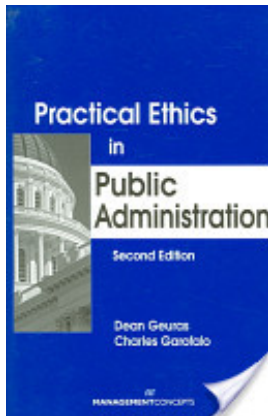


# Practical Ethics in Public Administration

Dean Geuras  
Charles Garofalo



## Overview

The authors, Dean Geuras and Charles Garofalo, introduce historic ethical theory applied to daily practice in public administration. The book reviews ethical dilemmas, such as allocation of department funds, deciding to terminate employees and other examples to assist readers in understanding the dynamics of ethics in public administration. The pathway to finding out the best course of action is determined not only by outcomes, but ethics as well.

## Authors



Dean Geuras is a professor of Philosophy at Texas State University. In addition to articles in his own field of philosophy, Dr. Geuras has authored several interdisciplinary publications in the fields of theology, counseling, and, in collaboration with Dr. Garofalo, ethics in public administration. Their previous book, *Ethics in the Public Service: The Moral Mind at Work*, was selected among the top academic titles of the year 2000 by *Choice* magazine.



Charles Garofalo is Professor of Political Science at Texas State University. He teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in public administration ethics, public policy, business-government relations, and comparative public administration. His research focuses on administration ethics, with recent publications as noted above. The journals he published in includes: *American Review of Public Administration*, *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, *Innovation Journal*, *Journal of Management History* and *Global Virtue Ethics Review*. His career also includes both government and university administration.

## Contents

Overview	1
Contents	1
Authors	1
Chapter	
Summaries	2-9
Review	10

## Executive Book Summary

Executive Book Summary for Dr. Keith Walker by Denelle R. Spencer

## Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 to 5:

The authors introduces ethics in the Real world both in the public and private sectors and finally describes the theories of ethics as relativism and absolutism and the four sub groups in absolutism: teleology, deontology, intuitionism, virtue theory.

“the real world”-a world of strategies, budgets, agenda, turf battles...our response to these realities make up our “real world” and we are challenged to respond based on ethics. We need principled reasoning and judgment, public interest and public trust deserve no less.

Society’s values are embedded in the public organizations it creates and the values are assumed in the manners of organizations. The people set ethical standards in public agencies and their ethical demands can be more or less than private firms.



An illustration of how powerful society’s values are in public organizations is demonstrated with the successful protests to stop a government decision to build a pipeline from Canada to the United States.

People have more impacts on the decision of government than they do in private organizations.

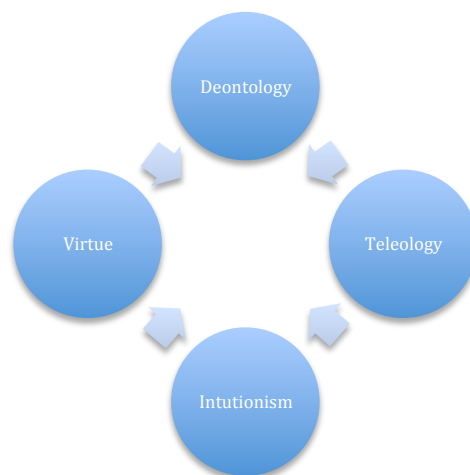


Relativism supports the idea that society has different standards, meaning that there is no single standard that fits all. On the other hand, when universal standards are agreed it is known as ethical *absolutism*. Absolutism is then divided into four subgroup theories:

- 1) *Teleological* promotes happiness and that the utility of everyone's happiness is most important, hence, utilitarianism. Happiness trumps other principles;
- 2) *Deontological* strives for more than a positive outcome it stresses doing things in a principled fashion, through obedience versus consequences;
- 3) *Intuitionist* is dependent on moral senses and feelings than theories; and
- 4) *Virtue* is determined by the character traits demonstrated known as acts of virtue.

Unified Ethics means combining all sub-group into a unified process. We must examine these concepts to think ethically. Problems exist and the best ethical approach to reach a solution takes much understanding and time. Unified ethics recognizes human nature and is the foundation of development and moral understanding.

The authors study the importance of having systematic developed methods for making ethical decisions. This requires asking the right questions! The book frames these questions to set the foundation for moral decision-making (pages 61-62).



The arrows point to the center as if they all have the same universal standards.

## Moral decision making questions

Teleology:

- What are the consequences of my actions?
- What are the long-term effects of my actions?
- Does my actions promote the greatest happiness?



Deontology:

- What principle applies in this case?
- Can this principle be applied consistently in this case and in all similar cases?
- Can this principle be considered as a possible universal principles of behavior?
- Which course of action best exemplifies the ideal of treating all people as ends in themselves?
- Which course of action best exemplifies and most fully promotes the ideal of society of free, responsible people whose ends promote each other rather than conflict with each other?

Intuitionism:

- What does my conscience tell me about this action?
- Do I feel good about this action?

Virtue theory:

- What character traits does this action express?
- What effect will this action have on my character?
- What effect will this action have on the character of other people?
- Is this the action of a person whose character I would admire?

By asking such questions to 5 case examples the authors reviewed the strengths and limits of autonomy, responsibility and accountability within each case.

The authors examine the realm of administrative ethics woven into organizational structure, for example the chain of command in the work place, and organizational culture. Organizational culture includes the values, assumptions, and expectations that influence thinking, deciding, and doing within the organization.” (page 98)



Codes of ethics enhance administrative ethics with a broad focus; however not detailed enough and “lacks teeth”. Over time the authors stated that the importance of implementing ethics has reached high levels, such as the creation of the Office of Government Ethics in 1978.

Chapter 6 and 7 focuses on personal ethics and asks these questions: Who am I? Who do I want to be? What do I want? The authors include moral stressors:

- Lack of legitimacy in our constitutional order
- Organizational structure and culture
- Daily ethical dilemmas

These stressors challenge the public administrators to ask the personal questions.

“The ethical dimensions and implications of our choices tend to be obscured by our commitment to the commonly accepted values of efficiency and effectiveness” (page 145).

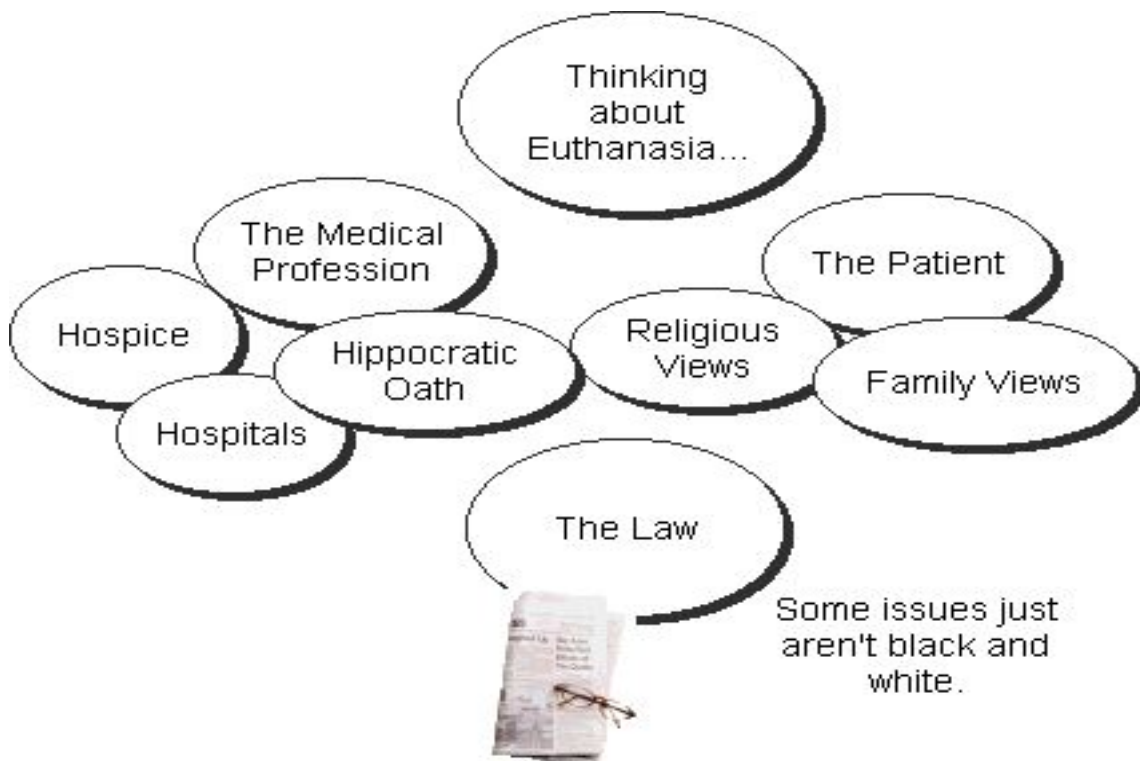


It is highly important to understand the nature of ethical dilemmas with an internalized sense of responsibility. Ethical dilemmas include making a decision between two rights that have significant impact on the welfare of others. For example, having to choose between environmental protection and economic growth is an ethical dilemma because both have positive and negative impacts if either were chosen. The public administrators need clarity, coherence, and consistency when making decisions. And it is good to have a moment to explain one's decisions. The authors provide many case examples for ethical thought and decision-making considerations.

Chapter 9 elaborates on general approaches that people take to ethical problems, known as ethical style: “the individual mix of attitudes, beliefs, and values that makes up each one of us and defines the perspective through which we plan and judge our actions and those of others.” (194).

There are 7 ethical styles.

1. Rigid deontologist: rule bound and circumstances and exceptions are secondary
2. Utilitarian: strong commitment to teleology
3. Virtuous: Virtue theorist
4. Intuitive: intuitionist
5. Professional: primary commitment is to their profession, institution, company, and its reputation
6. Loyalist: similar to professional style, but is more committed to the company above all
7. Empathetic: follows their feelings of sympathy and compassion.



No style is better than the other, but if there is consensus amongst the styles and acceptance of a unified ethic there is a more sound ethical position. Unified ethics provides a means of thinking about ethical issues; it does not provide a formula for unified agreements.

Chapter 11 discusses leadership and ethics. Leaders have an important role in the organizational structure and they must ensure that positive culture is supported ethically. Their role is vital to the organization and they must have strong ethical application personally and for the public administration body. Overall, the authors state that we need moral public servants. Ethical political and administrative thought and behavior ties into strong ethical leadership enhanced with unified ethic.

Chapters 12, 13 review ethics in New Public Management, Quality and Performance. The 10 principles for a new form of governance is labeled “entrepreneurial government” by Osborne and Gaebler:

1. Catalytic government, or steering rather than rowing
2. Community-owned government, or empowering communities and citizens by changing expectations.
3. Competitive government
4. Mission-driven government
5. Results-orientated government
6. Customer-driven government
7. Enterprising government
8. Anticipatory government
9. Decentralized government
10. Market-orientated government

This view looks at creating the most efficient government with the least cost. There are a number of critiques to this model. This model promotes a business approach to public administration. Should citizens now be considered customers? The focus would change from public interest to efficiencies or personal gains.





## Review

“What is hard to find is concrete evidence that following these prescriptions will lead to increases in integrity or performance” (329). The authors did a good job analyzing ethics in public administration and is a recommended resource for students who want to understand the complexities of ethical decision making. The authors gave concrete examples and offered specific questions and styles to use when applying unified ethic. Ethical dilemmas were discussed at all levels of the organizational structure. This book is worth the read.



