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Public Reason Confucianism

Democratic Perfectionism and Constitutionalism in East Asia

Sungmoon Kim
City University of Hong Kong

Recent proposals concerning Confucian meritocratic perfectionism have justified Confucian perfectionism in terms of political meritocracy. In contrast, 'Confucian democratic perfectionism' is a form of comprehensive Confucian perfectionism that can accommodate a plurality of values in civil society. It is also fully compatible with core values of democracy such as popular sovereignty, political equality, and the right to political participation. Sungmoon Kim presents 'public reason Confucianism' as the most attractive option for contemporary East Asian societies that are historically and culturally Confucian. Public reason Confucianism is a particular style of Confucian democratic perfectionism in which comprehensive Confucianism is connected with perfectionism via a distinctive form of public reason. It calls for an active role for the democratic state in promoting a Confucian conception of the good life, at the heart of which are such core Confucian values as filial piety and ritual propriety.

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