

This article proposes that a reorientation is required in public administration's discourse style. It suggests that traditional style(s) cannot cope with complex problems like the ongoing antipathy against bureaucracy and bureaucracy's "iron cage" challenges. It proposes, first, that public administration discourse should become more self-conscious about style, a feature often misunderstood as a decorative and unimportant add-on. Second, a self-conscious style should be what is described as post-ist, including emphasis on the autonomously macro and longer term. Traditional and post-ist styles are contrasted.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION DISCOURSE A Matter of Style?

DAVID JOHN FARMER

Virginia Commonwealth University

This article offers two ground-clearing steps helpful in facilitating Public Administration (PA) discourse about complex problem areas such as the justified part of the ongoing antipathy against bureaucracy. It questions whether the traditional PA style can cope with the emerging PA situation, which includes such complexity. It considers, in turn, the "hegemony of PA's style" and "PA's style of hegemony." First, it suggests that PA discourse should become even more self-conscious about style, a feature often misunderstood as a decorative and unimportant add-on. The prevalent PA discourse is described as privileging an inflexibly narrow style, with harmful consequences for macro and longer term analysis and for addressing the challenge in Max Weber's (1958) complaint about the deep-set tendency of the iron cage of bureaucracy to close and thereby to stifle the human spirit.

Second, the article suggests that we should welcome a self-conscious PA style that is post-ist and that includes emphasis on the autonomously macro and longer term. The proposal is made by contrasting two

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *An earlier version of this article was presented at the annual conference of the American Political Science Association, Boston, Massachusetts, September 1998.*



ADMINISTRATION & SOCIETY, Vol. 31 No. 3, July 1999 299-320
© 1999 Sage Publications, Inc.

hegemonic styles—a traditional and a post-ist style. The term *post-ist* is a neologism that refers to our post-ist intellectual context, a condition that is variously characterized, in part or whole, by descriptors such as post-positivist, post-industrial, post-patriarchal, post-structural, post-modern, post-Freudian, post-colonial, post-metaphysical, and other post-ist terms. Its meaning in PA terms will become clearer as the style is described. The term *autonomy* is used to suggest that our style should neutralize the polarity underpinning much of our disciplinary discourse. The present direction of the polarity is such that macro judgments are made against a backdrop that assumes that macro claims require ultimate justification in micro particulars and that longer term claims must be offered against a grain that demands final validation in relevance for action “now.” The descriptions (primarily heuristic devices) of the contrasting PA hegemonic styles, the traditional and the post-ist, suggest that attitudes toward the macro and the longer term should be considered in the context of other attitudes; the elements of our discourse style are interwoven. They also point to the possibility of alternative disciplinary styles that offer greater prospects of addressing iron cage problems and greater promise of providing theoretical leadership in understanding the antipathy against bureaucracy.

Weber’s (1958) iron cage metaphor is used here in its usual sense, to refer to what he and others consider to be the deleterious side effects of modern society’s increasing rationalization, capitalism’s privileging of economic-technical efficiency or instrumental rationality. In his celebrated account, Weber (1958) has explained the view that care for external goods should be worn like a light cloak, but “fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage” (p. 181). The iron cage metaphor points toward the effects on humans of the form, the prevalence and the dominance throughout modern society of bureaucratization, a manifestation of rationalization. Weber was concerned with our fate in what he saw as an age of bureaucratic domination. The metaphor also points toward Weber’s other concerns about modern society, such as the irrationality of a means-ends culture. “The tremendous cosmos of the economic order” is “now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which today determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism” (p. 181). For Weber, it requires of us a Faustian bargain, whereby we sacrifice our “full and beautiful humanity” in return for a narrow vocation where we are “specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart” in a rationalized and disenchanting world (p. 182). Bureaucracy in this technocratic context is seen as entailing an oppressive dehumanizing of humanity (parceling out of the soul), including bureaucracy’s

employees and customers. A number of other thinkers have developed the critique of technocratic rationality (e.g., Arendt, 1998; Heidegger, 1977; Marcuse, 1991; Oakeshott, 1962).

As a beginning, we should emphasize the complexity of the ongoing antipathy and our disciplinary response. The complexity is emphasized by comparing the PA experience with that of another social science, economics, as it encountered a different complex and explosive event, the Depression. There are indeed some stylistic parallels (and nonparallels) between fin de siècle PA discourse and neoclassical economic thinking of 60-plus years ago. A staple of both classical and neoclassical economic discourse had been Say's Law, the view that supply creates its own demand (Sowell, 1972). Classical and neoclassical economics, it is true, contemplated that temporary unemployment could arise from stickiness in wages in responding to system pressures. Yet, an economy in equilibrium would contain no unemployment. In due course, unemployment would evaporate; it would require no collective action; it was viewed as an item that could be, and should be, ignored. Some contemporary economists also hold that the market takes care of itself. By contrast, John Maynard Keynes (1936) would say that equilibrium could be reached at less than full employment. Modern macroeconomics, the branch of economics dealing with the operation of the economy as a whole (as opposed to microeconomics, which studies items such as the economics of the individual firm) is mainly the legacy of Keynes's (1936) *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money*. For the 25% unemployed in the 1930s, the view that unemployment could and should be ignored should have been a difficult notion.

There is a stylistic parallel in the two cases—between the neoclassical response toward the 1930s' unemployment and the PA discipline's attitude toward the massive ongoing public antipathy toward bureaucracy. The parallel element in the responses is justified denial. Of course, the antipathy against bureaucracy has become hyperreal, like the Depression. Hyperreality is Jean Baudrillard's (1988) concept, which we will note again later; it involves the ideas that the distinction between reality and unreality is imploding and that hyperreality emerges in the sense of entities that are more real than the real itself. Baudrillard's (1988) well-known example was, when writing of Disneyland, that "all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation" (p. 172). PA claims are surely right that there is a pernicious mythology concerning the public sector and public administrators. Such excess in swinging toward being regarded as evil or as saintly

seems to be a common feature of entities caught up in the order of hyper-reality; examples in the evil category are attitudes toward socialists and the "L-word," and examples of the other are attitudes toward figures like Princess Diana and George Washington. Authors such as Charles Goodsell (1994) are not denying that bureaucracy has particularized faults; for one, he asserts that any large administrative apparatus is riddled with instances. Goodsell does deny "a comprehensive inadequacy or overarching threat within the society or political system" (p. ix), and thinkers as profound as Dwight Waldo have agreed that we need to know the case for the affirmative. I empathize with the strong literature that argues that the antipathy is wrong-headed (e.g., Cigler & Neiswender, 1991; Goodsell, 1994), and I agree it is useful to highlight the obviously true: that government does many vitally important things well. The neoclassical economists in the face of revulsion at the unemployment of the 1930s were no less indignant; in their case, the elegance and power of neoclassical theory clearly justified their truth.

Putting aside the know-nothing, the noncognitive, and the crazy components of any such public view, such is the strength of public antipathy that the thinkers among the antipathizers may not want to hear such corrective denials. If they thought in such terms, the antipathizers might say that the iron cage character of bureaucracy is the foundational cognitive reason for their antipathy. They might object to the form, prevalence, and domination of bureaucratization, for example; they might go on to appeal to the Jeeves metaphor described later. To the extent that the critique of bureaucracy advanced by Max Weber and his intellectual heirs is correct, they can argue that their antipathy is justified.

Another parallel is the failure to shift PA attention adequately toward the macro, permitting a fuller opportunity to address the fundamental iron cage problematics of bureaucracy. The point is that such problematics are society-wide or macro; a characteristic reflected in the title of Mommensen's (1974) book on Weber, *The Age of Bureaucracy*. A nonparallel is the failure to shift PA attention more toward the longer term. By contrast, economic theory has always considered the long, as well as the short and intermediate, term; and the 1936 Keynes, proclaiming that in the long run we are all dead, was interested in the short run. Let there be no misunderstanding. It is not being denied that important macro and longer term PA work exists. On the contrary, the best of PA work has always been the macro and the longer term, and PA has a long and important history of hermeneutic or interpretive analysis. But absent from the discipline is what we will describe as an adequately autonomous Macro Public

Administration; absent is enough emphasis on the longer term, even in micro studies. Parallel to the character of the 1930s' neoclassical economic response (pursuing the old lines), many fin de siècle PA thinkers and practitioners have intensified their micro and short-term rationalizing and economistic approaches. They have pursued more emphatically the old perspective. For instance, Total Quality Management (TQM) and similar nostrums run rampant; and the American Society for Public Administration remains true to what it sees as the practical (e.g. see Farmer, 1998a). Parallel to the 1936 economics case, this article questions whether the traditional PA style can cope with the fin de siècle PA situation: the massive ongoing antipathy against bureaucracy and the iron cage problems that in part fuel such virulence of antipathy.

HEGEMONY OF STYLE

It is contended that PA discourse should become even more self-conscious about style, as a ground-clearing step in facilitating thinking about complex problem areas such as the antipathy against bureaucracy. The PA writer, actor, and reader should be conscious (self-conscious) of the significance and implications of the recognizable styles in which claims are made and acts are done. The style of PA discourse is no less significant than, for example, styles of teaching, of playing games, and of practicing medicine. Furthermore, a self-conscious style opens up the prospect of reshaping and broadening the scope and functioning of traditional PA—beyond, for instance, a micro, rationalizing, and efficiency mechanism that serves the power interests in society.

This section discusses in three ways the relevance of self-conscious style in PA discourse. The first is in terms of the notion of hegemony, starting with Gramsci, going on to Laclau and Mouffe, and then to Foucault. The second is in terms of the following three characteristics of style:

1. Style and content are interembedded, inextricably interwoven.
2. It is true that style can refer to an action or a product, an individual or a group, an era or a geographical entity, and so on. Of particular importance in conditioning our own individual PA style are the styles of the discipline, the era, and/or the geographical entity.
3. The intellectual context of understanding style is changing, as philosophical attention has moved toward style. Style in thinking continues to be too much ignored, in favor of a God's-eye view that assumes a transcendence over any particular style.

The third way of discussing the relevance of self-consciousness of style raises the issue of the relation of PA style and the emerging context.

Because a feature of the style of mainstream traditional PA discourse is a privileging of apparently practical statements, it may be helpful to preface this section by noting two examples of the practical aspect of style that first gave rise to my own interest in the topic. The first is that there seem to be many standard operating procedures in PA that exhibit an assertive style, even when it is not clear that the consequences of assertiveness are beneficial. One is the standard job description, which lays on the manager the impossible task of "directing, coordinating, and controlling all the personnel and activities of the assigned unit." A unit manager might feel the pressure to carry out this responsibility (sometimes insisting that the unit's work be carried out in such a way that this ideal prescription is approximated); but a self-conscious manager, whether of a very large or a small unit, can recognize that in practice the injunction can be fulfilled only rarely. The second example is the disjunction involved in studying with scientific neutrality a subject that involves power. Perhaps this can be illustrated by considering Blanshard's (1954) comments on philosophy's similar dilemma. Blanshard contrasts literatures of power and of knowledge, and he describes philosophizing proper as in the latter category, whereas people demand of it the virtues of a literature of power. "Philosophizing proper is a purely intellectual exercise . . . an austerely intellectual business" (p. 3), he says. He describes elements of this style as pledged to discuss power issues, such as those of values, "with scientific detachment and dispassionateness" (p. 6).

Turn first, then, to hegemony and to what could be called a post-ist analysis. Hegemony was understood by the later Antonio Gramsci as the consensual basis of a political system within civil society, as contrasted with domination (e.g., see Simon, 1982). The practical significance for Gramsci lay in its relation of consent by means of political and ideological leadership, involving the building of a system of alliances (e.g., see Adamson, 1980, pp. 170-171).

Laclau and Mouffe explain hegemony as a theory of the decisions taken in an undecidable terrain of discourse (Laclau, 1990; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). For them, the notion of discourse transcends any distinction between the linguistic and the extralinguistic. For them also, a closed totality of discourse is impossible; the connection between signifiers and signifieds is contingent and arbitrary; and there is a mass of "floating signifiers" in society. Discursive struggles arise to fix the meanings of signifiers, as when notions such as liberty and democracy are understood in

particular ways. Such a discursive decision also underlies the fixing of the meaning of PA, for example, as referring to a signified that privileges the statements about the immediate and short-term as PA “truths.” For Laclau and Mouffe, such partial fixings—such contingent fixings—are what they understand by hegemony.

A Foucauldian analysis would yield the same end result, even though Michel Foucault distinguished between discourse and the extradiscursive. For Foucault, what counts as truth in PA or any other area of discourse reflects power relations. It is no great leap to see PA, understood as fulfilling a micro function in upgrading the efficiency of the governmental machine, as reflecting the power relations and interests of a modernist and capitalist society (Farmer, 1998b, pp. 113-124). Associated implications are also suggested, such as the normalizing role (Foucault, 1977, 1980) of PA education as preparing workers who will fit into the established machinery.

Turn now to the three features of style noted earlier. Style and content are indeed interembedded; the content of PA (or any other) claims and the style of such claiming are interrelated. It is useful to say that content is what is claimed and that style is how it is claimed. However, this formulation, as Nelson Goodman (1978) has explained, is too simple. “Obviously, subject is what is said, style is how. A little less obviously, that formula is full of faults” (p. 23). Goodman is concerned with rejecting the received opinion that style can be understood as depending on an artist’s conscious choice among alternative forms of expression. He is concerned with rejecting the received opinion that connects style with misleading oppositions between style and subject, form and content, and intrinsic and extrinsic features. For Goodman, the style of a work of art is a set of complex characteristics serving as an individual or group signature, consisting of “those features of the symbolic functioning of a work that are characteristic of author, period, place, or school” (p. 35). It is clear that, although style can be appropriately understood as the how of a PA or other claim, consideration of “what” can include consideration of how. For example, whether to recognize (or ignore) the style of an agency’s decisions is critical in evaluating features such as the justness of the decisions—just as critical as evaluating the content of the decisions. For instance, evaluating whether the prevailing style is to impose the content of its view of justice from a power position, backed by police powers or economic muscle or academic regalia, should be included when considering the content of an agency’s or a government’s claims and decisions. Some Indians and Pakistanis

(rightly or wrongly) might be sensitive to this point following the Western condemnation of their “unfortunate” atomic tests.

Style can be a matter of an action or a product not only of an individual but also of a group, an era or geographical entity, or other larger division; and the style of the larger division (group, era, or geographical entity) inevitably shapes the style of the individual. As Leonard Meyer (1987) puts it, “Style is a replication or patterning, whether in human behavior or in the artifacts produced by human behavior, that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints” (p. 21). We can just as well describe the style of a painting as of a painter, of a claim as of a claimer. Further subdivisions could be expected to vary between divisions. In referring to a work of art, for example, a feature of style may be “a feature of what is said, of what is exemplified, or what is expressed” (Goodman, 1978, p. 32). Following the work of Freud and others, we have become conscious of the unconscious forces shaping our style of thinking and our thoughts. This has become even clearer following the work of later thinkers such as Foucault, who stresses the role of the unthought in shaping our thoughts. We have a clearer idea now of the role of language in shaping our style of thinking. Indeed, it should be relatively uncontroversial that our own individual patterns of thinking are largely shaped by the style of a discipline, an era, or a geographical area.

The hegemonic stylistic arrangement established for fin de siècle PA has consequences that should be explored. There is much that can be learned in this connection from the experience of philosophy, where, despite the scholarship on style, style in philosophizing continues to be too much ignored. Berel Lang (1980) goes further, arguing that style in philosophy is not only ignored but also consistently repressed. “It is a continuing irony that in an age of philosophical self-consciousness philosophers have been largely indifferent to questions about their own means of expression” (p. 145). Using Stanley Cavell’s phrase, Lang says that style is admitted “only in ornamental doses” (p. 21). He ascribes this repression of style as part of a “more inclusive” repression—the tendency of philosophical discourse to be decontextualized and dehistoricized. Certainly, some philosophers do recognize the difficulty. So we read Ernest Gellner’s (1980) comment that

the choice of problems, the choice of criteria and solutions, of rigor, of permissible evidence, the selection of hunches to be followed up and of those to be ignored, the choice of “language game” or of the “form of life,” if you like—all these matters which make up a style of thought or the spirit of the

times, are not dictated by an immovable reason, and they are at least influenced by the social and institutional milieu of the thinker. (p. 414)

Surely, an emphasis on philosophizing as an atemporal activity does have explanatory value in understanding the lack of emphasis on style. It is as if philosophy could have a “view from nowhere” or, to re-express it, a God’s-eye perspective. Is not this also the case for PA?

The intellectual context of understanding style is changing. There has been an increasing concern in philosophy, despite the limits just described, with the question of style, especially among thinkers like Derrida, Foucault, and Gadamer (e.g., see Derrida, 1979; Lang, 1990; Norris, 1984). Appreciating the significance of context leads inevitably to questions of style. The concept of style has been described as having become central to postmetaphysical philosophy; for example, see Wiesing’s (1995) claim that Ludwig Wittgenstein in philosophy and Kurt Schwitters in art set out a view of their respective disciplines in which truth is replaced as a goal by style (pp. 108-123). Foreshadowing the interest in styles in philosophy was a tendency toward stylistic pluralism in the arts. Before 1800, style was a term used by artists and art historians to indicate the place of a work of art in the hierarchy of the arts, for example, the grand style. Post-1800, style took over as a provider of meaning, when nature, reason, and the classical heritage lost status as reliable artistic standards (e.g., see Van Eck, McAllister, & Van de Vall, 1995). This foreshadowed the less clear distinction that now exists between the philosophical and nonphilosophical forms, such as the literary. A drive for objectivity, which tends to deny the significance of style, has a tendency to sharpen the boundary demarcation of the philosophical canon. When Western philosophy was dominated by the style of mathematical and geometrical reasoning, for example, Blaise Pascal’s work in contemporary eyes could be classified as “only” literature. As the intellectual context has changed, we are now more likely to see that it is a matter of style and yet recognize that the style has significance.

Inattention to style certainly predated the modern period, and attention to style surely occurred in the modern era (e.g., in sociology of knowledge). Yet, that PA should pay so little attention to style—although no less than any of the social sciences—was reinforced by the Western rationalizing drive of modernity, within which the social science disciplines were developed. This drive, seeking to increase human happiness and morality by extending rationality to all areas, had no vital role for style. Grounded on the notion of economic man and considering itself as dealing with

economic givens, for example, mainstream economics still aspires to be a hard science. As a modernist project spurred by the Enlightenment's rationalizing drive and grounding its theorizing on bureaucratic man (e.g., Farmer & Farmer, 1997), PA has no more use for style than any other "science."

The style of PA discourse (or thinking) should surely fit its context, and self-consciousness about style can facilitate this. What might work in a theonomic theocracy, as with the Calvinistic pilgrims and Puritans in New England, for example, might not be so suitable in a nonfundamentalist society. The style of PA thinking should fit the emerging context, especially if it is the case that PA facts are social constructs (rather than objective givens) and if it is the case that the character of the facts is changing as the post-ist context changes.

As an example, recall the notion mentioned earlier, Jean Baudrillard's (1988) hyperreality, entities more real than the real itself. The significance of hyperreality in politics and economics has been much discussed—the world of images where candidates and issues are packaged and sold like soap and where soap itself cannot be sold unless it enters the world of symbols such as Ivory or Palmolive. The significance of advertising in both politics and economics is clear enough, as illustrated by the artificial turf campaigns (encouraging Congress members to believe that a grassroots movement exists, even when they know that it does not) and as direct advertising is used to defeat public interest projects (e.g., by the tobacco companies in 1998). PA operates in the world of "soap." Examples relevant to PA have been given (Farmer, 1995, 1998b) in terms of managing in a context of falsehoods and CYA (e.g., in budgeting and public relations) and of changes implied in the nature of the PA project (in such terms as anti-administration and imagination, deconstruction, deterritorialization and alterity). As the hyperreal fact of antipathy against bureaucracy suggests, we should engage hyperreality more closely. It is not merely a case of PA adapting to a "changed" world; the "changed world" includes PA as part of the world. PA not only operates in a world of soap; some would concede that in the emerging context we also "are" the soap.

PA's hegemonic constitution, supported by lack of concern with the style of our own thinking, leaves thinking about PA with the same set of blinders that was noted earlier for philosophy. It also compounds difficulties to the extent that there are advantages in adapting to the complexities of the post-ist context. Recognizing the circumstances of our particular hegemonic arrangement also presents us with the same opportunity to think of alternatives beyond fin de siècle PA.

STYLE OF HEGEMONY

This article's second claim is that, to facilitate thinking about complex problem areas like the ongoing antipathy against bureaucracy, we should welcome a self-conscious PA style that is post-ist, including emphasis on the autonomously macro and longer term. The claim is made by contrasting two hegemonic styles.

Macro refers to the "complex of bureaucracies as a whole." However, we need not be limited in our understanding of the term by the reductionism inherent in the assumptions of economic theory; for example, macro PA analysis could include not only exploration of the bureaucratic complex's internal functioning and relationships to societal features but also the place and functioning of this complex in the lives of human beings as bio-psycho-socio-spiritual people. *Longer term* is used here not to refer to the passage of time per se, but rather to the analytical relaxation of contextual factors. (This is parallel to the economic theory of the firm, where variable costs are taken to be subject to change in a shorter time period than fixed costs.) Among PA's longer term contextual factors are the political, legal, economic, psychological, sociological, biological, cultural, and spiritual.

The term *autonomy* is used, as noted earlier, to suggest that our style should neutralize (some might say reverse) the polarity underpinning much of our disciplinary thinking. The present direction of the polarity appears to be that macro judgments are made against a backdrop that assumes that macro claims require ultimate justification in micro particulars, and that longer term claims must be offered against a grain that demands final validation in relevance for action "now." The notion of "ultimate justification" or "final validation" can be clarified by considering instances in other disciplinary areas, for example, the Western liberal tendency to require that group values be justified or validated by reference to the individual. An interesting reversal would be a style that requires that micro analyses should find validation in the macro and that the short term should find justification in the longer term. My own view is more middle of the road; macro PA and longer term analyses should explore their own significant issues without seeking validation from either micro or shorter term applications. Theorists should feel free to explore macro issues such as governmental size, ethico-cultural assumptions of alternative administrative discourse styles, or the epistemological status of administrative facts, without having to show relevance to "this" Justice Department.

They should be comfortable in exploring longer-term issues (e.g., alternative futures for airplane safety administration) without being limited by the constraints of now issues (e.g., of TWA Flight 800).

Hegemonic Style No. 1 is our legacy, the traditional style. It is the form of the modernist style that we must engage in dialogue not only because the thought patterns and preferences of so many in our audience are shaped by it but also because it shapes so much of our own thinking. Hegemonic Style No. 2 is the emerging post-ist context and content. Comparison between these hegemonic styles suggests that the elements of any discursive style are interwoven. It indicates that the traditional PA style, especially if not pursued self-consciously, tends to inhibit autonomous attention to the macro and the longer term. By contrast, the post-ist PA style promises to include an adequately autonomous emphasis on the macro and the longer term—and a concern with the complex problem areas of bureaucracy.

The limits of these interpretations should be stressed, as should the limitations of any interpretations (e.g., see Diesing, 1991). For supportive purposes, the descriptions could be characterized in such terms as “ideal types” or “models”; for dismissive purposes, they should be described as “caricatures.” As noted earlier, the descriptions are intended primarily as heuristic devices. The descriptions do not take account of variations that others may stress, and they are partial. Furthermore, the choice of two hegemonic styles, choosing to focus on the issue of the macro and the longer term, is not intended to imply that there are not other hegemonic options.

HEGEMONIC STYLE NO. 1

This description is provided in the form of speculating about why the traditional hegemonic PA style fails to emphasize the autonomous long term and the macro. It is similar to describing an object (an eagle, an atomic bomb) by discussing selected features (its wing span and talons, its radiation and blast effects). The contrast provided in Hegemonic Style No. 2 indicates some of the other important features not covered. Speculating about PA's failure to provide more disciplinary emphasis on the macro and the longer term cannot appeal solely to the existence of the modernist context, because other modernist social sciences have considered both the macro and the longer term, for example, economics. Rather, it may be attributed to historical accident in the sense of the particular forms taken by modern PA work and by the PA modernist project.

Part of the reason for any short-changing must lie with the political, economic, and other contexts of the discipline. The political and economic contexts encourage attention to the bureaucratic short run. Neither context would welcome bureaucratic consideration of macro issues regarded as “settled” or “capable of being settled in the contextual area.” The political context typically regards many important macro issues as settled, as in the American system in the attitude toward the Constitution and toward the genius of the Founding Fathers; for those yet to be settled, the political arena, and not the bureaucratic, is considered the proper site. The economic context usually considers that macro issues are already solved in principle in the form of the need for market efficiency, and there may be a tendency to see as dangerous any attempt to cope with unsettled questions outside the economic context. Contexts beyond the political and the economic must also be important, for example, any sociological and cultural emphases on “virtues” such as immediate gratification (consumer, baby boom, or other) and pragmatic tinkering (in the Wright and Edison tradition).

The historical accident of the particular form taken by modern PA work includes the definition of the PA job on the Jeeves model. The P. J. Wodehouse character Jeeves is the efficient servant of his employer, the foolish but entitled Bertie Wooster. Jeeves the butler is brilliant in “getting done through people” whatever Bertie wants, where “whatever Bertie wants” is significantly shaped (coerced) by what Jeeves thinks that Bertie should want. Setting up a PA occupation on this basis can be expected to have consequences in terms of the kinds of personnel wanted and attracted, as well as attitudes about personnel, attitudes among such personnel, and views about the kind of knowledge that they should be taught in, say, MPA programs. Jeeves has no enthusiasm for the longer-term issues of butlering work; any claims about butlering work would have to have current relevance to excite his interest. Any proclivity toward the macro is limited by his need to serve a particular master. Jeeves is encouraged to stick to his job and to remember his station in life.

The Jeeves model sheds additional light on the justified part of the antipathy against government and the iron cage problematics. Do people really want the form of bureaucracy offered by Jeeves-like systems and Jeeves-like bureaucrats? An anonymous reviewer notes that the PA discipline does not recognize that in general it treasures the Jeeves image; the reviewer claims that PA wants to be Jeeves because it sees Jeeves as a clever manipulator who gets away with running the world from behind the scenes. Wodehouse’s Jeeves, the servant, was no mere servant. Weber

(1978) writes that in “the modern state the actual ruler is necessarily and unavoidably the bureaucracy” (p. 1393).

The particular form taken by the modernist PA project is seen in the character of its origin and the shape of its later development. This original character in the United States, for instance, included confidence that the important longer term and macro answers were known; it was a matter of implementing them, and the role of research was to find out “facts” to facilitate the doing. The principal needs were to rationalize the personnel, the financial, the organizational, and the managerial situations. A merit system had to keep out political hacks and to encourage more competent appointments; a financial system had to move away from the line-item system and green eye shades; organizational systems should be centralized; and, above all, generalist administrative managers were to be created. This original attitude toward PA knowledge also goes some way toward explaining the methodological contrast between PA theorizing and, say, economic theorizing. With exceptions, the quintessential PA approach is inductive; with exceptions, the characteristic feature of economic theory is deductive, a feature that encourages a broad perspective. (Certainly, each approach has its advantages, and it is not suggested that one approach is better than the other. The points, rather, are the imbalance and the direction of the imbalance.)

The shape of the later development of PA—in academe, in the general run of professional journals, and in professional organizations—has done little to break this original pattern. There has been limited pressure against the original form. Instead, a culture that highly values the economic has only served in the United States to reinforce a highly marginal regard for noneconomic PA theory. A result of such factors is that PA theory is often distrusted within the PA discipline. Usually, it is trusted only as long as it can show its connection with what “exists,” with the “real,” with what is “known,” with “common sense”—with the micro and the immediate. Theory that paints large pictures or that reframes traditional perspectives is often regarded as foreign to the discipline. Jeeves strives for the familiar; he does not want to read anything he does not immediately understand; what is counted as wild-eyed tends to expand to include any item that is not comprehended within factors that include the micro and the immediate.

It is a tribute to the human spirit that, despite this hegemonic style and despite the direction of the disciplinary grain, PA theorists have achieved so much in terms of macro and longer term insights.

HEGEMONIC STYLE NO. 2

Distinguishing features of a post-ist hegemony include contingency and plurality. Consistent with these are other features, such as the nature of any ethical turn and extradisciplinary information. It will be apparent that post-ist hegemonic styles could be expected to include longer term and macro PA issues on an autonomous basis.

Any post-ist style of hegemony for PA discourse, to the extent that it is self-conscious, could be expected to recognize the contingency of any such hegemony. If language is not a closed system, there is an arbitrariness (as noted earlier) in any connection between a signifier and a signified—between, say, what we mean by the signifier *PA* and what is signified by the term *PA*. There is also contingency and arbitrariness (as Saussure, 1966, explains) in the fact that the meaning of a signifier depends on the roles of and relationships with other signifiers, as when the meaning of *I* depends on differences with the roles of signifiers like *you*, *she*, *he*, *it*, *we*, and *they*. So, the self-consciousness would be inadequate if there were an attempt to say that henceforth the signifier *PA* shall mean *PA Macro* and *PA Micro*, *Long-term* and *Short-term*. Consistent with such contingency and self-consciousness, the post-ist context could be expected to encourage plurality or a family of hegemonies rather than a single dominant hegemony. A significant feature of the traditional PA hegemonic style is that it tends to exclude and marginalize voices. The tendency toward plurality would exist to the extent that the postmodern aim of avoiding marginalization is sought, because a hierarchical situation where a single hegemony is dominant even on a contingent basis would involve marginalization. It should be stressed that a central aim of postmodernism is an ecstatic and expanded emphasis on human liberty; an aim is to demarginalize. There are marginalized groups such as women, minorities, the economically disadvantaged, those with policed sexualities, the colonized, and others. As is well known, such marginalizations are considered harmful not only for the marginalized members but also for the function from which the members are excluded. An example is the patriarchal or masculine nature that has been described for modernist PA thinking (e.g., Ferguson, 1984; Stivers, 1993); to the extent that this is the case, the advantages of the nonpatriarchal perspective are excluded. Marginalization, as Foucault (1977, 1980) and others have noted, can also occur from hegemonic arrangements privileging reason and language. We can easily see that a privileging of the rational, as is the case in economic analysis,

marginalizes consideration of unconscious motivations. We can easily see that the success in international commerce of the English language, with all the patterns of thought that our language contains, tends to marginalize non-English languages, each with their own distinctive thought patterns.

What does a combination of contingency and plurality mean in the post-ist PA context? Elsewhere, it has been described for PA thinking in such terms as a *reflexive language paradigm* and *play with a purpose* (Farmer, 1995, 1998b). The former is playful and attuned listening to the multiple perspectives that are available. It is framing and reframing, examining items and issues from multiple perspectives, even from the perspectives of counterfactuals. We can see that the “same” situation is likely to be seen differently by a sociologist, a psychologist, a biologist, a philosopher, and so on. More than merely examining items from different standpoints, the post-ist context involves imaginative play with perspectives and reframing. Play with a purpose, such as Defense Department war games and Federal Reserve stock market games, opens up the prospects of mind and action games of “what if?” What would an agency be like if, for example, employees did have to exhibit loyalty to their organizational unit or employees did not have to stick to their assigned job? This may well be easier in a context where imagination plays an even larger part. Jurgen Habermas (1983) refers to Max Weber’s account of how modernist rationality divides the scientific, the normative, and the aesthetic, each having its own logic of development. He describes the postmodern as breaking down the walls dividing these three kinds of activity. In modernity, imagination plays a part in the “logic of justification” only for the aesthetic. In the post-ist context, imagination may be demarginalized.

A PA turn away from focusing on mere efficiency toward a greater emphasis on the ethical (or justice) is implied in the post-ist style, and this shift in emphasis can be called an ethical (or justice) turn. Plurality and contingency argue against privileging mere efficiency. This shift does evoke a world where there are at least two organizing tendencies (or principles), but this is not enough. It does seem that we can distinguish sets of self and nonself (or other) motivations. One such organizational or motivating tendency (self) is the economic, privileging mere economic efficiency in an increasing number of spheres. It is the working out of the logic of self-interest. Currently, this principle tends to be regarded as triumphant, because—despite its drawbacks in noneconomic and purely economic terms (e.g., instability, maldistribution, and environmental degradation)—it is successful as a wealth producer. Another and contrasting organizational or motivating tendency (nonself) can center around a

sense of justice, or liberation, or public good that is considered to transcend self-interest. In some form, this would fill out, or substitute for, Augustine's flat statement about justice.

Remove justice, and what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale? What are criminal gangs but petty kingdoms? A gang is a group of men under the command of a leader, bound by a compact of association, in which the plunder is divided according to an agreed convention. (Augustine, 1467/1984)

The Augustinian line needs filling out or substitution in that the nature and role of justice, liberty, and public good are variously interpreted. Presumably, prescriptions about the combinations of these organizing principles will vary, as the notion of a third way (between capitalism and socialism) may suggest.

The mere evocation of the two conflicting tendencies in a PA ethical turn is described as "not enough" because of contingency and anti-foundationalism. Contingency is a feature of the post-ist context, as we have agreed; and specifying a world of two alternatives proposes a hegemony. In understanding the alternatives, an openness to other voices is required; a double-headed hegemony is as against the post-ist grain as a single-headed hegemony. Anti-foundationalism has been a view long discussed in philosophy, for example, by Nietzsche; and it is a view that has gained wide contemporary acceptance. This anti-foundational shift and the character of the change is reflected in what Georgia Warnke (1993) calls the "hermeneutic or interpretive turn" in contemporary justice thinking. She explains that important theorists (e.g., Rawls, Walzer, Taylor) no longer attempt to justify principles on Kantian or objective grounds, such as formal reason, the nature of human action, or the neutral procedures of rational choice. Rather, justifying principles turns simply to showing the suitability of the principles for that particular society or to "showing that the principles express the meanings of the society's goods and practices, history and traditions" (Warnke, 1993, p. vii).

Contingency and plurality offer opportunities. In the post-ist world, an implosion has been discussed for disciplinary boundaries; disciplinary fields are expected to have no hedges. Looked at one way, specialists can worry about the decline or extinction of their fields. From another perspective, there is opportunity in unrestricting subject-matter scope; any collapse of disciplinary hedges can help in demarginalizing the extradisciplinary. What counts as relevant truth for a strong discipline (one with a highly developed and integrated body of theory, e.g., economics) must

typically meet strong intradisciplinary tests. A relatively less strong discipline such as PA is likely to be more open to ideas from other disciplines, and PA certainly has been. (Curiously, the lack of such strength turns out to be an advantage for PA in terms of porousness.) However, modernist PA, porous as it has been, has always been limited in this openness. Like many other action subjects and like many of the social sciences, there are qualitative shortcomings in the borrowings from extradisciplinary sources. This refers to the quality of the reception and to gaps in the reception. On quality, for example, PA has done well in admitting philosophical ideas, but it has often not been at home with such ideas. On gaps, examples include topics such as psychoanalysis, feminist jurisprudence, civil society, and critical legal theory, where more could have been applied. For instance, few others struggle alongside Orion White and Cynthia McSwain (McSwite, 1997) in urging that Lacanian psychology has direct PA relevance. To the extent that the post-ist context realizes no boundaries, the porousness that has characterized the history of PA theory could be ratcheted up to a qualitatively different level.

The view that longer term and macro analyses are valuable only insofar as they shed light on short-run and micro issues is quite consistent with Hegemonic Style No. 1, but it seems alien to Style No. 2. The reverse is the case for the view that longer term and macro analyses are valuable in themselves. The differences in treatment of the macro and the longer term does seem to extend to a matter of style.

SUMMARY

This article has discussed two ground-clearing steps helpful in facilitating thinking about complex problem areas such as the massive antipathy against bureaucracy. These features were explored with recognition of our post-ist context, a condition that is variously characterized, in part or whole, by descriptors such as post-positivist, post-industrial, post-patriarchal, post-structural, post-modern, post-Freudian, post-colonial, post-metaphysical, and other terms.

First, it was suggested that PA discourse should become even more self-conscious about style. Prevalent PA thinking was described as privileging an inflexibly narrow style, reflected in a tendency to exclude the macro and the longer term and to continue to ignore the challenge in Max Weber's complaint about the long-run and deep-set tendency of the iron cage of bureaucracy to close and to stifle the human spirit. It was noted that

style is often misunderstood as a decorative and unimportant add-on. On the contrary, style and content were described as interembedded. It was noted that our individual styles and those of our immediate circles tend to be shaped by the styles of our larger group, era, or geographical entity. It was suggested that a style including greater self-consciousness can increase the range and flexibility of our disciplinary thinking, permitting more success in thinking about multifaceted and complex issues such as the ongoing public antipathy toward bureaucracy.

Second, it was indicated that we should welcome a self-conscious PA style that was described as post-ist, including emphasis on the autonomously macro and longer term. The suggestion was made by contrasting two hegemonic styles, a traditional and a post-ist style. The limitations of the descriptions in the contrast were noted, and the contrasting pictures were intended primarily as heuristic devices. Macro was described as referring to “the complex of bureaucracies as a whole,” and the point was made that we need not be limited in our understanding of the term by the reductionism inherent in the assumptions of economic theory. Longer term was used here to refer to the analytical relaxation of contextual constraints, and among PA’s constraints are political, legal, economic, psychological, sociological, biological, cultural, and spiritual factors. The term autonomy was used to suggest that our style should neutralize the polarity underpinning much of our thinking. The present direction of the polarity appears to be that macro judgments are made against a backdrop that assumes that macro claims require ultimate justification in the micro particular, and the longer term claims must be offered against a grain that demands final validation in relevance for action “now.” Rather, it was proposed that, as in economics, macro PA and longer term analyses should explore their own significant issues without any need to seek validation from either micro or shorter term applications. The descriptions of the contrasting PA hegemonic styles, the traditional and the post-ist, were intended as suggestive that attitudes toward the macro and the longer term should be considered with recognition that the elements of our discourse style are interwoven. They also suggested that the traditional PA style, especially if not pursued self-consciously, tends to inhibit autonomous attention to the macro and the longer term. They also pointed to our opportunity to consider alternative disciplinary styles that offer greater prospects of addressing iron cage problems and greater promise of understanding the ongoing public antipathy against bureaucracy.

Given the PA discipline’s interest in what is happening now, it is odd not to pay even more attention to a complex problem area such as the

ongoing event of the massive antipathy against bureaucracy. It is no less problematic to ignore parallels experienced by other disciplines, like the 1930s case of neoclassical economic theory. The antipathy problem (with insults in parentheses) may or may not be variously laid with the antipathizers (confused know-nothings?), with PA practice (stickiness in responding to efficiency pressures?), or with the quality of PA thinkers (imaginative enough?). More fundamentally, this article suggests that we should turn to the style of our disciplinary discourse. We should self-consciously examine PA's style in terms of its capability in coping with complex problems, like the ongoing antipathy. The central problem in this may not be the style in which we have chosen to think but rather the style in which our discipline thinks through us.

REFERENCES

- Adamson, W. (1980). *Hegemony and revolution: A study of Antonio Gramsci's political and cultural theory*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Arendt, H. (1998). *The human condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Augustine. (1984). *St. Augustine: Concerning the city of God against the pagans* (H. Bettenson, Trans.). New York: Penguin. (Original work published 1467)
- Baudrillard, J. (1988). *Jean Baudrillard: Selected writings*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Blanshard, B. (1954). *On philosophical style*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Cigler, B. A., & Neiswender, H. L. (1991). "Bureaucracy" in the introductory American government textbook. *Public Administration Review*, 51(5), 442-450.
- Derrida, J. (1979). *Spurs: Nietzsche's styles*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Diesing, P. (1991). *How does social science work? Reflections on practice*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh.
- Farmer, D. J. (1995). *The language of public administration: Bureaucracy, modernity, and postmodernity*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Farmer, D. J. (1998a). Framing a senator, ASPA, and the Zeus list. *Administrative Theory and Praxis*, 20(2), 248-250.
- Farmer, D. J. (Ed.). (1998b). *Papers on the art of anti-administration*. Burke, VA: Chatelaine Press.
- Farmer, D. J., & Farmer, R. L. (1997). Leopards in the temple: Bureaucracy and the limits of the in-between. *Administration and Society*, 29(5), 507-528.
- Ferguson, K. (1984). *The feminist case against bureaucracy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Pantheon.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. Brighton, UK: The Harvester Press.

- Gellner, E. (1980). Sociology. In B. Lang (Ed.), *Philosophical style: An anthology about the writing and reading of philosophy* (pp. 413-457). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Goodman, N. (1978). *Ways of worldmaking*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.
- Goodsell, C. T. (1994). *The case for bureaucracy: A public administration polemic*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
- Habermas, J. (1983). Modernity: An incomplete project. In H. Foster (Ed.), *The anti-aesthetic: Essays on postmodern culture*. Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1977). *The question concerning technology and other essays*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Keynes, J. M. (1936). *The general theory of employment, interest, and money*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Laclau, E. (1990). *New reflections on the revolution of our time*. London: Verso.
- Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso.
- Lang, B. (1980). Space, time, and philosophical style. In B. Lang (Ed.), *Philosophical style: An anthology about the writing and reading of philosophy* (pp. 144-171). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Lang, B. (1990). *The anatomy of philosophical style*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Lang, B. (1995). The style of method: Repression and representation in the genealogy of philosophy. In C. Van Eck, J. McAllister, & R. Van de Vall (Eds.), *The question of style in philosophy and the arts* (pp. 18-36). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Marcuse, H. (1991). *One dimensional man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society*. Boston: Beacon.
- McSwite, O. C. (1997). Jacques Lacan and the theory of the human subject: How psychoanalysis can help public administration. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 41(1), 43-63.
- Meyer, T. B. (1987). Toward a theory of style. In B. Lang (Ed.), *The concept of style* (pp. 21-71). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Mommsen, W. J. (1974). *The age of bureaucracy: Perspectives on the political sociology of Max Weber*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Norris, C. (1984). *The deconstructive turn: Essays in the rhetoric of philosophy*. New York: Routledge.
- Oakeshott, M. J. (1962). *Rationalism in politics and other essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Saussure, F. de (1966). *Course in general linguistics*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Simon, R. (1982). *Gramsci's political thought: An introduction*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Sowell, T. (1972). *Say's law: An historical analysis*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Stivers, C. (1993). *Gender images in public administration: Legitimacy and the administrative state*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Van Eck, C., McAllister, J., & Van de Vall, R. (Eds.) (1995). *The question of style in philosophy and the arts*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Warnke, G. (1993). *Justice and interpretation*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Weber, M. (1958). *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. New York: Scribner.
- Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wiesing, L. (1995). Aesthetic forms of philosophizing. In C. Van Eck, J. McAllister, & R. Van de Vall (Eds.), *The question of style in philosophy and the arts* (pp. 108-123). New York: Cambridge University Press.

David John Farmer is professor of political science and public administration and affiliate professor of philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University. His publications include The Language of Public Administration: Bureaucracy, Modernity, and Postmodernity and, as editor, Papers on the Art of Anti-Administration. His practitioner experience includes employment with the City of New York and the U.S. Department of Justice. He has provided consulting assistance to some 50 governmental agencies throughout the country. His Ph.D. in economics is from the University of London, and his Ph.D. in philosophy is from the University of Virginia.