

Association News

James Q. Wilson and Civic Virtue

John J. DiIulio, Jr.
Princeton University

Isaiah Berlin's famous 1953 essay "The Hedgehog and the Fox" opens with this line from the Greek poet Archilochus: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." As Berlin argued so brilliantly, taken figuratively, these words of Archilochus "mark one of the deepest indifferences which divide writers and thinkers, and, it may be, human beings in general." In terms of intellectual temperament and artistic personality, the "hedgehogs" are those who "relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think and feel—a single, universal, organizing principle in terms of which all they are and say has significance." On the other side are the "foxes," those who "lead lives, perform acts, and entertain ideas that are centrifugal rather than centripetal, . . . seizing upon the essence of a vast variety of experiences and objects for what they are in themselves, without, consciously or unconsciously, seeking to fit them into, or exclude them from, any one unchanging, all-embracing, sometimes self-contradictory and incomplete, at times fanatical, unitary inner vision." Plato, Hegel, and Ibsen dwell mainly among the hedgehogs; Aristotle, Montaigne, and Goethe run mostly with the foxes. Of course, no thinker of consequence is ever purely of one type or the other, and the burden of Berlin's memorable essay was to lift the thought of Tolstoy, who "was by nature a fox, but believed in being a hedgehog," on the back of this provocative dichotomy.

In selecting James Q. Wilson to serve as its President, the American Political Science Association (APSA) is paying tribute to a hedgehog

whose remarkable career as one of the most distinguished American social scientists, policy intellectuals, and university teachers of the late twentieth-century marks him as a fox. The Wilson scholarly corpus seems incredibly broad and eclectic, and it is. It includes over a dozen seminal books and scores of influential articles. It covers a wide variety of subjects in a number of different fields and subfields, including urban politics, bureaucracy and public administration, criminology and criminal justice policy, and American national government. It also contains a number of fascinating twists and turns of mind; a contrarian skepticism toward all-encompassing ideas about human behavior; and a will-

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ingness to justify intellectual efforts primarily in terms of their intrinsic joys as opposed to their practical or social utility.

But for all his mighty, and mightily diverse, fox-like toils, the APSA's eighty-seventh president is every inch the hedgehog. James Q. Wilson "knows many things," but the "one big thing" he knows—or has spent the better part of the past three decades as researcher, teacher, and member of numerous high-level government commissions seeking to know—is the wellspring of civic virtue, the political and other conditions under which good citizens are produced, bad citizens are corrected, and desirable human characters in general are made to flourish.

As he begins his term as President of the APSA, James Q. Wilson is James A. Collins Professor of Management at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), hold-

ing appointments in UCLA's John E. Anderson Graduate School of Management and its Department of Political Science. Despite his twenty-six years of life in the heart of Western civilization—the East Coast—Wilson, who grew up in California, is unrepentant in his fondness for the state, and harbors a learned fascination with its politics and history.

For Wilson, the road back home to California included many important stops. He received his B.A. in 1952 from the University of Redlands, where he majored in political science. After three years as an officer in the U.S. Navy, he enrolled at the University of Chicago, where he received his Ph.D. in political science in 1959, and spent the next two years as an instructor. In 1961 he signed on at Harvard University, where he served as Director of the Joint Center for Urban Studies of Harvard and MIT from 1963 to 1966; Chairman of the Task Force on the Harvard Core Curriculum in 1976-77; Chairman of the Department of Government from 1969 to 1973; and Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government from 1973 until his departure in 1987 for UCLA. Over the years, he has served in a number of government advisory posts. He was chairman of the White House Task Force on Crime in 1967; chairman of the National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse Prevention in 1972-73; a member of the Attorney General's Task Force on Violent Crime in 1981; and a member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board from 1986 to 1990. A fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and member of the American Philosophical Society, he has also served on the editorial boards of several academic and policy journals, and on the advisory boards of numerous foundations, fellowship programs, and corporations. Prior to becoming President of the APSA, he served the Association as Co-Chairman of the Program

Committee in 1977, and member of the Council from 1977 to 1979. In addition to many grants and fellowships, he has also been conferred several honorary degrees, and has won numerous major professional awards, including the APSA's Charles E. Merriam Award; the Bruce Smith Award of the American Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences; the Harold Lasswell Award of the Policy Studies Organization; and the APSA's James Madison Award.

Like many major departments of the day, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Department of Political Science at Chicago was very much alive with the cross-currents of behavioralism and its critics. At Chicago, the latter included the great political philosopher Leo Strauss, but Wilson's chief mentor in his graduate student years, and quite arguably the greatest single influence on his intellectual development for many years thereafter, was Edward C. Banfield. For the better part of a quarter-century, Banfield and Wilson were colleagues in the Department of Government at Harvard. Wilson's basic understanding of politics, and of the distinctive intellectual mission of political science, owes much to Banfield, a debt that the exceedingly modest Wilson has acknowledged many times. For example, in the concluding chapter of *The Politics of Regulation* (1980), Wilson argues:

[M]uch, if not most, of politics consists of efforts to change wants by arguments, persuasion, threats, bluffs, and education. *What* people want—or believe they want—is the essence of politics. . . . Both economics and politics deal with problems of scarcity and conflicting preferences. Both deal with persons who ordinarily act rationally. But politics differs from economics in that it manages conflict by forming heterogeneous coalitions out of persons with changeable and incommensurable preferences in order to make binding decisions for everyone. Political science is an effort to make statements about the formation of preferences and nonmarket methods of managing conflict among those preferences; as a discipline, it will be as inelegant, disorderly, and changeable as its subject matter.

In these words, one hears echoes of Banfield's *Political Influence* (1961),

and of his "Note on Conceptual Scheme," the appendix to Banfield and Martin Myerson's *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest* (1955). As Wilson suggests in a note to the chapter, the heart of his argument about the nature of politics, an argument which he developed most fully in his *Political Organizations* (1973), was first suggested to him by Banfield.

By the same token, when Wilson takes pains to define the limits of applied social science (even when done right and at its best) as a source of reliable policy-oriented knowledge—something he has done in numerous places, most notably in *Thinking About Crime* (1975, 1983), and in *Crime and Public Policy* (1983)—he echoes the profound doubts about "policy science" that Banfield has expressed over the years, both in print and in the classroom. Likewise, in the prefaces to several of his works, including *Varieties of Police Behavior* (1968), *The Investigators* (1978), and, most recently, *Bureaucracy* (1989), Wilson echoes the reason for studying politics first set out in the preface to the book that he co-authored with Banfield, *City Politics* (1963). After noting that increased knowledge about city politics is unlikely to result in the solution of local or national problems, they add that perhaps the "most intrinsically satisfying of man's activities is trying to understand the world he lives in. Politics, being one of the most difficult things to understand, is therefore particularly challenging. Responding to the challenge is, we think, its own justification and reward."

Wilson's first book-length response to the challenge was *Negro Politics* (1960), which he researched as his dissertation. In the late 1950s, for a serious political scientist—let alone for an unknown, unestablished, and untenured one—to write on this topic was to run head-on into three pieces of conventional wisdom about it: first, that there was no such thing as "Negro politics"; second, that to the extent that Negro politics could be said to exist, it was a simple politics of aspirational homogeneity and unity of purpose, with a stable leadership cadre to match; and, third, that the subject simply was not important or interesting enough to

merit close attention. Wilson's path-breaking and painstaking research helped to debunk these conventional views. Even today, the book remains a major source of information and perspective on the richly complicated post-World War II political experience of African-Americans.

One year later, Wilson completed *The Amateur Democrat* (1961), a comparative analysis of "club politics" in three cities. His riveting examination of political life in each city inspired a number of other young scholars to explore similar turf in other jurisdictions. The book's major contribution, however, was the spotlight it threw on fledgling "amateur democrats," a species of ideologically-driven, post-machine political actors whose existence would not be duly recognized, and whose energizing influence on traditional political party structures would not be fully appreciated, by most scholars and political commentators until the 1970s. His explanation for the rise of the amateur democrat grew out of his general understanding of the way that complex organizations arise, persist, and change, an understanding that he sketched out in his enduring 1961 article "Incentive Systems: A Theory of Organizations," co-authored with his graduate school peer Peter B. Clark, and published in *Administrative Science Quarterly*.

It is tempting to go on in this fashion, but one who proceeds to follow Wilson's long and winding professional trail on a year-by-year, project-by-project, or even decade-by-decade basis will get the scent of the fox, but miss the imposing shadow of the hedgehog. In the remainder of this essay, therefore, I propose to discuss just three interlocking parts of Wilson's work—his criminal justice, his public administration, and his perspective on American government, in that order. I will comment on a few of the things that he has published in each of these areas, and use them as windows on what, to me at least, appears to be his unifying intellectual, and animating moral, concern; namely, how best to understand and promote civic virtue. In closing, I will add a few words about his current research and teaching at UCLA,

briefly discuss his past labors as a teacher and colleague at Harvard, rebut the Californian's lingering attachment to Boston sports teams, and highlight his admirable qualities as a friend and family man.

Although the question of who should be punished by law, for what, how, and by whom is one of the perennial questions of political philosophy, until Wilson entered the field in the 1960s, modern political scientists had pretty much forfeited criminal justice studies to sociologists. As revealed in the title of a brief autobiographical essay he wrote in 1988 for the American Society of Criminology (ASC), Wilson himself was guilty of "Entering Criminology Through the Back Door." This "back door" opened in 1960 when the city of Chicago's new reform-minded police chief turned to the University for help in fashioning a training program for the department's nearly one thousand command officers (sergeants, lieutenants, captains). The University's Social Science Division bumped the request over to its Department of Political Science, and, as Wilson recounts, the Department, "acting on the venerable Navy tradition that a duty no one wants should be given to the most junior officer, gave the job to me." Fortunately for all concerned, Instructor Wilson, who knew nothing about cops and less about how to train them, had the University's adult education unit relieve him of the task. Never one to miss a good research opportunity, however, the young Wilson gained permission to prepare and administer a questionnaire to the cops. This research resulted in a few articles in which he summarized the survey results, and made what for its day was quite a novel argument; namely, that the role of the police was shaped by the adversarial relationship between themselves and the public.

Probably, that would have been the extent of Wilson's foray into criminal justice studies, but when he arrived at Harvard, a number of his colleagues in sociology and anthropology were engaged in a major government-funded study of juvenile delinquency, and they asked him to join them. As he recounts in his 1988 ASC essay, up to this point in his

early career, he had been "following carefully that social-science tradition in which it is more important to count something than to look at it"; he had been studying police "as urban bureaucrats without having watched a single cop make a single arrest." So he decided to take his new colleagues up on their offer, launching a study of how two operationally distinct big-city police departments handled juveniles, and designing it so that he "had both to gather statistics and watch police in action." Before his first ride in a patrol car had ended, he was "hooked by the opportunity to observe the complex interactions between the government and governed and to judge the effects on people of dealing with a 'professional' versus a traditional police agency."

Still, throughout his early years at Harvard, Wilson's interest in police remained a distant second to his other, more traditional interests as a political scientist. Just the same, he was christened an expert on law enforcement and crime control, and was appointed as such to various blue-ribbon government panels. He did not, however, consider himself any sort of an "expert." Moreover, as he scoured the relevant research literatures on the causes and control of crime, he found few studies of theoretical or practical value. Worse, he found that the few systematic empirical studies of crime that did exist had been rejected out of hand by most leading criminologists of the day, whose own competing ideas about how social forces produced criminals were almost entirely devoid of empirical content.

A lesser spirit would have shrugged his shoulders, submitted to his own strong disciplinary homing tendencies, and begged off any further research, writing, or advising on crime and related matters. But the intellectual and civic stakes were quite high. During this time of widespread optimism about the possibility of planned social progress, influential criminologists were recommending criminal justice policies based on the assumption that, if the policies were adopted—if police patrols were increased; or new law enforcement training regimens adopted; or new

urban poverty measures implemented—then good things would happen. In most cases, however, there was not a shred of empirical evidence to justify the "experts'" claims, or the raised public expectations, bold policy changes, enhanced public expenditures, and trying administrative labors that they entailed. But rather than head for greener, calmer, and more clearly marked out political science pastures, Wilson met these challenges, at first indirectly but powerfully with a major study of police behavior, and next with a field-transforming book about crime.

In *Varieties of Police Behavior* (1968), Wilson compared police operations in eight jurisdictions, and uncovered three distinct styles of policing that emerged from three distinct political environments. The book could be read as a comparative case study in public administration that highlighted the determinative effects of a public agency's political environment on what it did and how it did it. For the most part, that is how Wilson intended for the book to be read, and so in the book's preface he explicitly warned off readers who were seeking practical advice about how to enhance police performance or reduce crime.

Fortunately, however, criminal-justice scholars and officials were undeterred by Wilson's warning. For many of them, reading the book was like being doused with a bucket of cold water. By detailing the complexities of translating crime policies into administrative action; by showing how fundamentally police operations can vary; and by suggesting how difficult it can be to change any given operation with predictable and desirable consequences—whether via new leadership, new procedures, the addition of specially trained staff, or the infusion of extra dollars—Wilson had effectively pulled the rug out from under all sorts of then widely-touted but overly facile reform and reorganization schemes that were falsely guaranteed to change police operations in ways that would prevent crime, improve race relations, and achieve other worthwhile but distant goals.

Over the next decade, Wilson gradually entered criminology's front door, publishing a number of impor-

tant articles based on his own research on such topics as the deterrent effect of the certainty of punishment, the spread of drug-related crime, and the limited efficacy of criminal rehabilitation programs. It is one measure of his boundless energy and creativity that he accelerated his career as one of the nation's leading criminal justice analysts while continuing his career as one of its most insightful political analysts; for example, he published *Political Organizations* in 1973 and *Thinking About Crime* in 1975.

In the latter book, Wilson single-handedly revolutionized the contemporary study of crime by showing how the best empirical data then available supported, or at least did nothing to undercut, the common sense (and rudimentary micro-economics) of the subject; namely, that if crime pays, more crimes will be committed, but if the real or perceived penalties for crime are swift, certain, and severe, fewer crimes will be committed. In particular, predatory street crime, he argued, is by and large an activity of rational people who are not highly risk averse and who do not fear the stigma of arrest. Despite a heavy investment in poverty and social welfare programs designed to address the "underlying causes" of crime, crime rates in the U.S. rose in the 1960s and early 1970s because the costs of crime (the probability and severity of punishment) had gone down and the benefits of crime had gone up.

Wilson's basic argument in *Thinking About Crime* (1975) was labelled "conservative," even "reactionary," by some of the book's reviewers. For good measure, I suppose, a few of them added the charge of "criminology-bashing." Most reviewers, however, found in the book an approach to understanding crime that was not beholden to the empirically deaf ideologies of the left or the right. In fact, the book quickly became a rallying place for scholars from many disciplines—economics, operations research, experimental psychology, law, and, last but not least, political science—who wanted to think critically, and in a multivariate manner, about crime.

In all of his subsequent work in the field, including *Crime and*

Human Nature (1985, with Richard J. Herrnstein), and *From Children to Citizens: Families, Schools, and Delinquency Prevention* (1987, with Glenn C. Loury), Wilson has done a great deal both to revive the traditional sociology of crime, and to open up new lines of inquiry on criminal behavior from fields as diverse as econometrics, moral philosophy, and evolutionary biology. Indeed, despite his own preference qua policy analyst for the rational choice perspective on crime, if I were asked to write an article summarizing his criminology, an apt title would be "Bad Homes, Bad Genes, Bad Incentives, or Bad Souls?" for it con-

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tains probably the best evidence and arguments for and against each of the major schools of thought about crime to be found anywhere in the contemporary literature.

Yet, even within Wilson's fox-like criminal-justice corpus, a hedgehog emerges. The fully revised second edition of *Thinking About Crime* appeared in 1983. As did the first edition, it ended with these words: "We have trifled with the wicked, made sport of the innocent, and encouraged the calculators. Justice suffers, and so do we all." Unlike the first edition, it included a chapter entitled "Crime and American Culture," wherein he argued that there is a nontrivial relationship between the strength of character-shaping institutions (families, schools, churches), on the one hand, and the propensity of citizens to criminally violate the life, liberty, and property of their fellow citizens, on the other.

The common thread here is that, for Wilson, being a student of crime, like being a student of politics,

means being a student of civic virtue, or, more precisely, of the processes by which good character is or is not formed in the citizenry. He does not pretend to be a political philosopher, and so he does not have anything to say about civic virtue *per se*, at least not anything that Aristotle did not say first, best, and for all time. Instead, he defines civic virtues in concrete terms of what it is not. Predatory street criminals—citizens who hit, rape, rob, burglarize, and murder other citizens—are without civic virtue. While one can accept his account of how he entered criminology by accident, his passionate and persistent curiosity about the causes, control, and prevention of crime is by no means accidental. Rather, it is a serviceable surrogate for his empirically-minded drive to understand the ways and means of promoting civic virtue in a free, democratic society. Indeed, as he reveals at the close of his 1988 ASC essay, he views crime as "a political subject, for political society cannot exist unless it solves the problem of order."

But, strangely for someone who is often counted among those who believe in "getting tough on crime," Wilson never lets the tail of law and order wag the dog of free political society. The puzzle is solved when one recognizes that, for him, the problem is not merely to deter criminals, but to inculcate civic virtue among free citizens. At bottom, his criminal-justice thesis is that in a modern, open, and pluralistic society such as the U.S., draconian sanctions (or the credible threat of same) neither can nor should take the place of the successful, self-conscious inculcation of civic norms via major social institutions, a reality that Americans' materialistic, individualistic, and optimistic political culture ill prepares them to accept.

Indeed, taken all in all, Wilson's criminology can be read as a brilliant note on the philosophy of civic virtue captured in the following words spliced together from Aristotle's *Politics* (Book I) and *Ethics* (Book X):

Man, when perfected, is the best of animals; but if he be isolated from law and justice he is the worst of all. . . . We assume that the man who is to become good must first be trained and

habituated properly, and then go on to spend his time, in the spirit thus engendered, on worthy occupations. . . . We also assume that this object can be attained if men lead their lives in obedience to some sort of wisdom and under some right form of order—provided this order has sufficient force.

His seminal contributions to the field of criminal justice are all attempts to identify and establish in late twentieth-century America a “form of order” that promotes civic virtue.

The same preoccupation with civic virtue unites Wilson’s corpus on public administration. The place to begin is with the surface contradiction between Wilson the criminologist and Wilson the public administrationist. As discussed above, in *Thinking About Crime* (1975), he challenged the sociological perspective on criminal behavior in favor of an economic or rational choice perspective. But now flip to his *Bureaucracy* (1989), where he can be found defending the ramparts against those who are inclined to view bureaucratic behavior as rational and self-interested, and administering heavy doses of sociology—in particular, organizational sociology—to counter the notion that bureaucratic behavior can be understood as simple maximizing (e.g., budget-maximizing) behavior. An earlier, and more pointed, example is the concluding chapter of *The Politics of Regulation* (1980), in which he does frank battle with rational choice theorists of bureaucracy. The contradiction thickens when we recall that it was Wilson himself who, in the aforementioned 1961 article on “Incentive Systems,” and again in *Political Organizations* (1973), helped to advance, or at least helped to clear away the sociological underbrush that had inhibited, a rational choice view of behavior within complex organizations, public and private.

But the contradiction begins to fade when exposed to the light of one of Wilson’s most consistently argued ideas about the determinants of organizational performance; namely, that it is mainly the nature of the line-level employee’s critical tasks—as opposed to the styles of the managers or the preferences of the chief executives—that explains what

an organization does and how it does it. For a nurse-practitioner in a hospital, the “critical task” is tending to the needs of bed-confined medical patients; for a prison guard, the task is to prevent escapes and maintain discipline behind bars; and so on. Among students of public administration, the conventional view has long been that the problems of government agencies are problems of goals (so redefine them), resources (so increase them), and executive management (so retrain leaders, or attract the “best and the brightest” to public service, or both).

But based on his own empirical

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research and the research of others, Wilson has rejected this “top-down” perspective on bureaucracy. In *The Investigators* (1978), for example, he used the experiences of two federal law enforcement agencies—the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)—to argue that tasks are rarely “chosen, defined, revised, or discarded as a result of efforts by [executives and managers] to achieve organizational goals or respond to public demands. . . . [A]dministrative procedure must adapt to tasks, not the other way around.” Thus, the FBI stayed out of the fight against organized crime and narcotics because its agents had been trained and socialized to avoid situations that would raise the risks of corruption, and because its long-time leaders and managers valued administrative autonomy, and loathed inter-agency cooperation, more than they coveted the bigger budgets that would have been theirs had they tried moving the

agency in new directions. By the same token, the street-level DEA agents’ modus operandi was the “buy-and-bust” operation, and no amount of pressure from above could get them to abandon it in favor of other drug-control strategies. To be sure, by changing its formal and peer group reward systems, any agency, even the FBI or DEA, could be changed. But Wilson showed how difficult it was to effect meaningful change in agencies from the top down, and how precarious planned changes in agency operations tended to be.

More broadly, in his writings on bureaucracy, Wilson has highlighted the influence of organizational culture on agency operations. Students of business administration have long appreciated the importance of organizational culture, but with rare exceptions, students of public administration have tended to ignore it. Drawing on the work of Phillip Selznick, Wilson has explored the “sense of mission” or “distinctive competence” that has developed within some public agencies under certain administrative conditions. When the members of an organization, public or private, hold in common a view about the nature, legitimacy, and importance of their principal tasks, it effects what they do, how they do it, and how susceptible their on-duty behavior is to efforts to change it, whether by public demand, policy edict, or court order.

Wilson is unmistakably an admirer of those relatively few public administrationists who have somehow managed to part the sea of what the economists call “adverse selection” by creating and sustaining organizational cultures that induce many, if not most, employees to work hard, remain dedicated, and do their best. He does not, therefore, conclude his public administration magnum opus *Bureaucracy* (1989) with either a chorus of bureaucrat-bashing or three cheers for the privatization of government functions; but neither does he end it with any sort of a paean to the nation’s selfless public servants. Instead, based on his vast knowledge of documented variations in government agency operations and performance, he ends it with some “modest proposals for reform.” He

hints at ways in which at least some government agencies can be “deregulated,” that is, made less rule-bound, and thereby furnish greater intangible attractions to the types of persons who behave as if they are more interested in working with others in the public interest than they are in individual job security, multiplying personal perks, or maximizing bureau budgets.

To view bureaucratic behavior as self-interested maximizing behavior subject to institutionally-imposed constraints makes good sense. Undeniably, to understand government bureaucrats as budget-maximizers is to understand a good deal of bureaucratic behavior. To posit that bureaucrats often behave as if they were engaged in maximizing behavior of this type is to make a powerful simplifying assumption that comports not only with the facts of numerous case studies and the anecdotes of innumerable practitioners, but lends itself to formalizations that are (depending on your taste, your math-readiness, or both) intrinsically interesting and capable of yielding other, often highly counter-intuitive, ideas and empirically testable hypotheses. Alas, no competing theory of bureaucratic behavior explains as much with as little; none is at once so powerful and parsimonious.

There is nothing in the preceding paragraph, I think, that is contrary to Wilson’s understanding of the subject. As I read him, however, his large reservation is that what the rational choice approach to bureaucracy captures is less noteworthy than what it misses. There are simply far more unassimilated data out there in the real-world of public administration than the theorists allow; that is, far more in the way of documented and discoverable patterns of real-world bureaucratic behavior that lie outside the theory’s considerable explanatory range than they acknowledge. Moreover, these bureaucratic behaviors—the healthy young soldiers who throw themselves on live grenades; the inner-city teachers who work tirelessly for their students despite poor pay; the firefighters who go above and beyond the call of professional duty; the police chiefs who never take a vacation—are often more interesting and consequential

than the data that the theory can accommodate without rendering itself trivial, tautological, or nonfalsifiable. Within government, as within the corporate world, there are inter-agency, intra-agency, and historical variations in the strength of organizational culture, but a theory in which the nonpecuniary motives of bureaucratic actors are downplayed or ignored will miss these interesting and important variations, and have no small difficulty in explaining them.

In light of our subject’s overriding concern with civic virtue, therefore, it is not surprising that he is inclined to reject a theory of bureaucracy that is better at explaining why public servants shirk, subvert, and steal, than it is at suggesting how they can sometimes be induced to strive, support, and sacrifice. It is one thing to understand bureaucracy in terms of the principal-agent problem, and quite another to explain how some real-world public administrators have addressed this problem by building organizational cultures around what one might call “principled agents”—bureaucratic actors who have internalized a sense of their organization’s mission and behave accordingly. For Wilson, the student of civic virtue, any such understanding is both empirically shallow and morally unedifying.

Indeed, in the speech he gave when he accepted the APSA’s James Madison Award in 1990, Wilson took pains to spell out his views on the rational choice approach to studying politics. Clever as a fox, he did so by way of an intentionally oversimplified contrast between the divergent perspectives on politics contained in Madison’s *Federalist* Number 10 and Madison’s *Federalist* Number 51. But, ever the hedgehog, he concluded by forcefully seconding the Madison who believed that good government could not rest ultimately on self-interest; that a public interest transcending the play of “factions” and representing what Madison phrased as “the permanent and aggregate interests of the community” does exist; and that today’s American political scientists, like those of 1787, should view civic education as a professional duty.

For Wilson, however, while civic

education cannot be relativistic, neither does it mean indoctrination, even to the views of Publius. Rather, it means coming to grips with as much factual information, as many historical insights, and as many disparate theoretical perspectives as possible before deciding how to think about politics and government in general, or about any particular political issue or problem of governance. That, anyway, is the engaging spirit of his remarkable textbook, *American Government*, now entering its fifth edition.

Textbooks are rarely good windows on the real intellectual character (or genuine academic prowess) of their authors. But Wilson’s textbook on American government is a clear exception. The book is organized around two fundamental questions about American politics: (1) Who governs? and (2) To what ends? It offers four competing theories of political power (Marxist, elitist, pluralist, and bureaucratic), and forces its readers to confront the historical and contemporary evidence for and against each view.

In addition, Wilson’s conceptual chapters on the U.S. policy making process show readers how the real or perceived distribution of the costs and benefits of any given policy tend to affect the way in which the issue is agitated or settled. Not only for undergraduates and graduate students, but for professional students, mid-career public servants, seasoned public executives, policy analysts from other disciplines, and, of course, many practicing political scientists, his four-pronged way of classifying and explaining the politics of different policy issues (benefits concentrated, costs distributed, *client politics*; benefits distributed, costs concentrated, *entrepreneurial politics*; both distributed, *majoritarian politics*; both concentrated, *interest-group politics*) has been something of a conceptual revelation. Especially for undergraduates, these chapters, together with the chapters in which he applies the classification scheme to different substantive policy issues (economic policy, welfare policy, environmental policy), have stimulated many a lifelong interest in American government, and made not a few converts to the politics major.

By the same token, Wilson's chapters on the early Republic, the debate between the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists, and the philosophical basis of the Constitution, are at once highly accessible, perfectly balanced, and extremely insightful. Throughout the textbook, he takes pains to place the American political experience in comparative perspective. He is thus able to situate such important contemporary debates as that over whether the U.S. Constitution should be reformed along parliamentary or quasi-parliamentary lines. Also, his comparative perspective brings to life such not naturally lively topics as federalism and even budgeting. He helps the reader to think through what would be gained and lost as a result of any policy or institutional change, and invites him or her to decide for themselves whether it is worth the bargain.

There is, however, one point on which Wilson is insistent, not only in his textbook on American government, but in many of his other writings as well; namely, that ideas have consequences, and that seizing every available opportunity to educate oneself—and, where possible, others—on matters of common public concern is part of one's civic duty. Wishful thinking about new forms of democracy, polemics against this or that policy development, laments about the problems of particular political institutions—none of that will take the place of civic education. V. O. Key wrote that "Voters are not fools." In the same spirit, one can say that Wilson believes that average citizens, when properly educated, are neither selfish nor short-sighted. But the obligation to further civic education, he believes, should weigh especially heavily on those citizens who govern. Near the end of his textbook, for example, he argues:

The public acceptance of an activist role for government has been accompanied by a decline in public confidence in those who manage government. We expect more and more from government but are less and less certain that we will get it or get it in a form and at a cost that we find acceptable. This perhaps constitutes the greatest challenge to statesmen in the years ahead: to find a way to serve the true interests of the people while restoring and retaining their confi-

dence in the legitimacy of government itself.

In closing, I am happy to note that Wilson's recent teaching at UCLA has included a course on the morality of capitalism, and that his next book, *Essays on Character*, will address certain fundamental questions of morality, character, and society. I am happy to note these things because they promise to make explicit the concern with civic virtue that has, if I am even half-right, always been the animating intellectual and moral concern of his scholarship. My bet is that, by making it

. . . ideas have consequences, and . . . seizing every available opportunity to educate oneself—and, where possible, others—on matters of common public concern is part of one's civic duty.

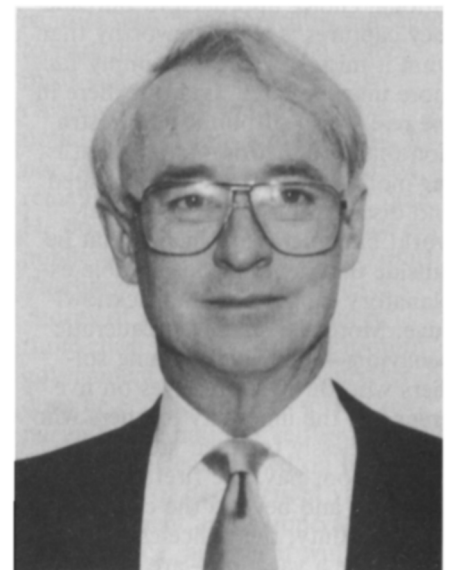
explicit, the hedgehog will thrive even as the fox retires.

I am also happy to recall his days as a colleague and teacher at Harvard. Anyone who can legitimately claim to have had several dozen former graduate students tripping over each other to organize his James Madison Award party has earned a degree of respect, affection, and loyalty that is uncommon in any profession. Although they are quite a diverse lot, his former students are as one in being proud of their mentor. Of course, he beat them all to the punch with *Bureaucracy* (1989), a book dedicated to his Harvard graduate students. As for his former Harvard colleagues, suffice it to say that, even after twenty-six years and a bout as department chairman, they were genuinely sad to see him go. In a competitive academic environment, such sadness is a high tribute indeed.

Naturally, Wilson himself was sad to leave Harvard, and not a little upset to hang up his locational right

to root for the Boston Red Sox and the Boston Celtics. As Wilson's former Harvard colleague, Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., noted in his introductory remarks preceding Wilson's Madison Award speech last year, Wilson "likes the things that Americans like," including baseball and basketball. I agree with Professor Mansfield, and I suspect that Wilson would trade some back issues of various academic journals for an extra inning at Fenway Park or overtime at the Boston Garden. But, I am sure that Wilson remembers his Burke, including the passages about local attachments and "little platoons." The time, therefore, has come for the APSA's President to renounce the Red Sox and the Celtics in favor of whatever teams hail from his native California.

Finally, a word about Wilson the friend and family man. There is, perhaps, no more telling thing about a person than how he or she treats those over whom they have some formal authority. I have already commented on the warm feelings of his former graduate students for him, but it is worth adding that many who have worked with him over the years as secretaries, editors, and research assistants feel that he treated them like a friend, rather than like some sort of boss or taskmaster. They feel that way because it is true. For a man whose close friends include some of the most influential and famous persons in the country, he



James Q. Wilson

has always had time and heart enough for everyone in his mighty orbit, including those from lesser constellations.

As a family man, he is a husband and father of two married children. He is a credit to his wonderful wife, Roberta, with whom he scuba-dived his way to co-authoring *Watching Fishes: Life and Behavior on Coral Reefs* (1985). And any man who would dedicate his American government textbook to his family, including their cat, understands civic virtue.

About the Author

John J. DiIulio, Jr. is Professor of Politics and Public Affairs, and Director of the Center of Domestic and Comparative Policy Studies, at Princeton University.

A Letter to Members from the Executive Director

Dear Colleagues:

It is hard to imagine a more exciting time to be a political scientist. That our profession is brimming with intellectual fervor was apparent at APSA's 87th Annual Meeting held in Washington, D.C. August 29–September 1. This excitement is reflected in every part of the American Political Science Association.

APSA's Annual Meeting attendance this year reached a historic high at 5,100 attendees—exceeding the boom days of the late sixties and early seventies. Numerous people stopped me in the hallways at the Hilton to say what a terrific meeting they were having. The panel sessions were at overflow capacity, and people typically stayed until the panels were over.

The book exhibit was the largest ever, not to mention the largest political science exhibit in the world. The Placement Service was bursting at the seams, and the numbers of employers and job seekers were approaching records as well.

Organized Sections have been formed in most subfields of the discipline, and they have brought new organizational vitality to APSA with

specialized newsletters, an electronic book review, awards for scholarship, and a great variety of panel offerings at the Annual Meeting.

Pi Sigma Alpha has begun an annual lecture at our meeting—rekindling an APSA tradition of years past of featuring a leading public official at our conference. This year Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney delivered a major policy address to an overflow audience of 750 people. And the excellent plenary session on “America As a Model for the World?” is featured in this issue of *PS: Political Science & Politics*, along with the John Gaus Lecture of Norton Long, the Gaus Award winner, who made an eloquent plea for ethical concerns in our scholarship.

Ted Lowi's lively Presidential Address is likely to be discussed for years to come. It will be printed in the March issue of the *American Political Science Review*, the first issue of the new Managing Editor Bingham Powell, a scholar of comparative politics, who is succeeding Samuel C. Patterson in that position. Powell has assembled a new Editorial Board for the *Review* and has named Melissa Collie of the University of Texas as Book Review Editor. Collie follows Helen Ingram in that position. Both Patterson and Ingram were honored by the Council for the superb jobs they have done.

Editor Patterson's final report appears in this issue of *PS* and is notable in several regards. First, the *APSR* is clearly the premier journal in the profession, a judgment based on both the number of times articles in the *APSR* are cited and on their staying power. Second, fields are underrepresented in the *APSR* primarily because scholars in those fields submit articles at a lower rate than political scientists in other fields do. The acceptance rate is consistent across fields, a point Patterson has continued to make during his years as editor.

Thanks to the work of Helen Ingram, Robert Salisbury, and their predecessors, the Book Review section of the *APSR* is second to none and is simply indispensable to any serious scholar of political science. Book Review Editor Collie has been given more space, and she welcomes suggestions for review essays, review-

ers and books.

Also honored at the Annual Meeting was APSA's 1952-53 President, Pendleton Herring, who has contributed over the years several dozen political prints to the Association. The Council officially named the collection the “Pendleton Herring Print Collection.” President Herring, in turn, presented to President Lowi yet another gift for the national office, a striking lithograph of George Caleb Bingham's “Canvassing for A Vote.” When you are in Washington, please come by 1527 New Hampshire Avenue to see this exhibit.

As you may know, the Council meets the day before the Annual Meeting begins. After a presentation by Mark Blasius, Co-Chair of the Gay and Lesbian Caucus, and by Ken Sherrill, also of the Caucus, the Council discussed at length whether to establish a Committee on the Status of Lesbians and Gays in the Profession. The Council agreed to do so in principle and authorized incoming President James Q. Wilson to name a Task Force to establish a charter for such a committee. That group is to report back to the Council at its April 11 meeting in Chicago. If you have any suggestions or comments, please feel free to write me or Mike Brintnall, who will be staffing that committee, at the national office.

Two other notable actions at the Council meeting were (1) The acceptance of a newly codified *Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science* that will be distributed to all political science departments in the U.S. and to senior graduate students. The yeoman's work entailed by this recodification was performed by Lawrence J. R. Herson (Chair), Gayle Binion, John C. Wahlke, Nancy H. Zingale, and Mike Brintnall (staff), to whom we all owe a great deal of thanks. (2) A suggestion that I communicate with you via *PS* more frequently than my September *PS* annual report. The purpose of this idea is to let members know what is brewing in the Council, at the national office, and in the Association generally. Hence, this letter to you.

APSA has scored some wonderful successes this past year, including: