Pragmatic Confucian Democracy: Rethinking the Value of Democracy in East Asia

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In contemporary Confucian political theory, there is surprisingly little effort among the theorists to illuminate the value of democracy. When they do on rare occasions, their focus is largely on democracy's instrumental contribution to Confucian goods. In this paper, I argue that, given democracy's dual aspects as a political system and as a way of life, it has both instrumental and intrinsic values, and insomuch as it is a kind of democracy, Confucian democracy, too, ought to possess both values. Central to my argument is that, once introduced and justified instrumentally as a political system, democracy in a Confucian society attains its noninstrumental value as it becomes consolidated as a democratic-Confucian way of life in which democratic institutions, rights, and practices are socially mediated by and negotiated with Confucian values, civilities, and moral sentiments. I present my overarching normative framework in terms of *pragmatic Confucian democracy*.

Contemporary Confucian political theory largely revolves around the compatibility between Confucianism and democracy, but quite surprisingly, theorists in this field rarely discuss the philosophical reasons for their interest in democracy. Confucian political theorists tend to take certain values of democracy for granted, which somehow requires creative "mixing" with Confucianism, which they find morally attractive (hence, styling their normative political theories as "Confucian").[1] This tendency is widely found not only among Confucian participatory democrats (Angle 2012; Hall and Ames 1999; Kim 2014; Tan 2004) but, more interestingly, among the advocates of Confucian meritocracy (or "Confucian meritocrats") as well. Despite their rejection of some core democratic principles, such as popular sovereignty, political equality, and the right to political participation, virtually all Confucian meritocrats embrace democracy's minimum institutional apparatus, namely, regular and competitive elections that select members of the low (or the lowest) house in their proposed bicameral (or tricameral) legislature, without explaining their philosophical basis for acknowledging this limited value of democracy (Bai 2013; Bell 2006; Fan 2010; Jiang 2013; Li 2012).

If democracy is both a distinct mode of political system in which political power is equally shared by citizens who are at once co-rulers and co-subjects, as well as, as will be argued, a way of life marked by equality of social relations, then neither democratic reconstruction of ancient Confucian philosophy nor advocacy of Confucian democracy as an alternative to Western-style liberal democracy can convincingly demonstrate the value of democracy. And without demonstrating the value of democracy, it is impossible, theoretically speaking, to justify the normative ground for Confucian democracy, a particular mode of democracy championed as best suited for the Confucian societal context.

In this paper, I argue that, first, democracy has both instrumental and intrinsic values and these dual aspects of democracy come from the very nature of democracy both as a political system and as a way of life. And accordingly, second, I contend that Confucian democracy has (and ought to have) both instrumental and intrinsic values. My central claim is that, once introduced and justified instrumentally as a political system, democracy in a Confucian society attains its noninstrumental value as it becomes consolidated as a way of life in which democratic institutions, rights, and practices are socially mediated by and negotiated with Confucian values, habits, mores, and moral sentiments. It is through such a complex process of social and cultural negotiations, I argue, that democratic institutions, rights, and practices—or a democratic way of life—can be made meaningful to and further cherished by citizens who share Confucianism as their public

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1. I adopted the term "mixing" from "Mixing Confucianism and Democracy," the title of chapter 4 of Chan (2014).

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culture, despite their deep diversity and pervasive moral conflict.

TWO CONCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY: SCHUMPETERIAN VERSUS DEWEYAN

One of the most distinctive features in contemporary studies of democracy is that its two aspects—democracy as a political system and democracy as a way of life—are studied nearly independently of each other. The result is a stark division of labor between empirical political scientists, focused on voting and election on one side and normative democratic theorists (especially deliberative or participatory democratic theorists) on the other, who understand democracy primarily as a way of life characterized by communication among equals with a view to resolving their common problems in a mutually acceptable way through law and public policy. What is more troubling is that what originally began as an academic division of labor seems to have given rise to two distinctive conceptions of democracy—one that posits that democracy is a method to arrive at political decisions and one that claims that democracy is not so much a political system as a communicative culture that enables collective self-government.

The classical inspiration for the first conception of democracy is Joseph Schumpeter, according to whom democracy is primarily a "political method," understood as an "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter [1943]1987, 269). The appeal of this parsimonious definition of democracy for political scientists is obvious; it can provide us with "a reasonably efficient criterion by which to distinguish democratic governments from others" (Schumpeter [1943] 1987, 269). This definition of democracy is especially useful not only in tracking the transition of a regime from authoritarian to democratic (the presence of competitive election can be seen as the minimum requirement to call a regime a "democracy") but also in proliferating various substantive conceptions of democracy in which competitive election,[2] the minimum requirement of democracy, is entwined with various forms of institutional arrangements and social practices (Collier and Levitsky 1997).

As a political institution pivoted around voting and election, democracy in the Schumpeterian conception possesses no intrinsic moral value. It is preferred over other types of political arrangements because of its institutional ability to effectively coordinate social interactions among political actors with diverse self-interests and resolve, albeit temporarily, political conflicts by channeling them through nonviolent competition—participation in which is expected to advance the interests of both winners and losers in the long run (Przeworski 1991, 19).[3] In short, democracy in this institutional understanding is only instrumentally valuable, offering, for example, the best institutional mechanism among existing political arrangements to reduce economic inequality (Boix 2003) or prevent famine (Sen 1999).

Barring rare exceptions, Schumpeterian political scientists seldom discuss how values such as popular sovereignty, self-government, and political equality—commonly acknowledged as core democratic values—should be understood within the context of their institutional and instrumental argument. The most telling example comes from Schumpeter himself, who presents his narrow definition of democracy as an alternative to what he calls the "classical doctrine of democracy" (à la Jean-Jacques Rousseau), which emphasizes people's actual capacity for collective self-determination toward the common good. Whereas the classical doctrine of democracy is more faithful to the Aristotelian ideal of democracy understood as common citizenship (i.e., citizens as co-rulers and co-subjects), the Schumpeterian alternative reinterprets democracy as another form of ruler-ruled relationship where the rulers are now elected by the ruled, and govern them in their name.[4]

In marked contrast, at the core of our second conception of democracy—democracy as a way of life—is a restoration of democracy of the kind that fascinated its earlier champions, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Alexis de Tocqueville, and John Stuart Mill, and in this respect it is diametrically opposed to its Schumpeterian counterpart. The modern inspiration for this conception of democracy is John Dewey, who urged us to "get rid of the habit of thinking of democracy as something institutional and external and to acquire the habit of treating it as a way of personal life" (Dewey 1981, 228).[5] Accordingly, Dewey's focus is not so much on the political institutions of democracy but on the Great Com-

2. Adam Przeworski (2010, 167–68) writes, "Competitive elections are the only credible mechanism of making the people believe that their rulers govern at their bequest and on their behalf. . . . Elections authenticate the claim that governments govern with active consent because they repeatedly test this claim by counting heads." For a skeptical view on using competitive election as a litmus test for democracy, especially the transitional context, see Carothers (2002).

3. For a similar emphasis on institutional design and coordination of interests in democratic theory, see Hardin (1999).

4. Precisely for this reason, Manin (1997) criticizes modern representative democracy.

5. This is reprinted from Anderson (2009, 217).

munity, “a society in which the ever-expanding and intricately ramifying consequences of associated activities shall be known in the full sense of that word, so that an organized, articulated Public comes into being” (Dewey 1954, 184). Central to the flourishing of the Great Community is the existence of the democratic public, understood as “those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for” (Dewey 1954, 15–16).[6] And it is by actively participating in social communication that citizens, who are equal to one another, can collaborate to take care of the indirect consequences of transactions, the “problems” in Dewey’s technical language, without a quest for certainty.

What distinguishes Deweyan pragmatism from other forms of consequentialism is that its problem-solving process is intelligent and educative. The decisions that citizens are making are intelligent because they are products of, first, reflexive personal judgment, then reciprocal collective deliberation.[7] Put differently, public decisions are outcomes of democratic citizens’ political autonomy (Richardson 2002). Furthermore, the intelligent decision-making process is educative in that citizens are fallible and the decisions they collectively make are ineluctably provisional, always subject to revision. In the absence of an independent moral and epistemic authority that can guide them under modern circumstances of politics, citizens can make a mistake in their political action or decision and come to regret it. But they are never paralyzed by their past mistakes or, more fundamentally, their fallibility under the circumstances of uncertainty. Instead, they learn from their mistakes and look for a more intelligent way to tackle the problematic situation (Barber 1984, 259). The most important thing to note is that it is citizens themselves, not their elite leaders, who make this whole process of reciprocal communication intelligent and educative. Just as an autonomous personal life is intrinsically valuable to oneself, so is the autonomous democratic life. As essential components of democratic citizenship, in the Deweyan conception of democracy, popular sovereignty, self-government, and political equality are all cherished as intrinsically valuable.

“INSTRUMENTAL VERSUS INTRINSIC” REVISITED

Understood as distinct conceptions of democracy, Schumpeterian democracy and Deweyan democracy may look incommensurable. They refer to two different things (institution vs. culture), and the value they place on democracy is accordingly different (instrumental vs. intrinsic). Locating democracy exclusively on either of these two aspects is deeply misleading, however, despite each conception’s heuristic and methodological advantages in studying democracy scientifically or philosophically. Although Dewey is thought to be the author of the Deweyan conception of democracy, he is not a “Deweyan” in this narrow sense, because he never dismisses the crucial importance of political institutions, which give democracy a significant instrumental value. One of Dewey’s often neglected insights is that democracy as a way of life presupposes the political structures that undergird it institutionally. In other words, a normative ideal of democracy requires its material conditions that can socially actualize it. Consider the following statement by Dewey himself:

> To profess to have an aim and then neglect the means of its execution is self-delusion of the most dangerous sort. Education and morals will begin to find themselves on the same road of advance that say chemical industry and medicine have found for themselves when they too learn fully the lesson of wholehearted and unremitting attention to means and conditions—that is, to what mankind so long despised as material and mechanical. But when we take ends without regard to means we degenerate into sentimentalism. In the name of the ideal we fall back upon mere luck and chance and magic or exhortation and preaching; or else upon a fanaticism that will force the realization of preconceived ends at any cost (Dewey [1920]1927, 72–73).[8]

Here Dewey does not make an explicit reference to democracy, but it is not difficult to derive from the statement the implication for his broader perspective of democracy—that democracy as a regulative social ideal that concerns the citizenry’s way of life would be merely fantastical if it were not embodied materially in a concrete institutional form.

A familiar Deweyan reading of this passage may still encourage us to understand the material means that help

6. Note that Deweyan Confucians, such as Hall, Ames, and Tan, are particularly inspired by Dewey’s idea of Great Community.

7. Throughout this paper, I employ the term “intelligent” in the special sense intended by Dewey, who understands it not so much as an individual’s original or innate endowment but as the social (and social-individual) quality attained by democratic citizens (i.e., the public) co-navigating the contingent world in association and solving, however provisionally, the problems that they are commonly concerned with (Dewey 1954, 203–11). Epistemic democrats such as Cohen (1986), Estlund (2008), and Landemore (2013), are largely (sometimes tacitly) influenced by this Deweyan notion of social intelligence.

8. This is reprinted from Knight and Johnson (2011, 35).

execute the aim of democracy in terms of nonpolitical social institutions in civil society, such as neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, churches, and other forms of voluntary associations. However, given Dewey's deep concern with the modern fate of the public in the emerging machine age, and his subsequent new definition of the state, which in principle concerns all citizens as the (democratic) public, it seems to be more plausible to take "the means of execution" to mean primarily an overarching scaffolding of political institutions that coordinate complex social interactions of citizens and help resolve social conflicts resulting from the diversity of moral and material interests effectively as well as legitimately. After all, nonpolitical social institutions can flourish even under nondemocratic political structures, and this cannot be what Dewey intended to imply in the statement above. Without a political democracy there is no democratic civil society. As Elizabeth Anderson rightly puts it, "[democracy's] noninstrumental value is conditional on its instrumental value" (Anderson 2009, 213).

That democracy's intrinsic value is conditional on its instrumental value becomes much clearer if we shift our attention from advanced Western democracies, in which most Deweyan theorists struggle with the increasing attrition of democracy's civic foundations, to non-Western and nonliberal countries that have recently undergone or are still experiencing democratic transitions. Consider the cases of South Korea (hereafter, Korea) and Taiwan, arguably the most Confucian countries in East Asia. Despite somewhat different modes of transition, democratization in both countries was galvanized by bottom-up citizen protests, aimed to break down authoritarian regimes; it then was mediated by a series of negotiations between political elites of the incumbent and opposition parties. In comparison with similar mass-ascendant democratic transitions taking place almost simultaneously in Eastern and Central Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, one of the distinctive features of the democratization in both countries is that it took place when the economies in these countries were highly advanced, enabling the social conditions under which citizens, hitherto preoccupied with economic survival as a nation, could pursue diverse individual and/or group moral and material interests. Put differently, the social demand for democracy in both countries was at its peak when the incumbent regimes fatally failed to respond to diversified social, moral, and economic interests arising from civil society. Accordingly, the impending collective task for the citizens of these countries was to search for an alternative political system that could better process their diverse, often conflicting, interests effectively and legitimately. The resulting democratic regimes were to meet this challenge of institutional coordination.

There is nothing regrettable or problematic in the fact that citizens in Korea and Taiwan initially pursued democracy mainly for instrumental reasons. In fact, other than the few activist intellectuals versed in democratic theory, most nonliberal people struggling for democracy do the same: they do not sacrifice their precious time or even risk their lives for the abstract ideal of democracy or its intrinsic values such as political autonomy, equality of interests, or reciprocity.[9] During the transitional period, democracy is sought because it is believed to "remedy evils experienced in consequences of prior political institutions" (Dewey 1954, 84). Although it may sound ironic, in some sense, nonliberal people, whose cultural and political tradition is completely foreign to democracy, pursue democracy without fully understanding what democracy practically entails both as a value system and, more fundamentally, as a way of life.[10] At a minimum, it remains ambiguous whether a democratic way of life, with all attending rights (so-called "democratic rights"), is what they actually aspire to have, given its deep embeddedness in Western historical experience and societal culture. Then, to put this puzzle more generally, how does the negative and instrumental project of democratization ("removing the current evil" and "searching for an alternative set of institutions") jump to validation of the positive ambition of the hard-won democracy ("redefining the polity's collective way of living")?

It can be objected that democratization of a nonliberal country is not purely an instrumental project, even when it is primarily oriented negatively. Nonliberal people, one may argue, already know the value of democracy through their observation of, or interaction with, democratic peoples, and it is the ideological motivation that drives the people to fight for democracy. There is some truth in this objection if the people in question are limited to the educated few, including democratic activists. But we should be careful in calling the value recognized at this predemocratic or democratizing stage democracy's intrinsic value. At this stage, the value of democracy is still largely extrinsic to the nonliberal people, including its most ardent advocates, because it is an ideal, merely known to them but never experienced, thus abstract. They have yet to understand why democratic institutions are normatively preferred over their nondemocratic alternatives and why democratic rights, undergirding the process of democratic decision making as well as delineating the sub-

9. Brettschneider (2007) presents these three values as the core values that make democracy intrinsically valuable.

10. Political theorists are surprisingly silent about this instrumental motivation behind democratic movement, widely observed in the third wave of democratization. One important exception is Shapiro (1999).

stance of democratic law and public policy, should guide their public interactions and interpersonal relationships. The answers for these sorts of normative questions concerning the intrinsic value of democracy can only be offered once citizens have been fully immersed in democratic institutions and related social practices in their everyday lives.[11]

Our brief excursion to a nonliberal country's democratic transition reveals that the Schumpeterian model and the Deweyan model should not be understood as two distinct, mutually exclusive conceptions of democracy, but rather as illuminating different features of democracy, each salient (comparatively speaking) at a different stage. In the transition stage—whether from early modern absolutism or modern forms of authoritarianism—the Schumpeterian model looms large because the instrumental value is the key motivating force of regime transition on which this model of democracy is undergirded. It is absolutely important that the Schumpeterian model be paramount at this stage because, as noted, the social institutions valorized in the Deweyan model are practically compatible with nondemocratic regimes.

The Deweyan model gains its salient normative significance during the period of democratic consolidation in which democracy becomes "the only game in town," attitudinally, behaviorally, and constitutionally (Linz and Stepan 1996, 5–6), as well as perennially beyond. The Deweyan model tells us (or the citizens of a new democracy) that the establishment of democratic institutions neither provides answers for the problems we all face nor removes contingency, uncertainty, and unpredictability that characterize our social and political life. Democratic institutions only offer us an institutional framework that enables us to resolve the problem at hand more effectively and legitimately. How we resolve the problem is up to our common judgment, which concerns both institutional design (the procedural aspect of democracy) and specific law and public policy (the substantive aspect of democracy). It is by immersing themselves in the process of public problem solving in formal decision-making institutions as well as in various public forums in civil society that citizens can grow in democratic skills and public judgment. Only at this stage can democracy, originally pursued for sheer instrumental reasons, attain its intrinsic value, becoming our democracy. Only then will citizens neither look back to their authoritarian past with nostalgia for a perpetual life of being ruled and provided for nor be tempted to trade the values of political autonomy and common citizenship (i.e., their sovereign status) with the goods (largely economic) that some nondemocracies claim to deliver better.

CONFUCIAN MERITOCRACY AND THE VALUE OF DEMOCRACY

Since democracy's instrumental and intrinsic values are complexly affiliated with different stages of democracy, and since democracies in East Asia are either new or have yet to be consolidated, lack of attention to actual democratic contexts makes it extremely difficult to understand on what value basis Confucian democracy should be pursued. Let me start with Confucian meritocrats who embrace democracy only partially.

Of Confucian meritocrats, Joseph Chan is clearest in articulating the value of democracy in his proposed meritocratic political system. What differentiates Chan from other Confucian meritocrats, such as Daniel Bell, who acknowledges democracy's (limited) instrumental values alone (Bell 2006, 185), is that he finds democracy valuable both instrumentally and noninstrumentally. According to Chan, democracy's instrumental value lies in its ability to "bring about certain effects that are desirable in the view of Confucian thought" (Chan 2014, 85). This is a reasonable stance for a Confucian perfectionist to take. For just as it is comprehensive ethical promotion of some core liberal values, such as autonomy, that imparts to liberal perfectionism a distinctive normative edge, to which democracy is more or less an auxiliary (in the sense of preventing the theory from being elitist; Sher 1997; Wall 1998), so it is Confucian values that do the most important normative weightlifting in Confucian perfectionism, to which democracy is instrumentally serviceable. Roughly put, Chan's reasoning—let us call this *instrumental value reasoning*—proceeds in the following steps:

1. According to classical Confucianism, the kernel of political authority lies in serving the well-being of the people.
2. Therefore, "any institutional arrangement of political authority is to be assessed [i.e., justified] by its contribution to the well-being of the people" (Chan 2014, 102).[12]

11. This does not mean that democracy's intrinsic values are completely foreign to ordinary people under the authoritarian regime. After all, in predemocratic Korea and Taiwan, what was most troubling for the ordinary citizenry was the regime's arbitrary and frequent violations of the democratic principles to which it is constitutionally, albeit only nominally, committed. To the extent that people were conscious of this chasm between democratic ideals and actual political practices, they can be said to have been aware of democracy's intrinsic values. My point is that democracy's intrinsic values cherished at this point have yet to be lived experiences embodied in the citizenry's daily social life because they still remain abstract in terms of moral principles. I am grateful to the editor for pressing me to think about this issue more deeply.

12. In the similarly worded sentence (Chan 2014, 85), Chan employs the term "justified" instead of "assessed."

3. Classical Confucians believed that "positions of authority should be taken by the virtuous and able" (Chan 2014, 93).
4. Democratic institutions—the election in particular—offer the best means, among those practicably available in our nonideal political situation, to select good leaders by means of the sanction function of elections (Chan 2014, 86).
5. From 2, 3, and 4, it is concluded that democracy is instrumentally valuable for fulfilling the Confucian conception of authority (and good government) under nonideal circumstances of modern society.

There can be a reasonable question as to whether transition from 1 to 2, which interprets (classical) Confucianism as one of justificatory philosophy, is tenable. If we can put aside this otherwise important interpretative question, however, Chan's reasoning looks cogent. That said, Chan has an additional noninstrumental reason to embrace democracy, which can be likewise recapitulated as the following:

1. The Confucian ideal of political relationship is "marked by mutual commitment and trust—the rulers are committed to governing the people in a trustworthy and caring manner, and the ruled, in return, express their willing endorsement and support for their rulers" (Chan 2014, 85).
2. "The point of democratic elections is to select those who are public-spirited and trustworthy and to make explicit the public's endorsement and support of those who are elected" (Chan 2014, 85).
3. The so-called "selection model" of election enables the people to be *intrinsically motivated* to submit themselves to a reciprocal and mutual edifying relationship between the ruler and the ruled (Chan 2014, 69–76).[13]
4. From 1, 2, and 3, it can be concluded that democratic election has a noninstrumental value for Confucian (meritocratic) perfectionism.

Chan calls democracy's noninstrumental value, as he understands it, the *expressive value* of democracy, and so we can call Chan's reasoning here, to distinguish it from his earlier reasoning on democracy's instrumental value, *expressive value reasoning*. Now the question is how we can make sense of Chan's idea of instrumental and noninstrumental expressive values of democracy against the backdrop of the present "instrumental versus intrinsic" framework and the two competing conceptions of democracy.

First of all, it is worth noting that, throughout his discussion of both instrumental and noninstrumental values of democracy, Chan consistently means by democracy one particular democratic institution, namely, the election. This is rather counterintuitive, in that even though it is in the Schumpeterian model of democracy that election is treated as nearly equivalent to democracy itself, this model acknowledges no noninstrumental or intrinsic value of democracy. Moreover, democracy's instrumental value itself is understood differently by Chan and the Schumpeterian model: while the Schumpeterian model presents it in terms of an institutional coordination of social interactions and temporary resolution of political conflict (often deeply implicated with moral conflict in a pluralist society), Chan understands it as democracy's ability to serve what classical Confucianism considers the central purpose of good authority or government, namely, the well-being of the people. Here, Chan glosses over the Schumpeterian interpretation of democracy's instrumental value (or institutional value in the pragmatic sense).

Does this mean that Chan has an alternative conception of democracy that subscribes neither to the Schumpeterian model nor to the Deweyan model? Quite the contrary, Chan adheres to one of the most conventional understandings of democracy à la Dewey that stresses popular sovereignty as collective self-determination, when he, following David Beetham, defines democracy as "a mode of decision making about collective binding rules and policies over which the people exercise control" (Chan 2014, 83).[14] However, having defined democracy in Deweyan terms, Chan quickly reverts back to the Schumpeterian model by saying,

> No doubt democracy as a political system gives power to the people and distributes votes equally. But such a system need not be justified, or be seen to express, popular sovereignty or political equality as a moral principle or ideal. . . . I suggest that the institution of democracy can be disconnected from such moral principles (Chan 2014, 85).

As such, Chan's conceptual oscillation between the Schumpeterian model, which he actually supports, and the Deweyan

13. For the expression of "intrinsically motivated," see Chan (2014, 70).

14. Here Chan cites Beetham (1993, 55). Note that Beetham is well known for his ideal of democracy that stresses active political participation as well as basic rights, which makes him closer to Deweyan democrats such as Elizabeth Anderson, Amy Gutmann, and Joshua Cohen than to Schumpeterian democrats. For a fuller account of Beetham's democratic ideal, see Beetham (1999).

model, on which his formal definition of democracy is premised, makes it extremely difficult to understand exactly what he means by "democracy." On the one hand, it is defined as collective self-government that (re)defines our way of living as relationships among equals, and yet it is a mere political system or simply election on the other, completely decoupled from the very moral ideal of democracy.

Would Chan's *expressive value reasoning* be able to relieve his democratic theory of this theoretical predicament? As Chan rightly notes, the constitutive or ethical relationship between the ruler and the ruled is in itself good from the perspective of Confucianism, and thus is justified noninstrumentally by Confucianism. Contrary to Chan's intention, though, this implies that expressive value reasoning is another form of instrumental value reasoning, according to which democracy ought to serve the moral end of Confucianism. It makes perfect sense in the context of Confucian perfectionism. Its philosophical force is significantly reduced, however, when Chan's moderate Confucian perfectionism is presented as a kind of Confucian democracy. What democracy as a political system and as a social practice expresses is equal citizens' collective self-determination. The reciprocal relationship between the (elected temporary) ruler and the ruled (i.e., citizens) is one of democracy's positive byproducts, which makes democracy even more attractive, but it is not democracy's intrinsic value.[15]

THE VALUE OF DEMOCRACY IN CONFUCIAN DEMOCRACY

In this section, let me point to two problems Confucian participatory democrats can hardly escape within the present "instrumental versus intrinsic" framework. First, Confucian participatory democrats seldom distinguish between democracy and Confucianism, which makes it difficult to understand what they take to be the value of democracy. For instance, Deweyan Confucian communitarian democrats understand democracy exclusively in terms of a way of life (i.e., an organic participatory community), but their methodological blurring of the lines between the philosophical interpretation of ancient Confucian texts—how best to reinterpret classical Confucianism—and normative political theory—what is the most attractive normative vision of democracy in contemporary East Asia—stands in the way of making clear sense of whether the way of life that they valorize is a Confucian communal life or that which attends to a particular mode of organized power, with which democracy is commonly associated as a political rule. For Deweyan Confucian communitarians, the greatest attraction of democracy lies in what Dewey identifies as democracy's intrinsic value, but by making such value integral to their own reconstructed Confucianism, they leave ambiguous what the unique value of democracy is, independent of (classical) Confucianism's democratic potentials.

While the first problem stems from Confucian participatory democrats' (particularly Deweyan Confucians') failure to make an analytical distinction between democracy and (their reconstructed) Confucianism, the second problem has to do with their dismissal of the important distinction between formal democratic institutions and democratic community. It is hardly surprising that Deweyan Confucian democrats understand democracy as a way of life and find it intrinsically valuable. What is surprising is that they dismiss the different contexts in which Dewey and they uphold democracy's intrinsic value.

As is well known, Dewey's central concern was to reinvigorate an already exiting democracy (i.e., American democracy) in the face of the emerging machine age, in which democracy, a self-rule of equal citizens, was being helplessly relegated to rule by technocrats and professional administrators. He did so by reconceiving both the public and democratic community in a dramatically altered societal context while paying renewed attention to the "art of association," which de Tocqueville had previously singled out as the locomotive of American democracy. In stark contrast, Deweyan Confucian democrats rarely situate their democratic theory in the actual social and political context of East Asia, in which democratic transitions have either been re-

15. What if, one may wonder, the problem that I am pointing out here is only internal to Chan's political theory? What if Chan revises his position by formulating the expressive goods that democracy brings about as instrumental to Confucian values? Would there still be any independent reason that we should prefer pragmatic Confucian democracy to Chan's Confucian perfectionist meritocracy? I offer two reasons. First, while pragmatic Confucian democracy takes what Waldron (1999) calls the modern *circumstances of politics* seriously, which are marked by value pluralism and moral conflict (hence, the importance of democracy's second-order, instrumental value for effective and legitimate social coordination), Confucian meritocracy is premised on the assumption of virtue monism, which stipulates that (i) there is a singular and morally uncontroversial standard of "merit" and (ii) political rights (including the right to vote) are covariant with one's merit or virtue understood as the "contribution to the well-being of others" (Chan 2014, 32). Second, while pragmatic Confucian democracy presents its normative—both instrumental and intrinsic—value from the perspective of ordinary citizens who are subject to its political order, Confucian meritocracy derives its normative value mainly from classical Confucian philosophy without a serious concern about its justifiability to citizens, especially non-Confucians. For my more comprehensive engagement with Chan's idea of Confucian meritocratic perfectionism, see Kim (2016, 43–66). I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pressing me with this important question.

cently completed or have yet to happen. This political deficit in the existing versions of Deweyan Confucian democratic theory reasonably leads one who has yet to (fully) experience the intelligent and educative process of a democratic way of living, or to develop a faith in democracy, to ask why democratization is necessary in the first place. Deweyan Confucian democrats have very little (almost nothing) to say about formal democratic institutions and their crucial instrumental role in resolving, however provisionally, political conflicts.[16]

This political deficit has significant philosophical implications. By paying exclusive attention to democracy's intrinsic value in the context in which democracy is either premature or nonexistent, Deweyan Confucian democrats obfuscate the politically important distinction between democracy's first-order value (democracy is good in itself) and democracy's second-order value (democracy has a crucial institutional-cum-instrumental value in coordinating complex social interactions under the circumstances of modern politics),[17] thereby risking democratic dogmatism. Furthermore, they have also forgone an important opportunity to remind East Asian citizens of how time-consuming the learning process of democratic education is and thus why patience is a necessary virtue in making democracy intrinsically valuable to a given population in the long run, though initially pursued on instrumental grounds.

Compared with his Deweyan counterparts, Stephen Angle, another advocate of Confucian participatory democracy, pays far more attention to formal democratic institutions, and the value he ascribes to such "objective political structures" is an instrumental one, in the sense of serving the end of classical Confucian ethical perfectionism, namely, personal moral growth. Angle further claims that democracy offers the best political structures under which we can advance progressive public policies toward, for example, gender equality and nondiscrimination (Angle 2012, 116–27). Understanding democracy as more than a political method to elect political leaders and embracing some of democracy's constitutive values, such as political equality, Angle is clearly distinguished not only from Confucian meritocrats but more generally from Schumpeterian democrats. Yet his overall silence about democracy as a way of life and his lack of emphasis on collective will formation and democratic self-government distances his conception of democracy from the Deweyan model as well. What further prevents a clear understanding of Angle's idea of democracy is that he does not elaborate on how the progressive values that he espouses are related to his conception of democracy. Are they democracy's intrinsic values or normative ideals justified independently of democracy? If the latter is the case, how—intrinsically or instrumentally—are such ideals connected with Confucianism? In short, how does Angle construct a philosophical connection between state perfectionism, which he endorses cautiously, and his vision of "progressive Confucianism" within the democratic framework?

His largely institutionalist account of democracy notwithstanding, like Deweyan Confucians, Angle tends to subsume his democratic theory under his ethical vision of Confucianism, obliterating the important analytical distinction between democracy and Confucianism. For him, democracy is not so much a political regime whose political institutions and the social practices that undergird them comprehensively form a way of life but rather merely one, however important, element of modern progressive Confucianism. As Angle puts it, in modern East Asia, democracy is "required" by (the ethical demand of) Confucianism (Angle 2012, 29), but he stops there without further articulating precisely what mode of democracy modern Confucianism requires and what additional value(s) the democracy required would provide for citizens in East Asia besides its instrumental contribution to personal moral growth, which is possible even under nondemocratic regimes and by means of nonpolitical social participation.

Although Angle shows a rare interest (at least among Confucian participatory democrats) in democratic political structures, in the end, he fails to relate this insight to democracy's second-order, or institutional, value, especially under the circumstances of modern politics. He thereby misses the important opportunity to elucidate the interesting process in which democracy, initially deemed as instrumentally valuable, gains new meaning and noninstrumental value as a way of life as its institutions and social practices are actively appropriated and intelligently experienced (or experimented) by citizens who govern themselves in the absence of any antecedent moral principle or authority.

THE VALUE OF CONFUCIAN DEMOCRACY

Echoing Dewey's own more nuanced account of democracy, the Confucian democracy I propose in this paper—let us call it *pragmatic Confucian democracy*—mediates between the Schumpeterian model and the Deweyan model of democracy, without falling prey to either model's one-sidedness. While the communitarian Deweyan democracy pays exclusive attention to the idea of democracy as a way of life, pragmatic Confucian democracy derives its value initially

16. Instead, Deweyan Confucian democrats tend to emphasize a tacit resolution of social conflict by means of rituals (Hall and Ames 1999, 182).

17. For the distinction between democracy's first-order and second-order value, see Knight and Johnson (2011).

from its institutional and instrumental ability to effectively and legitimately coordinate complex social interactions among citizens with diverse moral and material interests and places its further, more important, justification in values accrued in the course of living the democratic way of life, which make democracy intrinsically valuable.

On the other hand, while both pragmatic Confucian democracy and Confucian meritocracy primarily pay attention to democracy's instrumental value as a political system, they set different ends for which that value ought to be pursued. For Confucian meritocrats, that end is certain Confucian goods (or values or virtues), including the mutually constitutive relationship between the ruler (political elites) and the ruled (ordinary citizens). Confucian meritocrats are Confucian perfectionists in this very sense. The pragmatic Confucian democrat's guiding ambition is meaningfully different. Her primary concern is how to organize political institutions in a way that can best coordinate social interactions under the circumstances of modern politics marked by pervasive value pluralism and resulting moral conflicts. Democracy's primary (but not central) value lies in this second-order value, and it is primarily on this instrumental ground that she advocates the democratic transition from an authoritarian regime, a regime that miserably fails in this task of legitimate and effective institutional coordination of diverse social interests and instead meets citizens' political contestation from civil society by violent means.[18]

Thus understood, a pragmatic Confucian democrat is a moderate political consequentialist. Her political support for democracy is not primarily to best realize certain moral ends cherished by ancient Confucianism; nor is it her most supreme aim to invent modern Confucianism, of which democracy is merely one constituting element among other "Western values" such as human rights and personal autonomy. For a pragmatic Confucian democrat, democracy is an overarching and authoritative political institutional framework under which coercive political power is exercised legitimately, in the people's name. Selecting good leaders is just as important to her as it is to Confucian meritocrats, because democratic government cannot fulfill its political mandate in the absence of public-spirited and capable political leaders (Keohane 2010). In fact, democratic institutions can be sustained only if there are such leaders as well as equally public-spirited citizens who can identify and elect them to leadership positions. However, unlike Confucian meritocrats who place good leadership outside democratic institutions (and constraints) and justify it on undemocratic grounds and for antidemocratic reasons, a pragmatic Confucian democrat seeks good leadership within the very democratic institutional framework and according to democratic procedures that embody such core democratic values as popular sovereignty, political equality, and the right to political participation.

As a political theory, the greatest strength of pragmatic Confucian democracy lies in its direct political relevance to existing democratic or nondemocratic countries of East Asia. Its emphasis on democracy's second-order value gives a powerful account of both what motivated democratization in some of the countries and why democracy (or democratization) is necessary in those that are still under authoritarian forces. After all, neither Korea nor Taiwan initiated regime transition in order to better attain certain Confucian goods, nor did citizens in those countries take to the streets because they believed in democracy's first-order value (that democracy is a good in itself). Indeed, very few people in China who currently long for democracy do so in order to attain a perfect congruence between its political system and its Confucian philosophical tradition. It would be equally unfruitful to encourage or expect citizens and political leaders in China to embark upon democratization on the assumption of democracy's first-order value. At the same time, despite strong tendency among contemporary Confucian political theorists to construct the theory in a heavily abstract philosophical fashion mainly with reference to ancient Confucian texts, it is utterly unrealistic to advance a Confucian democratic theory without any concern with the existing (early) democratic or nondemocratic political situations in East Asia. By paying primary attention to democracy's institutional-instrumental value, pragmatic Confucian democracy gains significant explanatory power with regard to the democratization that actually took place in Confucian East Asia at an institutional level. It also gives a more realistic account of the motivation that is currently propelling citizens in nondemocratic regimes to seek democracy.

At this point, the following questions may be raised: While it may be true that to be politically relevant Confucian political theory has to engage with the actual political conditions in contemporary East Asia, as far as it is constructed as a "Confucian" democratic theory, should it not be the case that its democratic part be accommodated to the moral, cultural, or philosophical demands of Confucianism? In

18. Recently Gilley (2014) has forcefully shown that democratization in Asia was largely motivated by internal governance concerns when the traditional modes of accountability mechanisms that had undergirded the authoritarian regimes in the region became no longer effective in meeting the social contestations from below. In this view, the authoritarian regime is tempted to resort to violence when it refuses to opt for democratic transition despite the fact that the existing accountability mechanism (or the regime's attempt at its nondemocratic renewal) has completely failed.

other words, where is the "Confucian" part in the argument about pragmatic Confucian democracy thus far? Should not a Confucian political theorist think about the value of democracy from the standpoint of Confucianism? These are reasonable questions, most likely to be expected from scholars such as Joseph Chan who justify democracy's instrumental and noninstrumental values based on classical Confucianism.

Recall, however, that the kind of argument advanced by Chan (and company) confounds the instrumental and noninstrumental values of Confucian democracy with those of moderate Confucian perfectionism, a mode of philosophical Confucianism specifically tailored in the modern pluralist world, leaving the question of democracy's value unanswered. Pragmatic Confucian democracy approaches the relation between Confucianism and democracy and the value of Confucian democracy quite differently.

First, pragmatic Confucian democracy aims to address its political theory to East Asian citizens and takes its value to consist of the goods—instrumental and noninstrumental—experienced by the citizens themselves. For East Asian citizens, the instrumental value of pragmatic Confucian democracy is primarily its institutional ability to coordinate their complex social interactions in a way justifiable to all of them, despite their manifold differences as private individuals in terms of value, faith, and interest. Confucian democracy becomes intrinsically valuable for them when its political institutions and social practices come to be integral to their way of living, and deep immersion in such a life, accompanied by intelligent social inquiry and civic education, helps them appreciate the value of common citizenship, at the heart of which lies equal participation in public decision-making processes.

Second, without regarding the ethical ambition of classical Confucianism as the moral end to which democracy should be instrumental, pragmatic Confucian democracy does not aim to achieve a congruence between modern Confucian democracy and classical Confucianism as a philosophical system or doctrine, even if it is partially inspired by it. As a political theory, its purpose is not so much to faithfully serve what classical Confucianism requires ethically by means of state perfectionism as to theorize a principled way in which democracy both as a political system and as a way of life can acquire its instrumental and intrinsic values in a way intelligible to citizens of East Asia who no longer subscribe to fully comprehensive Confucian philosophies and/or moral doctrines but nonetheless live by a certain aspect of Confucianism, which is partially comprehensive, as a crucial part of their shared civic culture.

These two points combine to establish the key proposition of pragmatic Confucian democracy: the value of Confucian democracy is independent of the moral doctrines formulated by any version of traditional Confucianism and is assessed by how it contributes, instrumentally and noninstrumentally, to the citizenry's collective self-government, a value unrecognized by both classical and Neo-Confucians. From my argument about the primacy of democracy's second-order value, it should now be clear what is meant by Confucian democracy's pragmatic instrumental contribution to this effect. To repeat, this instrumental value of Confucian democracy is neither philosophically derived from, nor normatively justified by, traditional Confucianism. It is a political value attached to democratic institutions that are required under the circumstances of pluralism and moral conflict. What requires further explanation is how the Confucian democracy of my pragmatic understanding acquires an intrinsic value. Unravelling this question will also explicate the complex relationship between Confucianism and democracy in the idea of pragmatic Confucian democracy.

CONFUCIANISM OF DEMOCRACY

From the viewpoint of philosophical methodology, the most significant difference between pragmatic Confucian democracy and the existing ideas of Confucian democracy—participatory or meritocratic—is that it understands "Confucianism," which is to be connected with democracy, not as (classical) Confucian philosophy but as the public culture that undergirds the civic foundation of the democratic and/or nondemocratic regimes in contemporary East Asia.

As a civic culture, Confucianism is not necessarily democratic in itself, and it is compatible with a wide range of political systems; nor is it affiliated with a particular doctrine or a philosophical school of traditional, fully comprehensive, Confucianism that once penetrated both the public and private lives of East Asians during the pre-modern era. Confucian civic/public culture consists mainly of various sorts of rituals, social habits, civilities, mores, and moral sentiments, which together constitute a characteristically Confucian way of life. It is a particular life form (as well as a mode of public reasoning) that, despite its internal evolution, is culturally intelligible and socially attractive to the people who share its semiotic meaning and have long participated in its meaning-making processes over generations.

During the regime transition, people fighting for democracy naturally concentrate on removing the current evil and thus are prevented from entering into serious public deliberation on what kind of democracy they want to eventually live under. As noted earlier, at this stage it is even ambiguous whether people really aspire to live a democratic way of life, which necessarily requires a drastic change in

their political constitution, social behavior with other citizens, and personal attitude toward the new democratic political institutions and social practices. For non-Western people, democracy is not only new as a political system but, more fundamentally, as a way of life, and therefore democratic consolidation is doubly challenging. First, it has to be a social process in which the initial instrumental value of democracy is slowly superseded, but never wholly replaced, by the values that accrue in the course of citizens' intelligent collective inquiry into social problems and problem solving. Failure in this process means that democracy has not become a value to citizens in its own right and is thus likely to be sidelined for the sake of goods, economic or otherwise, to which its political institutions, decoupled from their underlying moral principles and social meaning, are conducive merely instrumentally.

Democratic consolidation does not take place in a social vacuum, however. The fact that the process in which the intrinsic value of democracy as a way of life is incrementally recognized, then fully cherished, by citizens co-participating in collective self-government, is a *social* and *communicative* process informs us that it involves negotiation between the new democratic way of life, politically initiated and based on formal institutions of Western provenance, and the ongoing cultural way of living that has hitherto provided a semiotic web of social meaning for, and communication among, the people who have now been transformed, at least legally, into democratic citizens. The second task of democratic consolidation, then, is to bridge the gap between cultural and democratic ways of life, especially when the cultural way of life, like the Confucian culture, is significantly at odds with newly introduced democratic values and practices (including rights discourse).

One way to "bridge" the gap between the indigenous cultural way of living and the democratic way of life is simply to replace the former by the latter in the public arena by highlighting their mutual incommensurability. Here the assumption is that, in its most authentic form, democracy is a liberal democracy, and that in order to be sustainable, democracy ought to be predicated on the corresponding liberal civic culture, at the core of which lies rights-based individualism. Since Confucian civic culture is neither democratic nor liberal, the argument goes, it must be replaced by, or transformed into, a liberal-democratic civic culture so that there can be a perfect congruence between the democratic constitutional structure and the background culture of civil society. However, there is a critical problem in this *liberal congruence thesis*, even though it rightly assumes that, in the most profound sense, democracy, however important the second-order value of its formal institutions is, is a way of life, and the citizens' collective way of life is inextricably imbedded in their civic culture. The problem arises when the thesis posits that nonliberal democratic citizens can only be "introduced" to the intrinsic value of democracy if the intrinsic value of living according to their cultural way of life is replaced by, or transformed into, a new public mode of life (i.e., a liberal-democratic life) that is extrinsic to their lifestyle and self-understanding.

Pragmatic Confucian democracy rejects the liberal congruence thesis and instead upholds what I call the *mutual accommodation thesis*, according to which a newly introduced democratic way of life should dialectically interact with the local Confucian civic culture, thereby generating the *Confucian democratic culture*, a new civic culture distinct from both liberal civic culture and traditional undemocratic Confucian civic culture. In Confucian democratic culture, participatory and educative processes of social communication and problem solving (or decision making) are mediated through Confucian rituals, habits, civilities, mores, and moral sentiments, which together form the existing semiotics of social communication. It is through this cultural mediation that a new democratic way of life not only becomes socially meaningful but further enables intelligent social interactions among equal citizens à la Dewey. When democratic culture is made intelligible in this way, citizens can find it valuable in its own right. Put differently, Confucian democratic culture is a democratic civic culture that is intrinsically valuable to citizens in a socially Confucian and politically democratic society.

Furthermore, the interaction between democratic culture and Confucian culture is not simply a one-way transformation, from Confucian culture to democratic culture. While Confucian culture renders democratic culture socially intelligible and intrinsically valuable by transforming it into Confucian democratic culture, new democratic institutions and social practices simultaneously influence the way that certain values and/or ideas have been understood and practiced traditionally. Consider gender equality. Admittedly, traditional Confucian societies in East Asia, albeit in varying degrees, have been androcentric, patrimonial, and patriarchal—tenets that have long been rationalized by the cultural authority of Confucian rituals. However, in the post-democratic constitutional and societal context in which the value of gender equality is publicly recognized, all sorts of gender inequalities that have severely injured the equal public standing of women as mothers, wives, daughters, and daughters-in-law are to be rectified in ways that can elevate them as equal members within their families (including clans) and as equal citizens who can actively

participate in public decision-making processes without fear.[19]

What is important is that this rectification process, stimulated by democratic-constitutional principles and values, is itself circumscribed by Confucian moral reasoning—first among citizens in civil society and then among their political and legal representatives in more formal public forums, such as the parliament and the court—hence, mutual accommodation or dialectical interaction.[20] More specifically, citizens and their representatives are encouraged to participate in the public deliberation as to what would be the most Confucian-humane (*ren* 仁) way to rethink the relationship between men and women in the modern societal context, who are nevertheless socially imagined to exist as sons and daughters, husbands and wives, and fathers and mothers, not as rights-bearing individuals, and whose democratic citizenship is envisioned broadly in terms of (extended) family relationships.

Seen in this way, Confucian culture and democratic culture are mutually constraining as much as mutually enhancing, resulting in a Confucian democratic culture, a sort of cultural amalgam, which makes democracy (i.e., Confucian democracy) the citizens' new public way of life and civil society the home of democracy. This mutual accommodation thesis not only enables us to engage with various forms of local Confucianism that actually exist in modern East Asia with continuing social evolution, but, more importantly in the present context, helps us make sense of the significance of Confucianism as a civic culture in the process of democratic consolidation and further maturation of the democracy afterward. Equally important, the thesis enables us to understand democracy's instrumental and intrinsic values without blurring the analytical distinction between Confucianism and democracy and thus without rendering the value of democracy dependent on traditional philosophical Confucianism's perfectionist moral ends.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I demonstrated the normative value of pragmatic Confucian democracy in East Asia by revisiting the value of Confucian democracy both as a political system and as a way of life (or culture). In order to do so, first, I examined democracy's instrumental and intrinsic values, then revamped the conventional "instrumental versus intrinsic" framework against the political background of democratic transition and consolidation in contemporary East Asia, whose societal culture remains characteristically Confucian to this day. I argued that the semi-disciplinary distinction between the Schumpeterian conception of democracy and its Deweyan counterpart is useful as long as it is an analytical distinction with a view to illuminating the distinct value—instrumental or intrinsic—that democracy's two inseparable dimensions each possess. My alternative view was that, given the inseparability of democracy's dual aspects as a political system and as a way of life, its instrumental and intrinsic values should be understood as equally inseparable, although, in practice, the latter, accruing in the course of living a democratic life, is conditional on the former, which works through the entrenchment of democratic institutions. Then I reexamined the core arguments of Confucian meritocrats and Confucian participatory democrats with regard to the value of democracy from the perspective of the "from instrumental to intrinsic" framework and revealed how one dimensional each position's understanding of democracy is, making it difficult for each group to articulate the value of democracy adequately in its respective Confucian political theory. After noting that Confucian political theorists often present the value of democracy as structurally dependent on the value of (philosophical) Confucianism, I finally offered pragmatic Confucian democracy as an alternative normative framework that can best help us to make sense of the value of Confucianism, understood as civic culture, in relation to the intrinsic value of democracy without confounding the two analytically. My central claim was that pragmatic Confucian democracy, supported by the mutual accommodation thesis, can address the methodological conundrum surrounding the value of Confucianism, the value of democracy, and the value of Confucian democracy in a philosophically principled and politically relevant way.

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19. Korean Constitutional and Supreme Courts' decisions in the 2000s to abolish the family-head system and to ban discrimination between men and women in terms of membership and property rights within clan organizations powerfully demonstrate this reverse accommodation process (Kim 2016, 107–67).

20. Therefore, my understanding of democratic representation is more expansive than the conventional view in democratic theory, which is focused on the legislature. My view is indebted to several works, including Eisgruber (2001) Rosanvallon (2011).

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