

reading, I will contend that little else in the course need differ from one type of higher education institution to another. Students in all colleges and universities need to become active learners. The comparative scientific method focuses on an important dependent variable, that is, on an important problem in political science. And because the whole enterprise is comparative, it works to mitigate parochialism among students everywhere.

Students from all types of educational institutions are characterized by the attributes set forth here. They are passive, parochial, and initially uncommitted to political science. Yet, in the face of the important challenges that will confront them once they leave higher education, it is crucial that they become more active problem-solvers, open their horizons to other

parts of the world, and develop a sense for how politics is important to human beings everywhere. We must do a better job of training thinkers and doers, rather than treating our students as merely passive vessels for the receiving of facts.

Notes

*David D. Laitin, now of the University of Chicago, had a substantial impact on the early formulation of my teaching philosophy and on some of the important, specific features of the pedagogy for introductory comparative politics that I outline here, in particular the focus on variables and the scientific method as a plausible and compelling way of teaching undergraduates comparative political science. His influence has shaped many of the specifics and the general concepts presented here. I also thank Sheilah Mann, Joseph Klesner, and two anonymous referees for serious and thoughtful critiques of an earlier version of this es-

say. Nonetheless, weaknesses and contradictions in this approach are, of course, my own.

1. The importance of case selection to the integrity of the scientific process that then unfolds has been forever impressed upon me by Arend Lijphart, who has been mentor, friend, and exacting taskmaster since graduate school. Indeed, I owe to him my emphasis on the indispensability of the comparative method to the whole political science enterprise. (Some students, however, wish I had never studied with Lijphart—or Laitin, too, for that matter!)

About the Author

David Wilsford is president and professor at the Institute for American Universities in Aix-en-Provence, France. He is the author of *Doctors and the State* (Duke University Press, 1991) and is currently completing a book comparing health care politics in the advanced industrial democracies, *The Political Economy of Health Care*. He is also working on an introductory text for the comparative politics course for Harcourt Brace.

Teaching Administrative Ethics with Help from Jefferson

Henry T. Edmondson III, *Georgia College*

An important question in public administration education asks whether moral education should concentrate primarily on intellectual skills or moral character. Another way of stating this is to ask whether the education of students should aim at refined intellectual skills or instinctive and habitual patterns of behavior. The debate is over whether the teaching of administrative ethics should be aimed at “*improving the moral cognitive capacities*, focusing on the development of moral judgment and an attitude of moral responsibility toward the public service . . . or whether the fundamental goal should be directed at *cultivating moral character and moral conduct*” (Hejka-Ekins 1988, 885).

Lilla argues that morality is a way of life, not a method of analysis, and by bringing abstract ethical reasoning to the study of public administration, the ethics movement helps to *create* a moral vac-

uum rather than fill one. He describes the popular movement of ethics in government as a “paradox,” because it promotes ethics without first emphasizing “moral education” (1981, 4). An exclusively intellectual approach is likely to produce administrators who are “shrewd in the convenient application of ethical principles, rather than administrators with integrity” (1981, 13).

To better understand the debate, it is helpful to note that many courses in administrative ethics seem to be based on the premise that by the time students are enrolled in the undergraduate or graduate curriculum, the opportunity has passed for shaping their moral character. When dealing with adults, often it is assumed that the most the instructor can hope for is to refine the student’s analytical skills. These presuppositions determine, in part, the curricular approach taken in the classroom.

Thomas Jefferson and the Character-Cognition Debate

It is comforting to see that Thomas Jefferson also questioned whether education should be aimed primarily at teaching cognitive skills or developing character. His educational thought offers a helpful perspective on this issue.

While Jefferson resolutely believed in the character-building goal of education, he was curiously ambivalent when considering studies in moral philosophy as a means to achieve that goal. Moral philosophy, which typically consisted of studies in ethics, politics, and economics represents a cognitive approach to moral behavior. In most of his proposals for university curricula, Jefferson includes a course in moral philosophy, while in informal discussions he appears to contradict his formal proposals. For example, he advised a nephew in 1787 that time is spent vainly in the

study of moral philosophy because moral character is not produced by abstract rules. He advocated the acquisition of virtue through consistently upright behavior, which would serve to form right habits (Peterson 1988, 425).

Regarding his grandson's education, he wrote to his daughter Martha that, "It would be time lost for him to attend professors of ethics" because ethical conduct "may be as well acquired in the closet as from living lectures" (Honeywell 1931, 125). Courses in moral philosophy sought to develop moral and intellectual character by refining one's ability to reason through moral questions. Thus, moral philosophy was a rational approach to ethical behavior. It assumes that moral *formation*—if it occurs—is a by-product of moral *cognition*.

The *primary* moral faculty for Jefferson, however, was not the intellect but the "moral sense." For Jefferson, a moral sense was a more reliable faculty than reason, because reason is often and easily led into error. "The Creator, Jefferson said, had designedly separated reason from morals in order that the motives for action, which stabilized the economy of nature, should be preserved from the diversity and infirmity which characterized the minds of men" (Boorstin 1948). Jefferson explains the moral sense to Peter Carr as he warns him that it would be "lost time to attend lectures" on moral philosophy. Our Creator, Jefferson continues, would have been "a pitiful bungler" if moral conduct was an intellectual calculation, because the great proportion of the population has not the capacity or training for discursive reasoning.

Intellect plays a role in guidance, but even below-average intelligence is sufficient for correct moral judgment. Moral behavior is only slightly dependent upon the guidance of reason. To prove this thesis, Jefferson proposed submitting a moral dilemma to a common laborer and to an academic. He suggested that the laborer would resolve the difficulty as well as the individual with advanced education, if not better:

State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor. The former will decide it as well, and often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules (Boorstin 1948, 141).

The Liberal Arts and the Promotion of Character

Although Jefferson warns against a predominantly intellectual approach to cultivating the moral faculty, he believed that education did play an important role in its development: when a moral sense is deficient in the student, "we endeavor to supply the defect by education" (Boorstin 1948, 145). More specifically, he is referring here to the use of literature. After discouraging moral philosophy, he told his nephew to "read good books because they will encourage as well as direct your feelings" (Peterson 1988, 425). "Good books were to be read, not because of the doctrines they contained, but because of the encouragement and exercise which they gave the moral feelings." Judging by his comments and curricula designs, the education to which he refers is a liberal arts education. His enthusiasm for the utility of the liberal arts in forming character, conspicuous in his correspondence, stands in stark contrast to his ambivalence toward moral philosophy.

Jefferson says that liberal studies exercise "the sentiments" and by this "men become just" (Boorstin 1948, 145). He advised his nephew: "Good books are to be read because of the encouragement and exercise which they give the moral principles" (Peterson 1988, 425). In these passages, Jefferson suggests that liberal studies use the emotions in forming right habits.

Jefferson seems to refer to a principle of moral development explicated by Aristotle in his discussion of literary tragedies. Aristotle explains that when tragic stories are presented in artful form, the spectator experiences intense fear or pity at the demise of the protagonist. If the plot of the drama is constructed well, the cause of the protagonist's downfall is due to some character defect in the actor,

rather than the consequence of an extraordinarily corrupt personality. This defect is ordinary enough that the spectator can personally identify with this degree of vice. For example, Oedipus's inordinate curiosity is a fault to which many might admit. The active identification of the spectator with the actor, compounded by the intense pity or fear he experiences while watching the play, will motivate the spectator to improve his own conduct (Aristotle 1982, 1452b12–1454b18). Those in the audience, then, actively participate in the presentation of the drama sufficiently enough to benefit personally from the moral lesson involved. From this discussion and others,¹ Aristotle expounds how moral formation is promoted by the creative presentation of drama, music, and literature.

Another function of liberal education also depends upon a vicarious student experience as a means to character formation. It was noted earlier that Jefferson asserts that liberal education can "enlarge" the mind of the student (Honeywell 1931, 250). Jefferson's statement might be interpreted in light of what today is called a "broad-minded" habit of thinking. To understand this idea, we begin by noting that the "great books" are so described because they creatively address important themes such as the nature of justice, the delusion of utopianism, or the elusiveness of equality. Careful consideration of such fundamental questions prepares students for occupational experiences in which these themes reappear. Study of classic works in which these concepts are seriously and artistically treated heightens the student's appreciation of their importance. A study of the development of equality, as it has been treated in literature and philosophy over the last two millennia, will sensitize the welfare director, for example, to understand that some expression of equality is intertwined into discretionary decisions over entitlement and allocation.

It is helpful to note that the traditional conception of virtue incorporates much more than the prohibition of, say, adultery or em-

bezzlement. *Moral* virtue should comprise one dimension of personal character, but *intellectual* virtue is necessary to make a person of integrity. Intellectual virtue is illustrated by the virtues of wisdom, discernment, prudence, and knowledge, to name only a few.

Pedagogical Implications

What do these ideas suggest for the administrative ethics instructor? For one thing, a recognition of the importance of liberal studies as preparation for public service implies that public administration graduate program managers might consider the number of liberal arts courses prerequisite to graduate study admission. Compared with other professional graduate programs, public administration programs usually have few prerequisites, so requiring more courses in literature, for example, should not put an undue burden on students.

Besides considering undergraduate preparation in liberal studies, instructors might look for opportunities to “liberalize” existing courses.² An administrative ethics class provides an excellent opportunity for the strategic use of literary works. Marini (1992) recommends Sophocles’ *Antigone* to acquaint the student with dilemmas involving competing sources of authority and the role of personal conscience. Future or current public servants could read or view Goethe’s *Faust*. A Faustian bargain can be struck in one tragic decision or by smaller compromises that accumulate over a professional lifetime. The *Hyppolytus* by Euripides provides an excellent study of the problem of “dirty hands” that Michael Walzer (1973) has articulated.³ *Hyppolytus* represents an individual who may be *too* good. The arrogance generated by his own righteousness leads to his destruction and the demise of those around him. He is told by the goddess Artemis: “It was the goodness of your heart destroyed your life” (Warner 1958, 122).

The instructor might also incorporate literary works into other courses. An abstract discussion of

courage in an administrative leadership course might be supplemented or even replaced by a class reading of Robert Bolt’s immortal portrayal of Sir Thomas More in *A Man For All Seasons*, or at least a viewing of the videocassette.⁴ Biographies such as this one have a quality that can inspire one to virtuous living.⁵ Kafka’s *The Castle* might be used in an organizational theory course to introduce the phenomenon of bureaucratic irrationality. Zola’s *Germinal* and *A Bell for Adano* by John Hersey are appropriate for a course in labor relations.⁶ For a course in personnel administration

. . . a recognition of the importance of liberal studies as preparation for public service implies that public administration graduate program managers might consider the number of liberal arts courses prerequisite to graduate study admission.

one might follow Kassiola’s suggestion for Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* to illustrate a person denied human freedom and dignity. Excerpts from Dicken’s *Bleak House*, which is a caricature of the self-serving operations of the nineteenth-century British legal system, and Kafka’s *The Trial*, are useful in preparing students for the frustrations inherent in the world of administrative law.

It should be noted that the efficacy of the liberal arts curriculum rests heavily on the attitude of the instructor. As in most other types of instruction, if the material is treated cynically, the students’ experience will be different than if the material is treated respectfully. On the other hand, it is true that ambiguity and contradictions sometimes characterize the way that moral questions are portrayed in the clas-

sics. This is true of life itself, and sound character formation should prepare the student to grapple with such frustrations with courage and determination.

Conclusion

It is a truism that character is formed through early experience. For this reason some may reject the idea that moral growth can continue in higher education. The liberal arts are able, however, to provide life experience vicariously. Hypothetical case studies attempt to do this, of course, but the experience they provide often reduces the involvement of the student to the intellect. Dwight Waldo once argued:

From literature we can learn what we could not possibly learn about administration otherwise. . . . [T]he life experiences of a single individual are necessarily highly limited in terms of all possible experience. . . . [T]hrough literature the life experiences of many are given to us. Moreover, they have . . . the ability to communicate whole-life situations, to present questions of a fundamental nature in cogent and stirring forms (Egger 1959, 451).

Ultimately, the best mode of ethical education is a balanced one. Jefferson seemed to be reacting against a predominant emphasis upon rationalism in his day; he saw a need therefore to stress an approach less concerned with rules and principles than with behavior itself. Yet, as previously noted, he did not exclude moral philosophy from the curriculum—as he had religious studies—so he apparently accepted the value of the development of moral cognition. Cooper (1982) recommends supplementing an intellectual approach with one concerned with character in public administration ethics, and Lilla (1981), similarly to Jefferson, is reacting against a contemporary imbalance. None of these thinkers would necessarily prohibit studies of ethical systems, case studies, or any other activity aimed at discursive skills. The implication for public administration is to take note of an imbalance in pedagogy within

the discipline which calls for redress. Jefferson wrote to advise his nephew, Peter Carr, who aspired to public service. His letter begins: "An honest heart being the first blessing, a knowing head is the second" (Arrowood 1930, 161).

Notes

1. For example, in the *Politics*, Aristotle provides a discussion of moral character and music which is parallel to this explication of dramatic presentations (1339a11–1342b33).
2. The prospect of teaching existing courses with a "liberal arts attitude" when a wholesale liberal arts curriculum is not feasible is argued by Herbert Storing in an unpublished and undated essay, in mimeographed form, entitled "Liberal Education and the Common Man."
3. Michael Walzer, 1973. "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands." *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 2 (Winter), pp. 160–180.
4. Bloom (1964), with Jaffa, demonstrates how a classic work—in this case the plays of Shakespeare—often contains important political and moral principles and is a useful vehicle for conveying such ideas to students. See *The Politics of Shakespeare*.
5. Rohr (1989) illustrates this point in a review of a discussion of ethics written by a "distinguished scholar of British public administration," Richard A. Chapman (*Ethics in the British Civil Service*, 1988). Chapman's treatment of ethics consists of an "administrative biography of a particularly distinguished British civil servant, Sir Edward Bridges," who served in the British government in the 1940s and 1950s. According to Chapman, Bridges provides an inspirational example for public administrative students.
6. These two works are highlighted by Howard E. McCurdy in "How Novelists View Public Administration," Ralph Clark Chandler, ed. *A Centennial History of the American Administrative State* (New York: The Free Press, 1987). A discussion of the "administrative novel" has persisted for the better part of this century. In this area of research, scholars have valued using fiction to teach public administration. In addition to other works cited in this article, see Humbert Wolfe, "Some Public Servants in Fictions," *Public Administration*, 2, (January, 1924), p. 40; Rowland Eggar, "The Administrative Novel," *American Political Science Review*, 53 (June, 1959), p. 449; Howard McCurdy, "Fiction, Phenomenology, and Public Administration," *Public Administra-*

tion Review, 53 (June, 1959), p. 449; and Thomas R. McDaniel, "The Search for the 'Administrative Novel,'" *Public Administration Review* (November/December, 1978), p. 545; and Mortin Kroll "Administrative Fiction and Credibility," *Public Administration Review*, 25:80–84 (March) 1965. For anthologies of administrative fiction see Dwight Waldo, *The Novelist on Organization and Administration: An Inquiry Into the Relationship Between Two Worlds*, (Berkeley: Institute of Government Studies, University of California, 1968) and Marc Holzer, et al., *Literature in Bureaucracy: Readings in Administrative Fiction* (Wayne, New Jersey: Avery Publishing Group, Inc.: 1979).

References

- Arrowood, Charles F. 1930. *Thomas Jefferson and Education in a Republic*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Aquinas, St. Thomas. 1920. *Summa Theologica*, IaIIae, trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Westminster, Maryland, Christian Classics.
- Aristotle. 1982. *Poetics*. translated by James Hutton. New York: W.W. Norton and Co.
- Aristotle. 1984. *The Politics*, translated by Carnes Lord. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Aristotle. 1984. *The Nichomachean Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bloom, Allan David with Harry V. Jaffa. 1964. *Shakespeare's Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bolt, Robert. 1990. *A Man For All Seasons: A Play In Two Acts*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Boorstin, Daniel J. 1948. *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*. Boston: Henry Holt and Company.
- Cooper, Terry L. 1982. *The Responsible Administrator: An Approach to Ethics for the Administrative Role*. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press.
- Dickens, Charles. 1972. *Bleak House*. With an introduction by G.K. Chesterton. New York: Dutton.
- Egger, Rowland. 1959. "The Administrative Novel." *American Political Science Review* 53:448–55.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. 1970. *Faust*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Hejka-Ekins, April. 1988. "Teaching Ethics in Public Administration." *Public Administration Review* 48 (September/October).
- Honeywell, Roy J. 1931. *The Educational Views of Thomas Jefferson*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Holzer, Marc, Kenneth Morris and William Ludwin. 1979. *Literature in Bureaucracy: Readings in Administrative Fiction*.

- Wayne, New Jersey: Avery Publishing Group.
- Kafka, Franz. 1969. *The Castle*. New York: Modern Library.
- Kafka, Franz. 1974. *The Trial*. New York: Modern Library.
- Kassiola, Joel. 1992. "Political Values and Literature: The Contribution of Virtual Experience." In Mauren Whitebrook, ed. *Reading Political Stories: Representations of Politics in Novels and Pictures*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Lilla, Mark T. 1981. "Ethos, 'Ethics', and Public Service." *The Public Interest* 63(Spring):111–120.
- Marini, Frank. 1992. "The Uses of Literature in the Exploration of Public Administration Ethics: The Example of *Antigone*." *Public Administration Review* 52 (September/October): 420–426.
- McCurdy, Howard. 1987. "How Novelists View Public Administration." In Ralph Clark Chandler, ed. *A Centennial History of the American Administrative State*. New York: The Free Press. 543–74.
- Peterson, Merrill D. 1988. *The Portable Thomas Jefferson*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Rohr, John A. 1989. "British and American Approaches to Public Service Ethics." *Public Administration Review* 49(4) July/August, 387–90.
- Waldo, Dwight. 1968. *The Novelist on Organization and Administration: An Inquiry Into the Relationship Between Two Worlds*. Berkeley: Institute of Government Studies, University of California.
- Walker, Alice. 1982. *The Color Purple: A Novel*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Walzer, Michael. 1973. "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands." *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 2:160–180.
- Warner, Rex. 1958. "Hippolytus." In *Three Great Plays of Euripides*, Rex Warner, translated. New York: New American Library. 73–126.

About the Author

Henry T. Edmondson is an associate professor of political science and public administration at Georgia College. His research interests are in educational philosophy and policy and in ethics.

