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Abstract

This essay reflects an academic career investigating maladministration, bureau-pathology and corruption that disturb, upset and harm people everywhere. These have plagued humanity from the dawn of civilization. They take so many different forms of wrongdoing, misconduct and malpractice that they penetrate every organized human activity. Presented are a lifelong obsession with this societal dysfunction, unusual definitions replacing earlier attempts (Caiden 1991) at universality and conclusions about major controversies concerning specific aspects of their causes, harm and possible effective ways of curbing their presence. The emphasis is on the moral mission of the discipline of public administration to bring maladministration more into the open, institute counter measures and retain optimism that the struggle is a worthwhile objective of public administration, civic action and ethical leadership. Probably, public administration can never be transformed into an objective universal natural science simply because all administration remains more of an art based on judgement and experience than formal learning of universal principles, proverbs and untested fashions and fancies of the moment. Reality is not so simple and circumstances are never the same from one moment to the next. Every administrator has the choice between doing good or bad. Personality and character still count. But the organization's culture and the conduct of the administered can be obstructive and defeating, defying efforts to change and correct; in effect, conducive to institutional paralysis as illustrated in country studies. In curbing maladministration, (a) priority should be given to what its victims most fear and condemn and to seeking effective processes of reassurance and rectification, (b) brave moralists should not be branded outcasts, spoil sports, and disagreeable just because they take a different line, (c) actions should speak louder than words and deeds count more than platitudes, (d) organizations should be more honest with themselves and heed complaints and criticisms even if unjustifiable, and (e) understand that reforms rarely go sweetly, are bitterly contested, and require commitment, persistence, and adaptation in their application. Nothing is likely to be perfect or go perfectly.

Key words: public administration, maladministration, corruption, bureaucracy.

Preface

I inherited my contrariness and iconoclasm from my parents. My mother was told that I would never walk but she made me walk and to persist in overcoming whatever handicaps and obstacles beset me. My father encouraged me to question everything and come to my own conclusions. From an early age, I challenged authority and asked my instructors to justify what they were saying. My upbringing was first during the blitz in wartime London and evacuation from the bombing and later in austere post war Britain when I first heard the words such as war profiteering, black market, anti-Semitism, refugee, extermination, fascism

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and concentration/extermination camp. Things did not always go right. Often they went badly wrong. Consequently, people were critical of government and their leaders. Reading everything to hand illustrated that this had been the situation reaching as far back as the dawn of civilization. The unhappy complained, protested and rebelled about their living conditions and generally stirred up societal unrest and specifically blamed governmental maladministration and the mismanagement of public affairs. Every great book referred to public discontent and suggested ways to overcome its causes. From early youth, this aspect of social science fascinated me and became a lifetime obsession.

I was attracted to public administration because it concentrated on improving the institution of government and the education of public officials, specifically administrative performance. It was distinct from history, politics, economics and econometrics, sociology, logic and scientific method, statistics and philosophy. At the London School of Economics and Political Science, I was specifically encouraged to seek new knowledge that would improve the human condition. I concentrated on administrative reform and bureau-pathology (the sicknesses of bureaucracy and formal organization), as studied from ancient times to the present by renowned thinkers and authors, not just to be descriptive, objective, impartial, and analytical as in the natural sciences but also to improve administrative performance as a moral mission in pursuit of betterment, progress and integrity in the conduct of public business. After all, reformers had come from all walks of life as philosophers, travellers, traders, preachers and conquerors in questioning the way things were being done from the ends to the means of government, from ideals to routine practices, from being politically partisan and theological to strictly mathematical and “scientific” as in *Fractal Change Management* (Henderson & Boje, 2015). I quickly stumbled upon corruption and wrongdoing in daily life and the choice between being moral or immoral, going along (conformity) or resisting temptation (disciplined resistance), self-advantage or social ethics. Misadministration, bureau-pathology, and corruption were intertwined and they were related to power, inequality, and discrimination. More important, they were institutionalized, not just attributable to individual faults.

As an academic outsider, where could I obtain my source material? Before becoming a researcher, I had been an avid bookworm, a member of a variety of civic organizations and a low-level employee of governmental and volunteer bodies to finance my studies. I learnt and experienced more than I expected about corruption, bureau-pathology - much along the lines of Balzac (2014) - and mismanagement, in contradiction to what I was being taught and instructed. Things rarely worked as they were supposed to and like my fellow participants and workers, I also broke the rules and invented ways of easing my work load. Informally, I would ask questions of the permanent insiders who would answer quite honestly, as long as I kept what was said to myself. As I progressed up the academic ladder, doors would be opened to me and I would have access to top insiders as long as I would not divulge any confidential information. Gradually I was overwhelmed with source material. Putting it in order and thinking about it was more of a problem.

But I was not alone. Fellow researchers became birds of a feather who shared information, obstacles and risks. Several good friends lost their lives to organized criminals, contrived accidents and persecution. We never gave up our mission to expose maladministration and warn its victims, to get the guilty to change their ways and reform their own organizations both from within and the outside. We have had our successes and failures. At one time, when government intervention was favoured, we thought we were also favoured as we

gained an increasing audience with the erosion of the taboos protecting mismanagement. As the tide turned against public intervention and bureaucratic enlargement, and with increased knowledge of official scandals, we have seen too many Pyrrhic victories, where promises to change have not been followed through. We have not been able to prevent *Friedmanism* and conservatism from overtaking *Keynesianism* and the entrepreneurial state. Nor did we anticipate the sudden collapse of Soviet communism and collectivism and the escalation of the global society in which the few would dominate the many.

The shift to the contemporary target setting, performance-driven organizational culture that concentrates much more on increasing productivity (in the guise of efficiency, results, outputs, client satisfaction), reducing expenses, adopting the latest technological advances and reinventing delivery through governance not just governmental organizations, based much on the ideological assumption that competition and business methods are allegedly superior to traditional public delivery monopolies and public service methods. Each step may have been a valuable building block in attaining better results, but it evades the greater issues of the subordination of collective ideals, values, virtues, and principles to private self-interests and self/individual improvement. Does anything go despite wrongdoing and misconduct as long as results are achieved? Should universal standards, social norms, and moral purity still count? Is good enough, good enough, as long as good intentions are professed? Should humanity always seek to do better and to pursue universal progress for all, not just for the few or even the many?

What is Maladministration?

At the outset, I adopted the common understanding of the expression until I discovered that the definition ranged from proof of bribery and the purchase of public office to charges of genocide and crimes against humanity. The former was too narrow and the latter too wide and stopped too short at professional public officials whereas it could be found in almost everyone engaged in organized human activity with few exceptions. When I investigated the cultural dimension, I had to ask myself whether any activity was entirely free if one could really penetrate its depths. Given that one could not as so much was hidden and kept secret and self-incriminating, that was unlikely. So, I had to draw my own boundaries crafted to emphasize a lifetime of research on administrative reform and related matters.

Maladministration is dysfunctional systemic performance that can be corrected. Bureau-pathology refers to all the maladies that afflict complex organizations through imperfect operations. Corruption is the deliberate and knowing obstruction of performance that rewards its participants while leaving its victims aggrieved and inadequately compensated.

All three aspects overlap, connect and feed off one another in a negative dynamic. Inadequacies in operations are a breeding ground for bureau-pathology, in which organizational goals and client service are subordinated to bureaucratic convenience, or in the extreme case, subverted entirely to the self-interests of powerholders. Maladministration and bureau-pathology, in turn, open the door to corruption. Where rewards are tempting and chances of being caught are slim, ambition and greed overcome moral scruples. As corruption becomes a tolerated and accepted way of life, it erodes culture, laws and systems, which remain as a shell, covering up illicit transactions and the persistence of maladministration and bureau-pathology (Caiden, 1991; Caiden & Caiden, 1977; Klitgaard,

2014). Because all three aspects are so closely inter-related, they result in administrative systems that (a) lose public confidence and the benefit of any doubt, where once they were trusted (to do the right thing) (b) fall below expectations for too long and exhaust patience in a speedy turn-around, (c) fail to achieve their stated purposes and objectives, (d) waste too much of other people's money, and (e) jeopardize lives or behave oppressively, indifferently, exploitatively, cruelly and immorally toward those whom they should be helping and serving.

In the past, maladministration as systemic dysfunctional performance or actions undermining the morality and values of public service was often simply attributed to the lack of personal integrity. A solution was having just honourable people govern public affairs. Unfortunately, only the death of the bad rulers could guarantee their permanent removal and replacement. While they lived, how could they be succeeded by better incumbents? How could those better candidates be recognized and supported? People of integrity were only part of the solution. Besides bad apples, there were also bad barrels, that is, faulty arrangements, institutions, systems, organizations, processes and procedures that overcame personal integrity. To this rotten side of administration is applied the term bureau-pathology, i.e. diseases of the bureau or any sizeable organization. So maladministration includes the two glaring components of corruption and bureau-pathology, both broadly defined.

This interaction where maladministration colludes with bureau-pathology and corruption is especially true when an organization's culture includes silence and fear and where colleagues cannot be straight with one another to reveal the truth about its operations (Svara, 2007).

Where elites behave in a self-serving manner there is no reason to believe that the rest of the population will be any better, while if elite behaviour honours and adheres to the institutional framework there may ensure positive spirals toward higher quality of government... This is achieved via formal and informal institutional constraints that alter incentives at the top in different ways... There are no straightforward relationships between institutions and elite behaviour but rather that different institutional arrangements and other preconditions interact with each other (Dahlstrom & Wangnerud, 2015: 3-4).

Altogether, maladministration is probably better caught by the general unease about performance and execution.

Something that human beings instinctively loathe...invoking notions of depravity and evil, human frailty and temptation... as an external force which attacks and undermines better human impulses. It is self-involvement, self-indulgence, and the loosening and discarding of the restraints of social bonds. It is...the idea of the capture by evil of one's soul... [of both individuals and systems] that transcends cultural boundary lines, ...[being] both ubiquitous and degenerate (Underkuffler, 2013: 1, 3-4, 6, 140).

Commonly perceived as needless suffering and wanton abuse of authority and trust, maladministration would require a strong defence. Those who benefit prefer not to have it mentioned at all as if it did not exist. When it is, they maintain that its positive outcomes more than offset its dysfunctions, which are exaggerated by envious losers, no-hopers, and misfits. Many academics and practitioners remain on the side-lines, without making

passionate judgment lest they be implicated as beneficiaries of tainted elites (Lawton, Van Der Wal & Huberts, 2016: 87-107). In contrast, autocrats believe self-righteously that they have the right to intervene in every human activity that is not purely private by nature and intent. But there is no reason to believe that eventually everything that occurs is for the good or works for the best. Some outcomes of human activity are definitely bad, if not evil; they ruin well-being, occasionally on a colossal or global scale. Not all human intentions are good and some outcomes turn out disastrous for humanity, as science fiction writers, behaviourists, and environmentalists warn about the evil, insensitive and uncaring strains in humankind.

A Current Example of Gross Maladministration

Current events reveal typical samples of obvious maladministration not just among the worst administered countries but also in one part of one of the largest, richest and proudest administrative systems in the world, that of the federal government of the United States in its assistance to one of the poorest and poorly run countries, that of Afghanistan.

Ongoing United States Governmental Development Aid in Afghanistan.

When the Special Inspector-General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, an American government watchdog, requested information in June about health clinics in that country funded by the United States Agency for International Development Agency, the aid agency handed over a database with the locations of more than 600 facilities.

But investigators quickly noticed something strange about the data: Coordinates for 13 of the clinics were not even in Afghanistan, and others were off by miles.

The findings were the latest in a series of reports and letters that that the special inspector general [John Shopko] has released over the past year and a half that have documented waste, abuse, and fraud in government-sponsored programs in that country, often to dramatic effect. Among them were aircraft bought by the United States that the Afghans cannot fly or maintain, troop rosters that cannot be verified and a \$335 million tax-payer supported electrical plant that is rarely used.

... Congress created the unusual cross-agency office in 2008 to determine what exactly the government has bought with more than \$100 billion it has spent on reconstruction...

The reports... underscore the inherently chaotic nature of development that relies on private contractors and local agencies. Records disappear, agencies do not measure progress reports accurately, and outright corruption drains government funds, especially in war zones.

It is a problem long recognized by government auditors. Since 1992, the Government Accountability Office has repeatedly listed the Defence Department's oversight of private contractors as highly vulnerable to fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement.

"So, the problem is not unique to Afghanistan; it's contracting in general", said [John Shopko], "The contracting officer's job is to get the money out of the door. But the question is what have we and the Afghans really gotten for our 14-year long, \$110 billion investment?"

To be sure, the United States has made substantial progress in rebuilding Afghanistan. There are more schools. Deaths from childbirth and infant mortality are down. People are living longer. And numerous roads, clinics, and irrigation facilities have been built.

Still Afghanistan remains one of the world's poorest and least developed nations. Corruption is rampant, abetted by weak ministries in a central government whose presence and support in rural areas is often minimal.

.... Government watchdog reports typically have a dry, understated tone. But Mr. Shopko has been blunt in his assessment of waste and fraud, naming individuals in his reports, which other inspector generals (sic) rarely do.

His office "is an example of how an inspector general is supposed to operate", said Danielle Brian, executive director of the Project on Government Oversight...

Senator Charles Grassley, Republican of Iowa, agreed. "This office gives the Defence Department classic case after case of blatant waste, served up on a silver platter. The audits are plainly written and cut to the heart of wastefulness", he said. "It is unfortunate that the Defence Department usually can't see through the bureaucratic fog and act on the waste."

... Money spent by the United States on future operations {will be overseen by} a new inspector-general for the United States military mission in Afghanistan... headed by a lead inspector-general who can come only from the Defence Department. State Department or U.S.A.I.D.... (Nixon 2015: A6)

This extract captures institutionalized maladministration. It is all there – inaccurate information and reporting; waste, abuse and fraud; risky reliance on private contractors and local agencies; disappearing records; inaccurate progress reports; outright and rampant corruption; poor oversight; inability to trace results for money spent; project underperformance or non-performance; decisions made without regard to recipients' capabilities; and the unconcern for spending other people's money. Few seem to care enough to bother to try to change things around. The administrative system perpetuates itself, including its maladministration. The mission is beneficial to all those involved and their intentions are good but the outputs and results are deficient and fall far short of expectations because of failures that are correctable and reversible by just following declared proper procedures. This is not trivial or sloppy. Inaction seems predictable if not premeditated.

The article also highlights five ubiquitous attributes of maladministration.

1. The irresponsibility of individuals. In this case, the Special Inspector actually named individuals found responsible for waste and fraud. In other words, maladministration does not just happen. It is not a natural phenomenon. There will always be totally unforeseen circumstances beyond anyone's control. But maladministration always involves in some way human agency; it doesn't happen on its own and it will not cure itself without outside intervention urging and assisting remedial action (United Nations Development Division 1998);
2. The frequent reaction to reports of maladministration is to replace the messenger, rather than deal with the message. Note that future United States spending on operations in Afghanistan will now be overseen by a new inspector-general for the military mission, an appointee who must be drawn only from the Defence

Department, State Department or AID, the very agencies in charge of spending the money and whose activities are shielded in secrecy. They are largely responsible only to themselves which should not put them beyond any public control, responsibility, and external supervision. Self-policing rarely works without zealous dedication to the truth and honesty;

3. Almost no reference is made to past and contemporary reports by other reputable inspection agencies although these bodies had complained repeatedly about similar and worse shortcomings. Their proposals for remediation had been totally ignored or half-heartedly adopted in such a way that they were doomed to fail. In this case, the United States General Office of Accountability (GAO), an agency of the Congress, not the Presidency, had been critical of all three organizations that were now to be given (by Congress) sole charge of investigating themselves although in early September 2015 the GAO issued a report highly condemnatory of the Pentagon for failing to address its problems regarding professional misconduct and other ethical issues;
4. Watchdogs in general invariably run into trouble over disputes as to their access and revelations when disclosing sensitive information and embarrassing the authorities to which they report. The 72 U.S. inspectors-general have run afoul of federal government protection of private privacy like grand jury transcripts, wiretap intercepts, financial credit reports, income tax returns, private business secrets and national security and international negotiations. The watchdogs complain that they are denied information crucial to their investigations, blocked and delayed in their operations, denied adequate resources, and their findings ignored, virtually making much of their work irrelevant. Ambitious watchdogs find themselves frustrated and subject to retirement and removal for interfering in matters that should not concern them from policy issues to boondoggles (Lichtblau, 2015: A1-2); and
5. Almost nothing is said about the prevailing culture of impunity. The players change but the game continues uninterrupted. Meanwhile back in Afghanistan, it has been business as usual. The international community had spent years to prosecute, in 2010, Khalilullah Frozi for defrauding the Kabul Bank (founded in 2004, as the country's first private bank, which operated more like a Ponzi scheme and a piggy bank for the elite) of nearly \$1 billion. He was given a 15-year prison sentence, which was a condition of further aid to Afghanistan. In November 2015 (after only one year of a new government headed by President Ashraf Ghani which had pledged on taking office to curb corruption and revive the Kabul Bank case to reopen prosecutions and push for harsher sentences for Mr Frozi and his colleagues) Mr. Frozi received another government contract to develop a new township (Smart City) in Kabul on land owned by him. As part of the deal, Mr Frozi would continue to serve his sentence at night (in his cosy cell) and the profits would enable him to pay off his debts including his fine for embezzlement. Two weeks before this, the chief international watchdog in Afghanistan, Drago Kos (a member of the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee), had resigned claiming that the government had not been serious about any systematic action against endemic corruption; he did not see the point of going on. Another member of the committee, Yama Tora, commented "Anyone can

loot, but if they can invest in Afghanistan, no one will question the legitimacy of the investment. It perpetuates the culture of impunity" (Mashal, 2015: A10).

The Inspector General's report (and previous ones in the series) was exceptional in its bluntness. It was not of course the whole picture; the American administration's ideals, values, achievements, capability, flexibility, inventiveness and worth to the globe usually get far more attention, deservedly so. Nor are scandals and revelations of shortcomings in both small and large scale organizations entirely ignored by the media. But the everyday accumulation of disappointments, frustrations, failures, waste and corruption that make up maladministration are usually kept in the shadows. Few within any large organization want to draw attention to its dirty laundry, or publicly accuse those with dirty hands. Such exposure would be most embarrassing and distressing to pride and reputation, as well as inviting an internal backlash for those who thought they were lacking sufficient loyalty.

Such remains the situation in Afghanistan where much information is alleged to be unsubstantiated and unreliable, distorted and taken out of context. The situation there may be as claimed far better than presented despite abundant evidence from local observers, the participants themselves, and public records released from the USGAO, other US federal departments operating in Afghanistan, and the US judicial system. Mass media do not hesitate to reveal how rotten is the country's governance and the extent of its prevailing greed, corruption and danger (Mashal, 2016). Visitors to other countries glimpse at similar situations and have to choose what to do. Do they close their eyes and keep everything to themselves, or pay the bribes and blackmail and have done with it, or make a scene, protest, and complain to clear their conscience? Do they take advantage of their favoured position as outsiders and profit? Afghanistan may well be a hopeless case, getting worse by the day but probably no worse than exists under totalitarian regimes, mafia states, and kleptomaniac rulers without law and order. Life in unsafe mines and urban slums is no joy. The worst probably is being an unprotected homeless refugee whose existence cannot be denied, deserted by everyone, and subject to both terror and imprisonment at the same time. These circumstances are all publicly brought about and common knowledge. Is there any need to wrangle over the maladministration behind such inhumanity?

Afghanistan is not an isolated black hole in the administrative firmament. In the race to the bottom, it has several competitors around the globe on all continents that in the past decade alone have been going backwards because of endemic maladministration. But no country can cast aspersions on any other. Probably all have pockets of maladministration somewhere hidden away like plagues to emerge and spread whenever the circumstances are right. According to the flourishing measurement business, daily revelations show that no state, no large-scale organization, public and private, and no enterprising activity can be complacent that there are no pockets of shame lurking within and disgracing the whole endeavour that shakes public confidence in the most honourable human institutions. At first hearing, this sounds too far-fetched although on deeper examination, despite its benefits, all administration is diseased with minor ailments to that can fester into monstrous epidemics in no time at all, if not treated when still controllable. The hunt is on measuring whatever is measurable, whereas more energy should be spent on what gives rise to maladministration in the first place, how quickly it can be diagnosed, and what may prevent it escalating, instead of distracting and diverting precious research substantiating what is already known.

Is Maladministration Inevitable?

One obvious answer is “It all depends.” Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so is ugliness. Furthermore, the ugly spots can always be hidden and never mentioned in polite company. Physical operations and other nostrums may not eradicate all bad spots, but they can make them less noticeable. The magicians (like hidden persuaders) can even mislead the all-too-gullible that ugly is really pretty. People generally believe what they want to believe and see only what they want to see. Even the brightest can deceive and be deceived, while wily tricksters can pull the wool over the eyes of the ignorant and naive. Prophets before their time and truly great thinkers are rebuked because others lacking the same talent cannot make the same leaps of faith and imagination. In contrast, the misguided and vulnerable are too often blind to the obvious and too easily convinced that they are just mistaken about the reality in which they live (Rose-Ackerman, 1978; 1999; 2013; 2015; 2016).

But administration is a matter of getting things done that people want done. Its blemishes eventually become more discernible, and its consequences more practical and crucial than difference between beauty and ugliness. Either things get done or they do not. They may not get done to perfection or up to expectations, that is, at least good enough despite the elements of maladministration which can be forgiven or glossed over. Things may not get done by fair means but then some ends may be deemed worthy of any means that bring success. They may not get done on time or as promised. What gets done may not be acceptable or remotely near satisfaction (satisficing). Thus, wars may decide nothing at all, bloody tyrants get their way, and worthy civilizations disappear. On a tinier scale, timetables are made meaningless, disasters cannot be prevented, and accidents occur. There are, of course, things that administrators cannot prevent and should not even undertake. Beauticians can go so far and no farther and medical practitioners cannot overcome every sickness. So people put into positions of authority should not be expected or required to eliminate all maladministration, given the uncertain state of the art and vulnerability of practitioners (Ivkovic, 2005). But should they give up trying, as so many appear to do to make their job easier? This question can only be answered only if there is substantial agreement about what is meant by maladministration, bureau-pathology and corruption beyond standard dictionaries.

One cannot simply point to maladministration solely as the cause of everything that might go wrong. There are other blameworthy factors, such as poor policymaking, setting impossible tasks, making bad decisions in the circumstances, failing to provide sufficient support and resources, permitting immunity from all responsibility and accountability, indifference to complaints, and failure to adequately examine possible outcomes before embarking on action. The simplest explanation is that nobody is perfect. No human arrangements are perfect. No laws are perfect. As long as humans are imperfect and their administrative systems are faulty, maladministration will be found somewhere. However, this should not prevent the continuous search for improvement. Rather, it should stimulate the hunt for the distinction between what can and should be safely tolerated (i.e., simply ignored as being relatively harmless) and those important outcomes that can and should be taken seriously and where any identifiable victims should be fairly compensated if at all possible.

The distinction occurs not in the self-justifying rationalization to dismiss honest from dishonest graft but in expressions such as “rules don’t always apply” which implies that

judgment counts as much if not more than competence. Administration is an intrinsic art taking into account values, ideals, and experience, not merely a universalistic technical science that can be applied to all situations that might suit and satisfy for the time being (Wright, 2015). Wisdom also has its place. Administrators play with other people's lives and resources. The best makes themselves believable and trustworthy; the worst are unscrupulous and egotistical. Character counts above technique and the ruthless application of rigid rules and questionable dogma especially when misapplied to employees and clients.

Does Character Really Count?

Unfortunately, some employees of sterling character do not stand much of a chance and are held back when it comes to promotion. Many folks are dismissed as possible administrative potential because they don't seem to fit the part, being handicapped, female, small in stature, cautious, ill-learned, shy, ugly and unassuming; not sufficiently charismatic, adventurous, intelligent, well-connected, wealthy, beautiful, and industrious. Chances are probably stacked when considering candidates for promotion to administrator against those confronted with common prejudices, being out of the ordinary (strange, different), or considered deficient in some way. Every community differs as to how one proves one's worthiness, merit, honour, and suitability. Whoever exercises authority over others is usually given the benefit of any doubt until found unworthy. This gives them the advantage as administrators to impose themselves. They may be excused by their loyal adherents for their lapses even though they are guilty for calamities, deprivation, cruelty, enslavement, terror and insecurity during their watch. Bureaucracies decide the fate of so many within their reach, who are unable to tame this inherently dysfunctional monster, despite calls for de-concentration, decentralization and fragmentation to reduce the distance between decision and application point so that those that give the orders see the ordered and realize their personal responsibility for the orders (Schumacher, 1973).

Maladministration is Universal

The ideal type of the Weberian model does not distinguish between publicly and privately owned or any mixture of the two in the third or nongovernmental (NGO) sector. No large-scale organization is immune. When it comes to feeling harmed and annoyed people sense who to blame. The voiceless victims know what ails them even when they cannot identify the source of the mischief or articulate their grievances. They are aware that few in authority capable of intervention are likely to take up their side. They tend to believe that they are bound to be ignored by faceless bureaucrats and merciless executives, who claim to know what is better if not best for them. Too often, the veins of these unapproachable heartless despots seem to run with ice water when ridding themselves of rivals, appropriating property, making money, exploiting minorities, denying individual human rights, increasing their own privileges and demonstrating the sheer arrogance and insolence of office. Such bosses are shameless, when lording over weaker folk, believing themselves born to rule, and exhibiting traits of vindictiveness, vengefulness, spite, and sheer indifference to suffering that borders on sadism. Their sweet words belie their contempt for inferiors (Krugman, 2016).

Bad leaders who linger set a bad example for others. When they get away with their misdeeds, they give an excuse for everyone else to copy them. Hence, the cry to "toss the rascals out" attracts. But there is little incentive to change when everybody involved benefits

from maladministration and nobody with tenure and the right connections can be removed from their iron cage. But what if the leadership that it is doing its best is being let down by uncontrollable independent staff who disobey discipline? What if the able leadership isolates itself from grassroots operations, delegates too much authority, and engages in symbolic politics without considering administrative details and substantive policy delivery? It keeps its hands clean although its veneer of assurance locks in the malfeasance of others (Rose-Ackerman, 2015). This occurs too frequently with sole source delivery access to public goods and resources (Detter & Folster, 2015), absence of collective action and countervailing power, uncompetitive politics, and prevailing nihilism.

The virtue of all organizations is that they get done what needs doing. If they fail after being given sufficient opportunity, they eventually disappear for being useless. They have to serve some useful purpose. That purpose may not be disclosed and it may contradict what is publicly declared. Secret organizations are exceptional because their existence is supposedly unknown, their activities hidden from view, inaccessible and unaccountable. Many others probably wish they were like that too so they could operate outside public sight, be more flexible, and free from outside restriction. The remedy for silence probably lies in greater accountability and reliance on people of good will (i.e. truthful whistle-blowers) to reveal what is happening in their daily work. But nobody likes being watched every second; most probably prefer to be left alone, trusted to get on with their job as best as they can. Unfortunately, not all (a) see where they fit into the bigger picture, (b) avoid being distracted by the daily boredom of their repetitive tasks, (c) believe they contribute less than their capability or equal share, and (d) like being expected to get on with their fellow workers and behaving as a happy team player or good citizen. After all, life is more peaceful when one goes along without drawing attention to oneself in the process. Spilling the beans is just not done should retaliation threaten.

More on Keeping Quiet

Contemporary information processing makes keeping quiet more difficult because of the possibility of unauthorized hacking. At the same time, technology makes traces of wrongdoing both more difficult to hide and easier to disappear, especially if aided by an organizational conspiracy to maintain confidentiality. In any event, exposure may well come too late for corrective action or only after a deal has been struck to allow the perpetrators of maladministration to escape with only a slap on the wrist in return for promises to make amends. After all, tolerance of maladministration may impede justifiable whistle-blowing. In the corporate world and elsewhere, it is considered good management practice if the organization involved gets away with its unscrupulous practices as has too often been the case with shady business. Organizations seek the best available talent to protect those with dirty hands and to devise more effective evasive measures to ward off outside interference. Their victims bless investigative mass media when possible scandal in the wind is detected. Regulatory bodies and watchdogs (which refuse to be intimidated and do their expected job) are similarly praised by a grateful public for exposing harmful maladministration in the hope and expectation that some remedial action might follow at last.

Today, there is much more of a persistent race between freedom of information and suppression of bad news. Not everything that goes wrong is newsworthy. In administration, things may go wrong simply because directions are not followed as expected or they are unclear, misunderstood and go astray. No blame can be assigned, no punishment fits the

error made and remorse cannot be discounted. Anyway, what deters any sinner? Administrators are put on the spot and have to make quick decisions regarding revelations of maladministration. Probably every language has expressions concerning rush to judgement when accusations are glibly tossed around. People like to gossip and scandal spreads like wild fire, damaging guilty and innocent alike. Administrators are warned to be on guard at all times for things are more likely to go wrong just when they relax. They cannot be everywhere at the same time or know everything, least of all when uninformed by others who fear retribution or being wrongly blamed. It does not pay to be the bearer of bad news. It is better on the whole to remain silent and pretend to be ignorant without raising suspicion.

Nothing is fool proof, least of all computers raided by smart hackers. As more administration is being conducted on computers, it must be assumed that anything can be revealed, although administrative systems are designed to be quite safe, stable, reliable, dependable and confidential. Digital Taylorism and corporatization are making the working situation far worse and threaten to dehumanize the workplace altogether. "Why turn workers into machines, when machines can do even more?" (Schumpeter, 2015: 63). The current love fest for modern business management practices may well turn out to be counter-productive in other organizations where they should not be applied at all or only with over-riding public considerations (Stensota, 2016: 17-31).

Administrative Reform

Tackling maladministration requires prompt action and outside intervention of administrative reformers. Where the rot is so bad, organizations or their whole top management may have to be replaced. The advantage of a new broom is that it can sweep clean and with beginner's luck it can draw instant attention. But caution is required. While appearing to improve matters, newcomers may actually be destroying the good along with the bad. This happens all too often with reshuffles and reorganizations. Unfortunately, simple solutions are not that simple in this complicated and rapidly changing world. If they were, they would probably have been tried already. Problems stick because there may be no feasible solution at all or the application creates unforeseen worse difficulties and complications by disturbing other previously undisturbed stakeholders. Many enthusiastic reformers (including famed international management consultants) forced to come in blind regret taking on what turns out to be an overwhelming, absorbing task without sufficient resources and backing, make a hash of the task. and rely on spin to hide the fact.

Administrative reformers are probably better off looking at the specific circumstances, that is, examining accurately at what is actually there, not what they hope to see or ignore. This does not mean just reductionism, window dressing, and story-telling. They tend to be birds of a feather, likely adventuresome, and fairly thick-skinned. Fortunately, they are also somewhat guarded, defensive and protective lest they give away too much ammunition to their critics who ignore the damage caused by undermining their reform efforts. Unfair critics impede progress by diverting attention to inessentials, discouraging administrative entrepreneurs and pouring cold water over anything that has not been suggested by them first.

The quest for improved administrative performance has frequently been marred by too much research for hire, such as too many self-promoting experts ready to justify what

administrators favour. All too often they propose predetermined findings posing as impartial, which are just so much sophisticated public relations propaganda to beguile their audiences. Occasionally, administrators and picked experts slip up and give their agenda away before they realize what has occurred. The message being broadcast is “Don’t let the [winning] side down. Play the game. Don’t stick your neck out or stick your nose into anything that does not concern you. Don’t make waves. You’ll get along fine just like the organization men did and still do as loyal (silent) team-players” (Whyte, 1956: 2002).

Since the rule of the organization man model, wiser administrators understand that insightful truth-sayers have their place. It is better to find out what the aspirants have discovered and employ them to advantage than disown them altogether and mock their views. Try to spot them early and co-opt them. Befriend them; don’t turn them into implacable foes. They are clever. In time, they can learn to play the administrative game skilfully and to their personal advantage not by staying, but by moving on to gain more varied experience. The ambitious seek success, prestige, power, stature, and prosperity, if not for themselves then for making their loved ones more comfortable and secure. So, tap their brains and adopt what is profitable. If necessary, bribe them with alluring promises. Tell them to count their blessings and not to care so much for the plight of others less fortunate and to confine mistakes and shortcomings to the fellow magic inner circle safe from exposure.

Room for Optimism

Academics, practitioners and investigators have filing cabinets full of material on maladministration, bureau-pathology and corruption and related topics. They have encouraged others to collect examples and to probe further. They repeat that even residents of developed countries grumble about maladministration, that is, (a) anything they want done is too often not done properly, (b) mistakes have to be pointed out to be rectified, (c) things do not necessarily run like clockwork, and (d) too much time is eaten away when they persist on getting matters right. Residents in underdeveloped countries are far worse off living amidst the chaos of maladministration, where (a) one has to know how to obtain service and entitlements all of which come at an extra price, (b) nothing ever seems finally settled, (c) having connections is essential, (d) little can be taken as guaranteed, and (e) life is a persistent struggle (Bracking, 2007; Chaturvedi & Chandra, 2015). The general conclusion drawn is that this situation is unlikely to change much within the lifetime of their children. Most agree that greater effort should be made to reduce maladministration and think that sufficient knowledge is available as what could be immediately done. They plead not to be impatient. The flame of concern still burnt bright if not brighter than ever before around the globe that improvements will soon occur but do not expect immediate results.

Looking back, the taboo on mentioning maladministration was finally broken in the early 1990s since when revelation and research have become a thriving global industry. One of the biggest breakthroughs came with the establishment in 1993 of Transparency International and its country branches (Vogl, 2012). Although it was not the first organization of its kind, it attracted like-minded adherents who breached barriers erected by deniers and brought results by the early 2000s when maladministration, particularly corruption was considered the top priority in the global war against poverty and underdevelopment (Klitgaard, 2014; Quah, 2013). Progress can be measured by the release of the recent research on Africa which bluntly reported on how many people were calculated to have paid bribes over the year to

escape punishment and to get access to basic services that were desperately needed. There was a wide disparity between a few strong performing countries and the many weak performers across the continent (Pring, 2015: 2-3). This mixed message of hope and disappointment could have been repeated around the globe: hope that strong local efforts were getting results in turning back maladministration but disappointment that elsewhere little was being achieved and the situation was worsening.

The hopeful opponents of maladministration are proud of the achievements being made but disappointed that the pressure to curb maladministration has since declined although the need has intensified. Despite appearances to the contrary, the initial gains seem to be declining. One has only to compare the United Nations discussions over the Millennium Development Goals before 2000 with those over the Sustainable Development Goals since 2012, especially over reducing inequality, tax loopholes and money laundering, environmental degradation, access to reproductive services and black international marketing by organized criminals. The final tally was 17 goals and 169 priorities meant to be a preliminary global social safety net by about the year 2030. Alas, this long list of immeasurable aspirations will likely end up pleasing no one and doing little for the most vulnerable, the marginalized and the poor. The offenders are as shrewd as ever at getting around obstacles placed in their way. They seem to be steps ahead in anticipating what is next in store for them and well placed enough to outsmart any assaults on their malpractices.

Thankfully, in every generation there have always been individuals willing to stand up against institutionalized wrongdoing, fearless in their opposition and outspokenness, trying to open eyes, and expose venerated villains and crooks in the highest places. They never give up. Where once silenced, they, now, at least receive adoration by their followers, by mass media for which they are newsworthy, and by decent people in all walks of life being deceived by systemic treachery. These moralists are not subversive; they are quite open, sincere, honest, and trustworthy. They share their protest against (a) the human toll of maladministration, (b) the measurement of human progress by pure materialism or just winning, or outright greed and egotism, (c) insufficient global fellowship, and (d) the presence of millions living with misery, cruelty, violence, and insecurity. There is also a spiritual dimension (Tawney, 1926; 1998), summed up in the Biblical expression that “Man does not live by bread alone” and put into theological terms “If God doesn’t exist, life’s just a game—To steal or not to steal—it’s all the same.” (Levin 2003: 73). They are pushed by some pounding inner conscience from which they cannot escape (Sorabji, 2014).

At the beginning of this essay, the dire situation in Afghanistan was cited. The very next day in Guatemala perhaps in a much the same mess, hope was illustrated.

Memo from Guatemala

Just about every weekend for months, Jorge Castiglione, a 70-year-old engineer... has gone to the Plaza de la Constitution here to support what has become a ritual in this nation: weekly protests calling for the resignation of the president and an end to political impunity.

These might seem rather ambitious demands. Politics here are as corrupt as dissent is deadly, at least if the last century is any indication. When protests began a few months ago, set off by revelations about a vast customs fraud scheme, few including Mr. Castiglione, figured things would change.

But suddenly, they did. And fast.

Spearheaded by a United Nations-backed commission, investigations into corruption expanded to the highest levels of government. On Friday, the nation's former vice-president was arrested, and prosecutors claimed that the president, Otto Perez Molina, was the chief beneficiary of a fraud ring that siphoned millions of dollars in customs revenues while basic public services suffered.

For a nation with the cards stacked against it—among the highest poverty and murder rates in the hemisphere and a history of violence of violent government repression—the emergence of large public protests is being greeted as a major step...After the high-profile arrests and the emergence of peaceful protests in a place silenced by a history of civil war, will lasting change occur?

...The next month could be telling. Though Mr. Perez Molina refused to step down...elections for his replacement are scheduled for September. In the eyes of many protesters, the prospects are not promising. The running mate of Manuel Baldizon's, the leading presidential candidate, is himself embroiled in a corruption investigation. And Mr. Baldizon's party, Lider, has blocked efforts to strip Mr. Perez Molina of his immunity, a necessary step to bring formal charges.

...Whether the country can end impunity for its politicians is a source of concern for many. Moving beyond the unifying anger of street protests toward something more transformative and lasting is relative uncharted territory [as it is in Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, and Peru.]

... The country's awakening has been incited by the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, the investigative body backed by the United Nations that arrived in 2006 to root out organized crime. In the early years, the group helped local prosecutors notch victories against criminal networks that penetrated the government.

But recently, the group blossomed into the government's worst nightmare [by setting] its sights on corruption and impunity, twin facets of Guatemalan political life that few thought would ever come under scrutiny.

...Guatemalans long accustomed to systemic dysfunction – whether in the form of hospitals without medicine or police officers without fuel to drive to crime scenes – were confronted with hard facts and evidence collected through wire taps and raids about frauds, which seemed to validate every cynical assumption.

The initial case, known as La Linea, involved customs stations across the country taking bribes from importers to reduce the amount of duties paid... officials were arrested... the same scheme [prosecutors] accuse Mr. Perez Molina of leading. Then another scandal emerged. The same authorities were accused of skimming millions off a contract meant to provide dialysis treatment for patients with kidney problems, among other things...negligent treatment, connecting the corruption to actual lives. (Azam Ahmed 2015: A4, 9)

Many people in Guatemala still remain on the side-lines, especially in rural areas where there is little faith in civic action. They seem to identify the protesters more as like a rent-a-crowd who insufficiently respect the law. The rural folk warmed more when the business elite shifted its position and the Congress voted that Molina should lose his immunity. Although only half of those eligible to vote did at the October 2015 general election, the overwhelming vote for President went to the least tainted of the three conservative

conservatives. He was a popular former television comedian, Jimmy Morales, who interpreted his mandate to continue the fight against corruption. His election slogan had been “Not corrupt, nor a thief”. The new Congress pledged itself to reforms that will do away with the existing political situation.

Upon his resignation, President Molina, he was immediately jailed for corruption in connection with a kickback scheme in the customs agency which led to further investigations by CICIG that revealed this was merely the tip of the iceberg whereby his party was the front to run the government for personal enrichment, nothing out of the ordinary in that country. Since its establishment in 2008, the party had accepted illegal donations for future benefits from government contracts and had delivered to most of the country’s elite. “It was a criminal gang whose objective was to take power to rob the state” (The Economist, 2016). Local officials have since copied CICIG’s example in their professional investigations which have resulted in numerous arrests. If convictions are obtained, this could cut into the elite’s impunity. The past was quickly brought to mind when Byron Lima Oliva, an ex-army captain, serving a 20-year sentence for murdering in 1998 Bishop Juan Jose Gerardi days after the victim had presented a voluminous human rights report on atrocities in the country’s civil war, was killed in July 2016 by a fellow inmate serving a 826 year sentence for a 2008 attack on a bus. Both led rival groups that clashed over drug sales and both enjoyed privileges that enabled them to run profitable businesses, travel freely outside prison on behalf of deposed President Molina, and run vast extortion schemes (uncovered by CICIG) in exchange for kickbacks to Lider. The kickbacks showed how a criminal enterprise had been able to co-opt the state. Oliva’s death was announced during the ongoing corruption trial of Molina (Malkin & Wirtz, 2016).

Sceptics commented that prevailing politics would change little as the new President would not be able to make much of a difference. They had in mind the warning coming from other countries where newly elected legislators, pledged to reforms had not acted on the pressing demands of protestors for years in India (Tummala, 2013: 167-187), the reigning authorities had persecuted prominent critics (for example, Alexei Navalny in Russia), and the collapse of popular protest movements elsewhere. True, reforms rarely occur over night. All too often they fall far short of curbing maladministration that persists from generation to generation because the reformers are out-smarted or they compromise too much, thereby undermining themselves and their cause. The initial enthusiasm of their supporters fades away in disillusion or other issues take center stage. However, in neighbouring Honduras, the Guatemala example sparked off civic leaders to urge a similar model to chip away at maladministration and its culture of impunity, this time with the outside intervention of the Organization of American States, again after street protests against malfeasance by senior government officials who stole from the country’s health care system that probably ended up in the coffers of President Hernandez’s National Party. The establishment of an outside investigation would be a OAS first with possibly more initiatives to come.

As to other countries, current ongoing scandals might have been cited in Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela and Chile in South America, Ukraine and other members of the ex-Soviet Union, Southern Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, not omitting even the tiny Vatican State. Indeed, all these countries and others suffer from systemic maladministration. The exceptions are the few countries acknowledged by pollsters and researchers reputed to experience the least maladministration, such as Finland, Scandinavia, Australasia and Singapore (Quah, 2013). What confirms much of what is written here has been illustrated by

scandals in China where the government is engaged in a campaign to reduce corruption and other embarrassments to the Chinese Communist Party. A specific case study arose over what was alleged to have occurred at the warehouse blast in Tianjin, China. The organization that owned the warehouse reaped profits from unsafe storage of dangerous goods, unfortunately an all too frequent phenomenon around the globe for hazardous waste and dangerous products from local sewage to the nuclear industry (Jacobs, Hernandez & Buckley, 2015: A1, 6 and 7). China has woken up that its path to development can no longer ignore its scandals in its aspiration to become a super power (Zhang & Lavena, 2015). In neighbouring Indonesia, following the excesses of the Suharto regime slow progress is reputed to being made by its Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) since 2003 with the imprisonment of some 400 members of the elite. Although there is still a long way to go, without an overhaul of its party system and campaign financial laws, further progress will be slow, as is often the case elsewhere.

Since these events, there have been ongoing scandals in some of most reputable corporations in a variety of global businesses, and in some of the most respected international organizations reaching as high as the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly (September 2013-2014) held by a diplomat from Antigua in cahoots with businessmen from Macau, and within several United Nations operations. Maladministration knows no bounds. It seems that the higher one rises, the more the opportunities, the greater the rewards, and the more any benefit of the doubt. At least, poor people are more aware of environmental pollution such as undrinkable water, hazardous waste, and poisonous food but they still do not know how much aid intended for them is siphoned off to the rich which could be as much as 90 per cent that just disappears into thin air.

Yet against the grain, hope springs eternal. In Romania, Prime Minister Victor Ponta was indicted in July 2015 on charges of forgery, money laundering and tax evasion. He had been in office since May 2012. The government had long been accused of corruption and abuse of the rule of law, dating from the regime of Communist Ruler President Nicolai Ceausescu. It had been brought down by popular revolt in 1989 although the governing elite had hardly changed its style of governance. Despite growing unpopularity, Ponta had stood his ground. What finally brought him down was a tragic fire at a nightclub in Bucharest which killed 32 people attributed to abuse of lax issue of permits and inadequate inspection arising from corrupt practices. The fire touched off street protests demanding the ouster of the prime minister, his deputy, and the mayor of the locality of the nightclub. In response, Ponta and the mayor stepped down "to preserve stability". A new coalition replaced the old. Ponta had not been popular but he was the first prime minister to resign because of street protests. It was a face-saving gesture but also an "opportunity to end the administrative incompetence and the state of perpetual illegality" in which people lived (Gillet & Karasz, 2015: A8).

The Bottom Line

The rot does not always start at the top, as expressed in the ancient Latin expression "*Corruptio optimorum pestimaraes*", i.e. corruption of the best is the worst of all. But that is where much amelioration has to begin. Without support and encouragement from both inside and out, reform is likely to falter and the opportunity to disappear will fade. As to the wider battle,

The anguish of the earth absolves our eyes, till beauty shines in all that we can see.

War is our scourge: yet war has made us wise, and fighting for our freedom, we are free
Sassoon, 1916; 2013: 17)³.

The optimists, together with their fellow birds of a feather, remains relentless work horses to reduce ubiquitous contemporary maladministration. Sometimes, governments go too far, but in this case, they do not go far enough, simply because they do not look in the mirror often enough to spot why so many people complain about their performance and boldly express their dissatisfaction without fear or favouritism. In so doing, they show bravery not contempt. They are not trouble-makers to decry all they think is unholy. They admit

How easy it has been to be seduced, to be knowingly led astray and join the great general mass of liars – that mas compounded of crass ignorance, utilitarian indifference and shameless self-interest – and exchange a single great truth for the cynical shrug of a hardened sinner (Yizhar, 1948; 2008: 1)⁴.

They who tell the truth are honourable and derive their happiness this way. Underneath their pride, integrity, dignity and criticism are love, tenderness, sensitivity and good heartedness (Kaplan, 2007)⁵. They strive for the common good without thought for the danger they encounter.

In short, “[Maladministration] will continue—indeed, may well be the norm—until those with a stake in ending it are able to oppose it in ways that cannot be ignored” (Johnston 2014, 1).

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³ Siegfried Sassoon from “Absolution”, in Harold Bloom. 2013. *Poets of World War 1, Rupert Brook and Siegfried Sassoon*. London: Chelsea House Publishers, p. 17.

⁴ S. Yizhar, *Khirbet Khizeh*, Ibis Edition, Jerusalem, 2008 (translated by Nicholas de Lange and Yaacob Dweck, p. 1.

⁵ Beth Kaplan. 2007. *Finding the Jewish Shakespeare: The Life and Legacy of Jacob Gordin*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

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