The Burden of Office, Ethics and Connoisseurship

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"Civilization is an achievement in the face of difficulties,
a precarious achievement. It is the state of mind
of the magician who tremblingly invokes the powers
he would use, knowing that if he gets the ceremony wrong
what he invokes will destroy him."

Joseph Tussman

1. Introduction

The notions of *accountability* and *ethics* are poorly understood, and the inadequacy of existing frameworks for analyzing them may be regarded as responsible for much of our inability to contribute to more effective institutions of public policy (Uhr 1992; Dubnick 1996). While both terms are used freely by public administrators, academics and ordinary citizens, they are often inappropriately used.

At a time when there are so many public outcries that our society has lost its moral anchor and its sense of responsibility, it has been claimed that the carelessness in the use of these words has become even more costly. In fact, the misuse of these concepts by legal, political and managerial official authorities has been denounced as a deceit that is no less damaging than if the Bank of Canada were to issue counterfeited currency. This explains the quest for precise rules, standards, and norms capable of serving as guidelines and benchmarks to what constitutes responsible, accountable and ethical behavior under different circumstances. We will try to show that this is a futile quest.

This does not mean that one cannot ground these concepts somewhat better in a reality capable of illuminating them. Indeed, that is precisely our objective in this paper. But, we would like to argue that the degree of precision one can hope for in this venture is quite limited: accountability and ethics are fundamentally contentious because of the fact that the notion of the burden of office, on which they are built, is an *essentially contested concept*.

In section 2, we explain why the notion of burden of office is an essentially contested concept and, in section 3, we show the link between burden of office, accountability and ethics. Then, in section 4, we indicate how, as the notion of burden of office has become more and more complex in the recent past, this has necessarily translated into a much fuzzier notion of ethical behavior, and into more uncertain performance gauges and less reliable means of assessing the nature of what might be regarded as acceptable justifications. In section 5, we speculate on the road to be travelled if a workable level of accountability and ethics is to prevail, and on the centrality of deliberation and ethos in developing this connoisseurship. The notion of connoisseurship is of central importance here. Connoisseurship is a form of accumulated practical knowledge, mostly tacit or at least not necessarily likely to be translated into simple explicit rules or algorithms, but capable of being translated into actions and choices in particular circumstances. In section 6, we question the reductionist urge of certain officials, and their tendency to focus on individual blamability rather than on insufficient connoisseurship; we suggest that this bias may be

responsible for the poor performance of many judicial commissions of inquiry. In conclusion, we suggest that there is a danger that the current debates on accountability and ethics may be focusing on scapegoating instead of learning from our failures.

2. The burden of office as an essentially contested concept

In a democracy, each citizen is an official, a person with duties and obligations. He has ruling work to do: he is not simply a consumer of governance, but a producer of governance. Indeed, it is only because citizens *qua* citizens have duties and obligations that they are entitled to civil rights that ensure that they are fully equipped with the power to meet their obligations. But there is not much meaningful debate about the nature of this burden of office, and when there is, agreement does not necessarily ensue (Tussman 1989).

The same fuzziness holds for more 'important' officials (i.e., those holding higher office - be they prime minister, chief of defence staff, etc.): they are persons with higher obligations and duties that are often rather ill-defined in our complex world. This vagueness is unfortunately unavoidable. It is a consequence of the fact that the concept of burden of office is socially-based: it is based on "a shared set of expectations and a common currency of justifications" (Day and Klein 1987:5) that are quite difficult to define consensually.

We underline this state of affairs when we say that the burden of office is an essentially contested concept.

W.B. Gallie has identified a whole range of concepts as essentially contested, i.e., concepts "the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of the users" (Gallie 1964:158). He has identified five conditions for a concept to be essentially contested. It must be (1) appraisive in the sense that it accredits some kind of valued achievement; (2) this achievement must be complex in character and its worth attributed to the achievement as a whole, but (3) variously describable in its parts with the possibility of various components being assigned more or less importance, and (4) open in character to the extent that it admits considerable modification in the light of changing circumstances; moreover, to qualify as an essentially contested concept, (5) each party must recognize that its own use of the concept is contested by other parties (Gallie 1964:161).

A good example of such a concept may be "championship" in a sport like figure skating, for instance, which can be judged in a number of different ways, with differential attention being paid to method, strategy, style, etc.

Our argument is that the notion of burden of office (like the concepts of democracy and social justice (Gallie 1964:178-182)) is an essentially contested concept, and that it is quite impossible to find a general principle to determine which party is using the concept best.

Another way of stating the problem we are raising, that has come to our attention after this paper was written, has been suggested by Michael Harmon. He has criticized sharply the rationalist

discourse on government by arguing that the notion of responsibility is inherently paradoxical, and therefore that identifying responsibility with "ethical correctness and the conformity of action with authoritative ends" is "necessarily flawed in a fundamental way" (Harmon 1995: 5). Paradox is everywhere in public administration.

3. Burden of office, accountability and ethics

If the burden of office is an essentially contested concept, the notions of accountability and ethics are in some way infected. The fuzziness of the former concept projects some haziness in the definition of the latter two.

Accountability refers to the requirement to "answer for the discharge of a duty or for conduct". This presupposes an agreement on (1) what constitutes an acceptable performance and (2) what constitutes an acceptable language of justification for the actors in defending their conduct (Day and Klein 1987). But since in the complex world in which we now live officials are confronted with (a) many interfaces with different stakeholders with different claims to authority (hierarchical superior, professional colleagues, clients, etc.), (b) many types of accounts demanded (political, managerial, legal, professional, etc.), and (c) much complexity, heterogeneity, and uncertainty in the circumstances surrounding the activities for which one is accountable, the very complexity of the burden of office results in much fuzziness in the definition of accountability.

Ethics is a form of goodness-of-fit that evolves in and from reflexion in action, deliberation or "argumentation - among particular people, in specific situations, dealing with concrete things, with different things at stake" (Toulmin 1988). Judgment is embodied in action. A reflective conversation with the situation resolves moral issues in the same manner as it resolves the problem faced by an industrial designer: in both cases, the challenge is to find a form that fits the circumstances given the constraints. When a designer interacts with a situation, this interactive process triggers the generation of a goodness-of-fit between two intangibles - a form that has not yet been designed, and a context that cannot be properly and fully described because it is still evolving. (Alexander 1964; Cloutier et Paquet 1988; Paquet 1991, 1996). This is the way of the "reflective practitioner" (Schon 1983). The notion of ethical fitness calls for the same fit between the standards defined by the burden of office and those that take into account the circumstances. And again, the essentially contested nature of the notion of burden of office makes it impossible for ethical conduct to escape a degree of fuzziness.

The fact that the notion of burden of office is essentially contested will not prevent contestants from claiming that their use of the concept is "the only one that can command honest and informed approval". Consequently, there will be different views about accountability and ethical behaviour. This is not without danger, for, as the essential contestedness of the concept transpires, there is always a real danger that those in authority may grow impatient with trying to persuade and be led to "a ruthless decision to cut the cackle, to damn the heretics and to exterminate the unwanted" (Gallie 1964:189). Then the conversation and the deliberation are interrupted, and democracy is in danger.

4. Dealing with incommensurables

But even when the conversation does not stop, there is a tendency to deny the essential contestedness of the concept and to search for ways to simplify the notion of burden of office in order to ensure well-behaved trade-offs among the different interfaces with stakeholders. In fact, what many refuse to accept is that the burden of an official in a many-dimensional world of hierarchical superior, professional colleagues, clients, etc. amounts to choices among incommensurables. The search for simple rules can only result in formulas that claim to reduce incommensurables to commensurability. For that reason, it is hardly surprising that this approach fails.

A. Defining accountability in a single direction, or with reference to only one stakeholder, or without taking account of the context, is extremely dangerous. It would amount to assuming that only one dimension is of consequence, and presuming that all other forms of accountabilities can be regarded as irrelevant or secondary in some sense. The famous 1919 case between the Dodge Brothers and Ford is a case in point. At the time, the court chastised Ford's corporate board for not paying exclusive attention to the interests of the shareholders in their decisions. This considerably limited their burden of office. This situation has evolved over the last 80 years, and the burden of office of corporate directors has now changed and become much more complex. As it stands now, a few dozen U.S. states have on their books legislation which clearly establishes that corporate boards may take into account other stakeholders' interests (de la Mothe and Paquet 1996).

Even though the burden of office of corporate directors has been prudently extended, the notion of accountability is still not widely regarded as a 360-degree process, i.e., as pertaining to all the stakeholders surrounding the official. And yet focusing on a single dimension is likely to be fundamentally contested. So, the only way to get an agreement about what constitutes *acceptable performance* and *acceptable justification* is through deliberation, and not through the unilateral imposition of one set of views.

B. The same may be said about ethics. Ethics is by definition "agonistic ethics" - from the Greek word AGON meaning competition, rivalry, conflict of characters in tragic dramas (Gray 1995:1). One must make moral sense in the presence of conflictive and incommensurable alternatives.

Consequently, moral reasoning cannot proceed on the basis of the comfort of universal ethical rules or codes. Indeed, it cannot rely on any simplistic theory that purports to provide answers to ethical dilemmas by pretending to gauge incommensurable situations with a single measuring stick. Non-trivial ethical issues involve rivalrous goods and evils and dilemmas that are unsoluble, undecidable by rational reflection. The rationalistic normative theories (utilitarianism, contractarianism, rights-based principles, etc.) are futile, because they wrongly deny the existence of unresolvable conflicts, and because they are swayed by simplistic universalism (i.e. the belief that universal rules are discoverable that would arbitrate all moral dilemmas) (Clarke and Simpson

1989).

In the name of utilitarianism, one falls into a total disrespect for the individual; rights-based approaches condone the most awesome inequities; as for the Rawlsian contractarian approach, it is silent as to the nature of the redistribution required to ensure a satisfactory allocation of the so-called 'primary' goods. Consequently, there are no clearly acceptable criteria for action that can be derived from these general principles because they are all too completely disconnected from a full appreciation of context and are therefore of no practical use (Paquet 1994, 1996).

Insistence on only one dimension of the burden of office or of the accountability framework (legal, organizational, professional or political) or a lack of prudence in balancing the moral push (to live up to one's values) and the moral pull (the need to respect the values of the other various stakeholders) can only lead to abusive, dangerous and truncated notions of burden of office, accountability and ethics (Dubnick 1996). There is no easy way out: there must be discussion, dialogue and deliberation leading to social learning, and to an always imperfect and incomplete reconciliation of these different dimensions.

C. Value-relativism is often presented as the only alternative to universal principles: it is the world of "anything goes". To most people, this appears rather abhorrent. That is the reason why *pluralism that is regarded as a sort of halfway house* has acquired such a good press (Kekes 1993). Pluralism is first and foremost *against monism*. Pluralists reject the view that there is only one system of values leading to the good life. They must, however, agree to find *some grounds* to impose *reasonable limits* on what is acceptable, and some justification for imposing these limits on the possibilities that individuals may pursue. While relativists do not believe that any such limits can have an objective basis, pluralists do. But how can this be done?

It can only materialize through social learning, i.e., through the erratic process of bouncing off the limits of tacit conventions and of making the highest and best use of scandals, for scandals are events pointing to unacceptable situations or behaviors (Paquet 1994). This is not a process likely to yield a high degree of marksmanship. But it is only through an oblique process of this sort that the limits of the unacceptable are defined, that jurisprudence slowly redefines the boundaries beyond which the convention in good currency does not hold. In the same way, scandals act as *révélateurs* to signal that certain limits have been transgressed, but there is some randomness in the scandal-generating process. Learning is recognizing the difference between what is expected and what happens, and embracing this error as a way to evaluate and adjust action (Michael 1993).

But this learning can only occur under some conditions: (1) if the conversation with the situation is conducted within a context where the ethos is sufficiently rich and supportive (i.e., the sum of characteristic usages, ideas and codes by which a group is differentiated is strong enough to allow a meaningful conversation to be carried out), and (2) if the conversation, deliberation, and accumulation of judgments is conducted with tact and civility, with a capacity to span boundaries and to synthesize multiple logics. Without a supportive 'communitarian' fabric and a fruitful and

open conversation, it is difficult to see how learning can occur effectively, and how a somewhat objective basis can be arrived at that might define the reasonable limits pluralists need to agree on (Schon 1983; Kingwell 1995; Paquet and Pigeon 1995).

Even though Michael Harmon's work focuses on a general cartography of the paradoxical world of responsibility rather than on the ways to navigate in this world of paradoxes, there is a certain family resemblance between our insistence on the essentially contested nature of the burden of office and his insistence on the essentially paradoxical nature of responsibility (Harmon 1995). For Harmon, responsibility is at best a paradox-ridden locus of creative tension between freedom of the will (agency), answerability to some institutional authority (accountability) and obligation to meet externally-generated norms. This leads Harmon to search for a way out, in the conclusion of his book, not in unassailable criteria (together with their retinue of obedience and blamability), but to a celebration of "practice" and "dialogue". So his philosophical analysis, conducted at a much more abstract level than our own, converges with our own celebration of the "reflective practitioner" (Schon 1983).

4. Moral reasoning and intermediate cases

We are then confronted with two very different accounts of ethics and morality: *the one* that seeks "eternal, invariable principles, the practical applications of which can be free of exceptions and qualifications, and *the other*, which pays closest attention to the specific details of particular moral cases and circumstances" (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988:2). The first is an *absolutist version* that oversimplifies the discussion of moral issues: the dogmatism of codes and rules does not allow any middle way between absolutism and relativism. But the *pluralist version* is not without generating major challenges also: it relies on human perceptiveness, appreciation and discernment; it does not prohibit rules, but it condemns them to a limited and conditional role in moral reasoning.

This pluralist stand has been under attack by those who, from Pascal on, have labelled it casuistry or case ethics, and denounced any moral reasoning based on 'cases' or 'circumstances' as "an invitation to excuse the inexcusable" (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988: 11).

Indeed, the pluralist position tries to avoid both absolutism and total value relativism by a rehabilitation of casuistry as the practical resolution of particular moral perplexities. It cannot ensure, however, that the conversation with the situation carried out by the citizens and other officials in the forum, and the bearing of the burden of office working itself through in the context of habits, patterns and institutions (making up the appreciative system and the ethos) will necessarily lead to effective social learning. But double-looped learning (i.e., not only a learning of better means to reach given objectives but also a learning of new goals, values and objectives as circumstances change) is possible (Argyris and Schon 1974; Schon 1983; Paquet 1991).

Ensuring that the conversation is conducted in a manner likely to foster social learning requires a process of adaptation of values, and an improvement of the "goodness-of-fit" between values and context. In order for the social system to adapt (i.e., to learn) as much and as fast as possible,

some basic conditions must be realized. Some pertain to process, some to new competences, and others have to do with the robustness of the supportive moral contracts in the ethos.

A. In terms of process, Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations (1953) may provide some cues. For Wittgenstein, understanding emerges from dialogue: it is mutual understanding. It materializes through looking at a multiplicity of cases, describing examples, drawing analogies, and "drawing attention to the *intermediate cases* so that one can pass easily from familiar cases to the unfamiliar and see the relation between them" (Tully 1995:108).

Tully notes that this practical form of reasoning is akin to the reasoning in individual cases in common law. This common-law view is typical of the Renaissance humanist culture. It is a commitment to conversation, to listening to the other side, to accepting that the only way to develop reason as a practical skill is to compare and contrast, to exchange and negotiate alternative descriptions.

The sort of learning generated by dialogue does not necessarily congeal in formalized conclusions. It remains very much *tacit knowledge*, a capacity to deal effectively with matters of practice, and to deal with such matters in a timely manner and with a full appreciation of the local and particular context. Such accumulated tacit knowledge is predicated on the fact that through experience we learn much, and that at any time we know more than we can tell (Polanyi 1966). This is the way knowledge evolves in common law: case by case, and often in a tacit way.

B. Through the assimilation of evidence, the individual's diagnostic capability grows. The specific experience is the essence of *connoisseurship*: it is developed by relating and comparing within a field of knowledge (Freedberg 1989). Connoisseurship, like skill, is communicated by experience and examples, not by precepts. One cannot develop an appreciation of human physiognomies except through a long course of experience. It is much like the way we acquire the skill of a wine-taster, or the capacity to swim or to ride a bicycle (Polanyi 1958:54). There is no spontaneous emergence of connoisseurship. It emerges from the jointness of some basic capability and from a very extensive external exposure to a large number of intermediate cases. Connoisseurship can never be the application of simple explicit rules. It is a *tacit savoir-faire and savoir-être* and becomes part of the fabric of the trainee. It generates instinctively a responsible decision in the face of complex and uncertain circumstances, i.e. a response that balances appropriately agency, accountability and obligation *hic et nunc*.

Learning values is like learning how to swim: it is done by eliminating misfits, by correcting errors, by continuous re-alignment to ensure goodness-of-fit between elusive standards and circumstances. But there can be no learning unless one recognizes and embraces error as a fundamental building block in social learning, as a crucial way to fuel fruitful deliberations. This is true as much for the citizen or the "simple soldier" as it is for military leaders.

The new competences in such learning systems will develop, however, only under certain conditions. There must be: (1) an acknowledgement of the high level of uncertainty as completely

irreducible; (2) an explicit will to embrace error as the difference between what is expected and what happens, for this is a condition of learning; and (3) a willingness to span boundaries across perspectives (Michael 1993).

Harmon does not focus on connoisseurship. He spells out the practical implications of viewing responsibility paradoxically but he proffers no advice. Our focus on the "practitioner" rather than on "practice" forces us to be bolder and to insist on the need not only to recognize the practical implications of viewing the notion of burden of office as essentially contested in nature, but also to develop practical strategies, and to reflect on the sort of competences, likely to lead to workable notions of accountability and ethics.

C. A robust underlying ethos is also very important for effective social learning. It is embodied in a number of more or less explicit moral contracts linking the different stakeholders. One may underline for instance, as an example of such contracts, the two moral contracts (I) between the citizenry and the bureaucracy, and (II) between the bureaucrats and their leaders (Paquet 1991). What we mean by a robust ethos is a 'contextualist' one in which there are vibrant multiplexed relations of mutual interdependence and caretaking, a contextual fabric rich in networking and in social capital (Putnam 1995). The more trust and *esprit de corps*, the more effective the social learning.

We know from experience that sometimes faster learning is a matter of survival. Our immune system is bombarded constantly by new viruses and it must learn and adapt fast if we are to survive. At times, there is even the possibility that our immune system may not learn fast enough, so it becomes necessary to use a vaccine, a lever to help it learn faster about the best way to fight a disease. The same can be said about any social system. And leadership is the lever in this case.

If the conversation is to be carried on truthfully, the leader must earn the trust of his followers by persuading them that he has their needs and aspirations at heart. The leader's ability to lead and to foster effective social learning is a byproduct of the trust he has earned by serving his followers as well as the capacity of the existing ethos to help generate such trust (O'Toole 1995; Paquet 1996).

For political leaders, the dual moral responsibility to both the citizenry and to their followers is quite daunting. For military leaders, because of the fact that there is always a potential life-and-death dimension to their decisions, the stakes are even higher than for politicians. They must manage high-stake moral contracts: (1) the citizenry must grant some latitude in the use of violence by armed personnel against a guarantee of higher moral standards by the armed personnel than what is expected from the ordinary citizen; (2) armed personnel must give a commitment to selflessness in the face of difficult circumstances in exchange for a guarantee of the appropriate level of financial, material and symbolic resources necessary to ensure that minimal casualty will ensue.

If these moral contracts between citizens and armed forces, and between leaders and followers

within the military, are explained, they may prove less difficult to implement than is generally perceived. For, as Akerlof suggests, there may be advantages for a well-identified group like the armed forces in instilling in its members certain moral values and certain virtues - that limit the pursuit of individual personal interests, but that improve significantly the probability of promotion within the ranks (Akerlof 1984). To the extent that this is the case, one may see how the two moral contracts (between the military and the citizenry, and between the leaders and the followers within the military) are integrally interconnected: the military offering to the citizenry a mixture of commitment to virtuous behavior as a *quid pro quo* for the civilian support of the military, and the military leaders offering their followers progress through the ranks on the basis of those very virtues that are important to the citizens (Ricks 1996).

5. Connoisseurship, social learning and blamability

To foster a stronger accountability and ethical fabric, a three-pronged strategy is necessary that can be built on the highest and best use of education, deliberation, social capitalization. Anything that provides greater moral connoisseurship and responsible behavior, or fosters a wider use of the moral reasoning and a more open deliberation process in the forum, or strengthens the ethos by endowing it with denser relations and a higher degree of trust - promote a more effective social learning and therefore the likelihood of a more robust accountability and ethical fabric. Anything that generates blockages in these three directions can only slow down social and moral learning.

A. There are important impediments and stumbling blocks on these three roads. They may vary in form and intensity from time to time and place to place. However, one major distortion deserves special attention. It is the sort of "judicial usurpation of politics" that has distorted the whole social learning process and the fluid common-law-type emergence of an effective evolving accountability and ethical framework. This distortion is caused by the myopic search for blamability that has become the trademark of the judiciary.

Politics is free persons deliberating the question of how we ought to order our life together. When questions that are properly political are unduly narrowed, legalized or "speciously constitutionalized", the conversation is truncated, distorted and social learning falters (First Things 1996). It is an even more dramatic distortion when morality is declared "legally suspect and a threat to the public order", and when political deliberative institutions are undermined by the arrogance of those who insist on redefining judicially the political questions.

The main reason why judicial commissions of inquiry headed or fueled by the legal perspective have proved quite unsatisfactory has to do with the tendency of such bodies to be mesmerized by experts in the business of interrogating and punishing. Those persons are neither trained to analyze nor really prepared to handle issues of malfunctioning institutions or flawed administrative systems. As a result of their narrow legalistic perspective, the notions of burden of office, of accountability and ethics are redefined in a flawed and reductive way.

For them, error is not a source of learning, but rather a source of blame, and it demands

punishment. Consequently, years after some of these commissions have been appointed, it is still unclear what was flawed in the system they are investigating. So the citizen cannot be sure that this flaw has been corrected. These commissions are in hot pursuit of culprits and persons to blame instead of trying to repair defective institutional architectures.

It is not sure that one can eliminate easily such a massive source of distortion in our political and administrative systems. Indeed, there are instances abroad where the judicial usurpation of politics has even progressed beyond anything we have experienced in Canada. But it would be unwise to develop a fixation on this sole blockage.

B. There are other impediments to moral and social learning: a diminished role of moral connoisseurship in our education system, the presence of too many taboo topics that cannot be openly discussed, the social decapitalization denounced by Putnam and others. However, this should not lead one to conclude that action to improve the moral fabric is not possible or condemned to be fruitless.

(1) On the education front, the central concern is the explicit recognition that connoisseurship is not necessarily an innate quality. It must be learned by example as much as by training. It must also be reconciled with the rest of the value system defined by the ethos.

It is as unfair to demand moral connoisseurship from public servants or military personnel without the appropriate moral apprenticeship as it would be to ask one to fly a F-18 without training. Consequently, unless the public sector begins to spend as much money as Toyota in selecting suitable recruits and in allocating through their training period as much time developing accountability and ethical skills as it does technical skills, connoisseurship will not materialize.

(2) On the deliberation front, the process of democratic participation in the production of governance has to be understood as a daunting task. When there is a problem of some magnitude revealed by scandals, it often cannot be easily understood and repaired quickly. In the case of a malaise in the armed forces, it may demand an overhauling of the corporate culture, a fundamental rethinking of recruitment practices, and nothing less than a sanitization of the 'traditional' way of life of the organization. Moreover, it may require no less than a full generation (some 15 years) to 'cleanse' the present ethos from its bacteria.

It is only too understandable that in the face of such a mammoth task, the tendency has been to turn one's attention to more tractable problems: for instance, blamability. There is a tendency when one is faced with a problem that has no obvious solution to deny the very existence of the problem. This is the case in particular when acknowledging the problem may lead to one's having to admit that one does not know what to do. This explains why it becomes a taboo problem (Michael 1988).

(3) On the social recapitalization front, even if it is not clear what the contours of the new institutional fabric will be, moral connoisseurship cannot simply be transplanted to the existing

ethos: it can be fitted within it only by making major repairs to the ethos.

An ethos is a permanent construction site. It is evolving constantly, and represents a complex set of social armistices between geo-technical constraints and values and plans. A refurbished ethos may have to start with a few points being reiterated in the same manner as was done in the Magna Carta: *primum non nocere* as one of the few absolutes; higher moral standards are required from the public servant than from the citizen; a greater awareness of the basic moral contracts making up the ethos; the essentially contested nature of the burden of office and the great limits it imposes on accountability and ethics consensus; the fundamental importance of error-embracing and social learning; the connoisseurship nature of moral reasoning; the recognition that social and moral learning is bound to be a trial-and-error process.

All this is both extremely simple and yet extremely profound. It recognizes that any social recapitalization is bound to take much time and to require long and difficult deliberations. While it is quite easy to destroy institutions, it is quite difficult to construct an institutional order and often it requires both a major reframing of perspective and much effort to reconfigure the ethos, and even to neutralize or displace the present politics of denial that prevent any coordinated effort to mount a new construction site (Paquet 1995).

C. This major task of *reframing* cannot however be undertaken unless it is first recognized that the usual rationalist representation of accountability and ethics is an "irresponsible masquerade", that it cannot escape the paradoxes it attempts to abolish (Harmon 1995:65). Only when the ground is clear, can one hope to build a more practical and useful representation.

Even though Harmon refuses to be programmatic, his analyses have identified four major challenges that need to be met head on in the process of social learning: the need to keep in mind and in balance somewhat at all times the reciprocity (1) between personal responsibility and commitment to others; (2) between freedom and responsibility; (3) between individual and collective agency and individual and collective answerability/entitlement; and (4) between political and professional responsibility.

The temptation in each case is to postulate a split between these different poles and to assert the dominance of one on the other. This can only produce pathologies through the atrophy of one of the constituent principles and an undue simplification of the "fundamental, unresolved, and perhaps unresolvable tensions" that characterize human behavior (Hirschman 1985).

But avoiding such pathologies cannot suffice. Reframing entails a transformation of these treacherous dyads into creative dialectical relationships that need to be worked out through deliberation at the practical level in a manner that ensures that all the relevant stakeholders and all the constituent principles are fully engaged in the creative dialogue and the creative practice from which the viable compromises emerge. This entails a 360-degree accountability and ethics: a complicated conversation which is both *incontournable* and unlikely to yield anything but an on-going and undending multilogue.

Hirschman (1985) and Harmon (1995) may be rightly accused of having contributed significantly to a complication of the social science discourse. Theirs have been pleas to recognize complexity where it exists instead of denying it. These complications may be troublesome but they are not posing unresolvable problems. They only force a reframing of our approach to social phenomena that takes into account the basic tensions humanity must live with.

7. Conclusion

One of the most fundamental reasons why the problem of inappropriate connoisseurship has not been resolved is that leaders have been unwilling to acknowledge it as a problem. The denial syndrome emerged from the fact that the leaders have been regarding this issue as one they did not know how to cope with; so there was denial and the real problem remained a taboo topic. Consequently, scandals have been dealt with as anomalies, and bad apples have been removed (or regiments disbanded) as if such actions were dealing with the issue. This has been both futile and dangerous: futile because of the fact that the problem was simply occluded; dangerous, because the suppressed problem was ever present like a denied generalized cancer.

For instance, it is very difficult for civilians not especially well informed, except through the popular press, to understand how the apprenticeship of an Airborne regiment based on violence could not only lead to violence in a context requiring saintly tolerance, humanitarian patience, and quiet diplomacy. Scapegoating the regiment, or some of its officers, without raising questions about the ethos of their training, and the system of command that led the military to assign a group so specialized in violence to such a delicate task, can only leave civilians puzzled. Disbanding the Airborne did not deal with the central issue; it allowed everyone to avoid dealing with it.

Conferences and papers about ethics may be necessary and useful, but are hardly sufficient to deal with the systemic problem at hand. They are at best a useful first step toward admitting that there is a problem. In that sense, they may foster some courage. For it requires much courage to stop denying the problem when one has no solution. This is the sort of courage that has been witnessed recently in the military, but also in numerous other areas of the private, public and social domains. But, now that it has become possible to talk about these questions without being accused of treason, it is essential that the conversation not be derailed into trivial pursuits. The central questions are not the preparation of a compulsory 3-hour course on ethics or the concoction of a code of ethics engraved in a plasticized card. The central concerns have to do with the burden of office of the different officials, and with the accountability and ethical frameworks that are required if officials are to perform their tasks in a manner that meets the expectations of the citizenry.

It may take 15 years of deliberation and clarification (of the moral contracts between the citizenry and the military, and between the military leaders and their followers, for instance) before the problem receives not a solution but a workable response. For, as David Nowlan remarked some thirty years ago, "puzzles have solutions, problems don't; problems have responses, and one

man's response will inevitably give rise to another man's objection" (Nowlan 1968). This is the world of paradoxes and essentially contested concepts. No anodyne instrumental logic will do.

But 15 years is only a shade more than 5000 days. This is the realistic time frame that the United States have accepted it would take to transform the ethos of their military establishment. And there are reasons to believe that this approach has proved effective (Ricks 1996).

Whether or not such a far-sighted approach can be adopted by Canadian officials in the military and elsewhere remains to be seen. But, there is a growing awareness that the problem is unlikely to go away and that the process likely to be successful in responding effectively to it is unlikely to be of the band-aid variety. That is why one may feel that, as Don Michael would put it, there are reasons to hope -- not to be optimistic but to hope.

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