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# VALUES AND ETHICS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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## VICTORIA'S SECRET:

### A REJOINDER AND AN AGENDA

Christopher Hodgkinson

*University of Victoria*

Professor Allison's (2002) critical discussion of the body of work christened the Victorian Quartet (1978; 1983; 1991; 1996) is to be commended on many grounds: perspicacity, scholarly diligence, and humour. It has given me to think --- always a demanding and somewhat unnerving process. In effect, the good doctor took the patient into the examination room and gently palpated the body for any lumps, lesions, or other abnormalities. He found a goodly few and arrived at a diagnosis of sub-chronic paradoxemia. Nevertheless he pronounced a more or less comforting prognosis of *mens sana in corpore sano*<sup>1</sup>, give or take a few kindly cautions. The chastened patient emits a sigh of relief.

Still, it might be possible to clarify or illuminate some aspects of this clinical process. I shall attempt such quibbling. I shall also attempt to sketch some future directions for practical research in this field of axiology. The good doctor and I are not at odds but, in the current euphemism, partners in the 'health care team'.

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## FACTS, FANCIES AND FOL-DE-ROL

My prejudice is that the foundations of administrative philosophy are best expressed in a propositional format. A proposition is a statement which, if rejected, can immediately be struck from the register but, if not, lingers on like a burr under the mental saddle and ideally acts as a provocation to argument, explication, elucidation, and the occasional increment to the body of knowledge. Allison illustrates this philosophical style in his treatment of the proposition that “the world of fact is given, the world of value made” (Hodgkinson, 1996, p. 133). This he would turn upon its head and set the right way up, as Marx claimed to have done to Hegel.

The intent of this proposition, as far as its author can recall, was to draw attention to the split between subjective and objective. That there is a given world of ineluctable fact is asserted by that archetype of all true philosophers, Alice, who

“ . . . had read several nice little stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, all because they would not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them: such as, that a red-hot poker will burn you if you hold it too long; and that, if you cut your finger very deeply with a knife, it usually bleeds; and she had never forgotten that, if you drink much from a bottle marked 'poison', it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.”<sup>2</sup>

Social construction of reality certainly exists but there always remains an irreducible 'hard core' of experiential reality that cannot be argued away or deconstructed à la Derrida<sup>3</sup>. The subjective/objective differentiation is real. One cannot be a philosopher with the toothache. Values belong on one side of this frontier --- not on the other. There are no values in the *world* any more than there are numbers or qualities (Hodgkinson, 2002). Values only exist in, and are a constituent part of, sentient consciousness --- that is, subjective

dimension. They are 'made' by sentient beings, and thereafter projected outwards into the world of action and behaviour. On the other side of the line -- out there --- is the brute reality, including our impending death, and it is *given*.

Of course such a distinction plunges us headlong into all the fuss about the naturalistic fallacy and how one cannot get an 'ought' from an 'is'. There are no 'oughts' out there, only 'is's'.

Allison claims I have 'conflated' Moore's (1903) gloss on Hume's Law (1739) and if by this he means I have combined (but not confused) them, then I plead guilty, subject to exoneration on the grounds that it is precisely this distinction (between Moore and Hume) that enables the paradigm to be constructed in the first place. Hume's Law (and it is still a law) states that one cannot legitimately get an ought from an is or, better, that human notions of right or wrong have no place in objective nature. Moore's 'good', on the other hand, is a matter of indefinability because of individual preference. It is Type III and we share Type III values with other animals and sentient beings such as insects, amoebas, and possibly viruses and complex molecules. This latter sort of attraction or repulsion, aggression or regression, has nothing whatsoever to do with 'right or wrong'. It is mechanical. When Holmes (1986) attempts to show that a teacher ought to teach (or else it would be the worse for the teacher) it is a misleading and amoral use of the term 'ought' or its equivalent 'should'. Of course there are all sorts of oughts and shoulds of this ilk but simple logical analysis shows that they are nearly always prudential (IIa) or conditioned (IIb). Why not kill? Because the consequences for the actor would be unpleasant. Why unpleasant? Because there is some sort of belief system constraining the authorities who command the consequences. Why the belief system? Here you have crossed over the line and imposed a subjective 'reality' not in the domain of Mother Nature<sup>4</sup>.

Why is it, I often wonder, that the naturalistic fallacy encounters resistance? Its antagonists include good scholars and scientists such as Holmes (1986), the historian Francis

Fukuyama (2002), and the sociobiologist E. O. Wilson (1998). Do they not realize that *if* values could be grounded objectively in scientific determinism then all our moral, ethical, and axiological problems would be over? Do they secretly wish for such a Final Solution? Or is it that they fall under the definition of a neurotic as 'Someone who knows that one and one make two, but simply can't *stand* it'?

### THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

Allison refers to a bedeviling paradox arising out of the paradigm, like a wraith on Hallowe'en, perhaps. Other aspects of value theory also perplex and bedevil him. These include the following: that Type I values occupy a superior position on the hierarchy; that 'good' is confined to the affective level; that the subrational and transrational value differentiation is not adequately explained; that Will trumps Reason trumps Emotion; that the paradigm is more a motivational than a valuational model; that values are 're-valued' within the paradigm; that group and individual values are confused; and that the paradigm only really applies (or *should* be applied) at the IIa level. All of these bedevilments are legitimate concerns and Allison rightly raises questions about them. But perhaps all of them may at least to some extent be exorcised by an exercise in what the current cliché calls 'connecting the dots'.

Let's try.

The first dot has to do with definition. As Richmon (2002) points out, the definitions of value are legion. Given this state of affairs the researcher is obliged to choose, to cut the Gordian knot at some point. My own choice stemmed from anthropology and the work of Clyde Kluckhohn (1962). His definition is extensive, practicable, and has withstood the test of time. In its full form values are referred to as '*distinctive*' of an individual or '*characteristic*' of a group (italics added). This means that values are *unique* to the individual and *descriptive* of a group. It means one can always average or statistically treat an aggregate of individual values (the only place where values are

*experienced*) in order to *characterize* the values of a collectivity, organization, or group. This is precisely what political polling accomplishes. But (a second dot) neither group nor individual values *compel*. Group values might have one stop smoking; one's own values might subscribe to this V4 value impress but . . . then one might light up.

The point is that the layers of value impress from V5 down to V2 are *collective* while only at V1, the individual level, do we enter into the moral and ethical domain, or even the affective domain of values proper. At V1 the analysis 'explodes' into the value paradigm. Only individuals can have value *experience*. One can be caught up in the mob, swept away by the herd, lose control in the auction room but the *experience*, however lowly, is yours and yours alone. Forever. The collective impress, powerfully deterministic as it is (we are all 'slaves' to fashion), is just something we have to contend with, *individually*.

And so it follows (dot three) that --- once we are into the value paradigm --- for the value actor Type I values are indeed 'more authentic, better justified, and all the rest of it' than lower levels on the hierarchy. I rest my case on Mohammed Atta as cited by Richmon (2002).

Another dot, one often missed, is that --- as I have repeatedly sought to explain --- any value whatsoever can be held at any paradigmatic level. So the taste for tea can be simple preference, a result of social conditioning, a consequence of nutritional study, or a mystical experience associated with esoteric Oriental rituals and an elite samurai aestheticism.

This brings us to the problem of transvaluation or re-valuation of values (an elusive dot). Allison's insight into the motivational character of the paradigm is perceptive and accurate. Substitute for motivation the concept of commitment and one can see at once how *any* value political correctness for example can be held with different levels of 'commitment'. At the Type I level political correctness might well be a function of a deeply held political ideology even if not

recognized as such or admitted to consciousness by the value actor. But we must be careful here for the true acid test of Type I values is whether one is prepared to die for them (e.g. Mr. Atta) or, more modestly and likely in postmodern Western society, whether one is prepared to lose one's job, sacrifice one's career or reputation, or otherwise exhibit like examples of radical and extreme commitment.

Another dot easily missed is what might be called the principle of subsumption. Any value in the hierarchy subsumes the same value at different levels. Thus, if I valued something so much that I would risk my livelihood for it then I would also hold the rational, conditioned, and preferential values that could be associated with that value. (Try this one on Canadian nationalism, or Quebec independence!<sup>5</sup>)

Worthy of repetition also is the dot that assigns the term 'good' a technical sense. In this sense it is not confined to the human species. All sentient beings appear to share the metavalues of survival, reproduction, and aversion to pain. But so far as we know, no species other than our own is plagued by concepts of right and wrong; or the knowledge of their certain death<sup>6</sup>. All creatures appear to have will (in the form of desire) but only humans are so pretentious as to claim free will. Again, I rest my case.

The paradigm attempts to incorporate the irrational with the rational; Dionysus with Apollo. Whether it succeeds or not is still an open question because the radical shift from the affective desired to the transcendently desirable remains profoundly mysterious. Or should I say paradoxical? Either way it is most certainly *real*. Or should I say factual? And it is true, as Allison implies, that the ordinary workaday level of administrative practice is Level II. Whether it ought to be so is another question. And it is not to say that administration is any more than a putative rational enterprise. Let's give Schiller the last word: *'Mit der Dummheit kämpfen Götter selbst vergebens.'*<sup>7</sup> (In the face of human folly even the gods themselves are helpless.)

## AVANTI

A paradigm is a paradigm only so long as it is not replaced, refuted, shifted, or subsumed within a larger paradigm. Since none of those things have happened we are left with the paradigm as it is. So, practically speaking, *what?* How to move forward? Space is limited but I would like to sketch briefly a few directions that might help form an agenda for research in the fertile fields of administrative axiology.

### *(1) The Administrative-Managerial Distinction:*

This distinction is already accepted as robust and Professor Allison has himself made valuable contributions in this area. But further dimensions could be explored, the aspects of dichotomies and continua clarified, and the areas of intercept and overlap studied in greater detail and depth, particularly with respect to value conflict and conflict resolution. Whether the world is becoming less administrative and more managerial is itself an interesting question.

### *(2) Administrative and Organizational Pathology:*

The social sciences can contribute more than they already have, especially social psychology and political science. To their findings we can add the generic question, Why (and how) do things go wrong *axiologically*? There is a natural reluctance amongst amateurs to explore the dark side, but amongst clinically oriented professional researchers there should be no inhibition. Investigative journalism is also to be admitted as a relevant discipline.

### *(3) Depth Studies:*

Professor Begley (1999) has already done pioneering work on the value audit. The next step would seem to be our own adaptation of something like the 'analytic hour' or traditional psychoanalysis. Given a truly credible and assured 'seal of the

confessional' valuable truths could emerge in the study of leadership. The work would be long but the pay-off might be great. Anthropological, ethnographic, bio-historical, and journalistic (in the best sense) works also feed into this stream. Greenfield would have had us include the arts.

*(4) Linguistic studies:*

Axiology is plagued by an excess of contentious lexemes. Action, attitudes, beliefs, motives, conscience, intuition, instincts, love, compassion, leadership --- all call for definition, explication, interpretation, and a greater understanding of the language games<sup>8</sup> played with this lexicon. Much of this work will be philosophical but the scope is interdisciplinary and there is even room for quantitative-empirical studies, e.g. using the Semantic Differential Instrument. For example, what does the Rokeach Value Instrument measure? Values, or attitudes-about-values?

*(5) Fallacies:*

Logical thought is difficult enough at the best of times but axiological thinking is even more difficult and subtle. The catalogue of fallacies, already large, needs further compilation --- although perhaps always defying completion --- and the encyclopedia should be included in the pedagogy of administrative training. We need this urgently as an 'aid to navigation': *how to think straight and not crooked*<sup>9</sup>. This is no obstacle to 'common sense', it is the salvation of it.

*(6) Will:*

The omega factor is critical to administration and leadership (Hodgkinson, 2002). How to go about investigating it? First steps must be philosophical but psychological investigation is by no means excluded. This, of necessity, engages other difficult axiological problems such as desire and consciousness (cf. 3 above) but the peculiar position of leadership studies should be to provide extra motivation for tackling these seemingly

intractable difficulties. Maybe the breakthrough will come from us?

*(7) The Phenomenology of Desire:*

This is also at one and the same time the phenomenology of the self. Is there a self that is in any way unified or consistent over time (cf. 3 & 6 above)? How does V5-2 impress determine the self? Interdisciplinary and cross-cultural studies cry out to be undertaken. Values lie along a continuum from behaviour (where the value actor encounters a resistant world of value) down to the most secretive and intimate depths of motivation and the very essence of being. Yes, the area is forbidding and difficult. But how exciting!

*(8) Value Conflict and Conflict Resolution:*

Considerable activity has occurred in this domain but, while the general logic has already been set out (Hodgkinson, 1996), it is questionable whether the paradigm has been employed or even considered in much of it. Consequently this avenue of exploration remains wide open and case studies could abound.



This rough sketch is enough to show that there are vast regions of unexplored territory in the axiology of administration, enough to keep battalions of researchers busy into the far future. It is my belief that, amongst all the social sciences and humanities, educational administration is a great place to stand. It occupies an interdisciplinary nexus which affords the researcher and scholar unique liberties and opportunities. The constraints are minimal and the independence maximal. In the oncoming generations of graduate students, and not excluding practitioners, who knows what discoveries may be made? A terra incognita lies before us.

**ANDIAMO!**



Christopher Hodgkinson is Professor Emeritus at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. Much of his acclaimed scholarly work in the areas of axiology, philosophy, and educational administration can be found in four books he has authored, most recently *Administrative Philosophy: Values and Motivations in Administrative Life*.

### Notes

1. Since Allison has resorted to Greek (anabasis) and Latin as well as old English (wealdan, wielden) I take the liberty of an occasional use of an occasional use of German and Italian.
2. Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, Chapter 1.
3. See also Umberto Eco's The Limits of Interpretation, Indiana University Press, 1990.
4. With apologies to Clark Gable in Gone with the Wind, 'Frankly, Mother Nature doesn't give a damn.'
5. Or perhaps most politicians on most issues.
6. Heidegger's Dasein with its consequence of Angst.
7. Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, Maid of Orleans, act III, scene 6.
8. Wittgenstein's concept is still valid and has been unduly neglected in the political and administrative literature.
9. Robert H. Thouless wrote Straight and Crooked Thinking in 1930. Now out of print after countless editions, and out of copyright, this great book would well serve as a basic text for the present and future generations.

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