Book review
Philosophy and Public Administration: An Introduction, by Edoardo Ongaro
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The author wants to provide a systematic introduction to the theme and furnish a base for discussion and analysis of "a number of interconnections between 'foundational' philosophical and some of the key themes debated" in the literature of public governance, public administration and public management.

The main argument is that philosophy provides a distinctive and constitutive contribution to the knowledge and understanding of public administration and that this is alongside with but also beyond the knowledge of other disciplines contributing the field of Public Administration (PA). The author's starting point is that ontological, political philosophical and epistemological issues tend to receive only scant attention, if any, in the literature of public governance, public administration and public management.

The book is organised along key thematic areas. The author discusses the rationale of the book in the introduction and then moves to key philosophical streams in the next two chapters. The fourth chapter applies the results of the previous chapters to Public Administration, focusing on ontological and epistemological questions. Political philosophical aspects and their foundational issues – common good, social contract, legitimacy – in the field of PA are examined next. Finally, the author chooses three great thinkers – A. Lorenzetti, N. Machiavelli, and T. More – to delve into three important dimensions of PA: public virtues, 'realism' in politics and utopian thinking. The last chapter pulls the threads together and examines the contribution to PA, when it is conceived as scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, or practical experience.

The book is most rewarding as reading experience. The reader should have some elementary knowledge and skills of philosophical reasoning to gain more about opening doors to different conceptual worlds. The book is mostly about 'philosophy *for* PA', not about 'philosophy *of* PA', as the author specifies in the last chapter. The former is about presenting philosophical knowledge for selective applications to themes of contemporary significance in PA. Indeed, the author's book provides an immense scope of distinctions and viewpoints, introducing mainly issues of ontology. PA and its contemporary issues can and should be revisited and reconsidered employing new conceptual instruments. The philosophy *of* PA is about professional philosopher's reflections about specific themes relevant for PA: for example, Hegel's Philosophy of Right. The problem here is that contemporary philosophers do not pay much attention to debates within PA. However, the author considers H.A. Simon and D. Waldo as examples of this tradition. In my view, for a professional philosopher, the famous Simon-Waldo debate about the nature of PA is relatively simplistic. The third option the author specifies is 'mapping backwards from PA to philosophy'. This means asking individual scholars to track backward what the foundations of

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her/his work have been. The authors gives examples of scholars that have done that: Riccucci, Raadschelders, Frederickson, and Hood. I find these contributions more enlightening than the Simon-Waldo debate.

The three relationships between PA and philosophy provide a helpful distinction. When the author specifies also three emphases of the philosophical study – ontology, philosophy of knowledge, and political philosophy – he is able to indicate that the philosophy for PA with the emphasis of philosophy of knowledge and political philosophy seems to be "uncharted territory" (p. 232) – ontology being the author's own contribution (in the form of the book under review). This is very much true. The deep wisdoms of philosophy have not been used often in the analysis of PA which has also effected the quality of theories of PA. PA is not the only discipline among social sciences to blame for this lack of interest.

The general problem in employing philosophical distinctions in analysing and reviewing PA research is that philosophical tools are too sharp. Analysing a single publication is often useless, when the actual distinctions used by PA scholars are so vague that philosophical tools make them look uninformative of even ridiculous. Applying philosophical tools for looking at bigger blocks or more general trends may show the underlying assumptions in an informative way, but then the risk is that you cannot justify your conclusions easily.

There have been some attempts to explicitly philosophical reflection already earlier, like C. Hodgkinson's Towards a Philosophy of Administration (1978) and Philosophy of Leadership (1985), which the author does not refer to. But Edoardo Ongaro has clearly levelled up the provision of analytical tools compared to previous attempts. There is clearly a need for philosophy *of* PA, in particular. More professional philosophical approaches may need to start with some very basic concepts: public, administration, management, organisation, action, behaviour, resources, performance, output, outcome, administrative authority, administrative ethics, etc. This can be justified both by the need for development of the theoretical logic of PA and for explaining and identifying the more and more complex administrative phenomena. They tend to be mixed with and linked to so many other societal and political phenomena of local, regional, global and multilevel governance that we need better concepts to orient ourselves in relevant directions and to be able to formulate new hypotheses with better explanatory power, if confirmed.