

Hierarchy, Virtue, and the Practice of Public Administration: A Perspective for Normative Ethics

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A military police officer is instructed by a commander not to issue citations to senior officers for driving while intoxicated. Also, certain specified junior officers and noncommissioned officers whose services and support are needed are to be similarly exempted. However, citations are to be issued strictly to all other personnel and maximum punishment is to be sought. When the officer objects to this order on the grounds of its illegality and unfairness, he is threatened with a poor proficiency rating and removal from his position.

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The design supervisor for a state water project is told by one of her engineers that the initial specifications for one section of water main must be changed. It has recently been discovered that the soil in that area contains toxic wastes which corrode steel pipe and will eventually enter the water supply. Consequently, only concrete-jacketed pipe is safe for this area. The supervisor agrees that the initial design represents a public health hazard and must be changed. Both go to inform the project chief of this necessary change. Upon hearing them out, the chief says that it is too late to incorporate these changes due to the significantly higher costs and time delays which would be required to complete the design phase. After leaving the chief's office, the supervisor tells the engineer that they have no other choice but to proceed with the initial specifications.

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The tendency of hierarchical organizations to demand absolute loyalty to superiors and thereby displace other important values, even those associated with the formal goals of the organization, is a well documented phenomenon.¹ Furthermore, it is clearly and overwhelmingly the most frequently occurring problem among the cases written by the more than 200 participants in administrative ethics workshops which I have conducted during the last four years.

An Ethic of Virtue for the Practice of Public Administration

Examination and analysis of this serious problem is not for the purpose of arriving at a set of specific recommendations about what one should do in such risky and

■ *The serious and recurring ethical issues raised by expectations of loyalty to hierarchy are used as an occasion for analysis of the ethical dimensions of the public administrative role in its organizational setting. Alasdair MacIntyre's concepts of practices, internal goods, external goods, and virtues are presented as useful elements in a theoretical framework for clarifying the ethical identity of the public administrative role. A table, organized around three realms of obligation, indicates the kinds of internal goods and virtues which might constitute the ethical content of the practice of public administration. Finally, it is suggested that the ASPA Code of Ethics should be grounded in the kind of perspective developed here.*

painful situations. Nor is the intention to provide a decision-making model for the analysis and evaluation of the various alternatives for action in any particular case. Frameworks exist for those purposes.²

Rather, this essay considers the general approach to the development of normative administrative ethics which would be most appropriate for public administration and, more specifically, the code of ethics of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA). The concern is to develop a moral identity for the public administrative role which provides a general orientation for action. The specific purpose is to explore an ethic of virtue for public administration which complements and supports ethical analysis of principles and alternatives for conduct by identifying certain desirable predispositions to act.

Lilla has argued that the analytical approach to administrative ethics amounts to equipping public officials with the means to create self-justifying rationalizations for their questionable conduct.³ He argues instead for the inculcation of a set of virtues derived from a democratic ethos. My position is that the problem of normative ethics should not be approached with the assumption that these are mutually exclusive options. Rather I find myself more in agreement with Frankena's judgment that an ethic of virtue is necessary to identify the predispositions to act which support courses of conduct which one has identified through some analytical process.⁴

Thus a complete normative ethic for public administration must include: (1) an understanding of appropriate ethical principles, (2) an identification of virtues which are supportive of those principles, and (3) analytical techniques which may be employed in specific situations to interpret the principles. The second item concerning "predispositions" or "inclinations," traditionally called virtues, which move an administrator to act upon principle, even in the face of anticipated resistance or punishment, deserve more consideration than they have received recently in the full development of normative administrative ethics.

In both of the case summaries presented above, subordinates confront organizational superiors with concerns which appear to be rooted in general principles derived from a professional ethic. In the first situation the officer is concerned both about obeying the law and maintaining justice in the enforcement of policy. In the second, the obligation of public servants to act in ways which are beneficent for the public and at least to follow the principle of nonmaleficence (do no harm) seem to be the motivating principles.

In neither of these instances is ethical understanding lacking; both individuals perceive a legitimate ethical issue. Also, both are able to identify what needs to be done to act responsibly. Furthermore, both demonstrate inclinations to act on their perceived obligations. However, in both cases, these would-be ethical public officials find their good intentions thwarted by higher executive authority.

Information is insufficient in the case summaries to make possible more than conjecture about reasons why the superiors resist attempts of their subordinates to conduct themselves ethically. However, it is plausible to infer from the information available that, as is often the case, interorganizational politics is a powerful deterrent to ethical conduct in the first case, and costs in time and money are an overriding concern in the second. Managers responsible for the well being of the organizations seem to allow goods associated with organizational status, position, and power to prevail over the professional ethics of subordinates.

If this problem occurs as frequently as both literature and experience suggest, why might this be so? What virtues support the action needed to maintain one's professional principles, even in the face of resistance and retribution if one is in a subordinate position or, in spite of the pressures to think first of the organization, if one is in an executive role?

Characteristics of a Practice

A useful perspective for analyzing the ethical difficulties inherent in the hierarchical relationships of modern organizations is suggested by the concept of "*practices*" and their *virtues* developed by Alasdair MacIntyre.³ Although his conceptualization needs revision and development, this general perspective is useful as a beginning point for scholars and practitioners involved in the development of normative administrative

ethics. Professional associations such as ASPA may also find it helpful in clarifying the broader ethical dimensions of the public administrative role. To consider the usefulness of this theoretical framework, the following concepts are briefly defined: practice, internal goods, external goods, and virtue.

MacIntyre focuses on "practices" rather than "professions" in dealing with the ethics of groups of people involved in common activities. Practices are forms of activity which possess the following characteristics:

1. They exhibit coherence and complexity.
2. They are socially established.
3. They are carried out through human cooperation.
4. They involve technical skills which are exercised within evolving traditions of value and principles.
5. They are organized to achieve certain standards of excellence.
6. Certain internal goods are produced in the pursuit of excellence.
7. Engaging in the activity increases human power to achieve the standards of excellence and internal goods.
8. Engaging in the activity systematically extends human conceptions of its internal goods.

MacIntyre explains that the skillful throwing of a football is not a practice, but "the game of football is, and so is chess. Bricklaying is not a practice; architecture is. Planting turnips is not a practice; farming is. So are the enquiries of physics, chemistry and biology, and so is the work of the historian, and so are painting and music." He concludes that "the range of practices is wide," including "arts, sciences, games, politics in the Aristotelian sense" and "the making and sustaining of family life."

The concept of practice is more appealing and constructive than that of profession; it is a larger framework within which to develop a normative perspective for public administration. Profession, unfortunately, may connote self protection and self aggrandizement and produce images of paternalistic expertise which are not appropriate for public administration in a democratic society. In addition, practice provides a broader concept which permits escape from often petty and generally class-conscious debate over which occupations are properly understood as professions. Practice includes professions and many other human activities.

This notion of practices is particularly appropriate as a conceptual perspective for understanding ethical problems inherent in organizational hierarchies. It suggests that the work of public administration needs to be understood in terms that transcend employment in a particular public organization. Organizations are unequivocally the *setting* for administrative practice, but the practice must have norms of its own. That is the reason for adopting the ASPA code of ethics.

But more broadly, the eight characteristics of practices represent a normative framework that might be used profitably to guide reflection about the ethical

development of the public administrative role. They suggest a working agenda and establish some tentative boundaries for inquiry. This concept calls attention to normative dimensions of public administrative activity which need greater clarity, particularly concerning the fourth, fifth, and sixth characteristics.

Internal Goods of a Practice

The concept of internal goods is essential to understanding the nature of practices. These are goods which can be realized only through participating in a particular practice or one very similar. For example, only through pursuing the practice of painting is one able to cultivate the finest sense of color, tone, texture, perspective, line, and proportion, as well as the skill to employ the relationships among these artistic elements in the pursuit of aesthetic excellence which can enrich the lives of others.

Public administrators need to determine which human attributes are most likely to advance the internal goods which are defined as essential to the practice and protect them from organizational pressures, to the extent possible.

These goods which are internal to practices cannot be purchased, stolen, or acquired through persuasion. They must be gained by engaging in a practice and submitting to its standards of excellence until one is able to go beyond them. It is in the nature of internal goods that although they are produced out of competition to excel, "their achievement is a good for the whole community."⁶ The ethical norms for a practice of public administration, therefore, must grow out of an understanding of its internal goods.

Can public administration be understood as a practice? As we consider the viability of conceiving of public administration in this way, *internal good* is clearly one of the central concepts upon which normative thinking needs to focus. Although the field has achieved neither precision nor clarity about its internal goods, public administration practitioners are aware of these in a general way. For example, administrators refer to such normative concepts as the public interest, popular sovereignty, accountability, social order, social justice, citizenship development, political equality, efficiency, and liberty as goods which they are attempting to achieve.

What appears to be needed is further discussion, debate, and consensus building about the meaning of these concepts and priorities among them. There is a need to consider *how* certain of these values should be understood as supportive of public administration practice and *how* they may subvert it. For example, the practice may require maintaining a certain balance between social order and social justice, while organizational goals may well favor social order for the sake of organizational stability, predictability, survival, and control. Without some considered consensus about

these goods which are internal to the practice of public administration in a democratic society, public administration practitioners remain vulnerable to organizational definitions of what is good and at the mercy of arbitrary organizational authority.

Furthermore, no intelligible way exists to distinguish the work of *public* administration from that of *business* administration without identifying the internal goods which are the unique ends of each. Without clarity concerning the goods toward which the practice is directed, it is impossible to identify the virtues which public administration practitioners should be expected to embody.

External Goods of a Practice

External goods are those which can be achieved in many ways other than engaging in a particular practice. They are genuine goods in that they are necessary to some extent for the support of members of the practice, but they do not contribute directly to the development of a practice. Typical of these external goods, such as money, prestige, status, position, and power, is that they always become the property of some individual, and, furthermore, the more one person has in a fixed-sum situation, the less there is for others. Consequently, external goods are often objects of competition in which there are winners and losers. This is essentially different from the value accrued through the achievement of internal goods, where the value is shared by the community of practice and the larger community as well.

External goods may become the dominant concerns of either organizations or individual practitioners.⁷ It is important at this juncture to remember that organizations should not be confused with practices but that they do coexist in an interdependent relationship. Practices typically require support by organizations, and organizations are, in turn, often dependent upon practices for their very reason for existence. However, considerable evidence shows that organizations do *tend* to corrupt the practices which they support as a result of their focus on external goods.⁸ In the competitive struggle for the scarce resources necessary for survival, organizations "are involved in acquiring money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards." Organizations have goals oriented around achieving and maintaining these external goods; practices should not allow these to have priority over internal goods.

Practices should be primarily oriented toward their internal goods, the tradition which has evolved from the quest for those goods, and a relationship among those currently seeking such goods.⁹ However, most practices are dependent upon organizations for resources and work settings. Consequently, the internal goods of a practice are at risk in an organizational environment dominated by the external goods inherent in organizational survival and growth. Thus, a precarious relationship exists. The practice of organizational management

can support or corrupt the integrity of practices which function under their purview.¹⁰

Virtues and Practices

Finally, the concept of virtue is to be considered. Virtue, along with the internal goods of public administrative practice, is one of the two points upon which fundamental normative thinking most needs to be focused. Virtue has been an important word in ethical thought throughout most of western philosophical history.¹¹ It is rooted in Aristotelian thought. However, when the language of moral philosophy in recent decades is considered, a substantial break is evident in the long and lively intellectual history of the concept of virtue.¹² Nevertheless, a revival of interest in virtue has occurred during the last 15 years.¹³

During this recent period the works of four scholars, in addition to MacIntyre, exemplify the revival of interest in virtue as a significant concept in moral philosophy: Stuart Hampshire, James D. Wallace, R. E. Ewin, and William Frankena.¹⁴ All five reflect a generally Aristotelian perspective, at least in some basic respects. For example, all understand virtues as inclinations or dispositions to act, not just to think or feel in a certain way. They are traits of character, more or less reliable tendencies to conduct oneself in a generally consistent fashion under similar conditions. Furthermore, virtues are not innate and, therefore, must be cultivated. In the work of all four scholars, virtues appear to involve cognitive activity. Virtuous conduct does not amount to merely conditioned reflex behavior; it is not just unthinking habitual response to stimuli, even though the term "habit" is sometimes used to characterize virtues, even by Aristotle. One might say that reason is employed in addressing particular situations, but with a certain preestablished attitude and a conditioned will.

MacIntyre contributes an additional dimension of meaning to the concept of virtue. He understands virtues as the character traits which make it possible for one to engage effectively in a practice by seeking to excel in achieving its internal goods while keeping the external goods of its organizational setting in a position of lesser importance. For example, if beneficence for the citizenry is one of the internal goods of public administration, benevolence on the part of public administrators is an essential virtue. If justice is also an important internal good for public administration practice, then fairmindedness is a necessary attribute for administrators.

Public administrators need to determine which human attributes are most likely to advance the internal goods which are defined as essential to the practice and protect them from organizational pressures, to the extent possible. For example, attributes associated with effective administration and management in the business world, such as competitiveness and profit orientation, may be unsuited to or less appropriate to the interests of a democratic political society. Similarly, virtues such as

concern for efficiency which advance organizational goals may not create openness to popular sovereignty if given more than secondary importance. The virtues of the public administrator must be consistent with agreed-upon internal goods of the practice of public administration.

Hierarchy, Virtue, and Normative Ethics

Through the concept of practices, with their standards of excellence, internal goods, and virtues on the one hand, and the analysis of institutions, with their external goods on the other, it is now possible to explore more profoundly the specifically ethical problems of hierarchy and loyalty, as well as the larger question concerning an appropriate perspective for the development of normative ethics for public administration.

Maintaining the Internal Goods and Virtues of a Practice

The most visible ethical, as distinct from tactical, problem which subordinates confront in dealing with superiors can be defined as one of maintaining the internal goods and virtues of their practice in the face of demands for personal or organizational loyalty rooted in external goods. Similarly, executives face the difficulty of maintaining these in order to support the practice(s) under their organizational authority in spite of pressures to place the organization's needs for survival and growth first.

For example, in the first case presented at the beginning of this paper, the problem for the subordinate is to maintain the practice of law enforcement by upholding one of its internal goods—the just treatment of all violators of the law against driving while intoxicated. In all probability this will require a measure of courage on the part of the subordinate, one of the generic virtues of all practices, according to MacIntyre.¹⁵ Indeed, extraordinary courage may be necessary since the commander's orders reflect a primary commitment, not to justice in the practice of law enforcement, but to the external goods of the organizational unit. Those he intends to exempt from the law are perceived as having the ability to provide resources and support for the unit. No doubt the commander's justification, if challenged by his subordinate, will be that he is looking at "the big picture" and acting in such a way that the police unit will be in a stronger position to carry out its mission. He may even convince the subordinate that this is the case; that he is acting ethically in terms of the larger organizational view.

However, it is clear that if the commander is successful in either persuading or forcing the subordinate to obey the order, the organization may be strengthened, but the practice of law enforcement will be weakened. No order which subverts the practice which the organization is established to support can be assumed to be a legitimate order, even in a strict chain of command such as a military unit. It may be legal and/or

consistent with organizational politics, but it is illegitimate in terms of the internal goods of law enforcement practice. One must acknowledge, however, that in the "real world" of public administration circumstances may occur in which such an order may be deemed a necessary compromise between the purity of the practice and the survival of its organizational host. The essential point here is that the justification for each such compromise should receive serious and careful reflection. One instance must not become a precedent for future action.

With the second case the engineer and the design supervisor were apparently attempting to uphold safety, one of the paramount internal goods of engineering practice, and we might reasonably infer that the design supervisor was trying to maintain beneficence for the public which would seem to be one of the central internal goods of public administration practice. The internal goods of engineering and public administration then appear to be congruent in this situation. However, the project chief seems more committed to the economical and efficient completion of the project than to safety and the public good that it represents. Economy and efficiency are goods, to be sure, but in this case they appear to be more associated with the external goods of the organization than the fundamental goods of either public administration or engineering. At most they are secondary internal goods.

Reflecting on the conduct of the engineer and the design supervisor, it seems reasonable to view their acts as motivated by a commitment to the internal goods of their practices and supported by the virtues of courage, honesty, benevolence, and prudence. However, in the face of resistance from the project chief, the design supervisor appears to lack sufficient administrative courage to uphold the internal good of her own practice and that of her engineer subordinate. Both practices may be eroded as a result.

Of course, this case might have unfolded differently. The project chief might have reflected a commitment to public beneficence by engaging in ethical analysis of the situation through which he or she seriously weighed safety over against cost factors without simply dismissing the former for the sake of the latter. However, for the chief to have done so might have required rescheduling of the project and a request for budget augmentation. These actions might have made the project chief vulnerable to criticism from superiors and might have required a greater measure of courage and benevolence, both obvious candidates for a list of essential public administrative virtues.

The NASA Tragedy: A Recent Case in Point

A recent tragic example of the seriousness of this problem of preserving the internal goods of a practice was provided by the events leading to the explosion of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) space shuttle on January 28, 1986.¹⁶ It now appears that four vice presidents of Morton Thiokol

TABLE
The Practice of Public Administration

Realms of Obligation and Virtue	Internal Goods	Virtues
1. Obligation to pursue the public interest	Beneficence for citizenry Justice	Benevolence Courage Rationality Fairmindedness Prudence
2. Obligation to authorizing processes and procedures	Popular sovereignty Accountability Due process	Respect for law Rationality Prudence Honesty Self discipline Civility
3. Obligation to colleagues	Enhancement of standards of excellence Contribution to achievement of internal goods	Fairmindedness Trustworthiness Respect for colleagues Responsibility for the practices Civility Honesty Prudence Rationality Independence

overruled 12 of its own engineering experts in their strenuous objections to the safety of the launch. This fateful management decision was made, according to Seymour Melman, professor of engineering at Columbia University, using "criteria unique to management—having to do with profitability, security of contracts, *positions of the managers in the hierarchy . . . but not the strengths of materials or design*" (emphasis added).¹⁷

Morton Thiokol's decision to ignore engineering standards of excellence through the imposition of management authority seems clearly to have been a response to expectations generated by NASA. During the decade before the shuttle tragedy, NASA had begun to orient itself increasingly to pressures for short turnaround time and frequent and reliable launch schedules.¹⁸ Safety, an internal good for manned space flight engineering, was sacrificed or at the very least devalued. Redundancy, a standard of excellence for achieving safety in this kind of engineering, was set aside. Prudence, one of the virtues of aerospace engineers involved in maintaining safety for human crew members, was rejected. The external goods of contract security, maintenance of schedules, profit, and marketability appear to have ruled the day.¹⁹

The most significant factor in the dominance of these external goods is alleged to have been the Reagan Administration's decision to "have as many commercial customers as possible use the shuttle to help defray the astronomical cost of operations."²⁰ On July 4, 1982,

President Reagan stated that the first priority of the United States Space Transportation System is "to make the system fully operational and cost-effective in providing routine access to space."²¹ George Will has recently noted this pressure for commercialization of the space program by the President in his promotion of the construction of a space station. Will laments President Reagan's promise that such a space station will produce "jobs, technologies and medical breakthroughs beyond anything we ever dreamed possible." He argues to the contrary that such "commercial bonanzas" from space research are not likely to justify their cost, but more importantly, that such expectations are inconsistent with the goals of science and tend to pervert it. In MacIntyre's terms, they are goods which are external to space research. In words which are remarkable for their clear focus on the internal goods of space science, Will asserts:

The dignity of our species derives from the fact that we value knowing. We value it not merely for utilitarian reasons, but for its own sake. We will have a space program that is both reasonable and inspiring only when we are sufficiently inspired by the noble quest to know.²²

Beneath this most visible ethical problem of protecting the internal goods of a practice from displacement by the external goods of an organization lies a deeper generic problem. This is the prior problem of achieving and maintaining clarity among practitioners about the standards of excellence and internal goods of their practice, as well as the virtues they must cultivate to preserve the practice in institutional settings. Without this kind of clarity, external goods are more likely to prevail.

The Practice of Public Administration

To deal with the specific problem of subversion by public organizations of the practices they were created to support, it is first necessary to clarify the nature of that potential practice or set of practices known as public administration. An attempt is required, at least, to identify and understand its internal goods and virtues. That is the prior task which must be engaged before particular issues can be addressed adequately or general rules of conduct can be prescribed.

At the outset of this discussion, it is important to address the instrumental orientation of the field. Public administration is an instrumental practice, but only in a particular sense. Its reason for being is to create and sustain institutional and other frameworks within which other practices such as public health, planning, accounting, law enforcement, and education may flourish. The justification for supporting other practices is that they provide goods which a democratic citizenry has determined either directly, or through its representatives, to be in its collective interest. Therefore, public administration should not be understood as instrumental in the sense of the "classical paradigm" with its assumptions about the separation of politics from administration. The practice of public administration involves more

than the simple subordination of the administrative role to that of the politician and the dominance of functional rationality as the only legitimate style of thought for the administrator. Rather, the role of the public administrator as a fiduciary for the citizenry gives rise to certain internal goods and virtues associated with carrying out the trust inherent in that role.

The accompanying table represents an outline of some of the plausible internal goods and virtues associated with three realms of obligation and virtue of government officials identified by Mark Moore.²³ For each of these realms, some of the kinds of internal goods and virtues which seem to be appropriate are indicated.²⁴ *This table is only illustrative and suggestive in nature; it is intended to be neither a definitive statement nor a decision-making tool.* However, it may help to suggest the kinds of norms, or more importantly at this point, the kind of *normative discussion* that may be needed for the full development of a practice of public administration.

Obligation to Pursue the Public Interest

For example, one may reasonably argue that beneficence is the central internal good related to the first of the three realms, the obligation to pursue the public interest. The most fundamental test of conduct and policy then would be the extent to which good is accomplished for the citizenry. Achieving good for the organization or the practitioners of public administration would have to be secondary considerations; no act could be deemed acceptable on the grounds that it strengthened the organization or furthered the interests of practitioners unless it first produced significant public good. Benevolence would be the essential virtue for the achievement of this internal good.

Justice would then seem to be the central internal good which follows from public beneficence. Justice defines the most essential political good; it is the fundamental ordering principle of democratic society from which such goods as political equality, representation of the citizenry, and citizenship development are derived. If that is the case, then fairmindedness,²⁵ rationality, prudence,²⁶ and courage are essential virtues for the practice of public administration. To achieve just decisions, rules, policies, and distribution of resources, it is essential that the inescapable exercise of discretion by administrators be guided by the inclination to search for and uphold what is fair or just.

However, this fairminded orientation to decisions and conduct needs to be buttressed by the propensity to deal rationally and prudently with problems, rather than simply determining what is fair according to the way one feels or what seems to be advantageous in the short term. And, of course, administrative courage is required if one is to resist the pressures and temptations to decide and act in response to goods which are external to this aspect of the practice of public administration, such as interest group offers of political support, threats of retribution, or organizational advantage.

Obligation to Authorizing Processes and Procedures

When considering the second realm—a public administrator's obligation to authorizing processes and procedures—popular sovereignty, accountability, and due process are critical internal goods around which a public administration practice should be formed. In that case one might reasonably argue that honesty, respect for law, prudence, self discipline, and civility are essential administrative virtues. If law, including its constitutional foundation, is a reflection of public will, then we might agree that those who implement its provisions should cultivate and maintain respect for the letter and the intent of statutes, while being attentive to their constitutional authority. It may plausibly be maintained also that practitioners should develop their knowledge and appreciation of the role of law and the constitutional tradition in a self-governing society. This implies an avoidance of that cynical attitude which simply sees the law as an opportunity for administrative intervention, reinterpretation, and imposition of one's own views.

A tragic example of the seriousness of this problem of preserving the internal goods of a practice was provided by the events leading to the explosion of the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) space shuttle on January 28, 1986.

Taking the law and legal processes seriously as instruments of popular sovereignty appears to require rational analysis and honesty in seeking to understand the intent of the law where it is vague, ambiguous, or even self contradictory. Prudent judgment is necessary in its execution. Furthermore, the ability to discipline one's own impulses, impatience, and preconceived convictions in order to serve the will of the people rather than one's own will would seem to be another requisite virtue. It may be argued that upholding popular sovereignty and accountability requires, whenever possible, in both the formation and implementation of public policy, effective provision for citizen participation. Civility, then, would predispose practitioners toward solicitation of open, serious, respectful, and rational exchange of views among the citizenry and between the citizenry and themselves.

Obligation to Colleagues

As concerns the third realm, the obligation of public administration practitioners to colleagues, the essential internal good appears to be the continual enhancement of the standards of excellence with which the practice is carried out. Practitioners have a right to expect their colleagues to strive to achieve clearer and more profound insight into the meaning of beneficence, justice, popular sovereignty, and accountability, as well as more effective ways of realizing those goods in public admin-

istrative practice. Both of these require the inclination to approach the practice in a responsible manner, bringing reason and honesty to bear to establish relevant factual material as well as the formation of normative judgments about the nature of the practice. Trustworthiness is an essential virtue for colleagues engaged in such tasks.

The sine qua non for the fulfillment of this obligation to colleagues would seem to be resistance to the dominance of external goods. The ability to keep the external goods of organizations in proper perspective calls for certain dispositions to act. Qualities of character such as independence, respect for colleagues, prudent judgment, and a sense of responsibility for the practice of public administration, as well as other practices which function within an organization, might be identified as crucial. One might also maintain that colleagues ought to be able to expect each other to exercise sufficient independence of mind to discern the difference between the internal goods of public administrative practice and the externally imposed goods of the organization in which they are employed. Practitioners should also be able to assume enough independence of conduct on the part of their colleagues to be assured that they will not give in to organizational demands which are subversive of the practice.

Furthermore, one might insist that colleagues should feel obligated to treat each other with civility, receiving each other's ideas in an open, rational, and fairminded manner. It may be logically argued that the members of a practice should assume that they are bound to respect each other's views about the development of the practice and the threat of external goods. Honest expression of differences is an expression of this respect. Similarly, it may be suggested that a sense of responsibility for the practice(s) commonly assumed and held in trust among colleagues is an essential character trait for establishing the ground of that bond. It is neither friendship nor proximity that obligate colleagues to each other as practitioners, but their shared responsibility for preserving and enhancing the practice of public administration. This sense of responsibility for the practice should encourage the redefinition of situations in which the commitment of superiors to external goods threatens the internal goods of the practice of public administration. Resistance to illegitimate organizational demands is not necessarily just a conflict between one individual's personal conscience and the goals of the organization, as is often thought. Rather, it may well represent a threat to certain internal goods of the practice which the entire community of practitioners as colleagues are obligated to confront.

Conclusion

These comments suggest the texture of normative ethical reflection and discussion which flow from the perspective which is advocated here. The specific substantive proposals concerning internal goods and virtues are intended to be suggestive and provocative of a focus

for normative deliberation, not as a final prescription. The development of such prescriptions is not the work of individuals but of colleagues devoted to a practice—or in *search* of a practice. For example, such a framework might provide a helpful orientation for deliberations about the *American Society for Public Administration Code of Ethics and Implementation Guidelines*.²⁷ It would encourage rooting an ethical code in a combination of experience and moral philosophy rather than relying too heavily on the politics of the committee process within ASPA.²⁸

In its present form the ASPA code of ethics is a conglomeration of prescribed virtues and modes of conduct, with some mention of specific goods, most of which have value and relevance when taken individually. However, what is lacking is a coherent ethical identity for public administration. ASPA's code contains no clear and systematic statement of the internal goods from which the particulars are derived and around which practice ought to be formed. The framework discussed here, on the one hand, would ground prescriptions in some understanding of the underlying

internal goods of public administration. On the other, it would focus attention on dispositions to act, on character traits which should be mutually cultivated, and qualities of people being recruited into the field.

The development of prescriptions without some understanding of the internal goods which are fundamental leaves public administrative ethics disconnected from the core of the practice; the promulgation of such prescriptions without a collegial commitment to the cultivation of the virtues which support those internal goods is likely to be an exercise in confusion, futility, and collective self deception.

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Notes

1. Illustrative examples are: David Ewing, *Freedom Inside the Organization: Bringing Civil Liberties to the Workplace* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1977); Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Alberto G. Ramos, *The New Science of Organizations* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1981); William G. Scott and David K. Hart, *Organizational America* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1979); William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956).
2. John Rohr, *Ethics for Bureaucrats: An Essay on Law and Values* (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1978); Terry L. Cooper, *The Responsible Administrator: An Approach to Ethics for the Administrative Role*, 2d ed. (New York: Associated Faculty Press, 1986).
3. Mark Lilla, "Ethos, 'Ethics,' and Public Service," *Public Interest*, vol. 63 (Spring 1981), pp. 3-17.
4. William K. Frankena, *Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973).
5. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2d ed. (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1984), pp. 181-225.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 188-190.
7. With respect to their attraction to external goods, MacIntyre's distinction between practices and organizations is too simplistic. See footnote eight.
8. This tendency is true also of organizations specifically established to support and develop practices such as professional associations. A practice may be corrupted by the external goods sought by its own professional association. Thus the practice may begin to orient itself more toward the pursuit of money, political power, social status, and protection from its clients than the whole-hearted development of the practice.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 194-196.
11. Philippa Foot, one of the leaders in regenerating philosophical treatment of virtue, argues in *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) that in developing contemporary thinking on the subject it is best to go back to Aristotle. For Aristotle, moral virtues were understood as habits which constitute our "states of character" specifically concerned with choice. They are the inner, although not innate, dispositions which make it possible for people to resist the pleasures that divert conduct from the good ends of human existence and keep them from being intimidated by the pain which may be required for noble acts. They help people to maintain a "mean" in their conduct between extremes and excesses. Virtues drawn from the political community of which one is a member were seen by Aristotle as essential for the fulfillment of citizenship. Far from being irrelevant to the rough and tumble world of government, Aristotle indicated in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, that the cultivation of these habits of conduct was considered one of the central responsibilities of legislators because without them democratic government would be impossible. According to Richard McKeon in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, it seems clear that *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics* "treat a common field" (New York: Random House, 1941). Politics without attention to the cultivation of virtue was simply thought to reflect a defective understanding of the ends and purposes of political activity.
12. For examples of this tradition more directly related to American thought, see: Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, D. D. Raphael and A. L. Mackie, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 216, 231; John R. Howe, *The Changing Political Thought of John Adams* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 30-32, 87-88.
13. Peter Geach, discussing the resurgence of interest in ethics of virtue in *The Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), observed that for some time philosophers had neglected virtue as a subject of serious interest and development, but he offered no insight into the reason for this lapse (Geach, 1977: 1). Foot attributed the neglect of the concept of virtue to the dominance of the analytic school of philosophy, but she indicated also that the situation had begun to change during the previous 10 to 15 years.
14. Stuart Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); James D. Wallace, *Virtues and Vices* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); R. E. Ewin, *Coopera-*

- tion and Human Values: A Study of Moral Reasoning (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981); William Frankena, *Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973).
15. *Op. cit.*, pp. 191-192.
 16. *Report of the Presidential Commission on the Space Shuttle Challenger Accident* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986). See especially chapters V, VI, and VII.
 17. William C. Rempel, "Shuttle Puts Spotlight on Engineers," *Los Angeles Times* (March 5, 1986), p. 1; J. Michael Kennedy, "Shuttle Veteran Charges Earlier Safety Lapses," *Los Angeles Times* (March 9, 1986), p. 1.
 18. William D. Marbach with Mary Hager, John Barry, and William Burger, "1986: A Space Odyssey," *Newsweek* (March 24, 1986), p. 18.
 19. Kathy Sawyer, "NASA Has Fewer People Minding the Store Now," *The Washington Post Weekly Edition* (May 19, 1986), p. 31.
 20. William Marbach with Ron Moreau, Richard Sandza, and Daniel Pedersen, "No Cheers for NASA," *Newsweek* (March 24, 1986), p. 18.
 21. *Report of the Presidential Commission*, pp. 164-165. See the remainder of chapter VIII for the details of these pressures on the space shuttle program. See also an institutional analysis of the problems of multiple expectations and competing accountability systems within NASA in Barbara S. Romzek and Melvin J. Dubnick, "Accountability in the Public Sector: Lessons From the Challenger Tragedy," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 47 (May/June 1987).
 22. George Will, "Who Will Lead the Noble Quest?" *Newsweek* (June 23, 1986), p. 84.
 23. Mark H. Moore, "Realms of Obligation and Virtue," in Joel L. Fleishman, Lance Liebman, and Mark Moore, eds., *Public Duties: The Moral Obligations of Government Officials* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 3-31. I have modified Moore's terminology here from "obligation to friends and colleagues" to "obligation to colleagues." When we are identifying the norms of the practice of public administration, "friends" do not represent a legitimate obligation within that role. Rather they represent the obligations of a competing role.
 24. The virtues listed here are not intended to be understood as strictly parallel to the internal goods listed in the previous column since some virtues are consistent with more than one internal good and some internal goods require the support of more than one virtue.
 25. "Fairmindedness" is used to indicate the virtue which is directly supportive of achieving and maintaining justice although in the philosophical literature "justice" is typically used both for the principle and the virtue. I find this much too confusing.
 26. Since "prudence" seems to have acquired negative connotations of preoccupation with self interest in contemporary discourse, both popular and philosophical, it seems important at least to indicate that this is a relatively recent phenomenon. Through most of the western philosophical tradition, prudence has been understood quite differently and regarded with greater esteem. For Aristotle, prudence (phronesis) was an essential human quality for moral conduct, as was true also in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas as he appropriated and incorporated Aristotelian concepts into his Christian theology. In both of these cases prudence meant "practical wisdom," the ability to achieve good ends through the use of good means. Prudence was understood as the deliberative skills necessary to move from principle to specific action in a concrete situation. For treatments of prudence which are generally consistent with this older tradition, see Adam Smith, *op. cit.*; R. E. Ewin, *op. cit.*; and Josef Pieper, *Prudence* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959). For one recent view which takes a more negative view of the concept see William Frankena, *op. cit.* See also David K. Hart's argument for prudence as one of the essential virtues of public administrators in "The Virtuous Citizen, the Honorable Bureaucrat, and Public Administration," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 44, special issue (March 1984), pp. 116-117.
 27. Both documents are obtainable from the American Society for Public Administration; 1120 G Street, NW; Suite 500; Washington, DC 20005.
 28. See Ralph Chandler's treatment of this problem in "The Problem of Moral Reasoning in American Public Administration: The Case for a Code of Ethics," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 43 (January/February 1983), pp. 32-39.