Impartial, Skilled, Respect for Law: The Ancient Ideals of Civil Servants at the root of Eastern and Western Traditions

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Abstract: When studying civil service traditions, scholars often contrast the Eastern, Confucian tradition from the Western, Weberian tradition. A few Korean and American scholars pointed out that the two traditions are not that different. It is argued in this article that they are not, because they are both grounded in the ancient Egyptian wisdom literature about what makes a good civil servant. They are impartial in their dealings with people, the have the administrative and technical skills necessary, and they respect the rule of law. The ancient Egyptian, Confucian, and Weberian traditions are visible in the work of Yu Hyŏngwŏn, a 17th century Korean scholar and civil servant.

Keywords: Civil service, Yu Hyŏngwŏn, Confucian tradition, Weberian tradition, ancient Egyptian wisdoms

IMPARTIAL, SKILLED, RESPECT FOR LAW: THE ANCIENT IDEALS OF CIVIL SERVANTS AT THE ROOT OF EASTERN AND WESTERN TRADITIONS

Eastern and Western public and civil service traditions are frequently contrasted with an eye on fit in the institutional arrangements of political-administrative functions in the larger society. This contrasting suggests that there are different cultural perspectives upon what constitutes an ideal civil servant. Is there an ideal civil servant? The existing literature on civil service traditions on the one hand and on public sector ethics on the other suggests that the ideal civil servant is conceptualized

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differently in the Confucian and Weberian traditions. In this paper, and like some others, I challenge the notion that Confucian and Weberian conceptions are fundamentally different. That is, at the surface they appear different, but both are grounded in the same and very ancient desire for reliable, trustworthy, and knowledgeable civil servants.

To contrast Confucian and Weberian conceptions of civil servants is actually a simplification of a rather complex set of desired attitudes and behaviors. Confucian scholarship and reflections is then regarded as emphasizing the moral content of bureaucratic behavior and civil service action and discretion, while Weberian scholarship stresses functional behaviors and actions in the context of more (i.e. *Rechtsstaat* concept) or less (i.e., *public interest* concept) formal institutional arrangements that frame and constrain behavior. However, at least two Korean scholars (Kim, 2012; Im, 2013) and two American scholars (Rarick, 2007; Tao, 2018) suggest that Confucian and Weberian perspectives are, deep-down, not that different, if at all.

First, I will briefly discuss (stereo)types of civil servants (section 1), followed by a conceptual framework for characterizing and conceptualizing civil servants that hopes to transcend the rather superficial cultural differences between Confucian and Weberian approaches (section 2). I will then summarize what various ethical traditions have to say about ideal civil servants (section 3). These ethical traditions outline what is considered good and just behavior in human society, and, thus, includes reflections upon the position and role of government in achieving what is considered good and just. From this, one can infer what behaviors of civil servants are considered acceptable and desirable. Indeed, they find that there are significant similarities between the two perspectives, and in this sense nothing is offered in this paper that has not been said before. However, what has not been noted in the public administration literature is that what is regarded as desirable and acceptable behavior of civil servants may actually be rooted in the so-called wisdom literature of the ancient world, especially Pharaonic Egypt (section 4). That ancient advice about the proper conduct of public servants is visible in various ethical traditions discussed in section three, including in these so-called Confucian and Weberian traditions. As it is, both these traditions are visible in the reform-minded ideas of Yu Hyŏngwŏn, a Korean scholar (1622-1672) who wrote about what could and should be improved in the statecraft of the late Chosŏn Kingdom (section 5). In section 6, I will briefly discuss why ideas about what constitutes an ideal civil servant emerge in human societies. Finally, in section 7 it is concluded that comments over time concerning desired behaviors and actions of public officials have, from the beginning, aimed at calling upon humanity's higher inclinations while recognizing its

darker potential for actions aimed at the pursuit of naked self-interest.

1. Some Thoughts on Images and Typologies of Bureaucrats and Civil Servants

For millennia the face of government was that of the ruler, the religious leaders, the military commanders, the tax collectors, the overseers (of whatever). Government existed to support the ruling elite. They protected the territory from internal and external instability through the judicial, policing, and taxation functions they controlled. Those working in government did so as personal servants to the ruler and/or ruling elite. The large majority of the population were mere subjects, providing resources in labor, kind, and money to the regime in power. This is the case throughout the globe and well into, what in a Eurocentric perspective is called, the early modern age of the late fifteenth up to the late eighteenth century. It is in the 1500s that slowly but surely, those who worked in government operated less and less as personal servants to a ruler, and more and more as servants of the state, except, of course, for those working in the royal or imperial household. The state and its government became impersonal entities. It is in the eighteenth century that the word 'bureaucracy' was coined as a conflation of a French word, *bureau*, with that of a Greek word, *krateo*, used as a suffix. The term 'bureaucracy' was allegedly first used by Vincent, Marquis de Gournay (1712-1759), intendant of commerce and was mentioned in a letter by art critic and diplomat Friedrich Melchior, Baron von Grimm (1723-1807) to Diderot on July 1, 1764:

> The late M[onsieur] de Gournay … sometimes used to say: "We have an illness in France which bids fair havoc with us; this illness is called bureaumania. Sometimes he used to invent a fourth or fifth term of government under the heading of bureaucracy." (Albrow, 1970, p. 16).

According to the New *Testament Greek Lexicon, King James Version*, the Greek word *krateo* means:

1. to have power, be powerful:
    a. to be chief, be master of, to rule
2. to get possession of
    a. to become master of, to obtain
    b. to take hold of
    c. to take hold of, take, seize
        1. to lay hands on one in order to get him into one's power

3. to hold
    a. to hold in the hand
    b. to hold fast, i.e. not discard or let go
        1. to keep carefully and faithfully
    c. to continue to hold, to retain
        1. of death continuing to hold one
        2. to hold in check, restrain

So, the term bureaucracy contains three meanings: being in power, getting power, and holding on to power. Once the state becomes dissociated from the ruler, those working for the state are increasingly viewed as bureaucrats. Especially German scholars and emigrés in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were so critical of bureaucrats that Charles Goodsell spoke of a Teutonic tradition in the study of bureaucracy (Goodsell, 1985, p. 8). The stereotypical bureaucrat is lazy, a pencil pusher, out for self-interest only, and they multiply like rabbits; bureaucracy is stereotyped as full of red tape, cumbersome, and officious (Raadschelders, 2003, pp. 318-319, with references to various authors).

The term bureaucrat is commonly used in a pejorative, stereotypical sense, and this is nicely captured in Franz Kafka's novels and in Erik Satie's *Sonatine Bureaucratique*. The high-ranking British civil servant, Humbert Wolfe (1885-1940), noted in the British journal *Public Administration* that two types of bureaucrats could be found in fictional work: the 'mandarin-parasite' and the 'slave' (Wolfe, 1924, p. 41).

A scholarly and more neutral understanding of bureaucracy and bureaucrats started in the early nineteenth century. Georg Hegel regarded bureaucrats as the new guardians of democracy who forego "…the selfish and capricious satisfaction of their subjective ends…" and serve in a "…dispassionate, upright, and polite demeanor…" (Hegel, 1967, pp. 191-193) In this quote it is easy to recognize Max Weber who wrote that the key characteristic of working in bureaucracy is that an official conducts his business *sine ira et studio*, which he translated as *ohne Haβ und Leidenschaft*, that is, without hatred or passion (Weber, 1980, p. 129). This is a very different official from Wolfe's 'slave,' who is completely subservient, and his 'mandarin-parasite,' who is allowed to cream off some of the taxes and fees he collects from the subjects for the ruler. The types of Weber and Wolfe are visible in the three types distinguished by James T.C. Liu (1919-1993). This Chinese-born historian and professor at the University of Pittsburgh and at Princeton University, briefly summarized listings of bureaucratic types as distinguished by, *inter alia*, Robert Merton, Alvin Gouldner, Robert Presthus, and others. He also provided a more

extensive discussion of Chinese sources (from the Song dynasty, 960-1279 CE) on desired behavioral and functional characteristics of public officials (Liu, 1959, pp. 209, 212-213). He arrived at a three-fold distinction:

a) *the scholarly-idealistic type* is characterized by personal integrity, recognized scholarship, explicit political theories and beliefs, and willingness to endanger and even sacrifice his personal (career) interests. This is similar to the 'virtuous' type in Confucian thought. However, this type could slide into self-righteneousness, excessive self-confidence, doctrinaire bias, partisanship, and love of fame;
b) *the career-minded type* is focused on his own career, and identifying with bureaucracy rather than with a specific political theory and belief. His personal integrity is shaped by the moral standard expected by social convention and by the desire to do a good job and pride in being a professional. There are two subtypes: the 'conformist' dominates by far, and the 'executive' radiates energy, ambition, aggression and has superior administrative capability;
c) *the abusive type* has a personal and selfish interest in power, influence, and material gain. Career is merely a means to that personal end. This type is reminiscent of the 'unworthy' official in Confucianism, and his pursuit of material gains and lusts makes him the ultimate "man in the iron cage" as portrayed by Bunyan (2009 [1795], pp. 29-30; see also Raadschelders, 2019, endnote 6.) This one also has two subtypes: the 'corrupt' and the 'manipulative.' (Liu, 1959, pp. 221-223) The latter has the energy and capability of the 'executive career-minded' individual, but turns "his talent to political maneuvers, consolidating his power so that he can indulge in dishonest practices on a scale beyond the ordinary." (ibid. p. 223) I quote this, because the abusive and manipulative type is a common occurrence throughout history, and represents the greatest danger to democracy when indulged and (quietly?) accepted.

As far as I am aware, after Liu two more typologies of bureaucratic personalities have seen the light of day. In a conceptual study of bureaucracy, Anthony Downs distinguishes five types. The *climber* is ambitious and on a fast career track. The *conserver* desires to maintain security and does not take risks. *Zealots* have narrow interests and usually are deficient general administrators. *Advocates* have substantial responsibilities and a significant overview of policies. Finally, *statesmen* are loyal to government and society as a whole (Downs, 1966, pp. 92-111).

In an empirical study of the Israeli civil service, David Nachmias and David Rosenbloom describe four types. The *politicos* are convinced that it is important to have political connections in order to acquire bureaucratic positions and they are not very interested in the common good. *Service bureaucrats* take their cue from the public at large and seek for ways that bureaucracy can improve how it allocates tasks to individual civil servants. The *job bureaucrat* is focused on the internal demands of modern government organizations. Finally, the *statesman* is truly oriented toward society and believes in achievement, education, and talent rather than in political and personal connections (Nachmias & Rosenbloom, 1978, pp. 31-32).

These various stereotypes and typologies can be placed on a continuum that has the truly virtuous and selfless public official on the one end, and the unworthy, selfish public official on the other. The reality on the ground is probably somewhere in-between and to capture the complexity of civil service a conceptual framework might be useful. One example of a conceptual framework is offered in the next section, and it is based in changes and conceptions emerging in nineteenth century Europe about government and its officials.

2. A Contemporary Conceptual Framework for Characterizing Types of Civil Servants

The conceptual framework in this section might be thought of as Eurocentric given the discussion about the origins and development of government, the major changes in public institutional arrangements around the 1800s in Europe, the use of Hegel's ideal and Weber's ideal type, and the fact that this author is Dutch. However, the elements discussed below are applicable to any governing system that is fundamentally democratic in nature (unless mentioned otherwise, this section is based on Raadschelders, forthcoming).

a) Origins and Development of Government

Homo Sapiens has walked this earth for about 300,000 years, and for most of that time they lived in small communities of people with 30/50 up to 150 individuals. Theirs was a *physical community* of people where everybody knew everyone else, and knew who to turn to for food, for protection, for mediation, etc. Theirs was a nomadic and fairly egalitarian society with a hunter-gatherer-scavenging economy. As far as we know, there were no formalized institutional arrangements for governing. Collaboration came naturally, because most members of each community were related by kinship.

About 20,000 years ago, at the end of the Palaeolithic, two processes started that would change human society and economy forever: sedentarization and domestication. Both used to be identified as part of the Agricultural Revolution, around 10,000 BCE, but we now know that these processes have been much more prolonged and unfolding across millennia. At the start of the Neolithic, about 10,000 years ago, the human population has been calculated to be at around 10 to 15 million people, which amounts to roughly one individual per square mile (Corning, 1983, p. 304). The globe was quite empty.

As people settled down and successfully domesticated certain plants/grains and animals, their numbers increased quite rapidly to about 50 million at the time that the first city-states appeared, around 5,000 BCE. Another 3,000 years later, there would be some 300 million people (Hassan, 1997, p. 6). This had substantial effects on how people governed themselves. Based on archaeological research, it is assumed that for the first 4,000 years of sedentary life, societies were quite egalitarian. They were larger than the prehistoric bands, but, living in a tribal community and even a chiefdom, did not require extensive institutional arrangements for governing. This changed with the emergence of city-states with populations into the thousands. It is then that societies become more clearly stratified, with a ruler at the apex, a ruling aristocracy, a priesthood, soldiers, craftsmen, farmers, and slaves.

The rapid growth in population size, and the resulting society as an *imagined community*, required institutional arrangements that assured the protection of people from one another and from the threat of other tribes and chiefdoms. Bureaucracies emerged in these socially stratified communities because those in power are not be able to monitor the behavior of all members. In order to maintain some degree of control they needed a support structure, a bureaucracy with people to do their bidding. These pre-modern bureaucracies were extractive organizations; they exploited the natural resources (produce, labor) of their populations to benefit the ruler(s) and the ruling class. Pre-modern bureaucracies were generally not service providers in a way comparable to modern bureaucracies. They served as a "…loyal and personally ascribed cadre of supporters…" of the ruler or the ruling class, not as servants of the people (Yoffee, 2005, p. 140).

These pre-modern bureaucracies are problem-creators rather than problem solvers (Paynter, 1989), because the adaptive capability of the political-administrative system is stressed once the political leadership, through a top-heavy bureaucracy, makes impossible demands upon the productive sector (Butzer, 1980). For millennia, societies had a ruler-oriented bureaucracy with bureaucrats only interested in advancing their own power, security, and comforts as long as that happens within the orbit of the ruler. Bureaucrats created selective benefits for themselves (Mas-

ters, 1986, p. 156). As can be expected, and throughout history, civilizations declined when, among other things, their governments became too demanding. Since Antiquity, discontent with government was usually fueled by unreasonable and extraordinary taxes, leading to tax riots and – sometimes – revolution (such as the American and French Revolutions). For some 6,000 years government was the instrument in the hands of the few and (ab)used for the subjection of the many. This situation lasted into the eighteenth century.

b) Foundation of Government and Civil Service in Democracy, 1780s-1820s

The major social-economic changes in human society described in the previous subsection took millennia to unfold. Another set of major social-economic changes occurred between the middle of the eighteenth up to the middle of the twentieth century. These changes are the processes of industrialization, urbanization, and unprecedented population growth. As with the changes thousands of years ago, the multiple and complex array of events that led up to these fundamental changes need not be described in this paper. However, what needs to be described are the changes in the foundation of government which happened in a pretty short period of time, namely during the decades between 1780-1820. Attention for this is necessary as it made possible that in the subsequent one-and-half century government came to occupy a new position and role in society.

As I have described these fundamental changes in detail elsewhere (Raadschelders, 2015), I can be brief here and use the three-level distinction introduced by Larry Kiser and Elinor Ostrom (1982) and applied by me to map out the study of public administration (Raadschelders, 2003). In table 1 below these changes are embedded in the development of the position and role of career civil servants over time.

Table 1. Roles and Expectations of Civil Servants (based on Eurocentric periodization)

	Basic skills	**Advanced skills**	**Leadership vision**
Personal servant since Antiquity	Writing letters and other official documents (e.g., trade records, wage records)	Accounting	Just, moral, integrity, righteous, not pursuing self-interest; ancient Middle Eastern and Chinese texts
State servant since early modern age	Ibidem + some writing law	Ibidem + double-entry bookkeeping and in some cases a law degree (in ancient China, since Han dynasty); attention for specific policy areas (in Europe: *kameralistik*, *science de la police*; in Asia, Yu Hyŏngwŏn)	Trustees, stewards of the people (cf. Althusius, Yu Hyŏngwŏn)
constitutional level changes 1780 - 1820	Separation of politics and administration; separation of church and state; separation of public from private; and constitutionalism		
collective level changes 1780 - 1820	Departmentalization and separation of office and officeholder		
operational level changes 1780 - 1820	Adequate salary and pension in money		
Civil servant since early 19th c.	Ibidem, + some writing policy	Ibidem + some with education other than law (e.g., medicine for health policy; agriculture, engineering etc.)	Hegel's "new guardians of democracy"; Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy as organization and personnel system
a) Protected servant since late 19th c.	Ibidem + increase of knowledge workers	Ibidem + increased emphasis upon importance of knowledge work; Civil Service Acts (e.g., USA 1883; Netherlands 1929; France 1949) provide capstone in the development to a professional service	Ibidem + policy makers
b) Professional servant since early 20th c.	Ibidem, and at most national levels the civil service is almost entirely white collar, i.e. bureaucratized in Weberian terms	After WWII: next to initial degree, since 1950s rapid increase in MPA programs taken as second degree for those who aspire to rise in the ranks (cf. Mosher 1968)	ibidem + since 1930s important role in writing secondary legislation

At the constitutional level, which is that of the institutional superstructure of government, there are four major changes. First, the public sphere becomes synonymous to that of government, while the private sphere is that of anything between the household and the market. This separation of a public sector from a private sector dates back to John Locke and becomes full-blown in the work of Adam Smith (Kennedy, 2010, pp. 164-167). Second, the separation of church and state, which had been de facto in development since the twelfth century but became codified toward the end of the eighteenth century. Hence, the church, just as any other societal association other than government, becomes part of this private sector. Third, politics was separated from administration, with political officeholders being elected and members of the supporting bureaucracy being appointed on the basis of relevant educational background, merit, and professional expertise. Finally, fourth, the emergence of constitutions as the foundation of society, constraining government power vis-à-vis citizens and separating the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government.

At the collective level, which is that of the decision making arena, this resulted in the separation of office from officeholder so that public office could no longer be inherited (except to this day for monarchs), farmed out (as in the case of tax collection throughout the ages), or sold to a third party. It is also resulted in organizing the various tasks and functions of bureaucracy in departments with a coherent set of activities. In fact, except for the top of the public sector, i.e., legislative chambers, ministerial cabinets, and high courts, government at large now became hierarchically organized on the basis of unity of command.

Last but not least, at the operational level of the day-to-day activities, those who worked in appointed career positions would receive a salary and pension in money that was adequate enough to avoid (a) the necessity of individual civil servants having secondary or even tertiary jobs and (b) possibility of corruption (e.g., accepting bribes in order to supplement base income).

These three groups of changes happened very quickly, and within the course of a lifetime. How quickly is clear when we read Georg Hegel's assessment of the new role of career civil servants and the formalization of that by Max Weber into the latter's ideal-type.

c) Hegel and Weber on the Modern Civil Servant

Above, Hegel was mentioned as the person who considered civil servants as the new guardians of democracy. He offers an ideal image of a career civil servant, and he captures their new role vis-à-vis political officeholders as one that is actively developing and advising about policy. He trusts career civil servants and his is a

sociological perspective that concerns how career civil servants can and should function in the real world. In today's democracies, career civil servants at middle and higher levels will not only help in formulating policy and advising about policy, but actually in developing policy (Page & Jenkins, 2005; Page, 2012). Elected officeholders rely upon the organizational memory, the professional attitude, and the substantive expertise of career officials.

Max Weber developed a more formal definition of bureaucracy as a personnel system (table 2). Befitting the principle of a clear division of labor, the first dimension is a departure from historical practice where one office could be held by multiple people (for instance, in a collegial organization) and this is still the case with political institutions today (especially legislatures; often also judiciaries). Dimensions 2 to 5 concern the nature of the relationship with elected officeholders and upon what grounds someone can be appointed in the career civil service. Dimension 4 in particular serves as a safeguard against nepotism. Dimensions 6 to 12 concern the work conditions. Civil servants are protected from the possible instabilities of the political environment as long as they provide loyal support to whichever political party (or parties in a coalition) is in power. This definition of bureaucracy befits a polyarchical and democratic system of government. It is also a definition that does not differentiate between rank or status: in a legal sense (see below) a municipal employee collecting garbage is as much a career civil servant as a director-general in a national government department.

Table 2. Bureaucracy as a Personnel System (Van Braam, 1986, pp. 216-220; Raadschelders & Rutgers 1996, p. 92)

1. Office held by individual functionaries,
2. who are subordinate, and
3. appointed, and
4. knowledgeable, who have expertise, and are
5. assigned by contractual agreement
6. in a tenured (secure) position, and
7. who fulfill their office as their main or only job, and
8. work in a career system
9. rewarded with a regular salary and pension in money,
10. rewarded according to rank, and
11. promoted according seniority, and
12. work under formal protection of their office.

d) Juridical and Sociological Perspectives

The last element of a conceptual framework for analyzing civil service and civil servants is to distinguish between juridical and sociological perspectives. From a juridical point of view, one can argue that all those elected into public office or serving as political appointees are not part of the civil service. A civil servant is, thus, someone who is appointed, at least and at the beginning of a career, on the basis of relevant educational background and, as a career advances, of merit and professional expertise. Political officeholders, political appointees and career civil service together form the public service.

In a sociological perspective we have to take national context and civil service roles into regard. As for national context, there is quite some variation. In the Netherlands, all those who are in non-elected and non-political appointee positions are considered career civil servants. This is similar in Scandinavian countries and in, I believe, Korea. In the United Kingdom, civil servants are those who work in Whitehall as generalists and they can rotate between departments. In France and Germany civil servants are appointed as specialists to a specific department and in both countries higher and lower level career civil servants have a specific designation (*Angestellte* v. *Beamte*, and *functionnaire* v. *employee*). In some countries, such as in Scandinavia, career civil servants are held in high regard. In others they are viewed with scorn, and then perhaps no more so then in the United States.

Apart from societal context and appreciation, we also have more neutral role descriptions of civil service that actually travel well across countries. One clear distinction is that between so-called *street-level bureaucrats*, a category introduced by Michael Lipsky (1980), and *policy bureaucrats*, a term proposed by Ed Page and Bill Jenkins (2005). The former is said to be about 70% of all career civil servants and includes anyone who comes in direct contact with citizens (e.g., social workers, school teachers, police officers, firefighters, judges, garbage collectors, etc.). Another distinction is that of elected officeholders, political appointees, white collar employees (those who work at a desk, write policy), uniformed officials (police, firefighters), blue collar employees (e.g., garbage collectors, water plant workers, parks and recreation workers, etc.), educational personnel, and health care providers (Raadschelders, 1994).

3. Ethical Traditions on the Ideal (Public) Civil Servant

The conceptual framework in the previous section is contemporary and, when attention is limited to the modern period only, that is the past two centuries, it could

be claimed as not Eurocentric since it applies to the position and role of career civil servants in any democracy. However, when we go further back in time, we will see that the elements of what constitutes the ideal civil servant are, in fact, not Western in origin at all. To see this, I will consider in this section what is said about the ideal civil servant in some ethical traditions emerging in the last millennium BCE (unless mentioned otherwise, this section is derived from Jordan & Gray, 2011). In the next section I will go even further back in time presenting ancient Egyptian ideas dating back to the third and second millennium BCE about behavior appropriate to civil servants.

The earliest ethical traditions that described the ideal public servant are of (East) Asian origin. The best known is Confucianism, after Confucius (551-479 BCE), which emphasizes moral leadership as something that can be taught. The ruler determines what the "virtuous" civil servant is expected to do. The more virtuous the ruler, the more virtuous those who work for him. The major virtues of people, and thus of public leaders, are humanity, propriety, righteousness, reverence, loyalty, wisdom, filial piety, and forgiveness (ibid., p. 142; see also Rarick, 2007, p. 25). The ideal administrator is first and foremost an expert on moral standards; there is less emphasis on technical expertise. Civil service exams serve to assure the moral quality of candidates (ibid., pp. 141-160). Written exams were introduced in 165 BCE in Han China, and the first university for examinations was established in 124 BCE (Creel, 1970, pp. 87-88). It looks that the notion of civil service exams came from Southeast Asia to Europe (Creel, 1964, p. 162).

By contrast, Daoism, dating back to China in the fourth century BCE, stresses a sage-king who is hardly involved in governing and relies upon the self-governing capacities of people. Daoists prize economy and efficiency above purpose and consequences of action, and they caution against bribery, the "shirking" of responsibilities, and partisanship (Jordan & Gray, 2011, pp. 86-95). Shen-Buhai, chancellor of the Han state (351-337 BCE), regards civil service examinations as important, but seems to include the Daoist preference for economy and efficiency given his preference for performance records and merit ratings as key to how a ruler can control his ministers and officials (Creel, 1964, 1970). Thus Shen-Buhai focused on administrative techniques. A few decades after Shen-Buhai passed away, it was the Chinese philosopher Hsün-zu (313-238 BCE) who pointed out that any civil servant should have both virtue and technical expertise (Creel, 1974, p. 129). In the same period, Shen-Buhai was criticized by political philosopher Han-fei-tzu for not paying sufficient attention to the role and rule of law (Creel, 1970, p. 122). This element is most strongly pursued by the Legalists of the Fa-chia (School of Law) and they are seen as situated between Confucianism and Daoism for advocating

adherence to strict and stable codes of rites, regulation, and law (Jordan & Gray, 2011, p. 103).

From the above, it is clear that ancient Chinese thought about the ideal civil servant was initially focused on morality, which in subsequent centuries was augmented by attention for *administrative techniques* and for *rules and law*.

Buddhism, dating back to the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, appears to have much in common with Confucianism. In the *Teaching of Buddha* we can read that "If an important minister of state neglects his duties, works for his own profit, or accepts bribes, it will cause a rapid decay of public morals […] (in that case) faithful ministers will retire from public service, wise men will keep silent from fear of complications […] Under such conditions the power of government becomes ineffective and its righteous policies fall into ruins. Such unjust officials are the thieves of people's happiness, yet are worse than thieves because they defraud both ruler and people and are the cause of the nation's troubles." (Jordan & Gray, 2011, p. 110) Wrapped in this comment are two important elements. First, the emphasis on the civil servant as an example of moral behavior, and this is also found in Confucianism. Second, and closely related to the first, the attention for assuring that civil servants are not working to benefit themselves. The *Teaching of Buddha* has contemporary relevance for wherever democracies in the twentieth and twenty-first century were challenged by autocratic executive leadership. Those autocratic leaders seek to mold government to their own interests, and civil servants leave public office because they do not see how, individually, they can stop the dismantling of democratic principles (Packer, 2020).

In the Western world, Christianity in its various manifestations recognizes that civil servants must have spiritual and technical expertise, but mainly focuses on the spiritual (Jordan & Gray, 2011, p. 205). In the American constitutionalist and Republican tradition statesmanship is a function of both specific skills, such as those pursued under scientific management, and of democratic values. Populism should be anathema to democracy. Also, scientific management and its contemporary of New Public Management (NPM) should dominate or stand alone in a democracy as it has little attention for the moral side of decision making (Jordan & Gray, 2011, pp. 176-177, 205). Both scientific management and NPM are expressions of, as Jon Pierre calls it, the *public interest model* that emphasizes pragmatic and flexible decision making and is more performance-driven and market oriented. This is mainly found in Anglo-American countries. Continental European countries are dominated by a *Rechtsstaat model* where legislative authority is the primary mechanism upon which government works (Pierre, 1995). Max Weber's ideal type fits this *Rechtsstaat* model with its emphasis on bureaucracy as specific organiza-

tional type and structure on the one hand, and as specific personnel system and type of civil servant on the other. Clearly, there is not one Western 'model' or ideal. If anything, there is at least a Western and a Weberian representation of ideal civil servants, as Tao (2018) points out (see below). Frankly, I am beginning to wonder whether there is a Western model or tradition at all. What has Western scholarship added to ancient ideas about ideal civil servants? The answer to that question starts here and will be summarized in the conclusion.

Korean public administration scholars recognize the importance of Confucian influence in Korean government, but at the same time suggest that it might benefit from some synthesis with foreign ideas (Kim, 2012, p. 228), and that a Good Governance model which balances efficiency with legitimacy and accountability might suit Korea better than the naked application of NPM-principles (Jung, 2014, p. 12). Also, there is actually significant overlap between Eastern and Western understandings of civil service (Im et al., 2013, p. 287). Indeed, the Confucian emphasis upon the importance of internalizing moral values in an individual is reminiscent of Carl Friedrich's reliance upon an internal moral compass and of John Rohr's "high road" of ethics (1986; see also Im et al., 2013, p. 292). Max Weber's approach is one that seeks guidance for behavior in an impartial legal framework. Professor of business administration, Charles Rarick, suggests that Max Weber's Protestant ethic does not differ much from the Chinese and Southeast Asian belief in hard work, loyalty to organization, thrift, dedication, love for learning and wisdom, and concern for social propriety (Rarick, 2007, p. 26).

The American public administration scholar Jill Tao, chair of the Department of Public Administration at Incheon National University, also points to the similarities between Confucius and Weber (2018). Her article is particularly interesting because she augments George Frederickson's contrasting of Western and Confucian thought (Frederickson, 2002, p. 623) with a third category, namely Weberian thought. Indeed, one cannot subsume Weberian thought under the category of Western thought, as Pierre's contrast of a *public service* and a *Rechtsstaat* model suggests. That is, superficially there are significant differences in perceptions of ideal civil servants between various Western countries. Digging deeper, however, it becomes clear that no matter the visible differences between countries, the foundation in morality, administrative technique, and rule of law, is one that is not Western of origin. Meanwhile, and on a side note, Frederickson's reading of Confucianism is intriguing as he firmly believes that the Confucian concept of social order based on moral convention and education would appeal to the West, and I quote, "with its adult children, infantile adults, incestuous fathers, criminal children, and androgynous individuals." (Fredrickson, 2002, pp. 620-621) I cannot help wonder-

ing whether Frederickson really intends to indict the Western world at large or is mainly thinking about the USA.

4. The Very Ancient Roots of Ethical Traditions concerning the Ideal Public Servant

George Washington insisted upon 'fitness of character' (Mosher, 1968, p. 57) for those working in the public service. In the Irish rundale system of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where commoners elected their King and elders, the good king was supposed to have "Stature, strength, comeliness [...] justice, wisdom and knowledge" next to various other desired attributes such as economic well-being (Slater & Flaherty, 2009, pp. 14-15). Clearly, what constitutes a good public servant is grounded in an internal moral compass developed through education and/or experience. The visions and wisdom of Confucius, Buddha, Washington and many others has roots in the ancient instruction or wisdom literature, a tradition that continued in Europe with the so-called *Fürstenspiegel* (i.e., mirrors of princes) (Rutgers, 2004, p. 52). These instructions have drawn attention because they are copied, and sometimes amended, in the Book of Proverbs of the Hebrew Bible. In this section some of these wisdoms will be highlighted quoting parts that are relevant to the topic of this paper (in the following the page references are all to Pritchard, 1969).

Among the oldest of instructions is *The Instruction of Prince Hor-Dedef* (27th c. BCE) and is ascribed to Ii-em-hotep, a high official of pharaohs Djoser and Hor-Dedef, the latter a son of pharaoh Khufo (or Cheops): "[Be not] boastful before (my very) eyes, and beware of the boasting of another." (p. 419) In this quote humility is presented as an important characteristic of a public servant, and it suggests a focus on something larger than oneself.

Possibly the best known of these wisdoms is *The Instruction of the Vizier Ptah-Hotep*, city administrator and vizier of Pharaoh Djedkare Isesi, ruling from the late 25th to the mid-24th century BCE at the end of the fifth dynasty. He advises humility and righteousness: "Let not thy heart be puffed-up because of thy knowledge." […] "If thou art a leader commanding the affairs of the multitude, seek out for thyself every beneficial deed, until it may be that thy (own) affairs are without wrong. Justice is great, and its appropriateness is lasting." (p. 412) As the only surviving copies of this instruction date back to the first intermediate period and the middle kingdom (around 1800 BCE) it could be that its content may be based in earlier writing but not compiled until later (Quirke, 2004, p. 90).

Written during the breakdown of central government at the end of the Old King-

dom (sixth dynasty, 2300-2150 BCE), *The Admonitions of Ipu-Wer* condemns weak rulers, and points to the importance of *ma'at*, which is justice/truth, and to be equitable when passing justice: "Authority, Perception, and Justice are with thee, (but) it is confusion which thou wouldst set throughout the land." (p. 443)

Well-known are *The Protests of the Eloquent Peasant* (Middle Kingdom, 21st c. BCE) where one can find the following remark: "To the doer to cause that he do" (p. 409) which is a version of the Golden Rule. On the same page the eloquent peasant observes what he expects from a public official, namely, "Thou were appointed to be a dam for the sufferer, guarding lest he drown" and "The covetous man is void of success." The theme of covetousness must be very important because it is reiterated in "Do not be covetous at a division. Do not be greedy, unless (it be) for thy (own) portion. Do not be covetous against thy (own) kindred. Greater is the respect for the mild than (for) the strong." (p. 413; see also Van Blerk, 2006) Covetousness has found its way into the Mosaic tenth commandment, and the respect for the mild suggests that civil servants are expected to treat everyone on a similar basis, i.e., impartial.

Also dating back to the Middle Kingdom is *The Instruction for King Meri-Ka-Re* (21st-20th c. BCE) which echoes the same themes: "Be not evil: patience is good […] Respect the nobles and make thy people prosper. […] He who is covetous when other men possess is a fool, (because [life] upon earth passes by […] He who is rich does not show partiality to his (own) house […] Do justice whilst thou endures upon earth; do not oppress the widow; supplant no man in the property of his father; and impair no officials at their posts. Be on thy guard against punishing wrongfully […] Do not distinguish the son of a man (JR: of birth and position), (but) take to thyself a man because of the work of his hands." (p. 415)

Almost a millennium later it is in *The Instruction of Ani*, a scribe (21st-22nd dynasty, 11th-8th c. BCE) that the following advice can be found: "Thou shouldst not eat bread when another is waiting and thou dost not stretch forth thy hand to the food for him […] Be not greedy to fill thy belly." (p. 421) In John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of* Wrath (1939) we find that one of the rules in the tent camps in California, established by those who had fled the Dust Bowl of Arkansas and Oklahoma in the 1930s, was that one shared food with the neighbor who had nothing.

Dating to roughly the same period is *The Instruction of Amen-Em-Opet* (1300-1075 BCE) where several elements of earlier wisdoms seem to come together:

Cast not thy heart in pursuit of riches,
(For) there is no ignoring Fate and Fortune.
Place not thy heart upon externals,

(For) every man belongs to his (appointed) hour
[…]
Do not bear witness with false words
[…]
Do not confuse a man in the law court,
Nor divert the righteous man.
Give not thy attention (only) to him clothed in white,
Nor give consideration to him that is unkempt.
Do not accept the bribe of a powerful man,
Nor oppress for him the disabled.
Justice is the great reward of god. (pp. 422-423)

Especially in the remark that one should not place too much "heart upon externals" it is easy to see John Bunyan's "man in an iron cage" who ended in that cage because he had pursued the lusts, pleasures and material possessions of the world (1795). The iron cage metaphor returns in Talcott Parsons' translation of Weber's *stahlhartes Gehäuse*.

Advice similar to that found in Egyptian texts can be found in Mesopotamian clay tablets. One example is one from the Late Assyrian period (9th to 6th c. BCE) titled *Advice to a Prince*. The text is all about maintaining just and proper relations with nobles, citizens, foreigners and have respect for their property: "If a king does not heed justice, his people will be thrown into chaos […] If he does not heed the justice of his land, Ea, king of destinies will alter his destiny […] if he does not heed his nobles, his life will be cut short." (Lambert 1960, p. 113)

The ancient Middle Eastern texts emphasize above all moral values as key to being a public servant. To have administrative and technical skills does not seem to be considered, even though we know that writing was an important skill and taught in the ancient world to those expected to prepare for a career in government. A similar focus on moral values is found in Confucianism. As far as I know, it is not until Shen-Buhai that practical skills are mentioned as important to administrators. Many of the ancient Middle Eastern and Chinese ideas and counsels can be found in *Pan'gye surok*, written by the Korean scholar Yu Hyŏngwŏn (1622-1672) during the Chosŏn Kingdom (1392-1910).

5. Yu Hyŏngwŏn: A Korean Scholar on Bureaucracy and the Ideal Civil Servant

Yu Hyŏngwŏn's study about desirable reforms of Korean government did not

attract attention until much later (Palais, 1996, p. 8; unless mentioned otherwise, all references in this section are to Palais), but is intriguing because of his effort to connect Confucian values to the running of bureaucracy and the daily affairs of state. As in the European early modern *Kameralistik* and sciences de la police of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Rutgers 2004), he also pays much attention to various national government tasks such as those concerning land administration, taxation, water management, currency administration, education, local government institutions and policies for, among other things, granaries and workfare relief, military supplies and tactics, walls and moats, post stations, care for the elderly and slavery. I will on focus on three themes in his work that are relevant to the topic of this paper: the foundational institutional arrangements, the bureaucracy, and the individual civil servant. The reader will be able to see how the various elements are similar to those found in ancient Middle Eastern texts, are drawn from ancient Chinese texts, and foreshadow several of Weber's ideal typical elements of bureaucracy.

a) The foundational institutional arrangements

Given the potential for despotism and tyranny, Yu Hyŏngwŏn is deeply concerned with how to block it and advises three, interrelated measures: control of royal expenditure, using the king in a symbolic way through the inculcation of Confucian values, and distribution of authority in running the bureaucracy and the daily affairs of state (p. 581). The basic means of achieving this is to assure that the king is as answerable to bureaucratic regulation as are his officials, with the latter basically controlling expenditure and management of the state (611). Distribution of authority is assured by the creation of a State Council, composed of five senior and three lower ranking officials and headed by a single councilor (p. 594). This State Council is a collegial organization, the members if which each head a bureaucratic department, and this is similar to what is found in many countries in the world today.

b) The bureaucracy

Central to his vision for bureaucracy is the principle of economy, operationalized both in terms of organizational structure as well as in terms of personnel size. Yu Hyŏngwŏn seeks a rational division of labor so that overlap or duplication of various functions can be avoided. At the same time, achieving the various tasks of government should be done by the lowest possible number of officials (p. 612). In

this, elements of Taylor's principles of scientific management can be recognized. Yu Hyŏngwŏn also advised to deal with sinecures, i.e., jobs that pay but require minimal work, and superfluous offices (p. 614), and this is reminiscent of the reforms pursued under the English King George III (Cohen, 1941, p. 20).

c) The individual civil servant

Throughout his book, Yu Hyŏngwŏn discusses and draws from Chinese wisdoms developed during the Hsia (or: Xia; 2070-1600s BCE), Shang (1700-1027 BCE), and Chou (1027-221 BCE) periods, and his aim was to translate their practices and principles to Korean government (p. 10). Several of his proposals are standard practice in the hiring and promotion of civil servants today, including state financing of government rather than relying upon fees and bribing by unsalaried officials, establishing regular work assignments at specific hours (and not allowing working from home, or conducting private business at work), and paying all clerks a regular salary (p. 627). This last was among his biggest challenges and never adopted (pp. 641, 1013). He also advised to recruit the most talented people in public service, and in his view talent was that which combined worth (as assessed in terms of moral knowledge) and ability (p. 669). That the latter must refer to administrative and technical skills seems clear in light of his advice to select and promote people on the basis of observation and recommendation (p. 672). Yu Hyŏngwŏn is considered one of the early representatives of a Korean reform effort that sought to counter ritualistic and formalistic Confucianism through attention for practical learning (*Sil-hak*) (Kim, 2012, p. 219).

He also reviews Chou personnel policies that prescribed performance evaluations conducted every three years, with a grand review every nine years. These reviews focused on six elements of performance: goodness or doing affairs well, ability to carry out, seriousness of not abandoning your post, law and maintaining these without error, discrimination or not being confused in making decisions, and rectitude or acting without partiality. Especially the latter about "acting without partiality" reminds of the ancient Egyptian advice of doing justice to all, and of the Weberian *sine ira et studio*.

By way of conclusion, his reform proposals are very comprehensive and inspired by balancing the need for rational planning with respect for tradition (p. 642). He wanted to establish a truly moral society ruled by moral officials who respected popular and peasant welfare. His sympathy for common people was balanced by recognizing the need for hierarchy (p. 1012). Yu Hyŏngwŏn's attention for both national and local government is of interest to contemporary Korea. Fol-

lowing the centralized-unitary system of the Chosŏn kingdom, the highly centralized administration during the Japanese occupation (1910-1945), and the autocratic and military rule until 1987, Korea has become a true democracy with attention for relations between state, business, industry, and labor (Jung, 2014, p. 29) (cf. 'corporatism' in Western Europe), and with more decentralized policies than is the case in, for instance, Southern Europe (Jung, 2014, pp. 159, 163).

6. Why do Images of the Ideal Civil Servant Emerge in Human Communities?

People have a need for government once living in imagined communities, where people only know few others. They need government to mediate in conflict, to protect against outside threat, to protect property, and to take care of functions that cannot be addressed on the basis of collaborative self-governance. In imagined communities it becomes really important to "feel" that those working in and for government can be trusted. The question is: on what basis can they be trusted as they are not personally known? Furthermore, can we trust that public officials will treat everyone with equal attention? Can we trust that public officials will not use their office for personal gain? The ancient Egyptian texts suggest that the most important elements and characteristics of those working in public office are a high sense of moral integrity and impartiality. There is no indication that specific administrative skills and/or techniques are considered important and that is, probably, because government is so small in terms of functions, and, consequentially, in terms of personnel size, organizational structure, number of rules and regulations, and revenue and expenditure. Administrative skills and techniques become more important as governments grow, and these can be acquired by training. That the focus of the earliest instruction or wisdom texts is on moral integrity and impartiality is not surprising as it deals with features of human behavior and psychology.

It was St. Augustine who observed that all human beings are subject to various conflicting elements of sociality: collectivism – individualism; egalitarianism – hierarchy; submission and domination; cooperation – aggression (conflict); conformity – uniqueness; community – competition; altruism (honorability) - selfishness (manipulation: deceit, under cover, covert, cheating); compassion – cruelty, and impulsive (emotional) – rational (deliberative) behavior (Manent, 2013, pp. 279-280; see also Ariely, 2012, p. 98). In the small physical communities of the hunter-gatherer bands it is virtually impossible for deviant behavior, that is behavior which can be harmful to the group, to go unnoticed. The chance to hide selfish and deviant behaviors is far greater in the imagined communities of the urban jungles of the world. People must have known this once they started living in cities, hence

the quick recognition of the importance of morality and impartiality.

From a common ancestor, the great apes and humans inherited a rank-order social system that operated upon a hierarchy, i.e., stratification, of positions of influence. The human hunter-gatherers switched to a society that operated upon reverse dominance hierarchy (i.e., keeping in check the extent to which a dominant member can usurp power indefinitely), conformity, kinship, egalitarianism, and reciprocity, and this was possible because they lived in a physical community of people. Humans in past and present engage in small-scale cooperation that can be characterized by nepotism, cronyism, deference to authority, dominance hierarchy and prestige, inter-group competition, and alliances on the one hand, and reverse dominance hierarchy, polite consensus, sharing, conformity, kinship, and face-to-face reciprocity on the other. These behaviors are all visible in physical and in imagined communities of people. Only in the latter, though, do we find large-scale cooperation characterized by coercive leadership on the basis of experience and merit, reverse orthodox dominance hierarchy, non-egalitarian social interactions, conformity, citizenship, hierarchical and prestige dominance, alliances, as well as reciprocity.

We will continue needing attention for morality and ethics in and for public office and must continue striving for the kind of education that at minimum provides knowledge about what behavior should be desired of an ideal public/civil servant. We need that as much today as people needed that 5.000 years ago and there are several reasons for that.

First, we cannot assume that social and economic inequalities are kept in check to some degree on the basis of self-monitoring and self-restraint only, since some people will be selfish. Second, people are endowed with different levels of abilities and in imagined communities those who cannot protect themselves (children, the physically and mentally handicapped, the elderly) and have no relatives or friends to look after them must be protected by government and its officials. Third, we need impartial public servants to mediate in conflicts between citizens, between private corporations and citizens, between citizens and government, and between private corporations and government.

Fourth, from the extensive research in behavioral psychology in the past forty years we have learned how people act upon many biases and public servants cognizant of these can actually assure the impartial application of rules and regulations. In relation to this, fifth, people have a tendency to confuse morality with conformity (to rules, social expectations; cf. Lawrence Kohlberg's second level of morality), rank, cleanliness and even beauty (Pinker, 2002, p. 294). We know that morality cannot be legislated, but we can expect from public servants that they, at least,

know that morality and impartiality are grounded in the triad of principled ~, deontological ~, and consequentialist ethics (Svara, 1997). That is, decisions made and actions taken by public officials for the benefit of citizens can only be legitimized by the combined forces of morality (i.e., principled ethics), the rule of law (i.e., deontological ethics), and in consideration of desired outcomes (i.e., consequentialist ethics). And even then it is not assured that maladministration and corruption will not occur. People across the globe may not accept either, but especially at local levels of government it still happens (Ady & Choi 2019, pp.127-128).

7. Balancing Conflicting Inclinations on the Ground: Morality Internal, Rules External

The main question of this paper as to whether there are Eastern and Western traditions in the notion of the ideal civil servant can be answered. From the literature we know that bureaucracy and bureaucrats are stereotyped in similar ways across the globe. With regard to the latter, I have not addressed the variation in appreciation and respect for civil servants across countries. In some countries they are well respected and appreciated (Scandinavian countries), in many countries they are somewhat respected and appreciated, while in some countries they are actually distrusted (United States) or despised and eyed with fear (mostly in authoritarian regimes). But, national differences do not constitute types. I have also not addressed civil servants' functional qualities as these are generally not central and relevant in any contemplation, 5,000 years ago or now, of what is an ideal civil servant. All civil servants are expected to have the skills and experience to fulfill their responsibilities adequately if not better than adequate.

What is important in discussions about so-called civil service traditions are the behavioral and attitudinal expectations that are value-laden. It seems that in the Middle Eastern literature of Antiquity, and in the Eastern (Confucian) tradition the emphasis is mostly on the moral quality of public servants, while the Western (Weberian) tradition stresses the outcomes of actions more in terms of factual and measured, i.e., calculated, achievement. The latter has become very important in Western countries since the late nineteenth century, no better illustrated than with the uncritical embrace of performance-management and ~-measurement in scientific management and New Public Management.

What, however, has travelled throughout the ages is the insistence upon morality and impartiality and it is therefore that I argue that so-called Eastern and Western traditions of civil service evaporate as soon as we look at what is considered the deep basis upon which public/civil servants are supposed to think and act. In fact,

living in an age where material and immaterial things are calculated in money and/or in rankings, it becomes very important to rekindle attention for the morality, integrity, and ethics of public office.

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