
Book Review Essay: The End of Public Administration?

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Abstract

Is the end of public administration at hand? Aaron Wildavsky asks: what is left if public administration's search for the best hierarchical form of organization and its search for efficiency are rejected? (Lynn, 1990, p.xiv) Robert B. Denhardt answers this question with the proposition that a new theory of public organization is possible. This distinguished past president of the American Society of Public Administration offers a compelling prescription in which he draws from the intellectual traditions of Marxist humanism, Freudian psychoanalysis and his understanding of Jeffersonian democracy. He proposes to test his arguments as to how organizations of all kinds might be made more public, more democratic and better able to express the values of society.

His major works, In the Shadow of Organization (1981), Theories of Public Organizations (1993) and In Pursuit of Significance (1993) offer a critique of Rational Theory and suggest replacing the positivist understanding of human behavior with a framework of individual autonomy and democracy. His radical reconstruction of organizational theory gives primacy to the growth of the individual rather than to the efficiency of the productive process. He expands his a philosophy of life as an alternative to "the ethic of organization" view of the world. Denhardt moves beyond the theoretical to offer a method of integrating theory and practice built on a system of personal learning. The format of his body of work meets the criteria for a new Discipline. It absorbs public administration into a larger study of organizations. The adoption of his work by academics and the acceptance of his widely acclaimed In Pursuit of Significance by practitioners and professors alike means in practical terms that a new generation of public leaders may not need public administration anymore. An interesting side result of this body of work is that if accepted, then the debate over whether public administration is a social science or a sub field of political science or a professional field expires with the discipline itself.

Review

Social Psychologist Viktor Frankl is reported to have said that during his second imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp that he became convinced that the Holocaust was not designed by the architects and military planners in Berlin but rather in the lecture halls of nihilistic universities. When I heard this reference to Frankl during a lecture on theory given at Georgia State University, I thought immediately of Denhardt's In Pursuit of Significance. In this book, Dr. Denhardt draws the theorist away from the farthest reaches of research and the practitioner from his cool efficiency to focus on what binds the discipline together. The bridge that links us together is the essence of human dignity and a quest for meaning. Denhardt's greatest accomplishment may be to allow his readers to put flesh and blood back on the body politic and rediscover that we have souls. His primary intent is to redirect the reader's attention from the organization to the individual in order that we might then establish a sense of individual autonomy and responsibility in an age of organization.

In his trilogy, Denhardt tests the theories of public administration and in the tradition of discourse accepts or reformulates some theories, shows others to be irrelevant and points out some omissions. However, instead of simply pointing out and making corrections, Denhardt lays the groundwork for a new theory of public organization. In these three books lies the cusp of a new body of generalizations and principles. This collection offers logical consistency, empirical adequacy and experiential relevance. These are the tests of a new Discipline. Denhardt is candid: heretofore, there has been no comprehensive effort to draw together both the theoretical and practical implications of these revolutionary efforts (managerial approaches of philosophies that underlies success in public organizations) in a way that might help others improve their work in public organizations. (*Denhardt, 1981, pp.5*) Aaron Wildavsky says, "Denhardt lays it on the line: public administration, he feels, has been limited by business values (read efficiency) and by hierarchy (read bureaucracy). What is left for administrators . . . if its hierarchical form of organization and its search for efficiency are rejected?" (*Wildavsky, 1993, pp.Xiv*)

In The Shadow of Organization

"...it is the ethic of organization that casts its shadow over our lives"

Robert Denhardt searches for a philosophy that integrates the individual with an organization without any loss to the inherent essence of the individual. In this book, his revolutionary approach is constructed on the notion that the structures of our social institutions reinforce how we think and are models of methods as to how we learn. This means that our daily functioning reinforces thought patterns and knowledge acquisition.

Conversely, our ability to function is consistent with existing organizational arrangements. If we were able to alter our thinking and social understanding, according to Denhardt, then we might open the possibility for restructuring social institutions and a new way of perceiving the world. He advocates examining the connection between forms of social scientific inquiry and the structure of social relationships from the perspective of critical theory.

He seeks to construct a philosophy of life as an alternative to the worldview of the 'ethic of organization.' His goal is to find new avenues to change thinking on organizational life. He asks: "What are the keys that might open our minds to different ways of believing and behaving in complex organizations? (*Denhardt, 1981, pp. vii*) For example, he postulates that the archetypal relationship between masters and slaves is played out historically and psychologically in organizational life.

Furthermore, he believes that this master-slave relationship underlies the contemporary relationship between superiors and subordinates in complex organizations. He advances the idea that modern organizational superiors seek a sense of their own mortality through manipulation of people and objects at the expense of their subordinates. Slavery, he asserts, is the state of being a mere instrument, and the organization can reduce man to the stature of a thing.

Instead of constructing human relationships on the outworn patterns of labor and authority he advances the alternative: leadership based on deriving meaning, action and continuity in our work in complex organizations. He suggests that leadership should not be seen as merely a position someone holds but rather as a dynamic that occurs within a group or organization. He suggests that the face-to-face encounter is the essence of freedom and it is also the primary unit of analysis in self-discoveries, apparently a concept borrowed from Freud. This new definition of leadership has three essential functions: (1) to help the group or organization understand its needs and potential (2) integrate and articulate

the group's vision and (3) act as a "trigger" or stimulus for group action. When viewed developmentally, this form of leadership can be enabling and fulfilling in Denhardt's estimation.

However, this places a very high value on communication skills and tilts again toward Freud: what we feel and why. Denhardt further advocates the notion that leadership should be distributed throughout society because leadership's essence is to create an energizing effect. The necessary leadership skills are then not management, nor control, nor manipulation but rather those skills that assist individuals and groups in realizing their fullest potential. He boldly asserts that leadership is educative, concerned with human growth and development and that leadership based upon power is seldom enduring.

This radical reordering is designed to give primacy to the growth of the individual rather than the efficiency of the productive process. Denhardt adopts a *Personalist* approach that establishes one's personal meaning, develops contexts for action and establishes "oneness" with the environment. This approach constructs an image of the world, then determines its own truth and then is motivated by a deep-seated search for meaning. Under this *Personalist* approach Denhardt plans to bring together such apparent opposites as politics and administration, efficiency and responsiveness, fact and value, autonomy and responsibility, theory and practice. His theory is based on the premises that in the end there are no permanent answers for those seeking guides to action.

Denhardt asserts that the fundamental failure of the past has not been a failure of theory, but rather of theory building. Theories developed absent of practice are then passed on to practitioners who then seek to apply these ideas. The practitioner was not part of the theory development process and the theorist was not part of the work of the organization. The resultant matches between theory and practice are flawed. At best it is imperfect, says Denhardt, at worst unsuitable. He suggests that theory and practice seem to be connected in the process of personal learning. It is the same place that leadership germinates. The result is that any approach to action in public organizations must encompass not only a theory of organization but an approach to learning as well.

The crux of the matter is that there is a need to refocus, but not on theories of governing and administration but rather, on the building of theories of organization. A new ethic is called for that balances concern for

organizational questions with a concern for learning. Problems cannot be excised through control but instead a durable and effective response must be communicative and consensus seeking. The resolution must be of itself enabling of action.

Denhardt offers a hardy work that introduces a critical theory of organization approach designed to (1) examine the technical basis of bureaucratic domination (2) provide ideological justification for this condition and (3) offer a means as to how clients and public servants can come to understand the limitations placed on their actions. This approach sees the formulation of public policy on a "value-critical" basis. Denhardt's goal is to emphasize conditions of power and dependence that characterize contemporary organizational life and the considerable potential for conflict and disorder that these conditions portend. His critical approach offers an alternative style of management aimed not at control but at assisting individuals. Denhardt notes the distinction to include organizational members and clients in discovering and pursuing their own developmental needs even when they may be at odds with those of the bureaucracy.

This revolutionary approach sees the structure of our social institutions not only similar too but intimately linked to how we learn. This means a continued reliance on existing methods of acquiring knowledge and thinking patterns. If we were able to alter our thinking and social understanding Denhardt maintains we might open the possibility for restructuring social institutions. He suggests using critical theory perspective to examine the connection between forms of social relationships and the connection to social scientific inquiry.

Theories of Public Organization

" PRAXIS . . . theory and practice become one" (*Denhardt, 1993, pp. 29*)

This book is a comprehensive review of the history and body of Public Administration Theory. It is designed for use as a textbook but with the ultimate purpose of reconciling the theory-practice split within the discipline. The goal is to connect theory and practice through critical reflection on our own situations to reveal the basis of social domination so that organizations of all sorts might be made more public with the expectation that they might aid in expressing the values of our society.

Denhardt's method is to critique mainstream literature based on its inability to connect with the real experiences of those working in the field in public organizations. The primary intent then is to understand the separation so that the reconciliation can begin based on knowledge, the source of that knowledge and then what is needed. He concludes that this is only possible through personal learning. Denhardt's process is to examine representative works and then based on this literature review suggest ways to better understand the "real" world of public organizations. He built on this idea, developed first in The Shadow of Organization, that real communication is the key and ends with the concept that face-to-face personal interaction and learning is the means to the most effective communication. His conclusions compliment his work in Shadow's: (1) Mainstream theory focusing on the "rational " model of administration and democratic accountability. (2) Theory learning is limited to "positivist" understanding of learning acquisition (3) A general failure to integrate explanation, understanding, and critical theory. (4) The existing approach has limited itself to instrumental concerns expressed through hierarchical structure (5) A second failure to acknowledge and then promote a search for alternative organizational designs. (6) A third failure to integrate issues of control, consensus, and communication. (7) Little definitive work that is instructive to cope with organizational change specifically tailored to public organizations. (8) Importance of identifying the motivating factors for those employed in public organizations. (9) Exposes the faulty communication patterns and suggests alternatives (10) examines how best to understand the relationship between bureaucracy and the bureaucrat.

Lastly, Denhardt asserts theories have appeared to practitioners as unrelated to their concerns, and they have failed especially to provide a "moral " context for personal action in public settings. He reiterates his call for a shift toward a broader process of managing change and the development of the necessary techniques to change public organizations into more *public* organizations. He revisits the idea that the connection between theory and practice will be very important in accomplishing this goal and the bridge is a process of personal learning. Using this method, individuals are called to reflect on their experiences and generalize from them to develop what he calls Theories of Action.

Denhardt introduces a clever vehicle for this process he includes in his appendix. He calls this an Administrative Journal and it is intended as an individual process of integrating theory and practice based upon personal

experience. The emphasis is on process with four main sections that focus on what he calls the outer and inner experiences followed by reflection and generalization with an objective of making connections among events with thoughts and theory and practice. A new way of thinking is created, germane to his contribution.

He also seeks to further refine the theory of organization with emphasis on the public nature of the process: justice, freedom, and equality rather than the connection to formal systems of administration. His goal is to create the premier change agent in the pursuit of publicly defined societal values. The public manager is newly re-minted as an individual sensitive to the impact of interpersonal and structural relationships in the development of changing patterns of organizations. The public manager becomes someone able to recognize and respond to the subtleties of the organizational change process.

Denhardt explores the intellectual heritage of the past century highlighting Marx, Weber and Freud to define the intellectual orientation of the western world. He strongly emphasizes the idea that people are defined by the work that they do and when, as he alleges, our work product is taken away from us we are reduced to the status of an object, an instrument of production, little more than a machine. When we become separated from our own sense of self-worth, we are alienated from our basic nature and thus, others. If we are objects in a system of production, we see others the same way and the distance between people increases. Denhardt introduces critical social theory as a means to reveal to us how ideology and other forms of mystification have clouded our understanding of our situation. This ideal leads to the ultimate goal of praxis. Through a praxis we engage in critical reflection upon ourselves and society with the intent to reveal the basis of social domination and then toward enlightened action. Conversely, Weber saw the expansion of bureaucratic systems to all spheres of human activity as the single most important development in the world. "Weber", Denhardt says, "thought bureaucracy capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rationally known means of carrying out imperative control over human beings. (Denhardt, 1993, pp.34) A new "Iron Age of Serfdom" is Denhardt's term to describe Weberian bureaucracy. Marx's concept of false consciousness blends into the foundation of Denhardt's perspective but it is Freud who holds prominence in this work. Denhardt cites his work as critical to the understanding of the human condition. "A good part of the struggle of

mankind centers around the single task of finding an expedient accommodation (happiness) between this claim of the individual and cultural claims of the group"(Denhardt, 1993, pp.67). Denhardt clearly identifies himself with Freud in that our growth as individual requires that we act creatively to mold the world to our own desires and ultimately transcend the limitations of that world.(Denhardt,1993,pp. 42)

Denhardt then builds on the public administration heritage from Woodrow Wilson to Dwight Waldo. He asserts those issues of freedom, justice, equality and participation have taken a back seat to issues of efficiency, control, and technique and by default a political theory of public organization has been constructed. Theories then examines the early public administration writers and their influence on theory and practice. He quotes Waldo that "autocracy at work is the unavoidable price for 'Democracy' after hours". The question is raised as to how do those in a government cope with rapidly changing social conditions and how can they alter and expand institutional structures to deal with the problems those conditions portend? The answer, according to Denhardt, comes in the union of political and intellectual heritages, which conclude that the extension of bureaucratic thought undermines a sense of autonomy and responsibility, both for the individual and for the society as a whole. Denhardt ends this treatise by presenting Waldo's dream of a society of the future in which education and general cultures are consonant with a working world in which all participate both as 'leaders' and 'followers' according to the 'rules of the game' known to all. (Waldo, 1952, pp. 103). Denhardt fleshes out this approach using research gathered in his world tours as president of the American Society of Public Administration and presents his findings in his third book.

The Pursuit of Significance

"Theirs were ideas that managers could 'feel' in their work"
(Denhardt, 1993, pp.3)

Robert B. Denhardt quotes Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman in their tome In Search of Excellence and his goal is very similar: to find "a comprehensive effort to draw together both the theoretical and the practical implications of revolutionary efforts in a way that might help others improve their work in public organizations." (Denhardt,1993, pp.5). He was able to interview successful public managers at most levels of government in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and in the United States through entrée' as the president of the American Society for Public Administration. His

work tries to isolate the characteristics of management that made these organizations successful in his estimation. His pursuit is to locate where theoretical ideas were exercised in a practical context in public service and driven not by the bottom line, but by the needs, interests and demands of clients and citizens. He recognizes the special quality of public organizations in that they are often constrained by rules and regulations including 'due process' and demands for ethics, openness and participation. Denhardt places himself in the company of the New Public Administration with Dwight Waldo and Robert T. Golembiewski. He rejects rational efficiency a theme he touches heavily in each of these three books, because it puts aside the troublesome issues of human values.(Denhardt, 1993, pp.8). He also rejects the 'managerialism" that applies business principles and marketplace practices like incentive systems and strategic planning. He finds them antithetical to democratic principles that should guide work in the public sector. He asserts that the core values of public organizations make them different. As the gage to the success of public organizations, he sets a standard of liberty, justice, equity, and responsiveness. To replace the tenants of rationalism and managerialism, Denhardt asserts his study reveals that the most progressive managers discovered several basic ideas. They emphasize: creativity, innovation, empathy, and understanding moving away from structure. These managers move toward values, participation, involvement and a sense of community. They highly esteem ethics and morality. Denhardt structures his discussion around five strategies or themes: **A Commitment to Values** as a change agent to develop professionalism, integrity, service and quality. Greater attention to **Serving the Public**. Managers in this study give priority to service to both clients and citizens. **Empowerment and Shared Leadership** by encouraging a high level of participation and involvement by all members of the organization to improve quality and productivity. **Pragmatic Incrementalism** as an instrument of change in which managers see the connection and then pursue unexpected opportunities and last is **Dedication to Public Service**, a dedication that requires modeling of highly ethical and professional standards. The book offers a good cross-section of recent illustrations of successful application of these principles.

Critique and Conclusions

Countless practitioners and students will gain affirmation and energy from these works, particularly, The Pursuit of Significance . Through these three books Denhardt seeks to bring theory and practice

together and his great contribution is to gather the diverse threads of theory like the strings of so many balloons and couple them with those of required skills and the knowledge of many disciplines and professions. This process is almost whirlpool in nature as disciplines, theologies, theories, practices, skills, and knowledge are drawn into the vortex of Denhardt's searching thought processes finally coming to rest on his concept of praxis ("*when theory and practice become one*", *Theories* 1993, p.29). To Denhardt nothing should dilute that condition. His vision is of a higher state of *natural man* (Lockean) that sees in man an inherent dignity shielded by integrity and motivated in kindness. Denhardt believes as little restraint as possible should be placed on the reach of the human spirit.

In a bold move, Denhardt steps into the breach and reverses the premise that the theorist's intellectual statements have little relevance to practitioners and that the meaning of practice is deeply linked to theory. It is the rare scholar, indeed, who blends in his work the necessary and logical connection that we humans are made of spirit, body and mind. Perhaps it is both symptomatic and symbolic that in the face of ongoing apathy and distrust of government power that Denhardt calls for the trusting of the people in public organizations rather than in the organizations themselves. He issues a clarion call for a new culture of public organizations that bridge the gulf between theory and practice through personal learning.

But his bridge falls just short in one very important sphere, the political. In his next addition to this seminal trilogy, Denhardt might consider a study of the political roots necessary for an unshakable political foundation for his bridge. A treatise on the actual "doing of politics" might compliment his work. What are the mechanics of hard-knuckle consensus building, and how do democrats regain enthusiasm for the process when their interests have suffered in negotiation and bent by the crucible of time? How is the magic of public policy effectively communicated to draw widespread compliance and support? If leadership is more than grabbing the biggest flag and running to the head of the parade how then is direction determined? These are hard questions that demand hard answers not found in Denhardt's work. The hands-on work that fills the public servant's time needs to be within a framework of integrity and service because the nature and sometimes dirty work of democracy has to be fashioned from among less than noble interests. There is not only a need to promote democracy but also a need to constrain anti-democracy. Denhardt, with his entrée to the professional cadre of successful managers, might revisit them and find some

nuggets of practical political experience to fashion within the body of his original contribution. If, for example, an administrator arrives at an organization without the opportunity to develop a history of trust and the relationships necessary for incremental change then what does she/he draw upon to confront the crisis that brought her/him originally to the organization? Denhardt uses just such an example in Pursuit but under-illustrates the practical means that the manager utilizes to accomplish her success.

The International City Managers Association estimates that the average tenure of a county or a city chief executive is between three and five years which makes this issue significant. Another area worthy of exploration is the idea that public organizations are not highly democratic. Perhaps in the formal sense this might be true, but there is an incredible informal power structure in most organizations that have roots in both formal and informal democratic practices.

Several important aspects of leadership that need to be addressed as well, are that expertise and institutional history have extremely high currency in the world of service delivery. How are they retained and made part of the organization's archive? Perhaps a "How to" or case study section might be added to Dr. Denhardt's personal learning exercise so that practitioners and students alike using the Theories book might begin their new thinking patterns grounded in the best mechanics available. Unfortunately, heretofore, new managers often must find either their own way or hope that their mentors are savvy enough when confronting some very vexing issues.

I think most actors in the political arena seldom make serious errors that bring their ability to earn a living into question. Instead they die the death of a thousand cuts. Whether a thousand cuts each yield a single drop of blood or a major artery is severed the result is unfortunately the same. Illustrative of this, even before In Pursuit of Significance was published, some of the successful managers cited had already left their positions. To his credit, Dr. Denhardt acknowledges this. So how did the other manager's survive? The individual in the organization is placed in the often-contradictory position of attempting to pursue meaningful change while entwined culturally in the organization and its ethos.

To follow Dr. Denhardt's lead, theorists and practitioner's alike need, no require, practical hands-on success stories modeled after those

found in Pursuit to put air under their sails. There is a deep desire to grasp the why and the how of small victories and the methods of averting setbacks. If the organizational change is incremental, we need to hear the war stories that detail the struggles where the growth takes place not only for edification as to technique but for solace and for sustenance and encouragement. Inherent in an appreciation of change is also an appreciation for the hard work or "sweat equity" new learning requires.

There are several texts that are illustrative of the kinds of complementary methodology that might enhance Dr. Denhardt's substantive contribution. They include: Robert Caro's classic The Power Broker (1974), James Sundquist' The Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson Years (1968), Haynes Johnson's and David Broder's The System (1996), or the far more traditional Sun Tzu's The Art of War, and Machiavelli's The Prince . A more contemporary example is the article, which appeared in this journal in 1997 "Getting Support from City Council-Manager's View" by Evan Berman. Another observation which might broaden the currency of Denhardt's theories is to look to the incredibly vast network of private voluntary organizations who stand alongside the public and quasi-public organizations and cry for an applicable merger of theory and practice in what may be a most fertile ground for experimentation. An area that appears underdeveloped in the Denhardt work is the clear centering of accountability and responsibility under a new leadership within the new culture. It appears that the centering of responsibility is placed in the good intentions of the newly empowered organizational community. When hierarchy is abandoned and centralized control is yielded what recourse do we have if our needs and wants are not satisfied? We have already paid with our time and essence translated into lost treasure and forfeited liberty. Under this scheme accountability is conceivably diluted and removed from representative government. Among the candid administrators and executives cited in Pursuit, there were honest admissions that within public organizations policy is influenced by the organizational staff in its preparation and then by the same people in its interpretation and subsequent execution. To these extra-legal influences, Denhardt seemingly would yet add a democratic reevaluation of the merits of the policy by the organization's other members and clients after it had been negotiated and approved by the representative legislative authority. If oligarchy is the demon, it appears under this design that the demon simply relocates deeper into the organization and is more distant from the sunshine of public accountability and representative authority.

If there is a criticism, it lies in that Denhardt's softest foundation is his use of Jeffersonian Democracy as a premise for moving power and leadership into the hands of public employees and clients. This foundation is undercut by Jefferson's own words. While the following Jefferson quote was directed against the empowering of judges as a part of a multiple chief executive proposal during the Constitutional Convention, the intent is applicable in this instance. Jefferson writes: "control of the validity of government acts by non-elected judges would place us under the despotism of an oligarchy."(*Schwartz, 1993, pp.144*) Alexander Hamilton in Federalist Paper # 70 advocated for a single executive in the same debate because unitary leadership provides for A decision, activity, secrecy, dispatch, vigor, and expedition. In contrast plural or committee-style leadership would be riven by disagreements that would render it slow to act and prone to create factions."(*Shwartz, 1993, pp.62*) I advocate that humankind is born with only one sure thing: time. All of us are created equal and all that we have is time. Some may have more time than others may. For each of us, though, there is no power, no prestige, no influence, nor wealth before, or after we have exhausted our time. The consequence is the same for all of us at the end of our time. Each of us may choose to trade our time for security or treasure or liberty. It is a fundamental economic compact. Often one chooses mutual security and comes into collaboration with others in-groups or organizations - a social compact. One quickly learns not to trade all our time for security or treasure or liberty and in practicality we attempt to trade as little as possible for just enough security. Humankind seeks to use the balance for other pursuits. So by extension, the foundation of an organization is an economic or social compact. "The authority which man or group has over others is not conferred by nature but instead can be acquired only as a consequence of human covenants made through the use of reason", writes Hobbes in De Cive in 1642.(*Hobbes, 1642, pp.35*) Locke reinforces the idea and according to Ramos: "Locke's political theory hinges on a social contract and the ceding of certain powers to government that originally inhere in the contracting parties."(*Lemos, 1978, pp .13*) Locke presents this fountainhead as necessary for representative democracy. It then is the scene of negotiation between competing interests and a consensus is built and becomes policy which is then translated into action by a responsive administrative arm.

To this process, Denhardt appears to seek to add several layers of individual democracy. In Pursuits he proposes that within the organization a new consensus be built to establish leadership and that the prerogative to

appoint the leadership is removed from the representative body of democracy and replaced within the organization without fixing accountability beyond the representative body. By extension it is conceivable that this leadership shift from a management technique to formal empowerment removes us or in other terms, the taxpayer many fold from the use of our money and in essence the disposition of our limited time. By illustration, beyond the internally chosen leadership another layer of democracy is then presumed upon the clients who are now empowered under Denhardt's scheme to sit in consideration as to which services of the organization will be offered and to whom. This new joint axis of internal leadership and the client then determine the level and nature of the service. This parochially self-selected leadership then presumably notifies the representative body of the required resources to meet the expectations of the client. The representative body may or may not decide to meet these requirements but in any event the cost is still borne by the taxpayer. It is highly conceivable that we, through our representative, have lost influence over the organization and most importantly over our own resources-our own essence, our own time. Unless we break the economic/social compact, we have been incrementally disenfranchised at each stage in the creation and execution of public policy. This is clearly anti-Lockean. Locke wrote: "the legislative is not only the supreme power, but it is sacred and unalterable in the hands where the community have placed it." *Two Tracts on Government*, Phillip Abrams, Ed. NY: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967, pp.374)

In reality, a new multi-franchised oligarchy emerges, no matter how noble and motivated by virtue. There is also a new potential for a new master and for us to now become the slave to the whims of the organization. The whole premise of freeing organizational man from the hidden master-slave relationship can bear bitter fruit when the relationship is replaced with a new dominance of the rest of us by an un-elected leadership energized by its new found power. This extreme treatment exposes the flaws of the proposal. The counterweight to loosening accountability and failing to fix responsibility when coupled with placing representative government further from administrative action renders us even more removed from the levers of power over our own life. The argument in the public square turns on the question as to what exactly is being purchased in return for our life's essence. Is it meeting the fundamental needs of a community of interests or the personal growth and development of the service provider and service consumer and is the tariff equitable? With even a minimal shift of focus away from efficiency the costs must escalate. The costs may be real or

hidden. This choice of resource allocation must remain in the hands of representative democracy and cannot be trusted to parochial actors under the color of democracy. Denhardt argues that the organization becomes a moral force for absolving personal responsibility. Herbert Simon says that the price of achieving organizational rationality is individual autonomy. (*Denhardt, 1993, pp. 86*) The battle now turns on organizational democracy versus representative democracy and unless a balance is clearly articulated the un-addressed flaw is antithetical to the basic premise of Denhardt's work.

Denhardt seems to aspire to provide the means to attaining Dwight Waldo's dream of the future by providing the answer to the drawbacks to the Greek *POLIS*. Polis was the Greek city-state from which we get the origin of the word political. The polis was a moderate sized city-state that honored public service and drew heavily upon the local community to provide amateur and volunteer male leadership. The flaw in the Polis system was that it required the functions of economy and household as well as the implementation of policy to be left to slave labor and women. Denhardt's empowerment of the slave and domestic female to full democratic power would seemingly address this flaw but the dynamic tension between the choices and a willingness and ability to pay the cost is not confronted. Notwithstanding these observations, Denhardt has made a substantial contribution to the literature.

However, even more impressive is his focus on changing the way in which we can think. To academics who desire an avenue to provocative inquiry and a very satisfying alternative to the traditional, intellectual and historical examination of the roots of organizational development, I commend Theories of Public Organization. To practitioners of the craft, I recommend The Pursuit of Significance as a must for their own professional development and their institutional libraries. To those seeking a comprehensive bridge to theory and practice, I commend both books. There is a place in the literature for In The Shadow of Organization but Denhardt has moved beyond his first book and incorporates the salient points in his subsequent work.

I would be remiss if I did not note that exceptional authors have a voice of their own that convey their mood and feelings and often can take a tone that is audience directed. It is interesting to observe that Denhardt was able to change his voice in each book to be audience appropriate. This mastery of writing technique is worthy of note. It is also a signal of respect

toward his intended audience that what the reader "hears" is very important to the author. It is interesting in passing to note, as well, that the mood elevates from pessimism to hopefulness as his work develops.

As to whether the end is at hand for public administration, if the Wildavsky standard is to be applied in the abstract there is little doubt that the Denhardt work is the death knell of Public Administration and the dawn of a new discipline. But the tension and dynamics of the public sector precludes such a static approach. The search for efficiency and the best form of government organization is a constant. In June 1993, the National Commission on the State and Local Public Service presented its first report, *Hard Truths/Tough Choices: An Agenda for State and Local Reform*. (The Winter Commission) This report advocated removing barriers to executive leadership, to increase citizen involvement and to create a high-performance workforce. But it left no question that the greatest change had to be in bolstering the formal authority of the chief executive. (Thompson, Frank J. "Executive Leadership as an Enduring Institutional Issue", *State and Local Government Review* vol. 27, No. 1 (Winter, 1995) This is a stark contrast to the Denhardt theory and is illustrative of the vibrancy of the debate, a debate that is both political, and managerial.

My vision of the contemporary manager is reminiscent of the cartoon of the circus acrobat who has grabbed the flying trapeze with her hands but still has her feet wrapped around the trapeze she was supposed to have left. One trapeze easily is understood as the legislative mandate and the other represents the very limited resources, including the demands of a high performance workforce. The contemporary manager is slung between the competing pulls in a precarious position. This illustrates the mismatch between executive authority and responsibility, limited resources and public demand and representative democracy and an empowered workforce and clientele. Our slung hero is the battleground for these competing forces. The modern executive needs flexibility because the battle keeps shifting but the precipice does not. Denhardt summons the field of Public Administration, not to a new discipline, but rather to a renewed recognition as to just how important our field is in an ever changing and fluid environment. The new millennium has the planet looking to Public Administration for the means of easing the strain of balancing competing demands. Denhardt's contribution is solid. He is to be applauded for his courage, and his work is of significance.

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