ANTI-ADMINISTRATION: REDEEMING BUREAUCRACY BY WITNESSING AND GIFTING

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ABSTRACT

Weber (1947/1964), in his description of a legal-rational administrative system, represents administrative orthodoxy. “Anti-administration,” in dialectical relationship to administrative orthodoxy, is reasonably construed as “not administrative orthodoxy,” and can legitimately take various forms. Both “charismatic” and “traditional,” Weber’s examples of non-rational administrative authority, are in opposition to orthodoxy, and either can easily assume the anti-administration mantle. Our view of anti-administration best fits Weber’s charismatic category, for “charisma” derives from the early Christian term “gift of grace” (Weber, 1947/1964, p. 328).

“Redemption” is the act of recovering a relationship following a fall from grace. This paper suggests reasons for the deficiencies of orthodoxy, then offers witnessing and gifting as an anti-administration strategy for reclaiming a relationship of community among civil servants and citizens. In therapy, the psychologist starts where the patient is; likewise, the bureaucrat seeking to rebuild a relationship with the public must first find common ground with the citizen by charismatic means, which requires the bureaucrat to act anti-administratively, one-on-one.

INTRODUCTION

We view the present negative attitude toward public employees as resulting primarily not from degraded bureaucratic performance, but from a socially constructed reality of dissatisfaction with the direction of public policy over the past fifty years. When joined with others’ frustrations, this dissatisfaction manifests itself in the acceptance of government inefficiency as unquestioned common wisdom.¹ The public adopts the myth promulgated by the National Performance Review that government is broken; the presumed cure is achieving efficiency through entrepreneurship (Wamsley & Wolf, 1996). But the search for efficiency is an insatiable desire, a bar that rises ever higher with each improvement in administrative performance, allowing those who dislike
government to continue complaining about inefficiency, regardless of performance. The challenge for administrators is to restore a trusting relationship between citizen and public servant that will overcome these misperceptions. Our contention is that this effort requires an anti-administration strategy. While the Kleinian object-relations theory underpinning our argument is psychological, the language is theological.

Orthodox administration within an industrial or post-industrial egalitarian society is seen as applying fair rules equally, a system associated popularly with Max Weber (1947). Farmer (1999) challenges the notion of a “one best way” in the administrative arena. Farmer argues, following Marcuse (1991) and drawing upon atomic theory, that framing any reality from multiple perspectives energizes the field. We concur, and argue that witnessing and gifting, when combined with an opposite, rational decision-making, can redeem bureaucracy.

We, the people, rather than it, the bureaucracy, are the problem. Since the major problem lies in people’s perceptions, bureaucrats must come to recognize the people as the problem in order to escape a negative reinforcing cycle or mutual blaming. We will speculate on the “causes” for the decline in trust of government, elaborate on the complaint of inefficiency, then offer witnessing and gifting as an anti-administration strategy for restoring community.

Destruction of Community Through Separation, an Old Story

A community can withstand internal unfairness, provided there is mutual recognition of a common bond. Sebastian DeGrazia (1948, pp. 74–75) cites an example from Gaetano Mosca’s *The Ruling Class* (1939). The Polish nobles of the Middle Ages exploited their serfs economically and physically, but the serfs never rebelled. Mosca attributes this to the fact that the nobles and serfs shared language, food, clothing styles, and superstitions. The exploitation appears objectively unfair, but evidently was accepted by the serfs as subjectively fair. When the Polish nobles imported French habits of dress, speech, dance, and entertainment, they treated the serfs better, but the bond of community between noble and serf was broken because serfs and nobles no longer shared a visible common culture (Mosca, 1939, pp. 112–113). The serfs of the 18th century no longer joined the nobles in their wars with any effectiveness. The construction of reality by serfs defined the nobles as outsiders and oppressors, not kin. Objective improvement in one’s economic condition was less significant than the subjective construction of being separated culturally from those they had previously considered related. Relationships trump objective notions of fairness. So long as authorities are viewed as being apart from those they serve, the separation is difficult to heal.
Destruction of Community Through Separation, a Newer Story

The emotional bonds of government to citizens in the U.S. over the past 40 years have loosened. A public opinion poll in 1964 indicated that trust in government to do the right thing was at 76%; by the mid-1990s it rested at 25% (Ruscio, 1997). Underlying themes in the contemporary U.S.—a shift of political dominance from state and local to federal level, decline in institutional religion, legitimization of protest as a means to communicate with an unresponsive and unethical government—parallel the situation in 18th century Poland presented by Mosca. These issues will be elaborated, the false hope of efficiency shown, then an anti-administration answer offered.

Shift of Political Dominance From State and Local to Federal Level

The depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s generated a shift of focus and emphasis from the state/local arena to the federal arena. Public policy was increasingly made and implemented at the federal level. The federal government instituted the social security system. Federal funding came to support local housing programs, highways, health care, education, response to natural disasters, and scientific research. Where federal money contributed to a program, federal law prevailed. The center of politics moved from the local courthouse or statehouse to Washington. More decisions were based upon a national agenda and interest group coalitions cobbled from the 50 states, and the national government even dictated local programs and standards for which states, counties, and municipalities had to provide financing (Kelly, 2001). Courthouses and statehouses lost both political power and symbolic status, contributing to an erosion of confidence in national institutions by many in the active public.

Minorities, relatively powerless in a state or local arena, bonded into shifting coalitions to influence policy on the national level. Racial issues led the way. From Brown vs Board of Education onward, racial equality steadily moved from an ignored principle closer to reality. Accompanying the progress on racial equality were improvements on women’s issues, gay rights, treatment of the disabled, age discrimination, the environment, and workplace safety. These were issues pushed primarily in the national arena, which often annoyed statehouse, courthouse, and local citizen majorities. Proposals granting benefits to minority interests were passed by Congress and implemented by bureaucrats. Many citizens comparatively advantaged by the dominance of state or local governments disliked this shift in power and focus.
Decline in Institutional Religion

Institutional religion in the U.S. has generally maintained social justice as a component of its creed. The social gospel commencing in the early years of this century was an active strand of both Protestantism and Catholicism, and mainline denominations continued to add members until the mid 1960s. However, mainline Protestant denominations lost between one-third and one-fifth of their membership between 1965 and 1990 (Johnson et al., 1993). Johnson et al. cite a lack of deep commitment to the ideologies of the mainline churches by members during this period, which lowered the salience of these churches to their following, resulting in a fall-off by the succeeding generation. In their study, based upon a telephone survey of 500 Presbyterians / former Presbyterians with forty follow-up face-to-face interviews, Johnson et al. (1993) find no decline in morality or ideological shift. For many in the pews the institutional church simply lost its priority in the value hierarchy. “Fallen” Presbyterians have gone to non-denominational community churches, other mainline churches, or no church at all, yet they maintain the ethical standards of their youth. Morality rather than theology is foundational. This resembles the commodification of ethics (McSwite, 1997, chap. 7) and resonates with a prophetic analysis written 25 years earlier by political scientist Lewis Lipsitz.

In 1968 Lipsitz published an American Political Science Review article entitled, “If, As Verba Says, The State Functions as a Religion, What are we to Do Then to Save our Souls?” Lipsitz argued that the diminished importance of religion, combined with the human need to provide an explanation for the seemingly unexplainable, points to government, and particularly the American Presidency, as the location of considerable symbolic significance for many of the American public. The President becomes a God-substitute. Not only a political leader, the President serves as a symbol of security and relief from anxiety.

With its increasing prominence in the lives of citizens, the political system has changed from a pragmatic, emotionless arena in which interests negotiate public policy, into holy ground where good battles evil, where people seek symbolic reassurance for their life-styles. This explanation is compatible with the Johnson et al. (1993) article describing civic ethics replacing religious commitment. Citizens infuse the political with religious meaning and judge the government by sacred rather than secular criteria.5

This infusion of symbolic importance into the secular and assumption of an ethical role for the political system is occurring during the same time frame as the administrative system is being asked to implement rational, secular policies that redistribute both real and symbolic resources. Through the legislative system and the judicial system minorities are finally receiving
backing to enforce the Constitution and its amendments. This social change evokes from white and advantaged Americans resentment against those civil servants charged with carrying out government policies. Mainline churches which support a separation of church and state and proclaim a social gospel of justice are losing members to evangelical groups which pursue political action with the intention of bringing government policies into alignment with local church policies. For these new evangelicals, as well as the church drop-outs, government which looks and acts like us is good; government which does not is evil.

Lipsitz does not answer the question of how to save our souls, but Lipsitz’ and Johnson et al.’s observations help explain bureaucracy’s fall from grace. Soft morality has replaced doctrine for many, and soft morality seeks a political system reflecting one’s personal values. Administrators are stuck with implementing institutional values that are at odds with local, personal values.

**Legitimation of Protest as a Means to Communicate With an Unresponsive and Unethical Government**

Written in the middle of the Vietnam War, Lipsitz’ 1968 article encourages a Lockean notion of the polity (interest group liberalism) and makes a Thoreauvian argument for civil disobedience. Left-wing Lipsitz becomes an echo to right-wing Barry Goldwater’s noted comment: “Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice.” If the government is corrupt or coercive, one’s duty is to revolt. Loyalty to the just political system is a core value. When one’s core values are threatened, and the political system is deemed corrupt, active protest, not civil discourse, is not only more effective, but also justified. The Thoreauvian civil disobedience of young people against the Vietnam War became practiced subsequently by right-to-life organizations, extreme environmental groups seeking to protect old-growth forests, and groups such as those in Waco and Ruby Ridge that resent any government decision not affirming their agenda. Their discourse is not in the civic language of interests, needs, and the public good, but in the ethical language of rights and wrongs. The Jeffersonian remark that a revolution every 20 years would not be a bad thing finally seems to have caught on, and public administrators—teachers, social workers, customs agents, and the police, implementing or defending national policy—are literally in the front line of fire in attempting to maintain the polity.

It is from the context of fusing religion and politics into a locally-oriented morality system, the rise in governmental responsiveness to a national rather than a local constituency, the increased legitimacy of protest as a vehicle for expressing one’s policy views, and an inability of the government to offer
stability congruent with one’s personal value system that dissatisfaction has arisen about the performance of public employees.

Complaints About Public Officials—and the False Hope of Efficiency

Civil servants are targeted because they implement legislative decisions, favoring some people, constraining others. They are criticized by some for being too rule-bound, by others for compromising principles too much, and by all sides for being inefficient. Inefficiency is a justification rather than a reason. Efficiency was never the prime value in administration. Being fair and being responsive were probably the most important administrative values. When statehouse and courthouse were prominent, responsiveness to local constituencies dominated; with the primacy of Washington, national constituencies received more attention. Obeying the rules in financial transactions was the second administrative priority because one could be fired or sent to prison; efficiency came third, at best, in the value hierarchy of public servants.

Criticizing civil servants for inefficiency is a charge that both sticks and is difficult to disprove. Almost everyone has experienced a situation where a civil servant has done something that is perceived as inefficient, but criticizing a public servant for inefficiency is more often a rationale rather than a reason. We really do not care that much if workers are inefficient. They should not be lazy, and should fulfill our requests promptly, but inefficient is different.

Back in 1930 Harold Lasswell made the argument that people displace their frustrations onto the political arena because it is a safe target. One can always be affirmed by criticizing bureaucrats. Kleinian object relations theory (Mitchell, 1986) describes how people attempt to lessen anxiety by creating illusions and moving these illusions onto objects. Bureaucratic inefficiency is an illusion to protect an individual’s fragile ego system. The citizen resembles Laura with her Glass Menagerie in being unable or unwilling to confront reality. The bureaucrats are unlikely to fight back and the charges are impossible to falsify, so citizens can collectively gain peer support, avoid reality testing, and remain in their fantasy world.

But since inefficiency is the highly publicized criticism, government employees at all levels are now responding by trying to become more efficient. Productivity and performance are the focus in most agencies. President Clinton made this a prime goal of his administration, which led to the National Performance Review (1993), a strategy for rendering federal agencies more efficient. Agencies are rearranging priorities, shedding tasks, and seeking less expensive ways to accomplish their top priorities. Responsibilities are growing more rapidly than their budgets, they have fewer employees, and their functions face privatization.
The Ineffectiveness of Efficiency; the Effectiveness of Inefficiency

Government has traditionally subordinated efficiency to fairness or responsiveness, without adverse reaction from the public; so “inefficiency” is likely a minor contributing factor to the negative opinion of bureaucratic performance. Becoming more efficient will reduce the negative image of civil servants among those few citizens who truly desire efficiency. However, it is our view that efficiency and productivity improvement will not substantially affect public opinion toward civil servants because the discontent with public agencies is more directed at the policies being implemented, how they are being implemented, and the fantasy surrounding the bureaucrat rather than the level of organizational efficiency in implementing those policies. Assuming that reality is socially constructed and that efficiency is generally invisible, a civil service becoming more efficient is unlikely to change public opinion about bureaucratic performance.

To raise the evaluation of public servants by the citizenry, which is important to creating generalized trust between governors and governed, the bureaucrat must respond anti-administratively. Our interpretation of “anti-administrative” does not mean unfair, or in any way giving the client inferior service. “Anti-administrative,” deriving from its Weberian roots of charisma, means building an emotional bridge between bureaucrat and citizen to energize the non-emotional, legal-rational response given from the Weberian paradigm. The bureaucrat seeks to understand how the citizen constructs the situation in order to respond in a way that addresses the concerns of the client. The administrator does not necessarily accede to the client’s desires; the administrator tells the client the truth about the situation, in detail, with reasoning understandable to the client, and seeks to help the client solve the problem, not simply answering the client’s question according to a rulebook. Legitimacy for bureaucracy emerges from a charismatic, personal relationship between civil servant and citizen.

From Impersonal Objectivity to Witnessing and Gifting

The rationalist, materialist construction of the citizen—public servant relationship is embodied in Weber’s description of the legal-rational administrative system:

That thus the typical person in authority occupies an ‘office.’ In the action associated with his status, including the commands he issues to others, he is subject to an impersonal order to which his actions are oriented.

(Weber, 1947, p. 330)

The Weberian notion of bureaucracy as impersonal decision-making, avoiding personal bias, is a modern notion and reflects the common
understanding among academics on how bureaucracy does and should operate.

By adhering closely to the rules and doing their jobs more efficiently, administrators cannot regain legitimacy for the system among minorities and the poor who believe the system unfair, or among middle class citizens, who view civil servants as unresponsive. Emphasizing efficiency in a system where trust and faith in governance are in short supply is analogous to an American speaking to an uncomprehending Frenchman, and attempting to make himself understood by speaking louder. No one is communicating, and each thinks it's the other's problem. Focusing exclusively on efficiency is solving the wrong problem—looking for the lost keys under the lamppost where there is light rather than in the bushes where they were dropped.

A system deemed unfair can be redeemed by administrators acting anti-administratively; by “gifting” and “witnessing.” Gifting and witnessing, underpinned by Goodsell’s (1997) concept of passion and Tronto’s (1993) concept of caring, can instigate a reparative cycle (Hirschhorn, 1988) that builds trust, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of both the administrative system and the political system.

**Building Community by Witnessing and Gifting**

Trust is the basis for building community (Gibb, 1978), creating a sense of belongingness, of having one’s place. Under a condition of high-trust, we are open; if trust is low, we defend. Even downsizing can be accomplished less painfully if trust is present in the organization (Mone, 1997). Trust is the specific expectation that another’s actions will be beneficial rather than detrimental, the generalized ability to take for granted (Creed & Miles, 1996).

Trust cannot be created by fiat—saying “trust me” lacks credibility, and instrumental trust based on reciprocity lasts only for the short term (Tyler & Degoe, 1966). Long-term trust is an important social quality that emerges slowly, from being in relationship to another. If these others in relationship are civil authorities, people gain a sense of identity from the relationships, and the interactions can enhance self-esteem, create a social bond, and change attitudes toward authorities (Tyler & Degoe, 1966). A reparative process has begun.

We believe that interactions leading to this change in public attitude emerge from witnessing and gifting on the part of administrators. Witnessing and gifting involve sharing uncomfortable truths, making self vulnerable to the other by taking risks, breaking organizational norms by telling the truth, and going beyond what is normally expected in providing or refusing the service. These activities that create an environment in which trust can grow are outside the administrative rulebook, are anti-administration.
A witness tells the truth as he or she knows it. If the truth is that the agency’s telephone lines are usually busy before noon, that certain services have a two-week backlog for appointments, that a particular office can usually handle one’s business on a walk-in basis, or that some red-tape can be avoided by certain processes, the witness provides that information. The witness tells the truth about the agency and about how the client can move most effectively through the system, even if this information is unflattering or places extra burden on the agency. The witness sees the system from the client’s viewpoint and provides a useful navigation map. This openness is demonstrated by gifting—showing care and respect for the other, accompanied by confrontation, or challenge. People grow best when they experience an ongoing blend of support and challenge (Kegan, 1994).

Gifting is related to witnessing. A gift is a good or service voluntarily and freely given, not part of one’s duties, and devoid of expected reciprocity or repayment. Examples are the social service worker who at the end of the day drives the client home so the client will not have to spend 90 minutes waiting for the infrequent buses, the public housing manager who leads the scout troop made up of boys from public housing on camping trips, the building inspector who on Saturdays participates with other volunteers in the framing of Habitat for Humanity houses. Each of these acts is a freely-given gift with no expectation of compensation or repayment. Gifts are creative acts in response to human needs, they cannot be programmed or predicted. A sense of duty destroys the joy of sharing the gift.

Intent differentiates exchange relationships from witnessing and gifting relationships. In the past, church members who wanted to become known in the community would volunteer to do the ushering, which would help them make business contacts. Nowadays, other sorts of volunteering, such as; serving food at homeless shelters, delivering food to the needy, or officiating youth sports activities, also provide visibility. If one volunteers for uncompensated duty primarily in the hope of making contacts useful for one’s career, then the relationship is one of exchange rather than gifting. Serving substitutes for paid advertising. The young politician who ladles soup at the Rescue Mission simply to have this on his record to appeal to voters at the next election is in exchange mode—giving something in expectation of return. Exchange activities are from duty or for personal benefit, not from the heart. This can get complicated at the boundaries. Recipients of the service may have their suspicions. A university student mentoring in an after-school program had the distinction between duty and gift brought home by an elementary school child:

John never wanted to do his work for me. I asked, pleaded. I told him that I had so much work I could be doing at that very moment. But instead, I was there helping him to do his. He looked at me and said, ‘I know that
the only reason that you are here is because you have to be for your school.' The other kids looked up to see what I was going to say. And I replied, 'I would not rather be anywhere in the world than here, with you.' He said, ‘Okay then, I will do my work.’ And this huge grin came over his face. The other kids smiled and continued with what they were doing. It taught me an important lesson. Your physical presence can be in the room, but it does not mean a thing to those kids if you are not spiritually there. And using spiritually I mean having your heart there to really want for three hours to make a difference in their day.12

Duty or exchange relationships can transform into gifting relationships. Many of the university students who initially mentored the required hour per week at an inner city school increased voluntarily (and with no incentive or pay-off) to double and triple that amount of time, shifting the relationship with their mentees from duty to gift. What started as duty evolved into gifting.

Properly done Weberian administration can meet material needs; anti-administration meets the needs of the spirit by reparative acts that speak to the soul. By gifting, the administrator contributes an answer to Lipsitz’ question. The gift is a soulful act that builds trust. It is in giving that we receive; the gift freely given will, if we attend, bring gifts in return—if we have no expectation of reciprocity. A gift must be a voluntary donation of the giver. One can commence an activity in exchange mode, then become committed to the activity because the activity provides emotional satisfaction—one volunteers a gift, and receives a gift in return, which commences a reparative process. A child’s smile is a meaningful gift.

Material needs, met within the framework of duty do not repair emotional damage. Emotional damage is addressed by freely given acts which witness to one’s caring about another individual. In admin-speak the dutiful employee tells clients their rights and responsibilities under the rules, indicates the papers and procedures necessary to transact their business. Employees are careful not to discriminate among clients or to make any statement that may obligate the agency or its employees beyond their normal responsibilities or duties.13 These activities fulfill Weberian responsibilities, but do not build relationships.

Collaborative, caring activity possesses the capacity to absorb and transcend the sickness of psychosis (Glass, 1989, chap. 9). Kramer (1995) describes the therapeutic process as an emotional experience. Witnessing and gifting bind people into sharing loving communities.14 This was the vision of Mary Parker Follett (1918/1998) as she attempted to build community in the tenements of our major cities. When people in conversation volunteer the statement, “I love my job,” and demonstrate this by their attentiveness to the client or the extra tasks they take on, the job activities become transformed from duties to gifts. The Weberian rationalist system grants equality to all, but excises passion. Witnessing and gifting restore passionate, caring
relationships that can invigorate the soul, restore trust, and build community. Robert Quinn (1996) reminds us that deep change—needed for reclaiming trust in the public service—is a spiritual process. To use the discourse of Farmer (1999), gifting constitutes the opposite polarity that energizes the administrative experience.

The Paradox of Gifting—a Sidebar

Paradox suggests that every situation can be looked at from divergent perspectives and as a result opposite conclusions can be found. The positive side of witnessing/gifting has been emphasized. What is a negative? There are two potential pitfalls to witnessing and gifting:

1) severing the relationship; and

Severing the relationship occurs when the witness/gifter tires of the giving role and retreats, or is forced by circumstances to move away. This can have the positive effect of forcing the giftee to become self-reliant. The negative side would dominate if the gifter leaves and the receiver sees the gifter as running out, like so many have done before. The receiver, having placed great faith in the gifter, is again betrayed. The wise gifter will explain the whole situation and give sufficient time for the receiver to readjust prior to the gifter’s departure.

The second pitfall is co-dependency—gifter and receiver becoming dependent on one another, each treating the other like an icon, seeing only the good. Neither gifter nor receiver can do wrong. This sets up the dyad for failure, for this perfect world cannot be maintained over time. We have seen this with child athletes whose parents achieve meaning in life through the exploits of their perfect children; and the children, in turn, idealize their parents. The children are informally pressured to perform to a high standard to please the parents. They are not allowed to be children; they must be perfect in every way. Transitioning to reality can be a difficult experience.

In the mentoring stories, insufficient time had elapsed for co-dependent relationships to develop, although one story is filled with warning signs:

I’ve had such a great time that I’ve decided to stick with a couple of them through high school. I ended up doing about 5 or 6 hours a week at the school with them. Then there’s one kid named Isaiah, his dad died about 9 months ago, so I started spending about 15 or so hours a week with him outside of school. It started out that I was going to take 4 or 5 of the boys to a local wrestling show. I told them that they couldn’t go unless I talked to their parents. Well, Isaiah’s mom was the only one that called. We talked for a long time, and I found out that he went to private Christian
school until his dad died. She loved the fact that I was an Evangelist, and said that Isaiah could go with me any time I wanted. So we started spending every Saturday together. We rode go-carts, played video games, saw movies, and did all kinds of things. My main focus was to reinforce just what a man is. Not just some one who’s a male, but what it means to be a man of integrity. He also goes with me on Wednesday nights to Lost Sheep. Lost Sheep is a homeless ministry that I’m a part of, every Wednesday night we feed between 200 and 300 homeless individuals at market square mall, downtown. Then after they’re fed I speak for about 30 to 45 minutes. We saw a lot of people come to the Lord, and I think it did him a lot of good to see some one not just talk it but to also walk it. I think the most amazing thing about it all was how fast it made a difference in his life. About the second or third time I went to pick him up his mom looked at me and said; ‘What have you done to my son?’ I said, ‘What’s wrong, has he been acting up?’ She said , ‘No, he’s been acting great, cleaning his room, doing his home work, and helping around the house.’ I just looked at her and said; ‘Well that’s what a man’s supposed to do,’ and Isaiah said ‘That’s right.’ I thought that it was so awesome that it had an effect so quickly. We’ve spent so much time together that he’s like my little brother. I’m glad I got to go to the schools and I’m going to stick with my class for the rest of the year, and I’m going to stay with a couple of them through high school, and I’ll probably stick with Isaiah till he’s all grown up. I wish I would have had someone like that in my life when I was a kid.  

That is a wonderful witness and gift to Isaiah and his mother, as well as to the mentor. However, the potential for disappointment and co-dependency is clearly present. Either Isaiah or the mentor, or both, may come to feel trapped by their relationship. Weber’s rational authority avoids both the pain and pleasure of personal relationships.

There are no easy answers. The golden mean, where two people are interdependent—neither dependent nor independent, where each renders fair judgments and is in relationship to the other, is not programmable, nor derived from an equation. It takes fallible, human judgment. Hopefully, the mentor and Isaiah can transition to a relationship where each sees and accepts the other’s strengths and weaknesses. 

CONCLUSION

Modern administration has become a unidimensional concept, concretized into Weberian legal-rational governance. This administrative model no longer has legitimacy in the eyes of many U.S. citizens. Paradox, dialectic, bipolarity, and multidimensionality are language terms that encourage the reader to conceptualize multiple truths useful for public administration. Anti-administration does not concretize or privilege a particular form of
governance relationship. It opens rather than closes discourse. Our suggestion emerges from Weber’s charismatic authority type. Bureaucrats: do not toss out legal rationalism, but energize the administrative system by combining rules with gifting and witnessing in order to bond citizens to the polity. Farmer (1999) adapted terminology from nuclear physics to argue that administrative phenomena are better understood by conceptualizing them in terms of anti-administration. We think administration is enriched by conceptualizing administrative relationships in terms of Weber’s opposites: rational and charismatic types. “Gifting” and “witnessing” are harsh terms to the ears of some; “bureaucrat” has a negative connotation for others. Appreciating and working with the paradox or bi-polarity present both within and between administration and anti-administration is the first step to redeeming our selves, and our polity.

As this is being finalized, three weeks after the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 on the World Trade Center, public opinion favorable toward public employees spiked to 65% (reported on NPR morning edition, October 1, 2001). Part of this rise in favor may be due to the failure of the private sector airlines to provide effective security for their passengers. However, likely the major stimulant to this dramatic change in public opinion was seeing public employees in New York working 16-hour shifts, concerned for the feelings of the families of those victims lying in the rubble. The public saw the actions of these public employees as not Weberian rule-governed, but as anti-admin, caring responses coming from the heart. The witnessing and gifting of these caring people reflect the core value of public service.

ENDNOTES

1. Although the psychological principles are universal, the case here refers to the U.S. context.

2. Putnam’s (1995) argument that the U.S. is dissipating social capital by the atrophy and contraction of secondary associations does not implicate directly the linkage between rulers and ruled, which is the focus here.

3. This paradox of objective effectiveness is detailed in Jaques (1990, chap. 2).

4. King et al. (1998) offer a gloss to the statistics.

5. Murray Edelman (1964) describes in depth the symbolic importance of political leaders and supposedly instrumental, secular institutions.


7. Lipsitz acknowledges the danger inherent in allowing acts of civil disobedience on the basis of conscience, but he supports civil disobedience anyway.
8. Meier (1997) makes the argument that the problem is of decision-making, not implementation. The general orientation of this paper draws inspiration from Gortner (1991).


10. This likely exacerbates the problem. The agency uses an automated phone answering system to save money, which increases frustration and anger because the citizen has difficulty making a human contact.

11. Based upon the senior author’s personal experience, almost all Americans returning from trips abroad in the 1950s had to open their baggage for inspection by U.S. Customs agents. Currently, baggage inspection of citizens returning from abroad is rare, indicating within the Customs service a shift of priorities and constrained resources.


13. Hirschhorn (1997) argues for an ethic of forgiveness, but that is difficult. Witnessing by a caring act demonstrates a constructive step toward building a bond without verbalizing either blame or forgiveness.

14. This paper emerged from a concern by Cunningham that the concept “servant leadership” was being used indiscriminately to describe activities unrelated to leadership. See Cunningham (in press) for an elaboration and critique of the concept. Witnessing and gifting may, but need not, be leadership acts.

15. Mentoring reflection experienced and written by an undergraduate student in the Introduction to Public Administration class, Fall, 2000.

16. Six months following the writing of this story the relationship continues, and reality is commencing. The receiver is testing the gifter by passive aggressive behavior. Thus far, the gifter is coping with this challenge.

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Cunningham and Schneider

587


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