Spirited Dialogue *is a special forum for lively exchanges on books of interest to* PAR *readers. In this issue, we focus attention on the award winning book,* Unmasking Administrative Evil, *by Guy Adams and Danny Balfour. The exchange begins with a hard-hitting and controversial critique by Mel Dubnick. The essays by Margaret Vickers and Hubert Locke praise the contribution made by Adams and Balfour and respond to Dubnick's critique. The exchange concludes with a response by Adams and Balfour.*

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Spirited Dialogue: The Case for Administrative Evil: A Critique[1]

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Guy B. Adams and Danny L. Balfour's *Unmasking Administrative Evil* (*UAE*) is an important book in several respects, not the least being the attention it has generated among readers both within and outside the field of Public Administration.[2] As a community of scholars, Public Administration is not known for its contributions to "popular" literature. We do not tend to publish books likely to be found on the shelves at Borders or Barnes and Noble—not even in the "management" section where just about *anything* associated with organizational life seems to sell. Beyond the rare exception or two, ours is not a field that draws attention to itself through publishing controversial volumes.

Therefore, any work published by our colleagues receiving some critical attention is indeed an important publication for our community. And the fact that it has received two of the field's major "book of the year" awards[3] only reinforces that judgment. *UAE* is no doubt a book to be reckoned with for any serious student of Public Administration.

UAE achieved its notable status by being a contentious work, putting forth a strong argument on behalf of a particular viewpoint. It is a work of rhetoric, designed primarily to introduce us to an insightful perspective and to persuade us of its value for understanding the problematic nature of modern public administration. To the degree that it stirs debate and reflection about important issues, *UAE* no doubt deserves the attention and honors it has received. But does it deserve the same degree of attention as a work of scholarship?

What follows is a critical assessment of *UAE* as a work of scholarship, and my focus is on two general concerns. In the first section, I present a foundation for assessing the credibility of argumentative scholarship and offer an assessment of *UAE* on those grounds. In the second section, I highlight some of the special responsibilities—some of them ethical—assumed by scholars who use rhetorical and argumentative approaches. Here as well, I assess *UAE* to see how well it "measures up." In the final section, I discuss what the widespread enthusiasm for this work says about our field and its view of scholarship.

The Credibility of Argumentative Scholarship

Scholarship as Argument

Hood and Jackson (1991, especially ch. 2) characterize the literature of Public Administration as argumentative and rhetorical,[4] a view they trace to Herbert Simon's classic critique of orthodoxy in "The Proverbs of Administration."[5] The characterization of the field's literature as rhetorical and argumentative may seem harshly judgmental at first, and I have previously offered a serious critique of the field's scholarship (Dubnick 1999). There is growing acceptance, however, of the idea that most academic scholarship is in fact focused on efforts to persuade, and that rhetoric and argumentation play key roles in the conduct and presentation of research in all disciplines (Gross 1996; Edmondson 1984; Nelson, Megill, and McCloskey 1987; Patterson 1996; Mailloux 1989; Fish 1989, ch. 20; Gusfield 1976; Overington 1977). Among students of social scientific inquiry, attention has shifted from the search for universal or reconstructed "logics" of inquiry to an understanding of the dynamic "discursive cultures" of inquiry (Nagel 1961; Hall 1999; Kaplan 1964). For some, this view reinforces the postmodern critique of "scientism," especially in the social sciences (Rosenau 1992). For others, it supports a more realistic view of the imperfect world of scholarship found in all disciplines (Sokal and Bricmont 1998).

In this context, the characterization of *UAE* as a rhetorical work does little more than make explicit the argumentative form of inquiry used by the authors. They are in good company. Among the contemporary classics of Public Administration are works no less argumentative, from Hummel's *The Bureaucratic Experience* (1994) and Goodsell's *The Case for Bureaucracy* (1994) to Osborne and Gaebler's

Reinventing Government (1992). Thus, the assessment of a work such as *UAE* depends on the standards we as a field accept for argumentative scholarship.

According to philosopher Stephen Toulmin, once we accept the legitimacy of rhetorical and argumentative inquiry, we face a choice between standards derived from idealized logic or "working" logic (1958, especially ch. IV). An *idealized logic* posits universal standards for an argument's claims, demanding conformity in both form and substance. Simon used such standards in his critique of orthodoxy's principles of administration, concluding they suffered two fatal flaws: they came in conflicting pairs and were grounded in "ordinary knowledge" rather than derived from scientific inquiry. In contrast, a *working logic* uses standards applied in "real life" conditions, and these are often radically different from idealized standards. Thus, in contrast to Simon, Hood and Jackson called for the assessment of "administrative arguments" on the basis of their credibility among practitioners who, in turn, rely on their working logic to determine what is acceptable or not acceptable. "Winning administrative ideas," they argue, "are rarely very profound. Often they are repackaged and relabeled [sic] versions of an idea which has been advanced many times before. Frequently their premises come down to some banal notion of 'human nature' coupled with a contestable view about links between cause and effect. 'Proof' typically consists of no more than a few colorful examples" (Hood and Jackson 1991, 10–11).

A similar distinction is useful in developing standards for assessing the credibility of argumentative scholarship. We can apply some idealized logic (such as, logical positivism) to claims made by our colleagues, but in the process we are likely to find ourselves reestablishing and reinforcing the same epistemological and methodological divisions that have plagued our field for the past half-century. A more productive approach involves the application of standards derived from a working logic relevant to the scholarly functions of the field.

As a claim-asserting argument, *UAE* is subject to assessment on both idealized and practical grounds. Here I focus on the working logic approach, relying on the basic requirements for a *justifiable* or credible argument established by Toulmin in *The Uses of Argument*.[6] Toulmin posits that support for the substance of any claim requires more than the data or evidence that generated it. The fact that the Coast Guard finds debris floating off the coast of Nantucket might lead to the claim that they had discovered the wreckage of an airliner crash, but more is required to establish the claim as justifiable. A credible claim calls for qualifiers and warrants.

Qualifiers are factors that, if true, would lead to a modification of the claim's reliance on the evidence. For example, a shipwreck in the same general area several days prior could be the source of the debris. While not necessarily proving the claim wrong, a qualifier raises issues about the degree of justifiability.

Warrants are an even more fundamental consideration. They provide the justifying link between facts and claims, and can be regarded as propositions offered to support a claim. In their simplest form, they are clear "if ... then" statements: *If* searchers find debris at a point where the aircraft was last tracked by radar, *then* the claim that it was from the missing airliner would be justified. *If* the debris consisted of items typically associated with the missing aircraft, *then* the claim's justification is even greater.

Toulmin also makes a critically important distinction between "warrant-using" and "warrant-establishing" arguments. *Warrant-using arguments* justify claims on the basis of propositions that are "taken for granted" or assumed to be valid. In the example of the aircraft disaster, the technical feasibility and reliability of radar scan data is assumed, and (at least initially) the claim maker does not have to provide support or "backing" for the warrant itself (Elgin 1996, 101–6). In contrast, a *warrant-establishing argument* will offer backing for the propositions used to link evidence to the claim maker's assertions.

The standards of scholarship in almost all disciplines require warrant-establishing arguments in cases where the claims or their assumptions are novel or controversial. To the degree that there are certain presuppositions that are widely accepted among the community of scholars within a field, a warrant need not require backing each time it is applied. However, one of the shared assumptions among members of an academic field is that the use of such warrants is subject to challenge—and thus the expectation that a scholar must be prepared to provide support for any warrant used in a particular claim (Chandler, Davidson, and Harootunian 1994).

This is a fundamental expectation in any academic effort that seeks legitimacy as scholarship—an expectation that is shared by the humanities, the sciences, and the social sciences. And it is this expectation that is not met by Adams and Balfour.

The Basic Claims

The principal assertion of *UAE* is that we are confronted with a new and particularly pernicious form of evil rooted in the "culture of technical rationality." This *administrative* evil "wears many masks" (4) that keeps it hidden from those "ordinary people" who do its bidding unintentionally. Thus, through the manipulation of language and a process of "moral inversion," administrative evil makes public administrators its unknowing and complicitous agents. The supporting evidence for the existence of administrative evil is all around us—from the

horrors of a technologically driven war machine to public policies that dehumanize poor and defenseless ("surplus") populations. Moreover, administrative evil is so pervasive and powerful that it is capable of overcoming all those external and professional controls designed to offset its worst consequences (see ch. 7). In the end, Adams and Balfour contend that our only hope might come through a radical reconstituting of our dominant culture—from one based on procedural and individualistic values to one grounded in substantive and communitarian values (175–80).

While that brief summary does not do justice to the elaborate argument woven by Adams and Balfour, it presents the basic claims of their argument. As novel and controversial as those claims seem, however, they are not accompanied by clear warrants. And such warrants as are used to support the major claims lack the kind of authoritative or evidentiary backing one might expect for such a controversial analysis. Adams and Balfour seem aware of this shortcoming and address those readers "who can look at human history and see no evil" or those who might regard "negative interaction in human affairs" as merely "dysfunctional behavior" rather than evidence of evil. "We ask that these readers set aside their objections and give the argument a chance to convince them" (xx). This would be a reasonable request if we were able to accept the ability to "convince" as an appropriate standard for scholarship. Being "convincing" may be a necessary expectation for any argument, but is not sufficient in the pursuit of credible scholarship.

Consider, for example, the book's most fundamental claims that (a) the world has long suffered from evil and (b) today it is suffering from a "new and frightening form of evil—administrative evil" (4). For Adams and Balfour, the claim that evil is a historical fact is self-evident and therefore requires no further support—in Toulmin's terms, it is a warrant-using argument.

Their approach to the second claim, however, is necessarily more explicit, for they are simultaneously creating a new concept of evil while arguing for their claim that administrative evil is inherent in the modern human condition. This is a warrant-establishing argument; therefore, they should be expected to provide backing for the claim and expect the proposition to be challenged.

The Definition of Administrative Evil

Adams and Balfour define evil itself as "*instances* in which humans *knowingly and deliberately* inflict pain and suffering on other human beings" (xix; emphasis added). This definition is quickly changed and eventually transformed as the presentation unfolds. The explicit change occurs just a page later when the authors make a distinction between historical evil (which fits the initial definition) and administrative evil, which seems to lack the core characteristics of "knowing" and "deliberate" behavior (xx–xxi). This turns out to be a critical change, for it leads to a conceptual ambiguity that is central to determining the work's scholarly credibility.

Administrative evil, as developed by Adams and Balfour, is dangerously different from traditional evil because people carry it out *unaware that they are engaging in evil behavior.* In contrast, what has made the traditional concept of evil behavior so interesting and challenging for philosophers, fiction writers, and others is that it involves actors who are *aware* of the wrongs they are committing and who *have reflected on their bad actions.* The literary models often used by philosophers include Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello* and John Claggart in Melville's *Billy Budd*—characters who understood what they were doing was wrong, and who concluded upon reflection that they must do their evil deeds (McGinn 1997; Midgley 1984, 139–45). Take away awareness and deliberateness, and you have effectively created a hollow conceptualization of evil, useless for purposes of explaining or understanding human behavior.

Adams and Balfour develop this revised idea of evil by elaborating on various factors that render this modern evil quite different from evils of the past. The modern form uses both the "modern complex organization" and the culture of technical rationality as masking devices (xxi). Once they have characterized administrative evil as "masked," a new narrative subtly emerges to replace the traditional one. What started as a characterization of actions ("instances" of inflicting pain and suffering) is transfigured into a historical force—one energized by the cultural norms of technical rationality that make members of modern bureaucratic agencies the *unknowing and non-deliberative* agents of its detestable deeds.

This conceptual transfiguration is achieved in chapter 1, where the authors adopt two perspectives—one behavioral and the other post-Freudian—that are intended to support the idea of administrative evil. Early in chapter 1, Adams and Balfour reinforce their hollow conceptualization of evil by shifting more explicitly from their original definition of evil to a "behavioral" definition that renders it as the "antithesis of good in all its principal senses" (2). From this view, evil behavior is no different from any other bad or destructive behavior except perhaps in degree of badness. Evil, therefore, can range from the hurtful white lie to mass murder. Intentionality is no longer a requirement; nor is agential consciousness.

Having freed the concept of evil from those characteristics that allow us to meaningfully differentiate it from other forms of bad behavior, Adams and Balfour turn to the task of estab-

lishing a theoretical rationale for evil as an autonomous historical force, while *retaining the linkage between human behavior and administrative evil.* This is no easy task since human awareness and intent are irrelevant to the operations of this new evil. Without creating that linkage, their case would rest on the "myth of pure evil"—a situation they explicitly seek to avoid (12–14).

To make the connection between the evil inherent in human life and administrative evil, Adams and Balfour turn to a Kleinian version "object-relations" psychology, an important choice for Adams and Balfour despite their assertion that "[t]here may be other and perhaps better explanations" upon which to construct the story of administrative evil (11). Among alternative theories, the Kleinian version[7] of object-relations psychology tends to be deterministic, stressing the influence of past experience and leaving little room for individual choice and responsibility (Minsk 1999, ch. 2 and 3; Mitchell 1988, 256–7).

But the most relevant feature of Kleinian theory for Adams and Balfour are the various mechanisms it offers to rationalize the emergence of administrative evil from within human societies. They include "projective identification," and "containers" (Minsky 1999, 37–9, 165–7). Projective identification provides the means by which both good and bad feelings are externalized to objects in the environment. They also take the original Kleinian idea of the mother-as-an-external-container for those feelings, and substitute modern organizations and social institutions for the mother. Putting these mechanisms together, they contend that the evil inherent in each person is externalized into organizational and institutional "holding environments" through projective identification.

The issues raised by this range from the credibility of the Kleinian model itself to the liberties taken by Adams and Balfour in applying it in this particular case. This is a pivotal point in determining the scholarly standing of the administrative evil argument, and yet the authors spend less than three pages elaborating its complex logic.

One of the earliest advocates and practitioners of applying this particular theory to organizations has concluded that extrapolation of the projective identification and container mechanisms to modern social institutions is dysfunctional as well as unproductive (Jaques 1995). A key focus of his criticism is the use of "technical psychoanalytic concepts as organizational metaphors disguised in scientific clothing. It strengthens obfuscation." Singled out for criticism by Jaques is the concept of "transference," for its application relies on the assumption that organizations and institutions have an unconscious—a critical premise of the psychoanalytic approach that is now generally dismissed even by those who continue to pursue its application to organization life (Amado 1995). Yet for the administrative evil argument to work, organizations and social institutions must possess an unconscious that manifests itself in the ideologies and belief systems of its members. Most contemporary students of modern organizations and institutions have adopted concepts of culture in lieu of the psychoanalytic unconscious (such as, Douglas 1986), which leads to the question of why Adams and Balfour did not do the same when seeking to explain the autonomous existence of administrative evil. The obvious answer is that such a concept could not be supported by socio-historical or socio-cultural theories.

Adams and Balfour do not let the problematic nature of their conceptualization deter them from pursuing the argument. The true nature of administrative evil emerges slowly throughout the rest of the presentation, assuming an ever-widening range of attributes with the reading of each chapter. We know from the first chapters that the culture and logic of technical rationality is a core feature of administrative evil, and by the end of the book we know this involves such things as a "scientific-analytic mindset," moral inversions and perversions, instrumental rationality, professionalism and expertise, efficiency, scientific rigor, modernity, diminished historical consciousness, destructive organizational dynamics, "persecutory organizational culture," procedural-ism, rational problem-solving, inhumane public policies, and moral vacuity. Thus, by the end of their presentation Adams and Balfour have offered up the concept as an all-encompassing *primum mobile* capable of filling in that gnawing gap in our ability to make sense of this (obviously) terrible world. The question remains, are they "warranted" in doing so.

This reconceptualization of evil comes with considerable cost and little, if any, gain. They have emptied evil of its basic features, and what remains is a phenomenon so abstract and comprehensive in scope that it borders on being conceptually "magical" (Frazer 1951, 56–7).

Just as important, by taking this approach Adams and Balfour create still another in a long line of diversions from the really difficult questions raised by the Holocaust, the Challenger accident, and the other cases touched on in *UAE.* As noted below, Sofsky's own "thick description" of Nazi concentration camp operations—as well as Browning's study of Reserve Police Battalion 101—demonstrates, *warrantable* claims can be made about the role of public administrators in the Holocaust (Sofsky 1996, 8; Browning 1992). But such claims are typically more complex than the contention that some demonic cultural force was at work making clueless people conduct history's most gruesome genocide.

The inability of Adams and Balfour to properly warrant the concept of administrative evil is not surprising in

light of the other scholarship that uses or makes reference to evil in general. The authors are only partly correct in observing that evil "is not an accepted entry in the lexicon of the social sciences" (1), for anthropologists, psychologists, and other social and behavioral scientists have devoted many volumes and journal pages to the subject. Many scholars study evil as a cultural phenomenon, just as they study rituals, religions, and ethical systems (Parkin 1985; Pagels 1995; Delbanco 1995). Still another group of scholars study *phenomena previously attributed to "evil"* with the intent of demonstrating that such a characterization has been an obstacle to a better understanding of behavior and social life. Most noteworthy among these was the work of Konrad Lorenz, whose most famous work—published in English as *On Aggression*—was originally titled *So-Called Evil* (Lorenz 1969; Midgley 1984, 65). More recently, at least two popular books have carried this argument even further by stressing the "natural" and "necessary" role of so-called evil in human and social development (Watson 1995; Bloom 1995).

Thus, evil is of interest to a wide range of social science scholars. Nevertheless, in an extended search of recent social science, I could find no other authors adopting evil of any form as a historical force in explaining social events. There are authors who see *socially perceived evil* as something to be considered in social analysis, and well-known writers who have used the term as a literary embellishment or rhetorical device to enhance and highlight their argument (Tiger 1987). But I could find no credible scholarship relying on the existence of evil as a real and effective force in the world.

Historical Evil

The reliance on history to support any scholarly argument is a tricky business. This is especially true when working with evidence or interpretations drawn from the field of Holocaust studies where historiographic and conceptual debates are numerous and typically filled with emotion (Kellner 1994; Kansteiner 1994; Braun 1994; Land 1995). Yet, Adams and Balfour attempt to support their concept of administrative evil by relying on historical evidence drawn primarily from the Holocaust (ch. 3), and it is for this effort that their work has drawn the most attention.

Like all scholars relying on historical data and interpretations to test their theories or support their claims, Adams and Balfour must deal with the reality that historical facts do not speak for themselves. Those who research and write history acknowledge that there exists an inherent bias in what they choose to study and how they conduct and present their research. And those making use of historical scholarship understand that there exists an equally powerful bias at work in the selection of relevant facts and interpretations to support their claims. These problems have been openly acknowledged for decades not only by historians, but also by historical sociologists and other social scientists relying on historical analysis (Lustick 1996; Skocpol 1984; Luton 1999). It is the reason most scholars approach historically based claims with care and caution.

For decades, Raul Hilberg and others (Hilberg 1992; Browning 1992; Goldhagen 1996) have been documenting the roles played by civil servants and other administrators in perpetrating the Holocaust, and Adams and Balfour make use of that data to present their case for the existence of administrative evil. The issue is whether they did so in a credible way—that is, according to basic standards of credible scholarship.

Here it is important to note both what Adams and Balfour *did do* and what they *did not do*. In addition to the brutal facts of the Holocaust, Adams and Balfour harnessed a range of well-known historical interpretations in support of their claims about administrative evil. Within the literature of Holocaust studies, their work can be regarded as an extension of an interpretive line that starts with Hilberg's systematic documentation of the role played by the German civil service and is pursued analytically by Hannah Arendt and Zygmunt Bauman.

Hilberg's research was among the first to stress the role of "ordinary" Germans in the Holocaust, and his relentless mining of previously ignored records has provided a significant insight into the machinery of a genocidal regime. What he garners from the research is the existence of a bureaucratized logic of destruction only possible in modern society (Hilberg 1985).

Arendt's *Eichmann In Jerusalem* was among the first interpretations to apply Hilberg's work as she developed her controversial arguments regarding the "banality of evil" pervading Hitler's totalitarian regime. The crime of Eichmann and others was rooted in a "sheer thoughtlessness" (Arendt 1976, 287–8) cultivated by the bureaucratic context within which they operated as functionaries. But Arendt's analysis of the administrative nature of the Holocaust was tempered by facts indicating that the implementation of the "Final Solution" varied from nation to nation—in some places it was carried out with enthusiasm, in others with considerable procrastination.

It is Bauman who articulates an interpretation closest to Adams and Balfour. The facts and lessons of the Holocaust, he argued, are not confined to what happened to the Jews, or even what took place in Germany under Hitler. They were universal lessons about the logic and power of modernity. "*I propose to treat the Holocaust as a rare, yet significant and reliable, test of the hidden possibilities of modern society*" (Bauman 1989, 12; emphasis in original). His Rousseauean

thesis regarded modernity and its institutions as engaged in the "production of moral indifference" and thus anathema to the human capacity to apply pre-social moral judgments. From the tragic facts of the Holocaust, Bauman derives the foundations for a "sociological theory of morality" that, if appropriately developed, can help us understand contemporary issues well beyond those raised by the Holocaust itself.

The thrust and influence of Bauman's argument is evident throughout *UAE*, not merely in specific citations, but in the logic of the argument itself. Modernity is the key factor in the argument presented by Adams and Balfour, just as it is in Bauman's analysis. Bauman, like Adams and Balfour, relies on a "historical force" narrative to present his argument. But his remains an empirically grounded analysis focused on the objective of developing a sociological theory that explains how the social foundations for morality have disappeared under modernity, thus making the Holocaust possible. Adams and Balfour, in contrast, use the same evidence to argue for the existence of a historical force energized by the technical rationality of modern society and powerful enough to fulfill its own destructive logic.

In brief, Adams and Balfour extended the interpretive historical logic of Hilberg, Arendt, and Bauman to meet the needs of their distinctive argument. In pursuing a logic close to Bauman's, however, they have subjected themselves to a criticism leveled at his approach. In an otherwise sympathetic review of Bauman's work, Todorov critiques his inability to make obvious conceptual and historical distinctions as he applied his argument. "Is it really possible to believe, if we take the word 'rationality' in its broad sense ... that our modern society is the only one endowed with reason?" And if we view modern rationality in a narrow sense, "is there really no difference between the thought processes of Einstein and those of Himmler?" Similarly, was there no difference between the rationality and technology driving the organization of German and American concentration camps? (Todorov 1990, 32). Todorov's questions can apply as well to the presentation and analysis of historical evidence in *UAE*.

As important, however, is what Adams and Balfour *did not do* to enhance the scholarly credibility of their work. The problematic nature of historical scholarship and the demands of scholarly credibility in argumentative contexts require much more of Adams and Balfour than merely citing authoritative sources. In fact, the contentious nature of scholarly debates within Holocaust studies makes it difficult to designate *any* source as authoritative—a situation not unlike the general condition of most fields associated with "socio-historical" studies. Under such circumstances, any author asserting a history-based claim must put forth credible backing for its warrants.

But this does not mean it is impossible to make controversial claims based on evidence culled from the Holocaust. Here the model to follow is provided by one of the most debated works on the Holocaust, Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996). Realizing the controversial nature of his argument, Goldhagen is careful to note competing perspectives and makes efforts to subject them to the same "empirical tests" he offers in support of his own contentions. He reasserts this position in a response to his critics issued just prior to publication of the book's German edition, arguing that the work "is not a polemic about German 'national character' or 'collective guilt.' It is a scholarly investigation that offers a new interpretation of the Holocaust" (Goldhagen 1996, ch.15). Goldhagen then faults many of his critics for not responding to the central issues he raises with "systematic counter-evidence and arguments" (Goldhagen 1998/1996, 133). Regardless of one's ultimate assessment of Goldhagen's substantive claims, what he presents meets the standards of credible scholarship challengeable on its warrants and merits. The argument for administrative evil made by Adams and Balfour also requires such an approach, but the authors do not deliver.

In relying on the Holocaust to support their claim regarding administrative evil, Adams and Balfour take note of two popular conceptual frameworks for understanding the role of public administrators in the Holocaust (i.e., the "intentional" and "functional" interpretations) and judge both to be useful but insufficient for comprehending what really took place (56–60). They contend those frameworks downplay the role played by the administrative evil of technical rationality in making agency adaptation to the operational demands of the Holocaust so easy to achieve.

> Understandably, history has focused on the brutality of the SS, the Gestapo, and the infamous concentration camp doctors and guards. Much less attention has been given to the thousands of public administrators such as those in the Finance Ministry who engaged in confiscations, the armament inspectors who organized forced labor, or municipal authorities who helped create and maintain ghettos and death camps throughout Germany and Eastern Europe. *The destruction of the Jews was procedurally indistinguishable from any other modern organizational process* (66; emphasis added).

Adams and Balfour face no problem in finding historical evidence to support their view. But they fail to deal with the alternative theories that compete, conflict, and even undermine their claims based on the same historical data.

Breton and Winthrope (1986), for example, present a model that credits intra-bureau and inter-agency compe-

tition as the driving force behind administrative involvement. Others stress the capacity of otherwise ordinary people to engage in the most vicious and inhumane acts against others. Sofsky (1996, 240), for example, is straightforward in his assumption about human nature: "Inhumanity is always a human possibility. For it to erupt, all that is required is absolute license over the other."

In Christopher Browning's study of citizen-soldiers-turned-killers, social and psychological circumstances ruled, but these were not the product of some modern rationalistic culture. Instead, the members of that unit were men at war subject to peer pressure, a siege mentality, and a constant barrage of patriotic and ideological call to arms. "If the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 could become killers under such circumstances, what group of men cannot?" (Browning 1992, 189).

In more direct conflict with the administrative evil claim is Goldhagen's argument that the key to understanding why ordinary Germans willingly engaged in the genocide is found in the unique history and culture of the German people. According to Goldhagen (1996), what drove the Holocaust was not some scientific-analytic mind-set, but a deeply rooted and vicious form of anti-Semitism that was waiting for someone like Hitler to unleash its destructive energy.

Still another set of challenges to the administrative evil thesis emerges from several works raising questions about the assumed technical rationality of the Final Solution. A strong case can be made for the claim that the Holocaust was implemented within a context of antirationalism and irrationalism (Proctor 1988; Harrington 1996). It is not the logic of rationality, but the logic of psychosis that needs to be emphasized. Summarizing the position of Holocaust historian Saul Friedländer, Glass contends:

> If the explanation of the Holocaust rests on theories of instrumental rationality, on bureaucratic processing or functionalism, it is difficult to see the instrumental properties in gas chambers and crematoria. Rationality and economic concerns may describe some of the motives behind medical experiments and the use by German industry of slave labor. But the death of those who perished in gas chambers possessed no functional utility; no economic gains or rational self-interest could be ascribed to the genocide. Annihilation of Jews contributed nothing to the war effort; in fact, great resources, particularly railroad stock, was [sic] diverted from both fronts to transport Jews to the killing centers. Bodies that could have been instrumental in the war effort ... were gassed and incinerated. It makes no sense ... to attribute a rational component to these kinds of "special actions" (1997, 162).

What is important about each of these alternatives to the administrative evil argument is the substantial effort made by their advocates to justify and validate their claims with evidence and supportable warrants. Comparatively, *UAE*'s primary claim about the existence of administrative evil stands on very weak grounds.

Responsible Argumentation

The standards for judging scholarly argumentation involve more than credibility. There is an ethical dimension as well, reflecting the sense that scholars must apply their rhetorical skills responsibly (Aristotle 1991, 35–6; Cmiel 1990, 24–6). As with credibility, standards of responsibility are field dependent; and in scholarly communities they are set forth in normative expectations regarding everything from data-gathering procedures to styles of presentation (Cross 1996; Cole 1992).

Scholars who explicitly use argumentative approaches need to deal with the potential consequences of the logic they use in their presentations. There are two concerns: The work's "internal" logic—that is, the impact of its narrative on the reader's conclusions—and its "external" logic—that is, the potential for misuse of the authors' narratives and claims.

The Internal Logic

As noted previously, Adams and Balfour develop a narrative that is driven by their characterization of administrative evil as an autonomous historical force emerging from modernity's technical rationality culture. By using the word "evil" and detaching this particular concept from human choice and motivations, Adams and Balfour make it easy for the reader to think of administrative evil as a supernatural force—a perspective reinforced by the narrative that unfolds in chapters 4 though 6.

The story told in those chapters weaves a plotline that takes the reader from Hitler's war effort to the fateful decision to launch the *Challenger* and then to current U.S. defense, welfare reform, and immigration policies.

When attempting to describe the underlying narrative in this story to others, I have found it useful to compare the book with a movie released at about the same time. In *Fallen*, actor Denzel Washington plays John Hobbes, a police detective who attends the execution of Edgar Reese, a serial killer he helped put behind bars. In a final confrontation with Hobbes, Reese reaches out to touch his nemesis and, failing to do so, eventually settles for contact with a guard preparing him for the execution. As it turns out, the body of the person being executed that day is merely the holding container for Azazel, a fallen angel and the embodiment of evil cursed to roam the earth without form. Reese dies, but Azazel continues to conduct his evil business by entering new bodies.

Although receiving mediocre reviews and finding a small audience, *Fallen* did garner some accolades for its intellectualized plot—it was a "thinking person's" horror movie that avoided the gore of more popular films of that genre. The idea that evil inhabits the earth and survives by possessing the bodies of ordinary people without their knowing seemed to work because it felt familiar—not only as a scenario for a movie but as a theologized explanation for the horrific behavior of serial killers and mass murderers.

In *UAE*, the administrative evil of Hitler's regime is passed on to the Werner von Braun team of German rocket scientists through their association with actions "for which others in postwar Germany were convicted of war crimes" (74). Operations at the infamous concentration camp at Mittelbau–Dora were directly linked to weapons production efforts, including the V-2 program. Adams and Balfour focus on the use of slave labor and deaths at that location and at the Peenemünde site where V-2 operations were housed earlier in the war. The evidence shows substantial involvement by von Braun in decisions related to operations at those sites—involvement that made him and his team members agents of administrative evil. But the U.S. military's pursuit of its technical rational goals "blinded" key American decision makers to issues raised by that involvement (105). Thus, by bringing that team to the United States, our government was essentially aiding the transfer of administrative evil to the U.S. military—and eventually to the space program.

Based in Marshall Space Flight Center, von Braun's team created an administrative culture fostering a managerial style rooted in technical rationality that was instilled in those who rose through the ranks at NASA to top positions. Ultimately, what emerges at Marshall and "NASA more generally" is a "destructive organizational dynamic" that Adams and Balfour eventually link to the decision to launch the *Challenger* Shuttle. Administrative evil was at work in NASA.

As someone familiar with studies of the *Challenger* disaster, I admit I found this entire narrative more than a bit fantastic and quite disturbing. Just as disturbing is this quote from the concluding paragraph to their analysis indicating that the authors realized how far they had taken the logic of their narrative:

> The destructive organizational culture that manifested itself during and before *Challenger* put lives at unnecessary risk. *It would be unfair and unwarranted to connect Challenger with the unmasked and essentially transparent administrative evil demonstrated at Mittlebau-Dora and Peenemunde.* Operations Overcast and Paperclip [which brought the von Braun team to America], policies of the U.S. government, each abetting administrative evil, *represent only an ironic connection* to later events at the Marshall Space Flight Center and with *Challenger*. Whatever administrative evil can be legitimately attributed to Marshall is of the typical organizational variety in our time and in our culture. It is opaque and complex, and no one can be identified with evil intentions. It is well masked (133–4; emphasis added).

The narrative's logic is extended (ch. 6) beyond the space program as Adams and Balfour link the culture of technical rationality in American public policy making on a wide range of issues to the spread of administrative evil. Defense policies, Clinton's welfare reforms, restrictive immigration policies, efforts to dismantle affirmative action—all are pictured as manifestations of administrative evil, despite the authors' periodic injection of qualifying statements. For example, after making an explicit comparison between Nazi portrayal of Jews and the portrayal of welfare recipients in the debate over reform, Adams and Balfour stress that their point "is not to say that those who advocate a particular approach to welfare reform are Nazis or have genocidal intent, but to highlight the dangers inherent in the approach that tacitly defines and then dehumanizes a surplus population" (149).

Adams and Balfour's pattern of warning readers against the obvious conclusions of their arguments is a fundamental flaw found throughout the book. The following may be the ultimate example:

> Despite what may initially seem to be a negative treatment of the public service, it is not our intention to somehow diminish public administration, engage in bureaucrat bashing, or give credence to misguided arguments that governments and their agents are necessarily or inherently evil. In fact, our aim is quite the opposite: to get beyond the superficial critiques and lay the groundwork for a more ethical and democratic public administration, one that recognizes its potential for evil and thereby creates greater possibilities for avoiding the many pathways toward state-sponsored dehumanization and destruction (5).

It is hard to take this disclaimer seriously by the time one completes chapter 6.

There are those who would contend that it is the reader's responsibility not to read too much into a work. I am among those who take seriously the counsel of Robert Graves and Alan Hodge that writers must conduct their work as if the reader is looking over their shoulder (Graves and Hodge 1979). Had Adams and Balfour followed that advice, a quite different—and perhaps more convincing—argument might have emerged.

The External Logic

While scholarly arguments are typically conducted within academic communities, there is a more general social context to consider. In some fields

where research is policy-relevant or market-relevant, the fact that the general community might be interested in certain research findings has had an impact on everything from the selection of titles to the timing and wording of scholarly work.

Adams and Balfour are not naïve on this point. They hope their work will not only increase awareness of administrative evil, but also result in adoption of the cultural changes necessary to preempt the emerging dangers of a state wedded to technical-rational problem solving. This is the primary focus of the seventh and final chapter in *UAE* where the authors call for the creation of a new communitarian-based cultural foundation for administrative ethics.

But the authors seem indifferent to the possibility that other prescriptions and lessons might be drawn from their presentation. Disclaimers notwithstanding, Adams and Balfour have generated an argument open to misinterpretation and abuse. It is a logic that can be used to demonize those who are contaminated by the evil forces they unknowingly serve. One lesson of the Oklahoma City bombing is that public administrators can easily become a stigmatized population, subject to the worst forms of scapegoating and targeted for violent action (Douglas 1995; Goffman 1963; MacCormack 1993; Douglas 1992; Herzfeld 1992). Within the context of a political culture predisposed to bureaucracy bashing, the association of public administrators with a pernicious and pervasive form of evil can prove to be a thoughtless (albeit unintended) act.

I am not advocating that our colleagues avoid publishing controversial claims or moderate their views. Rather, there are certain issues and themes that require consideration of possible misuse by some part of the work's general readership. Anti-Semitic Revisionists, for example, have taken advantage of one well-known historian's blunt statements that there was no firm evidence gas chambers were used in Auschwitz or that Hitler knew of the Holocaust (Rosenbaum 1998, ch. 12). We ought to be aware that our audience sometimes includes the Theodore Kaczynskis and Timothy McVeighs of the world—and structure our arguments accordingly.

Concluding Comments

As is common practice with a book of this sort, the back cover contains quotes from several prominent scholars attesting to the virtues of *UAE*. It is an award-winning book. But it is also a book that challenges some fundamental standards of scholarship in a way that can only do harm to our field.

This assessment is not easy to make, for both authors are in fact extremely competent members of our field who have several notable—I would even suggest "classic"—works to their credit. As I contemplated this review, I tried to understand how a work with such flaws could have emerged from their partnership, and how it received so many accolades and awards. I have no firm answers to offer, but I do have three comments derived from some speculations about the writing and reception of *UAE*.

My initial speculation is that the concept of administrative evil was developed as a rhetorical device to enhance the presentation of the modernity thesis. Perhaps the concept took on a logical life of its own that drove the book's presentation. Their decision to follow that logic reflected their opinion of the larger audience their book would reach. As it turns out, this was a Faustian pact that paid dividends, but at a significant cost in terms of scholarly credibility.

A second speculation also relates to the previous work of the authors. Both Adams and Balfour have been leaders in an influential movement among Public Administration theorists to promote a more "diverse" approach to research in the field. The issue is epistemological, and the solutions advocated by Adams, Balfour, and others (White and Adams 1994) include opening scholarship in the field to interpretive and critical theory approaches as well as to positivist research. In a sense, with *UAE*, the authors were practicing what they preached. But scholarship is not an "anything goes" endeavor. There are standards to be taken into account, and while these may vary from field to field and over time within each field, they must be addressed if a work is to be regarded as credible and responsible.

My third speculation relates to the positive reception *UAE* received from individuals and organized divisions in the field. On this point, I suspect both the subject matter as well as the reputation of the authors were the determining factors. While others had confronted the issue of public administration's role in the Holocaust, Adams and Balfour seemed to be the first within our field to tackle it from a Public Administration perspective. But Adams and Balfour added nothing new to our understanding of the Holocaust. Their analysis was not designed to generate a greater understanding of the Holocaust, but to use what was known about it as a means for promoting their distinctive claims about modern public administration.

There are many lessons to be culled from *UAE* about the state of theory and research in our field. Most of the issues raised by *UAE* are not unique to that work or its authors, but are rooted in Public Administration's inability (unwillingness?) to develop a disciplinary identity that would give some grounding for appropriate scholarly standards.

Notes

1. I am indebted to Jonathan Justice, Randa Dubnick, Larry Luton, and Jonathan Inz for their comments and reactions.
2. Here I follow the convention of capitalizing *p*ublic *a*dministration when referring to the academic field—and using lower case to refer to the practice.
3. The National Academy of Public Administration's 1998 Louis Brownlow Award and the 1998 Best Book Award from the Academy of Management's Public and Nonprofit Management Division.
4. Those who study classical rhetoric would quickly point out that rhetoric and argumentation cannot be used as synonyms. Here I accept the view of Chaim Perelman's "new rhetoric" approach that focuses on argumentation. See Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969.
5. Hood and Jackson 1991, especially, ch. 2; see Simon 1946. This reliance on argumentation and rhetoric can be attributed, in part, to the field's ongoing "identity crisis" that creates a schizophrenic life for academics constantly torn between the demands of professionalism and disciplinary scholarship. The professional commitments stress our roles as advocates, reformers, and the trainers of public service practitioners. Disciplinary obligations require adherence to the same standards of scholarship as our colleagues in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences. The tension manifests itself in many different ways, including ambiguity when attempting to assess the published work of our peers. See Dubnick 1999.
6. Also see Elgin 1996, especially ch. IV.
7. The work of Melanie Klein, regarded as the founder of the object-relations approach, represents just one of several strands of this psychoanalytic school. For a contrasting perspective, see the work of Donald Winnicott; see Minsky 1999, chs. 2 and 3 on Klein and Winnicott respectively.

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A New Concept

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Vivifying the need to unmask and to further explore the concept of administrative evil cannot be underestimated. Guy Adams and Danny Balfour have unveiled a previously unexplored notion in Public Administration (PA), one that deserves the spirited dialogue that has been unleashed here. I begin by briefly outlining the key concepts in the book, moving from there to some discussion and examples of how the ideas encapsulated in *Unmasking Administrative Evil* might flow beyond the PA space. From there, this essay offers some suggestions as to how this