ANTI-ADMIN: WITH HELP FROM HERBERT MARCUSE

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ABSTRACT

This paper selects from a longer chapter which recapitulates and extends discussions on anti-administration (anti-admin) from the perspective of discourse theory. First, it discusses discourse theory, explaining that the discourses of anti-admin aim toward the inclusion of marginalized or excluded perspectives. Second, it outlines some anti-admin theory. Parallel to the action of anti-matter and matter, the interaction of freshly demarginalized discourse perspectives and traditional discourse can yield anti-admin resultants. Used in describing these resultants is the Herbert Marcuse's notion of one-dimensional man. Third, the paper offers macro and micro examples of anti-admin gains in terms of problem definition and response resources. It underscores that anti-admin can recognize its affinity not only to the postmodern but also to critical theory perspectives.

INTRODUCTION

The discourses of anti-administration (anti-admin) aim toward the inclusion of perspectives (lens, frames, even people) marginalized or excluded by the constraints of traditional P.A. administrative discourse. The metaphor of anti-admin is borrowed from anti-matter in Physics. Anti-matter refers to the non-commonsensical notion of antiparticles (antineutrons, antiprotons, positrons, etc.) corresponding to nuclear particles (neutrons, protons, electrons, and so on). Antiprotons have the same mass and spin as protons but have opposite electric charge and magnetic moment, for example. "Normal matter and anti-matter would mutually annihilate each other upon contact, being converted totally into energy" (U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, 1967). In a similar way, anti-admin is administration which is directed at negating administrative-bureaucratic power. The suggestion here is that the encounter can give rise to fresh P.A. energy.

This paper selects points from a longer chapter written for Dr. Jon Jun's forthcoming edited book, *Challenges in Administrative Theory for the 21st Century*. That chapter focuses on anti-admin from the perspective of discourse theory. First, it discusses some discourse theory in order to explain what it means to claim that the discourses of anti-admin aim toward the inclusion of marginalized or excluded perspectives. Second, it outlines some anti-admin theory. Third, the chapter offers macro and micro examples of anti-admin gains in terms of problem definition and response resources—gains denied by the marginalizations and exclusions of traditional P.A. discourse. The chapter makes use of two thought games, neither of which are specified in this short paper.

The chapter recapitulates what I have described in other publications (e.g., Farmer, 1995; 1998). There is some extension of that work, e.g., appealing to Herbert Marcuse (1991). The recapitulation is designed to emphasize that anti-admin is not "wedded 'til death they do part" with postmodernism. It is true that postmodern insights have added significantly. Anti-admin has been described more than once in postmodern terms. Earlier, an account has been given of anti-admin as a shift away from rationalism and technocratic expertise in an emerging post-ist context (Farmer, 1998a). Yet, any postmodern v. modern debate can be side-stepped here. Anti-admin can recognize its affinity not only to the postmodern but also to critical theory perspectives. This is possible because the discourses of anti-admin are basically plural. There is no "one right way" in discourse reform. The differing accounts are understood as

complementary; the "same" entity is seen from different discourse perspectives.

SOME DISCOURSE THEORY

This essay describes and illustrates three features of discourse, as described in discourse theory. It invites consideration (using a game, as mentioned above) of how the three features are manifested in certain surface discourses or work sub-cultures, e.g., in those of administering, of a program area like policing, and of another program area like social work. It comments that people often operate in more than one surface discourse, e.g., a police commissioner operates in the discourses of administering, of policing and in some other discourses. Also, the hardest discourse (like an accent) to identify is our own; it seems exceptionally "natural." The game is intended to clarify the claim that the discourses of anti-admin aim toward the inclusion of perspectives (lens, frames, even people) marginalized or excluded by the constraints of traditional P.A.

"Discourse" has been interpreted variously, as discourse theory has been developed and achieved important results in non-P.A. disciplines; and discourse theory arrived later in P.A. The account used in *The Language of Public Administration* (Farmer, 1995) relies on thinkers like Michel Foucault and Ludwig Wittgenstein, for example. But there are others, e.g.,

Mikhail Bakhtin's notion. Most discourse theorists would agree that all claims, all ascriptions of meanings, all actions and events to which meanings are attached—that is, all discourses—are situated within constraints which are largely unconscious. What we can claim as true or relevant is shaped by such constraints, which include the social, the institutional and other larger texts within which we do our thinking. Most would agree that discourse is not limited to mere words. For example, discourse can be non-verbal; we all have "right sides" to our brains (e.g. see Farmer, R., 1998).

The first of the three discourse features, Feature 1, is that the categories, beliefs and values implicit in discourse constitute a way of looking at the World. Feature 2 is that discourses are mainly formed around practices involving marginalization and/or exclusion. Discursive mechanisms both limit "and" encourage what statements can be made, shaping what is considered to be worth knowing. Feature 3 is the idea that discourse is situated in the practice of a time and place, i.e., in a way of thinking and doing.

The chapter includes a chart that provides examples of each of these features in terms of the discourses of administering, policing and social working. They are as follows:

	Administering	Policing	Social Working
Feature 1:	e.g., world tends to consist of my agency (or program), similar agencies (or programs), and others.	e.g., world tends to consist of good guys and bad guys.	e.g., world tends to consist of needy clients and others.
Feature 2:	e.g., true administrator directs, coordinates and controls.	e.g., true cop is a crime-fighter	e.g., true social worker is a helping professional.
Feature 3:	e.g., common expectation for managers in some agencies to "fit in" with existing agency and/or local mores.	e.g., macho and paramilitary values now privileged in some agencies.	e.g., requirement now for MSW degree in some agencies.

SOME ANTI-ADMIN THEORY

The discourses of anti-admin, in the present account, focus on the effect of including the perspectives marginalized or excluded by the set of traditional P.A. discourses. (For convenience, the singular is used in referring to the latter.) Parallel to the action of anti-matter and matter, the de-marginalized and the traditional discourses interact—with energizing results.

This account of anti-admin borrows from Herbert Marcuse's analysis of one-dimensional man. Anti-admin looks to a change that is away from the one-dimensionality of traditional P.A. discourse and toward multi-dimensionality. An interaction between a freshly-demarginalized or freshly-included discourse perspective and traditional P.A. discourse is of significance in anti-admin terms insofar as it yields multi-dimensionality. Marcuse explains the one-dimensional thinking which he considered to be pervasive in contemporary society in terms of the uncritical acceptance of existing structures, norms and behaviors. "The most advanced areas of industrial society exhibit throughout these two features: a trend toward consummation of technological rationality, and intensive efforts to contain this trend within the established institutions" (1991, p. 17). It is thinking that accepts that non-conformity with the overall system is "socially useless" (p. 2). Against all this, Marcuse recommended the "great refusal."

What are of interest are anti-admin results that contribute toward a dimension beyond that of the existing system. It is thinking that is able to transform by "standing against." What "standing against" means can be approached by considering Marcuse's account of the flattening out of the antagonism between culture and social reality in the rationalizing context that accompanies capitalism (p. 56ff). He claims that this flattening out has obliterated the "oppositional, alien, and transcendent elements in the higher culture by virtue of which it constituted another dimension of reality" (p. 57). As an example, we may think of the "losing" battle of musicians like Anton Webern, wanting to liberate music from the hierarchical structures placed on it by tonality. Webern's music "stands against" the existing musical system in seeing each individual tone as having its own expressive possibilities, independent of the traditional discourse of harmony. Marcuse goes on to explain that the "liquidation of two-dimensional culture takes place not through the denial and rejection of the 'cultural values,' but through their wholesale incorporation into the established order, through their reproduc-tion and display on a massive scale" (p. 57).

The anti-matter/anti-admin metaphor is not intended to imply that anti-admin is slated simply as excluding admin. Rather it is a matter of "opening" P.A. to multi-dimensional thinking, not exchanging one set of discourse blinders for another. The anti-matter/anti-admin metaphor is intended to urge a more open attitude, for example, toward the unfashionable and toward less powerful voices. The term "unfashionable" points to the relevance of Foucault's claims about power and truth. There is a tendency to confuse the "power speaking" and "speaking to power" elements in P.A. thinking, and it is a reasonable confusion when mainstream political discourses emphasize the Civics 101 half-truth about democratic government being owned by the people. Foucault's claims (e.g., Foucault, 1980) alert us that P.A. theory should recognize fully theory's "speaking to power" component. The term "less powerful voices" includes the disadvantaged (e.g., women) and also those whose voices cannot be heard, like the future generation and the mentally ill.

It has been suggested that bureaucracy can be best studied from a variety of perspectives, where we are conscious of the co-shaping of the perspective used. A multi-perspectival, a reflexive, approach typically involves looking at P.A. "facts" and theories (first-order data) from various second-order perspectives, where second-order is used idiosyncratically to mean perspectives outside the discipline. It is even more advantageous if these perspectives contribute to multi-dimensionality in the sense borrowed from Marcuse. Anti-admin resultants should be "critical" perspectives in supporting a dimension that stands against "uncritical" acceptance of existing structures, norms and behaviors.

MACRO AND MICRO P.A. APPLICATIONS

The longer chapter claims that discourses of anti-admin have practical utility at both the macro and the micro levels in terms of problem formulation (selection, delineation) and of the spectrum of response resources considered available. It provides four examples of anti-admin macro and micro resultants that can be expected from the interaction of selected administrative discourse elements with marginalized and/or excluded perspectives. It uses a second thought game (not specified here) for this purpose.

Utility lies in going beyond the one-dimensional. That is, the anti-admin resultant should be "other"

dimensional in the Marcusian sense; it should be a "critical" perspective that is in a dimension that stands against "uncritical" acceptance of existing structures, norms and behaviors. Involved in this idea is that part of the system which the resultant "stands against" is the circumscribing of energies within descriptive boxes, within definitions. Attempting to circumscribe (seeking, striving) is valuable; supposing that one has succeeded in circumscribing may be a failure.

The first of the four interactions is between micro-orientation and macro-orientation in P.A. No one denies that P.A. has produced important macro work; the issue is the relative emphasis. A practical result of this pairing can be the addition of what is described as an autonomous or genuine Macro Public Administration, permitting more helpful emphasis on a larger or more fundamental set of p.a. problems (e.g., see also Farmer, 1999). The second interaction is the pairing of hierarchy and laterality. Some work has also been done on this (e.g., Thayer, 1981). Compared against a privileging of hierarchy issues, practical results follow from de-marginalizing the problems and response resources of laterality—in an emergent context of an accelerating shift toward a larger concern with citizen-citizen interrelationships rather than citizen-state relations (see Barber, 1984, on strong participatory government; Habermas, 1996 on deliberative democracy; and Farmer, 1998a). Examples of practical macro implications include the recognition that issues of hierarchy and laterality are not merely administrative; rather they are surrogates for competing manifest and latent non-bureaucratic perspectives (Farmer & Farmer, 1997). Other examples include those from P.A.'s discourse movement (see McSwite, 1998). Recognizing the surrogate character of the hierarchy-laterality pairing and appreciating the interaction's involvement with dialogue, the resultant anti-admin energy is seen as implicating another dimension.

The third interaction is between marketization and alterity. Compared against a privileging of marketization, practical results are available from de-marginalizing the problems and response resources of alterity. It is suggested that a marginalized feature in P.A. ethics is the ungrounded character of intersubjective moral conclusions (e.g., see Warnke, 1993, for a description of the hermeneutic or interpretive turn in justice philosophy). Practical implications of a marriage of ethical concern with such ungroundedness are indicated for management in terms of authentic hesitation. Micro issues are raised in terms of two contrasts. One is between the manager who directs, coordinates and controls v. the manager who is less Napoleonically challenged. Another is between a sub-culture of debate and confrontation (as it were, a crossfire complex) and a sub-culture consistent with shared explanatory discourse (e.g., Tannen, 1998). The ungroundedness of ethical prescriptions in a movement toward alterity, toward greater ethical concern, raises the prospect of a Marcusian dimension.

The fourth interaction is between rationalization (expressed in the narrowness of administrative rationality in traditional P.A. discourse) and imaginization. Consider the micro practicality of less managerial narrowness in terms of "experimentalism," perhaps a component of the resultant of this interaction. The discourse of rational administration does not include routinely the systematic and natural experimental work described long ago by Alice Rivlin (1972). What Rivlin had in mind was similar to the medical model, where promising drugs are rigorously tested to find out what works and what does not work; some patients might receive the wonder drug and others a placebo. By contrast, a city administrator or a police chief does not consider experimentalism to be a routine part of her administrative work. Perhaps Rivlin did not suppose that such experimentalism would be a routine ingredient of managing, as opposed to Federal leadership which still continues in some local-level program areas (p. 86). The experiment-friendly management in mind would not depend on Federal dollars; it would be part of the warp and woof of more imaginative managing. Imaginization would not be limited to this, however. The longer chapter refers to the advantages of play with a purpose (Farmer, 1998); practical opportunities do exist in radical play with the game rules of bureaucracy. The chapter also indicates the imbalance represented in privileging the rational as opposed to the unconscious. It points to the advantages of a shift toward incorporating the unconscious (Farmer, R., 1998) and toward adjusting the managerial task toward greater recognition of the therapeutic. It suggests that some micro-relevant messages of Mary Parker Follett could be rediscovered.

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