



Is There a Confucian Perspective on Social Justice?

a talk by



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(Moderator: Dr. Loy Hui Chieh)

Abstract: In recent years there has been a growing interest among Chinese and western scholars in reconstructing Confucian philosophy for contemporary or comparative purposes. There have been interesting works examining the compatibility between Confucianism on the one hand and civil liberties and democracy on the other. However, the relation between Confucianism and justice was left relatively unexamined. This paper is an attempt to partially fill the gap. It aims to reconstruct early Confucian views of justice. My focus is not general justice or justice as a virtue, but distributive justice and social justice. The questions I want to discuss are: does Confucianism contain the concepts of distributive justice and social justice? Are there ethical principles governing the distribution of resources in Confucianism? Are they principles of justice, and, if so, are they still relevant and viable today

The Speaker: Joseph Cho-wai Chan received his B.Soc.Sc in politics from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, M.Sc in political philosophy from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and D.Phil. in political philosophy from the University of Oxford. He is Professor at the Department of Politics and Public Administration and Director of the Centre for Civil Society and Governance, The University of Hong Kong. His recent research interests include Confucian political philosophy, contemporary liberalism and political perfectionism, the theory and practice of human rights, and civil society and social cohesion. He has published articles in various journals, including *Ethics*, *History of Politics Thought*, *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, *Journal of Democracy*, *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, and *Philosophy East and West*. He is co-editor of *Political Theory in China* (OUP, 2001, in Chinese). He is working on a book tentatively titled *Confucian Political Philosophy: A Critical Reconstruction for Modern Times*.

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Goldin, Paul R. 2000. "The View of Women in Early Confucianism." What a Confucian perspective on global distributive justice should be is rarely studied. This paper is an attempt to fill in this blank. I will try to reconstruct a Confucian theory of global distributive justice by introducing contractualism, which is a widely used philosophical methodology in Anglo-American political philosophy. This methodology has the virtue of deriving substantial political principles from ambiguous conception of the person. In this paper, I will first briefly describe this contractualist methodology. Then I will discuss what conception of the person Confucianism has. At