Political participation as self-cultivation: Towards a participatory theory of Confucian democracy

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Abstract
Challenging the popular perception that Confucianism provides mostly a moral defense of political hierarchy, this article demonstrates that Confucianism is more than compatible with democracy and fundamentally contradicts political hierarchy, be it autocracy or meritocracy. Drawing on Zhu Xi (1130–1200 CE), the spokesperson for the state orthodoxy in late imperial China and one of the towering figures in the Confucian tradition, I argue that to realize the Confucian self-cultivation program for all requires popular participation in politics *beyond casting ballots*. My argument builds on Zhu Xi's moral egalitarianism that all human beings can pursue sagehood by self-cultivation and should be given the equal opportunity to do so. Since Zhu Xi's self-cultivation program requires acquiring and perfecting political knowledge in political practice, to realize his moral egalitarianism requires political equality for all. As such, my participatory theory of Confucian democracy exhorts all people to engage in self-governance and daily administration of the state more proactively. Thus, it enriches the prevalent liberal theory of Confucian democracy that focuses on political representation but not on popular participation in politics.

In recent years, Confucianism has re-emerged as a prominent political ideology in China, as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) increasingly turns to China's traditional cultures to shore up its legitimacy. The CCP's co-optation of Confucianism seems fitting because the tradition is popularly perceived as a moral defense of political hierarchy (e.g. Bell, 2016a: 86–87, 91). I challenge this popular perception

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by drawing on Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200 CE), one of the towering figures in the diverse traditions of Confucianism. More radical than any existing defense of Confucian democracy, I argue that Zhu Xi's Confucian ethics 儒学, upon close examination, turns out to cohere better with democracy than with authoritarianism.

As such, this article intervenes in the lively debate on the compatibility between Confucianism and democracy. To those who are skeptical of the possibility of Confucian democracy, I will show that political equality can be a moral ideal internal to the Confucian tradition because it enhances Confucian Learning for all. To Confucian democrats, my argument reinforces their defenses of Confucian democracy by adding a robust participatory dimension. Enriching the prevalent liberal model of Confucian democracy, which does not expand the scope of popular participation beyond electoral politics, I will demonstrate that popular participation in self-governance should be an indispensable activity or mode of Confucian self-cultivation. Therefore, this article not only justifies democracy on Confucian terms but also illustrates how Confucian ethics can help build a robust democratic civic culture.

The following is divided into four sections. The first section reviews the current literature and specifies my contributions. The second section introduces Zhu Xi as an influential philosopher and addresses two charges of anachronism against my democratic reconstruction of his thought. The third section lays the moral foundation of Confucian democracy by explaining Zhu Xi's moral egalitarianism, which stems from his ontology of coherence (*li* 理) and material force (*qi* 氣). The fourth section demonstrates why Zhu Xi's investigative self-cultivation program (*gewu zhizhi* 格物致知), along with his belief in the universal accessibility to sagehood, calls for popular political participation.

The (im)possibility of Confucian democracy

The CCP's recent resort to Confucianism is unsurprising. In contemporary China, there are many grass-root efforts to revive various Confucian elements (e.g. see Billioud and Thoraval, 2015; Ivanhoe and Kim, 2016, chs. 1–4; Sun, 2013). Although many Confucian political theorists do not necessarily support the CCP's way to revitalize Confucianism, they reject the idea of a Confucian democracy for four different reasons. First, some hesitate to endorse political equality because they are concerned with the kind of liberal individualism that undergirds the popular understanding of democracy (e.g. Ames, 2011: 268; Hall and Ames, 1999: ch. 8; Rosemont, 2015: 63, 125). Second, some think that Confucian ethics is an inegalitarian tradition and does not support political equality (e.g. Angle, 2012: 54–56; Chan, 2014: 85; Elstein, 2010: 440; Tan, 2003: 153–156; Tan, 2016: 502). Third, some defend Confucianism as China's native identity, which is incompatible with foreign egalitarian values (e.g. Fan, 2013: 103–109; Jiang, 2013: 27–43; for a study of these nationalist positions, see Makeham, 2008). Lastly, some praise Confucianism as a worthy rival to democracy. Unlike the mob rule by universal suffrage, Confucianism reserves political power mostly for the meritorious

(e.g. Bai, 2013: 76; Bell, 2016b: 99–108; for critiques, see Kim, 2014: ch. 3). Simply put, none of these Confucians sees how the tradition can benefit much from the ideal of political equality.

Against this inegalitarian current, a few egalitarian voices have emerged. New Confucians in Taiwan maintain that liberal democracy benefits Confucianism, a state-centered political tradition, by protecting individual autonomy and popular welfare against abuses of governmental power (Mou, 2010: 122–128; Xu, 1979: 287–289; see also Angle, 2012: ch. 2; Liu, 1993: 138–140). Thus, they believe that democracy is necessary for realizing Confucian ideals (Elstein, 2015: chs. 3–5; Lee, 2005: 35–37). Others like Sungmoon Kim are less concerned with how democracy may benefit Confucianism. They consider democratic ideals intrinsically valuable and reconstruct Confucianism as civic instruments for strengthening democracy (Kim, 2014: 85; Kim, 2016: 18, 27, 67–68; Kim, 2017: 246). For example, Kim affirms the value of democratic participation, but he does so "without rendering the value of democracy dependent on traditional philosophical Confucianism's perfectionist moral ends" (Kim, 2017: 247). As such, Confucian democrats remain divided on the theoretical relationship between Confucianism and democracy: does democracy benefit Confucianism or vice versa?

My answer to this question combines insights from both sides of Confucian democrats. First, I agree with New Confucians like Mou Zongsan and Xu Fuguan that the philosophical relationship between Confucianism and democracy is more intimate than Kim has suggested. Kim refuses to associate his Confucian political theory with any school of Confucian Learning and argues that "as a civic culture, Confucianism is not necessarily democratic in itself, and it is compatible with a wide range of political systems" (Kim, 2017: 246). This article shows that Zhu Xi's Confucian ethics is incompatible with authoritarianism and that democracy is *a key implication* of Confucian ethics. My exegesis of Zhu Xi will demonstrate that democracy should be ethically valuable to Confucians because it is a political ideal deduced from their own ethical commitments.

To be sure, although I agree with Mou and Xu that democracy is necessary for realizing Confucian ideals, my article draws on a different source than Mou's and Xu's work. Xu mostly focuses on Classical Confucians, whereas Mou relies heavily on the Heart-Mind school (*xinxue* 心學) of the Neo-Confucian tradition. My theory of Confucian democracy rests on Zhu Xi's Coherence school (*lixue* 理學), which reinterprets Classical Confucianism in the wake of Buddhism and Daoism and against which the Heart-Mind school developed itself. Thus, supplementing Mou's and Xu's defenses of Confucian democracy, my appeal to Zhu Xi shows that, even with all its diversities, the Confucian tradition has a strong philosophical propensity towards democracy.[1]

Second, I side with Kim in affirming the value of democratic participation, though I do so by grounding this participatory value in Zhu Xi's perfectionist ideals.[2] New Confucians like Mou and Xu mostly adopt liberal democracy, i.e. a limited, representative government with free and fair elections, with a non-liberal justification (Elstein, 2015: 91–96). They never affirm the crucial need for Confucians to participate in self-governance beyond casting ballots. Building on

Brooke A Ackerly's insight that Confucian democratic institutions should foster universal self-cultivation (Ackerly, 2005: 562), I contend that a participatory democracy can benefit Confucians beyond the liberal need for political self-protection. Popular participation in politics is internally valuable to Confucians because it can facilitate their self-cultivation by encouraging them to acquire and perfect their political knowledge in practice. Consequently, my perfectionist theory of Confucian democracy can also help build a vibrant democratic culture, which Kim (2017: 247) values deeply.[3] In short, although this article focuses on justifying democracy to Confucianism, it also supports the idea that Confucianism benefits democracy (Kim, 2017: 248).

Why Zhu Xi?

Before I continue, let me first address the foundational question: why Zhu Xi? Today, most political theorists rely on Confucianism's classical and modern periods as sources for discussing Confucian democracy. Imperial Confucians have received little attention from political theorists. This article hopes to narrow this gap by focusing on an imperial Confucian, Zhu Xi. Zhu Xi lived during the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE), a transformative period of both Confucianism and imperial China (Bol, 2008; Kuhn, 2011). He was a key player during the Neo-Confucian revival, a political and philosophical movement aiming both to curb the power of Buddhism and Daoism and to extend Confucian influences. Representing one influential position (*daoxue* 道學) among diverse Neo-Confucian schools, Zhu Xi profoundly shaped the later development of Confucianism. His impact is partly due to his scholarly genius and partly due to the orthodox status his philosophy attained in late imperial China and across early modern East Asia.[4] In late imperial China, for example, to have a political career required first excelling at civil service examinations based on Zhu Xi's thought. Given the centrality of ethics to his political philosophy, Zhu Xi is largely responsible for our contemporary impression of Confucianism as a moralistic political tradition that prioritizes virtue over statecraft (El Amine, 2015: 8–9).

Considering Zhu Xi's historical context, to democratize his monarchist thought runs the risks of anachronism. To respond, I am not conducting an exegetical exercise to prove that Zhu Xi supports democracy, which is indeed anachronistic. Rather, I am *constructing* a Confucian democratic vision entailed by Zhu Xi's moral egalitarianism, i.e. all of us should pursue sagehood by self-cultivation. To do so, I need to address two historical "inaccuracies" stemming from my democratic reconstruction of Zhu Xi's thought. First, I must confront Zhu Xi's personal monarchism. To dispel this monarchal aura, I show that there is an internal conflict between Zhu Xi's support of monarchism and his moral egalitarianism.[5] That is, it is impossible for a benevolent political hierarchy to realize Zhu Xi's moral egalitarianism *even in theory*. Pinpointing Zhu Xi's conflicting commitments to moral equality and political inequality, I leverage his egalitarian ethics against his personal monarchism (in the fourth section). I will

demonstrate that Zhu Xi's support of monarchism is inconsistent with his *political* desire to implement his self-cultivation program for all because his self-cultivation program requires political participation. As such, to truly realize the fundamental perfectionist purpose of government for Zhu Xi requires us to abandon his monarchism and embrace democracy. Simply put, although Zhu Xi himself does not envision democratic institutions, I think that his ethics contains an egalitarian spirit that conflicts with authoritarianism but resonates with democracy as a moral ideal.

Second, popular participation in politics requires widespread literacy in Classical Chinese, a precondition that did not exist in Zhu Xi's time. As a local official, Zhu Xi established or restored local academies to promote his own self-cultivation program and welcomed all willing students and scholars—including his intellectual opponents—to attend these academies (Bol, 2008: 140–144, 231–232; Chaffee, 1985: 44; Chan, 1987: 61–62; Walton, 1999: 40; YL, 17: 3481).[6] Despite Zhu Xi's openness to welcome all as Confucian learners, however, his academies remained elite institutions and failed to reach the vast majority of the Chinese people (Elman, 1991: 91). This is because Zhu Xi did not promote any radical policy to ensure that children from the artisanal or peasant class could receive the basic classical training to attend an advanced institute such as his academies (Elman, 1991: 90–92).

Although universal education was an unrealized ideal in Zhu Xi's time, he does uphold it as a political ideal. In his preface to *Great Learning*, a Confucian text he singles out as *the* guidebook of self-cultivation, Zhu Xi expresses his admiration for the ancient times when the sages made elementary learning available to both male aristocrats and male commoners:

> Amidst the glory of the Three Dynasties, regulations were gradually perfected, and thereafter schools were found everywhere, from the imperial Palace and the state capitals on down to the villages. At the age of eight, all the male children, from the sons of kings and dukes to the sons of commoners, entered the school of elementary learning. (Gardner, 1986: 79; SS, 6: 13)

For Zhu Xi, the curriculum of elementary learning includes literacy in Classical Chinese (SS: 6:13; YL, 14: 273).[7] In other words, Zhu Xi does support the political ideal of universal education in theory (De Bary, 1989: 191). Indeed, Zhu Xi praises another local official for devoting personal and state resources to establish a charity school for poor students from the official's lineage and local community (Walton, 1993: 265–266). Therefore, to foster a democratic conception of Confucian citizenship based on Zhu Xi's thought, we must hold Zhu Xi accountable to the sagely principle of universal education and use it as a critical ideal for promoting equal access to education in our time. In short, this article may be called a progressive Confucian project because I believe that Zhu Xi's Confucian ethics can lead to "progressive political change, which in turn leads to greater realization of our potential for virtue" (Angle, 2012: 18).

Confucian moral equality and the universal accessibility of sagehood

Since this article argues for democracy as a moral ideal, I must first supply a moral foundation of political equality. Employing an ontology of coherence (*li* 理) and material force (*qi* 氣), Zhu Xi can help us explain why "evaluative inequalities among people do not disqualify the fundamental similarity among human beings" (Kim, 2016: 211). For Zhu Xi, coherence, as the common essence of all human beings, grounds the moral identity between the sages and the non-sages, whereas material force accounts for their moral differences. I will unpack the concept of coherence more in Section 4. For now, it suffices to emphasize that coherence outweighs material force in moral evaluations because coherence is the highest Confucian good, the supreme normative standard with which we evaluate the purity of material force. Therefore, all persons' moral identity in coherence overrides their moral differences caused by material force. Let me present this argument in greater detail.

Following Cheng Yi (1033–1107), his main philosophical influence, Zhu Xi believes that human nature is coherence (*xing ji li* 性即理).[8] The sages and the rest of us share the same moral essence by virtue of our common humanity (YL, 14: 196). This anthropological presumption pervades Zhu Xi's entire philosophy. A typical example can be found in Zhu Xi's commentary on *Mencius* 3A:1, where Mencius speaks with the Crown Prince of Teng about the moral identity between the sages and others. Zhu Xi writes:

> Originally, humans do not differ from Yao and Shun [two legendary sages] *even slightly*. However, many are drowned in their selfish desires (私欲, i.e. those human desires contrary to coherence) and lose their original nature. In contrast, Yao and Shun are never blinded by their selfish desires and can act in full accordance with their nature. Therefore, whenever Mencius speaks with the Crown Prince about the goodness of human nature, he always mentions Yao and Shun to substantiate his point. Mencius wants the prince to understand that the virtues of benevolence and appropriateness are not acquired by seeking them externally and *sagehood can be attained through learning*. [Mencius's teaching is to encourage the prince] never to slack off in exerting effort to pursue sagehood.[9] (Zhu, 2010: 306, emphasis added)

What I want to highlight in this passage is that, for Zhu Xi, coherence represents Confucian moral perfection. It is the moral standard by which the sages live. When Zhu Xi asserts that the sages and all other human beings receive the same coherence from heaven, he is saying that humanity is morally perfect by nature. Thus, Confucian virtues are innate in human nature. Commenting on *Great Learning*'s famous opening line, "the way of great learning lies in illuminating one's luminous virtue," Zhu Xi writes: "Luminous virtue is what all humans receive from heaven; it is open, spiritual, and undarkened; and it contains the multitudinous manifestations of coherence to respond to the myriad affairs" (Zhu, 2010: 16; trans. by

Gardner, 1986: 88–89). In other words, all human beings are born sages who possess complete virtues and perfect knowledge to handle all situations in both human and natural worlds according to coherence. Like the sages, all of us have the full moral potential to attain sagehood.

If the sages and the non-sages are morally identical by birth, how can we explain their apparent moral differences? For Zhu Xi, moral differences across human beings are caused not by different types of human nature but by different physical constitutions (*qizhi zhibing* 氣質之稟) (YL, 14: 199). According to Zhu Xi, human beings (like everything else) are not composed only of coherence, which is perceptible by intellect but remains invisible, intangible, and abstract. We are also constituted by material force (*qi* 氣), which generates physical substances for coherence to manifest itself concretely (YL, 14: 194–196). Unfortunately, although coherence sets the moral standard of purity for material force, it does not control the actual operation of material force (YL, 14: 200). In reality, material force impedes the manifestations of coherence by endowing most persons with an impure physical constitution (YL, 14: 198). Having an impure physical constitution means that an individual's natural perception of her inborn moral perfection is obscured. Her mental and bodily motions often deviate from coherence, resulting in human flaws such as ignorance, selfish desires, and excessive emotions (Ching, 1986: 275; Ivanhoe, 2000: 47–48).

Nevertheless, moral differences between the sages and non-sages do not constitute their moral inequality because, for Zhu Xi, these moral differences are accidental and do not constrain anyone's moral agency for self-cultivation.[10] He believes that all impure physical constitutions should be transformed to embody coherence, the universal moral perfection inborn to all (SS, 6: 49; YL, 14: 198). As Zhu Xi exhorts his students:

> an ordinary person should consider [pursuing] sagehood his own duty. Worldly people consider sagehood too lofty and themselves too unworthy. Therefore, they are unwilling to improve themselves . . . However, the sage's natural essence is the same as that of ordinary people. If so, how could an ordinary person not consider [pursuing] sagehood his own duty? (YL, 14: 280, 198; also see Chen, 1986: 50)

Here we hear Zhu Xi's egalitarian conviction loud and clear: sagehood is accessible to *everyone* by self-cultivation because all human beings share the same inborn moral essence and coherence as the sages (Angle, 2009: 17–18; Back, 2015: 267, 273).

Self-governance as self-cultivation

Based on his moral egalitarianism, Zhu Xi envisions a Confucian polity dedicated to realizing the equal opportunity of self-cultivation for all. He expresses this political vision in his commentary on *Great Learning*, one of the four Confucian

classics (*sishu* 四書) he canonizes as the new foundation of Confucian learning. As Zhu Xi indicates in his preface to *Great Learning*:

> [In ancient times,] should there appear among the people one who is bright and wise and capable of fulfilling the full potential of his [moral] nature, heaven would certainly ordain him to act as the sovereign instructor to the multitudes (*yizhao zhi junshi* 億兆 之君師), commissioning him to govern and teach them so that they can return to their nature (*yifu qixing* 以復其性). Thus, Fu Xi, Shen Nong, Huang Di, Yao, and Shun [all of whom were legendary sages] carried on for heaven and established the highest point of excellence; and these were the reasons for which the office of the Minister of Education and the post of the Director of Music were founded. (SS, 6: 13; trans. by Gardner, 1986: 77–79)

The last two sentences make it clear that the purpose of Confucian political authority is to help all persons return to their inborn coherence. The sage king is the instructor not for the few but for *the many* (“the sovereign instructor to the multitudes”). His government establishes the offices of education and music to promote the ethical transformation of the populace. The reason why those sage kings succeeded in completing their heavenly mission is precisely that they reconstructed the society to help all return to their own original nature, i.e. to pursue sagehood and attain ethical perfection.

Zhu Xi’s preface is echoed by his commentary on the text of *Great Learning*. The text begins with the famous line that “the way of great learning lies in illuminating one’s luminous virtue, in renewing the populace, and in coming to dwell in perfect goodness” (SS, 6: 16; trans. by Gardner, 1986: 88–89). For Zhu Xi, “coming to dwell in perfect goodness” is a critical ideal for both self-cultivation (“illuminating one’s luminous virtue”) and cultivating others (“renew the populace”) (SS, 6: 16–17). It means that Confucians have a moral duty to help others reach perfect goodness *by political means*, i.e. making public policies that compel the entire populace towards self-cultivation.[11] Zhu Xi thinks that, if one fails to renew the people, it can only mean either that one’s own self-cultivation is still insufficient or that the political environment is too degenerative. The latter means that one should strive to change the political environment (YL, 14: 446). As Angle and Tiwald empathize, for Confucians like Zhu Xi, the ultimate political goal is to facilitate “the ethical transformation of people in the state, as well as their leaders” (Angle and Tiwald, 2017: 183).[12]

Since politics serves ethics in Zhu Xi’s political theory, we need to show that his ethics calls for popular participation in politics to deduce a theory of Confucian democracy from Confucian Learning. Our first step is to undermine Zhu Xi’s own monarchism. Zhu Xi probably did not realize that canonizing and popularizing *Great Learning* has already destabilized his perfectionist hierarchy. For Zhu Xi, *Great Learning* contains the complete, systemic program of Confucian self-cultivation (SS, 6: 16; YL, 14: 420–421). He credits Confucius for composing the main text of *Great Learning* and making Confucian education *available to all* (SS, 6: 13–14). Even those adults who have missed out on elementary learning can now

pursue sagehood by studying great and elementary learning simultaneously (SS, 6: 505–506; YL, 13: 371, 14: 270).[13] Thus, all learners can now pursue sagehood even *in the absence of* a benevolent sovereign instructor (as was in Confucius's own time) because the sage has passed down the complete method of self-cultivation in *Great Learning*. As such, Zhu Xi unwittingly transformed *Great Learning* into a democratic text for all (Bol, 2008: 136; Gardner, 1986: 58).

The rest of the section illustrates how Zhu Xi's self-cultivation program (based on his egalitarian reading of *Great Learning*) and his ideal of universal self-cultivation render political hierarchy incompatible with Confucianism and democracy a more coherent implication. By doing so, this section sketches a participatory conception of Confucian citizenship that encourages all Confucians to see political participation as a moral good that can benefit their self-cultivation.

Recall that to reach perfect goodness for Zhu Xi is to know our inborn coherence and to dwell in the world according to it. Thus, we need to unpack the concept "coherence" more. As a relational and contextual good, coherence manifests itself when all elements come together in a rightfully patterned way in a being, an event, or a relationship (Angle, 2009: 49; Peterson, 1986: 18). For Zhu Xi, coherence is not only the ontological essence of humanity but also that of the cosmos. As the supreme normative principle, it both defines human ethics and determines how everything else ought to operate in the universe (YL, 14: 182–214; see also Zhang, 2016: 24–31). Although it does not mean that human beings share the exact same identity with the cosmos, it does entail that human nature and the cosmos form an intimate microcosmic-macrocosmic relationship. The flourishing of a human life is in harmony with that of the universe. Put differently, coherence is functionally analogous to the medieval conception of natural law in the sense that both coherence and natural law integrate human beings into a larger moralized universe and stand as the ontological ideal for all human actions in both empirical and normative realms (Angle and Tiwald, 2017: 32–33).

Despite being the singular source of normativity, coherence manifests itself differently in different relationships. Again, following Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi endorses the Neo-Confucian precept that coherence is singular but its manifestations are diverse (*liyi fenshu* 理一分殊) (YL, 14: 114, 606–607). As the prominent Zhu Xi scholar Wing-tsit Chan points out, the term *fen* 分, properly speaking, means a person's or a thing's "lot, function, duty, etc. The phrase is in a parallel construction, with *li* matching *fen*" (Chan, 1987: 89–90).[14] In other words, coherence determines relational ethics for all beings. It is the moral foundation of a person's relational functions or duties in her relationships with the society and the natural world (YL, 14: 186–191, 240). A relationship is coherent when all participants perform their proper roles. For example, Zhu Xi thinks that, within politics, different levels of governmental officials should follow different patterns of coherence. The local government should focus on eliminating theft, fostering agriculture, and regulating commerce, whereas the central government should keep open channels of remonstrations, collect the facts on the ground, and prevent factions (YL, 17: 3219). These political functions differ from those functions one must perform in familial relationships (YL, 16: 2015). Accordingly, other civil activities such as caring for

one's family cannot count as political participation because they are not properly political according to coherence. As we shall see, to have a full understanding of coherence, Confucians must know how to govern beyond their own family. Thus, coherence is practical in the sense that it provides different moral instructions for different human affairs.

Unfortunately, for most of us, our inborn knowledge of coherence—i.e. how to play various roles according to the patterns of coherence—has been obscured by our impure physical constitutions. Since human nature and the world both have coherence as their normative standard, Zhu Xi exhorts us to seek ethical knowledge externally by investigating the coherent patterns underlying the diverse affairs of the world (SS, 6: 167; YL, 14: 194). This is where Zhu Xi's famous precept—investigating things (*gewu* 格物) to extend one's knowledge (*zhizhi* 致知)—comes in. This precept originates in *Great Learning* as a minor point but Zhu Xi turns it into the foundation of Confucian self-cultivation (Gardner, 1986: 53–58). For Zhu Xi, Confucians should keep investigating various coherent patterns of the world until they have reached the full extent of knowledge and thus returned to their original moral nature. Considering how little the previous editions of *Great Learning* have said about investigating things, Zhu Xi inserts the following passage into the original text:

> What "the extension of knowledge lies in the investigation of things" means is that if we wish to extend our knowledge to the utmost, we must probe thoroughly the coherence in all things we encounter. It is because every person's intellect is possessed of the capacity for knowing and everything in the world is possessed of coherence. But, to the extent that coherence is not yet thoroughly probed, human knowledge is not yet fully realized. Hence, *the first lesson in great learning* is to teach the student, whenever the student encounters anything in the world, to build upon what they have already known about coherence to probe further. This is to seek the utmost extent of knowledge. (Gardner, 1986: 104–105; SS, 6: 20, emphasis added)

For Zhu Xi, the coherence of the diverse universe can be intelligible to us precisely because it is identical to our inborn coherence (YL, 14: 183–185). Thus, the most effective way for us to recover our inborn knowledge of coherence is to investigate the various affairs of the external world and understand their unique patterns of coherence (Chen, 2000: 294–303). Since the light of our inborn coherence is never completely extinguished, our epistemic pursuit should start by following our vague intuitions stimulated by external events, then proceed to see how those intuitions may be clarified in further investigations, and finally extend the acquired knowledge to other analogous circumstances (Angle and Tiwald, 2017: 127–128). As such, Zhu Xi's epistemic self-cultivation constitutes a hermeneutic circle in which the coherence of the human mind and that of external affairs are enlightening each other (Cheng, 1986: 176). Therefore, investigating things is the foundation of Zhu Xi's self-cultivation program because it provides ethical guidance derived directly from coherence, the supreme moral standard itself.

Although Zhu Xi emphasizes investigating things as the foundation of Confucian self-cultivation, he does not enact a rigid sequence of learning, i.e. acquiring knowledge before practicing it. Rather, Zhu Xi thinks that knowledge and practice are intertwined with each other:

> Knowledge and practice *constantly need each other* (*chang xiangxu* 常相須), just as the eyes cannot walk without the feet and the feet cannot see without the eyes. In terms of sequence, knowledge is prior, but in terms of weight, practice is heavier (YL, 14: 298, emphasis added)

Notice that Zhu Xi's sequence that knowledge comes before practice is *prefaced* by his emphasis that they are mutually dependent. Indeed, the analogy of walking is illuminating here. During walking, the exact relationship between the eyes and feet is not a rigidified sequence but a continuous interaction. When we walk, we use our eyes and feet *simultaneously*. Another conversation between Zhu Xi and his student can further substantiate my exegesis on the knowledge-practice relationship in Zhu Xi's self-cultivation program. A student asks him: "Should we know first and then practice?" Zhu Xi responds with an emphatic negation:

> No! [If so,] then we would have upheld no moral commitment (*bu chishou* 不持守) before we could understand coherence (*mingli* 明理). Take Zeng Dian and [his son] Zengzi as two different examples. Zeng Dian understood coherence thoroughly but his practice (*xing* 行) failed to match his understanding. Zengzi[, on the other hand,] upheld moral commitments instantly (*hexia chishou* 合下持守), understood coherence gradually, and [eventually] reached the ultimate truth he learned from Confucius [*yiweichu* 一惟處; see *Analects* 4:15]. (YL, 14: 298–299)

As we can see, Zhu Xi rejects his student's suggestion that there is a rigid sequence going from acquiring knowledge to taking actions. He does not think that an advanced understanding of moral principles is the precondition of moral actions. On the contrary, he believes that the very act of acquiring knowledge itself *requires practice*. That is why he praises Zengzi, a disciple of Confucius's who is slow in his moral apprehension but known for his commitments to moral actions (SS, 6: 96).

Therefore, Zhu Xi's conception of investigating things is more of a practical pursuit than a theoretical endeavor. Book learning is necessary but insufficient (YL, 14: 437–438). Even though Zhu Xi emphasizes reading Confucian classics as a matter of investigating things, he cautions learners never to lose their focus on practical matters (YL, 14: 314, 319–320, 331–332). Excessive theoretical speculation would only exhaust their minds in vain (YL, 14: 473). As Zhu Xi tells his pupil:

> people often treat the truth as a lofty and empty thing. *Great Learning* speaks not of probing coherence thoroughly but only of investigating things because it requires people to understand coherence in practical affairs. Only by doing so can their real

essence can be seen. What the so-called "real essence" means is that it can only be seen in practical affairs. (YL, 14: 469, emphasis added; see also Qian, 2010: 626–630)

Zhu Xi then illustrates his point with an example of pushing a boat on land. He thinks that only after experiencing the inevitable failure of such an endeavor can the learner truly know the coherence of the boat as a water vehicle unsuitable for land travel (YL, 14: 469; see also Angle and Tiwald, 2017: 118, 129–130). Thus, Zhu Xi makes it clear that the true knowledge of coherence is gained only in concrete trials (for more examples, see YL, 14: 597, 15: 1024). Investigating things to acquire knowledge must be fulfilled in practical affairs. It is an experiential method, i.e. to know coherence by experiencing it in practice.[15]

For Zhu Xi, practice not only produces knowledge but also perfects it. He thinks that "just having the knowledge before practicing it means that one's knowledge is still shallow. Once one has personally experienced the specific field, one's knowledge of it will also become more illuminated, which will differ from how one experienced it before" (YL, 14: 298). Answering a student's question on how to reach moral perfection, Zhu Xi responds: "Effort must be put into both knowledge and practice *simultaneously*. The more illuminated knowledge is, the more earnest practice will become; the more earnest practice is, the more illuminated knowledge will become. Neither should be abandoned..." (YL, 14: 457, emphasis added). Here we see another hermeneutic circle in which knowledge and practice illuminate each other. Only by practice can one truly understand coherence and know how to act coherently in diverse situations. Simply put, Zhu Xi thinks that genuine knowledge is inseparable from practice because the former is both acquired and perfected in the latter (Le, 2010: 172–175).

Now that we have seen Zhu Xi's emphasis on the inseparability of knowledge and practice for self-cultivation, we must show that his experiential method also applies to politics. First, Zhu Xi knows that it is neither possible nor desirable for a finite human being to investigate everything to reach the full knowledge of coherence. In his commentary and conversations, Zhu Xi repeatedly invokes Cheng Yi to state that a Confucian learner's investigative journey is long and difficult but does not entail the need to investigate all things (SS, 6: 525; YL, 14: 602–604). Although all things possess their own patterns of coherence that can be learned through investigation, Zhu Xi believes that:

> after exerting oneself in this [investigative] way *for a long time*, one will one day become enlightened and thoroughly understand coherence; then, the manifest and the hidden, the subtle and the obvious qualities of all things will be known. Then, my mind will be completely illuminated in its whole substance and vast operations. This is what is called 'things fully investigated'...(Gardner, 1986: 105; SS, 6: 20, emphasis added)

In other words, a large accumulation of knowledge will lead to a fundamental change in one's moral cognition of the world, which then enables one to see and follow coherence in all affairs (Chen, 2000: 306–307).

Since we cannot and should not investigate everything, we must have priorities. Although Zhu Xi never excludes propositional knowledge (e.g. the growth patterns of plants) from our investigative pursuits, he does make practical knowledge the priority of our investigations (Chen, 2000: 313–314).[16] One of such investigative priorities is politics. When one of his favorite students Chen Chun asks him how to respond to exceptional situations that evade regular rules (*yingbianchu* 應變處), Zhu Xi cautions him not to get ahead of himself by worrying about those exceptions (YL, 18: 3703–3705). Instead, the student should first investigate things broadly. Zhu Xi explicitly instructs Chen Chun that moral virtue alone is insufficient for dealing with the affairs under heaven (*ying tianxiashi* 應天下事). Zhu Xi tells Chen Chun to emulate the broad political learning of King Wu of Zhou (one of the ancient sages), study the *Rites of Zhou* (a classic containing the ancient designs of political institutions by another sage, Duke Zhou), and investigate political matters such as "musicology and calendar, criminal law, astronomy, geography, military affairs, bureaucracy, and so on" (YL, 18: 3704–3705). By the end of the conversation, Zhu Xi returns to the first teaching (*shoushuo* 首說) of *Great Learning*, i.e. the investigation of things (also see YL, 18: 3764). He thinks that, once we have investigated these political affairs to the full extent of our knowledge, all our actions—including our political actions to govern the state and bring peace to the world (*guozhi tianxiaping* 國治天下平)—will be "spontaneous like floods overrunning all without obstacles and resistance" (YL, 18: 3706).[17]

I have two more arguments to support my exegesis that Zhu Xi's investigative priorities include political affairs. First, for Zhu Xi, the investigation of things must start with careful studies of Confucian classics such as the *Analects* and *Mencius* (YL, 14: 314, 319–320, 331–332). Any glance at these preferred texts would reveal that they are filled with political discussions about concrete public policies (e.g. taxation, land distribution, and commerce). Zhu Xi also supplies plenty of commentaries on these political matters (e.g. see *Mencius* 1B:5, 3A:3, 3B:8; SS, 6: 266–268, 309–313, 329–330). Therefore, given Zhu Xi's emphasis on the inseparability of knowledge and practice, he certainly expects Confucians to acquire and perfect their political knowledge by reading the classics and applying the political lessons in practice, which are their first steps towards sagehood.

Second, more importantly, the *Doctrine of the Mean*—the final book of the *Four Books* and the classic Zhu Xi regards as the culmination of Confucian learning—includes political matters as a part of Confucian self-cultivation. The textual evidence appears in Chapter 20 where Confucius advises Duke Ai of Lu on good governance.[18] Here Confucius lays out the coherence of governance, i.e. the duties of a political authority. Confucius instructs Duke Ai that:

> to govern the kingdom with its states and families is to follow nine standard principles (*jiujing* 九經): cultivating oneself; honoring the meritorious; being affectionate toward relatives; respecting the great ministers; empathizing with the whole body of officers; treating the common people with parental love; recruiting all classes of artisans; showing hospitality to travelers from afar; and embracing the lords of all the states. (SS, 6: 46–47)[19]

As *a critical ideal*—not as a description of political reality—Zhu Xi's commentary on Confucius's nine standard principles sketches at least a partial political agenda for Confucians. According to Zhu Xi (SS, 6: 587–589), a Confucian polity is following coherence if 1) governmental officials feel trusted and devote themselves to public welfare, 2) the populace is exhorting one another to be virtuous, 3) the economy is diversified and booming, and 4) many immigrants are eager to enter the polity. Put differently, the coherence of politics at least demands Confucians to know how to improve a polity's bureaucracy, public culture, economy, and immigration policies.

For Zhu Xi, such political knowledge is gained by the same experiential method of self-cultivation, i.e. investigating things. Near the end of his lengthy advice to Duke Ai, Confucius states: "To govern the kingdom with its states and families is to follow nine standard principles. What propels action is one [nature] (*suoyi xingzhizhe, yiye* 所以行之者，一也)." Zhu Xi takes the word "one" to mean authenticity (*cheng* 诚), which for him designates the sagely state of moral perfection. An authentic person is a sage who has become identical with coherence, one's true self and inborn moral essence (SS, 6: 48, 591–592; also see *tongshu zhu* 通书注, 13: 95–100). In other words, for Zhu Xi, political competency and moral perfection are mutually constitutive. To be an authentic sage *is* to govern a polity according to nine Confucian principles and vice versa. By the end of his advice, Confucius teaches Duke Ai how to attain this sagely state: "Study it broadly, inquire into it accurately, think over it carefully, discern it clearly, and practice it earnestly." According to Zhu Xi, Confucius is giving a catalogue of self-cultivation methods (SS, 6: 48). He then interprets this catalogue according to his own theory of knowledge and practice. The first four items belong to the investigation of things (YL, 14: 634). The last item is Confucius's exhortation for gaining practical proficiency (YL, 14: 298). Zhu Xi's interpretation means that learning how to govern is a key part of attaining authenticity or sagehood by self-cultivation. It requires acquiring and perfecting political knowledge in practice. In sum, for Zhu Xi, political excellence is an essential part of sagehood and political practice is an integral activity of self-cultivation through which one's political skills are tested and honed.

Since Confucians must acquire and perfect political knowledge in practice, they should take governance into their own hands. As Zhu Xi puts it, "to study means that [one] blames no one for not dissecting or analyzing things for oneself. [Studying] entails that one must dig into it, put careful effort into it, and see it for oneself" (YL, 14: 284). To give citizens equal political power is to ensure that they can have meaningful opportunities to study and participate in the process of making political decisions so that they can acquire and perfect their political knowledge in practice.[20] Therefore, even a benevolent dictator cannot realize Zhu Xi's self-cultivation program because such a dictator necessarily takes away the populace's opportunity to "dig into [politics], put careful effort into it, and see it" for themselves. As such, a participatory democracy is the only way to ensure that all can have the equal opportunity to pursue sagehood by self-cultivation.

However, a practical-minded reader may worry that my democratic reconstruction of Zhu Xi's self-cultivation program is asking too much of ordinary citizens.

First, to think that everyday citizens can attain expertise in so many political matters such as bureaucracy and economy is to dream of an unrealistic prospect. Second, there are simply not enough governmental positions for everyone to acquire and improve their political knowledge in practice. Third, many citizens today have little knowledge about political matters and few incentives to change this situation. Therefore, letting poorly informed citizens participate in making political decisions would make everyone worse off.

Given limited space here, I can only briefly respond to these practical challenges against my participatory theory of Confucian democracy. First, Zhu Xi is aware that, even just in politics, it is impossible for one person to know all the technical details. When he tells his student Chen Chun to investigate political affairs, he also tells him that "even though we are unable to dive deeply into the complexities and subtleties of all political matters [such as bureaucracy and economy], we need to know their basic structures and key principles (*guimo dagai* 規模大概) so that [our understanding of] the truth (*daoli* 道理) is comprehensive and penetrating" (YL, 18: 3705). In other words, Confucian learners are not required to attain expertise in all political matters. Rather, they are only encouraged to know the fundamentals of each political matter. To be sure, this teaching is still demanding but is more likely to be realized than the impossible standard that one should know all political matters down to their smallest details, which Zhu Xi certainly does not endorse.

Second, how could we ensure that there would be enough opportunities for all citizens to participate, since there is only a limited number of governmental positions? To answer this question, let me make a conceptual distinction between political excellence and administrative competency. Political excellence indicates the ability to make informed political decisions for the common good. Administrative competency refers to technical expertise and the capacity of executing a political order. The modern state is a complex political organization whose daily operation requires a high level of administrative competency, which means that not everyone can be a qualified administrator. As we have seen, Zhu Xi does not think that to pursue sagehood requires us to attain administrative competency—that is, we do not have to know all technical details on all political matters.

However, as a political organization, the modern state needs normative directions, which requires political excellence. Confucius's nine standard principles of governance are normative guidelines, not technical workbooks. The model of Confucian citizenship is not a bureaucrat or technocrat who merely executes public policies but a sagely statesperson who understands Confucian political principles and makes public policies according to them. For example, citizens do not have to know the technical details of building a bridge. They can leave these technical matters to the civil engineers. However, as potential sages, they will have to know the basic principles of civil engineering and those of related subjects so that they can know to what extent the proposed bridge can contribute to popular welfare. Thus, to cultivate themselves, Confucian learners only need to acquire and practice the political knowledge necessary for them to excel at making informed political decisions. They do not need all the administrative skills necessary for implementing a public policy. Since self-cultivation needs only political excellence,

not administrative competency, a limited number of governmental positions is not an obstacle for realizing the equal opportunity for all to pursue sagehood. As long as citizens can participate in the political decision-making process outside political administration, they do not have to hold governmental positions.

Third, even if citizens do not need administrative competency, it is still a challenge to enable them to make informed political decisions. Today's citizens have few incentives to improve their political knowledge. To solve this problem, however, our discussion will have to move beyond the central concern of this article, i.e. the issue of whether my participatory theory of Confucian democracy is well-grounded in Zhu Xi's philosophy. This is not to say that I am dismissing this profoundly important question. Rather, I am suggesting that the foremost mission of this article is to propose a democratic theory based on Zhu Xi's philosophy. Only after the reader finds my democratic theory sufficiently compelling can we move on to deliberate together how to best achieve the *moral ideal* of a participatory Confucian democracy in our time. One key theme of that deliberation would be how to incentivize citizens to study and participate in politics, which is a topic beyond the scope of this article.

Conclusion

Engaging with Zhu Xi, the spokesperson for orthodox Confucianism, we have arrived at a democratic understanding of Confucianism antithetical to the popular impression. According to Zhu Xi, nearly all of us are not yet sages and lack political knowledge. We should all be encouraged to acquire and perfect our political knowledge in political practice. Therefore, democracy is more coherent to Zhu Xi's with moral egalitarianism than any political hierarchy, for only political equality can enable all to study politics in practice and pursue sagehood effectively. Political hierarchies like monarchy or meritocracy, on the contrary, deprive the populace of their equal opportunity for self-cultivation by excluding them from political participation. As such, *political hierarchy, not democracy, is a fundamental contradiction of Zhu Xi's moral ideals*. Confucians, at least those sympathetic to Zhu Xi's school, should not worry that embracing democracy, an idea new to the Confucian tradition, would dampen their ontological or ethical commitments. On the contrary, they should be confident that advocating for political equality only reflects their deepest moral conviction. Democracy, as I have shown, should be an integral part of the Confucian mission to "renew the populace," as *Great Learning* exhorts all Confucians to do.

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Notes

1. In this article, labels like "Confucians," and "the Confucian tradition" mostly refer to Zhu Xi's school. To be sure, I am not at all arguing that Zhu Xi's scholarship is the correct essence of Confucianism or is somehow representative of the highly diverse Confucian tradition. I am simply contending that democracy is beneficial to an extremely influential tradition of Confucianism.
2. Although Stephen Angle also considers political participation valuable (e.g. Angle, 2012: 56, 72), he does not specify "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" (Kim, 2017: 244). Like Angle, I also take political participation to be an instrument for personal moral growth. However, my conception of political participation requires citizens' *equal* participation in political matters, which Angle (2010: 55) rejects.
3. In other words, my participatory theory of Confucian democracy can also be read as a Confucian ethics of democratic citizenship, which some scholars think is missing in the Confucian tradition (Dallmayr, 2003: 207–209). It encourages Confucian citizens to take an active role in politics.
4. For a detailed account of how Zhu Xi's philosophy attained the status of political orthodoxy in China, see De Weerdt (2007); Liu (1973); Tillman (1992). For an introduction to Zhu Xi's philosophical and political impact on Korea and Japan, see Choi (2010: 37–47) and Nosco (2010: 55–62) respectively.
5. Historically, Confucians like Zhu Xi often clashed with imperial authority because they thought that the emperors repeatedly failed to meet the Confucian standard of good governance (De Bary, 1991: chs. 4–6; Wood, 1995: 130–131). In one of his memorials, for example, Zhu Xi criticizes the Song Emperor Xiaozong for his interests in Daoism and Buddhism and exhorts him to focus solely on Confucian governance (*wenji* 文集, 20: 572). For more historical studies on Song Confucians' attempts to restrain imperial power, see Bol (2008: 129–138); Yu (2004: 156–183); Zhang (2006: 52).
6. All citations of Zhu Xi's writings follow *The Complete Works of Master Zhu* 朱子全書 published by Shanghai Guji Press 上海古籍出版社. I shall refer to a cited passage with an abbreviation of the book title, the volume number, and the page number. For abbreviations, YL = *The Categorized Conversations of Master Zhu* 朱子語類; SS = *Expositions and Collected Commentaries on the Four Books*; *Questions on the Four Books* 四書章句集註;四書或問. For other less frequently cited books, I will use their full titles, such as *Reflections on Things at Hand* 近思錄.

7. For more on his philosophy of education for young children, see his *The Essential Knowledge for Young Children* (*tongmeng xuzhi* 童蒙须知, 13: 369–392). There Zhu Xi further specifies his reading method.

8. In this article, I follow Willard Peterson (1986) and Angle (2009) in translating *li* as coherence because I want to emphasize the contextualist and relational connotations of *li*. Occasionally, I will employ the term "pattern" to make my writing less awkward. For a more thorough introduction on coherence, see Angle (2009: ch. 2); Angle and Tiwald (2017: ch. 2).

9. Unless indicated otherwise by citations, all translations of Zhu Xi's works are mine. For those adopted translations, I have also modified them to reflect my own understanding of the texts.

10. One may ask: "Since *qi* determines a person's physical constitution, can individuals with physical incoherence or disabilities still pursue sagehood?" To answer this question in detail is beyond the scope of the article, but I think that Zhu Xi's guiding principle is clear. That is, physical incoherence or disabilities are not obstacles to sagehood, as long as such deficiencies do not affect one's moral cognition of coherence. As Zhu Xi comments on *Mencius* 6A:3, "humans and [non-human living] beings are the same in merely knowing the appearances (*chunran* 蠢然) of cognition, perceptions, movements, and motions. However, humans and [non-human living] beings are different [because the former knows] the essence (*cuiran* 粹然) of benevolence, righteousness, ritual propriety, and wisdom, [whereas the latter does not]" (SS, 6: 396; also see YL, 14: 186). As such, Zhu Xi would think that the only people who are unable to pursue sagehood are those with such an impure physical constitution that it makes them permanently incapable of moral judgments.

11. To be sure, Zhu Xi has no problem with using coercive political means to push others towards self-cultivation. However, he also thinks that political coercion alone is insufficient for attaining sagehood. Answering a student's question on the "infamous" passage from *Analects* 8:9 that the populace can be made to follow a path but cannot be made to understand it (Lau, 1979: 93), Zhu Xi emphasizes that the populace cannot be made to understand the Confucian path not because they are incapable but because mere bureaucratic management is insufficient for fulfilling the ideals of Confucian, which as we shall see requires the learner's independent agency (SS, 6: 134; YL, 15: 1303). As such, the populace may be pushed to pursue sagehood but the ideal itself is attainable only by *self*-cultivation, i.e. initiated by one's own will and action.

12. Thus, it is unsurprising that Zhu Xi also wants women to receive some education, even though he does not believe that they can attain sagehood. When asked by his student whether or not women should be educated in the *Classic of Filial Piety* and some simple passages in the *Analects*, Zhu Xi answers affirmatively and goes on to mention other prominent books on women's moral education (YL, 14: 271).

13. Historically, when Zhu Xi's philosophy was the ruling ideology of late imperial China, *Great Learning* was taught as an official textbook to students as young as seven (Gardner, 2007: xiii).

14. See, for example, Cheng Yi's saying indexed in Zhu Xi and Lyu Zuqian's anthology *Reflections on Things at Hand*: "Heaven and earth generates everything with sufficient coherence. [I] often ponder that there are too many duties left unfulfilled (*bujin fenchu* 不盡分處) in the relationships between the ruler and minister, between the father and son, between brothers, and between the husband and wife" (13: 170).

15. As such, it is no surprise that prominent Confucian scholars like Qian Mu (2010: ch. 5), Chen Lai (2000: 302), and Cheng Chung-Ying (1991: 379) have all argued that Wang

Yangming was wrong in criticizing Zhu Xi for being too theoretical and insufficiently practical.

16. Zhu Xi's emphasis on practical knowledge does not mean that he finds propositional knowledge unnecessary for truly understanding coherence. It simply means that, for Zhu Xi, to truly know something we must know how to interact with it (practical knowledge), which requires us to know what the thing is (propositional knowledge). As Angle and Tiwald (2017: 118) remind us, "for Zhu Xi, 'knowing' is a process concerned with coming to understand things, coming to be able to make distinctions (in practice) among things, as well as coming to have specific items of articulable knowledge". Indeed, as scholars have noted, one reason that Zhu Xi stands out among Neo-Confucians is his inclusion of propositional knowledge about nature as a necessary part of understanding coherence (Chen, 2000: 296; Kim, 2000: 6; Qian, 2002: 69). For a more detailed analysis of Zhu Xi's intellectualism and cognitivism, and their relationship with his moral self-cultivation, see Ying-shih Yu (1986: 231) and Yung Sik Kim (2000: 23–24).

17. In the same conversation that encourages Chen Chun to investigate a wide variety of things, Zhu Xi invokes Confucius as a learning example who was born with sagely capacities but still studied many things (YL, 18: 3705). To be sure, although theoretical studies might be sufficient for a natural sage like Confucius because he has no impure physical constitution to transform, Zhu Xi thinks that the rest of us must exert hard effort in *practicing* our knowledge of coherence so that we can transform our impure physical constitutions (SS, 6: 48–49). Therefore, in rare cases, we may encounter natural sages who need no political practice to attain moral perfection, but most of us who have impure physical constitutions still need political practice to acquire and perfect our political knowledge.

18. Zhu Xi thinks that Confucius's advice is not just for rulers but also for all learners (SS, 6: 49; YL, 14: 419), which means that statecraft should also be a concern for all. As a prominent scholar on Zhu Xi's political thought reminds us, Zhu Xi wants everyone—not just the political elites—to be attentive to how well the polity is being governed (Schirokauer, 1978: 130 see also SS, 6: 513–4). For more on Zhu Xi's specific views of statecraft, see Angle and Tiwald (2017: 201–206); Schirokauer (1976, 1978); Shu (2003: ch. 12); Zhang (1998: chs. 2 and 3).

19. All translations of the *Doctrine of the Mean* are adopted from Chan (1963: 105–106), Gardner (2007: 120–121), and Legge (1971: 408–413). They are modified according to my understanding of the original text.

20. Here I am echoing Mou and Xu's point that political equality protects citizens' moral space for self-cultivation, though my conception of such moral space includes politics itself.

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