

Wilson's Demarcation of Field: Outline for Reconsideration

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Abstract

Dualized program for building Public Administration scholarship in Korea has been, in a sense, a result of theoretical tension between the two positions, politics/administration dualism vs. politics/administration monism. The program has maintained its integrity by its dependence on a foundational question, "Is administration a different field of action from politics?" Korean community for the study of public administration has maintained its oneness by internally asking this question even though the two external philosophical positions were relatively indubitable. Strating from the well-known changes in the community, this brief outline for the future full exegesis tries to read carefully one point shown in the second chapter of one of the most seminal proposals for foundation of modern Public Administration, one paragrahp in the second chapter of "The Study of Administration" by Woodrow Wilson. What was the contemporary meaning of Wilson's classic distinction made in 1887? Keeping this research question in our mind, we will attempt to prepare for the full understanding of a kind of internal distinction Wilson explicitly draws between the constitutional and the administrative.

I. Introduction

It is usually very helpful to reconsider the foundational affairs when we confront with an unusual tendency in groups, organizations, or any other collectivities in a society. Even though reexamination of the founding idea of any human undertaking does not automatically explain an extraordinary change in that society, it definitely seems very smart move for understanding a change because reconsideration of an original position gives us a significant moral preparation for dealing with this unfamiliarity. According to Oh et. al, [1] Korean Public Administration Scholastic Society has been experiencing a following tendency during a relative short period of time as for an academic community:

- (1) radical expansion of the area of studies in less than two decades
- (2) diverse representative words for academic associations formed by P.A. scholars
- (3) increasin difficulty in holding the theoretical position of 'Organization Theory' within traditional P.A. curriculum.

Before we reach at full understanding of this somehow turbulent reform of this one of the largest academic associations in Korea, I suggest to look at the founding motivation of this great academic discipline called Public Administration. Reconsidering one point made by Wilson [2] must be regarded as a scant part of a starting effort for the long process clearly needed for a systematic explanation of above changes.

II. Analysis

After radically disjoint administration from politics, Wilson says that "There is another distinction which must be worked into all our conclusions, which, though but another side of that between administration and politics, is not quite so easy to keep sight of: I mean the distinction between *constitutional* and administrative questions, between those governmental adjustments which are essential to constitutional principle and those which are merely instrumental to the possibly changing purposes of a wisely adapting convenience." [3]

As the first step for his major distinction between constitution and administration, he focuses on the two ideal types of governmental adjustment. In the two areas of governmentality, governing by principle and governing by wisdom, the structure government can be adjusted by two different kinds of justification, he argues. To him, structural adjustment in administrative dimension is commanded by the possibly changing convenience. For the sake of convenience, administration can change governmental organization. Of course, government can be adjusted for simply realizing the constitutional intention. Intentional principle and situational convenience are two different animals both justifying organizational adaptation in government. In order to push forward this extremely significant contrast, he provides his own reading of the U.S. Constitution as follows:

"The broad plans of governmental action are not administrative; the detailed execution of such plans is administrative. Constitutions, therefore, properly concern themselves only with those instrumentalities of government which are to control general law. Our federal

constitution observes this principle in saying nothing of even the greatest of the purely executive offices, and speaking only of that President of the Union who was to share the legislative and policy-making functions of government, only of those judges of highest jurisdiction who were to interpret and guard its principles, and not of those who were merely to give utterance to them." [4]

The Constitution is silent on administration except identifying the head of the Nation, the President of the Union. The principle and its intention have let the executional nature of government alone. In other words, executive functioning of government is led by situation. Then, he critically identifies a constitutional misreading or misleading of tripartite government by saying that "This (constitutional division of power) is not quite the distinction between Will and answering Deed, because the administrator should have and does have a will of his own in the choice of means for accomplishing his work." Woodrow Wilson firmly believes that "He (administrators) is not and ought not to be a mere passive instrument (of other branches)." [5]

As anticipated in the "Study," the real distinction must be of the one between constitution and administration rather than between politics and administration. Not only the distinction is clear and important in Wilson's foundation, but it is complex when we move into the contextualization of the two distinguishing dimensions of governing, a purely philosophical and theoretical phase of the distinction. Wilson presents his case:

"There is, indeed, one point at which administrative studies trench on constitutional ground - or at least upon

what seems constitutional ground. The study of administration, philosophically viewed, is closely connected with the study of the proper distribution of constitutional authority. To be efficient it must discover the simplest arrangements by which responsibility can be unmistakably fixed upon officials; the best way of dividing authority without hampering it, and responsibility without obscuring it. And this question of the distribution of authority, when taken into the sphere of the higher, the originating functions of government, is obviously a central constitutional question. If administrative study can discover the best principles upon which to base such distribution, it will have done constitutional study an invaluable service." [6]

The passage is definitely one of the most difficult ones in the "Study," it is absolutely indispensable for understanding his idea of administration. If the ultimate objective of administrative study is to find out the best principles upon which to base the distribution of authority, there seems to be no clear philosophical demarcation between constitution and administration. But it is no possibility as long as Wilson's vision of administration is adequately based on the autonomy of administrative will in constitutional setting. In this vein, without losing the clarity of administration, we need to be able to address the full meaning of this passage in theoretical terms.

III. Another Distinction and the Question

If 'A' is different from 'C,' and, also, if 'B' is different from 'C,' then, we should know that 'A'

is not different from 'B.' In other words, if politics is different from administration, and, also, constitution is different from administration, then we should say that politics and constitution are not different in nature from each other. Constitution is a special political process, which deserves to be dealt with independently from politics. This distinction between politics and constitution has been a neglected question for a long time. Before inquiring into this one, we need to reread Wilson's "Study" with utmost carefulness and open mind. If we agree on many issues on the second chapter of the "Study," how can we deal with the third chapter? In this last chapter, he relaxes the tension built by the distinction between politics and administration made at the second chapter. How can we take care of the paragraph cited above with the sense of constitutional history? Actually, he invested more space for the first chapter than the second and the last ones. And, in it goes Wilson's historical distinction between Europe and America. What's the meaning of historian Wilson vivid in the first chapter for distinguishing administration from constitutional politics?

■ References ■

- [1] Oh, Suh Gil, et. al. (2009), "A Study on Governmentality: Rationale and Orientation," Spring Conference Proceedings, Korean Association for Public Administration, p. 1.
- [2] Wilson, Woodrow (1987), "The Study of Administration," in Classics of Public Administration, eds. by Jay Shafritz and Albert Hyde, Brooks/Cole, Cal., pp. 10-25.
- [3] Ibid., p. 18.
- [4] Ibid., p. 19.
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] Ibid., p. 20.