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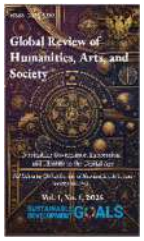
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Between Communication Ethics and the Common Good: A Review of Son Young Jun's *Political Philosophy* from a Republicanism Perspective

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Abstract:

Son Young Jun's *Political Philosophy* is a systematic inquiry into key issues in political thought, with a particularly insightful treatment of republicanism. As a scholar in communication studies, I found the book not only theoretically illuminating but also deeply relevant to the interdisciplinary dialogue between political philosophy, media ethics, and governance. This review draws on Son's republican framework to explore its applicability in today's media environment and further reflects on its relevance to geopolitical challenges and the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Keywords: Republicanism; freedom of expression; the common good; communication ethics; freedom as non-domination

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1. Political Philosophy and Communication: An Interdisciplinary Perspective

In my work on communication theory, political philosophy has long provided crucial intellectual support. Son's *Political Philosophy* demonstrates that republican values—such as public participation, social contract, and civic equality—align closely with central concerns in communication studies, including the formation of public opinion and media ethics. While communication studies focus on the circulation of information and its role in social relations, political philosophy probes the underlying structures of power and justice. Together, they form a complementary analytical framework for understanding social change.

A recent example is the South Korean government's attempt to legislate against disinformation, which sparked public debates over potential infringements on freedom of speech. This case prompted me to reflect on the republican concept of the *common good*, which, as Son emphasizes, privileges collective well-being over absolute individual freedom. Balancing freedom of expression and the public good remains a central concern in my research.

My experiences as a news presenter and university lecturer have taught me the value of bridging theory and practice. As the Chinese proverb goes, "What one hears remains shallow; only by practicing can one truly understand." This ethos motivates my interest in examining republicanism through the lens of China's political and social context, especially in comparison to other political ideologies.

2. Core Principles of Republicanism and Their Relevance

Son outlines the core principles of republicanism in clear and compelling terms: prioritizing the common good, institutionalizing broad public participation, upholding the social contract, and reinforcing civic responsibility. These ideals resonate with the core socialist values in China—prosperity, democracy, civility, and harmony—which similarly emphasize collective interests and civic engagement.

3. Conceptual Foundations of Republicanism

The intellectual lineage of republicanism can be traced back to the Roman Republic and Renaissance thinkers like Machiavelli, and more recently, to modern republican theorists such as Hannah Arendt and Philip Pettit. Son explores three major aspects of this tradition:

1. **Freedom as political autonomy:** Unlike libertarian definitions of negative freedom as non-interference, republicanism emphasizes active freedom—citizens achieve autonomy through participation in collective decision-making.
2. **Civic virtue and the common good:** Republicanism requires a sense of civic-mindedness, encouraging individuals to subordinate personal interests to collective well-being to maintain a stable community.
3. **Mixed government and checks on power:** Institutional designs that prevent power concentration are essential to preserving political equality.

4. The Chinese Context: Compatibility with Republican Values

Socialism with Chinese characteristics also emphasizes collective well-being, equity, and justice. Its core values, including prosperity, democracy, and harmony,

reflect a commitment to inclusive development. Policies aimed at achieving "common prosperity" and social stability share notable overlaps with republican ideals.

Recent Chinese initiatives—such as narrowing the wealth gap and promoting local self-governance—illustrate how republican concerns about civic responsibility and democratic engagement can find concrete expression in China's governance model. For instance, reforms in local governance aimed at increasing transparency and public participation reflect republican commitments to institutional legitimacy and participatory justice.

5. The Philosophical and Practical Value of Republicanism

5.1. Rousseau and the Social Contract

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theory of the social contract is a foundational reference for republicanism. Rousseau believed that natural freedom is eroded by social inequality and private property, and proposed direct democracy as a way to restore collective autonomy. Son draws on this legacy to argue that republicanism remains essential for addressing today's challenges, especially in the face of corporate domination and elite capture in global governance.

5.2. Arendt and the Public Realm

Hannah Arendt emphasized "action" as the core of human existence and believed it finds full meaning only in the public sphere. Republicanism's insistence on civic engagement draws heavily on her ideas. In an era of political apathy, Arendt's vision of public life as the site of human dignity serves as a powerful corrective.

5.3. Pettit and Freedom as Non-Domination

Philip Pettit's "freedom as non-domination" distinguishes republicanism from both libertarianism and authoritarianism. For Pettit, true freedom requires transparent, legally bound institutions that prevent arbitrary control. Son applies this framework to show how republics can foster civic autonomy by reducing corruption and power abuse.

5.4. Dialogue with Chinese Thought

Interestingly, republicanism also resonates with aspects of Chinese traditional philosophy. Confucian "benevolence" and Wang Yangming's "innate moral knowledge" reflect notions of civic virtue and individual responsibility to the community—concepts that enrich republican thought in culturally relevant ways.

6. Republicanism in Practice

6.1. The European Migrant Crisis

The influx of refugees into Europe tested the limits of community cohesion. Republicanism offers a normative framework for integrating newcomers while maintaining shared civic values. Germany's community education programs exemplify this balance between inclusion and civic responsibility.

6.2. COVID-19 and the Public Good

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese government's "dynamic zero-COVID" strategy sparked debate about freedom versus collective welfare. From a republican standpoint, prioritizing the public good through collective action aligns with the principle of civi

c responsibility under emergency governance.

6.3. Digital Governance and Civic Participation

China's "Internet + government services" platform r eflects a drive toward participatory governance, empo wering citizens via digital tools. Yet republicanism al so warns against the risks of technological dominati on, urging vigilance against digital inequality and su rveillance.

7. Conclusion: The Contemporary Relevanc e of Republicanism

Son Young Jun's *Political Philosophy* offers not just a theory of political freedom, but also a timely resp onse to the ethical dilemmas of the media age. It b ridges communication and philosophy, helping us ret hink freedom as a condition made possible by instit utions, collective action, and civic virtue.

In a world facing inequality, polarization, and techn ological disruption, republicanism provides a normati ve path forward—one that upholds individual rights while demanding shared responsibility. As a commun ication scholar, I find in this book a compelling fra mework for integrating ethics, governance, and freed om in both theory and practice.

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