and attitudes show increasing support for democracy: the 2001 World Values Survey in China show 96% agreeing that having a democratic political system is fairly good (75%) or very good (21%), although this is complicated by varying understanding of democracy, and fears and anxieties that undermine democracy. The CCP, seeking to handle the people’s democratic aspirations without ceding its supremacy and undermining China’s economic growth, has embarked on a series of political experiments in the past two decades to increase political participation at different levels of the political process, including elections at village and township levels. There is strong support among the population for the CCP’s leadership in developing democracy in China. Despite the belief prevalent among outside observers that political reforms have stagnated, a majority of the Chinese population (67%) are fairly satisfied (55%) or very satisfied (12%) with “the way democracy works” in China.²

While some Chinese, such as the signatories to *Charter 08*, aspire to the liberal democracies of the West, they are probably outnumbered by those who believe that China’s democratization should be on its own terms, with characteristically “Chinese” institutions, and if not completely new inventions, these must be compatible with or even rooted in the distinctive characteristics of Chinese culture. Nationalism, with different strands, has come to dominate both popular and intellectual Chinese discourses over the last two decades. Cultural nationalists often look to traditional Chinese culture, especially Confucianism, for inspiration when charting China’s future. Politically, they are often inclined towards neo-authoritarian thinking, due to Confucianism’s historical association with autocracy, which probably also

tempted the CCP to appropriate the Confucian tradition for its own political agenda.³ Others are critical of liberal democracy for its failings, especially in the United States of America, and believe that China has traditions that offer superior alternatives. Daniel A. Bell proposed a “Confucian” institutional alternative to liberal democracy, a bicameral legislature with a meritocratically selected upper house of “virtue and talent” and a democratically elected lower house.⁴ He and Jiang Qing also presented a “Confucian Constitution” with a tripartite government based on three sources of political legitimacy as an alternative to the duo of authoritarianism and democracy.⁵

Whatever the historical associations because of its adoption as state orthodoxy by various imperial regimes, Confucianism as a philosophy is not inherently anti-liberal or anti-democratic, and philosophical attempts to reconcile Confucianism with democracy in some form goes back more than a century. Against the May Fourth attacks on Confucianism, blaming it for China’s backwardness and its failure to develop science and democracy, modern neo-Confucians such as Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan offered creative transformations of Confucianism to reconcile it with modernity, in particular with science and democracy.⁶ William de Bary maintained that there was a “liberal tradition” in China.⁷ According to Tu Wei-ming, liberal democracy provides the best way to realize Confucian ethical pursuits.⁸ Sor-hoon Tan reconstructs a Deweyan form of Confucian democracy that resists individualism of autonomous selves often associated with liberalism in favor of Dewey’s social liberal conception of democracy as the idea of community without submerging individuality in holistic collectivism.⁹ Sungmoon Kim argues persuasively against the various forms of Confucian meritocracy offered either as constraints on or opposition to democracy, in favor of a form of pluralistic Confucian democracy with greater emphasis on individual political autonomy and more faith in democratic participation.¹⁰

Contributors to this lively discourse often adopt definitions of democracy that theories of deliberative democracy are critical of. Attention to deliberative democracy is timely given its importance in democratic discourses and recent experiments in “deliberative” or “consultative” democracy in China. Baogang He and Mark Warren’s study shows that deliberative politics in China, combining non-inclusive power and persuasion-based influence, is authoritarian rather than democratic.¹¹ One question is whether this is due to the continued influence of Confucianism. Would Confucian understanding of political deliberation help or hinder deliberative democracy? This essay seeks to answer these questions by comparing the concept of *yi* in the early Confucian texts with contemporary concepts of democratic deliberation. Confucianism is a very complex tradition of both thought and practice that has evolved over more than two millennia. This study will focus on texts

from the pre-Qin period (before the unification of China in 221 BCE) that, taken together, are widely accepted as the earliest source of Confucian philosophy: the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, the *Xunzi*, and the Confucian Classics—the *Changes*, the *Odes*, the *Documents*, the three *Rites* cannons, and the *Zuo Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals*.¹²

In the context of Andrew March's discussion of comparative political theory, this study does not assume that comparative political theory is most coherent and interesting *only* when it engages in first-order evaluation of the competing ideas, doctrines, and norms from distinct and at least semi-autonomous traditions.¹³ Whether or not it deserves the description of comparative political theory, it is a deliberate intervention in the above-mentioned politics of civilization. Although it aims to determine whether and how Confucianism might support deliberative democracy today, its concern is not primarily rehabilitative. There is no need to render Confucianism less alien to those from other traditions given the already considerable and still growing literature showing similarities between Confucianism and various Western philosophies. It is more interested in contributing to the construction of democratic alternatives to societies with Confucian legacies. Its modest scope does not encompass all the other laudable possibilities of explanatory-interpretative, epistemic, global-democratic, and critical-transformative comparative theorizing mentioned by March.

Deliberation (yi 议) in Early Confucian Texts

In China's current political vocabulary, “*yi* 议” is used in “deliberating in politics,” often coupled with “participating in politics.” The term includes any kind of verbal exchange, from loose talk about politics in various settings to more stringently defined “deliberation” in which reasoning or thinking is employed in collective decision making of official forums. The term appears in early Confucian texts with a range of meanings; some usages have nothing to do with politics or government. In two cases in the *Zuo Commentary*, it means “measuring” or “according to” some kind of distance in descriptions about construction work.¹⁴ An ode celebrating the completion and dedication of a palace describes the daughters born to the occupant as living a carefree life in which the only matters requiring *yi* pertained to food and drink.

It will be theirs neither to do wrong nor to do good.

Only about the spirits and the food will they have to think,

And to cause no sorrow to their parents.¹⁵

The *Ceremonials*, one of the *Rites* canons, records a sacrificial rite requiring *yi* in selecting one of the guests to assist the impersonator of the dead.¹⁶

According to the above usages, *yi* involves some thought or choice. Usually the criteria for choice are ethical or imply some justification. The earliest Chinese dictionary glosses *yi* as “speech that attains the suitable, proper, or right” and the way it is written links it with “appropriateness,” which is one of the virtues central to Confucian ethics.¹⁷ Xunzi makes the ethical standards required of *yi* explicit.

As a matter of general principle, in deliberations it is necessary to establish high standards of correctness, for only then may the validity of an argument be determined. If there are no such high standards of correctness, then truth and falsity cannot be separated and discriminations and disputes cannot be settled.¹⁸

The sense of *yi* as deliberation to reach the right judgment by arguments based on virtue is found in a narrative in the *Zuo Commentary*. Three individuals were contenders for the ownership of a territory after its owner died. The claim of one on historical grounds was disputed by the other two on the basis that, given so much subsequent divisions and transfers of territories, it was well nigh impossible to establish on historical grounds who had the right to rule any of them. Eventually all three voluntarily abandoned their claims because they felt bound by what they came to accept as the correct *yi*, a judgment rendered on the basis of their virtue.¹⁹

The normative connotations of some usages notwithstanding, *yi* in political contexts can mean idle talk, even false and pernicious opinions.

Some indulge long in pleasure and drinking,
And some are miserable, in apprehension of blame;
Some, at home and abroad, pass critical remarks,
And some have everything to do.²⁰

This ode by a soldier complaining about inequity in official assignments implies that, rather than an activity concerned with virtue, *yi* is idle talk at the expense of positive contribution to the state. This also seems to be the meaning of *yi* in *Analects* 16.2. “When the way prevails in the world, the common people do not debate affairs of the state.”²¹ The people’s *yi* about politics may be considered “idle” because they were not responsible for governing. This is a view also implied in the only occurrence of *yi* in the *Mencius*.

No sage kings have appeared since then. Feudal lords do as they please; people with no official position uninhibitedly expressing their views, and the words of Yang Chu and Mo Ti fill the Empire.²²

The *Xunzi* also uses *yi* with negative meanings of false opinions and idle, pernicious talk. *Xunzi* associates such *yi* that fails to be excellent with failures of government.²³ Conversely, deliberating with virtue is crucial to good government.

When its plowmen take pleasure in the fields, when its fighting knights are comfortable with adversity, when its minor officials are devoted to law, when its court exalts ritual principles, when its high-ranking officials harmoniously engage in deliberations—this state is definitely well-governed.²⁴

A ruler who “is fond of discussions and deliberations, is sure to be adept at laying plans.”²⁵ *Yi* is important in judicial contexts, ensuring that laws are “executed without excesses”; without *yi*, “points not explicitly covered are certain to be left unresolved.”²⁶ These passages are reminiscent of descriptions of judicial offices in the *Zhou Rites*, the *Rites* canon listing various bureaucratic functions of the Zhou dynasty. In determining punishments, the minor magistrate deliberated on various factors. Other officials involved in adjudicating litigations, crime, and punishment also deliberated, especially when the application of existing statutes was not clear or straightforward, and therefore discussion was required in a specific case among relevant officials to judge what was right and appropriate, or fitted the statute in question.²⁷

Loosely understood as thought and discussions aimed at evaluation or choice, *yi* could have positive or negative effects in politics and government. From the Confucian perspective, the outcome depends on the motivation and ethical qualities of those deliberating. Confucius refused to deliberate with those who allowed materialistic desires to distract them from the pursuit of the ethical life. “Those scholar-apprentices who, having set their purposes on walking the way, are ashamed of rude clothing and coarse food, are not worth engaging in discussion.”²⁸ Without the appropriate orientation, deliberation becomes cunning thinking resulting in choice devoid of ethical merit. Deliberation with ethical orientation is part of learning to become an exemplary person and part of the understanding of a sage.²⁹ It is therefore important that the object of *yi* itself is ethical. The *Changes*, which originated as a divination manual and is consulted for grasping the way the world changes and how to conduct oneself amid these changes for the best effect, mentions *yi* only once: “the exemplary person/superior person . . . deliberates on virtue and conduct.”³⁰ The *Rites Records* mentions how the exemplary person

“deliberates on the way” to the best of his own ability but does not expect the same of the common people who must be regulated by laws.³¹

Injunctions in the *Rites Records* suggest that only certain people are qualified to deliberate on certain matters, and deliberation is not an activity appropriate for all occasions. It describes Confucius cautioning his audience “not to discuss/deliberate on rites lightly,” probably because serious study and practice are required before one is qualified to do so.³² The text at one point limits deliberation on the rites to “the Son of Heaven,” recalling *Analects* 16.2, “When the way prevails in the world, rites, music, and punitive campaigns are initiated by the Son of Heaven.”³³ *Yi* is not appropriate when one is in mourning. For the heaviest mourning, the mourner responds to others without conversing with them; the next lower level of mourning, the mourner answers verbally without talking more than necessary; another level down, the mourner talks more freely but does not engage in deliberation or discussion; only the lightest forms of mourning for distant relatives allow mourners to engage in deliberation but not to listen to music. According to Zheng Xuan, deliberation here refers to discussions critical of current affairs.³⁴ The meaning of *yi* here may be the negative one of idle talk, which would be inappropriate during mourning. However, the ritual exclusion of deliberation during mourning does not necessarily devalue it. The activity may be inappropriate because the mourner’s grief should preclude his focusing on anything else; engaging in discussions, especially of political matters, is evidence of insufficient grief, not because deliberation is necessarily trivial or frivolous, or inherently bad, but because politics takes one’s mind away from the personal grieving. This ritual abstention from political deliberation was supposed to apply not only to the common people discussing politics, but also to government officials and even the ruler himself engaging in deliberation that is a legitimate part of government.³⁵

The *Rites Record* stipulates that deliberation on official or public matters must not be conducted in private. Han dynasty scholar Zheng Xuan commented that this is to avoid the suspicion of wrongdoing. In Qing dynasty commentator Sun Xidan’s opinion, this is to avoid abuse of power by a few individuals acting in secret for private gain; Sun added that this reasoning applies also to *Analects* 13.14. According to Sun, Confucius dismissed the discussion between Ranyou and the head of the Ji clan as being about “affairs of state” because it was conducted in private.³⁶ This seems to recognize that matters of concern to the people and official duties should be open to public scrutiny, if for no other reason than avoiding secret “private” deals that might benefit a selfish minority against the people’s interests. It is misleading to reify any dualistic opposition between private and public in Chinese thought. The terms *gong* and *si* are often used quite effectively to translate “public”

and “private,” contrasted with each other without sharing the Western philosophical baggage of the public-private divide. *Gong* means both “official” and “public,” while *si* often means “selfish” as well as “private.”³⁷

In the *Documents*, the only use of *yi* occurs in the record of a Zhou King’s exhortation to his officers to learn from the ancients in their deliberation; it also refers to the incompatibility between public office and selfishness.

By your public feeling extinguish all selfish aims, and the people will have confidence in you and be gladly obedient.

Study antiquity in order to enter on your offices. By deliberating on affairs, determine by the help of *such study*, and your arts of government will be free from error.³⁸

The phrase using *yi* in this passage reappears in the *Zuo Commentary*, in a narrative of Shu Xiang admonishing Zi Chan of Zheng for casting tripods with descriptions of crimes and punishments.³⁹ This is considered a departure from the practice of the ancient kings who “deliberated on [all the circumstances], and determined [on the punishment of crimes]” without making “laws of punishment lest it should give rise to a contentious spirit among the people.”⁴⁰ Shu Xiang seemed to think that if laws were clearly specified and made public, litigiousness would undermine good government.

When the people know what the exact laws are, they do not stand in awe of their superiors. They also come to have a contentious spirit, and make their appeal to the express words, hoping peradventure to be successful in their arguments. They can no longer be managed.⁴¹

Shu Xiang did not describe the people’s arguments to protect their own selfish interests in litigations as *yi* and clearly did not consider them capable of *yi* that contributed to good government. Zi Chan, on a different occasion, appears to have a higher opinion of the common people and the kind of *yi* they are capable of. It was suggested to Zi Chan when he was minister of Zheng that village schools be destroyed because someone had wandered into one such school and fell to “discussing about the conduct of government.” Zi Chan replied,

“Why do so? If people retire morning and evening, and pass their judgment on the conduct of government, as good or bad, I will do what they approve of, and I will alter what they condemn; — they are my teachers. On what grounds should we destroy [those schools]?”⁴²

Some might wonder to what extent Zi Chan's accommodating attitude to the people's criticisms of government policies and actions is accepted by Confucians, since he is presented earlier as the object of Confucian criticism.⁴³ The narrative about Zi Chan's defense of the village schools ends with Confucius's judgment of Zi Chan as a benevolent person. The balance of evidence across the range of early texts shows more Confucian approbation than disapproval of Zi Chan.⁴⁴

The above survey of *yi* in the early Confucian texts shows that deliberation loosely understood as discussion and thought aimed at evaluation or choice, even though it need not result in definitive evaluation or actual choice, is an acknowledged activity with varied political impact. Early Confucian ideal incorporates deliberation into the political process by emphasizing its normative requirements and highlighting how failing the ethical demands on deliberation would bring disasters to individuals and states. To meet its normative requirements, deliberation tends to become limited to persons who possess ethical qualities and are entrusted with social or political responsibilities. Deliberation appears to be the legitimate activity only of the ethically accomplished (exemplary persons and sages) or the political elite (rulers, ministers, magistrates).⁴⁵ The only exception is Zi Chan's defense of people discussing the government's performance, which apparently contrasts sharply with the association of the same phenomenon with problematic governance in *Analects* 16.2. One could reconcile them by reading the latter as referring to people discussing affairs of state as a *sign* or the *result* rather than the *cause* of bad government. If there were good government and the people were content, there would be no need for such discussion; this is consistent with a less than ideal government being able to learn from such discussion when it occurs.

The village school narrative notwithstanding, the survey of *yi* in early Confucian texts shows no straight forward endorsement of democratic deliberation. Insofar as there was deliberative politics in the political life depicted in those texts, deliberation was mostly carried out in undemocratic environments with a tendency to exclude the common people. Those concerned with recovering traditional thought and practices might take this as support for authoritarian deliberation in contemporary Chinese politics. Daniel A. Bell argues that elite deliberative institutions have special appeal in East Asia because of Confucian influence, which poses cultural limits to democratic deliberation. However, it is questionable whether contemporary authoritarian deliberation lives up to the Confucian normative requirements; Bell himself acknowledges that East Asian societies face the challenge of combining the benefits of "rule by a talented and public-spirited elite with the democratic virtues of accountability, publicity, and participation."⁴⁶ How different is

early Confucian understanding of *yi* from the concept of deliberation in contemporary democratic theories?

Yi and Contemporary Democratic Deliberation

Many who want rule by the people are dissatisfied with the political system of public offices filled by periodic elections, even while they recognize that direct democracy in which everyone decides on everything is impractical. Some are critical of liberal democracy's over-reliance on the legalistic regime of fundamental rights and principles of justice, at the expense of democratic resolution of moral disagreements.⁴⁷ Theorists of deliberative democracy argue that inclusive public deliberation offers people more meaningful and more frequent participation in matters concerning them; as a decision-making procedure, deliberation is capable of delivering better results than aggregation of preferences through voting, interest groups bargaining, rights litigation, or other alternatives in actual democracies. There is however no consensus on the meaning of "deliberation." The concept stretches from any kind of communication to consensus aiming rational discourse defined by Habermasian ideal communicative situation, just as *yi* in early Confucian texts stretches from mere expression of opinions to arguments and judgments based on virtue.⁴⁸ Both contemporary theories of deliberative democracy and early Confucian texts show concern about normative standards of deliberation and *yi* respectively insofar as these concepts play a role in good government.

In contemporary debates about deliberative democracy, theorists propose various criteria for democratic deliberation, such as reciprocity, publicity, accountability, freedom and equality, reason, aim at consensus, and focus on the common good.⁴⁹ Jane Mansbridge advocates a "deliberative system" that includes not only deliberation by formal and informal representatives, between constituents and representatives in designated public forums and politically oriented organizations, discussions in media and among political activists, but also "everyday talk in formally private spaces about things the public ought to discuss."⁵⁰ Although she is critical of some aspects of normative standards imposed by other theorists, she acknowledges the need for standards of good deliberation that apply to both formal assemblies and more loosely to "everyday talk." The normative standards of what counts as good deliberation in deliberative democracy are determined by conceptions of democratic legitimacy, by considerations of what make democracy a desirable form of government. Without the same commitment to democracy, early Confucianism has different standards for *yi* that are based on its own conception of ideal government. Comparing the two sets of standards will illuminate

the similarities and differences between early Confucian ideal of government and democracy and show us whether it is possible to close the gap between the two, if one wishes to universalize democracy. Given limited space, this comparison will only look at the requirements of democratic deliberation in Gutmann and Thompson's theory.

Beginning with the narrative most accommodating of democratic participation, one might ask why Zi Chan favored giving space to the people to deliberate, debate, or simply pass critical remarks about government conduct. He believed that government could learn about what the people considered good or bad, and adjust their policies and actions accordingly. This assumes that a government that gives people what they want and act in a manner approved by the people is a better government. Although it does not advocate rule by the people, it defies the common supposition that Confucians believe in rule by sages who always know what is best for the people, better than the people themselves; it opens the way to a politics that is more "discursive, educational, oriented to truly public interests, and needful of active citizenship."⁵¹ Without rejecting the ideal of sage-kings, Zi Chan recognized that actual governments suffer from "bounded" rationality, "the fact that our imaginations and calculating abilities are limited and fallible."⁵² This recognition leads to epistemic arguments for deliberative democracy: compared with an individual decision maker or other political decision-making process, public deliberation is more likely to yield, if not exactly the "right answer," then at least the "better answer" to the practical questions of politics, for example, based on an understanding of decision making as a process in which beliefs about the right action or policy are adjusted in the light of evidence provided by the beliefs of others.⁵³

Nor is Zi Chan unusual among the early Chinese in acknowledging that actual governments are not sages and admitting a need to broaden participation, at least through rulers listening to good advice in various deliberative situations. The same sentiments underlie Mencius's delight at the prospect of Yue Zhengzi taking political office in Lu because of the latter's fondness for the good.

If a man is truly drawn to the good, then, within the Four Seas, men will come, thinking nothing of the distance of a thousand *li*, to bring to his notice what is good. On the other hand, if he is not drawn to the good, then men will say of him, "He seems to say 'I know it all.'" The way one says "I know it all" with its accompanying look of complacency will repel men a thousand *li* away.⁵⁴

No matter how experienced, knowledgeable, or well informed those in office, their knowledge alone would not be enough for good government. Knowledge

is distributed throughout the population, and those who would seek and invite other's knowledge out of a "fondness for the good" would govern better than those who believe themselves to be omniscient.

Confucius also emphasized the danger of rulers who do not admit their own epistemic and ethical limitations.

"Is there any one saying that can ruin a state?" Duke Ding asked. "A saying itself cannot have such effect," replied Confucius, "but there is the saying, 'I find little pleasure in ruling, save that no one will take exception to what I say.' If what one has to say is efficacious and no one takes exception, fine indeed. But if what one has to say is not efficacious and no one takes exception, is this not close to a saying ruining a state?"⁵⁵

Rather than the complete obedience by subordinates expected of authoritarian regimes, Xunzi advocated that ministers who "follow the way and not the lord" should oppose and remonstrate against rulers whose inadequacies endanger the state.⁵⁶ These textual resources acknowledging the fallibility of actual governments and the benefits to be gained from encouraging free expression and dissenting views, although usually limited to elite interactions in the early Confucian texts, could be extended, within the context of expanding the relevance of the Confucian tradition to contemporary life, to support public deliberation for better achievement of the common good.

Publicity of Deliberation

To early Confucians, selfishness is a frequent obstacle to good government and its elimination is a normative requirement of *yi*. We see in the *Zuo Commentary* story about the fight over territory, the "correct *yi*" that resolved the matter is based on the virtuous contenders surrendering their selfish interests. The *Documents* acknowledges that popular support for government depends on the latter's riding itself of "selfish aims." Guarding against the selfish motives also seems to be the concern of the *Rites Record's* injunction against discussing official matters in private. The latter resonates with contemporary calls for more transparency in government processes and the principle of publicity in theories of deliberative democracy. Gutmann and Thompson cite Jeremy Bentham, that "publicity is essential to ensure that government promotes the greatest happiness of the greatest number" by acting as "a mechanism to make the self-interest of officials coincide with the general interest."⁵⁷ Combined with the village school narrative, we might argue that this awareness that publicity helps to prevent self-interest defeating general interest gives Confucians a reason to encourage citizens to deliberate publicly about government policy.

Reciprocity, publicity, and accountability are three principles implied by “the disposition to seek mutually justifiable reasons,” which Gutmann and Thompson identify as the core of deliberation.⁵⁸ The village school narrative by itself is inadequate as an argument for public deliberation. Although Zi Chan might implicitly encourage people to debate government conduct so he could learn from them, he did not engage them by offering them reasons for the government conduct they were approving or criticizing. Nor does the ritual injunction against private discussion of official affairs stipulate that officials should offer reasons acceptable to those affected by official policies. Looking beyond passages in which *yi* occurs, we find in the *Documents* a record of an event in which a Shang dynasty ruler Pan Geng apparently offered public justifications for his intended move of the capital to Yin. This decision had significant impact on his subjects and met with some initial resistance. Pan Geng “appealed to all the discontented,” first citing that the old capital was no longer viable.⁵⁹ He went on to give reasons that, although dubious to today’s audience, would carry considerable weight with his audience: the outcome of divination on the matter, and how the move followed a tradition established by earlier rulers. He wanted “to induce a sincere *acquiescence in the measure*.”⁶⁰ He admonished his ministers, “Let none of you dare to suppress the remonstrances of the poorer people.”⁶¹ He called on those who opposed him to “put away [their] *selfish* thoughts.”⁶² This document seems to offer us an example of public deliberation that seeks to be inclusive and offers reasons for a political act that aims to be mutually justifiable.

Reciprocity versus Impartiality

Unfortunately, the “Pan Geng” is rather one-sided, failing to capture the voices and views of his subjects, and at one point lapses into autocratic threats. “If there be bad and unprincipled men, precipitously or carelessly disrespectful *to my orders*, and taking advantage of this brief season to play the part of villains or traitors, I will cut off their noses, or utterly exterminate them.”⁶³ Are these threats part of the justifiable enforcement of a decision implemented after adequate public deliberation or do they point to a lack of mutual respect for differing opinions, and therefore a failure to meet Gutmann and Thompson’s extended principle of reciprocity? Deliberation in a democracy requires civic integrity and civic magnanimity. Civic integrity means that participants must affirm the moral status of their political positions—being consistent in speech, between speech and action, and accepting the broader implications of principles presupposed by one’s moral positions. Civic magnanimity requires participants to acknowledge the moral status of

the positions they oppose. Beyond acknowledgment in speech, participants must be open minded, maintaining the possibility of being convinced of the moral merits of opposing views, and they should practice “economy of moral disagreement” by minimizing rejection of opposing views.⁶⁴

Whether Pan Geng’s moral condemnation of those who continued to oppose him shows a lack of civic magnanimity depends on the nature of his opponents’ opposition. The textual evidence is inconclusive as to whether we have a case of reasonable moral disagreement of the kind that demands mutual respect. It is unclear whether the rejected “selfish thoughts” referred to the kind of reasons based on economic and social status that the principle of reciprocity would exclude or if the rejection demanded that everyone suppressed and disregarded his or her personal projects and partial perspectives and be motivated only by altruism. The mention of including “the poorer people” supports the former reading; but the general tenor of Pan Geng’s condemnation of those who opposed him leans towards the latter reading, which means that his offer of reasons to his people is an example not of reciprocity in democratic deliberation but of the principle of impartiality, that is, a demonstration that the intended action is universally justifiable from the perspective of a comprehensive view.

There is insufficient evidence for thinking that early Confucians believe that policies and political decisions are legitimated by deliberation based on mutually justifiable reasons. It is more likely that their view of political legitimacy is based on a comprehensive view of how human beings should live, and as part of that, how those in government positions should discharge their responsibilities. The criticisms of selfishness were made from an ethics that amounts to a comprehensive doctrine, rather than merely based on selfish reasons not being mutually justifiable. This is incompatible with Gutmann and Thompson’s theory of deliberative democracy. To reconcile early Confucianism with deliberative democracy, we need to defend deliberation as an ideal form of political participation without insisting on fundamental moral disagreement and the kind of mutual respect that views those who oppose us as holding reasonable moral views. I contend that an admission of fallibility is enough for accommodating others’ views to the extent that we believe them to hold those views sincerely as moral views, even though we believe them to be wrong, where accommodation means refraining from coercing them to act against their own beliefs or suppressing their expression of them. Confucianism approaches politics from the perspective of a comprehensive ethical doctrine but it is not a doctrine that demands conversion of all by any means possible. It would reject the claim that a Confucian sage could legitimately coerce others in order to make them into Confucians and therefore live better lives and realize the ideal Confucian polity. It is possible for

Confucians to support deliberative democracy because, in addition to the acknowledgment of fallibility of actual governments discussed above, early Confucian texts also emphasize that one learns to live the Confucian way of life only with voluntary commitment; in other words, “conversion” to its comprehensive doctrine cannot succeed by coercion.

Confucian Accountability and Deliberative Accountability

“In a deliberative forum, each is accountable to all.”⁶⁵ Gutmann and Thompson’s principle of accountability is absent in early Confucian texts. What legitimizes a policy or political decision for Confucians is not the process of officials or citizens justifying it to those bound or affected by it. This does not mean that there is no concept of accountability in early Confucianism. Governments were accountable in that their actions had consequences for their tenure. While the people could not vote their rulers out of power, their love or hatred for a government strengthened or weakened a state. Popular support mattered to rulers even without a democratic political system.

The lord is the boat; his subjects the water. It is the water that sustains the boat, and it is the water that capsizes the boat.⁶⁶

The lack of democratic mechanisms to remove unpopular governments peacefully does mean that only in extreme cases would a regime be toppled and a ruler actually removed from office. In Chinese history, removal of governments often required nothing short of armed rebellions and usually meant death of the deposed ruler.

According to the early Confucian texts, a good government is a government for the people. To avoid being “capsized” by the people, a ruler must employ the talented and virtuous in his government, reward those who uphold ritual and ethical norms, punish those who use their talents in “conduct opposed to what is proper to the occasion,” look after the people, ensure that even the worst off in society have “employment adequate to feed and clothe themselves so that all are included and not even one of them is overlooked.”⁶⁷ Mencius ranked the people as a government’s first priority, ahead of the state’s independence and the ruler; the government of a true king is focused on the people’s welfare and education.⁶⁸ We can infer from this that early Confucians do view governments as being accountable *for* the well-being of the people, but it is questionable whether this also means being accountable *to* the people, given that there is no systematic popular participation in the process by which a ruler or government came to power or left that position. In early Confucian texts, the most common concept of political legitimacy is “the mandate of heaven,” which implies that a ruler is accountable *to* heaven.

The *Mencius* brings the people into the process of legitimate succession to the throne. In explaining what he meant when he said that heaven, and not Yao, gave Shun the empire, Mencius cited the *Documents*, “Heaven sees with the eyes of its people. Heaven hears with the ears of its people.”⁶⁹ This suggests the possibility that being accountable to heaven may mean the same thing as being accountable to the people.⁷⁰ However, the people do not seem to be any more articulate than heaven, which “does not speak but reveals itself through its acts and deeds.” The people do not give *voice* to heaven; they do not even seem to have their own voice but, like heaven, only reveal their will through their acts and deeds. “When he was put in charge of affairs, they were kept in order and the people were content. This showed that the people accepted him.” If being accountable to someone in deliberation means giving reasons that the person could accept, and responding to that person’s criticisms with mutual respect, then the early Confucian texts do not give us deliberative accountability.

The concept of accountability implicit in early Confucian political thought is not a matter of who is obligated to give reasons and to whom reasons should be given. Instead it has to do with discharging one’s responsibilities according to one’s position and living up to the ethical norms that govern the responsibilities of that position. One’s position is defined *viz-a-viz* others—government and the governed—one’s failure or success in discharging one’s responsibilities towards them affects their well-being and they respond to one’s actions. Speech has no primary importance in this interaction. Though different from deliberative accountability, this early Confucian concept of accountability based on relational positions is not irrelevant to *yi*. It defines what it means to deliberate with accountability, or responsibly, in the early Confucian context. Mencius criticized the “uninhibited *yi*” of those “with no official positions,” only the “son of heaven” can legitimately deliberate about rituals, and the people, probably because they have no official positions, do not deliberate about affairs of the state when “the way prevails in the world.” *Yi* is legitimate when it corresponds to the responsibilities of one’s position.

Linking accountability and deliberative legitimacy to positions tends to be socially conservative and elitist if one takes those positions as given by prevailing social structure. Such tendencies lead to obfuscation between Confucian rule by virtue and elite rule, unless one takes care to distinguish between rightful position and *de facto* position. The “son of heaven” who should deliberate on rites refers not to just any actual ruler but someone who has the “mandate of heaven,” that is a legitimate ruler who occupies the throne because of his virtue. Those who hold offices without the requisite virtues do so under false pretense.⁷¹ To resist anti-democratic reading of Confucianism, it is necessary to separate clearly the belief that the virtuous

should be appointed to political office or occupy other superior positions, to which Confucians are philosophically committed to, and the unjustified assumption that those occupying official or superior positions, which might not have been acquired through ethical means, are therefore superior in virtue or talent. Accountability in deliberation from the early Confucian perspective means that one's deliberation should be limited to the responsibilities of one's rightful position.

Confucius said, "Do not plan the policies of an office you do not hold."⁷² Zeng Zi interpreted this as "The thoughts of exemplary persons do not wander beyond their position." Ames and Rosemont comment on this, "Words are cheap—if you have the position, you have the responsibility."⁷³ It could be justifiable to tie accountability to positions even when the occupants may not have the virtue to go with it. One can contextualize Confucius' admonition with the dangers of abuse when power is exercised by those without the authority attached to specific offices—this is an endemic problem in Chinese history from the influence over the emperors of their wives, concubines, and relatives to that of eunuchs; and officials at various levels failed at their jobs not only from incompetence, but sometimes also from acting on the advice or under the influence of close associates. When someone holds an official position, he or she is responsible for his or her actions in office, and these actions should be visible to others who could then hold them accountable. If performance fails to meet the relevant standards, one way of holding the person accountable is to remove them from office. Whereas one who wields influence behind the scenes cannot be held accountable in this way even if others come to know their actions. The risk of abuse of power by usurpers, people who determine the course of politics without being authorized to do so, was taken so seriously by Confucius that he emphasized the need for the exemplary person to set an example of not resorting to acting without official authority, even if such a person could do a better job than the actual office holder.

Can the constraints of early Confucian concept of accountability on deliberation be rendered more democratic? Requiring that people deliberate within the responsibilities of their positions, even when these are held legitimately, has anti-democratic implications if the relevant positions include only those occupied by a minority, for example, government positions. For the early Confucian concept of accountability to be compatible with democratic deliberation, it must be possible for everyone legitimately to occupy a position with responsibility for political matters requiring deliberation. An obvious position is that of a citizen; every member of a polity is a citizen and no other qualification (virtue or talent) is required for participation in deliberation. The risk of *yi* among citizens being idle and including false or pernicious

views will always be present, but it does not justify excluding those whom one believes to be guilty of such negative *yi*. Rather, it means that Confucians must approach *yi* as a learning process, where one is open to learning from others, but also takes on the responsibility of “teaching” others through deliberation by offering them alternatives we believe to be better and persuading them to change their views and actions. This view of *yi* as a learning process moves Confucians closer to deliberative accountability of participants offering one another mutually justifiable reasons.

While early Confucian texts do not discuss citizenship, contemporary scholars have argued for conceptions of Confucian citizenship.⁷⁴ Some may find the idea of citizenship too abstract and the relationship it invokes too impersonal for the Confucian ethical framework. Another approach that gives more weight to Confucian preference for particularistic relationships is to consider that every person find themselves in relationships—family, neighbors, colleagues at work, and various kinds of organizations—in which arise “matters that the public ought to discuss.”⁷⁵ Involvement in these relationships means occupying positions with responsibility for political matters on which one should deliberate with others with similar responsibility in those particular relationships. This is consistent with the Confucian view that personal cultivation that is expected of every person goes hand in hand with participation in community.⁷⁶ One’s ethical personality grows with one’s contribution to others’ personal cultivation and thereby to the flourishing of community. Such contribution includes political participation as Confucians subsumed political life under their broad understanding of ethical life.

For Confucians, political order involves more than the official government: it is about everyone doing what is right and proper in whatever social contexts one finds oneself, beginning from the most intimate and probably universal social group, the family.⁷⁷ If a Confucian cannot or chooses not to serve in government, she could still contribute to political order by doing what is right and proper in her own situations, from family and personal relations, to workplace, to local community, to today’s national or transnational non-governmental organizations; this is consistent with a participatory conception of democracy that locates participation not only in national electoral politics but in local contexts where people deliberate on matters with public import. In every context where there is something the public ought to discuss, anyone who has something to contribute to the topic for discussion occupies a position with the responsibility of deliberation, for which she is accountable. Although she may not be *directly* accountable to everyone who would be affected by the result of the discussion, she is accountable for the result, whether or not it contributes to the flourishing of the community and its members, and thereby she is *indirectly* accountable to the community, and to

all members who are affected by the result of deliberation. This *indirect* accountability can be transformed into direct deliberative accountability if Confucians recognize that the impact of the result of any deliberation on others is not self evident, and admission of fallibility of one's own assessment means opening the evaluation of the deliberative result to others, especially those who are affected by the result; such engagement would require that one offers reasons for one's views that others can accept.⁷⁸

Conclusion

There are many theories of deliberative democracy, with different normative constraints on deliberation, and space limit allows exploration of only some aspects of deliberation in one such theory in a comparison with the concept of *yi* in early Confucian texts that constitute an authoritative source of Confucian ideas. This limited comparison shows that trying to rehabilitate early Confucianism would be procrustean if that means showing that there is already some form of deliberative democracy in the early Confucian texts. The differences between the concept of *yi* in early Confucian texts and the concept of democratic deliberation show that the presence of deliberation, even when they meet stringent norms, does not guarantee that the politics would be democratic. Rather, the political environment and processes must be democratized for deliberation to be democratic.

This comparative study is critical of the elitist and antidemocratic tendencies in the early Confucian texts and tries to reconstruct Confucianism by leveraging on ideas in those texts that are friendlier to democracy. It is engaged political theorizing that considers how the similarities between two concepts, and other aspects of Confucian philosophy might be deployed to close the gap between early Confucian view of ideal government and deliberative democracy. At the same time, it does not simply embrace all aspects of the chosen democratic theory, but argues that Confucian deliberative democracy may differ significantly, for example, in approaching politics from the perspective of a comprehensive ethical theory. In doing so, it offers a different conception of deliberative democracy and shows how the chosen theory is limited by certain assumptions specific to its own context and that the understanding of deliberative democracy needs to be expanded and modified to approach genuine universalism.

Notes

1. I borrow the phrase, "politics of civilization" from Yongnian Zheng, *Will China be Democratic?* (Singapore: Eastern University Press, 2004), chapter 3.

2. Wang, Zhengxu, "Public Support for Democracy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 16, no. 53 (2007): 561–79.
3. Baogang He and Guo Yingjie, *Nationalism, National Identity, and Democratization in China* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 2000), 28–30.
4. Daniel A. Bell, *Beyond Liberal Democracy* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 2006), chapter 4; cf. criticisms by Fred Dallmayr, "Exiting Liberal Democracy: Bell and Confucian Thought," Chenyang Li, "Where does Confucian Virtuous Leadership Stand?" and Sor-hoon Tan, "Beyond Elitism: A Community Ideal for a Modern East Asia," *Philosophy East and West* 59, no. 4 (2009): 523–53.
5. Jiang Qing and Daniel A. Bell, "A Confucian Constitution for China," *New York Times*, July 10, 2012.
6. These works unfortunately have not been translated into English. Mou's views about Confucianism and democracy are discussed in Stephen Angle, *Contemporary Confucian Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), especially chapter 2; David Elstein, "Mou Zongsan's New Confucian Democracy," *Contemporary Political Theory* 11, no. 2 (2012): 192–210.
7. William Theodore de Bary, *The Liberal Tradition in China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1983).
8. Tu Wei-ming. *Confucianism in Historical Perspective* (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1989), 3.
9. Sor-hoon Tan, *Confucian Democracy: A Deweyan Reconstruction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).
10. Sungmoon Kim, "To Become a Confucian Democratic Citizen: Against Meritocratic Elitism," *British Journal of Political Science* (October 2012): 1–21; "A Pluralist Reconstruction of Confucian Democracy," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 11, no. 3 (2012): 316–36.
11. Baogang He and Mark E. Warren, "Authoritarian Deliberation: The Deliberative Turn in Chinese Political Development," *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 2 (2011): 269–89. For description of experiments with deliberative polls, see Baogang He, *Deliberative Democracy: Theory, Method and Practice* (Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2008).
12. The first three texts are associated with the three key thinkers of the tradition; for the canonical status of the Classics, see Michael Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).
13. Andrew March, "What Is Comparative Political Theory?," *Review of Politics* 71 (2009): 531–65.
14. James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics* (Hong Kong, 1960), 5: 309–10, 739–41.
15. *Chinese Classics*, 4: 307.
16. Li Xueqin, ed., *Thirteen Classics with Commentaries and Annotations* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1999), 5: 935.
17. Xu Shen (Han Dynasty), *Explaining and Analyzing Written Characters*, 2nd ed., with annotations (Shanghai: Guji, 1988), 92.
18. *Xunzi* 18.9. Citations give book and section numbers in John Knoblock, trans.,

- Xunzi: A Complete Translation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988, 1990, 1994).
19. *Chinese Classics*, 5: 590.
 20. *Chinese Classics*, 4: 362.
 21. Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., trans., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books), 1998.
 22. *Mencius* 3B9. D. C. Lau (trans.), *Mencius* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).
 23. *Xunzi* 5.2; 8.10; 18.5c.
 24. *Xunzi* 10.12; see also 11.5; 11.9a.
 25. *Xunzi* 25.51.
 26. *Xunzi* 9.2.
 27. *Thirteen Classics*, 4: 915–17, 928, 930, 933, 934.
 28. *Analects* 4.9.
 29. *Xunzi* 23.6b; 27.88
 30. *Thirteen Classics*, 1: 240.
 31. *Thirteen Classics*, 6: 1472. Of the three *Rites* cannon, this text is most self-consciously “Confucian” in its discussions of meanings and justifications for various ritual forms and edifying stories of Confucius and his disciples.
 32. *Thirteen Classics*, 6: 764.
 33. *Thirteen Classics*, 6: 1457.
 34. *Thirteen Classics*, 6: 1365.
 35. *Mencius* 3A2. This demanding mourning practice was controversial even during the time of Confucius (*Analects* 17.21).
 36. *Thirteen Classics*, 6: 116.
 37. Huang Junjie and Jiang Yihua, eds., *New Explorations of Public and Private Spheres: Comparison of East Asian and Western View Points* (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2005), 117–35, 183–201.
 38. *Chinese Classics*, 3: 531.
 39. Cf. *Chinese Classics*, 5: 732. Confucius was reported to condemn the casting of similar tripods in the state of Jin.
 40. This is consistent with *Analects* 2.3, often cited as evidence of Confucian reservations about over-reliance on laws in governing.
 41. *Chinese Classics*, 5: 609.
 42. *Chinese Classics*, 5: 565–66.
 43. *Chinese Classics*, 5: 566, 609.
 44. *Chinese Classics*, 5: 566; *Analects* 5.16; 14.9; cf. *Mencius* 4B2.
 45. Cf. contemporary criticisms against elitist tendencies in deliberation: Lynn M. Sanders, “Against Deliberation,” *Political Theory* 25, no. 3 (1997): 347–76; Iris Marion Young, “Difference as Resource for Democratic Communication,” 383–406, in James Bohman and William Rehg, eds., *Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997).
 46. Daniel A. Bell, “Democratic Deliberation: The Problem of Implementation,” 70–87, in Stephen Macedo, ed., *Deliberative Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 78.
 47. Cass Sunstein, “Preferences and Politics,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 20, no.

- 1 (Winter 1991): 3–34; Seyla Benhabib, “Deliberative Rationality and Models of Democratic Legitimacy,” *Constellations* 1, no. 1 (1994): 26–52; Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Lawrence R. Jacobs, Fay Lomax Cook, and Michael X. Delli Carpini, *Talking Together: Public Deliberation and Political Participation in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 5–8.
48. André Bächtiger, Simon Niemeyer, Michael Neblo, Marco R. Steenbergen, and Jürg Steiner, “Disentangling Diversity in Deliberative Democracy,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 18, no. 1 (2010): 32–63, 33.
 49. Gutmann and Thompson, chapters 2 to 4; Joshua Cohen, “Deliberation and Political Legitimacy,” 17–34, in *The Good Polity*, ed. A. Hamlin and P. Petit (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Jon Elster, ed., *Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 8.
 50. Jane Mansbridge, “Everyday Talk in the Deliberative System,” 211–39, in Macedo, *Deliberative Politics*, 211.
 51. John S. Dryzek, *Discussive Democracy: Politics, Policy, and Political Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 13.
 52. James Fearon, “Deliberation as Discussion,” 44–68, in Elster, *Deliberative Democracy*, 49; Herbert Simon, *Models of Bounded Rationality* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983).
 53. Joshua Cohen, “An Epistemic Conception of Democracy,” *Ethics* 97, no. 1 (1986): 26–38, 34; James Bohman, “Participating in Enlightenment: Cognitivist Interpretation of Democracy,” 264–89, in *Knowledge and Politics*, ed. Marcelo Dascal and Ora Gruengard (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989); Christopher McMahon, *Collective Rationality and Collective Reasoning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 95–103. Epistemic arguments may defend different models of democratic deliberation, e.g., “epistemic proceduralism” in David Estlund, “Beyond Fairness and Deliberation: the Epistemic Dimension of Democratic Authority,” 173–204, in Bohman and William Rehg, *Deliberative Democracy*; David Estlund, *Democratic Authority: A Philosophical Framework* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).
 54. *Mencius* 6B13.
 55. *Analects* 13.15.
 56. *Xunzi* 13.2.
 57. Gutmann and Thompson, 95, 98. They combine the utilitarian argument for publicity with a Kantian argument for publicity as “a test that any policy must pass in order to be just” (99).
 58. Gutmann and Thompson, 52.
 59. *Chinese Classics*, 3: 222.
 60. *Chinese Classics*, 3: 233.
 61. *Chinese Classics*, 3: 224.
 62. *Chinese Classics*, 3: 225, 227, 235, 236, 238.
 63. *Chinese Classics*, 3: 241.

64. Gutmann and Thompson, 81–91.
65. Gutmann and Thompson, 128.
66. *Xunzi* 9.4 and 31.4. Beyond the consequences for their remaining in power, how Chinese rulers are remembered by future generations is another way in which they have been held accountable.
67. *Xunzi* 9.1.
68. *Mencius* 1A3; 1A7; 7B14.
69. *Mencius* 5A5. Yao and Shun are legendary sage-kings often mentioned in the early Confucian texts. According to legend, Yao passed the throne not to his own son but to Shun.
70. For a more detailed discussion of the relation between “heaven” and “the people” in this passage, see Tan, *Confucian Democracy*, 140–44.
71. *Analects* 4.14; 15.14.
72. *Analects* 8.14; 14.26.
73. Ames and Rosemont, *Analects*, 261.
74. A. T. Nuyen, “Confucianism and the Idea of Citizenship,” *Asian Philosophy* 12 (2002): 127–39; A. T. Nuyen, “On the Confucian Idea of Citizenship,” 169–82, in *Challenging Citizenship*, ed. Sor-hoon Tan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Sungmoon Kim, “Confucian Citizenship: Against Two Greek Models,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 37, no. 3 (2010): 438–56; Kim, “Confucian Democratic Citizen.”
75. Mansbridge’s definition of the political in “Everyday Talk,” 214.
76. Tan, *Confucian Democracy*, 128–32; David Hall and Roger Ames, *Thinking through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 182–84.
77. *Analects* 2.21; 12.17.
78. Cf. Kim, “Pluralist Reconstruction of Confucian Democracy.” Kim’s argument that unity in Confucianism should be understood as constitutional rather than moral unity can also support deliberative engagement that holds each accountable to all; however, I disagree with Kim regarding the possibility of reconciling Confucianism with any serious pluralism given that I view Confucianism as subscribing to a comprehensive ethical doctrine, albeit one that eschews authoritarian consequences.

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