PRAGMATISM AND THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

by

Keith F. Snider

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Public Administration and Public Affairs

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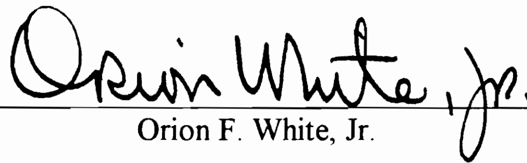

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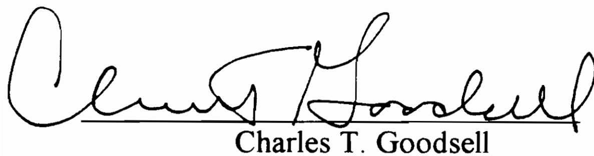

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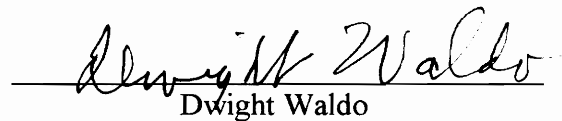

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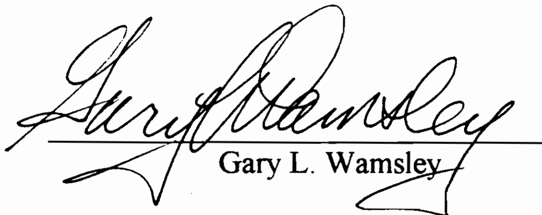

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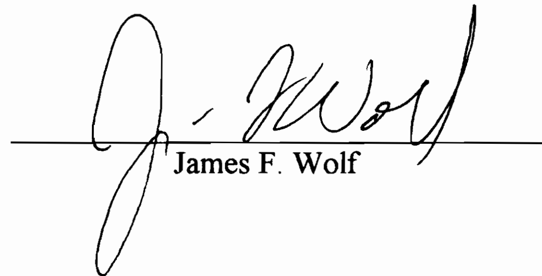

James F. Wolf

May, 1997

Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: public administration, pragmatism, public administration history, intellectual history, postmodernism

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Keith F. Snider

Committee Chairman: Orion F. White, Jr.
Center for Public Administration and Policy

(ABSTRACT)

Histories of public administration's early intellectual development have little to report on the influences of pragmatism as developed by philosophers such as Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. This dissertation contributes to the literature of the history of public administration by documenting this "slighting" and assessing its consequences. The dissertation concludes that public administration does indeed have a heritage in pragmatism, but this heritage does not emanate directly from the philosophical pragmatism of Peirce, James, or Dewey. Rather, it is found in the disguised or silent pragmatism of Mary Parker Follett, the popularized, corrupted, and nominal pragmatisms of Charles A. Beard and Herbert Simon, and the implicit pragmatism of Dwight Waldo. The discovery of this heritage of "hidden" pragmatism carries with it significant implications for the way we think about public administration as a field of study. Most importantly, it means that we have a distorted and incomplete view of our past. Our failure to understand the heritage of pragmatism means that we cannot see pragmatism as a legitimate alternative to the positivism and behavioralism that dominate contemporary mainstream public administration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

God has blessed me with an abundance of family, friends, teachers, and colleagues whose thoughtful criticism, wise counsel, and kind encouragement made the completion of this dissertation possible. It would be impossible in a short space to name all these contributions, so I trust that I will be forgiven for acknowledging explicitly only a few.

First, I thank the faculty members of the Center for Public Administration and Policy at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University for their efforts in creating and sustaining a rare and truly special intellectual climate.

Second, I am indebted to the members of my dissertation committee, Professors Charles T. Goodsell, Dwight Waldo, Gary L. Wamsley, and James F. Wolf, not only for their willingness to serve on the committee, but also for their sincere desire to help me succeed in the project. A very special word of gratitude is reserved for my committee chairman, Professor Orion F. White, Jr. Without his patient guidance and constant encouragement this dissertation would never have been completed.

Finally, in appreciation of her unwavering support for me and this project, notwithstanding the many nights and weekends I spent paying attention to it and not her, I express my deep love for my wife.

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

'Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?'
'To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.'
'The dog did nothing in the night-time.'
'That was the curious incident,' remarked Sherlock Holmes.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1894), "Silver Blaze"

General

American pragmatism gained prominence as a philosophy around the turn of the twentieth century. The intellectual influence of pragmatists such as William James and John Dewey was felt in a wide range of academic disciplines as well as in the profound social and political movements of the day. This was also the period of the founding of public administration as a self-conscious field of study. One might expect then that pragmatism would receive at least substantial mention in the histories of public administration's intellectual development. In fact, though, these intellectual histories have practically nothing to report on the influences of this important philosophy on the field. To use the metaphor alluded to above, pragmatism is apparently "the dog that didn't bark" during public administration's early years, and the field's historians have neither noted this curious incident nor investigated its significance.

The purposes of this dissertation are to document this "slighting," to assess its consequences, and to suggest a direction for public administration that will help heal it of the negative effects of these consequences. The primary, specific contribution will be to

the literature of the history of public administration; I seek, however, to make a broader contribution to the field's general effort to refound itself and to find a new direction for the future. The general line of argument and investigation of the dissertation will be as follows: first, to show that public administration histories have neglected issues of pragmatism's influence; next, to show specifically what these influences are and why little or no note was made of them; and finally, to show how the field has been affected by its neglect of pragmatism and what opportunities would be opened if we developed a more complete awareness of our intellectual "roots."

Relevance of this Topic

Guy Adams (1992) has argued that public administration is "enthralled with modernity" and so is an "ahistorical and atemporal field." In other words, it lacks an historical perspective from which critical intellectual and social issues may be addressed. This dissertation aims to contribute to the formation of such a perspective. It proceeds from the assumption that a more complete understanding of the field's intellectual development may lead to a greater sense of "context for thought and action" among both scholars and practitioners of administration. Specifically, an understanding of the role pragmatism played in early public administration may create a basis for new approaches to administrative action grounded in contemporary pragmatism .

Further, the field is limited both in thought and in action by the boundaries set for it (consciously or otherwise) in terms of what constitutes legitimate domains for research,

methods, and so on. Once we self-consciously push these boundaries out to encompass pragmatism, significant and new possibilities for action and inquiry in the field could become possible. To give a specific example, students of public administration study Frederick Taylor and not John Dewey only because our histories are incomplete; that is, these histories pay attention to Taylor but not Dewey. The way then that the field is conceived revolves around Taylor and scientific management rather than Dewey and pragmatism. The point of this dissertation is to help "rescue" public administration from our narrow conception of it by revealing the flaws in the way we have written our history.

Finally, an understanding of public administration's failure to become conscious of its ties to pragmatism helps us understand various aspects of the state of the discipline today: its "identity crisis," the persistent gap between theory and practice, and its continuing preoccupation with rationality and positivism. A better grounding in our field's intellectual heritage may lead to a more flexible, broad-ranging approach to guiding its future development. This aspect of the dissertation is particularly relevant given the recent postmodern revival of pragmatism.

Adams's concept of public administration as being "enthralled with modernity" is confirmed by my own experience as a practitioner of public administration in the areas of Department of Defense procurement and systems analysis. Throughout these areas, there is a pervasive undercurrent of faith in the possibilities for progress through human action, primarily through advances in science and technology and applications of rational

analysis in various technical disciplines.[1] The fact that progress has not yet been achieved is, in this perspective, merely evidence that we either need to "do it better" or "do more of it." Thus, specialization in the various technical disciplines increases, empirical research continues, more problems are identified and addressed, yet progress remains an elusive goal.

The emerging field of defense acquisition management illustrates this well. There is much research being conducted in, for example, methods of cost analysis, techniques of contract negotiations, and literally dozens of other areas. The prevailing view seems to be that these efforts will produce improved techniques that will lead to "better" acquisition management. At issue here is not the merit of such research in each of these areas, but rather the field's exclusive emphasis on this type of inquiry. The field is trapped in a modernist perspective that relies on empiricism and rationalism in research, thereby precluding other more integrative perspectives that may allow for investigation of larger, more fundamental and systemic questions of acquisition management. There is no sense of history nor continuity of prevalent themes in acquisition management, even though governments have been struggling with issues of weapons procurement for thousands of years.

Pragmatism offers an alternative to the prevailing modernism in acquisition

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[1] This prevalent frame of mind was countered by a rather paradoxical underlying suspicion that such progress was not guaranteed, indeed could probably never be achieved, because inevitably human irrationality, usually in the form of political action, would "triumph."

management and in public administration more generally. While its immediate widespread acceptance as a guiding mode of thought is not likely, as we shall see, some students of public administration will no doubt be drawn to the pragmatic viewpoint straight away, once they become aware of its traditional linkages to the field. To that extent at least, this dissertation may contribute to the intellectual development of the field.

Theoretical Grounding, Research Strategy, and Scope

The way we think and act about public administration depends largely upon what we have learned about the field, including its history. Public administration students learn that the thoughts and writings of Goodnow, Gulick, Follett, Barnard, Simon, Waldo, and others have established an intellectual foundation for the field. Almost all current research and thought in public administration may be traced in some way back to these "early giants." But who and what influenced them? Our histories largely ignore the intellectual debts of the founders and thus give us an incomplete and slanted view of our chosen field of study. The perspective of this dissertation is essentially critical in the respect that it calls into question our acceptance of the way that public administration histories have portrayed the major early theorists, with little or no regard given to a significant philosophy, pragmatism, which may have shaped their thoughts.

The approach of this dissertation is consistent with that of intellectual histories in general. That is, my purpose is to show how ideas, rather than people or events, came

into play in the history of public administration's development. To the extent practicable, I also attempt to show linkages in terms of causal relationships between and among significant ideas. We should note here, but resist, the rationalistic temptation to view history as an orderly progression of ideas that arise and endure on their own merits. As we shall see, the rise and fall of ideas in public administration, like other disciplines, is often dependent on exogenous and even completely non-intellectual factors.

It should be made explicit that nothing remotely close to an exhaustive intellectual history is set out here. Thus, since my purpose regarding pragmatism is the limited one of simply demonstrating that it was influential in public administration, I do not trace all its influences in every facet of public administration. Nor am I concerned to detail the thoughts of every pragmatic philosopher and public administration theorist. For the purposes of this dissertation it is sufficient to capture those that are important and representative.

The temporal boundaries for this dissertation are set as beginning with public administration's founding as a self-aware enterprise in the late nineteenth century works of Wilson and Goodnow to the Simon and Waldo critiques of the 1940s. During this time there was a fairly coherent "mainstream" of public administration thought as well as, interestingly enough, a coherent stream of pragmatic thought. Indeed, pragmatism essentially arose as a philosophy during the same years as public administration, and, as we shall see, it "died" with John Dewey during roughly the same period as the demise of the public administration orthodoxy.

Overview

A brief overview of some of the main points of the dissertation may provide some context for the reader. One of these is the issue of various "levels" of pragmatism. At one level, pragmatism is a social philosophy concerned with melioration through science (i.e., applying scientific methods) of social problems. At another level, it may also be seen as an operational philosophy concerned with improvements through science at the level of day-to-day administration. The former view (that of James, Dewey, and Follett) envisions administrators and institutions as agents of social change and progress, and is thus vulnerable to criticisms that it is excessively liberal or idealistic. The latter, more limited view sees pragmatism merely as an attitude or approach to problem solving in administration. The focus is on the scientific method, but in the limited sense of management efficiency. Experience, empiricism, practicality, "what works"--these are the important considerations to this view. The administrator is a manager concerned with operational efficiency rather than an agent of social change. This latter perspective, as we shall see, fit well in early public administration, in that the constrained view of pragmatism was directly related to the then-prevalent view of the role of administration in government as restricted (i.e., a neutral, value-free, efficiency-oriented administration separated from political influences). Thus we will see the larger "social philosophy" view of pragmatism in decline in the disillusionment following the World Wars and the Great Depression, while the "operational attitude" of pragmatism continued as the mainstream perspective in public administration.

A similar situation exists in contemporary administration. Because this view of administration as constrained to the role of applying expertise persists today, the operational version of pragmatism is prevalent. This helps to explain our readiness to embrace "reinvention" and some aspects of Total Quality Management (TQM) that address questions of eliminating waste and inefficiency. It also explains our persistent failure to address larger questions of social melioration.

A particularly important period for the purposes of this dissertation is the one from around 1920 through 1940. It was during this period that behavioralism came to dominate the social sciences, including public administration. A key question that arises for investigation is why pragmatism could not "compete" during this period with behavioralism in public administration. Lines of inquiry suggested by Safford (1987) are useful in describing how the "sociology of knowledge" movement of the "Chicago school" led the social sciences, inevitably, toward behavioralism and a resultant "de-valuing" of the moral aspects of pragmatism as espoused by James and Dewey.

This period thus saw the general decline of pragmatism as a philosophy. It came to be seen merely as an attitude of practicality or "realism." Safford argues that pragmatism degenerated into a form of behavioralism (213). This was probably the result of social and political factors, but was helped along by pragmatism's reliance on the empirical, which found coherence in the positivist nature of behavioralism. Most notably, Herbert Simon exemplifies this behavioralistic idea of pragmatism in *Administrative Behavior* (1976) when he claims coherence between his views and those

of John Dewey (195n). Pragmatism essentially died in its behavioralism, the contemporary consequences of which are well-known. Public administration's legitimacy issue, the "identity crisis" and the related "theory-practice gap" all may be traced to public administration's embrace of behavioralism since the middle of this century.

Though behavioralism persists in public administration, pragmatism has been revived in the contemporary, postmodern context. Strains of pragmatism were always present in the eclectic heterodoxy which has characterized current public administration literature since the 1940s. A revival of pragmatic thinking in the field was first evident in the "New Public Administration" movement's rejection of behavioralism and its attempt to reinstill a moral direction in administration. More recent evidences of pragmatism are seen in the writings of action and process theorists in postmodern organization theory. This movement of postmodern pragmatism may be strengthened and legitimated as its proponents spread an understanding of public administration's pragmatic roots. But the possibilities for a large scale move toward pragmatism is doubtful, considering the strength of modernism.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter II presents the literature review. The appropriate literature for this dissertation (and that to which it seeks to contribute) consists of the histories of public administration's intellectual development. The purpose of the review is to document the

neglect of pragmatism in these histories. This task is relatively straightforward, since ours is a relatively new discipline with few works of intellectual history. The literature review also reveals some confusion and ambiguity that is relevant to the project at hand, since some works note public administration's "pragmatic heritage" while failing to explain how this relates to philosophical pragmatism.

Chapter III describes what philosophical pragmatism is and how pragmatism has been operationalized and manifested in various ways over the years. The chapter begins with a review of the important ideas of the founding pragmatists, Charles S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. It also portrays manifestations of pragmatism in other disciplines, as well as vulgarized meanings of pragmatism that arose as results of pragmatism's own internal difficulties. The point of this chapter is to provide a common understanding of what pragmatism means so that we have a foundation for further analysis of its linkages to public administration.

In Chapter IV we examine the ideas of two important early public administration theorists, Mary Parker Follett and Charles A. Beard, for influences of pragmatism. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the impact of pragmatism on early public administration theory. Follett and Beard are chosen as subjects for this examination because of the vastly different manifestations of pragmatism in their administrative thought. The examination reveals that, while the process theories of Follett were very closely coherent with philosophical pragmatism, her ideas were not embraced by public administration. Beard's atheoretical formulation of public administration was practical

and utilitarian, and while less true to philosophical pragmatism, his ideas represented the mainstream of public administration thought from the founding through the years of the orthodoxy.

Chapter V investigates the reasons for public administration's failure to embrace pragmatism. The analysis begins with the founding and proceeds through the years of the early twentieth century up until roughly World War II. The point of this chapter is to describe other factors such as competing ideas and social or political events that created conditions that precluded pragmatism from being more of an influence in public administration. The analysis reveals that public administration theorists did not reject pragmatism in any conscious or self-aware sense; they simply either leaned upon other approaches such as behavioralism or else eschewed philosophical concerns entirely.

Chapter VI concludes with a discussion of postmodern pragmatism, its expressions in contemporary public administration, and its potential as an influence in future public administration. Postmodern pragmatism offers opportunities for a moral and communitarian public administration, but it is opposed by both modernism and some aspects of postmodernism. My conclusion is that, considering historical trends, it is doubtful that pragmatism will be of anything more than secondary influence on the field in the foreseeable future.

CHAPTER II - LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature of the histories of American public administration, with the point of demonstrating that these histories have not paid attention to pragmatism as a factor influencing the intellectual development of the field. Before proceeding, it is first necessary to identify the appropriate works for review.

Four factors determine the boundaries of the body of literature to be reviewed. First, we are concerned solely with American public administration. Second, since we are concerned with pragmatism as an influence in public administration's early development, temporal boundaries may be established. The late 1880s, often taken as the period of public administration's birth as a self-aware enterprise, is a sensible beginning point, and the demise of the classical orthodoxy in public administration in the late 1940s may be taken as an ending point. Third, we are concerned with the intellectual development of public administration, and so the focus must be on intellectual history or the "history of ideas." Histories of events, individuals, or agencies, apart from their impact on ideas, are excluded. Finally, we are concerned with historical works. Most public administration scholarship is implicitly historical in the sense that scholars, in order to provide a context, a point of departure, or support for their own ideas, refer to the significant ideas of those who have gone before. To illustrate, a student reading Goodsell's *The Case for Bureaucracy* (1994) would, in the space of a few paragraphs,

read important ideas of Woodrow Wilson, Max Weber, and Norton Long (151). But this dissertation is concerned with those works that have as an explicit purpose the recounting of the intellectual history of public administration.

Some may object to the characterization of certain works as intellectual history, but where there is question, a conservative approach was adopted, and marginal works were included rather than excluded. As we have noted earlier, histories do not abound in public administration, and if strict criteria on the bounds of the literature review were enforced, there would be little remaining to review.

To summarize then, the scope of the literature review for this dissertation is the body of works that have as an explicit purpose the presentation of the history of the intellectual development of American public administration, and which address the period between the late 1880s and the late 1940s. A bibliographical listing of the works selected for inclusion in the review is included as an appendix. Also provided is an explanation of the sources for these works. The literature generally falls into four categories: first, anthologies of selected important readings in public administration; second, public administration texts; third, edited works that usually contain one or perhaps two chapters dealing with public administration's intellectual development; and fourth, general works that devote some attention to public administration history.

Having defined the appropriate literature, it remains to review those works to determine whether the authors portray pragmatism as a factor in public administration's early development. The means for accomplishing this is simply a search of the text for

discussions or references to pragmatism or to those writers such as Peirce, James, or Dewey, who are traditionally associated with pragmatic thought. As we shall see, the evidence gleaned from this search demonstrates neglect, which occurs in two ways. The first is simply a failure to acknowledge the influence of pragmatism or pragmatic writers. The second is for the author to either assert or allude to the importance of pragmatism, but then fail to elaborate on or explain its importance, leaving the reader with, at best, mere vague impressions of pragmatism and its influence. Such is the case with Dwight Waldo's *The Administrative State* (1948).

The Administrative State

Perhaps the most compelling evidence supporting the case that public administration histories have not paid attention to pragmatism is found in Waldo's treatment of the subject in his most well-known work. For, while Waldo goes into more detail than other historians, his discussion of pragmatism and its influence on public administration appears as almost perfunctory and dismissive.

Writing explicitly from the standpoint of the history of ideas,[1] Waldo documents the origins of and major factors influencing American administrative thought. His approach may be illustrated in his discussion of Taylor's Scientific Management. Devoting an entire chapter to what he believes is the "most important of the theoretical

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[1] Nash (1969; 56) calls this the "standard work" of intellectual history in public administration, though Fry (1989; 220) notes that Waldo's motives were somewhat more critical.

movements now influencing American administrative study" (209), Waldo demonstrates Taylor's influence on the thought of such theorists as Cleveland, Mosher, Pfiffner, Gaus, White, and Gulick (53-54).

Waldo takes no such strong stand regarding pragmatism, displaying rather an ambivalence toward its influence on the field. At times he asserts its importance, noting for example the role of pragmatism in causing public administration to turn away from its preoccupation with "principles" (165), and later, the important place of pragmatism in the prevailing public administration view of science (178). At other times he places pragmatism on public administration's periphery, stating for example that pragmatism is "occasionally mentioned in the texts" (83), and that it is "unlikely" that Pragmatic philosophy will play an important role in future public administration (210). Here we see, in Waldo's use of both the upper and lower case, the signaling of a potentially important distinction between different meanings of "pragmatism." Unfortunately for the reader, Waldo does not elaborate. We may take this, along with the brevity of his treatment and the lack of references to the pragmatic philosophers (Waldo mentions Dewey only once (210)), as evidence that, on the whole, Waldo attaches little importance to pragmatism.

Other Works Referring to Pragmatism

Three other works in the literature reviewed have very brief references to pragmatism in public administration. Bozeman's (1979) excellent chapter on the

intellectual heritage of public administration devotes only a few sentences to the subject. He names pragmatism as one of the six "policy philosophies," or "sets of values about the purposes of government or the most desirable means of achieving purposes" (69). Because pragmatism is essentially "the art of the possible" (70), it has always been a guiding principle in administration and policy-making. Bozeman also hints that pragmatism was a significant influence in the rise of the policy sciences, and sees evidence of pragmatic thought in Lindblom's classic "The Science of 'Muddling Through'" (1959).

Caiden's (1971) treatment of pragmatism in his chapter on the history of the study of administration is also brief. He notes the influence of Dewey on the University of Chicago political science faculty, which included Charles Merriam and Leonard D. White:

> The Chicago department was impressed with John Dewey's doubts that facts alone could lead to principles and doctrines, for doctrines could prejudice the interpretation of facts. What was needed was not dogmatic doctrines, but flexible scientific thinking as an experimental tool of inquiry (37).

Caiden also devotes a few paragraphs to a discussion of Dewey's "idea that public policy could be studied systematically" (76) as an influence on the growth of the policy sciences through Harold Lasswell.

DeLeon and Overman (1989) also note the influence of pragmatism in the policy sciences. They acknowledge William James and John Dewey as the developers of a philosophical pragmatism that provided a "rationale for extending the application and

relevance of science in all disciplines to social, political, and economic life" (408). Specifically, they see the basic premise of the policy sciences as emanating from Dewey's instrumentalism, the concept that knowledge and ideas are instruments leading to action and are to be understood in terms of the consequences of those actions. Further, deLeon and Overman note that the process of inquiry put forth by Dewey--defining the problems and then analyzing alternatives in light of probable consequences--forms the basis for the process of inquiry adopted by the policy sciences.

Three other scholars make references to pragmatism in ways that seem to indicate its importance, but then they fail to pursue any further discussion. Vieg (1959), in tracing the growth of the practice of modern public administration during the early 1900s, notes that the trend toward expansion of governmental functions in the United States should be viewed in light of "American pragmatism" (13). But he does not elaborate on what he means by this, other than to infer that "practical considerations prevail" when determining the proper sphere of government influence (13-14). Mosher (1975) makes a similar comment, that "early public administration was pragmatic" (4), in the introductory chapter to his comprehensive edited volume. In a later chapter of this volume, Egger (1975) refers to pragmatism in a significantly less ambiguous way in discussing Leonard D. White's thoughts on the principles of administration:

> White also expounded the case for pragmatism in suggesting that the term "principle" should be restricted to a hypothesis that had been verified at least to the extent that it had a *prima facie* verification, and that conformed to reality within the possibilities of currently available evidentiary processes (80).

The Remainder of the Literature

The rest of the works in the reviewed literature have no discussions or references to pragmatism. We may take this to mean that the authors either completely neglected the subject or, if they considered pragmatism, they felt that it was unimportant and not worthy of mention.

Each of the remaining texts, Morrow (1975); Simmons and Dvorin (1977); Hill and Herbert (1979); Henry (1979); and McCurdy (1977) each provide a brief discussion--usually a chapter--on the development of public administration in thought and practice. Henry's discussion of public administration's five paradigms also appeared in Chandler (1987) and in *Public Administration Review* (Henry (1975)), and is probably the best known summary of the intellectual history of the field. None of these makes any references to pragmatism.

This is also true of the remaining edited or general works. Gladden's (1972) silence on the subject is perhaps understandable, given that only a small portion of his two-volume opus concerns modern American public administration. Notwithstanding its title, Chandler's (1987) *A Centennial History of the American Administrative State* contains significantly more than just history. One of its major contributions to intellectual history is, as mentioned above, Henry's discussion of public administration's five paradigms.

Fry's (1989) work is particularly disappointing in its neglect of pragmatism. In

documenting the thoughts, work, and significance of eight “masters” (Weber, Taylor, Gulick, Mayo, Follett, Simon, Waldo, and Barnard), Fry makes an extremely important contribution to public administration’s intellectual history. However, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, several of these masters, Follett and Simon in particular, leaned on pragmatism in developing their own thoughts on administration, yet Fry fails to devote any attention to this fact.

Finally, the two anthologies (Mosher (1981) and Shafritz and Hyde (1978)), while not intellectual histories in a traditional sense, present the significant ideas of prominent public administration practitioners and scholars, but fail to make note of pragmatism. Considering the neglect of pragmatism cited to this point, the fact that the anthologies also neglect it is not surprising, since a criterion for inclusion of a work is that it be widely quoted and reprinted.

Summary

To summarize the results of the literature review (see Table 1), most of the works on the history of the intellectual development of public administration pay no attention to pragmatism. Those that do pay only brief attention and document pragmatism as an influence in one of three ways. First, public administration was related to pragmatism in its essential nature and context (in Waldo, Bozeman, Mosher, Vieg). In other words, public administration <u>was</u> pragmatic in a general and loose sense. Second, pragmatism’s emphasis on the tentative and experimental played a role in public administration’s

rejection of the "principles" approach (in Waldo, Caiden, Mosher). Third, pragmatism provided a basis for the rise of the policy sciences movement in public administration (in Bozeman, Caiden, deLeon and Overman).

Let us reflect on these findings for a moment. On one hand, we have evidence that pragmatism was both an essential characteristic of public administration and an influence at one of the most defining periods in its brief history as a self-aware enterprise: namely, the demise of the classical orthodoxy and the rise of behavioralism during the 1940s. On the other hand, we are confronted by the fact that most public administration historians do not acknowledge this evidence, and those who do so present it very briefly and superficially. Sherlock Holmes might say that some historians heard nothing and found this not curious; others may have heard something but apparently attached little significance to the incident. In any case, it seems clear that much about pragmatism in public administration has been left unsaid. What is missing, specifically, from the intellectual histories of public administration is an understanding of what pragmatism is and the real extent to which it was an influence in early in public administration.

Table 1: Literature Review Summary

Author	Type of Work	Discusses pragmatism	Refers to pragmatism/ pragmatic writers
Bozeman (1979)	Text	●	●
Caiden (1971)	Text	●	●
Chandler (1987)	Edited Volume		
deLeon and Overman (1989)	Chapter in Edited Volume	●	●
Egger (1975)	Chapter in Edited Volume		●
Fesler (1982)	General		
Fry (1989)	General		
Gladden (1972)	General		
Henry (1979)	Text		
Hill and Herbert (1979)	Text		
McCurdy (1977)	Text		
Morrow (1975)	Text		
Mosher (1981)	Anthology		
Mosher (1975)	Edited Volume		●
Nash (1969)	Text		
Ostrom (1975)	General		
Shafritz and Hyde (1978)	Anthology		
Simmons and Dvorin (1977)	Text		
Uveges (1982)	Edited Volume		
Vieg (1959)	Chapter in Edited Volume		●
Waldo (1948)	General	●	●

CHAPTER III - UNDERSTANDING PRAGMATISM

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an understanding of pragmatism so that we may have a basis for the argument, to be advanced in later chapters, that pragmatism influenced early thought in public administration. We seek this understanding along several paths. First, we examine the ideas of the most well-known of the philosophers of pragmatism, Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. We pay particular attention to Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems* because it reveals hints of what he might mean by a pragmatic public administration. Second, we examine pragmatism in the contexts of American anti-intellectualism and of socio-cultural events at the close of the nineteenth century. Third, to illustrate how pragmatism was "operationalized," we discuss the influences of pragmatism in political philosophy, law, and education--three disciplines that, unlike public administration, explicitly acknowledge pragmatism in their intellectual histories. Finally, we describe differing interpretations of pragmatism that arose as a result of its popularity and subsequent vulgarization.

Two cautionary notes must be sounded here. First, it should be obvious that space limitations permit only the most superficial treatment of the thought of Peirce, James, and Dewey, three men who are widely acknowledged as giants in the history of American ideas. Second, we should proceed with trepidation in attempting to link and

synthesize their ideas, which, though related, varied widely in both subject and rhetorical style. In such a case it is important to recognize the easy traps of distortion and misrepresentation. Pragmatism cannot be easily characterized as a clearly-defined, homogeneous body of philosophy. Each pragmatist developed particular ideas from a certain focus, concern, or perspective.[1] For example, Peirce approached pragmatism from his perspective as a logician; hence logical method was a primary concern. James came to pragmatism through Peirce, but as a psychologist, he focused on pragmatism in personal meaning and experience. Dewey, as a philosopher, took a much broader view of pragmatism in social matters. The differing perspectives that inevitably resulted from this diversity of approaches led to occasional conflicts among the pragmatists and created confusion among observers[2] over, as Frank Goodnow put it, "the vagaries of pragmatic philosophy" (in Waldo, 1948; 84).

These pragmatists share, however, some clear themes and approaches that constitute a fairly well-defined basis for understanding pragmatism as a single philosophy. First, pragmatism arose from a perceived need to mediate between two diverging trends in nineteenth century thought. One trend can be characterized as scientific, empirical, probabilistic, objective, utilitarian, secular, and democratic. This

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[1] West's *The American Evasion of Philosophy* (1989) provides a most useful description of the similarities and distinctions among the pragmatists.

[2] Probably the most rigorous and best-known early treatment of the different varieties, meanings, and interpretations of pragmatism is Lovejoy's *The Thirteen Pragmatisms* (1963). Lovejoy's plea "that contemporary philosophers should agree to attach some single and stable meaning to [pragmatism]" (1) has gone unanswered.

trend, heavily influenced by Darwinism, portrayed humans as merely elements in universal biological or mechanical processes. The other trend, described variously as idealist, rationalist, romantic, and religious, gave humans a central place in the universal scheme. The mind's ability to reason, as well as its moral and religious sensibilities, provides purpose and gives meaning to life. The first trend was vulnerable to the criticism that it ignored moral considerations; the second that it neglected objective scientific facts. As we shall see, the pragmatists were united in attempting to reconcile these two trends by insisting that ideas dealing with the realm of values, to have any meaning, must have some practical consequence, that is, some consequence of action. Pragmatism thus provided a way to view facts and values as integrated and unified, rather than as mutually exclusive categories.

Second, in opposing the purely idealist and rationalist trend, the pragmatists rejected the Cartesian idea that reality can be known through human intuition. In this respect, they sided with the empiricists in the view that knowledge is pluralistic and provisional. Since certainty is therefore always precluded, the pragmatists all emphasized methods and processes of scientific inquiry as the way to stability and continuity in life. Third, this emphasis on method leads to the idea of a scientific community of inquiry in which continual learning from experience occurs. Such a community is a suggestive metaphor for the ideal democratic society, in which social ideas and policies are examined around institutionalized procedures of critical inquiry.

The Pragmatist Philosophers

Charles Sanders Peirce

Generally recognized as pragmatism's founder, Peirce first presented his ideas to the Metaphysical Club, a scholarly and philosophical group whose members included William James and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Few of Peirce's works were published during his lifetime, and he received little public recognition. Following his death, his creative thought gained more widespread attention, and his influence on his more famous followers and students--James, Dewey, Thorstein Veblen, and Josiah Royce, to name a few--has been recognized.

The widening gulf between empiricism and rationalism, each of which had staked a claim to "truth," signaled to Peirce an irreconcilable split, which he sought to heal through his new ideas on meaning. As suggested by the title of his article "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (in Thayer, 1982), his concern was to propose a way for the two competing philosophical camps to communicate with each other. His concern was not with the truth of ideas, but rather with the meaning of ideas. His fundamental argument was that our ideas only have clear meanings in operation; that is, in terms of their actions, effects, or consequences. For example, a rock is hard if it scratches something, or a rock is soft if something scratches it. Apart from what we see and experience as the practical consequences (the scratches) of the testing, the words "hard" and "soft" have no meaning. So, if ideas are to have any meaning, we must be able to operationalize them in

the following way: If (idea), then (effect). This is the essence of Peirce's so-called "pragmatic maxim:"

> Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object (in Scheffler, 1986; 77-78).

For Peirce then, pragmatism is essentially "a method for ascertaining the real meaning of any concept, doctrine, proposition, word, or other sign" (in Moore, 1961; 38; emphasis added).

Around this central pragmatic maxim revolve Peirce's interrelated ideas on belief and doubt, scientific inquiry, and the social nature of the scientific community. Belief, according to Peirce, links thought and action. It is a settled state, arrived at on the basis of our experiences of the effects or consequences of ideas. We believe a rock is hard because we sense the effect of its hardness, and on that basis, we are prepared to act toward it in certain ways. But we must be prepared for new experiences and sensings. Our experience is always situational and contextual; any new or different sensing leads to an unsettled state, which is doubt. Inquiry or thought is the struggle to overcome doubt, thereby fixing belief, at least provisionally.

Peirce rejected three traditional ways of fixing belief. The methods of authority and tenacity are insufficient in that they refuse to consider alternate experiences or to entertain doubts. The method of reason relies on *a priori* principles or ideas from intuition. Each of these methods can be sustained solely on the basis of the content of an individual mind.

As a fourth alternative, Peirce proposed the method of scientific inquiry. He held that our conceptions of things are based on sense experiences of their consequences, which should be observable and verifiable. So belief can be fixed in a public sense only to the extent that all observers can sense and agree upon the meaning of the consequences of ideas. Any concepts of knowledge, truth, or reality are thus socially constituted and always provisional. They have meaning only in terms of the human experiences of the community of investigators, and they are always open to modification in light of new experiences.

What saves Peirce in some sense from the critique of relativism in this formulation is his emphasis on the primacy of the public method of knowledge rather than the content of knowledge. Only by strict adherence to this method may individual prejudices be overcome. The method requires that, if one states a particular belief, one must also state how that belief was obtained so that others may test the result. The method is, first, collaborative in that it requires cooperation among members of a community of inquiry, and second, highly self-critical in that it must always accommodate new evidence.

Peirce and Semiotics

To grasp the contemporary importance and relevance of Peirce's pragmatism, we must attempt to understand the extent to which it was an outgrowth of his lifelong study into the nature and relations of signs in representing thought and reality. Peirce used the

term "semiotic" for his general theory of signs and is recognized, with Ferdinand de Saussure, as a founder of the modern field of semiotics (White and McSwain, 1991; 20). In the final chapter of this dissertation we will discuss how semiotics ties pragmatism to the contemporary context of public administration. Here we are only interested in sketching some of the key points of Peirce's often complex and arcane formulations to provide a basis for this later analysis.

In rejecting purely rationalistic schools of thought, Peirce essentially rejected intuition and other ideas of "unknowable" reality. Reality had to be known through cognition, and to Peirce, reality was actually on the same order as thought. All thinking involves representation or signs, and so reality is governed by the same relational order that governs signs. The structure of thought, and hence of reality, is revealed in the ways that signs function. Since one of these ways is through language, then reality must actually be revealed in language (Conkin, 1968; 207-208).

In Peirce's conception, signs are

> socially standardized ways in which one thing (a thought, word, gesture, or object as 'sign') refers 'us' (a community) to something else (the interpretant, the significant effect or translation of the sign, being itself another sign). Thus signs presuppose minds in communication with other minds, which in turn presupposes a community (of interpreters) and a system of communication (Thayer, 1968; 83).

To return to our prior example, the words "hard" and "soft" are signs that a speaker uses with the intent of determining interpretants, which are other signs, in the mind of a hearer. Signs create expectations and introduce order and regularity into social interactions. The extent to which a sign functions as a rule, determining its interpretant

with precision and predictability, is dependent upon acquired interpretive habits.

An important point for elaboration here is that any word or sign is interpreted or defined by another word or sign. There is no "final interpretant" derived by intuition in the mind of an interpreter. There is instead an infinite progress and regress of signification. All signs refer only to other signs, and so the reality of "hard" exists only in the mind of an interpreter. Peirce resolved this seemingly extreme subjectivist formulation with his concept of indexicality. An index accompanies a sign and points to something (for Peirce, an "object") directly or indirectly experienced. The interpretant or meaning of any sign is thus the habit formed as a result of experience. The significance or meaning of the sign "hard" is the behavior on one's part that it produces. This habit of acting is the ultimate interpretant of "hard" and is therefore what "hard" means.

The importance of Peirce's semiotics for this dissertation is the way that it connects and integrates the apparent relativism of self-referential meanings (what White and McSwain (1991; 21) call the "endless commutability" of signs) with concrete facts of experience. Peirce essentially provided a system of thought that precludes and avoids certain problematic epistemological dichotomies such as the objectivist-subjectivist rift that characterizes much of contemporary public administration.

William James

His background as a psychologist provided James with a unique perspective from which to extend Peirce's pragmatism. An empiricist by training, he was more interested

in dimensions of human thought and real-life experience than with formal logic. Like Peirce, James was concerned with resolving the empiricist-rationalist schism, but unlike Peirce, he was not so concerned with realm of science as with human experience. While Peirce's tough-minded empiricism appealed to human intellect, James recognized that a more tender-minded rationalism plays well to human conscience and intuition. According to one interpretation, James's objective, therefore, was to describe a version of pragmatism that allowed him to retain his tender-minded beliefs without relaxing his intellectual standards (Ayer, 1978; xvi). Again like Peirce, James saw pragmatism not as a formal philosophy, but primarily as a method. But where Peirce's pragmatism was a method for establishing meaning within a community of inquiry, James's pragmatism was a theory of truth.

According to James, the test of any idea or belief is in the difference it makes in life, or as he put it, in its "cash-value." For example, a debate as to the existence of God is pointless and meaningless unless we look to the practical effects in experience in the life of one who does (or does not) believe in God. If a belief in God makes a difference, then "God is real because he produces real effects" (James, 1902; 517). Truth is therefore an emergent property:

> The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its veri-fication. Its validity is the process of its valid-ation (James, 1907; 201; emphasis in original).

This idea of cash-value implies an element of "workability" or success. For an

idea to be true means that it must "work:"

> [I]deas (which themselves are but parts of experience) become true just in so far as they help us get into satisfactory relation with other parts of experience. . . . [If] ideas prove to have value for concrete life, they will be true, for pragmatism, in the sense of being good for so much (James, 1907; 58, 73).

James extended this view in developing the concept of "extra truths," or "ideas that shall be true of merely possible situations" (James, 1907; 98). In other words, we may conceive that certain situations are possible or potential, and on this basis alone they are at least in some sense true. Action that is directed toward realizing in fact the possibility or potentiality of these situations is therefore justified. This line of thought, as we shall see, foreshadows Dewey's particular brand of experimental and instrumental pragmatism.

James followed Peirce's thinking with regard to the social and public nature of truth. To the extent that true ideas could be assimilated, validated, corroborated, and verified within a "community of truth," James believed that "[w]e trade on each other's truth" (James, 1907; 100). Truth depends on social experience, and true ideas are always on probation, subject to new experiences.

We may note here that James was attacked at times by Peirce for relativism in his concepts of truth. Peirce generally avoided questions of truth, preferring to deal instead with meaning. But, while denying that absolute truth could ever be attained, Peirce still allowed that it could exist. James's declarations that truth changes and is something that happens to an idea seemed to Peirce to be pragmatism's "seed of death" (Scheffler, 1986; 113). Much of Peirce's concern can be attributed to his own concept and vision of

pragmatism as functioning primarily in the realm of scientific inquiry. He doubtless was hesitant to see pragmatism applied and extended to personal and social experience. But this is precisely the value of James's contribution to pragmatic thought. While his ideas are vulnerable to many criticisms, he cannot be faulted for faintheartedness in attempting to grapple with the often messy world of human life. As a psychologist, James recognized that notions of absolute truth appear often not to mesh with life's experiences (Marcell, 1974; 171-172). As a pragmatist, he irrevocably linked thought and action, as well as values and facts, by insisting that the goodness or truth of ideas be evidenced in their working in the real world of human experience.

James on Facts and Values

Recognizing the importance of the controversy surrounding facts and values in the history of ideas in public administration, we should devote some attention to how the pragmatists, particularly James, handled the issue. We have noted that a central concern of pragmatism was the reconciliation of rationalism and empiricism. We have also seen that the pragmatists were not so much concerned with the merits of either philosophy as they were with reconstructing the basis of the controversy upon a foundation of practical consequences of ideas. Similarly, pragmatism reconstructs the basis of the fact-value controversy, and James's contribution in this regard is particularly significant.

The key to understanding this aspect of James's thought is to recognize the extent to which he saw human consciousness as an instrument of purpose. Marcell (1974)

explains this well in his discussion of James's pragmatic definition of human experience:

> Experience was a streaming sense of personal continuity enveloping external objects, their relationship to each other, and their shifting relationship to a dynamic, purposeful experiencer and thinker. Out of this flowing interaction emerged a state of consciousness or a sense of continuity and movement among the data of experience. These data did not remain random or chaotic but rather, in the very fact of their becoming part of consciousness, they assumed a purposive or intentional structure. They became, in short, ideas or concepts, patterns of percepts arranged so as to allow the individual to respond satisfactorily to his environment and to plan its modification to enhance that satisfaction. The very nature of thought, the evidence and substance of consciousness, implied the ability of the thinker not merely to survive in a complex experiential situation but to survive on his own terms. Consciousness and thought implied an active, purposive, selective stance toward the future. Such a view implied that experience itself was progressive, that it contained categorically both the possibility of responding to the environment in new ways as well as the standard for evaluating how effectively this was being accomplished (184).

Three points are important here. First, James held that human experience, rather than being relativistic or even nihilistic, as suggested by some empiricists, has a quality of continuity in that it encompasses not only objects perceived but also relations among those percepts. These relations are in human consciousness as "real" as the percepts themselves, so experience, the basic "stuff" of reality, is at once both open and cohesive.[3]

Second, relations among percepts constitute ideas or concepts which allow response or adjustment to the environment. Humans continually rearrange percepts, or facts, to form new ideas to adjust in a changing environment; that is, humans think. The value of an idea is simply a matter of the degree to which that particular arrangement of

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[3] This formulation illustrates the integration of the rationalism and empiricism in James's psychology.

facts makes possible human adjustment, or as James put it, how well it serves to "carry us prosperously from one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily" (James, 1907; 58). There is nothing intrinsic in the value of an idea or concept, because value stems from and has meaning only in the facts of experience.

Third, thought enabled humans to envision desired future states and to act to achieve those states. Thus progress is not a matter of fate or divine intervention; rather it is a matter of human endeavor. According to James, people, not God, create value.

To summarize, fact and value are for James inseparable, and thus both the rationalist claims of intrinsic value and the empiricist denial of value are equally misguided. However, even though pragmatism provided a seemingly satisfactory resolution, the fact-value controversy remained--indeed still remains--in public administration. We will return to examine this point in later chapters.

James's Voluntarism

The issue of James's voluntarism is important in the account of pragmatism's development. James initially borrowed heavily from the ideas of Peirce, but subsequently he began to infuse them with his own psychological perspectives, sometimes with controversial results. Of particular note was the assertion in his 1897 work "The Will to Believe" that "[t]he willing department of our nature . . . dominates both the conceiving department and the feeling department; or, in plainer English, perception and thinking are only there for behavior's sake" (in Schneider, 1946; 525).

The voluntarism expressed in this essay was widely criticized by writers who interpreted it as a justification for believing whatever one wants to believe. It eventually led Peirce to repudiate the term "pragmatism" and Dewey to disavow any connection between voluntarism and his own pragmatism.[4] Conkin (1968; 295-310) notes that James later retreated with regard to his voluntarism, admitting to Lovejoy that he had long confused the effects of believing with the effects of a belief being true. But the damage had already been done. Because many observers and critics defined pragmatism in terms of James's voluntarism ("its most aberrant and uncharacteristic offspring" (310), as Conkin puts it), further developments in pragmatism proceeded from confused and shaky foundations.

John Dewey

Generally recognized as the most influential of the pragmatists, Dewey was a prolific writer whose work ranged over a broad spectrum of disciplines throughout the entire first half of this century. While he is probably best remembered in the field of

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[4] Peirce wrote in 1905, "the word [pragmatism] begins to be met with occasionally in the literary journals, where it gets abased in the merciless way that words have to expect when they fall into literary clutches . . . So then, the writer, finding his bantling 'pragmatism' so promoted, feels that it is time to kiss his child good-by and relinquish it to its higher destiny; while to serve the precise purpose of expressing the original definition, he begs to announce the birth of the word 'pragmaticism,' which is ugly enough to be safe from kidnapers" (in Schneider, 1946; 527-528).

Dewey stated that his pragmatism was "quite free from dependence upon a voluntaristic psychology. It is not complicated by reference to emotional satisfactions or the play of desires" (in Rucker, 1969; 5).

education, the broad pragmatic themes--experimentalism, instrumentalism, and the linking of facts and values--that pervade all his work are perhaps his most important contribution to American thought.

Like Peirce and James, Dewey rejected purely rationalist and empiricist modes of thinking. Like many others of his time, he was heavily influenced by Darwinism, seeing humans as integral parts of a biological world. Dewey believed that, in such a world, the function of the human mind is to mediate between one's biological being and the various problematic situations one encounters.[5] Thought occurs, in fact is inspired by, doubt or perplexity experienced in a particular situation. This unsettled state leads to deliberation and elaboration of competing hypotheses about how to resolve the situation. Thinking is not a quest for truth, but rather an attempt to achieve adjustment with one's environment. Thought is thus instrumental in that it guides action. For Dewey, ideas are plans of action:

> Ideas are statements not of what is or what has been but of acts to be performed. . . . Ideas are worthless except as they pass into actions which rearrange and reconstruct in some way, be it little or large, the world in which we live (Dewey, 1929; 138).

Such action guided by thought is experience. It is experimental, and it is capable of educating (Scheffler, 1986; 227). One deliberately interacts (experiments) with the environment and experiences the consequences, which provides feedback for future conduct. This, for Dewey, is the mark of intelligent thought. "Thinking. . . . is the

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[5] Marcell (1974; 235) notes the extent to which Dewey accepted and relied upon James's psychology in his own thought.

intentional endeavour to discover specific connections between something which we do and the consequences which result, so that the two become continuous" (Dewey, 1929; 145). In other words, thinking is not something that happens in isolation from experience. Rather, thinking continually reflects on experience to inform action to resolve and transform problem situations. Thought and action (or theory and practice) function in an integrated way to adjust one to his or her environment.

Education, or achieving knowledge, is experimental. Properly viewed, the mind is a problem-solving instrument, struggling to develop theories in the context of continual experimentation and reflection. But Dewey believed, like Peirce and James before him, that knowledge and theories are always tentative and fallible. They are validated only in light of the present situation, but may serve legitimately as starting points for future hypotheses.

According to Dewey, humans are neither inherently good nor evil, but simply reflect often deeply ingrained habits learned from prior experience. Society's ills are often the results of habits of ignorance, which is the absence of critical inquiry. But these may be overcome through education. "The chief means of continuous, graded, economical improvement and social rectification lies in utilizing the opportunities of educating the young to modify prevailing modes of thought and desire" (in Stumpf, 1966; 418).

Dewey recognized that such "improvement" assumes some range of values, but these are obtained, like knowledge, through experience rather than by rational means.

Like facts, values are contextual. An act has value if it serves to resolve a problematical situation, and so values ("ends") are inseparable from actions ("means").

For Dewey, choosing a particular course of action involves responsibility for causes influencing the future (Conkin, 1968; 391-393). So morality, again, is inherent in action. Moral principles are rules gleaned from past moral choices. If they are good principles, they are based on a broad range of informed moral experiences. In most situations they will be excellent aids and tools of judgement in guiding actions. But they are not self-evident, and they are always subject to revision based on new experiences.

Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems*

As indicated earlier, Dewey and the other pragmatists have been neglected in the histories of public administration. But one of Dewey's works, *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), has achieved some measure of recognition in public administration bibliographies. Caiden *et al.* (1983) cite this work as a "classic text" in American public administration. McCurdy (1986) lists it as one of the 1200 works that constitute the knowledge base of public administration (that is, those books important enough to be cited at least two or three times by experts working in the various areas that support the study and practice of public administration). Given these commendations, it is appropriate to devote some attention to this particular work.

Dewey's arguments in *The Public and Its Problems* are in the direction of a general pragmatic rejection of what he believes are outmoded social and political ideals,

"old principles [that] do not fit contemporary life as it is lived" (135). Conditions have changed, but "nothing approaching a transformation has taken place in ideas and ideals" (142). Existing political forms and institutions that arose from these principles are now likewise outmoded. An underlying reason for this condition is an almost religious and ultimately pathological faith in the universality and timelessness of the old ideals concerning the state:

> The belief in political fixity, of the sanctity of some form of state consecrated by the efforts of our fathers and hallowed by tradition, is one of the stumbling blocks in the way of orderly and directed change; it is an invitation to revolt and revolution (34).

Dewey's approach to this issue is to investigate the concept of the "state." But rather than attack various historical theories, he proceeds, pragmatically, from a basis of the facts of human activity to see if he is led to ideas about political behavior. "[T]he problem of discovering the state is not a problem for theoretical inquiries engaged solely in surveying institutions which already exist. It is a practical problem of human beings living in association with one another. . ." (32). Human associations have both direct and indirect consequences, and it is often the indirect or unforeseen consequences that are most significant. This aspect of association is central to Dewey's political concept of the "public," which he defines as "all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to the extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for" (15-16). Officials perform this function of caring for the public's interests. Thus the state is "the organization of the public effected through officials for the protection of the interests shared by its members" (33).

The key issue for Dewey, then, appears to be one of organizing. He lays out purely pragmatic criteria for determining how "good" a state is:

> . . . namely, the degree of organization of the public which is attained, and the degree in which its officers are so constituted as to perform their function of caring for the public interests. But there is no *a priori* rule which can be laid down and by which when it is followed a good state will be brought into existence. In no two ages or places is there the same public. Conditions make the consequences of associated action and the knowledge of them different. In addition the means by which a public can determine the government to serve its interests vary...In concrete fact, in actual and concrete organization and structure, there is no form of state which can be said to be the best. . . (33).

Democracy, according to Dewey, emerged not in response to some idea of democracy, but rather as a net consequence of a vast multitude of responsive adjustments to a vast number of situations (84). Its value in history can be measured as a function of these consequences, but its contemporary value must be measured against contemporary conditions. Dewey believed that existing democratic political institutions were lacking in this respect:

> The same forces which have brought about the forms of democratic government . . . have also brought about conditions which halt the social and humane ideals that demand the utilization of government as the genuine instrumentality of an inclusive and fraternally associated public. "The new age of human relationship" has no political agencies worthy of it (109).

The essential problem of the contemporary public was, according to Dewey, that "there are too many publics and too much of public concern for our existing resources to cope with" (126). "The democratic public is . . . largely inchoate and unorganized" (109). Again, "the outstanding problem of the Public is discovery and identification of

itself" (105). He believes that the only possible solution is "the perfecting of the means and ways of communication of meanings so that genuinely shared interest in the consequences of interdependent activities may inform desire and effort and thereby direct action" (155).

The potential for such communication and sharing of interests is best realized locally, in "the vitality and depth of close and direct intercourse and attachment." Dewey believes that a sense of community has been lost through industrialization and urbanization, and the "neighborly community" (213) must be rediscovered. "Unless local communal life can be restored, the public cannot adequately resolve its most urgent problem: to find and identify itself" (216).

Dewey of course is not able to lay out specific remedies. Rather, remaining true to his pragmatism, he focuses on method. Given both the inadequacy of political theory and the ambiguities of future conditions and indirect consequences, he says that the only way to proceed is experimentally. This does not, however, mean that we proceed blindly or by trial-and-error. Dewey believes that the methods of scientific inquiry allow for a more intelligent approach. He notes that, although "[m]en have got used to an experimental method in physical and technical matters . . . , [t]hey are still afraid of it in human concerns" (169). The need therefore is to transfer the logic of the experimental method to the social sciences:

> First, . . . those concepts, general principles, theories and dialectical developments which are indispensable to any systematic knowledge [must] be shaped and tested as tools of inquiry. Secondly, . . . policies and proposals for social action [must] be treated as working hypotheses, not as

programs to be rigidly adhered to and executed (202-203).

The social sciences will then be seen not as constituting knowledge, but as intellectual means for making discoveries. Differences of opinion will still exist as to the best course of action, but opinions held in the absence of evidence will decrease. Most importantly, "[n]o longer will views generated in view of special situations be frozen into absolute standards and masquerade as eternal truths" (203).

We may conclude this sketch of *The Public and Its Problems* with an interpretation of Dewey's thought as it related specifically to the newly (in 1927) self-aware discipline of public administration. Though Dewey never explicitly acknowledges "public administration," he gives us enough information to indicate what his views might be. For example, he discusses the role of "experts." Dewey rejects the notion of rule by experts, believing that, because of their expertise, they are out of touch with the conditions of real life. Their contribution rather is in

> freeing and perfecting the processes of inquiry and of dissemination of their conclusions. . . . [T]heir expertness is not shown in framing and executing policies, but in discovering and making known the facts upon which the former depend. They are technical experts in the sense that scientific investigators and artists manifest *expertise*. It is not necessary that the many should have the knowledge and skill to carry on the needed investigations; what is required is that they have the ability to judge of the bearing of the knowledge supplied by others upon common concerns (208-209, emphasis in original).

This type of language explains the credit given Dewey, in several of the public administration histories in our literature review, for his influence in the policy sciences. The expert (public administrator) is "on tap," not "on top." He or she is continually

working with the public around evolving problematical situations, lending expertise, but never in the sense of leading or managing the public or the situation. The expertise is manifested rather in the public administrator helping the public to understand and to find its own resolution for the situation.

Pragmatism in Context

To this point we have concentrated on the ideas of those considered to be the most prominent of the pragmatist philosophers. The important areas of agreement among them include a view of reality as indeterminate, ambiguous, and flexible; of meaning being determined by its practical consequences; of morality as inherent in action; and of science and community as means for working out agreements on truth and morality. For a deeper understanding of the role and importance of pragmatism, it is important to see how it fit within a larger context of American thought and events. First, we may describe pragmatism as a unique response to the momentous events of the end of the nineteenth century. Second, we may document evidences of pragmatism in several other disciplines by briefly reviewing selected works of intellectual history in those disciplines. Such a review adds to our understanding of pragmatism by showing how it played, was manifested, or was operationalized in other areas. These disciplines, unlike public administration, have explicitly acknowledged pragmatism in their intellectual histories. This review illustrates the importance of pragmatism in American thought and makes all

the more curious public administration's failure to recognize its influence.

Pragmatism and the Turn of the Century

It is important to recognize that pragmatism was a philosophy for tumultuous times. The pragmatists' desire to formulate a way of thinking that mediated between late nineteenth century rationalism and empiricism was not an idle intellectual exercise. Rather, they perceived that past modes of thought and action were simply inadequate for dealing with the momentous transformations of this time.

Commager (1964; 41-54) has described the decade of the 1890s as the watershed of American history. Prior to these years stood an America that was largely unchanged in spirit from that of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a still largely agricultural nation focused inwardly on its own domestic affairs. After the turn of the century a self-consciously urban and industrialized international power emerged, one that was firmly committed to progressivism in its society, its politics, and its economics.

The pace and sweep of this transition was staggering. The old West and the frontier had disappeared, the transcontinental railroad had been completed, and new territories had been organized and new states admitted. Technological advances such as the telephone, the phonograph, the electric light, the automobile, and wireless telegraphy were changing the daily lives of Americans. The rise of big business was accompanied by reactions against the excesses of the spoilsmen and the Gilded Age, as well as by recognition of the increasing exploitation of natural resources. A malaise in agriculture

hastened the transfer of economic and political centers of gravity from farms to cities. Burgeoning immigration and the rise of the modern labor movement led to the beginnings of class conflict. Debates raged between "isolationists" and "imperialists." As Commager notes,

> Change itself became qualitative as well as quantitative. As a result, the demands made upon the integrity of the American character and the resourcefulness of the American mind at the end of the century were more complex and imperative than at any time in a hundred years (42-43).

Philosophy provided little guidance for handling such change, for it was also in turmoil:

> The neat, orderly universe of the Enlightenment--a universe governed by laws whose nature could be discovered by man--was disintegrating under the blows of Darwinian evolution, the new physics, and the new biology; and philosophers, baffled or disillusioned in their search for universal laws, contented themselves with analyses of its fragmentary and fortuitous manifestations (47).

Amid such upheaval American pragmatism was born. The pragmatic outlook, with its secular rejection of the absolute and its accommodation of continual change, made much during this era seem sensible. Indeed, pragmatism provided a philosophical basis for the Progressive movement after the turn of the century. Pragmatism justified Progressivism's unwillingness to accept the often appalling social and political conditions of the day as natural states of affairs. Legal, educational, economic, and political institutions began to be viewed pragmatically, that is, simply as instruments that in the past had been used for purposes of power, greed, and oppression. Once it had been granted that conditions could change, these institutions could then be used, with intelligent planning, as instruments of change, amelioration, and progress. For example,

as the nation recognized, pragmatically, the importance of business to its overall health, the public reaction against big business began a reversal that reached its symbolic culmination in Coolidge's remark that "the business of America is business." More significantly, from the standpoint of public administration, pragmatism justified Progressivism's vision of an active and expanded government:

> In the Progressive Era the questions were how far the government should regulate business empires and monopolies, how far it should tax its wealthy citizens, how far it should extend democracy, and how far it should try and control its citizens' leisure and pastimes. For municipal government, it was a question of how far it should control such essential public utilities as gas and electric power, water, and sewage works, and such services as public transport, street cleaning, and refuse disposal (Cashman, 1988; 5).

Thus, the key question of the day was no longer simply one of political philosophy, that is, whether or not government <u>should</u> intervene. It became rather a pragmatic one concerned with the extent to which government <u>must</u> intervene in response to the turbulence of the period.

Pragmatism in Other Disciplines: Political Philosophy

Several works in political philosophy describe pragmatism as consistent with the general revolt against rationalistic political concepts around the turn of the century. William J. Elliott, writing in 1928, suggests that "the political products of the current revolt against rationalism are the most characteristic contributions of the period, and that pragmatism is the philosophy that gives them their ideology and their values" (1968; viii). Hallowell, writing in the late 1940s, notes pragmatism's widespread popularity as a

force in the revolt against reason. He cautions however against an unquestioning acceptance of pragmatism in politics, pointing out what he believes is relativism and naivete in James's ideas of truth. (If, Hallowell asks (1960; 546), as James claims, we have the right to believe at our own risk in the truth of any hypothesis that appears to "work," does that mean that we are justified in believing in the work of Adolph Hitler?) On the other hand, he commends Dewey for his important thoughts on the role of institutions and the political community, and for providing what Hallowell feels are necessary justifications for intelligent planning in political affairs.

Horwitz (1963) also provides a detailed examination of Dewey's political thought. He describes Dewey's concept of the state as "a secondary form of association chiefly empowered to facilitate the smooth and effective functioning of all other associations" (755). Horwitz sees this as consistent with Dewey's view of democracy in particular and political arrangements in general as merely parts of a larger social whole:

> Dewey deliberately minimizes the importance of institutional and constitutional arrangements. He thereby places almost full dependence for the achievement of the good, democratic regime upon the existence of an educated, enlightened, public-spirited, and active citizenry. . . . The measure of Dewey's depreciation of the political is his refusal to treat democracy as primarily a form of government; instead it is a way of life, and political or legal democracy is more in the nature of an effect. . . than a cause of psychological and economic democratization (760-762).

One final illustration of pragmatism in political philosophy will suffice. Nichols (1990) presents a brief but thoughtful discussion of pragmatism in relation to the political philosophies underlying our nation's founding. In his view, and this is certainly consistent with our previous analysis, pragmatism attacks many of the fundamental

substantive aspects of the framers' thought, particularly the "self-evident" truths of the Declaration of Independence:

> That laws of nature and of nature's God should guide our political action, that the individual has inalienable natural rights, that the individual is prior to government so that legitimate government needs to rest on a social contract, that the primary purpose of government is securing individuals' rights--all these . . . are rejected as opinions not firmly supported by pragmatic inquiry (371).

According to Nichols, it is Dewey's conceptions of individualism and liberty that are most at odds with those of the framers. Where the framers envisioned the individual as prior to and apart from society and government, Dewey saw the individual as essentially being created by social arrangements and institutions. Where the founders viewed liberty as an individual's natural possession to be protected and conserved by government, Dewey saw liberty as something to be achieved by individuals and extended by government.

Such thinking clearly calls into question our basic constitutional arrangements. But we know that Dewey would be perfectly comfortable with attacking what he feels are outdated political forms, and in fact Nichols notes that Dewey often warned against treating the Constitution with excessive respect (374). Its arrangements more properly should be treated as experiments, as working hypotheses. Nichols believes that this aspect of experimentalism represents the value of a pragmatic approach to the Constitution. While he refuses to endorse the pragmatists' rejection of underlying constitutional principles, he is willing to accept an approach that tests the Constitution in practical day-to-day experience (384-388). Such an approach, Nichols believes, can keep

the Constitution alive and working in a contemporary context.

Pragmatism in Other Disciplines: Law

Historians of the intellectual development of law (e.g., Cowan, 1947; Stone, 1966) describe how legal pragmatists mounted a significant challenge, around the turn of the century, to law's traditional stress on logical concepts and abstract norms. The prevailing nineteenth century legal theory, that of the "historical school," had a

> negative attitude with respect to improvement of the law, and [a] rooted tendency to hold a rule wholly established. . . . [The historical school] had come to deny growth and progress in any effective sense through its belief that it had discovered finally the immutable lines of growth or had calculated once for all the fixed orbit of progress outside of which no movement could possibly take place (Pound, 1967; 10, 12).

Social conditions at the turn of the century had changed, rendering the theories of the historical school impotent and obsolete. There was now "the need for action to meet the pressure of new demands consequent upon changes in the social order and of new desires both behind and involved in those changes" (Pound, 1967; 12). Such action found its conceptual basis in legal pragmatism, or what Kelly *et al.* (1983) call "sociological jurisprudence:"

> According to sociological jurisprudence, law was not a body of immutable principles and rules, but rather an institution shaped by social pressures that was constantly changing. It was valid not in any universal sense, but only in relation to a particular time and place. Sociological jurisprudence taught that law developed through experience rather than logic; its essence lay in considerations of expediency rather than timeless justice. . . . [J]udges made law rather than discovered or declared it, pragmatically adapting it to changing social conditions (466-467).

This thinking was probably first expressed by Oliver Wendell Holmes, who as we recall was an associate of Peirce, and who wrote in 1880 that the life of the law was not logic, but experience and pragmatic social invention (Kelly *et al.*, 1983; 468). Other influential jurists who followed Holmes's pragmatism were Louis Brandeis and Roscoe Pound (Friedrich, 1963; 175-177).

Each of these men took a Deweyan, instrumental view of the law. In the past it had been an instrument of social oppression; now it was to be an instrument of reform and social progress. To illustrate, Pound, writing in 1923, describes the essential problem of the legal order as one of "social engineering" (1967; 157-158). Such thinking from the legal profession surely gave force and legitimacy to the reform and Progressive movements around the turn of the century. More importantly, according to Kelly *et al.*, the ideas of the legal pragmatists laid a foundation for a much broader trend toward judicial liberalism during the mid-twentieth century (1983; 468).

Pragmatism in Other Disciplines: Education

The importance of pragmatism in the development of education as a modern discipline has been well documented in education's intellectual histories (e.g., Butts, 1955; Hart, 1931; Ulich, 1945; Cremin, 1988). While both James and Dewey are recognized for their contributions, it is Dewey whose name is most commonly associated with pragmatism in education. Indeed, considering the attention paid to Dewey in these histories, it is probably difficult to overstate his influence on modern educational thought.

Dewey's thoughts on education echo the broad pragmatic themes we have already discussed. He saw education as a process rather than a product. It entails a constant growing and changing, and it is always moving forward toward further activity and revision on the basis of experience. Thus, the idea of setting up any ultimate or even intermediate aims for stages of educational development was anathema to Dewey (Eby, 1952; 617).

As for schools, Dewey saw them primarily as social instruments and, ultimately, as methods for social progress and reform (Butts, 1955; 481). He rejected the idea of the school as a forum where knowledge is merely imparted to students, preferring instead the idea that students learn best through experience. Eby (1952; 624-625) describes Dewey's ideal elementary school curriculum. The traditional "3 R's" are rejected in favor of a program that builds upon activities a child can more closely associate with, such as those experienced in the home: cooking, sewing, and carpentry, for example. Dewey believed these activities more properly emphasize civic and social experience, as well as vocational and practical usefulness. The freer academic atmosphere enhances learning and individual development, while cultivating in the student a critical and experimental approach to problem solving.

Such progressive ideas clearly put Dewey at odds with those advocating more traditional emphases on fundamentals and discipline in schools. But Dewey also found himself opposing more progressive zealots who advocated even less structure in the classroom:

> He chided latter-day progressives for believing that organized subject matter should be jettisoned, for proceeding "as if any form of direction and guidance by adults were an invasion of individual freedom.". . . Dewey warned that "it is not too much to say that an educational philosophy which professes to be based on the idea of freedom may become as dogmatic as ever was the traditional education which is reacted against." To those who had insistently confused progressive education with the removal of external controls, Dewey cautioned that "the only freedom that is of enduring importance is freedom of intelligence," which is the result of "*intelligent* activity," not of activity which is based on whim and impulse (Ravitch, 1983; 58-59, emphasis in original).

Interpretations of Pragmatism

The preceding review sought to illustrate how pragmatism was appropriated for use in various disciplines. Inevitably, as pragmatic thought grew in popularity, it spawned other often significantly different interpretations, sometimes for example in terms of James's voluntarism, as we discussed earlier. As we prepare to document the influence of pragmatism in early public administration, it is important to understand that pragmatism meant different things to different authors. In this section we describe some of those differences as we contrast the "original" pragmatism of Peirce, James, and Dewey with some "offshoot" versions of pragmatism. First, we lay a foundation by discussing what several historians have termed "anti-intellectualism" in American thought, which as we shall see in later chapters, came to be associated with the pragmatism of Peirce, James, and Dewey.

Pragmatism and Anti-Intellectualism

We have seen that pragmatism, in its emphasis on practical, experienced consequences of action, rejects purely rationalist, *a priori* formulations of general principles for action. This one facet of pragmatism has been described by several historians as congruent with a distinctly "anti-intellectual"[6] strain in the American way of thinking. White (1973) locates the origins of American anti-intellectualism in the Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards, and traces it through the transcendentalism of Ralph Waldo Emerson to the pragmatism of William James. Conkin (1968) also traces this trend back to the early Puritan colonists, whose "intellectual assurance [in their religious beliefs] eliminated the motives for sweeping philosophical inquiry and for great intellectual originality" (2). Further, the Calvinists' view of totally depraved humans standing in need of grace from totally sovereign God led to a humble, pious, and thoroughly instrumental, from a theological standpoint, conception of knowledge:

> To assay [reality's] final limits, to presume on God, was either misplaced pride or metaphysical arrogance. Reality was knowable enough for human purposes, even though man should not flatter his prideful urge to imitate God and know everything. . . [T]he problem of truth is not a formal, technical problem, but one of practice, of utility, of making a proper response to the demands of God or of nature (11).

This aspect of anti-intellectualism is also present in American histories' frequent and familiar references to our nation's founding as an "experiment" in democracy. As Hofstadter (1974) notes, "the Founding Fathers, despite their keen sense of history, felt

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[6] meaning "anti-philosophical" or "anti-theoretical"

that they were founding novel institutions and gloried in the newness of what they were doing" (xxxiv). And again, "the Constitution was founded more upon experience than any . . . abstract thing" (3).

Finally, the most well-known references to anti-intellectualism in early America come from de Toqueville's *Democracy in America* (1969):

> Less attention, I suppose, is paid to philosophy in the United States than in any other country of the civilized world. The Americans have no school of philosophy peculiar to themselves, and they pay very little attention to the rival European schools. . . . [T]o treat tradition as valuable for information only and to accept existing facts as no more than a useful sketch to show how things could be done differently and better; to seek by themselves and in themselves for the only reason for things, looking to results without getting entangled in the means toward them and looking through forms to the basis of things--such are the principal characteristics of what I would call the American philosophical method (429).

We must emphasize at this point that the pragmatism of Peirce, James, and Dewey, when considered in all of its aspects, is of course <u>not</u> anti-intellectual. It is important to recognize, though, that this apparent "bias" toward anti-intellectualism in American thought may have caused many observers to interpret pragmatism in this way, as the following sections explain.

Pragmatism of Potentiality versus Pragmatism of Practicality

The pragmatism of Peirce, James, and Dewey may be described as a pragmatism of potentiality. Each saw the thought of their day as being trapped in a hopeless struggle between idealism and empiricism. The only way out was to find a new way of talking about reality, knowledge, and morality that would provide individuals and society with

new possibilities. The emphasis here is, as we have seen, on experimentation, that is, on undertaking new modes of thought and action that are directed toward creating new realities or "potentialities." The view of science here is that ideas are hypotheses to be tested in the crucible of real-world experience. This pragmatism tends toward the intellectual and the conceptual, as exemplified by James's "will to believe" and Dewey's instrumentalism. It also has an integral component of the moral, in that humans engender value in their visions of desired future directions and in their choices among alternatives to move in those directions. A key assumption here is that humans can indeed be free to make such choices.

Critics may interpret the pragmatism of potentiality as having at least two vulnerabilities. First, the idea that humans may create their own futures tends toward idealism, utopianism, perhaps even mysticism. Second, its commitment to continual collective experimentation implies, at the extreme, socialism, revolutionism or radicalism, and at best, liberalism.

Partly as a reaction to such perceptions there arose another version which we may call a pragmatism of practicality. Here the emphasis is on experience that demonstrates which ideas can or cannot be put into practice. It is utilitarian in that value is revealed by what works in practice. The pragmatism of practicality may be described as empirical, anti-intellectual (in the sense described earlier), and atheoretical. The underlying premise is that humans are limited, either by their own natures or by their environment. The role of science is to measure and record data (facts) about the world and human behavior,

which leads to understandings of their underlying structures (principles). A major criticism of this version of pragmatism is that it tends toward positivism or realism.

An excellent demonstration of the use of these two interpretations of pragmatism is given in Waldo's *The Administrative State* (1948). Waldo discusses the atheoretical, empirical, practical, utilitarian, and positivist "pragmatism" (note lower case) of Goodnow, Beard, and Buck (83-86), which corresponds approximately with what we have termed the pragmatism of practicality. Later he discusses "Pragmatism" (note upper case) "of the Dewey variety" in the work of Horace Fries, which corresponds to our pragmatism of potentiality. This version Waldo finds utopian or mystical, "as unsatisfying as the Hindu cosmology--and for the same reason" (210).

We will return to this idea of different interpretations of pragmatism at various points throughout the remainder of this dissertation. Again, the point here was to make note that different interpretations of pragmatism arose and were operable in the social sciences of the early twentieth century.

The Vulgarization of Pragmatism

The idea of pragmatism that we have sought to form in this chapter may differ from the reader's previously-held idea. We have noted that pragmatism took often differing and sometimes confusing forms depending on the various backgrounds or particular interests of its proponents. But the pragmatism of Peirce, James, and Dewey also lent itself to vulgarization and corruption. Commager (1964) cites the widespread

popularity of the pragmatic point of view during the early twentieth century as the primary cause. "When philosophy spoke the language of the people, connected itself with their experience, addressed itself to their interests, illuminated their problems, it was natural that they should seize upon it and fashion it to their purposes." Such popularization was "a sign of vitality," but it also meant that pragmatism suffered widespread misinterpretation:

> [T]he transition from the principle that truth is to be discovered in the practical consequences of conduct to the notion that whatever works is necessarily truth was dangerously easy. . . . That [pragmatism] should have been equated with a success philosophy, watered down to an acquiescence in cash values or a justification of business efficiency, associated with a series of compromises and concessions, translated into a cunning technique for outwitting Providence, was discreditable (101).

A vulgarized conception of the words "pragmatic" and "pragmatist" thus arose. To be pragmatic has come to mean to be practical, realistic, and "down to earth." It is a compliment in the sense that it means one is not excessively idealistic, that one recognizes limits on human nature and on possibilities for improvement, and that one does what one knows will work. But contemporary pragmatism now also connotes a certain amorality and subjection to expediency, which as the cartoon in Figure 1 suggests is not far removed from cynicism.

Conclusion

In this chapter we sought to develop an understanding of the meaning of

pragmatism, not only from the standpoint of its founders but also from the perspectives of its interpreters. Our discussion emphasized the point that the meaning of the term "pragmatism" could be interpreted in ways that depart significantly from the original intentions of Peirce, James, and Dewey. In the next chapter we return to public administration to document influences of pragmatism in the field, and in so doing we observe two such widely differing interpretations in the thought of Mary Parker Follett and Charles A. Beard.

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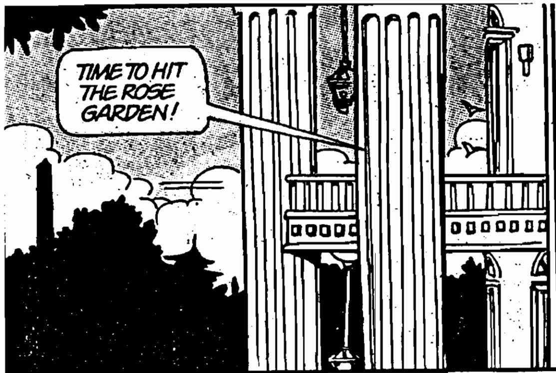
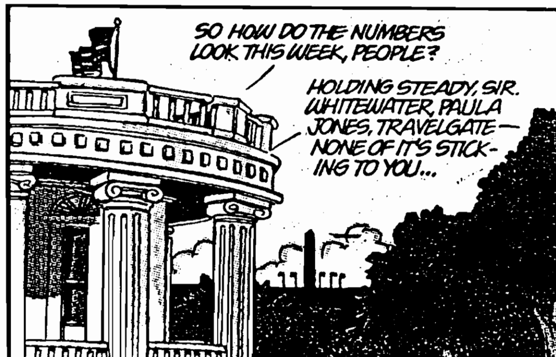
G. B. TRUDEAU





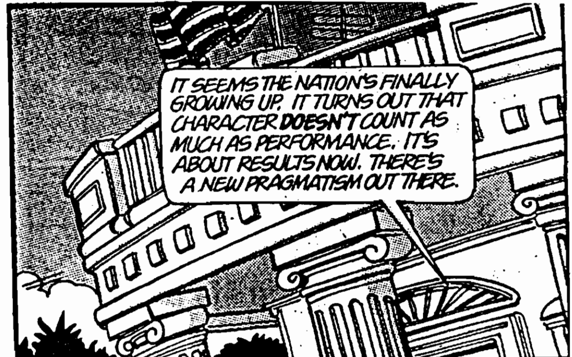


Figure 1. Contemporary, Vulgarized Pragmatism.
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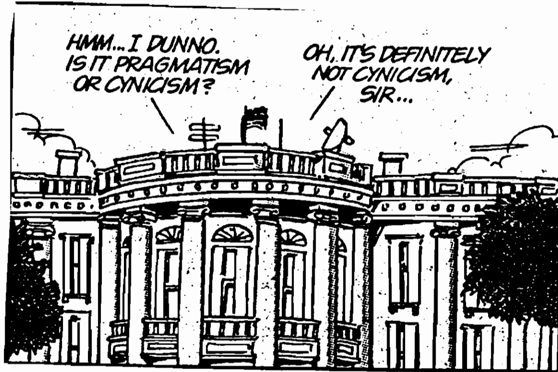

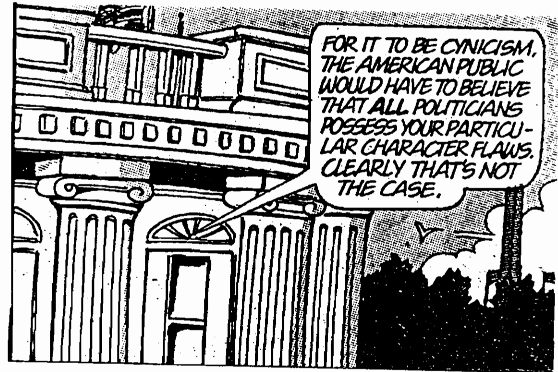

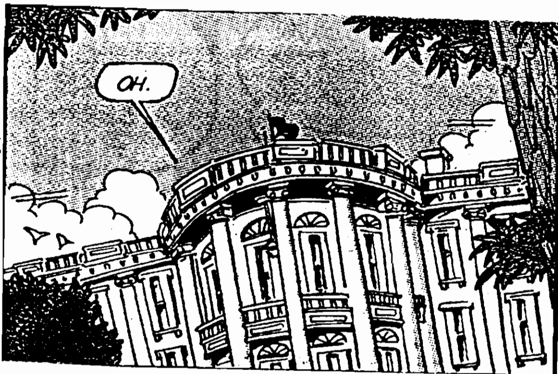

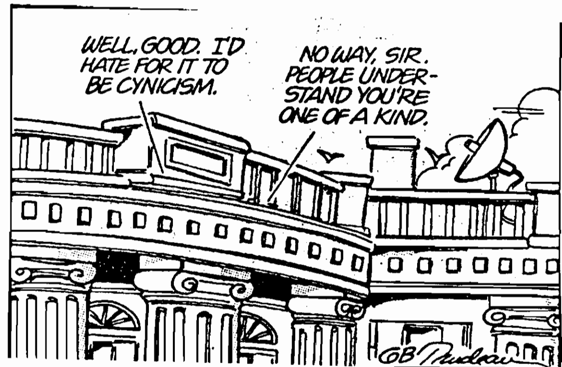

Figure 1. (continued)
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CHAPTER IV - INFLUENCES OF PRAGMATISM IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In this chapter we examine the influences of pragmatism in the intellectual development of early public administration. The means for accomplishing this is to show how early public administration writers exhibited pragmatism in their ideas. Rather than attempt to capture pragmatic aspects of all (or even many) of these writers, we instead focus in some depth on two: Mary Parker Follett and Charles A. Beard. The reasoning for this choices will become clear as the analysis proceeds, but we may summarize it here briefly.

The several interpretations of pragmatism that were previously discussed led to a variety of manifestations of the philosophy in public administration. The writings of Follett exhibit a more explicitly philosophical and social pragmatism--a pragmatism of potentiality--that proceeds directly from the thought of William James. Her pragmatism, though, was not accepted in mainstream public administration. Beard, in contrast, displayed a practical and operational brand of pragmatism that reflected concerns with efficiency and the search for scientific principles of administration. Beard's pragmatism was accepted in public administration and indeed represents the mainstream of administrative thought from the turn of the century through the 1930s. Follett's and Beard's writings thus portray two very different expressions of pragmatism that underlie their two very different ways of thinking about the field. This analysis sheds light on the

competition among ideas in early public administration and, as we will see in a later chapter, adds to our understanding of the heterodoxy that characterizes contemporary public administration.

Part 1 - Mary Parker Follett

General

Follett is accepted as an influential figure in early public administration,[1] and her well-known ideas on group processes, participation, and leadership have been reviewed and analyzed by several scholars, including Fry (1989) and Wolf (1989). Still, some have questioned her place in the history of administrative ideas. Peter Drucker (1995; 7-8) argues that her ideas were rejected in the 1930s and 1940s, and as a result he and others such as Simon and Herzberg performed their early work in ignorance of her. Others suggest that we who study administration either have failed to take Follett seriously (Harmon and Mayer, 1986; 372) or have failed to understand what she was trying to say (McSwite; 1996; 52).

We can gain insight into the nature of this ambivalence if we develop an understanding of Follett's philosophy[2] of pragmatism. The social psychology and

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[1] Scholars of public administration claim Follett as one of their own, though the orientation of her ideas was more toward the private sector.

[2] We use "philosophy" in this discussion in the sense of a general outlook, world view, or paradigm. As Drucker (1995; 8) notes, Follett was no "systematic philosopher."

pragmatism of William James, coupled with her own "real world" administrative experiences,[3] illuminated for Follett a perspective that differed dramatically from the prevailing rationalism and empiricism of the period. Follett developed this perspective in her earlier, more explicitly philosophical writings, which included *The New State*, originally published in 1918, "Community Is a Process" in *Philosophical Review* in 1919, and *Creative Experience* in 1924.[4] It was only after she became dissatisfied with the condition and directions of contemporary philosophical inquiry that she turned her attention to the more practical realm of business and administration (Metcalf and Urwick, 1940; 16-19). It was after this time that her most widely-known papers and lectures on administration were given. The interpretation we develop here is that through these Follett attempted to express her new philosophy to administrators in practical language. She was, however, unsuccessful in this endeavor, and as a result many scholars have misinterpreted her work. Examples of this include characterizations of Follett as merely "innovative," someone who was "ahead of her time" (Fry, 1989; 98,117). A more complete understanding of her pragmatism reveals instead a philosophy that is also today as startling and unsettling to contemporary mainstream administration as it doubtless was in Follett's day. We now turn to an exploration of that pragmatism, the explication of which, again, is found in what we will call her philosophical writings: *The New State*,

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[3] See Metcalf and Urwick (1940; 11-13) for a description of Follett's work, beginning around 1900, with the Boston schools system.

[4] Wood, writing in 1926, indicated that Follett was a well-known social scientist by this time (759).

"Community Is a Process," and *Creative Experience*.[5]

Follett and Psychology

The key to understanding Follett's pragmatism lies in recognizing the extent to which it is based in her psychological assumptions. Follett served notice early in each of her philosophical works that her arguments would proceed from a basis of individual and social psychology (CP; 576-7; *CE*; xvii; *NS*; 19). The psychologist upon whom she leaned most heavily was the pragmatist William James; indeed, given the frequency and manner of Follett's references to James, it may be difficult to overestimate his influence on her thought.[6] Her message in each of these works was essentially the same: first, that advances in psychological thinking had revealed new truths about humans and their social relationships; second, that these truths required new ways of thinking about the fundamental questions of philosophy; and third, that existing social forms and processes must be changed in recognition of these new psychological truths.

Follett's foundation was the "new and progressive social psychology" (*NS*; 19), which held that humans are socially constituted by reciprocal interplay with others. Such a view rejects the idea of psychologically isolated individuals with separate egos, and it instead places relationships between and among persons at the fore of psychological

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[5] For convenience in referring to these frequently cited works, we use *NS* for *The New State* (Follett, 1965), CP for "Community Is a Process" (Follett, 1919) and *CE* for *Creative Experience* (Follett, 1930).

[6] Follett cited James often and approvingly. She referred to Dewey only rarely; I found no references in any of her work to Peirce.

analysis. Follett coupled this view with the naturalistic assumption "that men and women are capable of constructing their own life" (*NS*; 8), that is, of exercising their free will to create themselves by entering into new relationships with others. The result was Follett's idea of a creative process of individual and, by extension, group growth through new and authentic social relations, which Follett called "the stuff of existence" (*NS*; 341):

> The seeing of self as, with all other selves, creating, demands a new attitude and a new activity in man. The fallacy of self-and-others fades away and there is only self-in-and-through-others, only others so firmly rooted in the self and so fruitfully growing there that sundering is impossible. We must now enter upon modes of living commensurate with this thought (*NS*; 8).

For Follett, this was a unifying process, whereby both persons and groups grow in an integrated fashion. Social integration and unity occur as "man advances toward completeness not by further aggregations to himself, but by further and further relatings of self to other men" (*NS*; 65). She recognized that these ideas of unity and integration seemed alien, but this was simply a result of artificial boundaries imposed by prior particularistic theories of psychology (*NS*; 21). Under the new social psychology, "the process of the many becoming one is not a metaphysical or mystical idea" (*NS*; 33), and it is "neither a sentiment nor an intellectual conception. . . . [I]t is <u>a psychological process produced by actual psychic interaction</u>" (*NS*; 160, emphasis added). This psychic interaction with others is what creates a person, and the total of psychic interactions, rather than inherent conceptions or rational capabilities, is what constitutes the self. According to Follett, "we have thought of egoistic or altruistic feelings as preexisting; we have studied action to see what precedent characteristics it indicated . . . [but] men

possess no characteristics apart from the unifying process" (*NS*; 45).

Follett recognized the paradox that growth in selfhood occurs only as the individual becomes increasingly "lost" in relation to others. In this regard she again leaned heavily upon James who, she said, struggled with similar philosophical questions: "[H]ow can many consciousnesses be at the same time one consciousness? How can the same identical fact experience itself so diversely? How can you be the absolute and the individual?" (*NS*; 264) Follett accepted James's conclusions that the "all-form" and the "each-form" are not incompatible (*NS*; 265) and that "states of consciousness can separate and combine themselves freely and keep their own identity unchanged while forming parts of simultaneous fields of experience of wider scope" (James, in *NS*; 264).

Follett also accepted James's concept of the "compounding" of consciousness or, as she put it, "multiple individuality through our manifold relations" (*NS;* 297). This occurs at the lowest level when two people relate psychically in such a way that their consciousnesses interpenetrate, integrate, and unify, to use Follett's terms. Each person's consciousness grows because of the encounter with the other's, and a new group consciousness emerges that incorporates both. Each new activity and experience of one adds to the experience of the other. If new persons join the group, if a new activity is undertaken, or if another group is encountered, the consciousness of each member and that of the group is affected by the new experience. This process is illustrated in Follett's conception of the state arising from neighborhood groups. She held that each person creates the small group, and then through compounding with other groups,

> it ascends from stage to stage until the federal state appears. Thus do we understand by actual living how collective experiences can claim identity with their constituent parts, how your experience and mine can be members of a world experience. In our neighborhood groups we claim identity with the whole collective will, at that point we are the collective will (*NS*; 265).

The ideas of individual and group consciousness were for Follett not static. Rather, each is being constantly reconstituted by the others; consequently, there can really be nothing such as static individual or group purposes. The environment was also, in Follett's naturalistic view, a part of the process:

> [The] environment is not a hard and rigid something external to us, always working upon us, whose influence we cannot escape. Not only have self and environment acted and reacted upon each other, but the action and reaction go on every moment; both self and environment are always in the making (*NS*; 98).

Since consciousnesses are always in flux, perceptions of facts are as well; hence Follett's assertion of "the two fundamental principles of life--the compounding of consciousness and the endless appearing of new forces" (*NS*; 303).

The degree to which interpenetration, integration, and unity occur in groups is dependent, according to Follett, upon the genuineness and authenticity of the relations among members. That is, differences are neither suppressed nor compromised, but are rather maintained and harmonized. Members achieve this by recognizing first, the objective demands of the particular problematic situation,[7] and second, the needs and powers of fellow members. A group dynamic such as compromise, with its basis in

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[7] This is Follett's well-known concept of the "law of the situation," discussed in, for example, Fry (1989; 111-112).

individualistic psychology, does not reflect the "true social process" (*NS*; 115; CP; 576-577) and thus precludes genuine and authentic group relations. Follett discussed several examples of this pathology, including ballot box democracy, the contract, and even debating societies (*NS*; 5; 125; 209). Only by putting aside this way of thought and by obeying the desire for association, which Follett believed is "the impulse at the core of our being" (*NS* 193), may group members achieve unity.

We may here also briefly note that Follett was influenced by Freudian psychology in addition to that of James. Here she draws upon Freud to support her concept of emergent group purposes:

> As in the Freudian psychology the purpose about to be carried out is already embedded in the motor attitude of the neuro-muscular apparatus, so in the social process the purpose is a part of the integrating activity; it is not something outside, a preconfigured object of contemplation toward which we are moving. Nothing will so transform economics and politics, law and ethics, as this conception of purpose, for it carries with it a complete revaluation of the notion of means and ends (CP; 579).

On this rather provocative note we end this sketch of Follett's psychological perspective. There is of course opportunity for much deeper analysis in this area of her thought, and we will touch on aspects of it again. Our objective thus far has been simply to understand the psychological basis for her philosophical ideas, which we will summarize before delving more deeply into her pragmatism.

Follett's Philosophy

In none of her works did Follett develop and present clear statements of her

ontology, epistemology, or ethics. For the most part, we must infer these; occasionally, however, she was more explicit. Indeed, Follett explicitly summarized her philosophy when she asserted that "the alpha and omega of philosophical teaching" is "the harmonizing of difference through interpenetration" (*NS*; 34).

For Follett, reality was relating. "[T]he only reality is the relating of one to the other which creates both. Our sundering is as artificial and late an act as the sundering of consciousness into subject and object. The only reality is the interpenetrating of the two into experience" (*NS*; 61). Facts emerge in relation, purposes emerge in relation, and both personal and group identities are created in relation. Non-relation (individualism) is non-reality (death) (*NS*; 63)

Follett's epistemology was similarly located in the idea of interpenetration. She stated, "Life is the true revealer: I can never understand the whole by reason, only when the heart-beat of the whole throbs through me as the pulse of my own being" (*NS*; 265). Further, we know only in a tentative way because situations and relations are always interweaving, constantly creating new facts and purposes (*NS*; 210). The law of the situation continually evolves. Each situation is only a point in time, never fixed in such a way that concrete, immutable laws may be divined. But while knowledge may be tentative and limited in a future, temporal sense, Follett would hold that it is essentially unlimited in a spatial sense, that is, in relation. In other words, knowledge in the sense of experience increases to the extent that increased relation and interpenetration occur.

Interpenetration was also at the core of Follett's idea of value. Value for Follett

lay in creation, growth, and progress, which occur in authentic social relations (*NS*; 193; *CE*; 188). In and through the integrating process, personal differences are harmonized, and collective will and purposes emerge. Morality, in essence, emerges and progresses as well (*NS*; 54). So we may say that value for Follett is to be found in relating with other humans, the "good life" is that which is spent in relating, and the ethical person is that person who pursues ever-increasing relationships with others.

On the basis then of the "new" social psychology that emphasizes the group rather than the individual, Follett's perspective was one that moved the locus and focus of philosophical inquiry away from the individual to the group. Hence, concepts of reality, knowledge, and value have meaning only in a group or social context. This is highly significant because it results in a fundamental restructuring of traditionally important issues in philosophy. The distinctions become blurred between empiricism and rationalism,[8] between the material and the ideal, between the objective and the subjective; indeed, the terms themselves require redefinition.[9] For example, the notion of an objective "out there" reality had a certain meaning from the perspective of individual intuition and cognition. What, though, does "out there" mean from the group perspective, and what is the meaning of group intuition or group cognition? While Follett did not attempt a systematic reconstruction of the meanings of these and other ideas, the thrust of her inquiry was clearly in a different philosophical direction than that

[8] To bridge the gap between these was, as we have seen, the pragmatists' purpose.

[9] See Follett's note (CP; 586) on the need for "many revaluations" in philosophy, jurisprudence, and politics as a result of this new perspective.

of the past.

Follett's Pragmatism

Some writers (e.g., Fry (1989); Stever (1986)) label Follett an idealist. Many may find this a curious characterization, given our previous discussion, and we will return to evaluate these interpretations later. First we should make explicit the claim that Follett was a thoroughgoing pragmatist. This should be evident from our discussion over the past several pages which shows that she sided with Peirce, James, and Dewey in their views of reality as indeterminate and flexible, of morality as inherent in action, of practical consequences as determining meaning, of knowledge as pluralistic and provisional, and of the centrality of the group or community of inquiry. Further, she made human consciousness the foundation of her thought, as did the pragmatists. In this section we draw out some specific points of Follett's pragmatism by examining, first, her ideas on experimentation, experience, and principles, and second, the implications of her thought in terms of power, control, will, and responsibility.

Recall that the pragmatists placed heavy emphasis on experimentation and experience, and of course several early public administration writers pursued the formulation of "principles of administration." Follett linked these concepts in a way that is quite different from the way that we think of the search for principles in the public administration orthodoxy of, for example, W. F. Willoughby. The following passages demonstrate Follett's ideas on experience and experimentation from the lowest level of

face-to-face interaction to the highest level of state action:

> [P]eople must socialize their lives by practice, not by study. Until we begin to acquire the habit of a social life nothing of a social life will do us any good. . . . I learn my duty to my friends not by reading essays on friendship, but by living my life with my friends and learning by experience the obligations friendship demands . . . Ideas unfold <u>within</u> human experience, not by their own momentum apart from experience (*NS*; 192-193; *CE*; 273, emphasis in original).

> We need then those who are frankly participant-observers, those who will try experiment after experiment and note results, experiments in making human interplay productive. . . . [We must] take an experimental attitude toward our experience, and have many experiments to report with reasons for their success and failure, and suggestions as to what direction new experiments should take (*CE*; xi; 213).

> [The solutions of the state] must be a matter of experiment and experience, of patient trial and open-minded observation. . . . This is all that democracy means, that the experience of all is necessary (*NS;* 321; *CE*; 19).

For Follett, the mere application of experience is no guarantee of success (*CE;* 71) because each situation is different from the previous. The key point is the accumulation and integration of experience into principles that incorporate the contextual details of each situation (*CE*; 136-137). When principles are used in a new situation, the facts of that situation "contribute to those principles which by use again in the factual world become again transformed, and thus man grows--always through his activity" (*CE*; 141). Thus principles for Follett are <u>hypotheses</u> or <u>tools</u> for guiding action rather than predictive rules of cause and effect. Further, principles are not fixed, but neither are they constantly shifting without basis. As Follett stated with respect to legal principles, we "evolve day by day a <u>crescent</u> law which is the outcome of our life as it is to be applied to

our life" (*NS*; 132, emphasis added). In essence, principles represent pragmatism's naturalistic view of knowledge or truth as crescent, that is, as growing and changing, in the sense that a person grows and changes. As a person is the same today as yesterday, yet a different one as well, so do principles grow.

This excursion into Follett's ideas on experience and principles allows us to comment on pragmatism as an integrating philosophy. We noted earlier that the pragmatists were attacked for their views of reality as flexible and indeterminate, which seemed to imply that morality and knowledge are situational and relative. An opposing, more accurate perspective is that pragmatism is at once conservative and radical. It is conservative in that all past knowledge and value is operable in a given situation; it is radical in that none of this is considered sacred. All must be held subject to revision.

Follett's pragmatism makes necessary radically different notions of power, control, will, and responsibility. To elaborate, we return to her related concepts of interpenetration of consciousness and the law of the situation. In Follett's view, interpenetration, rather than occurring as a product of abstract intellectualization, occurs when individuals relate to each other in some joint activity. This could be through some shared work activity among group members, or it may simply be through group communication.[10] The preconceived purposes of the activity are not important for Follett, but the action itself is vital. The real purposes and meanings will be worked out--

[10] We may say this because consciousness is manifested in action and because action is a form of communication. The extent to which interpenetration occurs depends upon the degree to which the group shares a common language and, as noted earlier, upon the authenticity of the communication.

that is, are emergent--in the concrete activity, and they will be manifested in the practical consequences of the activity. For Follett, it matters not so much <u>what</u> we do or <u>why</u> we do it, <u>as long as we do something together</u>.

Wrapped up in this concept of interpenetration through group activity is Follett's "law of the situation." Particular problematic situations continually arise, and the circumstances of each situation and the needs of other actors may be considered to constitute objective demands on us. One response is to approach the situation in an objective fashion through, for example, "ballot box democracy." But this is for Follett the response of discredited individualism. Another response is that we submit ourselves to the law of the situation through immersion in activity with others around some aspect of the situation. Our participation in activity integrates us with others as parts of the situation, and thus we engage it in a subjective way. The details of the situation are worked through, meaning and purpose emerge, and a different set of circumstances--a "new" law of the situation--arises requiring new activity on our part.

A central issue here for Follett is that of <u>power</u> and <u>control</u>. Past individualistic conceptions of human nature held that humans could intuitively or rationally know right from wrong and thus could attempt to control others through force or persuasion. Further, science supposedly gave humans the capability to reason and to know analytically, and thus also in some sense to exercise control over, the facts of a situation. In this view, power stems from control. Follett, in contrast, believed contemporary psychology revealed a different view. First, it portrayed truth as a product of social

activity, not a rational or intuitive concept (*CE*; 151). Second, it revealed sub- or unconscious components of interpersonal relations[11] (Follett referred to these as occurring "subliminally" and "subterraneously" (*NS*; 176)). Third, it developed the idea of *gestalt*, what Follett termed the characteristic of an undivided, articulate "whole" or "structure." She believed this concept essentially precluded human ability to analyze a social situation without being an integral part of it:

> [O]ne of the principal features of present psychological teaching is that experience is always a complex, that experience is always a unity, so this is exactly what some students of the social sciences have felt to be the most illuminating part of their observations, namely, that the very essence of experience evaporates in analysis (*CE*; 104).

For these reasons, Follett believed the idea that humans could exercise control over social situations to be folly. The power of social and political forms designed to achieve such control (Follett takes particular issue with the instruments of pluralistic democracy (*NS*; 5)) is illusory; these serve no purpose other than to perpetuate individualism.

Follett's view was that power derives not from control, but from submission to the law of the situation and the resulting interpenetration and unity with other group members. We give up control in order to become integral participants in the situation; only through integration do we derive real power.[12] Follett's idea was "power with"

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[11] Lane and Wolf (1990; 94) note this aspect of Follett's thought.

[12] Readers familiar with the New Testament may perceive a parallel between Follett's perspective and the Apostle Paul's explanations of dying to one's self and being born again in Christ (see for example Galatians 2:20 and Philippians 4:13).

Considering the Scriptural references Follett employs in her philosophical works (compare for example "the branch and the vine" (*NS;* 98) to John 15:4-5; "born again of water and the spirit" (*NS*; 161) to John 3:5; and "when two or three are gathered together

rather than "power over" (Follett, 1940; 101-107).

We may note here aspects of Peircean semiotics in Follett's ideas of interpenetration and the law of the situation. In the integrating process, facts and purposes emerge and become apparent to all participants. Further communications among group members have their basis in this process and so are symbols that refer to the integrating activity. Follett provided the following illustration in "The Giving of Orders" (Follett, 1940; 65):

> The referee in the game stands watch in hand, and says, "Go." It is an order, but order only as symbol. I may say to an employee, "Do so and so," but I should say it only because we have both agreed, openly or tacitly, that that which I am ordering done is the best thing to be done. The order is then a symbol.

Orders--and communications overall--thus do not reflect rational or intuitive workings of individual minds; they reflect instead psychic processes of interpenetration among minds.[13]

A correspondingly new concept of human will is required. We have already addressed Follett's view of the future as unknown and flexible, and of knowledge as

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(*NS*; 314) to Matthew 18:20) and the often religious tone of her writing, it may be interesting to speculate on Follett's personal religious beliefs and the role they played in her secular thought. The pragmatism revealed in her statement that "God appears only through us" (*NS*; 335) seems consistent with James's ideas in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). Probably she would have approved of the Christian neo-orthodoxy of the 1920s and 1930s. Its key proponents included pragmatists such as Paul Tillich and Karl Barth, who were concerned to reconcile scientific naturalism with orthodox Christianity.

[13] One notices here that Follett presaged Karl Weick's (1969) idea of "retrospective sense-making." See for example *CE*; 176.

tentative and emergent. It follows that the outcome of any exercise of human will toward some end is not guaranteed. Success in any endeavor is always uncertain, because purposes, facts, and values are always changing in each new situation. In essence, Follett was saying that we cannot really know what we want. Now, as we have seen, Follett was critical of existing democratic institutions and processes because they encourage and perpetuate the exercise of individual wills and thus limit human freedom and growth. Again, these come instead through psychic interpenetration in group activity, which leads to formation of group will and group purposes. Our "true" desires, values, and purposes are worked out, are emergent, in group activity around a particular situation. So, rather than approaching a situation with a preconceived will to act, Follett would have us instead will to give up our individual will so that a group will may emerge. This "will to will the common will," as she put it, is "perhaps the deepest truth" (*NS*; 49). Indeed, this writer finds in this idea of the emergent common will Follett's clearest statement regarding her self-aware pragmatism:

> [W]e evolve a so-called common will, then we take it into the concrete world to see if it will work. In so far as it does work, it proves itself; in so far as it does not, it generates the necessary idea to make it "common." Then again we test and so on and so on (*NS;* 50-51).

Finally, a new sense of responsibility is needed along with these new concepts of power, control, and will. Responsibility formerly implied a burden or obligation to act or "do the right thing," in an objective sense, to control or manipulate circumstances in some situation. Responsibility thus meant not only an obligation to act; it also meant an obligation to know what is the right action. In Follett's pragmatism, responsibility has

rather to do with being in relationship as an integral part of the situation. One's moral obligation is to submit to the relating and interpenetrating, out of which will emerge the "right" thing to do. As with power, control, and will, responsibility for Follett is redefined in subjective and collective terms.

To summarize this discussion on Follett's pragmatism, what she clearly envisioned was a giving up of self, or a submission of self to the law of the situation and thus to the process of interpenetration. We may interpret her pragmatism as constituting, in a Kuhnian sense, a different paradigm than the then-prevailing rationalism and empiricism. To use Morgan's (1980) terms, her pragmatism is probably best associated with radical humanism, "the view that the process of reality creation may be influenced by psychic and social processes which channel, constrain, and control the minds of human beings in ways which alienate them from the potentialities inherent in their true nature as humans" (609). The early twentieth century emphasis on the efficacy of science and reason to achieve progress best fits Morgan's functionalist paradigm, the "ontological assumptions [of which] encourage a belief in the possibility of an objective and value-free social science in which the scientist is distanced from the scene which he or she is analyzing through the rigor and technique of the scientific method" (608). That Follett recognized the apparent incommensurability of these two paradigms is evident in the way her message and manner of writing changed after *Creative Experience*, her last philosophical work.

Follett, Pragmatism, and Administration: Attempting to Bridge Paradigms

Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1995) illustrates a functionalist's frustration with Follett's ideas on administration when she complains that the "nature of her analysis makes it difficult to use. . . . [Follett] offered no specific techniques, no step by step approach, no strategies for success, no action plan" (xviii). From Kanter's perspective, Follett's ideas on integration, participation, coordination, and so on mean that one must integrate, participate, and coordinate. Put another way, these are interpreted as functions of administration, the effective exercise of which depends upon, among other things, the will and control of the administrator. As we have seen, this is precisely the position that Follett attacked. Integrating, participating, and coordinating are not things that we do in a functional sense; rather they are products of submitting to the process of relating.

The functionalist's question,"How do I then submit?" remains, and, unhappily for the functionalist, there is probably no satisfactory answer. What is required is actually a change in world view or a Kuhnian paradigm shift, the prospects for success of which are, following Kuhn (1970; 148-159), highly problematical. Follett herself recognized that this was an issue of commensurability and that she could not lay out a specific program for the functionalist:

> The only possible way . . . is for all of us to realize that the power we are snatching at is not really power, not that which we are really seeking, that the way to gain genuine power, even that which we ourselves really want, is by an integrative process (*CE*; 188).

Commensurability becomes an even greater issue when we take Follett's pragmatism one step further in its implications. Not only must the functionalist, in

submission, give up prior ideas of power and control, he or she must also give up prior ideas of organizational goals, of what constitutes effective management, and perhaps even prior ideas of democracy. True goals and purposes, indeed our true natures, will emerge in relation and may be radically different from what we had previously conceived them to be[14] (*NS*; 8-19). Once we immerse ourselves in the process of relating, we give up our claims on the future. We trust that whatever emerges will be a more "true" reality, but we really do not know what will emerge. This perspective may be today as startling and perhaps even troubling as it doubtless was in Follett's day.

We may speculate then that Follett was confronted with a dilemma. By the mid-1920s she had expressed both her impatience with the abstract intellectualism of philosophy[15] and her interest in what she saw as the increasingly integrative activity of business and administration (Metcalf and Urwick, 1940; 17-19). She had noted several promising trends in these fields (*NS*; 107, 112, 114), and perhaps perceiving the potential for a paradigm shift in administration, she wanted to help hasten its occurrence. But in leaving philosophical pursuits and engaging the world of administration, she would lose an audience that was perhaps more receptive to alternative world views and gain another whose membership was interested no doubt almost exclusively in bottom-line concrete

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[14] Both Fry (1989; 116) and Harmon and Mayer (1986; 344) seem to miss this point. Both interpret Follett as assuming that individual and organizational interests may be reconciled. The interpretation developed here is that *a priori* interests are largely irrelevant; true interests emerge from the integrating process and are by definition reconciled.

[15] See *CE*; xi. Interestingly, Follett notes here that even "pragmatism has still bits of intellectualism sticking to it."

results such as profitability and efficiency. How could she then convey her paradigm of pragmatism to what were largely functionalist, reform-minded business and public administrators? Like Kanter, these administrators would have wanted to know what to do to solve their specific problems. As Drucker (1995; 6) puts it, they would have wanted a "tool box" of "procedures, techniques, methods, and practices." Further, her new audience was to include what were no doubt powerful, successful business and government leaders who were used to relying on their own talents and the force of their own wills. Was Follett to tell them that they had been misguided, that they now must learn submission?

An illustration of this dilemma is provided in the New Testament account (Matthew 19: 16-22) of the rich young man who asked Jesus what he must do to have eternal life. Upon hearing the answer, the young man went away sad, because Jesus required him not only to give up everything, but to follow Jesus as well. In other words, he had to give up not only his material power, but also his will in submission to Jesus' leading. This message was, in the rich young man's paradigm, simply too much to bear. Follett must have recognized that the message of her pragmatism would similarly be too much for functionalist administrators, and that this audience would either not listen or not understand. To enter and be heard in this arena then, Follett had to begin to communicate with practitioners of administration in ways they would find acceptable.

Thus we see after *Creative Experience* a fundamental change in Follett's writing. No longer did she write for audiences of philosophy; the remainder of her works were

written for practitioners in business, industry, and government. Nor did she write after this time anything close to a book-length work that would have allowed her the space to develop complex ideas and arguments. She limited herself instead to papers or lectures--relatively short, pithy items more suited to the practical atmosphere of business.[16]

Most significantly we see a change in what we would today call Follett's voice. She departed from the more scholarly and elegant style of her philosophical works and began instead to use a style that draws upon many concrete examples from her personal experience.[17] To illustrate, in *Community Is a Process* (576) she mentioned both Freud and Hegel in her explanation of reciprocal relating. In her paper "Individualism in a Planned Society" (Follett, 1940; 299), she explained the same concept as the interaction among department heads in a business, and she hopes the reader will "recognize this process as one you often see."

Another illustration of this change of voice is seen in Follett's use of the terms unifying and co-ordination. The emphasis in Follett's philosophical works is, as we have seen, often on unifying, and Follett tended to describe this concept in ways that many would find difficult, perhaps even "mystical":[18]

[M]en must recognize and unify difference and then the moral law appears

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[16] Follett appeared on occasion impatient that the restricted nature of her new forum kept her from presenting her ideas in more depth. See for example Follett (1940; 196, 207) and Follett (1940; 269).

[17] Odegard (1971, 186) has similarly commented on this change in Follett's writing approach.

[18] Waldo (1948; 210) noted a similar tendency in the writing of Horace Fries, whose pragmatism he found "as unsatisfying as the Hindu cosmology."

> in all its majesty in concrete form. This is the universal striving. This is the trend of all nature--the harmonious unifying of all. . . . [Man's] sustenance is relation and he seeks forever new relations in the ceaseless interplay of the One and the Many by which both are constantly making each other (*NS*; 334; CP; 582).

Follett no doubt realized that she may not be well received by audiences of administrators if she spoke about, for example, "the unifying of management and labor" or "the unifying of business competitors." Her solution in her post-philosophical works was to begin to use co-ordination, a term she had used only rarely before; indeed it appears nowhere in *Community Is a Process*. With this word Follett selected both a term administrators would be familiar with and one she hoped would convey the idea of joint activity around a particular situation, which would then make possible interpenetration, integration, and unity. She was careful though to explain that her meaning of co-ordination was much more than simply working together; it entailed rather a more thorough commitment to joint activity, encompassing:

1. Co-ordination by direct contact of the responsible people concerned.
2. Co-ordination in the early stages.
3. Co-ordination as the reciprocal relating of all the factors in a situation.
4. Co-ordination as a continuing process. (Follett, 1940; 297).

This may be as close as Follett came to satisfying Kanter's functionalist desire for a specific program of "what to do."

Follett was of course unable to lay out specific techniques for her new audience. She could only describe the results of relating and hope that her audience would thereby gain an understanding of its deeper implications. The following passages from "Leader and Expert" (Follett, 1940) give the sense that, while Follett could describe leadership

and effective leaders, she could not lay out specific steps for how one may become an effective leader:

> [The leader is] one who can organize the expertise of the group, make it all available and most effectively available, and thus get the full power of the group (258). . . . Above all, he should make his co-workers see that it is not <u>his</u> purpose which is to be achieved, but a common purpose, born of the desires and the activities of the group (262, emphasis in original). . . . The great leader is he who so relates all the complex outer forces and all the complex inner forces that they work together effectively (265).

In summary, what Follett was attempting by taking on a new voice was to try to communicate across paradigms. Her strategy was to avoid completely the issue of what to do--if she advocated technique, she would undermine her own pragmatism; if she advocated submission, she would have no audience--and to focus instead on her experiences, which she hoped administrators would find congruent with their own, thus providing a common ground for understanding.

Some may argue that this change in Follett's writing is not a matter of a change of voice. It might be interpreted rather as evidence of a larger philosophical change in which she rejected her previously developed radical humanist perspective in favor of one more narrowly focused on practical, functional administration. But there is ample evidence to counter this claim. Even in her post-philosophical writings, Follett emphasized a complete and total commitment to the process of relating. One example is the way she took issue with John Dewey in his view that the role of the public in a democracy is to intervene only at certain junctures, that the public has other work to do. Follett objected strenuously, arguing instead that democracy is a continuous "co-

functioning" (Follett, 1940; 190). Odegard (1971), writing in a critical vein, also notes that, though Follett's style changed in her post-philosophical writing, her basic message did not:

> [E]ven in the course of propounding principles for administrative conduct she gives a feeling of too wholesome totalism--something slightly artificial--as if everyone should and could participate in everything that concerned him,--as if a man's function in an administrative organization were or could be every moment a burning interest to him (186).

The "totalism" of relating is of course precisely what Follett was attempting to communicate to administrators in her later works.

Misinterpreting Follett

The effect of this change in Follett's writing is that her pragmatism, that is, her radical humanist paradigm, is pushed into the background. In her post-philosophical papers and lectures we read her ideas on integration, participation, leadership, and co-ordination, but we receive little or none of the underlying psychological pragmatism that supports it. Further, the voice we "hear" Follett using in these writings is one with which she hoped functionalists would identify. Thus if we pay attention to only her post-philosophical works, we get only a functionalist perspective on her thought.

In fact, these are precisely the works that we in administration have studied and associate with her. One of the best known compilations, *Dynamic Administration* (Metcalf and Urwick, 1940), contains only her papers, as does *Freedom and Co-ordination* (Urwick, 1949). Her single best known work in public administration may be

"The Process of Control," which appeared in *Papers on the Science of Administration* (Gulick and Urwick, 1937). Another well-known paper for students of public administration is "The Giving of Orders," which appears in the important text *Classics of Public Administration* (Shafritz and Hyde, 1978). Finally, in a recent management text, *Mary Parker Follett: Prophet of Management* (Graham, 1995), eight of eleven selections of Follett's writing are papers; the other three are brief portions of text from both *The New State* and *Creative Experience.*

Because we thus have an incomplete perspective that emphasizes Follett's functionalism, we have misunderstood Follett's thought and her place in our history of ideas. Probably the most common misinterpretation is the way Follett's ideas are seen today as contributing to the human relations movement. Parker (1995; 282-283) views Follett as leading a reaction against the impersonality of Taylorism, thus constituting an intellectual bridge between the scientific management and human relations movements. Shafritz and Hyde (1978; 22) and Stone and Stone (1975; 42) similarly associate Follett with the human relations movement. Fry (1989; 121) links the thought of Follett to that of Mayo and comments on Follett's ties to the behavioral movement (7). Each of these authors mentions Follett as key in the development of the idea of participatory management.

From this perspective, Follett's post-philosophical writings are simply another step in the incrementally progressive accumulation and refinement of management thought from Taylor to Mayo and others. But Follett did not react against scientific

management's approaches of viewing "men as machines" or advocating "the one best way." Rather, she perceived in it an underlying philosophy that was coherent with her own pragmatism:

> [O]ne might call the essence of scientific management the attempt to find the law of the situation. With scientific management the managers are as much under orders as the workers, for both obey the law of the situation. . . . [T]he divorcing of persons and the situation does a great deal of harm. . . . [T]he deeper philosophy of scientific management shows us personal relations within the whole setting of that thing of which they are a part (Follett, 1940; 59-60).

Nor did Follett share the human relations movement's functionalist paradigm. The movement's focus, as evidenced by the coherent themes of theorists such as Mayo, Barnard, Herzberg, and McGregor, was on increased productivity and efficiency through increased management attention to the human and social elements of work. That Follett is viewed as an influential player in this movement is a testimony to the success of her efforts to gain an audience in functionalist administration. But that she is identified with this movement means that theorists and practitioners of functionalist administration viewed her as one who reinforced their ideas, as "one of their own." They thereby failed to grasp that she was attempting to communicate with them from a different paradigm, from a different understanding of reality, truth, and value.

It would be misleading however to suggest that there was an unquestioning acceptance of all the ideas put forth in Follett's post-philosophical papers. Though she was successful in adopting a functionalist voice, there are still many instances in these

writings when her radical humanist roots begin to be exposed.[19] Functionalist theorists, indeed most of mainstream public administration, have generally rejected these aspects of Follett's thought, thereby selectively appropriating only those ideas they felt were valid. This rejection is evidenced by the common characterization of Follett as idealistic or *avant garde*,[20] perhaps still so today. The implication here is that some of Follett's ideas can be realized only in some future, more perfect state of human development; in other words, we are not ready for it today.

Interpretations of Follett as Idealist

This is an appropriate point at which to address in some detail those who have characterized Follett as an idealist. Two examples of these interpretations are Stever (1986) and Fry (1989).

Stever has argued that Follett vacillated, philosophically, between idealism and pragmatism, which led her to an "organizational imperative" that claimed organizations were vital for both democracy and human development. Stever's thesis rests on his portrayal of Follett as an idealist, and while his evidence for this interpretation is

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[19] One example is from "Some Discrepancies in Leadership Theory and Practice" (Follett, 1940). Follett said James "tried to show us the relation between what he called the inmost nature of reality and our own powers. He tried to show us that there is a significant correspondence here, that my capacities are related to the demands of the universe" (293).

[20] See for example Metcalf and Urwick (1940; 24) and Graham (1995; 31).

unconvincing in several respects,[21] we address only one point in detail here. Stever claims that "Follett, in idealist fashion, freely acknowledged the inevitability of the self-whole relationship. For the idealist, the individual was only truly free and thus able to find potential within a larger collective" (167). Stever's claim suggests, on two counts, a significantly different reading of Follett's pragmatism than that presented throughout this chapter. First, Follett pointed out, as we have seen, that there is no destiny or inevitability in integration; rather it is possible only to the extent that humans submit to the process of relating. The following passage from *The New State* is most appropriate here because it clearly documents Follett's position on this point; further, it clearly indicates her position on idealism and pragmatism:

> There is no state except through me. James' deep-seated antagonism to the idealists is because of their assertion that the absolute is, always has been and always will be. The contribution of pragmatism is that we must work out the absolute. You are drugging yourselves, cries James, the absolute is real as far as you make it real, as far as you bring forth in tangible, concrete form all its potentialities. In the same way we have no state until we make one. This is the teaching of the new psychology. We have not to "postulate" all sorts of things as the philosophers do ("organic actuality of the moral order" etc.), we have to *live* it; if we can make a moral whole then we shall know whether or not there is one. We cannot become the state imaginatively, but only actually through our group relations (*NS*; 334, emphasis in original).

Second, Stever implies that Follett was an idealist because she held that humans are most

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[21] Stever (1986; 166) cites as evidence of Follett's idealism her brief acknowledgment, in the introduction to *The New State*, of the influence of a student of Josiah Royce, but he overlooks Follett's criticisms of Royce (CP; 580, 584). Stever further claims that, because Follett was educated on the East Coast and in England, she "absorbed idealist literature and concepts" (163).

complete in relations. This of course for Follett is not idealism; it is rather the pragmatism of James, which reflects the authentic nature of humans as revealed by psychology.

Stever's interpretation is a result of his falling into the trap that we described earlier. He believes that Follett developed an organizational imperative; that is, she emphasized the necessity of involving individuals in organizations both for their individual benefit and to solve the collective problems of liberal society. As evidence Stever presents a lengthy quotation from one of Follett's post-philosophical papers. By attending thus to her functionalist voice, he interprets her as a functionalist, essentially reading her radical humanist's view of relating as a functionalist's view of organizing. Asserting her place in the "mainstream of American thought" (Stever, 1986; 163), he fails to recognize that Follett was really attempting to show the folly of the mainstream paradigm.

Fry (1989) follows a similar path in characterizing Follett as an idealist. Like Stever, Fry makes unsupported claims that Follett's "early orientation was toward philosophic idealism" and that "evidence of that orientation crops up throughout her writings" (100). His later criticism of her idealism is also based on a similar interpretation of her as a functionalist. Fry appears to recognize a problem with this interpretation, but rather than search for a deeper resolution, he simply attributes it to a lack of clarity in Follett's thought.

> Follett's idealism would not be a significant problem except that she claims to be dealing, not with what should be, but with "what perhaps may

> be." Although it is not entirely clear what Follett means by this statement, it would seem to indicate that she intended to construct, not an ideal world, but a possible world (116).

Fry's own words suggest the solution to this "problem": Follett was a pragmatist dealing with the possible, not a functionalist dealing with the ideal. But Fry misses this point by completely neglecting Follett's pragmatism throughout his discussion, thereby misinterpreting, like Stever, her "relating" as "organizing."

We should note here that not all have missed the point that Follett wrote from a paradigm different from that of early twentieth century administration. Harmon and Mayer (1986) note this aspect of Follett, grouping her with Thayer, Weick, and White and McSwain as theorists of "emergence." Yet Harmon and Mayer also betray a misunderstanding of Follett's pragmatism when they note her "two deeply held beliefs":

> (1) her commitment to the pragmatists' idea that experience rather than detached intellectual reflection was the surest guide to discovery of truth, and (2) a psychology that held that the self does not exist prior to social interaction (341).

The implication of this construction is that psychology is separate from pragmatism; this of course ignores the psychological basis of both James's and Follett's pragmatism.

Follett in Conclusion

In summary, this chapter's description of Follett's pragmatism and its subsequent analysis of her administrative thought have developed a different interpretation of her contribution to ideas in public administration. The common interpretation, supported by an underlying paradigm of functionalism, is of Follett as extending, from a humanistic

perspective, the scientific management of Taylor and thereby contributing to the human relations movement in its various manifestations. The verdict from most commentators is that she had some good insights but was too idealistic to be taken completely seriously. An alternative interpretation is that, in extending the pragmatism of William James, Follett failed completely in her attempt to capture early administration for her own radical humanism. Indeed, she may even have driven the field deeper into functionalism, because by adopting a functionalist voice she was misunderstood and her ideas misappropriated for the human relations movement. In this alternative interpretation, Follett's pragmatism had an influence on administrative ideas, but it was precisely the opposite influence from her intent.

Part 2 - Charles A. Beard

General

Beard is an important subject for analysis in this chapter for several reasons. Though he is often identified most closely with history and political science,[1] there can be no doubt of his influence in public administration throughout its early years. His writings on government and public administration extended from his turn-of-the-century master's thesis on civil service reform (Borning, 1962; 20) to the tenth edition of *American Government and Politics*, which he was completing when he died in 1948. Apart from his writings, Beard's influence was probably felt most in what may be called public administration's movement toward professionalization in the early 1900s. He was a consultant for the New York Bureau of Municipal Research and served as director for the Bureau's Training School for Public Service. He was also active in the National Municipal League and participated in the formation of the American Society for Public Administration in the early 1940s. Second, because of Beard's connections with other "early giants" of public administration, we may claim that their ideas on the subject were substantially similar. We have specifically in mind here Charles Merriam, Frank Goodnow, Frederick Cleveland, and Luther Gulick.[2] Third, Beard has been described by

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[1] Beard served as president of both the American Historical Association and the American Society for Political Science.

[2] Merriam studied with Beard under Frank Goodnow at Columbia University (Rucker; 1969; 153); Cleveland and Beard taught courses together at the Training School for Public Service (Stone and Stone, 1975; 269-270); Gulick was Beard's student at

several commentators as a leading pragmatist of the era (see for example Crick, 1964; 75). The pragmatism of Beard that influenced early public administration, though, while sometimes linked to that of James and Dewey (Marcell, 1974), was more a utilitarian pragmatism of practicality. It was this brand of pragmatism that lay at the foundation of mainstream administrative thought during the first forty or so years of this century.

Beard and Goodnow: the Politics-Administration Separation and Efficiency

Beard's thought may be traced directly to that of Goodnow, his mentor at Columbia[3] (Borning, 1962; xix). Goodnow, writing from the perspective of administrative law, was concerned with how to limit appropriately the discretionary authority of administrators in an increasingly complex society. There were for Goodnow two significant and related dimensions of this issue that had profound effects on the infant discipline of public administration. One dimension was the Wilsonian politics-administration separation, or the idea that administration was concerned only with implementation or execution of the politically determined public will. In the progressive democracy of the new century, administration was to become in effect the fourth branch of government. According to Goodnow, administrators would be

free from the influence of politics because of the fact that their mission is

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Columbia and at the Training School (Fry, 1989; 76).

[3] Beard may have been one of the first to recognize Goodnow as the father of modern public administration. Beard praised him for having been the first scholar in the United States to recognize the immense importance of administration to modern society and to sketch the outlines of the field (Borning, 1962; 20).

> the exercise of foresight and discretion, the pursuit of truth, the gathering of information, the maintenance of a strictly impartial attitude . . . and the provision of the most efficient possible administrative organization (Goodnow, in Kelly *et al.*, 1983; 426).

The other major dimension of this issue had to do, as Goodnow suggested above, with efficiency. Goodnow set forth priorities that he believed would ensure adequate discretion for administrators while protecting against abuses of power. These priorities were (1) efficient operation of the people's business; (2) the protection of individual rights; and (3) efforts to ensure the general goals of social welfare (Cooper, 1988; 74, 233). The thrust of Goodnow's thought, then, was to introduce efficiency into government by, first, separating administration from politics, and second, by making efficiency its principal goal. Such ideas were certainly in keeping with the reform-minded progressivism of the day and so were assumed to be self-evident truths and desirable goals (Wallace Sayre, in Shafritz and Hyde, 1978; 199).

Beard appears to have accepted Goodnow's ideas without question, as the following passage on municipal government illustrates:

> No lengthy argument need be adduced to show that the government of the great American city is a complex process requiring a multitude of detailed technical and expert operations subject, in matters of general policy, to the control of the electorate. By its very complexity it offers a multitude of opportunities for waste, corruption, and maladjustments. On the side of its administration the city is a gigantic business concern requiring for its proper conduct something more than mere election enthusiasm. Speaking abstractly, all of its branches should be carefully integrated so that there can be no conflict of authority, no waste in the purchase of supplies, no neglect of duties by the employees, no misuse of funds appropriated, and no protection for vicious interests seeking to evade the law or to wrest privileges from the city (Beard, 1919; 598).

For roughly the first forty years--the formative years--of public administration's history, Beard promulgated this spirit of politically neutral administrative efficiency throughout the discipline's training, education, and practice.

Beard's Pragmatism

Though his thought differed in several significant aspects from that of Peirce, James, and Dewey, Beard has appeared to several commentators sufficiently similar to them that he has been labeled a pragmatist.[4] One reason for this may be due more to his fairly close relationship with John Dewey than with any particular coherence in the thinking of the two men.[5] But the most plausible reason for this similarity is that these men, along with others such as Veblen and Pound (also called pragmatists), were all writing during roughly the same period of history. Thus, they were all involved in what Morton White has called "the revolt against formalism" (1973; 43). They were all reacting against the same rationalism, were all influenced by Darwinian naturalism, were all caught up in the same progressive spirit, and all shared the era's implicit faith in science. The major difference is that Peirce, James, and Dewey took a conceptual path

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[4] Marcell (1974) discusses Beard's pragmatism primarily in terms of his views of history, which we only briefly mention here, rather than in his political thought.

[5] Their original acquaintance can probably be traced to the activities surrounding Hull House in Chicago in the late 1890s. In 1904, Dewey left Chicago and joined Beard on the faculty at Columbia University, and over the course of their careers the two sometimes cooperated on various projects. For example, both were involved in the founding of the New School for Social Research in 1917, and in 1937 Dewey invited Beard to join him as a member of the Mexico City commission on the Trotsky trial.

leading to their philosophically explicit pragmatism, while Beard developed a more implicit pragmatism of practicality that was embedded in his ideas on history, politics, and administration. Next we shall draw out aspects of this pragmatism as we examine Beard's views, first, on the evolutionary nature of experience; second, on the fact-based nature of science; and third, on the utilitarian basis of administration.

The Evolutionary Nature of Experience

Beard held that political institutions and forms were not the results of any theory or philosophy about the "best" form of government; rather they occurred as natural and practical responses to the evolving conditions and circumstances of history. He believed that this was true of America's political institutions, which he argued were based on "political and economic conditions prevailing at the time of their creation" (Beard, 1919; 3). This belief must have seemed especially valid amid the tumultuous change of Beard's day, during which was evolving " a complex political organism which is swiftly changing under our very eyes" (vi).

From such an evolutionary perspective, Beard attached primary importance to the idea of <u>practical experience</u> over abstract theory and philosophy as a basis for action. Speaking of the nation's founding, Beard argued that

> American government did not originate in any abstract theories about liberty and equality, but in the actual experience gained by generation after generation of English colonists in managing their own political affairs. . . . [T]he federal Constitution . . . was based as far as possible on the experience of the colonies and the states (1919; 1-2).

Beard also attacked the popular notion of the Constitution as an experiment in democracy:

> The powers which the Convention of 1787 vested in Congress were scarcely experimental, for six years practical experience with the shortcomings of the Articles of Confederation had taught statesmen the inexorable necessity of giving the national government those very powers, and limiting the states in the exercise of the authority which they had previously enjoyed (2-3).

He also made it clear that he believed the Framers were no idealists:

> [T]he members [of the Constitutional convention of 1787] were not seeking to realize any fine notions about democracy and equality, but were striving with all the resources of political wisdom at their command to set up a system of government that would be stable and efficient, safeguarded on one hand against the possibilities of despotism and on the other against the onslaught of majorities (46).

Beard did not dispute that the Framers engaged in political theorizing. But in his view the philosophical debates between, for example, the Federalists and the anti-Federalists followed to support more practical considerations. Beard saw this as a problem in two related ways. First, such *post facto* intellectualizing could never, in his view, keep pace with societal change. This was particularly evident in the vastly new conditions at the turn of the twentieth century, conditions which had "drawn in question the very basis of modern government." As a result, the arguments of democracy were "old in substance and obsolete in application," were "heavy with age," and "creak[ed] with rust" (Beard, 1931; 9). Second, abstract theoretical and philosophical justifications tended to obscure our perceptions of the evolution of history, setting in concrete and perhaps stunting those political institutions and forms which needed to evolve as well.

To illustrate, let us examine Beard's view of the Constitution. He perceived that the Constitution was surrounded by a "myth of fixity," which he believed should be replaced with a view of it as a living document to be continually interpreted and revised in response to changing political environments:

> [T]he theory that the Constitution is a written document is a legal fiction. The idea that it can be understood by a study of its language and the history of its past development is equally mythical. It is what the Government and the people who count in public affairs recognize and respect as such, what they think it is. More than this. It is not merely what it has been, or what it is today. It is always becoming something else. . . . [Its provision for amendment] is a criticism, a partial repudiation, or a confession that the original falls short of the ideal, at least the ideal always in the process of becoming (Beard, 1931; 39).

Nor was the Constitution for Beard completely self-contained or "self-referential" in its meaning. It contained numerous "interpretive passages" that were "meaningless in themselves; they [could] only be understood by reference to a great body of knowledge and practice outside the Constitution" (23).

Beard believed the political health of the nation depended on doing away with the myths surrounding its institutions and replacing them with a new "evolutionary" approach to government. He wished government to take advantage of what he saw as the new, progressive techniques of the sciences, especially the emerging social sciences:

> Let the organization of economic and technical societies continue. Let them raise their standards. Let the departments of administration and the committees of Congress take advantage of their counsel and advice. Let research unearth and philosophy illuminate social data of technological evolution. Effect an ever widening distribution of knowledge respecting the transformation which technology has made in human affairs. In themselves these new attitudes imply a revolution in the study of government, in the approach to the subject, and in the methods of

> research, calculation, and deduction employed. To the historic verbiage and tactics of politics such an operation would be fatal (17-18).

The proper basis for action in government, then, is a science that describes experience as it really is, not one that prescribes what "should be."

We may briefly note here that Beard, though never emphasizing psychology to the same extent as James or Dewey, also held that perceptions of evolving experience varied from individual to individual. This is most evident in his views on history. Beard believed that there is a difference between history as actuality and history as we can know it. Humans can never write history as it actually occurred, but rather only as a product of their own personal biases, prejudices, beliefs, and experience. Further, as new historical records are uncovered, so do new interpretations of history arise; thus history evolves with experience. The only safeguard against a completely relativistic perspective of history was, for Beard as for all the other pragmatists, the spirit of the scientific method, in which findings and methods are open to investigation and critique within a community of historical inquiry.

It thus seems clear that Beard looked to practical experience as the anchor of meaning in his evolutionary perspective. He rejected abstract theory and philosophy in favor of examining the practical experiences of day-to-day life; that is, in favor of simply understanding what was going on. As we understood how life was evolving, then Beard believed we could allow our political institutions to evolve as well. Here he begins to depart from philosophical pragmatism, especially that of Dewey. Beard emphasizes what has worked in the past (or put another way, what our experience has shown to be true in

the past) over what may work in the future. By emphasizing what works, he implicitly denigrates Dewey's instrumentalism.

Fact-based Science

Crick (1959) has described well how political thinking at the turn of the century became purged of normative concerns. Because political meaning evolves and varies according to circumstances and interpretation, writers like Beard believed that "it is not the function of the student of politics to praise or condemn institutions or theories, but to expound them; and thus for scientific purposes [the study of politics] is separated from theology, ethics, and patriotism" (Beard, in Crick, 1959; 14-15). Thus science, for Beard, is fact-based; that is, science is <u>understanding experience through the gathering of facts</u>.[6]

The accumulation of sufficient facts allows for the formation of principles that may serve as "rules of thumb" for description and prediction. Principles for Beard were not Deweyan hypotheses, but rather generalized rules of description and of cause-and-effect relationships. As he put it on one occasion, "the business of science, in dealing with any subject, is to make true statements about it, of the utmost generality, and in the

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[6] Crick argues that Beard's controversial historical work also emphasized facts over values: "Beard, in his *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (1913) thought that he was <u>merely</u> uncovering the facts about the financial interests of the Founding Fathers," just as Steffens, Tarbell, and Lloyd were merely reporting the facts in their respective muckraking works. Crick does not however go so far as to call Beard's or the Muckrakers' works "value free" (1959; 83, emphasis in original).

fewest possible words" (in Mosher, 1981; 188).[7]

With respect to administration, Beard used "science" as a convenient term to convey the body of knowledge and practice called administration. If, he opined, science was

> a body of exact knowledge, derived from experience and observation, and a body of rules or axioms which experience has demonstrated to be applicable in concrete practice, and to work out in practice approximately as forecast, then we may, if we please, appropriately and for convenience, speak of a science of administration (1953; 77).

This simple, eminently practical definition bears a comment. We have already discussed Beard's aversion to political theory and philosophy because of, as he saw it, their inadequacy in adapting to the exigencies of a modern evolving society. Yet here in his definition of a science of administration he implies that administrative experience is sufficiently stable, in evolving circumstances, to allow for the formation of laws and principles. This would seem to be a fatal flaw in Beard's idea of an administrative science, and indeed the notion of "principles of administration" was later savaged during the 1940s by both Simon and Waldo.[8]

The body of knowledge and practice which Beard referred to as a science of

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[7] The phrase "business of science," with its connotation of a value-free focus on "bottom-line" efficiency, seems especially descriptive of Beard's idea of science.

[8] We may speculate that this inconsistency was simply a consequence of Beard's tactics of scholarship. Because the field of political philosophy had such a rich and grand heritage, he perhaps felt his best chance for academic success lay in simply rejecting everything that had come before. Because public administration had <u>no</u> such heritage, he perhaps felt that he was justified in attempting to provide the emerging discipline with some structure by setting down some basic principles.

administration represented in essence a body of techniques that could be taught to and mastered by students of administration. Beard devoted much of his energy toward the goal of ensuring the technical competence of administrators, both through the professionalizing activities that we mentioned earlier and through the publication of texts on government (see for example Beard, 1970).

Utilitarian Administration

Beard did not pursue these activities out of simple beneficence. Rather he quite literally believed that American civilization was dependent on efficient administration for its very survival. The advances of science and technology that were evident at the turn of the century, the reform-minded progressivism of the day, and the politics-administration separation of Wilson and Goodnow led Beard to a utilitarian view of administration. The value of administration was properly to be judged according to its ability to execute efficiently the public will in a complex world. Efficient administration was, for Beard, absolutely essential to modern democracy.

Beard's reasoning here was simple, given his explicit assumption of the separation of politics and administration. Democracy doesn't "work" unless a government can execute the democratically determined will of its public. Government can't be democratic (i.e., it can't deliver what its people want) if it is inefficient. The move to such an efficient democracy was at the heart of Beard's progressivism:

> The supreme public question of the hour is whether democracy and efficiency are inherently irreconcilable. It is for us to attempt. . . . It is

> false to say that the experiment has been made and has failed. The truth is the experiment has not been attempted. On the contrary, we are really in the preliminary stages of thinking about it (Beard, 1916; 215-216).

Democracy thus has (at least) two components: a political component having to do with the determination of what the public wants, or ends; and an administrative component having to do with the execution of, or means to achieve, the ends. Beard saw evidence to support this reasoning "in the histories of ancient Greece and Rome . . . which show that incompetence of administration and the breakdown of administration accompanied the disintegration of the state and civilization" (in Waldo, 1953; 80-81).

With respect to American government, Beard had two major concerns. First, as the scope and activities of progressive government expanded into more aspects of people's lives, the technical expertise of administrators had to expand correspondingly to encompass all the instruments and methods which modern science, both natural and social, could command (Borning, 1962; 32). This had significant implications in terms of civil service reform and in terms of training and education for the public service. Beard believed that the public service should follow the same model of hiring for technical competence as private business, where employees are not hired until they prove that they can accomplish requisite tasks (Beard, 1916; 220). Second, though administrators were properly concerned in a functional sense only with means, they still had to remain connected with and sensitive to ends. The implication here is that administrators had to understand politically acceptable means for carrying out the public will. Beard found evidence for this belief again in the history of ancient Rome, the administration of which

he interprets as becoming increasingly centralized and consolidated as the empire grew. As it grew more insular, it was cut off from local, "grass roots" concerns. Its corresponding loss of legitimacy was a contributing factor to the empire's collapse (in Mosher, 1981; 189). Beard appears thus to qualify his strict separation of politics and administration, or to hold that the separation is more methodological than substantive--merely a pragmatic separation of convenience.

As we discussed earlier though, Beard's view of democracy as having two components, one of ends and one of means, allows him ultimately to maintain the strict separation. Beard believed that political studies had in the past paid attention to only the democracy of ends. The vast changes of the day required an expanded, pragmatic view to encompass, as well, a democracy of means. The guardians of this aspect of democracy were to be administrators, who would use the criterion of efficiency as their guide for action. Beard recognized that a major challenge in moving toward such a "democracy of efficiency" lay in the formation of a technically proficient and professional administrative workforce, and he gave this project considerable attention throughout his professional career.

In Beard's utilitarian view of administration, government is justified in major part according to the manner in which its administration executes the public will, that is, according to the services it provides. Thus public administration, for Beard, occupies a central place of importance in any government. As Waldo has wryly pointed out, Beard perhaps took this perspective too far, stating that public administration was charged

literally with the preservation of civilization (Waldo, 1948; 33, 90).

Summary of Beard's Pragmatism

At this point, though there are divergences, the fundamental reasons for the characterization of Beard as a pragmatist should be clear. In many ways his ideas were similar to those of Peirce, James, and Dewey. He rejected the *a priori*, accepted experience as evolving, and emphasized the importance of science. But for the most part the similarities ended there. Most importantly, Beard separated politics and administration, or means and ends, in a way that was hostile to pragmatism. Further, though he appeared to accept social and political change in the name of reformism, he emphasized an empiricist science of facts at the expense of a more Deweyan instrumentalism or experimentalism.

Beard's Pragmatism and the Times

Why did Beard not utilize philosophical pragmatism more thoroughly in his thought? The reasons are probably to be found more in an understanding of the spirit and temper of the age rather than through a close analysis of differences in underlying philosophies. Beard was a student of history and politics, not of philosophy. During his undergraduate years during the late 1890s, he spent several months in Chicago and no doubt was aware of Dewey, who was at that time a well-known member of the faculty at the University of Chicago. But according to Marcell (1974; 260-261), Beard's attention

was captured by the reformist spirit of the times, and so he paid more attention to the speeches of William Jennings Bryan and the work of Jane Addams than to the intellectual activity of Dewey and his colleagues. His interest was subsequently reinforced by over three years of graduate study in England, where in those years the social reform movement was also very strong.

The reformism of Beard (and like-minded others such as Goodnow and Charles E. Merriam) was manifested, as we have seen, not only in a general rejection of past rationalistic political theories, but also in the concomitant development of a new empirical political science. We probably cannot exaggerate the extent to which, amid the optimism of the day, political science was envisioned as a new discipline, separate from political theory and philosophy, which would break new ground and lay a foundation for progressive democracy. That philosophers such as James and Dewey were simply irrelevant in this endeavor is evidenced by the fact that neither appears in the index of the first twenty volumes of *The American Political Science Review*, which first appeared in 1906. As philosophers, both were considered too theoretical, too intellectual, for an empiricist political science. We thus see in this new science of politics of the early twentieth century evidences of the beginning of a trend toward the elevation of facts, measurement, and method--what has since become known as "scientism"--over theory.

This trend was highly significant for public administration, which was of course an emerging sub-field of political science, in two respects. First, when combined with the taken-for-granted politics-administration separation and the implicit value of

efficiency, this trend led to an atheoretical, practice-oriented notion of what the field should be. Public administration was conceived to be a discipline of techniques to be imparted through training (as with the Training School for the Public Service, which Beard directed for some years), rather than a body of theory to be learned in a university.[9] The spirit that defined the discipline was one of "Don't give us theory--we want to do what works."[10] As we have discussed, this attitude is pragmatic in its emphasis on what has worked, but it is also certainly at odds with pragmatism in its rejection of what may work in the future. Being pragmatic is not necessarily exhibiting pragmatism. Thus, in rejecting the role of philosophy (including pragmatism) in their discipline, Beard and the new political scientists became known, paradoxically, as "pragmatists." Again, this rejection appears to be based on a wholesale aversion to abstract thought, rather than on any specific criticisms of pragmatism.

Second, the trend toward scientism provided a basis for the behavioral movement which has both dominated and constrained public administration since the 1940s. The circumstances surrounding the birth of this movement may be illuminated through a discussion of the "Chicago school." It also highlights the apparent contradictions and ambiguity surrounding the pragmatism of Beard and other political scientists of his day.

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[9] While several university graduate education programs in public administration were established as part of a larger trend toward professionalization in the 1920s and 1930s, the legacy of its atheoretical foundations remains as an important feature of the field today. One manifestation of this legacy is the so-called "theory-practice" gap, described by, for example, Michael Harmon (1981; 17-20).

[10] Dwight Waldo provided these words in commenting on the prospectus for this dissertation in August, 1994.

The term "Chicago school" was originally used by William James in 1903 to describe the group of University of Chicago faculty who, with John Dewey at the center, had developed over the course of several years a coherent theme of pragmatism in a variety of disciplines. The social psychology of George Herbert Mead provides probably the most well-known example in this regard. But Dewey left Chicago in 1904, and it was inevitable that new ideas and methods would surface over time. Among these was John B. Watson's behaviorist psychology, which was actually opposed to the psychology of either James or Mead.

Of particular interest for our purposes are the ideas of Charles E. Merriam in the Chicago political science department. Like Beard, Merriam favored a highly empirical approach to the field:[11]

> Merriam was intent upon separating himself from his early theoretical and historical researches and separating political science from history and philosophy. He recognized the pragmatists' efforts to relate philosophy to the social world, but he emphasized the decline of philosophic speculation in political science in the twentieth century. Not that he repudiated the role of political philosophy: he simply chose not to enter that field in order to devote his energies to encouraging empirical research by means of polls, surveys, election studies, and the like (Rucker, 1969; 154).

An important instrument for this type of research was the Social Science Research Council, established by Merriam in 1923. Behavioral psychology reinforced Merriam's empiricist approach to political science, resulting in the aforementioned behavioral movement. This "Chicago school" educated such notable scholars as Harold Lasswell,

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[11] See for example his "Preface to the First Edition," of *New Aspects of Politics* (1970; 49-60).

V. O. Key, David Truman, and Herbert Simon. Thus, the group that became known as the pragmatists of the Merriam-era Chicago school were actually quite distant intellectually from the pragmatists of the Dewey-era Chicago school. We return to this point in the next chapter.

Beard in Conclusion

Marcell (1974) notes that, during the 1920s, Beard became gradually "more philosophically self-conscious and more inclined to take seriously the speculative dimensions of history and social science" (267) and began to react against the scientism that marked political science. His Presidential address before the American Political Science Association was an indictment of the discipline's "intellectual sterility, [which] may be attributed to the intense specialization that has accompanied over-emphasis in research" (1927; 10). Perhaps in his later years Beard indeed began to move to a more Deweyan brand of pragmatism in politics. We see however no evidences of such a move in his writings on administration. His ideas in this regard appear remarkably consistent throughout his lifetime. He remained firmly committed to the same pragmatic view of efficient administration from the turn of the century until his death in 1948. Thus his influence transcends some of the nominal boundaries--for example, Henry's (1975) Paradigms 1 and 2--of the early stages of public administration. The sheer duration of his influence may be a significant reason why the concepts of efficiency and the politics-administration separation persist even today in public administration.

We may conclude this section on Beard by examining some of the key elements of his pragmatism alongside those of Follett's. Recall that Follett wrote from the radical humanist paradigm, seeing the potential for people to share in the creation of new and alternative realities. Humans may engage reality subjectively, imparting value through submission to the process of relating and to the law of the situation. The interpretation that we developed earlier was that she attempted unsuccessfully to move administration in this direction by adopting the voice of the dominant administrative paradigm of functionalism, which was the paradigm of Beard's pragmatism of practicality.

Beard's concept of public administration favored facts over theory, means over ends, business over philosophy, and experience over experiments. Unlike Follett, Beard largely ignored issues of psychic interrelating and so reflects an individualistic pragmatism. In this view, humans stand apart from, operate on, and are affected by their environment. The concern is not one of the creation of alternative realities, but rather one of how to understand, adjust to, and accommodate the changing circumstances of an objective reality. With respect to epistemology, Follett believed that we could only know in an experiential sense, that is, as an active participant in a social situation. Beard on the other hand believed truth could be known, albeit in a tentative sense, by detached observation through application of the scientific method. Finally, where Follett believed that values were emergent in relations, Beard saw values as given and separate from scientific inquiry and, in the case of efficiency, assumed as universal.

Beard's implicit views of power, control, will, and responsibility reflect the

functionalist paradigm. Power is derived by understanding facts of the environment and the concomitant development of techniques or tools to control those facts. Beard's is a "power over" that is a function of individual will, unlike Follett's "power with," which is a product of individual submission. Follett, we recall, held that purposes, or values, were emergent in relationships, which leads to a subjective and personal perspective on responsibility. Beard, on the other hand, held that administration was value-free. Ends and values are given for administrators, a perspective which relieves them from any responsibility for ends. They only are responsible for means, and even the test for that--namely, efficiency--is assumed to be universal.

Beard thus represented the mainstream functionalist paradigm, away from which Follett was attempting to move administrative thought and practice. His particular brand of evolutionary, fact-based, and utilitarian pragmatism gave the infant discipline its emphasis on the technical, the atheoretical, and the businesslike; on facts, principles, and efficiency. Indeed, he reflects the character of early public administration probably more than any other writer. Beard's pragmatism of practicality pervaded the discipline and was too firmly entrenched to be swayed by the pragmatism of potentiality, especially when it was disguised by Follett's pseudo-functionalist voice.

CHAPTER V - THE DECLINE OF PRAGMATISM IN PHILOSOPHY AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Introduction

To this point we have traced the influence of pragmatism in early public administration in two ways: first, in the generally pervasive attitude, exemplified by Beard, that favored practical, empirical knowledge; and second, in the philosophical foundations of Mary Parker Follett's ideas. In this chapter we investigate the question of why early public administration theorists, apart from Follett, did not embrace pragmatism as a source of inspiration. Previous chapters have indicated some potential answers, for example, the apparent confusion over the specific tenets of pragmatism, the perceived non-relevance of philosophy to administration, and the growing empiricism in both philosophy and the social sciences.

Throughout this chapter we should remember that the specific expressions of pragmatism by Peirce, James, and Dewey arose as results of and in response to larger intellectual, social, and political movements in the late nineteenth century. In other words, the philosophy did not create these but rather was emergent from them. While pragmatism no doubt fed and reinforced certain aspects of these movements, its continuing strength and influence was dependent on its being perceived as having continuing relevance as times and contexts changed. As we shall see, pragmatism indeed

declined in importance in philosophical circles through the 1920s and 1930s. Thus, public administration's failure to embrace pragmatism during what were perhaps its most intellectually formative years was no doubt related to pragmatism's general failure to sustain itself during these same years.

For purposes of convenience, we separate this examination of early public administration into three nominal periods: the founding, which encompasses the years from the late 1800s through World War I; the orthodoxy, which is the period of the 1920s and 1930s; and the challenge to the orthodoxy, which occurred generally during the decade of the 1940s.

Pragmatism and the Founding of Public Administration

The Assumptions of the Founders

The slighting of pragmatism within public administration began very early; indeed it was a characteristic of the field's founding. As we discussed previously, Wilson, Goodnow, Beard, and like-minded others laid the foundations of public administration in a theory of democracy that distanced it from philosophical concerns. Early public administration was atheoretical, practical, and business-like in its emphasis on apolitical "neutral" efficiency, exhibiting what we have called an implicit pragmatism of practicality.

Had Beard and the other founders engaged in a rigorous, detailed analysis of

pragmatism in relation to their political views, they may well have explicitly rejected its application in public administration. Of course, much of Dewey's work in extending pragmatism to the realm of government was not accomplished until well after the founding.[1] But had the founders studied the implications of his and James's earlier philosophical works, they would have seen that these went against the grain of their version of democratic theory. Pragmatism implied a much more open, tentative, experimental, participative, and communal democracy than the founders' politics-administration separation would accommodate. Thus, because the democracy of Dewey's pragmatism was hostile to the founders' view of democracy, they likely would have rejected it.

Unfortunately for the purposes of this study, there is really no evidence that Beard and the other founders engaged in such an analysis of pragmatism. Nonetheless, the founders certainly saw their creation as "pragmatic." It may be that they simply did not understand how their pragmatism differed and was opposed to the thought of James and Dewey. James's voluntarism and the growing popularization of pragmatism had created much ambiguity as to what it really meant. Many may have had problems understanding Dewey's arguments because of his notoriously difficult style of writing (Ryan, 1995; 20-21). Or perhaps they simply liked some of the particular details of pragmatism that seemed to suit their needs. Since the founders were not philosophers themselves, perhaps they felt sufficiently comfortable only with certain aspects of popularized pragmatism,

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[1] Recall *The Public and Its Problems* was not published until 1927.

such that they could claim the philosophy of Dewey and James as legitimating factors for their new field.

Following these interpretations, the slighting of pragmatism in the founding years of public administration is likely more due to several related factors--the founders' ignorance or disregard of the philosophical dimensions and technical details of pragmatism, their desire to appropriate selected aspects to reinforce their administrative views, and pragmatism's popularization--than to an explicit, calculated rejection of it as a body of thought. The new discipline, without a hint of philosophical debate, simply took for granted the assumptions of its founders.

Taylorism

The thought of Frederick Taylor is important in our analysis because it represents another taken-for-granted aspect of early public administration. While Wilson, Goodnow, and Beard were founding public administration as an instrument of rational efficiency in government, Taylor was concerned with rationally efficient administration in industry. Most interpret Taylor as bringing a progressive, reformist spirit to business and industry. Through an application of the scientific method, he introduced a new empiricism into the area of industrial work. This reinforced the trend toward professionalization in factory organization and management, and it also led to the creation of new engineering and management functions, many of which were also executed in the public realm. His ideas are thus generally recognized as the basis of the

scientific management movement in public administration.[2] The important point for our discussion is that, in the same way that the assumptions of public administration's founders were taken-for-granted, the efficacy of Taylor's "one best way" was largely taken for granted (Kakar, 1970; 189). His project to find the best techniques for efficient management seemed to fit well within the new scientific spirit of industry and business management. In these enterprises, as in early public administration, philosophical issues and debate were simply absent.

The Orthodoxy of the 1920s and 1930s

The orthodoxy of Beard, Taylor, and other "early giants" such as Luther Gulick remained generally unquestioned during this period. Indeed, public administration was apparently so shot through with the pragmatism of practicality that philosophical pragmatism simply was obscured. This period saw the beginnings of university programs in public administration, but still these focused on issues of practice, not theory.[3] Most faculty and students in these new programs remained under departments of political science, where they were viewed with some intellectual contempt for their interests in such mundane activities as "counting manhole covers" (Fesler, 1975; 116). Business and

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[2] Many commentators, as we have seen, understand Follett as extending, in a more humanistic form, the ideas of Taylor to the later Human Relations movement.

[3] Stone and Stone (1975; 268-290) describe early educational efforts in public administration.

industry remained focused on the scientific management of Taylor. The only real champion of pragmatism in administration during this period was Follett, but it was precisely the legacy of taken-for-granted Taylorism that she faced when, as we discussed earlier, she attempted to communicate her pragmatism to business and industry in the late 1920s. The sheer dominance of the core ideas of the public administration orthodoxy is therefore probably the main reason why other writers did not seize upon pragmatism as a source of theoretical inspiration.

Several other trends emerged during this period that are important in our understanding of why pragmatism declined and thus failed to exert a greater influence in public administration.

Realism Replaced Progressivism

The temper and spirit of the age changed dramatically in light of the horrors of the Great War and in the social and economic crises of the 1920s and 1930s. A much more cautious, even pessimistic realism emerged to replace Progressivism's widespread and ambitious social optimism. This new realism is perhaps best exemplified in the writings of Reinhold Niebuhr (1932), who castigated public philosophers such as Dewey and Lippmann for what he saw as idealism in their views of human and social perfectibility. The recent tragic events of the new century were evidence to Niebuhr of an unchangeable "sinful" aspect of human nature. Such realism contributed to the trend toward empiricism and, later, behavioralism, in the social sciences of the 1920s. The

Progressive era's faith in science and technology to solve social problems was replaced by a more constrained concern for cause-and-effect prediction and control through measurement of individual and social behavior (Depew, 1995; 117). The course of history itself thus seemed to work against pragmatism during the years of the public administration orthodoxy. Pragmatism had been so closely associated with Progressivism that the disillusionment surrounding the failure of the movement could not fail to affect the philosophy.

The Decline of Dewey's Influence

By 1919 Dewey was sixty years old. While he no doubt was still vigorous both physically and mentally (he died at the age of ninety-two in 1952), his pragmatism was already some twenty-five years old. William James had been dead for ten years. By the close of World War I, pragmatism was coming to be seen as something of a philosophical relic, especially by what were no doubt ambitious young academic Turks anxious to "make their bones" in the new empirical scientism of the day. Pragmatist philosophers appeared "old-fashioned and unprofessional, and, in their self-bestowed role as 'public philosophers,' little better than advice columnists" (Depew, 1995; 113). Thus, where philosophy in general had been irrelevant at public administration's founding, pragmatism in particular was becoming *passé* and irrelevant in the 1920s.

Dewey retired from academic life in 1929 at the age of seventy. The timing of his retirement is, in retrospect, significant. Original pragmatism's last true champion--and

by all accounts a truly giant intellect--was quitting the philosophical battlefield during the very time that the first members of the Vienna Circle's logical positivists were arriving in the U.S. As we will discuss shortly, the logical positivists were able to capture, with no resistance, what remained of American pragmatism and use it to advance their own causes, with momentous implications for public administration.

The controversies that surrounded Dewey and his social and political views no doubt alienated some who may have otherwise embraced pragmatism.[4] Since his years at the University of Chicago, Dewey had been a well-known public figure. He had initially opposed U.S. involvement in World War I, but subsequently recanted, thereby angering many of his colleagues. During the 1920s he espoused many liberal causes and by the 1930s was an avowed socialist. Through the 1930s he led largely unsuccessful efforts by various socialist organizations to form a third political party emphasizing social planning and control. Though Dewey rejected both Communism and Marxism, his socialist positions, made public in comments such as "Only elimination of profits through socialization will prevent eventual chaos" (in Ryan, 1995; 293), no doubt frightened many Americans.

Dewey's frequent criticisms of Roosevelt's New Deal policies and his opposition to U.S. involvement in World War II could not have been viewed with favor by those in the administration of the federal government during the years of the first and second New

[4] Ryan (1995; 284-327) describes Dewey's controversial public life from the 1920s through the 1940s).

Deals. The very livelihoods of these officials, and in their minds, that of the nation, were tied to the successful execution and administration of Roosevelt's new programs, agencies, and war effort. Dewey's criticisms could only have reinforced the anti-intellectualist spirit in administration and reinforced the view among practitioners that he and other academics were out of touch with the realities of administrative practice.

Finally, in the burgeoning government of the New Deal, Dewey's perspectives--and those of Follett as well--on participative democracy must have seemed somewhat quaint. Both Dewey and Follett emphasized the importance of the local and the communal in democracy, but, as Rowland Egger (1975) has described, the social and political trends of this period were in an opposing direction:

> [T]he major change . . . was the drastic expansion in the public conception of the obligations and responsibilities of government in social and economic affairs. . . . [The] second important change . . . was the enduring emphasis upon presidential leadership, and especially upon the development of institutional facilities through which this leadership might be effectively exercised. . . . A third important legacy [of this period was] the emergence of a truly national economy, [which] of necessity shifted to the national scene the responsibility for most of the important policy decisions (91-92).

Thus, during this period, the concerns of public administration became more national in scope; that is, they lay more in the direction of executive reorganization and technocratic planning, design, and control at the federal level.

Technical Specialization - The Rise of the Professions

We previously touched upon the era's new scientism, which emphasized the

search for predictive cause-and-effect relationships through empirical measurements. As this view of science began to be applied to social problems, literally dozens of new technical professions emerged, each with claims to particular techniques and bodies of knowledge. While this specialization seemed perhaps appropriate for the times, it presented an issue for pragmatism, which one scholar from the period described in the following way:

> [T]he limitation of human capacity compels us to be specialists, whether this fits the facts or not. What the pragmatic method seems to drive us to, however, is not specialization . . . but rather to the isolation of relatively separable problems and an attack upon them along converging lines of economic, political, and legal study. . . . The area that a study would have to cover . . . could hardly be exclusively political or exclusively economic. . . . [H]istorical studies would almost certainly be necessary. . . . The description of the total situation would probably have to include not only existing economic and legal and political practices, but also less tangible factors, such as prevailing prejudices and beliefs. Hypotheses looking to a solution would have to include estimates of possibilities in various directions . . . (Sabine, 1930; 882-883).

The generalist, holistic, and contextual flavors of pragmatism thus seemed inappropriate and out of place amid the general movement toward specialization of knowledge through the 1920s and 1930s.

Summary

In summary, there were several events and trends that worked in opposition to pragmatism during the 1920s and 1930s and that perhaps kept public administration theorists from embracing it. We must emphasize “perhaps,” because as with the founders, there is no clear evidence that any theorists from this period, apart from Follett,

gave serious study to the merits of pragmatism in public administration.[5]

The 1940s - Reaction Against the Orthodoxy

Introduction

The reaction among public administration theorists in the 1940s against the orthodoxy of the 1920s and 1930s has been documented by several historians.[6] The principal actors in these accounts are: Herbert Simon, whose 1945 *Administrative Behavior* was the seminal work of the behavioral movement in public administration; Dwight Waldo, whose 1948 *The Administrative State* provided a general critique of the past and present state of the discipline; and those we will call "Traditionalists," whose administrative experiences during the 1940s significantly informed their subsequent scholarly activities. What is not well documented, however, is the account of pragmatism in these reactions.

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[5] This raises an interesting question for speculation: Why was Follett the only proponent of pragmatism in administration during this period? The answer may likely have to do with the (not altogether common) combination of the intellectual and the practical in her own background. She was perhaps able, as few or none else could, to connect the pragmatism of William James with her own experience, and then to communicate that connection in ways that others would understand. But surely she was not the only "reflective practitioner," as Donald Schon (1983) would put it, during those years. We may conclude that more thoughtful study and interpretation of Follett is needed, particularly with respect to her earlier experiences in the context of historical events.

[6] See for example Fesler (1975).

We have already touched upon several factors that contributed to the general decline of pragmatism in American philosophy. First, the lingering stigma of intellectual sloppiness in James's voluntarism and the continuing vulgarization of the term "pragmatism" had led to ambiguity over what pragmatism really was. Many saw these as evidences of incurable philosophical flaws. Second, amid the trend toward rigor and empiricism in the physical and social sciences, there was a perceived need to make philosophy more rigorous and empirical (Wilson, 1995; 123, 130). Finally, in the disillusionment and realism of the 1920s, the progressive attitude and outlook that had previously marked pragmatism seemed naive. What happened to pragmatism during the next two decades of the 1930s and 1940s is perhaps best described by the events surrounding academic activity at the University of Chicago.

The Pragmatism of the Chicago School and Herbert Simon

We have noted that, after Dewey's departure from Chicago in 1905, the direction of intellectual activity there turned toward empiricism, as exemplified by the activities of Merriam's political science department. A similar trend was evident in the department of philosophy, where Charles W. Morris had taken a leading role in espousing what remained of pragmatism.

Morris was well aware of pragmatism's flaws and was interested in finding ways to rescue it. The new philosophy of logical positivism seemed to hold promise in this regard. The logical rigor of the Vienna Circle appealed to American philosophers

searching for rigor. Morris believed that logical positivism held the key to curing pragmatism's ills. He believed that logical positivism and pragmatism were actually consistent and mutually supporting philosophies, particularly since they both relied on empiricism for verification of meaning, and he set out to reconcile and meld them. Morris found a position for one of the best known members of the Vienna Circle, Rudolph Carnap, with him on the faculty at Chicago, where they collaborated on several projects. In 1937 Morris published *Logical Positivism, Pragmatism, and Scientific Empiricism*, thus bringing about a virtual convergence between the two philosophies (Depew, 1995; 112).

Both Depew (1995, 109-121) and Wilson (1995; 122-141) explain this convergence as the result of a strategy by pragmatist philosophers to court and win logical positivism for their own benefit in the intellectual battle with realist philosophers. The members of Vienna Circle were only slightly familiar and even less taken with pragmatism, having heard in Europe only a few of its more vulgarized details. When they arrived in America, they were welcomed by men like Morris and W. V. O. Quine, who seemed all too willing to accommodate logical positivism at the expense of native American pragmatism. Given the subsequent influence of logical positivism on Morris, Quine, and American philosophy in general, this accommodation seems in hindsight more an acquiescence. In any case, the strategy was successful, as the convergence of pragmatism and logical positivism assured their hegemony in philosophy over realism.

In the logical positivism-pragmatism convergence, the confusion and ambiguity

over pragmatism was made complete: philosophical blood enemies could now each claim the sanction of pragmatism. There had of course always been variations on and corruptions of the pragmatic framework, as Lovejoy had pointed out many years earlier. The focus on empiricism had represented probably the most significant instance of this prior to the 1930s. But the subsequent "positivized and scientized" (Depew, 1995; 115) logical positivism-pragmatism of Morris and Carnap stood in direct opposition to the pragmatism of Peirce, James, and Dewey. C. I. Lewis saw four major areas of difference in this respect (Wilson, 1995; 134-135). First, both philosophies embraced empiricism, but while pragmatism embraced a rather wide range of acceptable ways of creating empirical verification, logical positivism found meaning only in logical, formal relations between sentences. Second, pragmatists accepted a much wider meaning of the term "science." According to Lewis, science connoted for the pragmatist "the *method* of science and its experimental and instrumental point of view," while the positivist emphasized "the *content* of science as exact formulation in physical terms" (Lewis, in Wilson, 1995; 135, emphasis in original). Third, while pragmatism would allow metaphysical statements as meaningful and significant, logical positivism denied significance to all metaphysical issues. Finally and, for Lewis, most significantly, pragmatism held that "all judgements are implicitly judgements of value, and that, as there can be ultimately no valid distinction of theoretical from practical, so there can be no final separation of questions of truth of any kind from questions of justifiable ends of action" (135). Logical positivism, on the other hand, required a strict separation of facts

(truth) and values (ends). It held that value statements, because they were either expressive or normative, were not subject to empirical verification and so were in effect meaningless. This last point was what John Dewey found most abhorrent in the positivist trend in American philosophy:

> When sociological theory withdraws from consideration of the basic interests, concerns, and actively moving aims of a human culture on the grounds that "values" are involved, and that inquiry as "scientific" has nothing to do with values, the inevitable consequence is that inquiry in the human area is confined to what is superficial and comparatively trivial, no matter what its parade of technical skill (in Depew, 1995; 116).

A related trend at the University of Chicago during these same years was, as we have seen, the rise of the behavioral movement. Recall that behavioralism at Chicago had its roots in the psychology of John B. Watson.[7] During the 1920s, it gained strength in the political science department under Merriam through such developments as the growth of the "survey method" as a methodological tool, the establishment of the Social Sciences Research Council, and an increase in grants resources from foundations and other institutions, whose financial support Merriam was particularly effective at obtaining (Karl, 1970). One manifestation of this behavioralist atmosphere was an emphasis on policy research and analysis, expressed subsequently through such Chicago graduates as Harold Lasswell and David Truman. We recall from our literature review that several public administration histories credit Dewey with the policy sciences

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[7] Watson actually began his studies at Chicago in the philosophy department under John Dewey. He switched to psychology, admitting many years later, "I never knew what [Dewey] was talking about then, and, unfortunately for me, I still don't know." (in Rucker, 1969; 69).

movement at Chicago. We see now that this movement was actually quite non-Deweyan in its behavioralism. The behavioralist trend was subsequently reinforced by the rise of logical positivism, the methodological rigor and fact-value separation of which seemed well suited to behavioralism's emphasis on the observable and the measurable.

The preceding discussion is important for our present study because, by the 1930s, philosophy had achieved a new relevance. Its new emphasis on empiricism and science fit well in the professionalizing atmosphere of the social sciences, which were seeking intellectual respectability and equality in academic departments throughout the nation's universities. Such was the case with the new field of public administration, which in most universities was considered a poor relation of political science (Fesler, 1975; 116). Students and faculty who were interested in administration were now more disposed to look to their newly scientific colleagues in philosophy for inspiration and reinforcement.

Herbert Simon entered the scene in the early 1940s as a political science student at the University of Chicago. Simon had surveyed the field of administration and, noting its lack of theoretical underpinnings, formulated a behavioral theory of administrative decision-making. His dissertation, which later was published as *Administrative Behavior*, proceeded directly and explicitly[8] from the logical positivism of Morris and Carnap, who were both on the Chicago faculty during the years that Simon was a student. This is significant for our discussion because by the time of Simon's doctoral work,

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[8] See Simon (1976; 45n).

pragmatism had captured, or else had been captured by, logical positivism, and the two philosophies, to many observers, had become one. Thus in *Administrative Behavior,* Simon was able to claim the authority of pragmatism as well as that of logical positivism. This conclusion is reinforced by his several citations of both James and Dewey and his claim that the theses of Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems* and his own *Administrative Behavior* were the same (1976; 195n). Thus, Simon embraced pragmatism, but only as logical positivism-pragmatism. Because by this time it had achieved philosophical hegemony and because he worked so specifically from it, Simon was able to perform his seminal work from what was essentially an unassailable philosophical position. Any future attacks on his theory would have to challenge its philosophical foundation, and as we shall see, there were few such challenges until the 1970s.

Most observers characterize Simon's work as devastating to the public administration orthodoxy. While he maintained its emphasis on efficiency, he exposed its "principles" as mere "proverbs." He also rejected the basis of the politics-administration separation in the normative political theory of the founders. More damaging in the view of some,[9] and more significant for our study, was his postulation of logical positivism's fact-value dichotomy as a new basis for a behavioral science of administration. As Fry (1989; 208) puts it,

> In proposing the fact-value dichotomy, Simon sought to describe a value-free domain in which scientific investigation could be conducted. That domain is the factual premises of administrative decisions defined as the

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[9] See for example Waldo (1952)

> relationship between alternatives and their consequences. Since that relationship is empirically observable, it is amenable to systematic (i.e., scientific) investigation.

The fact-value separation allowed Simon to focus on administrative decision-making, whether public or private, but it necessarily excluded value-laden politics. Thus, upon a new foundation, Simon continued the orthodoxy's politics-administration separation as well as its focus on efficiency; hence the label of "neo-orthodoxy" given to Simon's behavioralism.

It is ironic that Simon completed the corruption of pragmatism in public administration in a work in which he claimed the sanction of James and Dewey. This corruption had its origins in Beard's pragmatism of practicality, the emphasis on experience over experimenting. It was given further impetus in the rise of empiricism through the 1920s. Public administration maintained through these years, however, a strong practitioner orientation, that is, an emphasis on administrative experience, and thus still had a flavor of the original pragmatism. The triumph of logical positivism and behavioralism in Simon's *Administrative Behavior* practically erased this remaining vestige. Following Simon, the formation of theory was to be the province of academicians investigating value-free, factual administrative decision-making, as opposed to the day-to-day value-laden practice of administration. This theory-practice split, justified partly by pragmatism-in-name-only, was the most corrupted manifestation thus far of original pragmatism. Pragmatism had, under Simon and more generally under behavioralism, come to stand for precisely that which its founders had originally sought

to correct--the separation of thought and action.

Several contemporary writers[10] in public administration attribute the discipline's current theory-practice gap--the seeming gulf between the activities of academicians and theorists and those of practitioners--to the rise, since the 1940s, of positivism and behavioralism, exemplified by the work of Herbert Simon. The interpretation that we have developed thus far is that this condition had its true roots in the atheoretical nature of public administration's founding. There was never any true Deweyan integration of theory and practice, because there was simply no theory, only practice. Because of the lack of any unifying theory or approach, pragmatic or otherwise, in the public administration orthodoxy and its singular focus on practice, Simon was well-positioned to impose his own behavioralism with little intellectual resistance.

Dwight Waldo

The account of Waldo's critique of the public administration orthodoxy is more straightforward than that of Simon. Waldo was also a student of political science, but unlike Simon, he approached public administration as an outside observer from the point of view of political theory. His doctoral dissertation, subsequently published as *The Administrative State*, was an investigation into the underlying political theory of what was an avowedly atheoretical field. Thus he was concerned with administration in the context of inherently value-laden issues of political philosophy, such as the nature of the

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[10] For example, Denhardt (1984), Harmon and Mayer (1986), Bellavita (1990).

"Good Life" and "Who should rule?"

In a sense, Waldo found more to criticize in the public administration orthodoxy than did Simon. Simon dismantled the notion of "principles of administration" and attacked the politics-administration separation, but he substituted logical positivism's fact-value separation in its place. He also maintained the orthodoxy's emphasis on efficiency in administration. Waldo on the other hand found fault with each of these, and the underlying problem as he saw it was in the very nature of public administration's founding as an atheoretical enterprise presumed to lay outside the realm of politics. Public administration simply ignored such issues, even though it demonstrated implicit theories of politics and democracy. The public administration orthodoxy focused instead on the criterion of efficiency and the search for scientific principles, neither of which was adequate to explain what was really going on in the field. Thus, in *The Administrative State* as well as in many of his later works, Waldo was concerned with the reconciliation of public administration with democracy (Fesler, 1975; 110). It was not that he was attempting to impose a certain theory of democracy or to make its practice more democratic; he simply wanted public administration to recognize that it could not escape having a political theory dimension to it.

Waldo was essentially calling into question the basis of public administration's founding claim as an atheoretical, apolitical body of thought and practice. In the sense that he was rejecting the past and introducing issues of value-laden political theory, we may interpret his project in *The Administrative State* as an attempt to re-found public

administration as a more philosophically self-aware field. In such a project he was of course in direct competition with behavioralists such as Simon, who were involved in their own re-founding project. Waldo objected to the behavioralists' perspective of a value-neutral science of administration, believing that it, like the orthodoxy, neglected the truly significant aspects of the field. His words on this subject are remarkably similar to those that we noted Dewey using to criticize logical positivism's separation of fact and value:

> Are students of administration trying to solve the problems of human cooperation on too low a level? Have they, by the double process of regarding more and more formal data over a wider and wider field of human organization, lost insight, penetration? Is formal analysis of organizations without regard to the purposes that inspire them but a tedious elaboration of the insignificant? (1948; 211)

Thus in the 1940s Waldo was swimming, along with the few remaining Deweyan pragmatists, against the popular tide of logical positivism and behavioralism. Now, there is no basis upon which we can rest a claim that Waldo embraced pragmatism. As we saw in our literature review, his position on the subject is best described as ambivalent. In none of his writings did he attempt a rigorous analysis of pragmatism; like other public administration writers he simply ignored it.[11] He found the ideas of Follett to be important and worthy of additional study (Waldo, 1948, 210), yet he did not attempt such an effort. We saw earlier that he found Deweyan pragmatism, at least as it had been

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[11] In commenting on the prospectus for this dissertation in August 1994, Waldo told the author that he had not read Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems* until after his retirement.

promulgated in public administration by Horace Fries, to be "as unsatisfying as the Hindu cosmology" (210n). Thus any labeling of Waldo as a pragmatist may have its basis in the fact that Waldo and Dewey shared a common foe--logical positivism-- rather than a common philosophy.

The Traditionalists

The final important aspect of the reaction against the public administration orthodoxy is the account of those we will call the Traditionalists.[12] This group includes those practitioner-scholars who contributed to Fritz Morstein Marx's 1946 edition *Elements of Public Administration* and those associated with the Inter-University Case Program (Stein, 1952). The activities of these men are described by Fesler (1975; 104-108) and White and McSwain (1990). In general, these writers all relied on the lessons of their own first-hand experiences as government administrators during the 1940s as bases for their subsequent scholarly activity in public administration. These lessons had taught them a new maturity and realism concerning the possibilities for rational action. This was reflected in their later teaching and writing, which emphasized public administration's context, especially its political context, and thereby attempted to capture the complexity of factors affecting administrative practice in the "real world." Fesler's description is apt: "The objective was understanding of a rich reality, not approximation to exact science" (106).

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[12] This appellation is from White and McSwain (1990).

We may interpret the Traditionalist stance as a manifestation of a new, more Deweyan emphasis on practice in public administration. The field had been founded, as we have seen, with a focus on practice but at the expense of any theoretical or philosophical underpinning. This denigration of theory continued through the 1920s and 1930s, with the result that empiricist and behavioralist thought emerged to fill the void. In the 1940s, the Traditionalists found that the thought of the orthodoxy, expressed in texts such as White's and Pfiffner's, simply did not reflect the significant issues of practice that they encountered in their own administrative agencies (Fesler, 1975; 104). So they rejected the orthodoxy and attempted to capture their experiences in a reflective, scholarly way through, for example, the case study approach. This project of linking thought and action was of course very Deweyan and probably represented the nearest approximation to pragmatism in public administration since Follett.[13] We must say "approximation" because, and this has become a familiar refrain, there is really no evidence that any of the Traditionalists studied, accepted, and employed pragmatism in a self-conscious way.

As the Traditionalists rejected the orthodoxy, so too did they, generally, reject the ideas of Herbert Simon. Their view of a contextual, ambiguous, value-laden world of administration stood in direct opposition to Simon's value-free, behavioralist neo-orthodoxy. As Fesler put it,

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[13] White and McSwain (1990; 13) describe the case method of the Traditionalists as a Follettan approach which assists practitioners in understanding the "law of the situation."

> [Simon] was widely perceived as being in the tradition of the old scientific management movement and eager to reinstate the concept of administration as a neutral instrument, to revive the policy/administration dichotomy, and to ignore the contextual differences between public and business administration (1975; 111-112).

Here again we see an irony of corrupted pragmatism: the behavioralism of the nominal pragmatist opposed the more Deweyan approach of his detractors.

Though many of the Traditionalists continued as influential scholars in public administration, their movement as represented by the Morstein Marx collaboration and the Inter-University Case Program did not endure. Both Fesler (1975; 115-116) and White and McSwain (1990; 24) attribute this to the Traditionalists' lack of intellectual tools to counter the strength of the behavioral movement. The case method alone did not satisfy the field's prevailing demand for scientific rigor and certainty.

What About Follett?

Before we leave our discussion of the reaction against the orthodoxy of the 1940s, we must address a remaining issue concerning Mary Parker Follett. We have seen that, for a variety of reasons, the theorists during this period did not embrace the pragmatism of Peirce, James, and Dewey. Why did they also not embrace the ideas of Follett, a theorist with whom we would expect any serious student of public administration during these years to be familiar? The reasons probably have to do with the nature of each theorist's particular interests and specific project.

Simon's behavioral theory of administrative decision-making is foreign and

hostile to Follett's ideas. Yet he claimed, as did she, the psychology of William James as a basis for his work. *Administrative Behavior* contains no references to Follett, an omission that might be explained in several ways. Simon was perhaps completely unaware of her work, as Drucker suggested, but this seems unlikely. A more likely scenario is that Simon was familiar primarily with Follett's post-philosophical works. In this case he may have associated her, as many others have, with Taylorism and scientific management, and her ideas would have been rejected along with the rest of the public administration orthodoxy.

Waldo slighted Follett in a somewhat similar way. His project in *The Administrative State* was of course much different than Simon's in that he was interested in issues of political theory and philosophy in public administration. Given this objective and Follett's writings in these areas, we might expect that Waldo would have paid some attention to her ideas. But he only cites Follett twice and then very briefly, stating that, while her ideas deserve attention, "This is not the place to embark on a discussion of her theories" (Waldo, 1948; 210). It appears that Waldo, like Simon, perhaps knew only Follett's later works, associated her with the general orthodoxy, and thus simply did not see her as an important subject for individual analysis.

The Traditionalists likewise paid only slight attention to Follett. While authors in the Morstein Marx volume use words such as "penetrating" (Leiserson and Morstein Marx, 1959; 43) and "brilliant" (Vieg, 1959; 162) to describe her work, the references are few, brief, and all from her later works in *Dynamic Administration.* So the

Traditionalists, like Simon and Waldo, may have associated Follett with the same orthodoxy against which they were reacting. Another possibility is that, in focusing on Follett's later works on administration in business and industry, they saw her, like Simon, as denigrating the political context in favor of a more "generic" perspective on administration.

Conclusion

Our discussion in this chapter indicates that public administration's general failure to embrace pragmatism through the 1940s was not the result of any considered analysis and explicit rejection by theorists in the field. Follett was evidently the only writer of historical significance who devoted serious thought to philosophical pragmatism and who demonstrated an understanding of what Peirce, James, and Dewey were saying. But again, her pragmatism was disguised in her administrative thought. Simon embraced pragmatism, but only in its positivized form. Others such as Waldo and the Traditionalists evidenced only implicit strains of pragmatism in their work.

Reasons for this neglect include, as we have seen, the ambiguity and uncertainty about what pragmatism really meant, the controversial nature of its proponents (specifically Dewey), and the general view in philosophical circles of pragmatism's growing irrelevance, in the face of a rapidly centralizing national government, through the 1920s and 1930s. But for the most part, public administration's atheoretical focus on

practice and the concomitant failure to engage in any sort of conscious philosophical reflection explain its failure to embrace pragmatism. Most writers paid it, indeed paid philosophy in general, scant or no attention. Ironically, public administration's emphasis on the "practical" aspect of pragmatic thought precluded attention to the philosophical dimension of pragmatism.

CHAPTER VI - CONCLUSION

The purposes of this chapter are first, to summarize the major points of our discussion thus far and to state some conclusions that are suggested by the analysis, and second, to discuss contemporary aspects of pragmatism in public administration. From the ideas of Simon, Waldo and the Traditionalists in the 1940s, we essentially "fast-forward" through the relatively unimportant (for our purposes) 1950s and 1960s, and pick up our story with the rise of postmodernism, which includes a significant strain of pragmatism. We discuss this pragmatism as it is expressed in contemporary public administration and attempt to assess its future directions.

Summary

Pragmatism as Hidden in Public Administration's History

We have reached a point where we may assess pragmatism in terms of the significance of the incident of the "dog that didn't bark" in public administration's intellectual development. To summarize the main points of this dissertation, we saw first, that public administration histories present a confused picture in that they characterize the discipline as pragmatic but do not explain what this means relative to philosophical pragmatism. These histories pay little or no explicit attention to pragmatism or to pragmatic philosophers. Second, during the early 1900s the

pragmatism of Peirce, James, and Dewey was given a wide range of interpretations, the poles of which may be represented as a pragmatism of potentiality versus a pragmatism of practicality. Third, with respect to public administration, while pragmatism had its fullest expression in the thought of Mary Parker Follett, its founding and subsequent development mainly reflected Beard's pragmatism of practicality. Finally, because of public administration's early atheoretical nature, its orthodoxy lacked an adequate intellectual foundation, which led to the subsequent devastating attacks by Simon, Waldo, and the Traditionalists. Through the 1920s and 1930s, the corruption of pragmatism continued, as evidenced by Simon's use of it to support his behavioral administrative thought. Though neither Waldo nor the Traditionalists claimed pragmatism, both brought some aspects of it into public administration. We concluded that the lack of pragmatism's influence in public administration was not due to any explicit consideration and rejection by public administration theorists, but rather to a variety of other factors, for example, larger non-intellectual (i.e., social, economic, and political) trends.

These points lead us to conclude that public administration does indeed have a heritage in pragmatism, but this heritage does not emanate <u>directly</u> from the philosophical pragmatism of Peirce, James, or Dewey. Rather, it is found <u>indirectly</u> in the disguised or silent pragmatism of Follett, the popularized, corrupted, and nominal pragmatisms of Beard and Simon, and the implicit pragmatism of Waldo and the Traditionalists.

The discovery of this heritage of "hidden" pragmatism carries with it significant implications for the way we think about public administration as a field of study. Most importantly, it means that we have a distorted and incomplete view of our past. By assuming that public administration is pragmatic, as our historians have told us, we assume that it is, for example, Deweyan. This taken-for-granted characterization means that we fail to recognize Dewey as an important figure in our field and that we fail to understand his ideas. We thereby fail to understand what has been meant, and might yet be meant, by a pragmatic public administration. A recent illustration of this condition is provided by Patricia Shields (1996; 407n), who takes Herbert Simon's claims of James and Dewey in *Administrative Behavior* as evidence of Simon's pragmatism. Our failure to understand the heritage of pragmatism means that what should be wide differences in meaning between it and behavioralism have been obscured. We thus cannot see pragmatism as a legitimate alternative to the behavioralism that dominates mainstream public administration, and we cannot see James, Dewey, and even Follett as intellectual forebears of such an alternative.

Public Administration's Untidy Intellectual History

Our analysis has led us to a rather ironic perspective on our discipline. We note in the intellectual history of early public administration an apparent "messiness," which may indeed be a characteristic of intellectual history in general. From our contemporary perspective, we may be tempted to see in the past a neat progression of clearly stated,

well compartmentalized ideas. In our desire to make sensible the present, we project an order onto the past which simply did not exist. We find it convenient to view the theorist of the past as operating similarly to the "rational man" of economics; that is, as someone who is perfectly informed of all philosophy and theory and who selects an optimal market basket of ideas, one that maximizes his or her intellectual utility. Our brief discussions of pragmatism in public administration reveal a quite different picture. We have seen how writers may misinterpret, misappropriate, ignore, or simply be unaware of the important ideas of others. Larger social and political trends and events come into play, as do the personal experiences and circumstances of individual writers. We thus find Beard interpreted as a pragmatist, perhaps more because of his association with Dewey than because of his own ideas. We find both Follett and Simon working from a common basis in James's psychology, yet coming to conclusions that are intellectually miles apart. We find a similar distance between the ideas of the old (circa 1900) and new (circa 1930) Chicago schools. There is of course the more general issue of public administration being characterized as pragmatic when it simply was indifferent to pragmatism. We must conclude that, at least with respect to pragmatism, we have a very untidy intellectual history in public administration--a "tangle of paradoxes, ironies, and contradictions."[1] This realization may lead us to question the modernist perspective on administration that has dominated the discipline throughout the last several decades.

As an aside, we may comment here upon the apparent usefulness of studying

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[1] Dwight Waldo, in personal correspondence to the author, August 1994.

public administration's intellectual history in the context of studying pragmatism. That is, for the study of the emergence of ideas in public administration and the various trends and movements that were important in its history, pragmatism seems, on the basis of the discussion in this dissertation, to provide an appropriate context for understanding almost all, if not all, of these ideas and movements. It would thus seem that pragmatism could potentially provide a unifying theme for the study of American public administration history.

The 1950s and 1960s

There is little to report with respect to pragmatism and public administration during these two decades. For our purposes, we may simply say that there was "more of the same" from the 1940s. The positivized pragmatism that was born from the philosophical marriage of Morris and Carnap continued in various forms. Uncorrupted pragmatism essentially died with John Dewey, and though others like C. I. Lewis assumed the mantle of nominal pragmatism, their interpretations were often very non-Deweyan. Auxier (1995) argues that, after Dewey, philosophy "lost its nerve and vision" (200) by refusing to acknowledge that it had anything <u>of value</u> to tell. It is clear that Auxier faults C. I. Lewis for not recapturing the high ground of "values" from positivized pragmatism after Dewey's death. With regard to public administration, several authors (for example, Fesler (1975) and Schick (1975)) describe the rising eclecticism of

intellectual approaches following the Simon and Waldo critiques of the 1940s. The orthodoxy was replaced by a heterodoxy, which had the effects of exacerbating the theory-practice gap and creating the so-called "identity crisis" in public administration (Schick, 1975; 156-159). Different trends that were prominent during the early years of the heterodoxy included rival models of decision making (i.e., rational cost-benefit analysis versus political incrementalism), sociologically based studies (e.g., Selznick's *TVA and the Grass Roots* (1949)), and policy studies.

We may describe these decades as the "high noon of modernism" in public administration. Gergen (1991; 211) has described four characteristics of modernism: a revival of Enlightenment beliefs in the powers of reason and observation; a search for fundamentals or essentials; a faith in progress and universal design; and absorption in the machine metaphor. Though these characteristics were certainly present in public administration long before the 1950s, they were most prominent in what White and McSwain (1990) call the rational technicism, or what Adams (1992) calls the technical rationality,[2] of these years. Both these terms describe a mode of thought associated with scientific-analytic empiricism and a faith in technological progress. It is perhaps best exemplified in the rise of the positivist and behavioralist policy sciences through the 1940s into the 1950s. As we have seen, such analyses excluded questions of value. Thus public administration became increasingly concerned with technique and, consequently,

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[2] Adams takes issue with White and McSwain, arguing that technical rationality's roots were actually in the Progressive Era. My interpretation is that the difference is simply one of emphasis.

increasingly unable or unwilling to address questions of "the good" that were swiftly coming to be posed in the many emerging social issues of the day.

Considering the tremendous social upheaval of the 1960s, it was perhaps inevitable that there would be some response in public administration. The "New Public Administration" represented the most vigorous reaction against modernist tendencies in the discipline. Though this movement rejected a modernist (i.e., positivist) epistemology for public administration, at its core was a critique of prevailing theories. Its members held that, not only was the field ignoring the pressing social problems of the day, it was incapable of addressing them as well. Thus the New Public Administration reaction was dominated by ideological concerns that overshadowed and prevented more direct attacks on modernist epistemology.[3]

Postmodernism

The postmodern perspective has been taken up in recent years and given prominence in public administration by, among others, some who were members of the New Public Administration. In this section we will briefly outline the history of postmodernism's development and its expression by public administration writers. Our object is to illuminate the linkages between the semiotics of Peirce, the process theory of

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[3] Orion White provided this description of the Minnowbrook reaction in a seminar on organizations in the Spring of 1993.

Follett, and the postmodernism of contemporary writers.

Gergen (1991) captures the essentials of the postmodern movement, and we will draw heavily upon his description because of the connections that he makes to organization theory. The origins and subsequent development of postmodernism may be traced through a coherent line of analysis in writers such as Wittgenstein, Garfinckle, Kuhn, Habermas, Derrida, and Foucault. The overarching thrust of this analysis is that words and language are socially constituted; that is, they make no sense unless there is at least one other person who may interpret them and provide agreement as to their meaning. This directly challenges modernism's implicit assumption that language and words are able to reflect an "external" reality, one that exists independently of human perception.

One of the most direct implications of this line of thought is the ironical perspective that it imparts. For if one accepts that language does not represent reality, then one must be forever critically doubtful of one's own suppositions. With regard to modernism, since there can be no perfect knowledge of an object, there can be nothing like a rational decision to be made concerning its disposition. Thus, what constitutes modern scholarly activity is revealed by postmodernism as simply ritual--a modernist narrative without foundation. To many schooled in the modernist tradition, this is not a particularly uplifting conclusion. It seems to deny any possibility of truth and value, and it smacks of intellectual relativism and nihilism. Indeed, some postmodernists,

particularly deconstructionists, seem to glory in their revenge on modernism (Auxier, 1995; 182).

For some, postmodern pragmatism provides an alternative in the middle ground between modernism and postmodernism. Pragmatism became disentangled from positivism, found a renewed voice, and returned significance to postmodern inquiry. As Gergen puts it,

> [W]e are moved to silence only if the modernist presumption of objective truth is the only game in town. If the function of theories is not derived from their truth value, but from their pragmatic implications, then the theoretical voice is restored to significance. And the potential of theoretical work is far greater than that assigned to it under modernist conditions. For under modernism, the proper theory should be fortified with years of research, and its application undertaken by yet another culture (the practitioners). In the postmodern context, the primary ingredient of theory is not its data base but its intelligibility, and the very communication of this intelligibility already establishes grounds for its utility. Theory and practice are inseparable (217, emphasis in original).

Thus, as pragmatism in the late nineteenth century had provided a middle ground between rationalism and empiricist relativism, almost a century later it provided another middle ground between modernist positivism and postmodern linguistic relativism.

Richard Rorty

Probably the most well-known voice of postmodern pragmatism is Richard Rorty. Rorty has followed earlier pragmatists and linguistic analysts in arguing that language, self, and community are determined by history and are not expressions of an essential human nature. If we accept that human nature is not fixed, then Rorty believes we face

certain consequences, most significantly, how to achieve individual autonomy and self-creation, and how to create a more free and less cruel society (1989). Rorty believes that we have mistakenly relied upon philosophy for such solutions. He rejects "the traditional view of philosophy [as] a discipline that will (any day now) produce noncontroversial results concerning matters of ultimate concern" (1991; 75) and argues instead for a thoroughly postmodern, pragmatic perspective on philosophical pursuits:

> [Pragmatic philosophy] would not make much of the line between "philosophy" and something else, nor try to allot distinctive cultural roles to art, religion, science, and philosophy. It would get rid of the idea that there was a special sort of expert--the philosopher--who dealt with a certain range of topics (e.g., Being, reasoning, language, knowledge, mind) (76).

Depew and Hollinger interpret Rorty's proclamation of "the death of philosophy" as carrying

> cultural consequences as large as those that once accompanied the displacement of theology from the centrality it once enjoyed. A postempiricist, postphilosophical, and in these respects postmodern, society will certainly affirm the promises of liberal democracy. Each person will be free to reinvent himself or herself. . . . [But] the full scope for self-creation, self-interpretation, and self-expression will be granted only when liberalism has liberated itself from the earnest appeals to human nature and natural rights that bewitched our founding fathers, and from the religious conceptions of the human condition that modern philosophy both displaced and at the same time preserved. . . . "[T]he right and the good" cherished by ethicists are too aprioristic to allow Rorty's thousand flowers to bloom (1995; xvii).

Kolenda (1995) interprets Rorty's pragmatism as leading to a liberalism that strictly separates the public and private spheres. Rorty believes that philosophical ideas too often have been used to justify political action, sometimes with disastrous results.

Thus abstract thought, aesthetics, and considerations of value must be held strictly within the private realm, there to be protected and allowed to flourish by a carefully circumscribed, purely instrumental, and rational technocracy. Only under these conditions may we all do as we please and become who we want, as long as we don't hurt anyone else in the process.

While this perspective is certainly postmodern in its reaction against positivism and pragmatic in its recapturing of the moral, the extent of its coherence with "true" (e.g., Deweyan) pragmatism may be called into question:

> On no possible interpretation, however, can Dewey be construed as treating democratic culture as one in which the private expressive life is to thrive at the expense of the public life of shared learning, making, and governing. What is more seriously doubtful, however, is whether Rorty's refusal to regard the public sphere as a site for the realization of intrinsic goods is consistent with the deepest impulses of pragmatism itself, and its continuity as a tradition over time. A purely instrumental conception of the public and social, that is to say, will fail to embody, and to teach, the moral conceptions that are required for individuals to sustain their commitment to the aims of democratic society even under Rorty's conception of it. By the same token, sustaining the common life of a society in which the moral ideals of democracy are actually realized is itself an intrinsically good action, and not just a matter of instrumentally effective social engineering (Depew and Hollinger, 1995; 236, emphasis in original).

The bifurcated democratic culture of Rorty's pragmatism would indeed seem to stand apart from the democracy of Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems*, and even further from that envisioned by Follett.[4] What sets Rorty apart here is apparently an issue of

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[4] We recall that Follett took Dewey to task for suggesting that, in a true democracy, citizens might not always be fully engaged in its creation.

scale. Like Dewey and Follett, he sees the possibility for community, but only locally. We recall that both Dewey and Follett recognized that the potential for community was greater locally, but they, unlike Rorty, also held on to concepts of larger communities. Such concepts were of course necessary to the extent that social issues were to be addressed on a larger scale. Rorty seems to display a Niebuhrian realism in his belief that such large-scale conceptualizations are potentially harmful and thus should be given up. We will return to Rorty later; here we simply note the apparent absence of moral aspects from the public sphere of his democracy.

Postmodernism and Organization Theory

The line of postmodern analysis in organization theory is of particular interest for us. While based in Peircean semiotics, its contemporary manifestations appear in the writings of Derrida and are expressed in the following way. The meaning of a word or phrase is derived from a process of deferral to other words or phrases that differ from it. One word or phrase always refers to another, which always refers to another, and so on in an endless progress and regress of signification. The other key point is that language (signification) is always social, that is, a speaker may signify, but there is no meaning until a listener supplements the saying with an interpretation. The meaning is transient and local, since other listeners may interpret differently. In complex social situations, resignifications and reinterpretations occur constantly; thus meanings constantly change as significations proliferate across social boundaries.

From an organizational theory perspective, this conceptualization helps explain coordination and power within groups. A group achieves coordination by forming its own self-contained language--a community of signification. That is, members reach agreement on meanings by arresting and containing these free-floating signifiers through some sort of activity. Coordination through contained signifiers enables consensus for action, which translates to group power. But because meaning is arrested, signifiers are not free to float in or out of the group; thus a barrier of meaning is formed between it and other groups. This has potentially harmful consequences. As Gergen explains, the group "fails to achieve the kinds of supplementarity in meaning that would enable its self-contained signifiers to be honored from without, and it fails to supplement the meanings of others in ways that would invite reciprocation and further coordination" (221). The costs of consensus are thus the potential inabilities of a group to change and adapt in response to its external environment and to achieve coordination with other groups. To preclude this, organizational dissensus--the challenging of consensus--must occur. Dissensus unlocks arrested and contained signifiers, allowing them to float freely to the outside, and those of the outside to float freely in. This threatens the existing power bases of the group, but it also sets in motion the process for reconstituting power upon a different basis.

This perspective has enormous significance in terms of organizational forms and processes. More *ad hoc*, heterogeneous forms which are constantly able to challenge consensus may take the place of modernist hierarchical structures which facilitate

rational decision-making and consensus. Minority hiring may become justified not on the basis of equal opportunity, but rather on the basis of the alternative signifiers that accrue to the group's language. Of course, a group must still be able to, at some point, achieve some containment of meaning so that it is able to act. The key problematic then is the maintenance of an appropriate balance between consensus and dissensus, between containment and release of signifiers.

Postmodernism and Public Administration: Process Theorists

With respect to public administration and on the level of interpersonal relations and individual development, a similar line of analysis is evident in the work of process theorists such as Robert Denhardt, Michael Harmon, and Orion White. White (1990), for example, draws upon the ideas of Jung, as well as those of Peirce and Follett, in posing an alternative perspective to the issue of authority and participation in public administration. In Jungian psychology the central problematic for any individual is the regulating or balancing, through appropriate <u>analogues</u>, of the flow of energy from unconscious to conscious and thence to activity. The effectiveness of this process in participation is dependent upon several factors:

> [D]ifferences in personal temperament must be acknowledged, analogues must be kept appropriate, and a proper grounded relation to the self must be maintained by individuals. A state of ego submission to the process, as symbolized in relations to others, must be present, and action questions must be concrete and immediate enough to be apprehended by human capacity. The tactics of process hinge critically on the conscious awareness of, and to the extent possible, "management" of the language formats by which the dialogue of the process is carried forward (208).

Similarly to individuals, groups are dependent upon appropriate analogues for working through the unconscious projections of their members. In a heterogeneous group, members tend to hold back their projections, which in terms of the discussion above means that signifiers in the group are not arrested nor contained. Thus the group has no basis for action until an appropriate analogue can be found for the release of unconscious energy, which allows members to work through their projections and establish meanings in common. A more homogeneous group shares projections, and hence signifiers, in common and thus has a basis for action. The issue here though is one of whether the development of the group and its members can continue in its contained language world..

The convergence in White's concepts, and in postmodern organization theory in general, of the lines of thought of both Peirce and Follett should be plain at this point. Peirce provided a foundation with his concept of "slippery" signifiers, whose meaning a group may tentatively establish in activity or experience, thus constituting itself as a "community of meaning." Follett's concept of interpenetration relies on exactly the same idea[5] of joint activity leading to a community of shared meaning. Follett, of course, paid much more attention than Peirce to the process, conditions, and quality of interpersonal relating, as her interests lay in administration.[6] In White's writings, the process of

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[5] Again, this is most probably due to both Peirce's and Follett's reliance on James's psychology.

[6] She was, we recall, apparently unaware of Peirce's semiotics, and she did not have, in her lifetime, the tools of Jungian psychology with which to work. We suspect that she would have found them useful in explaining the concept of interpenetration. Though she was, as we have seen, familiar with Freudian psychology and *gestalt*

interpenetration is revealed to be bound up inextricably in the process of signification, and this makes explicit Follett's pragmatism.

In their ideas on administration, both Follett and White give first priority to the issue of individual development through interpersonal (i.e., group) relations. They thus both capture aspects of value--of the moral--in the same way. The "good" is not an objective good, but rather a product of individuals in submissive interrelationship. It is neither an ideal nor is it assured; it is only a possibility, a potential. But only through such development is the development of a larger community possible. Indeed, White's concept of the ultimate manifestation of community is remarkably similar to that of Follett's "New State:"

> The public interest is public consciousness. The ideas of public interest and consciousness are in all dimensions congruent. Each can be seen as a state, as embodied in a specific action or policy, and as embodied in goals toward which we can strive. Yet both are at a more generic level processes that are set in motion by the attainment of a special sort of relationship. The public interest, like consciousness, can only exist as people live it out with each other. In seeking the public interest in this way we can achieve isonomy, the highest form of government: rule by all in relationship (239, emphasis in original).

In much the same way that Follett's ideas on leadership entail the enabling of conditions for interpenetration, White's analysis allows him to recast the issue of authority in public administration as one of enabling social maturity, which in turn enables the conditions of effective participation described above. Thus public administration has, for both Follett

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concepts, these were not sufficient to help her explain in any complete sense the process of interpenetration.

and White, a significant moral role to play in the development of both the person and the community.

Postmodern Public Administration: Rorty vs. White

Rorty and White would thus seem to be at odds with respect to the public sphere, specifically with respect to public administration. We may illustrate their differences with our concepts of "pragmatism of potentiality" and "pragmatism of practicality." White's pragmatism is very Follettan in its emphasis on what is possible and potential in human and community development. There is a *bête noire* in his analysis, namely modernist technicism,[7] but this is combated through the suffering that human relationships entail. Though technicism may dominate our culture today and possibly in the future, White holds out hope that more humanistic enclaves within public administration may persist and eventually thrive. Rorty, on the other hand, focuses on past tragedies and abuses of political philosophy and theory in the public sphere, that is, on what has not worked in the past. He seems to be saying that our experience has shown the public sphere to be, in a practical sense, incapable of accommodating issues of philosophical import, so these must be relegated to the private sphere. By implication, the public sphere has no real bearing in individual and social development, apart from ensuring human freedom for such development. There is then no human community of which public administration can be a part. Public administration can, as far as Rorty is

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[7] See for example White (1990; 237-41) and White and McSwain (1990).

concerned, essentially remain modernist in its purely instrumental rationality.[8] We may thus interpret Rorty's postmodernist public administration as identical to modernist public administration.

So what do we make of these two "texts" of public administration that portray completely different "communities of public administration?" First we should note, since we are "speaking postmodern pragmatism" here, that White's and Rorty's ideas are indeed only texts. They are simply particular configurations of signifiers--in no way to be interpreted as copying reality--that are "true" only to the extent that they serve as hypotheses (or bases) for some action. Second, from an historical perspective, we may conclude that this represents simply more of the same. That is to say, such competing perspectives have risen throughout public administration's history, seemingly during periods of some cultural turbulence. From the perspective of semiotics, such turbulence has the effect of "shaking up" and loosening social signifiers, which allows meaning to coalesce in different ways. Both philosophical pragmatism and the constrained public administration of Beard arose during the social upheaval of the late nineteenth century. Both Follett's pragmatism of potentiality and Merriam's empiricism arose during the disillusionments of the 1920s. Both Simon's behavioralism and the pragmatic ideas of Waldo and the Traditionalists arose during the years of World War II. In each of these instances there was one approach which resulted in the integration of theory and practice; the other led to their separation. In each of these instances there was one approach which

[8] See Depew and Hollinger (1995; 236) on this point.

enabled administrative capacity to address value-laden or moral issues; the other had the effect of distancing administration from the moral. In each of these instances there was one approach which allowed for a subjective engagement of reality; the other separated humans from objective reality. Interestingly, in each instance the approach which integrated theory and practice and which captured the moral and subjective in interpersonal relations was the weaker in the sense that it was less endorsed by theorists and influenced public administration less than the other. What this seems to indicate is a continual and pervasive rejection of what may be called, for lack of a better word, "communitarianism" in public administration. In uncertain times, administrative thought seems to coalesce around ideas that tell us what we can do apart from each other, that is, ideas that minimize the idea of community.

Today, turbulence again characterizes our postmodern era as evidenced by, among many other factors, our growing cultural diversity, the polarization of debate around social issues such as abortion, and the uncertain effects of information technology. The heterodoxy in public administration thought that arose during the 1950s continues, indeed is exacerbated amid such uncertainty. Again we see, even in what many consider the "fringe" postmodernist segment of public administration, differing conceptions of community in public administration. The mental picture of White's process postmodernism is that we "band together in our terror and fragility" (White and McSwain, 1991; 46). We perhaps imagine here shipwreck survivors (some of whom are public administrators) who, believing that individual and group survival are inextricably

linked, raft their lifeboats together in community so that resources may be shared. Rorty's perspective seems to be one of individual lifeboats drifting in separate currents. Each resists linking up with others for a variety of reasons (e.g., others may steal their rations; a larger group may override an individual boat's desire to row in a certain direction) and simply "does its own thing." The "micro-community" in each boat actually prefers its individual drift to the modernist voyage of its wrecked mother ship, indeed prefers this drift to rescue. Here public administration is represented by aircraft circling overhead, the rescue efforts of which are resisted by survivors, and whose role is simply one of periodically dropping provisions to ensure the bare physical needs of the survivors are met. In this interpretation, Rortyan pragmatism essentially denies public administration a place in human community.

Conclusion

If history is any indicator, White's idea of postmodern communitarian public administration will "lose out" to, if not Rorty's, some other anti-communitarian concept. We must realize after all that, though we have not mentioned modernism at length in this chapter, it is still by far the dominant way of thinking in public administration. Barring some particularly profound and catastrophic "dissensus" in our culture that would, in semiotic terms, unlock contained signifiers at the societal level and cause them to coalesce around some new configuration, our discipline is likely to remain stuck in, or

"enthralled with," to use Adams's words, modernity. And if we believe, following Follett, that reality is experienced only in relation, that is, in community, then public administration is stuck in non-reality.

Perhaps it is the lot of public administration pragmatists to experience reality only vicariously, that is, grasping the concept of a community of public administration but never truly experiencing it. But to the extent that they believe it is possible and desirable, the idea of "communitarian public administration" does represent a tentative hypothesis to be tested in the crucible of experience. The question of how to make it true receives the pragmatic answer: by acting to make it true.

I believe that there is really nothing that "Public Administration" can do about this, because there really is no such thing these days, just as there is no such thing as "Defense Acquisition Management." What we have in each is "hyper-heterodoxy," a multitude of schools of thought and theorists who seem for the most part to be simply uninterested in what others are doing. More to the point, it seems as if <u>most</u> are uninterested in the issue of community in their discipline. Such "pointless" philosophical speculations detract from efforts better spent in the pursuit of ever-elusive progress.

Thus the project is left solely to the pragmatists--perhaps rightfully so. If there is a "should" for pragmatists in all this, it is that we should continue to write, teach, and speak pragmatism among ourselves, thus maintaining our own "local" community. Works like this one may help by providing a context for further thought and action within the community. We should also keep watch for opportunities for dialogue with other

communities, even modernist and practitioner communities. Here we may take a lesson from Follett. She recognized the difficulty in trying to communicate her thoughts to practitioners. But rather than throw her hands up in frustration, she submitted, adopted their voice, and entered into their community. Certainly she risked being misunderstood, but the chance to relate to this new community, to experience new reality, was more important. The outcome will never be assured, but relating is the best that we can do.

APPENDIX

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February 7, 1997

Keith Snider

FAX #: 408-656-3068

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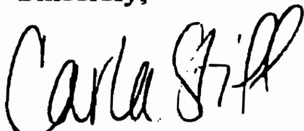

Carla Stiff
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CS:rs

VITA

Keith F. Snider was born on December 11, 1954 in DeQuincy, Louisiana. He graduated with the Bachelor of Science from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York in 1976 and served as an officer in the United States Army for the next twenty years. In 1982 he received the Master of Science in Operations Research from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. Upon his retirement from active military duty in August 1996, he joined the faculty of the Naval Postgraduate School as Assistant Professor in the Department of Systems Management.