

Confucian Republicanism, Party Democracy, and Democratic Meritocracy

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Abstract

This article critically engages with Elton Chan's recent proposal of Confucian republican democracy, where republican institutions are adopted for the end of promoting Confucian virtue politics. It contends that the proposal fails to properly acknowledge that the rise of modern political parties has transformed the republican mixed regime into party democracy which is less compatible with Confucianism. In particular, the strong partisanship required for the proper functioning of party democracy is deeply problematic from a Confucian perspective because it undermines people's ability to display benevolence or *ren* (仁), the Confucian virtue par excellence, as well as the pursuit of harmony or *he* (和), the Confucian ideal state of affairs. The article further explores how a well-designed democratic meritocracy drawing on both relevant proposals by Confucian meritocrats and the democratic innovation literature can be viewed as a more promising model for realizing Confucian republicanism in the modern world.