

The American Society for Public Administration's code of professional ethics culminates in an admonition to respect, support, and even study constitutions, both state and federal. However, an understanding of constitutionalism is an often neglected or perfunctory element in the educational program for public administrators. In his influential 1887 essay on public administration, Woodrow Wilson reasoned that because there is near universal agreement about constitutional principles in modern society, concentration should be chiefly on problems of effective management. The recent rebirth of concern for education in professional ethics generally and ethics in public administration in particular also reveals a tendency to approach the issues in a way that is still insufficiently connected to constitutional norms. The remedy for such difficulties is a critique of the ideological temper on the basis of what might be called an ethic of constitutional government, which to the extent that it can be elaborated satisfactorily should be an important component of the education offered to future public administrators.

THE PLACE OF CONSTITUTIONALISM IN THE EDUCATION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS

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The problem addressed in this article concerns an unduly neglected element in the education offered to prepare men and women for public service in the United States. The element to which I refer is an understanding of constitutionalism, both as a matter of principles and of ends and as a history of authoritative practices. Inattention to constitutionalism is not, of course, complete. The American Society for Public Administration's (ASPA) *Code of Ethics and Implementation Guidelines*, to its credit, stresses the need for professional administrators to "respect, support, study, and when necessary, work to improve federal and state constitutions, and other laws which define the relationships among public agen-

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cies, employees, clients and all citizens" (ASPA, 1984, p. 1). This provision of the *Code* is the only one that refers to a distinct writing or text as an authority to respect and to study, if the administrator wants some guidance in matters of ethics. I would also mention the work of Storing (1980) and of Rohr (1978, 1986), whose writings have done much to restore constitutionalism to view as a crucial element in the field of public administration. These developments nevertheless struggle against a long-established tendency to gloss over constitutionalism, a tendency which has important theoretical roots and which has helped to shape an approach to administrative education that gives the study of constitutional practice a very marginal role.

It is not my purpose here to develop an account of the content of constitutionalism, except in a very general way, but rather to reflect on the ideas which led to a certain lack of interest in the issue within public administration and which still today affect the way we view the task of educating administrators in principles by which to guide their work. I contend that a turning away from constitutionalism is not accidental, as I will show by examining W. Wilson's (1887/1941) classic essay, "The Study of Administration." I further contend that recent attention given to ethics in government is still, to a large extent, innocent of a distinct connection to constitutional principles; Thompson's (1985) "The Possibility of Administrative Ethics" will help to illustrate this point. In the movement from Wilson's study to Thompson's case for a new examination of "ethics" in administration, we can see both the arguments for marginalizing constitutionalism and why an otherwise persuasive plea for the "possibility" of administrative ethics remains contentless when not linked with the existing constitutionalist ethic. Finally, I turn to a distinctly less theoretical work, Stockman's (1986) memoir, *The Triumph of Politics*, because I think Stockman's career illustrates the path of a certain type of mind (an increasingly common type of mind) in contemporary public service and illustrates why that type of mind could profit from a deeper education in constitutionalism. Constitutionalism, properly understood, contain a kind of antidote to the tendency toward "ideology," which Stockman and others harbor and whose consequences he tried to explain.

Wilson's (1887/1941) "The Study of Administration," the centenary of which was recently observed, makes the case for professionalized administrative study. His argument centered on the need for a distinction between politics and administration designed to allow administration its own distinctive sphere within which it can profit, literally, from the

cultivation of businesslike methods. Wilson's argument did not merely call attention to an existing distinction that has been overlooked. It tried to *create* the distinction within an American governmental outlook that is too comprehensively democratic or populist in tone. To do so, Wilson undertook what verged on a critique of democracy in America, arguing that popular controls are too intrusive and that the public is too distrustful of expertise (pp. 491-493). Wilson's critique has, for my present purpose, two features worth noting. First, he argued that fundamental questions of authority and sovereignty are the truly central questions of politics and precede administrative problems in importance. But these questions, he insisted, can eventually be *settled* in a relatively final way for all practical purposes. Once a people settled the issue of who should rule, *then* proper attention could be paid to administrative problems and their more competent resolution (pp. 482-485). Sometimes, however, this closure was difficult to reach: "Once a nation has embarked on the business of manufacturing constitutions, it finds it exceedingly difficult to close out that business and open for the public a bureau of skilled, economical administration" (p. 489). An obsession with popular control through legislative oversight and freedom for political criticism could become obstructive, once the moment was reached when administrative development should become the focus of attention. Anticipating the end of ideology thesis (and blissfully unaware of the emerging challenge to constitutional democracy from the left), Wilson suggested that fundamental authority issues can be decisively resolved in relatively final ways, after which a more technical era of governmental issues dawns in the form of administrative problems addressable with the "methods of the counting house." He saw this condition emerging in America—hence his criticism of populism and of the "fullness" with which we have "realized popular rule" (p. 491). Indeed, it was because constitutional problems were now more or less settled that a window of opportunity opened for American constitutional democracy to turn its mind to administrative competence (cf. W. Wilson, 1961, pp. 46-49; see also Kirwan, 1977, pp. 326-330).

Yet the insufficiency of this thesis emerges in several distinct ways in Wilson's argument, which brings me to my second point concerning his criticism of 19th-century American democracy. Wilson found himself obliged to admit, first of all, that administrative issues affect constitutional authority and, second, that even thoroughly skilled and effective administrators need, ultimately, some focus beyond their managerial craft. Understanding administration, he argued, will inspire reflection about the

proper distribution of authority and claims for the suitable discretionary authority to be vested in professional administration (p. 497). This cautiously worded admission might suggest to an ordinary American populist certain dangers, especially to those who notice Wilson's explicit readiness to adopt European, even Prussian, models. Anticipating this objection, Wilson asked what will prevent an "illiberal officialism," an "offensive official class"?—a "distinct, semi-corporate body with sympathies divorced from those of a progressive, free-spirited people, and with hearts narrowed to the meanness of a bigoted officialism." "A great many very thoughtful persons" may choose to raise this issue (p. 500; cf. Rohr, 1978, pp. 22-26).

This altogether reasonable question is not, be it noted, a question about effective external controls over administrators. It is rather a question about their hearts, about the spirit which will animate them and their work, and it implies a question about the ultimate ends which they serve. Will that spirit be "illiberal"? Wilson's answer is that "administration in the United States [unlike in Prussia] must be at all points sensitive to public opinion" and administrators must have "steady, hearty allegiance to the policy of the government they serve" (p. 500).¹ Wilson suggested the need to teach administrators a loyalty to something beyond professional managerial norms, so their administrative competence coupled with significant discretionary authority can be clearly seen to be in the service of a public good beyond itself. But the defect in Wilson's position should be clear. He relied on the amorphous concept of public opinion, which he described in this very essay as too fluid, populist, and contemptuous of executive expertise (at least in the Anglo-American experience). He failed to draw the all-important distinction between what "public opinion" has firmly, coherently, and consistently upheld, namely, the U.S. Constitution, and the more fluctuating opinions and passions by which it responds to current events. A simple maxim of loyalty to public opinion cannot adequately serve the purpose that Wilson intended: the simultaneous critique of intrusive populism and the creation of visible loyalty to something higher than professional expertise. Wilson's wording unwittingly sacrificed the first aspect and carelessly endorsed the overly democratic tendency he had earlier criticized. But his recognition of the need for some set of administrative loyalties outside those of the professional corps indicates a genuine need. That need can be addressed if we turn to the constitution and constitutionalism less as a source of negative restrictions on government and more as an act by which the public authoritatively

establishes norms, practices, and a certain outlook on the spirit and tone of government.

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If Wilson tentatively conceded the need for something beyond professional administrative norms, surely this was for him rather like an afterthought. What remains as his legacy is the vision of administration detached from politics, enabled thereby to pursue the managerial skills that will permit more effective performance in public service. The influence of that model has been enormous, no doubt because it appeals to certain tendencies in the American character and certainly also to certain legitimate needs. Some interesting consequences of this model, however, appear in the attempt by Thompson (1985) to establish the "possibility" of administrative ethics. Thompson's argument for the role of ethics in public administration began with recognition that a case for administrative ethics must overcome a principled resistance to the idea that ethics is relevant. The objection does not come from Machiavellians who contest any useful connection between ethics and government altogether. Rather, Thompson addressed those who admit the possibility of an ethics relevant to government but deny it a place specifically in administration. They incline to think that administration in the proper sense "precludes the exercise of moral judgment," and they tend to hold this view for one of two reasons. Either they believe that administrative duties require a sort of neutrality, in the sense that the administrator should suppress personal moral conviction in order to follow organization aims, or they believe that moral responsibility belongs to the organization, not to the individual administrator, and that the individual administrator may not rightly be held morally accountable (p. 555). These positions were expressed in a manner more sophisticated than Wilson's, but they reflected what he meant by an administrative outlook proceeding with the mentality of business and without a vital connection to politics.

Thompson skillfully outlined the reasons why each of these relatively common views could be considered weak. I will not here discuss his critical arguments against these views but want to consider rather the result which emerges from them. Thompson suggested that independent moral judgment cannot reasonably be eliminated from administration. He concluded that

we are forced to accept neither an ethic of neutrality that would suppress independent moral judgment, nor an ethic of structure that would ignore individual moral agency in organizations. To show that administrative ethics is possible is not of course to show how to make it actual. But understanding why administrative ethics is possible is a necessary step not only toward putting it into practice but also toward giving it meaningful content in practice. (p. 560)

It is, of course, correct that the problem of content is crucial. Once specious arguments for avoiding moral responsibility are overcome, then the next issue must be, how are we to understand the content of moral responsibility? We should not uncritically assume that more awareness of moral responsibility is necessarily a good thing, in any and every situation, without regard to the content of the moral sense. It *may* be a good thing, but mention of the unattractive disposition called "moralism" serves to remind us of the possibility of excess, disproportion, and fanaticism in these matters. Thompson's own examples of the moral conscience at work included a situation where an administrator felt morally justified in remaining in his job (rather than resigning) while so opposed to an organization's policy that he would believe it right to pursue "covert obstruction," perhaps including the adoption of "extreme methods" (p. 558); Thompson also mentioned the ultimate in extreme methods: giving "secrets to enemy agents," an act which would "count as treason" (p. 557).² Furthermore, to heighten the sense of moral responsibility, Thompson argued that administrators should be held accountable not only for what they do but sometimes for what they fail to do, that they are responsible for the outcome of policies and not just for their own personal intentions, and that they need be held to a "higher standard than that to which we hold ordinary citizens" (p. 560). Thompson thus argued that administrative ethics is possible, but he also suggested that ethics can lead to certain extreme possibilities and can place a potentially heavy burden of responsibility. He was right to call attention to extreme situations, for ethics can lead in such directions. But this fact makes it plain that we need to learn not only the possibility of ethics but how to educate the ethical sense, for not every extreme action justified by an appeal to "conscience" is really justifiable.

Thompson gave us an opening toward administrative ethics but little guidance on how to fill that opening. The emptiness of the newly awakened administrative conscience he depicted is striking. It discovers the inadequacy of the antiethics based on administrative structure and neu-

trality and thereby acquires a receptivity to new issues, new problems and, surely, new levels of controversy. But once the administrator has recognized the right and the duty to make moral judgments, where then does he or she look for guidance in the proper formation of these moral judgments? It seems insufficient to say, "Look into your conscience." It should be obvious that many dangers lurk in the purely private conscience, which can be too easily confused with personal inclination. A doctrine of moral judgment and responsibility that relies purely on the sense of private conscience risks indulging those who confuse the intensity of their personal convictions with the defensibility of those convictions, as Thompson perhaps admitted, although with insufficient emphasis (p. 560). Administrative ethics is possible, we may concede, but so is moral fanaticism. The point suggests not that ethics is unwise but that the ethical or moral sense requires (a) a guide, (b) instruction in the possibilities and limits of conscience, and (c) an understanding that moral sincerity is not sufficient in and of itself. Ethics is an area which is necessary and yet also inherently controversial and even, in its way, obscure. It is an area where one can do worse than keep in mind the reasons once offered by Madison for moderation in matters regarding our opinions: Reason and passions have a "reciprocal" influence on each other and the "institutions of man" are so imperfectly delineated that it is extraordinarily difficult to deal with them in terms that are precise and unequivocal (Madison, Nos. 10 and 37, in Rossiter, 1961). When we learn the unavoidability of personal judgment, even within the context of large, well-structured organizations, we need next to ask, how does the sense of moral autonomy acquire a disciplined understanding of social, political, and historical context, so that it does not remain empty, merely formal, and possibly dangerously subjective?³ If we recognize the possibility of ethics, do we then proceed as if there are no standards beyond our private judgments, or are there, in fact, authoritative, *public* principles to which the conscientious administrator owes some considered deference?

It is striking that both Wilson and Thompson (unlike the ASPA *Code of Ethics and Implementation Guidelines*) leave us with no clear sense of distinct and useful *public* standards in these matters. In Wilson's case, the reasoning seems to be that public standards are too blindly democratic to be of much use; but he himself conceded somewhat half-heartedly that a loyalty to public opinion may be necessary. However, he did not seem to make this element of loyalty to "public opinion" part of the real *study* of administration. As one example of the underlying difficulty, Wilson's own

argument contained a *critique* of public opinion and its tendency toward inappropriate interference with certain operations of government. This factor alone illustrated that an official needs a refined sense of what public opinion is.⁴ One element of education for public administration should be an investigation of what American constitutional democracy is and how one best practices a serious loyalty to its norms and goals.

In Thompson's case, he showed the inadequacy of relying on a position of neutrality or of abandonment of responsibility to the organization. But this awakened conscientiousness is given no place to turn, no sense of authoritative guidance. A moral vacuum remains.⁵ It can be filled, to be sure, by any number of competing moral theologies or moral doctrines available today, but this only raises the question whether it is sufficient to be uncritically open to such possibilities, without any standard to apply in evaluating them and their suitability for public life and public business. If Wilson's argument culminated in a somewhat blind grasping for "public opinion" as touchstone, Thompson's arrived at a sense of openness to something beyond the organization while allowing us to believe that choice at this level is primarily personal and individual and yet morally weighty. Neither of these arguments so much as hinted at the thesis stated in the *ASPA Code of Ethics and Implementation Guidelines*, in the form of a professional obligation toward constitutionalism. Neither would appear to accept that public life is guided, in its actual operations, by principles that one could consider ethically authoritative.

To suggest more clearly why a new sense of constitutionalism as principle and end might be valuable, I want to consider the case conveniently presented by Stockman's (1986) revelations because his example is quite instructive about certain common difficulties in ethics. Stockman's career illustrates well the mentality of a certain kind of talented, vigorous, and more or less well-educated young man (educated in the famous 1960s) who approached government with what could be described as an intensely active conscience. Yet he claimed to learn that his approach was somehow unsuited to constitutional government. The experiences he related are worth some consideration.

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Stockman's story is that of a man of principle given the position from which he could pursue the implementation of his principles.⁶ He came into

the Office of Management and Budget believing that he should pursue the program of "supply-side economics." With great enthusiasm and enviable energy, Stockman struggled to achieve his cause, only to meet what he thought was a severe defeat. *The Triumph of Politics* is chiefly concerned with a rather detailed account of the machinations within the Reagan administration and between the administration and Congress, as the plans for the tax cut and then the budget reductions were formulated, presented to Congress, fought through to victory or defeat or, in many cases, to some sort of compromise. I do not intend to concentrate on this part of the tale here but, rather, to consider the larger framework which Stockman gave to his experiences, for the book does offer an overall interpretation—actually, two different interpretations—of what is going on in American government and of the likely fate that Stockman thinks will befall those who enter government with strong commitments to principles.

The first interpretation is suggested by the title: Politics will defeat reason, sound economic planning, financial prudence, economic doctrine (such as the program of supply-side theory) and finally, most important of all, principle itself. Politics means in this case the mentality of institutions like Congress, presented here as entirely the captive of powerful but hidden interest groups who cannot restrain themselves when given the opportunity to acquire benefits from the federal government. This hoary theme—"the special interests" and their malignant power—is given a treatment worthy of the welfare state by the fact that Stockman viewed social programs as just another part of the famous government pork barrel (see Stockman, 1975). Stockman held that the special interests are, in the long run, certain to dominate institutions like the Congress and thus to permeate the very heart of government, with the result that those dedicated to principle will fail to achieve their program.

Now if this lesson is correctly derived from the experience, Stockman's message to those concerned with ethics might be of two possible kinds. One result of the experience could be the view that politics is so thoroughly controlled by self-regarding interests that it is utterly useless to care about principle. On this conclusion, perhaps the reasonable outcome would be a posture of cynicism: Unable to defeat the interests, one might as well join them and play their game better than they do. Another possible result, however, might be to conclude that principle is so inefficacious in politics that one must adopt extreme methods, be they the methods of the covert obstructor or the methods of aggressive confrontation of the "system," attacking from the outside and with other means than debate

and elections. On this conclusion, the adherent of principle would best become a protester against the system itself. The Stockman (1986) story might be read to lead in either direction. But the story as first presented could hardly lead to the "conservative realism" which Stockman thought that he had learned from Reinhold Niebuhr and Walter Lippmann and which served at one time as his reason for returning from the feverish world of student protest against the government to a quest for influence and competence within the government (pp. 24-26).

We need to ask whether Stockman's experiences actually led to these extreme results or whether the lesson would be different if he had interpreted his situation more carefully. It is striking that at the end of the book, he reported being deeply troubled by the financial prospects of the country, but he seems to be neither a cynic nor an extremist. He may, perhaps, have failed to see clearly where his own experiences led. However that might be, to see why neither cynicism nor extremism is the proper conclusion to be drawn from this tale, let me draw attention to another aspect of Stockman's story, which allows us to correct the lesson he drew from these events with a truer account of what they mean. I suggest that the better conclusion to draw is not the sordid victory of politics over principle but a more interesting victory of politics in a different sense over ideology, or to put it in finer terms, of consent over doctrine. Indeed, in suggesting this point, I follow certain elements of the Stockman story that he himself proposed but did not reflect on sufficiently; they suggest the need for his second, rather underdeveloped interpretation of government. Stockman's deeper difficulties derived not from the problems he had with Congress or with other members of the Reagan administration but from a certain way of thinking about American government and about the role of ideas like supply-side economics within it. The difficulty can be seen if we consider Stockman's reflections on ideology, for an important element of his story could in fact be described as "the defeat of an ideologue." In *this* story lies an illustration of the difficulties faced by those who adhere enthusiastically to principle while derogating the established forms of constitutional democracy. These forms, the constitutional forms, erect significant barriers in front of the schemes of principled men, in a way which is itself based on a certain principle about how government must work in our circumstances.⁷

Stockman began his book with a description of his education in politics and government. Disarmingly frank, he entitled this chapter "The Odyssey of an Ideologue." The word ideologue seems quite apt. Speaking of the

celebrated *Atlantic* article by Greider (1981), Stockman (1986) said that Greider rightly portrayed a "radical ideologue" who had "burst upon the scene of national governance" and whose approach was "principled," a case of "idealism" at work (p. 6). The Stockman program "started out as an idea-based Reagan Revolution," or so he thought, but it ended with Stockman recognizing that the program belonged to himself and a "small cadre of supply-side intellectuals" and was "not Ronald Reagan's real agenda in the first place" (pp. 11, 156-157). Here are all the key words of the Stockman political universe: ideology, revolution, and intellectuals, set off against one of many politicians who give a verbal allegiance to the program but who are in the end more pragmatic, devious or complex.⁸ Stockman held a view requiring "relentless" battle in the name of principle against interests, embracing the value of the "creative destruction" which the market requires (citing Schumpeter), preferring "theory" to "history," calling for "perpetual revolution" (pp. 136, 312). This aggressive outlook, with its penchant for theories and abstractions, characterized Stockman's entire political education. He moved from one ideology to another: fundamentalism, the soft-core Marxism of the student left, conservative realism, free-market economics, Lowi-ite opposition to "interest-group" liberalism (to which we shall return shortly), and finally supply-side economics. To be sure, an important part of Stockman's early development had to do with the rejection of a certain kind of ideology: He abandoned the left, he said, because it contained too many who "wanted to bring about change with the barrel of a gun" (p. 23); in the context, he recognized in himself a preference for "democracy" and its methods. Nevertheless, like many who emerged from the charged climate of the 1960s, he returned to the mainstream of American public life while retaining a taste for a politics dominated by ideology, although it was now the economic theories of the right that moved him.

When Stockman talked about ideology, he meant a set of beliefs that are bookish and theoretical in origin, that provide a comprehensive "grand doctrine" (p. 43), that entail a set of policies and actions which need to be undertaken together (piecemeal approaches undermine the effectiveness of the ideology), that justify a decisive break with existing patterns of action and thought, and that should be subjected to compromise as little as possible. The authority of an ideology derives not from its degree of public support, the deliberate, free "consent" of those who may be governed by it, but from its intellectual plausibility. Ideologies can be anywhere on the political spectrum, right or left. In a number of amusing

asides, Stockman drew examples and similes from *the* example of ideological politics in this century: the case of the Soviet regime. Thus he likened a gathering of senior House Democrats to a “politburo of the welfare state”; he referred to his own reluctance to compromise at one point in these terms—only half a joke: “Revolutionaries don’t cut deals, they cut heads”; when he began to have some doubts about supply-side orthodoxy, he called himself the Trotsky of the movement (pp. 121, 171, 302).

Stockman approached his tasks with a firm principle in mind and thought that principle—he used the term “ideology”—required a determined, perhaps ruthless confrontation of existing programs, policies, and institutions. Can we then say that Stockman illustrated “ethics” at work? He seemed “committed” to a principle, he rejected expediency, he sought higher ground than ordinary political deal making, and he did not wish simply to conform but to shape policy in accordance with his views. He was of the right, not the left, but this made little difference. The ideology to which he was committed was stated in terms of the general good, he claimed, for it sought the liberation of productive work, a method for rejecting “weak claims, not weak clients,” and new brakes on the pursuit of special interests. Yet it seems incomplete to call Stockman’s case an illustration of ethics at work, precisely for the reason that his position was one driven by ideology and it seems imperative to distinguish ideology from ethics.

There are a number of important reasons for making that distinction, but one among them is suggested, again, by Stockman. At certain points in his book, he hinted at but failed to develop another account of what he encountered than the simple one of principle (“ideology”) confronting naked self-interest. For example, he eventually found himself forced to admit that his economic program was not merely a matter of financial planning but was “a political revolution” at basis, which one would presume, in Stockman’s terms, to mean not just an issue of principle versus interests but of one set of interests versus another (pp. 303-304). This insight, if explored and deepened, might suggest the need to recognize that more is involved in the conflict than abstract truth in one set of hands and greed in the other. It might suggest that the problems of economic growth and balanced budgets involve issues not only of financial loss and gain but of influence, status, and power—on both sides—and that it is unwise to be dogmatically certain about the superior intellectual rigor of one’s own views. More significant, Stockman at the very end seemed to grasp dimly the specific implications of this more political understanding

of his failures. He saw that "the politics of American democracy made a shambles of my anti-welfare state theory" because that theory "rested on the illusion that the will of the people was at drastic variance with the actions of the politicians" (p. 376). Stockman meant that his ideology led him to a profound misunderstanding of the popular will. He had thought that there were only narrow interests who pursued the welfare state and that their errand boys in the legislatures, once confronted and exposed, would lose influence to spokesmen for reduced government activities. But his was a mistake, he finally came to see. Those

who suggest the existence of an anti-statist electorate are in fact demanding that national policy be harnessed to their own particular doctrine of the public good. The actual electorate, however, is not interested in this doctrine. . . . The spending politics of Washington do reflect the heterogeneous and parochial demands that arise from the diverse, activated fragments of the electorate scattered across the land. What you see done in the halls of the politicians may not be wise, but it is the only real and viable definition of what the electorate wants. (p. 377)

These crucial admissions suggest one of the most important difficulties in the ideological posture which Stockman assumed. His doctrines made him blind to political reality. The welfare state is not an accidental creation of conniving politicians and obscure interests. It represents what the public has quite deliberately chosen; the people are "interested in getting help from the government to compensate for a perceived disadvantage" (p. 377). If this is the case, then it seems necessary to say that the supporters of the various government programs comprising the welfare state cannot be stigmatized merely as special interests. Stockman finally conceded that

the triumphant welfare state principle means that economic governance must consist of a fundamental trade-off between capitalist prosperity and social security. As a nation we have chosen to have less of the former in order to have more of the latter. . . . Social democracy . . . encourages the electorate to fragment into narrow interest groups designed to thwart and override market outcomes. That these pressure groups prevail most of the time should not be surprising. The essential welfare state principle of modern American governance sanctions both their role and their claims.

Viewed in this light, our political system performs its intended function fairly well. Its search to balance and calibrate the requisites of capitalism with social democracy's quest for stability and security has produced a surprising result. By any comparative standard, American politicians have created a more favorable balance between the two than in any other advanced industrial democracy. (pp. 391-392)

It should be obvious that this account constitutes an implicit repudiation of the ideology-versus-interests framework dominating the earlier parts of Stockman's book. It shows that the categories of the ideologue were profoundly deceptive about the character of policies and political institutions. Stockman, it turns out, was hardly conservative at all: The Congress acted conservatively, in preserving the basics of the welfare state, in accordance with a certain firm if rough consent on the part of the public, while the Stockman program, as he often admitted, was revolutionary in its attempt to overturn that existing consensus. This late turnabout in Stockman's understanding illustrates an important effect of constitutional forms—they make rapid and revolutionary change driven by ideological fashion quite difficult, and they force us to see that an established and settled policy is likely to be such because it reflects the public mind, or so it is wise to assume until a convincing case is made to the contrary. Ideology blinds us to a certain deference that ought to be given in a constitutional democracy to both the processes of government designed to elicit deliberate consent and the policies that come to be firmly established through deliberate consent. It cannot be the case that "ethics" could require of us either self-deception about what is the actual state of affairs or indifference to the consent of the public. I would suggest that a critique of ideology or of the ideologue must be considered not only useful but, in a certain sense, a moral imperative following as a direct consequence from the preference for government by deliberate consent.

It is the reluctance of the ideologue to perceive that which is established by consent, the ideologue's inclination toward coercion and intolerance, that renders his or her orientation in public business so dubious; the same qualities lead to the excessive denigration of governing institutions which recurred again and again in Stockman's account. It is self-evident that "ethics" involves the critique of narrow self-interest and therefore of processes of government dominated by self-interest. However, this point is insufficient for delimiting what ethics requires because by itself the criticism of selfish interests fails to draw a distinction between criticism drawn from the basis of a potentially intolerant and coercive ideology (often concealing hidden, unreflective interests, while presenting itself as idealism) and criticism drawn from the basis of the deliberate sense of the community and its permanent and aggregate interests.⁹

The position I have begun to sketch here suggests the need for a critique of the ideologue and of ideology for two different kinds of reasons. The first concerns the ineffectiveness in our context of the ideologue's ap-

proach. The abstract, inappropriately theoretical character of ideology distorts perceptions and hinders the prudence which makes one able to judge accurately the difference between what is achievable and what is only to be wished for. The second is moral or ethical; it is based on the fact that we have freely established, by deliberate consent, certain ways of governing and administering that dispose us toward such methods as persuasion, the free solicitation and free giving of consent, and a process of negotiation and compromise in many (not all) situations. These same methods dispose us against the self-righteous coerciveness and dogmatism of the ideologue. They are methods based on a "morality of consent," whose grounds go deep into the tradition of liberal theory and governmental practice.¹⁰ They are methods the need for which is suggested by a late realization of Stockman's that in the struggle for influence over policy, "raw hunger for power was as important a part of the equation as pure ideas" (p. 243).

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The view stated here is susceptible to the objection that ideology is unavoidable, which can be extended into the proposition that even the methods of nonideological democratic politics contain a hidden ideology of sorts. This view is indeed the one advocated by Lowi (1979) in his very influential *The End of Liberalism*, a book which provides the framework to which Stockman (1986) turned when he sought to put his experiences into perspective (pp. 32-33). I want to conclude with a comment on Lowi's book because the ideas advanced in it make the case for my critique of ideology more difficult.

Stockman's progress was from the new left toward the right, but the road went through the *End of Liberalism*. To the extent that Stockman had an understanding of how American government works, apart from the notions afforded by supply-side economics, his ideas seem to have been guided by Lowi's important thesis about the dominance of "interest-group liberalism" in the contemporary welfare state. Lowi (1979) called into question the common view that American government fosters a politics discouraging ideology and favoring those who pursue their "interests" from government and who know how to negotiate with others in order to give and get specific benefits. Lowi thought that the seeming pragmatism of American government masks deeper processes in which public philos-

ophies form, shape perceptions, and finally control the general orientation of policies. He supported this thesis with ingenious and quite illuminating analyses of various policy areas, attempting to show the presence not so much of prudence, improvisation, or reasonable deliberation but of an all-encompassing ideology called "interest group liberalism" (see chap. 3).

Lowi argued, and in this point lies the real passion of his book, that the result of interest-group liberalism is an absence of morality in government and especially in administration (pp. 125-126). The New Deal intellectuals, he suggested, wanted more government programs, more "administration," but were hesitant to allow the state to be too coercive. They preferred government and administration through negotiation, or bargaining; in Lowi's account, they adopted a doctrinaire preference for bargaining processes, wanting formal legislation to set only the vaguest of standards while administrators worked out through negotiation and compromise the vital specifics of programs.¹¹ The mentality behind this preference is what he called interest-group liberalism — condemned by Lowi for its fear of law, principle, and morality, that is, clear, distinct stands taken by lawmakers subject to democratic election. He saw at hand a new impoverishment of democratic politics because delegating authority to faceless bureaucrats and permitting them to negotiate with the affected interests allows insufficient opportunity for public control. The administrative process comes to substitute for "law," the authoritative stand taken by government in explicit formal rules.

My purpose here is not to evaluate Lowi's thesis but to comment on Stockman's response to it. If Lowi is correct about a dominant public philosophy in the welfare state, or about what seems close to an ideology,¹² then it may be the case that the public world is permeated by ideology more deeply than old-fashioned pluralists have believed. In that case, it may be that Stockman was on the right path in assuming that the way to fight an ideology is with a new set of ideas. This seems to be the world of Stockman and of those who inspired him, and it is perhaps Lowi's world as well. The approach has the merit of taking ideas seriously and taking ideology seriously. My caveat is only this: Those whose politics are energized by ideas need to include among them the idea of constitutional democracy. Stockman came late to the realization that the structures of constitutional government, despite their untidiness, have produced a set of policies which in fact capture a tolerable balance between conflicting interests in a free economy and a welfare state. As such, these structures have forced, at least on these issues, a certain practical level of agreement

and policy effectiveness even when the principles applied are somewhat contradictory or conflicting. The structures create institutional practices which elicit and establish consent and shape the sort of leadership capable of maintaining practical agreement. One might call this the ethic of constitutional government. It is an ethic that is really in effect, not a wished-for utopia, and one might suggest that an education in this ethic, toward which even Stockman seemed finally to move, is precisely the step needed to inform the administrator whose conscience has awakened. A politics centered on ideas, public philosophies, or ideologies will likely be a polarizing and confrontational politics. It need not be too much so, however, if a part of those ideas is the ethic of constitutional democracy, which requires attention to the building of a sustainable public disposition expressed in deliberate consent.

When persons in government become aware of the "possibility" of ethical responsibility and accountability, a vast domain opens, which can be filled by moral principles shallow or deep, ignorant or informed, idiosyncratic or tutored by public as well as private experience. As we can learn from the Stockman case, the "odyssey" of ideologues, of whom we have too many, is likely to be frustrated and ineffective while constitutional structures are in place. Those structures are designed to produce a certain degree of agreement and stable consent, often through methods of election and government giving a surface appearance that is not very inspiring. Nevertheless, the achievement may be policies more acceptable to the public than any fashionable ideology, of the right or the left, can produce. On these grounds, we are entitled to suppose that constitutional structures possess a certain degree of authority precisely for those wanting to know what it is "right" to do. They serve to discipline ethical or moral idealism.

Now I do not think this view is the last word; I would not argue that the norms of constitutional government are sufficient to define a completely satisfactory ethics.¹³ I would only suggest that they should be the starting point for those concerned not just to assert moral principles but to discern what principles have already been established and to see that they are not weakened by attempts at a perfection that is, in actual practice, not available to us. A case like that presented by Stockman (1986) is no accident. Managerial and technical norms replaced constitutional principle as the core of administrative education, following the injunction of Wilson and others. It was inevitable that later generations would see the inadequacy of these norms, but the critics of our time, like Thompson

(1985, 1987), point out their limitations while opening up only an undefined possibility of a more satisfactory ethics. In a situation of this kind, it is small wonder that persons in public life, like Stockman, turn to one of the quasi-theoretical ideologies available in number. But American constitutional government is known for its capacity to make influence available primarily to those who move to the center and to refuse such influence to those who decline to move; it has, so far, tended to frustrate ideologues (see Fischer, 1948). If we search for some guidelines in public ethics, perhaps then we need to concentrate on just this aspect of the constitutional system and make it a deliberate object of explanation, cultivation, study, and defense. This aspect of constitutionalism is, in essence, an unwritten rule of democratic moderation and it is even more the core of constitutional government than the changing doctrines of judicially expounded law.¹⁴ It is, furthermore, still a real and established process, not merely an ideal. The ASPA was wise to conclude its *Code of Ethics and Implementation Guidelines* with an exhortation to "respect" as well as "study" our constitutions, but what we need next is a vigorous, historically rich program to educate public administrators in what constitutionalism means.

NOTES

1. See Kirwan's (1977) comments on an implicit political component in Wilson's understanding of administration (pp. 331-332).

2. One quite common method of covert obstruction is unauthorized disclosure of government documents, which Thompson suggested was justifiable in some situations. An interesting case where most would agree that such a method of covert obstruction through leaks was highly disreputable was discussed by Greenstein (1982): Recounting the attempts of Eisenhower to deal with McCarthy, Greenstein noted that at one point McCarthy openly urged the several million government employees to feel at liberty to reveal confidential materials to him (pp. 209-210). Context is essential, as Thompson (1985) noted in saying that certain methods by which officials express dissent "may be morally wrong except under extreme circumstances" (p. 557); ultimately, political judgment is unavoidable.

3. Thompson (1985) noted at one point this difficulty: "If the organization is pursuing goals set by a democratic public, individual dissent in the organization may subvert the democratic process" (p. 557). See also Weisband and Franck (1975) for an argument stressing the value of "ethical autonomy" without significant attention to the "democratic process" and the conditions needed for it to work effectively. Thompson (1985) discussed this book on page 557.

4. For a contrast to Wilson's views, see the comments on "democratic self-control" in Schumpeter (1975, pp. 294-295).

5. For some broader reflections on the reasons for a certain kind of moral vacuum, see Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) and MacIntyre (1981).

6. I think it is justified, at least at the start, to consider Stockman's work as guided by principles. However, opinions differ, and some would emphasize a relentless ambition as his driving motivation. David Broder has been the most caustic in interpreting Stockman (see 1986; pp. 45-46, 169-171). Important comment on Stockman's book has been made by Will (1986), Krauthammer (1986), Samuelson (1986), Moynihan (1986), Galbraith (1986), and J. Wilson (1986).

7. For the stress on the importance of forms, I am indebted to Tocqueville (1969, pp. 698-700) and Mansfield (1985).

8. See Stockman (1986), who contrasted his own preference for "exacting, abstract principles" with the politician's subordination of "ideology" to "the plight of real people" (p. 11). The same distinction is illustrated in a different way in Stockman's passion for economic theory and hostility to the "so-called social issues" (p. 49).

9. See *The Federalist*, No. 10, for the term "permanent and aggregate interests." See Epstein (1984, p. 60) and Mansfield (1978, pp. 47-49).

10. See Bickel (1975, pp. 17-20, 22-25, 100-111, 139-142), Faulkner (1978), Fischer (1948), and J. Wilson (1979), which drew my attention to Fischer's excellent study.

11. See the views on bargaining in Lowi's (1979) chapters 3 and 5 with the more balanced account in Freedman (1978, pp. 22-30, 32-35).

12. J. Wilson (1979) stressed a prevalence of ideology in recent public life that may have permanently transformed the American scene (pp. 44-45). His (1986) article on Stockman, however, suggested the importance of "equity" rather than ideology (p. 21).

13. For discussion of some limitations as well as strengths of constitutional norms, see the essays in Horwitz (1977). See also Mansfield (1986), *Public Interest's* special issue containing essays collectively titled "The Constitutional Order 1787-1987" (1987), and Kelman (1987, pp. 213-222).

14. What I mean by democratic moderation is not totally unlike the "conservative realism" that Stockman (1986, pp. 24-26) claimed to have learned from Niebuhr and Lippman, but it is not based, needless to say, on doctrines of original sin, and it is meant to reflect the "idealism," so to speak, which allowed the founders to believe that popular government and republican liberty could be made to work successfully (see Hamilton's thesis in *The Federalist*, No. 9, to the effect that democracy has not yet proved itself, but that new discoveries can change the pattern). There is no reason why what is here intended could not be equally well described as "liberal realism."

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