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# The Traditional Chinese Political System: Good or Bad?

## —An Example of the Scholarly Persuasion—

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China's national image, embodying as it does the personal character of the individual Chinese, has long become a big question mark under the impact of the West in modern times. This question mark has sometimes been projected well into China's past and also further unto the Chinese people as a race or ethnic group. Most conspicuous as a response to such a situation, Harold R. Isaacs, expert on the Chinese revolution in modern times and keen observer and analyst of both Nationalist and Communist affairs of *Newsweek* fame, not long ago organized a panel of 181 Sinophiles for the purpose of finding a sample answer as to American attitudes and views on the latter projection. He did so under no other than the august scholarly auspices of Harvard University, and his research results (as published in *Scratches on Our Minds*) indicated that, out of these 181: "predominantly admiring attitudes about the Chinese were shared by 123 members of our panel"; "a predominantly negative view was held by 31"; there were 6 whose views were "either too detached or too differentiated to fit any dominant bias," 9 whose views were "too scanty," and 12 whose interviews happened to be "incomplete." The net, conspciuous answer was therefore "predominantly admiring."

This may seem to have settled the question, but it did not, nor could, cover China as a cultural-political entity. On this latter question, however, many more Americans and other Westerners have done comparable studies and reached similarly positive conclusions a long time ago. Yet these conclusions likewise became seemingly dubious as the country went through repeated rebellions, reforms and revolutions before and since the turn of the present century. More recently, social scientists armed with new theories have once more plowed into traditional and contemporary Chinese society alike and reached somewhat predominantly ambiguous, if not negative, conclusions. This time the tone is more detached and hence liable to be regarded as free of emotional or moral or ideological preoccupations: ambiguous or negative, then, it would have to be "scientific"—or so it seems. But, significantly, out of their very ranks has now appeared a new comer whose findings on traditional China happen to be *predominantly positive* at a time when internal forces seem precisely to be cooperating in the attempt to destroy that image.* His conclusion, indeed, may at first seem as ambiguous as

*Thomas A. Metzger and his new book, *The Internal Organization of Ch'ing Bureaucracy: Legal, Normative, and Communication Aspects* (Harvard University Press, 1973).

"yes, but . . ." or "no, but . . ."; but, on close examination, it is really "yes, although . . ." or, more surely, "although . . . , yes." The tone, in balance, is affirmative, and, trampling on many big names to carry it, he is not likely to budge. His is definitely not a partisan commitment but a scholarly and very scientific one commensurate, evidently, with his status.

Mr. Isaacs, a journalist, was given a question to find an answer through the method (of interviewing and panel discussion) he knew best. Mr. Metzger, a scholar, had an academic interest and sought to satisfy it through diligent application of analytical models from social science to the study of history, taking advantage as he did of "that sinological paradise called the Harvard-Yenching Library" quartered in the same Cambridge, Massachusetts. Their equally predominantly positive conclusions, under today's circumstances, may tend to have different beneficiaries, but, all the same, they constitute a reinforced affirmation.

Isaacs' findings were personally heartening to most Chinese as well as Americans but evidently, and inevitably, distressing to others. Individual Chinese were described, for example, as "intelligent, high-caliber, attractive, likable, decent, nice, fine, upstanding, topnotch, worthy, lovable, extraordinary, individually just tops. . . ." As to their own feelings about such Chinese, interviewees said they "liked them; were fond of them; had great respect for them all; admired them; had deep attachments; warm, friendly feelings; liked being among Chinese; love the Chinese. . . ." However, there were those who characterized the Yellow Emperor's children as "unreliable, devious, untrustworthy, cruel, callous, materialistic, inefficient, socially irresponsible, excitable, repulsive in mobs; xenophobic, not highly intellectual, inscrutable, confused, overcivilized, strange, queer, different. . . ." And hence they usually said of themselves: "I don't like the Chinese; can't ever tell what they think; they never show whether they like me; have no high opinion of them; feel funny about the Chinese; felt a certain animosity. . . ." Any Chinese would tend to "feel funny" about these latter remarks, no doubt. Yet, as a whole, the Chinese people were said to be "down-to-earth, pragmatic, practical, good, kind, highly civilized, vigorous, industrious, persevering, courageous, loyal, wise, independent, pleasant, sensitive, canny, thrifty, rugged, competent, subtly humorous, jolly, dynamic, dignified, cheerful, astute, the finest people; a gifted race; quite wonderful people; the most adult and mature people in the world; the outstanding inhabitants of Asia. . . ."

Although not primarily concerned with China as a cultural-political entity, Isaacs' findings were occasionally also relevant in this regard. Some interviewees candidly proffered to say, for instance, that "The Chinese have the greatest and most unique history in the world, the only nation on earth with a continuous history since Neolithic times. They are dynamic, resilient, powerful, with a great capacity to survive and come back and a remorseless power of expansion over time." Or that "Confucian rationalism, moderation, disrespect for magic, freedom from intense sentiment, anything goes so long as it's kept within bounds and without too much disturbance—I admire a culture that houses this." Less complimentary views, in the multi-cultural American environment, were formed too. Some "think of the Chinese in general as slick, 'damned clever, these Chinese,' . . ." "From childhood folklore, movies, the Chinese is wily, astute," others said. "But the Chinese were historically outsmarted in power politics. Couldn't defend their country against the whiteman or the Japanese. Haven't been so clever as these childish notions made them out. . . . Chinese seemed . . . to be incapable of asserting themselves. . . . People who allow strangers to come in and put up signs saying 'No Chinese or dogs allowed' deserved to have the hell beat out of them. . . ."

The burden of modern China was heavy, compliments notwithstanding.

"The onset of 'new' images of the Chinese arising out of China's new setting as a Communist power, an efficient tyranny, and a dangerous foe, is a later part of our story," observed

Issacs himself. It seemed "clear" to him, however, that "these 'new' images are not 'new' at all, but for the most part old and long-established conceptions of the Chinese which are only new, again, after a long time in the backstage shadows, being brought out into the bright—and sometimes lurid—light of changing circumstances." These circumstances, of course, are still changing. "Only the most sentimental Sinophiles saw the Chinese in single dimensions," Isaacs opined; "the more knowing Sinophile has a more complicated view than this; he not only has more knowledge but he also has a whole past of intimate associations to reconcile with present experience in which no individual Chinese figure at all." Thus he cited two such Sinophiles "who had each spent decades of his life in China." One of them thought that "Sinophiles were attracted not so much by Chinese character as by Chinese culture, art, history, language." "Though it was disillusioning to get too close to the Chinese, I do like them fundamentally." The other, not surprisingly, "liked the Chinese in sum" and thought "of their sense of humor persisting under difficult circumstances, of personal relations based on a whole system of life and the art of survival, of resilience . . . , of the ability to enjoy life in the most unpromising circumstances, of gusto, of a tendency to dramatize and to live by the rules of the game, especially the game of life in public." Yet, in his mind, there was blemish also on this collective image. He thought "of callousness and brutality about human life and suffering, of the ease with which principles can be compromised, of the lack of inner guiding motivations or ideals. . . ."

Granting that people of different backgrounds at different levels saw and thus said different things, this collective image formulation does strike the culturally and politically conscious as protruding, if not outstanding, as these two opposing views—and issues—are here expressed and coupled in the same vein: a tendency "to live by the rules of the game, especially the game of life in public" and "the lack of inner guiding motivations or ideals." Was there not some ideal that produced the tendency "to live by the rules of the game, especially the game of life in public"? Or, if true, was there "tension," i.e., discrepancy, between such ideal or motivation and the said tendency or game?

Interestingly, these are also among the more important issues with which Mr. Metzger has grappled and on which he reached his positive conclusion as to China's political and cultural order. Although tackling only the "internal organization of Ch'ing bureaucracy" in its selected aspects, he somehow found himself dealing with the entire "political structure" in relation to its "political culture" (or culture-provided political values and attitudes) in traditional China as a whole. Noting that two prominent sociologists (Max Weber and S. N. Eisenstadt) had come to pass the judgment that "Chinese culture" had "nontransformative orientations" (e.g., toward making "progress") which served to explain the "ineffectiveness of the initial stages of China's modernization" under the traditional "political structure," he eagerly proffered his own findings (through microanalysis) and energetically objected to that judgment. Since the sociologists' reasoning was that "in order to have a potential for the transformation of its society, a religion or ideology has to focus on a normative order which transcends and so is *in tension* with the established political order (that is, "the cultural order has to be differentiated from the actual, present political order" and that "this differentiation was not achieved in imperial China")—or, put in another way, because "the cultural symbols of Chinese intellectuals and bureaucrats, despite some transcendence in principle, were embedded in the existing political structure to the point that there existed an ideological *identity* between the cultural and political orders . . . the elite had no autonomous, independent status orientations . . . (nor) any moral obligation to any groups outside their bureaucracy and their families (to warrant changes or transformation in response to pressure)—he protested with his evidence: "On the contrary, as we have seen, Ch'ing political culture involved a basic set

of coherent, abstract, universalistic ideas which transcended the status quo . . . the Confucian subject felt a heavy sense of responsibility to improve his character and reform the world. Certainly he looked to the state as the organ of reform, but he most emphatically also regarded it as the basic object of reform." This makes Confucian China look and sound good even in the jargon of contemporary social science, indeed.

But we are jumping a bit too fast in looking at Mr. Metzger's work here. What he has done, as his book title suggests, may baffle quite a few traditionalists whose thinking remains insulated to such concepts as the "normative and communication aspects" of a bureaucratic system's "internal organization," if not its legal aspect, or to such concepts as "political culture" and "political system" in the glaring absence of the more familiar "government and politics." This "systemic" conceptualization and approach have by no means been fashionable or popular for very long. To understand Mr. Metzger's contention and labor, we must first cast our glance at the way he looks at "bureaucracy" as a part—evidently the most important part—of the Ch'ing dynasty's overall "political structure" or "political order" that must be further connected to its "cultural order" or "political culture" and, also, the way he looks at the Ch'ing as one and the last of imperial China's dynasties. This would help us perceive the whole through perception of the parts, and also see why the author had to bring the weight of the whole to bear upon the parts under investigation.

The systemic theory or model of analysis has stemmed from the behavioral approach to social science in recent decades, particularly in the United States. With emphasis placed on the "behavior" of human beings and groupings in the various political units and areas of the world instead of merely the latter's legal and institutional frameworks, it is necessary to view such groupings as "systems" working together in a coherent way in order to take the necessary "action" to fulfill their "functions" or achieve their "goals." A "system" is therefore an organismic (e.g., biological, like an individual, or adaptive, like an evolving social institution or the state functioning as a living organism) or mechanical whole made up of interdependent parts that all "act" out their roles so as to take that necessary collective or systemic "action" in the environment in which it finds its existence. Each grouping in existence or definable that exhibits such "behavioral" coherence in human society constitutes a "system." Each society as a whole so characterized also constitutes a "system." The intra-societal system that is conterminous with a given society is that society's overall "social system," which must also have its constituent "parts" or "partial systems." That "part" or "partial system" which serves to allocate values for the entire society most authoritatively by wielding supreme power, monopolizing legitimate coercion, compelling action commensurate with such allocation and thereby meting out sanctions or deprivations for corresponding performance or inaction on the part of all other parts or partial systems is the "political system." A "political system," even though the most important, is therefore a "subsystem" of the overall "social system." Each "system" has its "subsystems," and each "subsystem," its "structures," each "structure," its constituent "roles" played by the most minute "parts" (like individuals or the most basic "behavioral units"). Between systems, there are definable "boundaries." Surrounding each system is its "environment" or "ecological setting." And, finally, to function or "behave" effectively, each system depends on the relevant (e.g., supporting) human or social values, beliefs, and attitudes prevailing in its environment—a relevant "culture." The "political system," therefore, must also have its "political culture" in order to be viable, to perform its functions adequately.

What functions does a political system have? Most basically it must convert the actional inputs from its parts—ranging from individual to structural and subsystemic (roles)—into relevant actional (policy) outputs in order to take care of that very allocation of values. But,

apart from this "conversion" function, the system must also maintain itself in order to continue doing what it is supposed to do. In addition to "maintenance," too, it must change or adapt to changing conditions (e.g., "culture") in the environment should they—as they always—occur in order to survive or persist. This "adaptation" capability, of course, is supplemental—but it can become instrumental—to the system's "maintenance" as well as "conversion" functions. Once engaged in its normal converting activities, it can and usually does all that is necessary or desirable in the allocation of values on the one hand and in looking after its own survival on the other hand. This is the overall picture (and Mr. Metzger cites relevant authorities like David Easton, Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., etc., as the source of his model).

The "conversion" function, in particular, is detailed in six aspects: (*a*) interest articulation; (*b*) interest aggregation; (*c*) political communication, which basically make up the "input" parts; (*d*) rule-making (e.g., legislation); (*e*) rule application (e.g., administration *via* the bureaucracy); and (*f*) rule adjudication (e.g., judiciary), which make up the "output" parts. Clearly, this function, in its totality, must be performed by social groupings, organizations (goal-oriented) and institutions (value-oriented) on the side of "the people" and by the usual "branches" exercising separate powers on the side of "the government" in a typical Western democracy like the United States. This is the most conspicuous bias as well as virtue of the systemic model and approach so far proffered predominantly by American sociologists, political scientists, and other social scientists in recent years. And now we can see how Mr. Metzger has elected to study the specified "aspects" of Ch'ing bureaucracy (on the basis of feasibility) and why he must bring the whole model and attendant methodology to bear upon the study (on the basis of relevance). It is self-evident that his interest in sinology in general dictated his viewing the Ch'ing as necessarily only a part of traditional China, and hence his treatment—by the same standard of completeness—of the latter's political system or "order" as a whole as a matter of convenience.

Selecting the Ch'ing bureaucracy and limited aspects of its internal organization, however, bespeaks the author's own immediate focus of attention, which necessarily sacrifices the systemic model, traditional China and its political system or order as a whole to a considerable extent. But, if this puts these latter concerns in dimmer light, he at the same time and by the same token elevates the object of his concentrated study to a higher plane, and, in doing this, he has applied another model—that of "organization" as a focus of sociological investigation—to his efforts. This model has been supplied by no other than Max Weber and the like, with whose verdict on China he disagrees.

The Weberian model of social organization, especially bureaucratic organization, stresses, first of all, the specific goals (e.g., running a district, a region, a country, an enterprise, an office, etc.) it sets for itself. Then, for the sake of realizing such goals, it is conceived in terms of a relevant hierarchy of specialized offices (on the basis of limited responsibility and technical competence) legitimated by law (or authorized regulations) and functioning in an efficient, impersonal manner so as to maximize achievement in the pre-set direction. Internal efficiency, therefore, is indispensable in this conceptualization for such external success, and internal efficiency, in turn, depends very much on organizational as well as personnel cohesiveness. The latter is further achieved through the unity of command (through a strict chain of offices), with bureaucrats at the higher level (administrators) outweighing those at the lower levels (subordinates) and authority and rewards accorded by the same scale. Higher or lower, however, offices cannot be "personalized," and must be separated from the office-holders so that they can be replaced when falling from their expected level of competence and achievement. There must also be communication between the offices and the criteria for hiring and promotion

must be universalistic and not particularistic. There must be job security and calculability on the part of the office-holders in accordance with established regulations or value standards (which sometimes are projected from external environment), while various means (e.g., material incentives, persuasion, coercion) are devised to insure compliance. There must likewise be relative autonomy to avoid interference and confusion between offices and levels of responsibility and to facilitate team work and insure concentration and efficiency. This set-up, as a whole, would in turn insure achievement for the organization in the external environment in general.

Very conspicuously, this Weberian model of organization stems, once more, from the industrialized Western society; some even view it as an abstraction from capitalist value preferences and practical experiences. It is, for example, deemed "rational" and "efficient" for achieving economic development especially because of its "impersonal" and "technical" character, which is regarded, in turn, to be more capable of handling complex divisions of labor and coordinating the diverse activities of large numbers of individuals than, say, organizations based on kinship, personal loyalty, or moral persuasion. Here we see how the application of this model may run into peculiarities of a different (e.g., non-Western) environment, such as China, especially traditional China. That Mr. Metzger should reach a positive evaluation of the Ch'ing bureaucracy—of traditional Chinese bureaucracy and political system as a whole—even as to its capability, as an organization, to transform society in the direction of progress is therefore something bordering on surprise.

Yet, is it?

In his process of analysis, Mr. Metzger has discovered three types of critics of traditional China and all that it stood for. One is, of course, the modern Westerners, whose very modernity seems to equip them with all necessary tools of criticism, even trappings of condescension, quite apart from their countries' power political triumphs. This category includes, of course, Western social scientists in particular, especially those of the modernistic, empirical schools. The second type is "modern Chinese reformers committed to Westernization" who "deplored" the lack of the creative "tension" that Weber pointed out, "charging that Confucian scholars typically let their moral ideals become corruptly entangled in the current political order." And the third is made up of those "Chinese with vastly different ideologies" who naturally could not see a relevant rationality in the traditional Chinese system, let alone a positive reality and a promise, whether bureaucratic or political.

So, Mr. Metzger has run counter to the "trend," or the "tide." Let us see how he did it in this book.

The Ch'ing bureaucracy is studied in three selected aspects—legal, normative, and communication—as the title suggests. In his presentation, Mr. Metzger divides his thick book (of 469 pages) into four lengthy chapters, the first dealing with the normative aspect; the second, communication; and the third and fourth, the structure of the law-making process and one category of substantive law (that of administrative punishment). Thus the legal aspect is the most extensively studied and, due evidently to feasibility as well as interest, specialized.

It would be impracticable to set forth here what Mr. Metzger has gathered into his construct called the "normative background" (of China) governing law-making in the Ch'ing period. But it is very important to note that his construct includes pre-Ch'ing norms of both theoretical and practical categories. It is built, at the same time, with the author's own borrowed models in mind and done so, furthermore, from a critical as well as "eclectic" standpoint. Stressing "the ultimately Weberian notion of 'political culture' as a major factor affecting the organizational capability of the bureaucracy" and agreeing "with Almond and Powell that the nature of political culture is to a large extent distinct from the question of interests," for

example, he takes many distinguished predecessors in the field to task (in the "Introduction" section of his book) by declaring that "other approaches to Ch'ing bureaucracy have usually described political culture in general terms rather than in detail . . . they neglect some factors . . . put too much weight on one or another factor . . . misunderstand one or another factor." Then, he first cites a colleague apparently of the "modern Chinese reformer" variety who, departing from the two great normative traditions of Western and Chinese political thought, has chosen to fill the function "of exposing dysfunctional or immoral practices and pointing the way toward improvement" on the basis of his work that focused "on the fact that the Ch'ing was a Confucian autocracy and on the abuses of dysfunctional characteristics allegedly associated with this fact." In Mr. Metzger's eyes, "This stress on the dysfunctional aspects of Ch'ing bureaucracy—its particularism, corruption, lack of specialization, administrative rigidity, contempt for commerce, and so on—has also been taken over in much of the literature discussing the Ch'ing failure to modernize in the face of the Western impact." "If we are to have a rounded understanding of this failure," says he, "we should try to take into account the bureaucracy's functional as well as its dysfunctional aspects."

Mr. Metzger is pleased, in the second place, to see that some colleagues have recently "turned away from this focus on dysfunctional factors" and have, through more detailed studies, duly noted certain "political skills of leading statesmen" in traditional China. Raising "normative questions reflecting the concerns of both traditional and modern political thought," too, they have somehow "boldly yet inductively devised categories of analysis allowing a conceptualization . . . making sense to modern minds." These contributions "have brought our understanding of the imperial bureaucracy to a new level of clarity and specificity, but," unfortunately, "all these studies focus on only some political aspects, dealing mainly with what I call 'top leadership,' " while ignoring the political culture of the subordinates within the bureaucracy.

The Marxist approach to China's imperial bureaucracy, as Mr. Metzger sees it, "focuses on the question of interests, especially on the class or societal basis of interests." "This approach is obviously a valuable one, but to the extent that it is pitted against the Weberian stress on values, it is incomplete." Its focus appears to be centered "largely on those ideas adults argue over in times of political turmoil rather than on those ideas and attitudes which are widely shared in a society, which condition the efficiency of routine organizational cooperation, and which affect the capacity of a society to meet various challenges such as the problems of modernization." In other words, it stresses, like Dr. Sun Yat-sen has said, the "pathological" rather than the normal, healthy aspects of political culture, and it elevates, by the same token, the importance of "social form" (such as class dictatorship) above that of "intellectual content" so that the influence or power of a social grouping (like a class) appears to depend "more on its capacity to punch and bully people than on the particular ideas it happens to put forward." Yet, according to this approach, it is a cliché to say that "ideas are 'dangerous,' that is, involve concrete political power." For, if not, "why do so many political groups in so many countries fear and try to eliminate the free discussion by intellectuals of even highly specialized subjects?" "It would be interesting," suggests Mr. Metzger, "to try to persuade Chairman Mao that because the discussion of such subjects never has any significant behavioral and political effects outside the ivory tower, he need have no qualms about removing restrictions on it."

Next to the Marxist approach, Mr. Metzger also takes up the theory of "despotism" (e.g. "Oriental Despotism"), an adjudication, it seems, pronounced or accepted by so many Western students of Chinese bureaucracy and politics upon traditional China. This theory, "in its various forms neglects political culture and other bureaucratic features . . . but it is particularly vulnerable because of its exaggerated emphasis on the ruler's use of arbitrary, coercive

sanctions." "These sanctions," according to Mr. Metzger's own study, "were only one among the constraints the ruler used, and probably not the main one. He rather played on the whole range of available sanctions—coercive, remunerative, and normative—frequently shifting tactics to find the right combination of sanctions for the particular problem. Moreover these various kinds of sanctions tended to be intertwined. The emperor's use of normative sanctions was colored by the threat of violence, and his use of terroristic violence was usually accompanied by outbursts of moral indignation aimed at achieving normative justification in the minds of the elite. Besides thus playing on a blurred spectrum of sanctions, the Ch'ing emperors tended to see that regularity and law, *even to the point of limiting their own scope of arbitrary decision*, were needed to make the use of sanctions more effective." Thus, whether those who have cried "despotism!" (in the purely negative sense) had done any detailed study of the situation they were describing or adjudicating looks rather doubtful!

This complexity of sanctions also makes those views oversimplifying or overemphasizing Confucian cultural values and importance of the traditional elite at the expense both of the emperor and of other "major social strata" (as expressed by S. N. Eisenstadt and Talcott Parsons) less than fully relevant. The elite's behavior, within the bureaucratic context, was subject to many influences even in addition to such sanctions, like specific administrative tasks assigned, problems encountered in implementing these tasks among the populace, etc.

Finally, Mr. Metzger also disagrees with those who have viewed Ch'ing (or traditional Chinese) political culture as primarily "authoritarian" as borne out by the bureaucratic elite (like Lucian W. Pye and Richard H. Solomon). The predominantly Confucian bureaucrats operated, instead, on what Mr. Metzger called a "probationary ethic," for they, while seemingly in "a web of other-directed (i.e., directed by the "external superego" of the superiors) behavior oriented to the cues of superiors," had embodied an "inner-directedness of the *chün-tzu* (true gentleman) ideal, which was integral to maintaining the *ch'i-chieh* (high morale and integrity) of the bureaucrats" themselves. Thus "the Confucian personality involved not only respect for superiors but also an inner autonomy based on moral standards differentiated from the current political order" (as characterized by "despotism," "authoritarianism," and what not). This "stable inner core of emotional poise and moral integrity . . . was often perceived as derived from contact with 'heaven' itself," which thus served to free the cultivated personality from "any anxious need for external approbation." This "inner" character of Chinese political culture of the "charismatic" variety requires a student to dig a bit more diligently in order to grasp, evidently. But the failure to understand on the part of most critics remains regrettable, nevertheless.

Thus, it was with these overall considerations and understandings that Mr. Metzger proceeded with his own study and reached eventually his own conclusions. About traditional China's "normative background," for instance, he notes ideas and attitudes that since antiquity stress "transformation" and "renewal" as well as "continuity" and "changelessness," although the latter often received greater attention from sinologists, who "have often been content to view the imperial Chinese state as dominated by an 'atmosphere of routine, traditionalism, and immobility' without asking how the latter atmosphere was mixed with the tendencies toward flexibility." He also takes into consideration ideas and attitudes derived from China's history as a whole as well as its philosophies and other cultural traditions. Thus Confucianism and Legalism, plus theoretical and practical exponents of these schools throughout China's dynastic history, are cited to indicate this more balanced development in Chinese administration. Included as his sources of authority are the classics and later expositions, earlier rulers and Ch'ing personalities, theorems and idiomatic expressions. What emerged from this political culture was the conceptualization of a state that was only "partly good," of laws

and institutions of a seemingly "unchanging" and "uniform" type that constantly clashed with, and hence necessarily adapted to, an emphasis on adjustment to "changing current conditions," and of an elite characterized by a sense of self-worth as well as self-doubt (as to one's perfectibility or need for improvement). Thus, even though "fixed" in the imperial tradition, the political order was nevertheless subject to "legitimate" changes from dynasty to dynasty and, theoretically, from thinker to thinker, while minor administrative adjustments were effected almost constantly. There was a kind of "polarity" not only between Confucian and Legalist principles—which was somehow mitigated by Confucius' praise for Kuan Chung and Hsün-tzu's differentiation from Mencius—but also between such practical measures as "promoting commerce versus inhibiting commerce," and the larger questions of "radicalism versus realism." The Chinese have never been one-track-minded, so to speak, on such an important issue as affairs of state: there was "fixity versus flexibility." Viewing the political order "as a historical process continuing in the present," the "Ch'ing Confucians indeed were weighed down by their consciousness of their history, but because their outlook was fundamentally critical, they transcended what Max Weber called 'traditional' values." "In virtually all periods," too, "Confucians perceived the society around them as corrupted and *in tension* with ideals almost beyond the possibility of implementation. While this perception was a source of anguish to them, it impresses us as a 'definition of the situation' facilitating work in a complex organization." This is what has equipped Mr. Metzger in pursuing this study to begin with, far removed from those who could and can only see riddles written all over China and things Chinese, especially in the political and administrative realms.

Not studying China's political or administrative system as a whole as such, however, Mr. Metzger's love for characteristic details sometimes tends to give the impression of having presented, or even just perceived, himself, a rather fragmented picture. This needs to be supplemented and complemented by studies based on other than the organizational focus and the microanalytical approach.

In analyzing the communication aspect of the Ch'ing bureaucracy's internal organization, the author has most likely given an outlook to routine practices such as the compilation, publication and distribution of laws seldom understood in this light previously, especially within the Chinese context. His attaching "functional" and "dysfunctional" consequences to the ambiguity or clarity of the legal language as well as to general or specialized competence on the part of the bureaucrats is bound to be refreshing and technically enlightening.

In presenting the legal aspects of Ch'ing bureaucracy, Mr. Metzger has apparently exerted himself most and also achieved best. Emerging from the discussion of what he calls "the formal structure of the law making process," for example, are not only the formal and substantive categorization of laws and the format of books of law, but also "the executive process" stemming from the entire political order as conceptualized by and prevailing in traditional China. This political order, as a matter of fact, includes the state of nature (heaven), the state of society, as well as the state of man. In the China-centered universe, the emperor sees himself receiving the mandate, a trust, from heaven and, bound by it, administering benevolence via his ministers and worthy elite in general to the people residing in the central and local districts of the empire, while having relations in the meantime with lesser political entities in the periphery based on tribute or mere commerce. His words might become law, but only after going through the various levels and procedures, and taking on the relevant forms, of law making and bureaucratic communication. And through the same manners of communication and relevant process of legitimation, his subordinates' proposals might likewise become law, binding even upon himself once through himself or through his predecessors. Sometimes a prime minister could be more influential than he. Sometimes regional offices also shared power.

He was also subject to criticism by the censors and incensed scholars, even if at the pain of death. On some rare occasions, even the common people could and did make presentations to him directly (such as in the case of the salt merchants of the Liang-Huai area in 1689, when the emperor K'ang-hsi was on tour in the south). In the case of administration, in particular, he often merely supervised and authorized action rather than wielding arbitrary power every bit by himself. Since Ch'ing laws included precedents, administrative rules, fully established regulations and precedents of capital offices, as well as basic statues—*with particular emphasis on precedents*, the emperor, in most ordinary cases, was really not such an authoritarian or despotic figure. Ch'ing laws may be also differentiated into penal and administrative categories, plus another differentiable law on administrative punishment that had to do primarily and exclusively with bureaucrats themselves within the administrative system. The study of this last category of law thus becomes Mr. Metzger's own specialty, presented in the longest fourth chapter that takes up almost half of the entire book.

In this important study, the author pronounces the equally important finding that the Ch'ing law on administrative punishment "was a system of bureaucratic disciplinary sanctions shaped by the Ch'ing rulers' policies as well as the situational, institutional, cultural, and technological *constraints on these policies and their implementation.*" To a significant extent, too, this system has realized "hypothetically-defined ideal characteristics," and this reflects its commendable "organizational struggle for effectiveness"—commendable, that is, in the contemporary scientific sense. And these "hypothetically-defined ideal characteristics" include particularly sanctions that are "legitimated, mild, universalistic, rationalistic, and flexible," plus "an administrative framework sufficiently differentiated and centralized to apply them uniformly." This is a good image, indeed, and it is derived, no less, from what must be classified as a down-to-earth microanalysis meticulously carried out by the author. "The Ch'ing bureaucracy was effective," Mr. Metzger has shown, "not just because it wielded the economic and coercive power more easily available to it but also because it reached out for less easily accessible sources of power, strenuously struggling to stretch its power by controlling its officials in ways designed to increase its effectiveness." Such "strenuous struggle" most certainly went beyond the requirements, and departed from the intrinsic nature, of despotism. If it persisted, therefore, it was because other reasons than the fact that it was "despotic" had made a contribution.

This image does not exonerate it from "problematic" practices and characteristics to some extent, as Mr. Metzger also points out. This was particularly so with the realization of "universalism, administrative uniformity, and legitimation." Universalism and uniformity, for instance, "were inhibited by particularistic ties leading to bribery or favoritism, as well as by the limited extent of administrative centralization, of professionalization in adjudicative activities, and of differentiation between political and judicial activities." But emperors like Yung-cheng and Ch'ien-lung made systematic efforts in the right direction, especially in promoting "fairness" throughout the system. Thus universalism was "strikingly realized" at least "in the way the law was written" and in the promotion of "respect for law" both by the emperors themselves and by bureaucrats in general. If China's bureaucrats *must* respect the law, the emperor certainly did not have to, or so everybody thinks—he must have been "above the law." Yet, Mr. Metzger's findings in this regard perhaps merit recognition more than anything else insofar as such stereotyped thinking is concerned:

> On the side of the bureaucrats, there were various forces promoting respect for law: their considerable amount of specialized experience; the usefulness of law as a neutral umpire for settling disputes in a conciliatory way between competitive offices; the officials' competitive tendency to display their respect for the laws as a way of demonstrating their loyalty to the emperor's interests; the inescapable

imperatives of organizational efficiency; and the ideologically appealing connotations of respect for *li* (precedent), which was the form of so much Ch'ing law.

The emperor also had reasons for respecting law. As we saw in the case of Yung-cheng, he appreciated that respect for law was a way of extending his overall power even if it constricted his freedom of choice on particular occasions. Moreover, his deliberately emphasized awesomeness made it relatively difficult for officials to develop particularistic ties with him; his great wealth often made him unbribable; and he often had an overriding political interest in effective universalistic performance. Because of these factors, the emperor's immense power was often inclined in a universalistic direction, although arbitrary despotism also was a characteristic of his.

This is apparently a more balanced view, and technically, or scientifically so.

Recognizing the roles of the *chün* (ruler) and the *chün-tzu* (true gentleman) as "the twin foundations of government" in the "indigenous outlook," too, Mr. Metzger's understanding is that each of these was "to be exalted in its own way." "From this standpoint we can agree that the emphasis on *tsun-chün* (reverently respect the emperor), even though open to Mencian reservations, was crucial for effective governmental action and was not just an expression of the emperor's dysfunctional desire for excessive power. Particularistic impulses conflicting with organizational aims had to be restrained somehow. If they could not be restrained through an intense, common commitment of all members of the organization to its goals, then they could be restrained by raising the position of the leader as much as possible beyond their reach." Herein lies the rationale of non-Western "authoritarianism" or "despotism" that calls for recognition particularly by critics of such regimes. It is worth noting, also, that the author discusses the question of leniency in the same vein. Bureaucracy being "not just an executive arm but also as arena of politics," the emperor, in applying administrative sanctions, therefore "generally aimed not only to elicit performance but also to maintain his authority." "This connection to the problem of maintaining authority over an organization with weak ties of solidarity at times made the sanctions so severe as to endanger performance." But, "administrative mistakes were distinguished from crimes and treated with leniency." And "light offences," too, "were routinely punished only by remunerative or status sanctions, not physical deprivations." There was no "primary reliance on terror." The emperor Yung-cheng is cited as wanting to maintain the "principle" that "superiors should overlook certain minor failings rather than stick blindly to the letter of the law." Here is one Chinese bureaucratic tradition that has become universalized. Unduly harsh sanctions, especially those irrelevant to the offenses merely intended to proclaim authority, would be counter-productive, in any case.

Yet, in the emperor's interest and, no doubt, also in the interest of maintaining the disciplinary system and administrative efficiency, the idea did prevail that "keeping the fear of failure alive in a man's daily thoughts was the best incentive"; hence, punishment was often meted out through "rationalistic" and "moralistic" as well as disciplinary considerations. And, bureaucrats being basically also *chün-tzu*, they therefore must and usually did accept such more severe standards of sanction than necessary on account of what the author has inferred as their "probationary ethic"—an ethic based on "the officials' self-image as charismatic leaders holding ultimate responsibility for the fate of the empire" and their accompanying "sense of shame." This ethic produced a series of ideas and attitudes commensurate with their status that almost bordered on the religious—like "the common notion of 'expiating' a crime through punishment; the practice of clearing oneself or winning a milder punishment by the process of self-impeachment, which was a sort of confession; the idea of 'renewing oneself' through blameless performance following an offense; and the willingness to accept such a strong moralistic and disciplinary element in the system of sanctions." Here are revealed more Chinese traditions not easily visible to the casual eye. And Mr. Metzger observes:

> The probationary ethic can be compared to the Protestant ethic to the extent that both are regarded as forms of motivation to carry out organizational work. In both instances there was the organizational problem of inducing an elite class to carry out arduous work barren of immediate gratification. In both cases this was done by injecting this elite with a moral tension more distasteful than the work and so formulated that it could be relieved only through performance of the work.

Here is seen why "creative tension" was present, and "progress" or "reform" possible, because, Mr. Metzger argues, "the Ch'ing elite's internalized sense of responsibility promoted the effectiveness of the sanctions applied to them. This sense of responsibility can be seen as an integral part of a broader pattern of political culture. Connected to a feeling of inner badness and shame, the sense of responsibility promoted the desire to improve the world, which also was perceived as containing badness. At the same time . . . there was doubt as to how best to proceed in improving the world, and indeed in improving oneself. This combination of the sense of inner and outer doubt, the sense of inner and outer badness, and the sense of responsibility was crucial for the promotion of flexible and disciplined organization work." Viewed in national proportions, it was thus possible for China not only to maintain internal integrity and to promote internal progress, but even to "make a contribution" to the whole world, so to speak.

If the question of an "elite class" seems to raise also the question of privilege in the context of the disciplinary system, which, as has been well known, is characterized by the Confucian dictum that "The *li* (rules of moral propriety) do not descend to the common people; the *hsing* (criminal punishments) do not reach up to the officials," Mr. Metzger also observes "the Confucians' sense of honor." This latter was intimately connected with the demand of *tsun* (to respect), whether in relation to the emperor above or to subordinates below. This demand, of course, was based on their learning "which hopefully put them into contact with the *tao* (the true way) . . . and so made them vehicles of sacred truths which the emperor (and the superiors) needed if he (and they) were to be fully successful." Hsün-tzu, the Confucian-cum-Legalist thinker, has observed: "Therefore heaven and earth bring forth the true gentleman, and the true gentleman brings order to heaven and earth." But, without learning or without the sense of honor, a nominal *chün-tzu* in official position would not only be punishable and punished, but also morally condemned and deemed rationally (e.g., technically) irrelevant. The consequence could be more severe. In the meantime, as Mr. Metzger describes, "Much of the Ch'ing elite perceived the political arena as consisting of three basic parts which had a continuous, tortured interaction: the 'people,' usually suffering and requiring help; an often corrupt, inefficient complex of power culminating in officialdom and the emperor; and the Confucian scholars, themselves often tainted by this complex but still graced through their learning with the high, flattering mission of realizing the *tao*, reforming this complex, and helping the people." Here is what served to "bridge the class gap," as may be feasible.

Since this feasibility lies in the realm of reality in relation to theory or ideology, Mr. Metzger further sees a "central" problem in "the behavioral importance which should be ascribed to the Confucian perception of a split between political reality and political ideals." "Those who regard this perception as behaviorally important will tend to link the traditional political culture to creative political efforts throughout history and in the present. Conversely, those who say that this perception is of merely intellectual importance will probably view Confucianism as a pathological force blocking or distorting modernization." How relevant an observation is it today!

Did the Confucian perception in question evince "behavioral importance," i.e., leading to formulas or schemes for social and political action? This question can be best answered in two ways—that is, whether, on the one hand, Confucians had exhibited any inclination

toward "practice" aside from their love for "theory" or empty ideals, and whether the evolving traditional Chinese political system came actually to embody some of such ideals. On the first point, the conclusion is foregone, because even critics have been accustomed to say, as Confucius did, that a Confucian, after accomplishing his learning, usually sought to enter governmental service. Even bandits familiar with Confucian teachings, too, were used to think of "practising the *tao* in behalf of heaven (i.e., in the absence of good rulers and/or officials)." And "worrying about things before the rest of the world learn to worry about them, and not enjoying oneself until the rest of the world all have a chance to enjoy themselves" as a learned Confucian's principle certainly does not suggest that he can simply "sit and meditate on the *tao*" without "getting up and do something about it."

The Confucian government, furthermore, was supposed to be a government of benevolence, i.e., designed to benefit the ruled through dedicated service of the ruling. In contemporary circumstances in some countries, it is perhaps better for the ruled masses to claim (e.g., as a right) or to struggle for (e.g., as a necessity) the ruling status and work on the benefits themselves. But this has not been a historical feasibility anywhere in the world. One cannot wish what is feasible retroactively. Confucian government—of benevolence from above (from the ruler and the officials and the learned) and hence of moral and competent man—did prove feasible, even though social realities often created difficulties in the way of fulfillment. Thus, a "tension" remained, almost constantly, between realities and ideals. Yet, embodied were most certainly many concrete Confucian ideals in China's traditional political and administrative systems, as Mr. Metzger has unmistakably uncovered through meticulous microanalysis. It is perhaps regrettable, from the macroanalytical point of view, that he did not resort to a Creel or a Quigley, or, in outlining China's "normative background" on his own, provide a broader, and more comprehensive perspective so as to make visible the traditional political and bureaucratic systems as a whole and thereby to indicate clearly their structural and functional relationship to and with each other. The projection of the systemic and the organizational models, no doubt, has taken the place of this possible approach.

But, if some are interested—whether from the scholarly standpoint or otherwise—in continuing to ask the question or in knowing as to whether the Chinese people, with the kind of ideological and political heritage as they have, can pursue "progress" or "modernization" on the basis of continuity, here is at least one affirmative answer in one category of evidence provided by a very diligent historian and a conscientious contemporary social scientist.

# 從墨子可新著申論中國傳統政體在現代社會科學理論與分析方法攷驗下所標示的得失

（中文摘要）



戴 盛 虞

自從西方勢力與文明擴張到遠東以來，由於中國的國勢日蹙，人們往往覺得中國和中國人似乎都一無是處，連歷史傳統、基本文化、民族秉性好像都一概失去了光彩。不久前美國名記者艾沙克斯（Harold R. Isaacs）曾就美國代表性人物在這一方面的觀感，作出調查統計，發表專書（*Scratches on Our Minds*）證明絕大多數的美國人，對中國和中國人仍然都極端佩慕；有些接受訪問調查，發表他們的研究心得與觀察經驗的人，又特別提到中國歷史的悠久、文化的博大，幷說縱使中國人一般幷無有系統的政治理想推動，至少大家上下都能守法奉公。去年一位美國學者墨子可（Thomas A. Metzger）又出了一部書，發表他專門研究清代官僚體制與吏政的結果。他發現中國的士大夫（連清代以前的許多朝代在內）除了表面上守法奉公之外，大部還有很深的儒家哲學和一般傳統文化上的修養，而儒家的政治理論和理想更作爲他們的規範和推動力；所以他們在多數時間幷不是一味盲從的俗吏，而且清代及清代以前的所謂「專制政體」也幷不如一般人心目中那樣，完全任憑皇帝一意孤行而無法統可循或道統可據。墨子可是用最新的社會科學理論和分析方法——如像魏伯爾（Max Weber）他們所標揭的所謂「組織」，尤其是「官僚組織」（bureaucratic organization）論，以及阿勒蒙特（Gabriel A. Almond）他們所發揮的「政治體系」(political system)論等——來從事研究的。但是他卻不同意主張此等理論和方法的權威人士有關中國傳統政治體系和官僚組織那種不求甚解的否定看法，認爲古老的文化和體制中，似乎不會有、或不曾有合乎現代社會科學要求的優良品質與潛能。相反地，墨子可自己就理論和實際體制與行政雙方分析的結果，證明有許多中、西的學者，都往往樂於發掘中國傳統體制裏面似乎「當然」的「缺陷」和「失誤」的地

方，卻不曾小心提出反問，更進一步探究出一些「或然」的「完滿」和「勝任」的地方。所以他更指出在儒家文化的薰陶指引下所形成而使清代二百餘年、堯舜以降幾千年的中國持續不墜的體制與理想，實在一直有其相輔相成的完整性，甚至相生相發的進步性；這些素質，是不能爲部分時代中所偶發的、甚至屢發的奉行不力或流弊所隱蓋過去的，因爲中國獨一無二的、屢變不衰的悠久歷史，是世界上無可辯駁的事實。

艾沙克斯的肯定結論，是由記者的採訪和討論方法得來。墨子可的肯定結論，則是基於學者實事求是、深刻鑽研、持平體察得來。無疑地，二者相得益彰。中國和中國人大可不必因爲人家道聽塗說，偶有微詞，便失去自信與自尊。