Unmasking Administrative Evil

Guy B. Adams and Danny L. Balfour

In The Face of Administrative Evil

Searching for a Basis for Public Ethics

> If history is a nightmare, it is because there is so much cruelty in it. In peace as in war members of our species are cruel to one another, and human progress seems to consist not so much in diminishing that cruelty as in finding more impersonal and efficient ways of crushing and grinding one another.
>
> —*Philip Hallie, 1969 (xv)*

Administrative evil poses a fundamental challenge to the ethical foundations of public life. Our reluctance to recognize the importance of administrative evil as part of the identity and practice of public policy and administration reinforces its continuing influence and increases the possibility of future acts of dehumanization and destruction, even in the name of the public interest. The Holocaust and other eruptions of administrative evil show that the assumptions and standards for ethical behavior in modern, technical-rational systems are ultimately incapable of preventing or mitigating evil in either its subtle or its more obvious forms. With this final chapter, we consider the nature of and prospects for ethics in public life, living as we do in the shadow of administrative evil.

Source: Republished with permission of Sage Publications from UNMASKING ADMINISTRATIVE EVIL by Guy B. Adams and Danny L. Balfour, pp. 161–180, copyright 1998; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

Necessary but Not Sufficient: The Technical-Rational Approach to Public Service Ethics

Ethics is the branch of philosophy concerned with systematic thought about character, morals, and "right action." In the modern age, until recently, two main versions of ethics have dominated Anglo-American philosophical thinking, namely *teleological* (or consequentialist) ethics and *deontological* ethics (Frankena, 1973). Both share an interest in determining the rules that should govern—and therefore be used to judge—individual behavior as good or bad, right or wrong. Teleological ethics, based on utilitarianism and tracing its lineage to Bentham (1989, orig. 1789) and others, offers the overarching principle of the greatest good for the greatest number. Oriented toward the results or consequences of actions, teleological ethics tends to elevate the ends over the means used to achieve those ends. Deontological ethics, founded in the thought of Kant (1959, orig. 1786) and his support of duty and order, reverses this emphasis, holding that the lower-order rules governing means are essential for the higher-order rules that concern the ends to be achieved. For our purposes, the important point is that both of these traditions have focused on the individual as the relevant unit of analysis.

Ethics in the technical-rational tradition draws upon both versions of ethics and focuses on the individual's decision-making process in the modern, bureaucratic organization and as a member of a profession. In the public sphere, deontological ethics are meant to safeguard the integrity of the organization by helping individuals conform to professional norms, avoid mistakes and misdeeds that violate the public trust (corruption, nepotism, and so forth), and assure that public officials in a constitutional republic are accountable to the people through their elected representatives. At the same time, public servants are encouraged to pursue the greater

good by using discretion in the application of rules and regulations and creativity in the face of changing conditions (utilitarianism). The "good" public servant should avoid both the extremes of rule-bound behavior and undermining the rule of law with individual judgments and interests.

It is fairly self-evident that public (and private) organizations depend on at least this level of ethical judgment in order to function efficiently and effectively, and to maintain public confidence in government (and business). At the same time, it has to be recognized that these ethical standards of an organization or profession are only safeguards, not failsafes, against unethical behavior. Nor do they necessarily help individuals to resolve tough moral dilemmas that are often characterized by ambiguity and paradox. Indeed, these problems provide the grist for the discourse among ethical theorists in the rational tradition. The Friedrich–Finer debate on public service ethics is still a useful way of describing the ethical terrain in public life. Finer (1941) argued for a version of ethics that emphasized external standards and controls, laws, rules, regulations, and codes. By contrast, Friedrich (1940) maintained that ethics was of necessity a matter of the individual's internal standards of conduct—a moral compass that guides the public servant through the morass of ethical dilemmas.

The Finer position of external controls is most compatible with a view of the public servant as a neutral functionary who carries out, in Max Weber's phrase, *sine ira ac studio* (without bias or scorn), policy decisions made in the political sphere or by those in higher echelons of the organizational hierarchy. One author has gone so far as to argue that both an ethic of neutrality (decisions from politics) and an ethic of structure (decisions from higher up) preclude public service ethics altogether because they deny the legitimacy of administrative and professional discretion (Thompson, 1985; see also, Ladd, 1970). Today, arguments in the literature are primarily over just which ethical grounds might justify such discretion. Prominent among the arguments for administrative and professional discretion are: (1) justice-based claims, usually following Rawls (Hart, 1984); (2) citizenship (Cooper, 1991); (3) American regime values (Rohr, 1978); (4) stewardship (Kass, 1990); (5) phronesis (Morgan, 1990); (6) conservation (Terry, 2002); and (7) countervailing responsibility (Harmon, 1995), among others.

In both public and private organizations, it has become almost an article of faith that professionalism imbues its practitioners with a public service ideal and a code of ethics—that is, internalized standards (after Friedrich) that provide the ethical compass for administrative discretion. To this way of thinking, professionalism becomes the basis for a version of virtue or character ethics (Stewart, 1985; see also Cooper, 1987, and MacIntyre, 1984). On the other hand, professionalism can also offer grounding for the external version of ethics (after Finer). Professions have codes of ethics, and they also often have some method of peer control in which ethics and standards are enforced, and in the extreme, in which the serious transgressor can be drummed out of the profession (Kemaghan, 1980). At the same time, most of the activity in the world of public service has been directed at external controls.

The Challenge of Administrative Evil

Despite the extensive literature on public service ethics, there is little recognition of the most fundamental ethical challenge to the professional within a technical-rational culture: that is, one can be a "good" or responsible administrator or professional and at the same time commit or contribute to acts of administrative evil. As Harmon (1995) has argued, technical-rational ethics has difficulty dealing with what Milgram (1974) termed the "agentic shift," where the professional or administrator acts responsibly toward the hierarchy of authority, public policy, and the requirements of the job or profession, while abdicating any personal, much less social, responsibility for the content or effects of decisions or actions. There is little in the way of coherent justification for the notion of a stable and predictable distinction between the individual's personal conscience guided by higher values that might resist the agentic shift, and the socialized professional or administrator

who internalizes agency values and obedience to legitimate authority. In the technical-rational conception of public service ethics, the personal conscience is always subordinate to the structures of authority. The former is "subjective" and "personal," while the latter is characterized as "objective" and "public."

The specter of the agentic shift and the tightly controlled but soulless functionary, and the need for administrative discretion, helps explain why much of the recent literature in public service ethics has leaned toward Friedrich's emphasis on internal control and personal conscience as the center of ethical behavior and standards. But some see this trend as leading to the usurping of democratic controls over public policy and a slippery slope toward government by bureaucracy (see Lowi, 1993).

This paradox is starkly illustrated in the Third Reich and the Holocaust. Many of the administrators directly responsible for the Holocaust were, from the technical-rational perspective, effective and responsible administrators who used administrative discretion to both influence and carry out the will of their superiors. Professionals and administrators such as Eichmann, Speer, and Arthur Rudolph obeyed orders, followed proper protocol and procedures, and were often innovative and creative while carrying out their assigned tasks in an efficient and effective manner (Keeley, 1983; Hilberg, 1989; Harmon, 1995; Lozowick, 2000). Ironically, the SS was very concerned about corruption in its ranks and with strict conformance to the professional norms of its order (Sofsky, 1997).

As Rubenstein (1975) points out, no laws against genocide or dehumanization were broken by those who perpetrated the Holocaust. Everything was legally sanctioned and administratively approved by a legitimated authority, while at the same time, a number of key programs and innovations were initiated from within the bureaucracy (Browning, 1989; Sofsky, 1997). Even within the morally inverted universe created by the Nazis, professionals and administrators carried out their duties within a framework of ethics and responsibility that was consistent with the norms of technical rationality (Lifton, 1986). Hilberg (1989) points out that the professions were "everywhere" in the Holocaust. Lawyers, physicians, engineers, planners, military professionals, accountants, and more all contributed to the destruction of the Jews and other "undesirables." Scientific methods were used in ways that dehumanized and murdered innocent human beings, showing clearly how the model of professionalism consistent with modernity empties out moral reasoning. The moral vacuity of professional ethics is clearly revealed by the fact that the vast majority of those who participated in the Holocaust were never punished, and many were placed in responsible positions in post-war West German government or industry, as well as our own NASA and other public and private organizations in the United States. The need for "good" managers to rebuild the German economy and to develop our own rocket program outweighed any consideration of the reprehensible activities in which they were complicit.

The historical record is such that we must conclude that the power of the individual's conscience is very weak relative to that of legitimated authority in modern organizations and social structures more generally, and that current ethical standards do too little to limit the potential for evil in modern organizations. Even if the individual finds the moral strength to resist administrative evil, the technical-rational perspective provides little in the way of guidance for how to act effectively against evil. As public service ethics is now construed, one cannot be a "civil servant" and be in public disagreement with legally constituted political authorities (Trow, 1997). A public servant can voice disagreement with a public policy privately, but if this does not result in a change of policy, the only acceptable courses of action that remain are exit or loyalty (Hirschman, 1970; Harmon, 1995). One can resign and seek to change policy from the outside (leaving only silent loyalists in the organization), or remain and carry out the current policy. This was the choice faced by German civil servants in the early 1930s, as observed by Brecht (1944). If legitimate authority leads in the direction of administrative evil, it will certainly not provide legitimate outlets for resistance. In a situation of moral inversion, when duly constituted authority leads in the direction of evil, public service ethics is of very little help.

Why, one might ask, does professional ethics focus so much on the decision processes of individual administrators at the expense of collective outcomes? Why is the individual conscience primarily responsible for ethical behavior, when it is political and managerial authority that are responsible for public policy and organizations? Because, operationally (theory-in-use), the central value is the primacy of legitimated authority. This is buttressed by the focus on the utility-maximizing individual as the locus of ethical decision making. In short, the ethical problem is construed as one of individual conformance to legitimate authority as a function of self-interest. The fact–value distinction (Simon, 1976) further separates the individual administrator from substantive judgments by limiting the field of ethical behavior to questions of efficiency and proper or innovative implementation of policy as determined by those who deal in the realm of values (policy makers). In effect, the ethical purview validated by technical rationality relieves, and even prohibits, individual administrators from making substantive value judgments.

Within the technical-rational tradition, there seems to be little or no room for allowing or encouraging public servants to publicly disagree with policies that threaten the well-being of members of the polity, particularly policies that may produce or exploit surplus populations. Rather than expecting the individual public servant to exit voluntarily when in serious disagreement with such public policies, public disagreement might press those in authority either to dismiss the offending administrator or to engage in a public debate over the policy. In either case, the policy makers would have to take responsibility for their policies, rather than place that responsibility on the shoulders of functionaries. One can only imagine whether things might have been different in Germany had the civil service spoken out against Nazi policies in the early days of the regime. True, individual civil servants would have done so at great personal risk, but, at the same time, the newly constituted government could not have sustained itself without their collective support. The fact that the vast majority of the German civil service willingly carried out their duties once the legal basis for the new regime was established (Brecht, 1944), and that U.S. government scientists continued the Tuskegee experiments long after a cure for syphilis had been developed, along with numerous other examples, reveals how the ethical framework within a culture of technical rationality leaves little room for moral choice or for resistance to administrative evil that is promoted by legitimate authority.

If the Holocaust teaches us anything, it is that individual administrators and professionals, far from resisting administrative evil, are most likely to be either helpless victims or willing accomplices. The ethical framework within a technical-rational system posits the primacy of an abstract, utility-maximizing individual while binding professionals to organizations in ways that make them into reliable conduits for the dictates of legitimate authority, which is no less legitimate when it happens to be pursuing an evil policy. An ethical system that allows an individual to be a good administrator or professional while committing acts of evil is necessarily devoid of moral content, or perhaps better, morally perverse. When administrative evil can be unmasked, no public servant should be able to rest easy with the notion that ethical behavior is defined by doing things the right way. Norms of legality, efficiency, and effectiveness—however "professional" they may be—do not necessarily promote or protect the well-being of individuals, especially that of society's most vulnerable members, whose numbers are growing in the turbulent years of the early twenty-first century.

Globalization, the Corrosion of Character, and Surplus Populations

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a new, global world order has emerged (for discussions, see Friedman, 1999; Farazmand, 1999; Bauman, 1999; Sassen, 1998; Huntington, 1996; Fukuyama, 1992). The relatively stable and predictable system of the Cold War, at least for most industrialized nations, has given way to a new global system that is much more complex and unpredictable (Balfour and Grubbs,

2000), a process that was accelerated by the events of September 11, 2001. Where once two great nation-states defined the parameters of the world's political and economic systems, we now find instead a constantly shifting balance of powers in the relationships between nation-states, between these states and super-markets (such as NAFTA and the European Union), and between states, supermarkets, and super-empowered individuals (Friedman, 1999). Old boundaries no longer restrict movement as the world moves toward greater integration of markets, nation-states, and technology. These developments have created phenomenal opportunities to create wealth and prosperity, but have also opened the doors to new conflicts and to deepening poverty among those who lack access to these new opportunities.

A key consequence of this new world order is that individuals are less and less tied to the traditional moorings of organization, community, and nation that once nurtured and protected them, although these moorings had already loosened considerably in the last century. For some, this represents a great opportunity to explore new horizons and possibilities. Many others, however, have found themselves adrift in a world that offers no haven, no safe port in which to land and settle into a stable life. At the extreme end of this spectrum are millions of refugees—surplus populations. The dimensions of this problem are such that no nation or community remains untouched by it (Fritz, 1999, 5):

> An estimated 50 million people were either driven from their countries or uprooted within them by the mid-1990s, roughly one out of every hundred people on earth. Counting those who emigrated for what were viewed as dire economic reasons, the figure more than doubles. The impact of this great migration has been enormous. It has compelled U.S.-led armies to intervene in faraway wars. It has led to a reactionary wave of restrictive immigration laws around the world. And it has planted the seeds of countless future conflicts.

Each new refugee crisis challenges already overstressed nation-states and nongovernmental organizations to find ways to absorb and care for these people with limited resources within an increasingly unsupportive political and social environment.

On another level, millions more individuals feel threatened by the new world order, fearful that they too will be uprooted and left hanging without a safety net. The underlying anxiety of the Cold War era was the fear that the conflict between the two superpowers would escalate into a nuclear holocaust. While that concern has diminished since the upheavals of the early 1990s, new anxieties have emerged. People feel threatened by terrorism and by the rapid changes and painful dislocations caused by unseen and poorly understood global forces. They fear that their jobs, communities, or workplace could be changed or even taken away at any moment by anonymous and turbulent economic, political, and technological forces. A new technology can transform an industry in a matter of months, making an individual's skills obsolete, or one's organization can disappear overnight in a new wave of mergers. The mass of refugees throughout the world serves as a constant reminder of how anyone can be overtaken and made superfluous by the dynamics of the new global system.

In his book *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, Richard Sennett (1998) discusses how organizations are changing in the new global system and looks at some of the effects of these changes on the individual worker. He encapsulates many of these developments in his conversations with Rico, a "successful" businessman in the electronics industry whose wife is also a working professional. While in many ways they exemplify success in the contemporary economy, they also suffer from deep anxieties about the future and the quality of their lives—anxieties that have turned all too real for many thousands of people like them in the wake of the "Tech Bust."

Rico struggles to maintain a sense of identity and ethical integrity in an atmosphere of continual change and low levels of commitment to anything other than short-term gains (Sennett, 1998, 20–21):

> He feared that the actions he needs to take and the way he has to live in order to survive in the modern economy have set his emotional, inner life adrift . . . his deepest worry is that he cannot offer the substance of his work life as an example to his children of how they should conduct themselves ethically. The qualities of good work are not the qualities of good character.

One result of the focus on the short-term is low levels of trust and commitment. The pace of change in contemporary organizations means that for most there is "no long term." Rico both values the independence he has found in the new economy, but also feels adrift, with no strong bonds of commitment or trust (Sennett, 1998, 25). "'No long term' means keep moving, don't commit yourself, and don't sacrifice." For managers and policy makers, this means that individual employees are all expendable. Any notion that organizations should care for their employees, or make long-term commitments to them, is seen as an anachronism, an impossible luxury. Translated to the individual level, the short-term orientation of the new global economy tends to undermine character, especially those qualities that bind people to each other and furnish the individual with a stable sense of self.

Under these conditions, the requirements for success in organizations make moral inversions and administrative evil all the more likely. Where once bureaucracy and stable lines of authority and routine were valued, today the emphasis is on flexibility and autonomous action. Corporations and governments want employees who can think on their feet and adroitly adjust to rapid change, but also want to retain the right (in the name of adaptability) to let these employees go at any time for the good of the organization. It would be a mistake to conclude, therefore, that more flexibility means more freedom for employees (as the song has it: Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose). Instead, the move away from bureaucratic structure to more flexible forms of organization has replaced one structure of power and control with other, less visible forms of control and compliance (Barker, 1993). The threat of expendability and fear of social breakdown make people all the more prone to protect their self-interest rather than consider the implications of their actions for the well-being of others. The context these developments provide for ethics in public life is a difficult one.

The Prospects for Reconstructing Public Ethics

As the twenty-first century dawns, two trends seem clear. First, interdependence is greater than it has ever been—people's fates are deeply intertwined—and this is less recognized than ever; and second, social groups are more and more fractionated and fractious—socially centripetal forces are as powerful as they have ever been, with more surplus populations appearing, and being created, at the fringes of American society. We live in a time in the United States when politics has become more sharply partisan, when public discussion in many forums has degenerated well below hard-edged debate, when hyper-pluralism underlines our differences perhaps beyond repair, and when the relentless pressure to entertain in the media has made even the somewhat thoughtful sound bite seem deliberative by comparison with the serial-monologue-by-interruption so common on television. Without the cohesion provided by a much greater sense of community, it is hard to see how American society can be kept from literally flying apart, except through coercive power and even public policies of elimination, the most perversely tempting technical-rational solution to social and political disorder (Rubenstein, 1975, 1983). As a response to serious social fragmentation and economic dislocation, an authoritarian America now seems to be in the realm of the possible, one in which the barriers to "final solutions" can all too easily fail. Many political, economic, and social responses to these conditions have been suggested from a wide variety of perspectives. However, any viable response must be plausible within the American political system of liberal democracy.

Liberal Democracy

Liberalism and democracy came together in the American founding period. A clear account of the marriage between the two appears in C.B.

Macpherson's *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (1977). The core values of classical liberalism are: individualism, the notion of rights (particularly to property), the sanctity of contracts, and the rule of law. Classical liberalism sets the philosophical foundation for American society, which allows for and encourages differential achievement by individuals. Democracy's chief value—equality—is often outweighed within this framework. Americans of the founding period lived, as we twenty-first century Americans do, in an order fraught with the tension between the liberal and the democratic traditions.

Democratic principles were a driving force in the American Revolution (Countryman, 1985). While political beliefs were widely divergent, there was widespread popular support for the democratic aims of the revolution; there had to be for the armies to be manned, and for the struggle to be successfully pressed against the British. What lingers decisively, however, is not a polity based on the revolutionary rhetoric, but the state that was built following the war during a time that has been appropriately called counterrevolutionary. The constitutional framework that was laid down during the founding period was formed far more from the principles of liberalism than those of democracy. The core value of the more democratic, revolutionary period—equality—was given a severe reduction in rank by the founding fathers. And the value of liberty—and its repository in the individual—was elevated and buttressed by law, by contract, and by right. The American liberal democracy is thus predominantly procedural—civil liberties, voting, fair procedures in decision making, and technical-rational policy making (Adams et al., 1990). Within the context of American liberal democracy, there appear to be two divergent scenarios in which public ethics will either flourish or wither.

Putting Cruelty First

"Putting cruelty first," our first scenario, is more apparent in American public life at the national level; it gives precedence to liberty within the pantheon of American political values, and offers a public ethics which at best provides a scant defense against administrative evil. This version of liberalism is perhaps best articulated by Judith Shklar in *Ordinary Vices* (1984), in which she advances a "liberalism of fear" predicated on the rather dismal track record of human beings, particularly in the twentieth century. Among the pantheon of human vices, including treachery, disloyalty, tyranny, dishonesty, and cruelty, Shklar argues for "putting cruelty first" (1984, 7–44). If our first consideration in public life is the cruelty that human beings all too often inflict on one another, our normal response is a healthy fear of cruelty, leading us to a liberalism of fear; one whose first and foremost mission is to avoid the worst excesses of state power run amok (Shklar, 1984, 5):

> Tolerance consistently applied is more difficult and morally more demanding than repression. Moreover, the liberalism of fear, which makes cruelty the first vice, quite rightly recognizes that fear reduces us to mere reactive units of sensation. . . . The alternative . . .; is . . .; between cruel military and moral repression and violence, and a self-restraining tolerance that fences in the powerful to protect the freedom and safety of every citizen, old or young, male or female, black or white.

A polity based on the liberalism of fear is focused on avoiding our worst proclivities. At the same time, it paradoxically makes strenuous ethical demands on citizens: "liberalism imposes extraordinary ethical difficulties on us: to live with contradictions, unresolvable conflicts, and balancing between public and private imperatives which are neither opposed to nor at one with each other" (Shklar, 1984, 249). In a liberalism of fear, into which we are prompted by our "ordinary vices" and by the forces of globalization, we are left utterly dependent on the development of the character of our citizens—too many bad characters and we lapse into the excesses of evil. Too much of an organized, systematic program by government or by religious or social institutions to reform character on a large, social scale, and we risk falling into evil through arrogance (Shklar, 1984, 39), "Nothing but cruelty comes from those who seek perfection and forget the little good that lies directly within their powers." It is just as easy to overreach as to underreach for character

development within a liberalism of fear, leading to those cruel consequences which surely warrant our fear.

In this first scenario, one is left with a minimalist public ethics. Transparency becomes the chief principle, under the assumption that when people can see the worst excesses, they will respond to correct them. A system of laws and regulations that make public deliberations and decisions *visible* to the public becomes the pillar of public ethics. Along with a system of transparency, public ethics under a liberalism of fear would include a program of laws and regulations that set minimum floors below which we would not want to allow people's behavior to sink (in full knowledge and expectation that at least from time to time it will).

This is not a version of public ethics that inspires much optimism about future instances of administrative evil. The assumptions about human nature under a liberalism of fear are essentially misanthropic, anticipating the worst from human beings, having been given so little encouragement from the events of the twentieth century. Indeed, the difficulties of getting liberalism right, along with the corrosion of character exacerbated by globalization, suggest that administrative evil may well increase, perhaps even dramatically.

Deliberative Democracy

The second scenario for public ethics focuses on the democratic aspect of our political heritage—in particular, deliberative democracy—and has been more visible at the local level of our polity (Box, 1998; Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, and Vidal, 2001). In its most basic sense, deliberation is careful thought and discussion about issues and decisions. Deliberative processes comprise discussion and consideration by a group of persons of the reasons for and against a measure, or, put another way, consulting with others in a process of reaching a decision (Fishkin, 1991). According to Dryzek (2000), deliberation is a process of social inquiry in which participants seek to gain understanding of themselves and others, to learn and to persuade. Thus, one of the cornerstones of deliberative processes is the nature of the communication involved: participants strive to rise above win-lose exchange; over time, they may aspire to dialogue, and even to become a learning community (Yankelovich, 1999).

Participants in deliberative processes are expected to be open to change in their attitudes, ideas, and/or positions, although such change is not a required outcome of deliberation. It is a process that can, over time, grow citizens, fostering growth both in the capacity for practical judgment and in the art of living together in a context of disagreement—hence, a public ethics. As in a liberalism of fear, tolerance is elevated to a central virtue in public life.

Deliberative democracy insists on a meaningful role for citizens in public decisions, although sorting out which citizens and what decisions are appropriate for deliberation represent ongoing problems. There is a considerable theoretical literature on both deliberative democracy (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; Dryzek, 1990) and deliberative governance (Forester, 1999; Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003; Fischer, 2000; deLeon, 1997). Deliberative processes have seen use at all levels of government (although mostly at the local level), and share in common involving citizens in public discussion and decision making (Dryzek and Torgerson, 1993). Insistence on "full" deliberation sets a very high standard that has been met only rarely, and then, only after multiple iterations.

A public ethics appropriate for deliberative democracy offers a possible alternative to the technical-rational approach to administrative ethics, and the associated complex of problems associated with administrative evil. Alasdair MacIntyre (1984) provided the groundbreaking work within this literature (also known as neo-Aristotelian, character, or virtue ethics). This tradition does not locate ethics in the autonomous individual, but within the community. That is, ethics emerges from the relational context within which people act—within the public square.

The process of building a community, in this case, an inclusive, democratic community, develops public life and public ethics at the same time. As detailed by Deborah Stone, a political community has the following characteristics (1988, 25):

It is a community;
It has a public interest, if only an idea about which people will fight;
Most of its policy problems are common problems;
Influence is pervasive, and the boundary between influence and coercion is always contested;
Cooperation is as important as competition;
Loyalty is the norm;
Groups and organizations are the building blocks;
Information is interpretive, incomplete, and strategic;
It is governed by the laws of passion as well as of matter; and
Power, derivative of all those elements, coor dinates individual intentions and actions into collective purposes and results.

Publicness is a key aspect in this development as Ventriss (1993, 201) notes: "A public, therefore, is a community of citizens who attempt to understand the substantive interdependency of social and political issues on the community, and who maintain a critical perspective on the ethical implications of governmental policy making." In this view, it would be unethical for public servants *not* to speak publicly to policy issues. As citizen professionals and administrators in a democratic community, they would have a special responsibility to guard against policies and practices that might engender eruptions of administrative evil.

This critical and active citizenship is a key aspect of building a viable deliberative democracy. Camilla Stivers (1993, 441) has articulated the following characteristics of democratic citizenship:

The exercise of authoritative power, using sound judgment and relying on practical knowledge of the situation at hand;
The exercise of virtue, or concern for the public interest, defined substantively in particular contexts through reasoned discourse;
The development of personal capacities for governance through their exercise in practical activity;
The constitution of community through deliberation about issues of public concern;
In summary, then, active citizenship means participation in governance; the exercise of decisive judgment in the public interest, an experience that develops the political and moral capacities of individuals and solidifies the communal ties among them.

Deliberative democracy clearly makes demands on individuals, and on individuals acting together in the public interest. It views exclusion and nonparticipation in public life as major problems in and of themselves. Public policies based on exclusion and exploitation are entirely inimical to a deliberative democracy because they "weaken the community by undermining the civic bonds that unify it, while eroding the political process by converting what should be a dialogue between fellow citizens into a repressive hierarchy" (Farber, 1994, 929). This of course is precisely what occurred in Nazi Germany. Under the rhetoric of a unified community, the Nazis' racist and exclusionary policies created a polity held together not by civic bonds but by the terror of the concentration camps (Gellately, 2001; Sofsky, 1997).

A public ethics within a deliberative democracy would require that professionals and administrators be attentive to social and economic outcomes of public policy, as well as to their proper and faithful implementation. Public servants could not ethically implement a policy that was overtly detrimental to the well-being of any segment of the population. It would be unethical, for example, to cooperate with cutting off disability benefits to legal immigrants, many of whom are elderly and are likely to wind up malnourished and/or homeless. Such a policy amounts to defining this group as a surplus population, and an ethical public service cannot be complicit in that sort of public policy.

Cruelty, Deliberation, and Administrative Evil

Within our liberal democratic polity, at least these two versions of public ethics can be imagined. The first, based on a liberalism of fear,

stems from an essentially misanthropic view of human nature: We have repeatedly seen the worst from human beings, and we should expect no better. In this scenario, we should understand that only a minimalist public ethics can be expected to be workable, but even more importantly, we must beware the arrogance of a public ethics based on grand designs about human perfectability—for such designs are the well-traveled avenues to those horrific eruptions of evil that we have seen throughout human history, and especially in the last century.

The second version, based on deliberative democracy, while not blind to human vices, including cruelty, does assume that we humans can—with hard work and great vigilance—do better. In this scenario, we can strengthen our public life and our public ethics through the rigor and tribulations of deliberative processes. This is not an easy road; not only does it risk arrogance and a concomitant descent into evil, but it assumes more—perhaps far more—than we have yet achieved. Yet it does have the considerable attraction of imagining a future that can hope for fewer lapses into administrative evil.

Regardless of which assumptions about human nature one holds—and which version of public ethics one thus finds persuasive—no human communities, even deliberative and democratic ones, offer any guarantees against administrative evil. And they certainly offer no escape from evil itself, which remains a part of the human condition. Still, one might hope—perhaps without lapsing into fantasy—that administrative evil may not be so easily masked in deliberative democratic communities. And public servants might not so easily wear the mask of administrative evil when their role entails a critically reflexive sense of the context of public affairs, and a duty to educate and build an inclusive and active citizenry. Our argument in this book thus offers no easy or sentimental solutions; offers no promise of making anything better; but only offers an inevitably small and fragile bulwark against things going really wrong—those genuinely horrific eruptions of evil that modernity has exacerbated very nearly beyond our willingness to comprehend.

> Do not despair. You need not worry so much about the future of civilization, for mankind has not yet risen so far, that he has so very far to fall.
>
> *—Sigmund Freud, Vienna, the 1920s (personal recollection of Raul Hilberg)*

References

Adams, G. B. et al. (1990). "Joining purpose to practice." In H. D. Kass & B. L. Catron, *Images and identities in public administration* (pp. 219–240). Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage.

Balfour, D. L., & J. W. Grubbs. (2000). "Character, corrosion, and the civil servant: The human consequences of globalization and the new public management." *Administrative Theory and Praxis*, 22, 570–584.

Barker, J. R. (1993). "Tightening the iron cage: Coercive control in self-managing." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38, 408–437.

Bauman, Z. (1999). *In search of politics*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Bentham, J. (1989). *Vice and virtue in everyday life*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich (original work published 1789).

Box, R. C. (1998). Citizen governance: *Leading American cities in the 21st century*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

Brecht, A. (1944). *Prelude to Silence*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Browning, C. (1989). "The Decision Concerning the Final Solution." In F. Furet (Ed.), *Unanswered Questions: Nazi Germany and the Genocide of the Jews* (pp. 96–118). New York: Schocken.

Chaskin R. L. et al. (2001). *Building community capacity*. New York: Aldine.

Cooper, T. L. (1991). *An ethic of citizenship for public administration*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Countryman, E. (1985). *The American revolution*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Dryzek, J. (1990). *Discursive democracy: Politics, policy, and political science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dryzek, K., & D. Torgerson. (1993). "Democracy and the policy sciences: A progress report." *Policy Sciences*, 26, 127–149.

Farber, D. A. (1994). "The outmoded debate over affirmative action." *California Law Review, 82,* 893–934.

Finer, H. (1941). "Administrative responsibility in democratic government." *Public Administration Review, 1,* 335–350.

Fishkin, J. S. (1991). *Democracy and deliberation.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Frankena, W. (1973). *Ethics* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Friedman, T. (1999). *The lexus and the olive tree.* New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

Friedrich, C. J. (1940). "Public policy and the nature of administrative responsibility." In C. J. Friedrich & E. S. Mason (Eds.), *Public Policy* (pp. 221–245). Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Fritz, M. (1999). *Lost on earth: Nomads of the new world.* Boston: Little Brown.

Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man.* New York: Free Press.

Gellately, R. (2001). *Backing Hitler: Consent and coercion in Nazi Germany.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Gutman, A., & D. F. Thompson. (1996). *Democracy and disagreement.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Haile, P. (1969). *Cruelty.* Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Harmon, M. M. (1995). *Responsibility as paradox: A critique of rational discourse on government.* Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

Hart, D. K. (1984). "The virtuous citizen, the honorable bureaucrat and public administration." *Public Administration Review,* 44, 111–120.

Hilberg, R. (1989). "The bureaucracy of annihilation." In Furet (Ed.), *Unanswered questions: Nazi Germany and the genocide of the Jews.* (pp. 119–133). New York: Schocken.

Hirschman, A. (1970). *Exit, voice, and loyalty.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Huntington, S. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of the world order.* New York: Touchstone.

Kant, I. (1959). *Metaphysical foundations of morals.* Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill.

Kass, H. D. (1990). "Stewardship as a fundamental element in images of public administration." In H. D. Kass & B. L. Catron (Eds.), *Image and identity in public administration.* Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage.

Keeley, M. (1983). Values in organizational theory and management education." *Academy of Management Review 8*(3): 376–386.

Ladd, J. (1970). "Morality and the ideal of rationality in organizations." *The Monist, 54,* 488–516.

Lifton, R. J. (1986). The Nazi doctors: *medical killing and the psychology of genocide.* New York: Basic Books.

Lowi, T. J. (1993). "Legitimizing public administration: a disturbed dissent." *Public Administration Review,* 53, 261–264.

Lozowick, Y. (2000). *Hitler's bureaucrats: The Nazi security police and the banality of evil* New York: Continuum.

MacIntyre, A. (1984). *After virtue* (2nd ed.). Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press.

Macpherson, C. B. (1977). *The life and times of liberal democracy.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Milgram, S. (1974). *Obedience to authority.* New York: Harper and Row.

Morgan, D. G. (1990). "Administrative phronesis: Discretion and the problem of administration legitimacy in our constitutional system." In H. D. Kass & B. L. Catron (Eds.), *Image and identity in public administration.* Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage.

Rohr, J. A. (1978). *Ethics for bureaucrats.* New York: Marcel Dekker.

Robenstein, R. L. (1975). *The cunning of history: The Holocaust and the American future.* New York: Harper and Row.

Sassen, S. (1998). *Globalization and its discontents.* New York: Free Press.

Sennett, R. (1998). *The corrosion of character; the personal consequences of work in the new capitalism.* New York: W.W. Norton.

Shkal, J. N. *Ordinary vices.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Simon, H. A. (1976). *Administrative behavior.* New York: Free Press.

Sofsky, W. (1997). *The order of terror: The concentration camp.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Stivers, C. (1993). "Citizenship ethics in public administration." In T. L. Cooper (Ed.), *Handbook of administrative ethics* (pp. 435–455). New York: Marcel Dekker.

Stone, D. A. (1988). *Policy paradox and political reason*. New York: Harper Collins.

Terry, L. D. (1995). *Leadership of public bureaucracies: The administrator as conservator*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.

Thompson, D. F. (1985). "The possibility of administrative ethics." *Public Administration Review, 45*, 555–561.

Trow, M. (1997, May 16). "The chiefs of public universities should be civil servants, not political actors." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. A48.

Yankelovich, D. (1999). *The magic of dialogue: Transforming conflict into cooperation*. New York: Simon and Schuster.