

Confucianism and the Political Theory of the Business Corporation

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Participants:

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Abstract

Despite the burgeoning literature in contemporary Confucian political theory, little effort has been devoted to the exploration of the implications of Confucianism to economic justice. Among the few exceptions, Chan (2013) argues that Confucianism would require a sufficientarian, yet inegalitarian, distributions of economic resources; Kim (2019) suggests that Confucianism could offer an account of the political economy of harmony where distributive values of equality, need, and merit “could have their own place”. Although these are important contributions, these works’ focal point is on developing a general outlook and guiding principles of a Confucian moral economy. This paper argues that the modern relevance of a theory of moral economy depends to a significant degree on whether it could offer an attractive normative account to the legally privileged economic agent, business corporation, which enjoys legal rights such as legal personality, limited liability, asset shielding that are unavailable to other market actors. The paper attempts to build a bridge between contemporary Confucian political theory and political theory of the business corporation for two purposes. First, it offers a better ontological account of the business corporation for Confucian political theory to intervene in debates about the business corporation. Second, it also offers alternative moral resources to develop a political theory of the business corporation beyond the usual liberal democratic framework in the literature.

Short Biography

Chi Kwok is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Lingnan University. He was a postdoc at Utrecht University, where he was also a member of the European Research Council funded project: “The Business Corporation as a Political Actor”. His research interests include the political theory of the business corporation, data ethics, gig economy, and social justice. His work has appeared in journals such as *Journal of Social Philosophy*, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, *Review of Social Economy*, and *Information, Communication & Society*, among others.

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