I Know I'm Wrong, So How Can I be Right
Public Administration, Democracy, and Transparency
by Robert P. Huefner, PhD

Introduction

This paper says administrators can usefully pay special attention (1) to the capability that information technology provides for better transparency in public programs and (2) to building a more positive ethic, that is: one of greater initiative, in applying these tools to build our democratic dialogue. It presumes that the growing power of information technology is not a means to escape the burdens of administrative judgments, but in its very power adds new demands for ethical responsibilities. To begin, I will say you may not find this interesting – and then say that would be a mistake.

Crisis Avoidance Raises Crucial Administrative Ethics

Can ethics be interesting when attending to routine public administration rather than to administrators facing a severe crisis of a flu pandemic, or administrators of a program that has disastrously failed after a hurricane, or administrators forced to decide a truly tough choice of whether to order police to invade a school where children are captive?

It is true that severe crises, disastrous failures, and tough choices are more common than we realize, and do not receive the corrective attention they deserve. Consider, for example, recent tension between The Atlanta Journal-Constitution and the Centers for Disease Control[1] over releasing the Centers’ internal review of its performance in dealing with Hurricane Katrina and with lessons learned for a flu pandemic. Is press pressure a crucial check on program secrecy and how might administrators affect such secrecy? Is secrecy justified to encourage frankness of reviews or does it suppress crucial participation? Can institutional reforms and administrative skills and responsibilities improve public dialogue and program effectiveness in crisis response?

Or, consider the 40,000 to 100,000[2] deaths per year in this country due to errors in hospitals. Only recently has this crisis begun to receive systematic and broad attention. It illustrates the even more neglected importance of the usual and not dramatic activities of every day that determine whether, and how often, we face crises, failures, and painful choices. If we don’t find usual activities interesting, if we don’t make them interesting, there will be more crises than we can resolve no matter how sensitive our ethics.

Listen to James Madison’s closing of his eloquent fourth paragraph of the 51st Federalist Paper. This is the “If men were angels” paragraph. It concerns how to protect ourselves from abusive power, in and out of government. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions. The rest of Madison’s paper concerns the auxiliary precautions, but should we not be concerned...
with whether it is safe to say that a “dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government”? Did Madison depend upon a gun in every home? Not when it was Shays’ Rebellion that helped reveal the inadequacy of the Articles of Confederation. His expectation instead concerned the capability of the people to judge in deciding upon leadership, in deciding upon laws, in deciding upon programs, and in deciding upon the acquisition and allocation of resources.

The capability of everyday people to judge everyday choices deserves as much attention as the “auxiliary precautions.” There is a parallel in medicine, where a growing consensus expects more lives to be saved by improving standard practices of good physicians and nurses than by finding and eliminating the bad apples among health care professions, though that too needs attention.

The importance of the everyday activities of administrators is the primary reason why it would be wrong to not find these activities and lecture interesting. Another reason for interest is that my argument challenges seven presumptions commonly found in public administration. You must know there is nothing new in challenging these presumptions. It is remarkable, and a reason for considerable disappointment, even cynicism, that past challenges have not erased these mistaken and disabling presumptions.

Making the Argument for a “Positive” Ethic

Transparency has become a buzz word in both private and public sectors. While it means many things, the concern is for information about programs and institutions that is readily understood and free from pretense or deceit. The (一号) mistaken presumption is that transparency is simple, in its meaning and its correctness. Enthusiasm for transparency is frustrated because of inadequate understanding of barriers to transparency and of its legitimate limits. Public administrators must be included, and indeed must include themselves, in dealing with these challenges because we are at the front line in meeting them. While we are limited for good and bad reasons in meeting the challenges we must be included because other players also have structural limitations: politicians are (necessarily?) too focused on electoral competition; the press, by dint of technology and market competition, is (necessarily?) too shallow; and academics, by the nature of their reflective and systematic methods, are (necessarily?) too late.

To overcome the simplification that undermines progress toward transparency, we must realize that transparency is suppressed by institutions and programs, for both selfish and appropriate reasons. Secrecy is sought for self protection, as from torts and competitors. Secrecy is sought as a source of power, or seen as such a source, in dealing with competitors or the public. Secrecy is sought as a means to assure equal access, as in restricting access to economic data (e.g. measures of inflation) and actions (e.g. Federal Reserve policy) until the information is publicly announced. Transparency is challenged by such secrecy as well as by political interests attempting to discredit unfavorable information or sources of information. These interests are among society’s most powerful motivators, and may favorably or unfavorably affect cherished rights.

Administrators are among those most acquainted with information, its uses and its problems, so they have special opportunities and ethical responsibilities to promote and guide its use. For example, both the cooperation and tension between administrators and the press can serve the public interest. The tension can avoid unnecessary secrecy by administrators and political leaders while also protecting individual privacy from an insensitive press or political ruthlessness. Cooperation in administrators/press relations can give the public information essential for program evaluation and democratic dialogue. The press, like the public, is chronically short of time and dependent upon trusted sources. The press, like the administrator, can avoid responsibility by providing a “balance” of conflicting arguments, irrespective of their
relative merit. But, with creditable sources, which administrators can help establish, the press can judge and provide information for real enlightenment.

Take smoking as an example. Tobacco interests attempted to suppress concern by contriving studies questioning the damage and then pressing publicity of their studies as “balance.” But U.S. Surgeons General, with strong science and data, established credibility for measures showing almost half a million premature deaths a year, roughly ten times the deaths due to traffic accidents and, in each year, nearly ten times the deaths of U.S. service men in the whole of the Vietnam War.[3] Administrators and the press now deserve credit for avoiding millions of premature deaths.

The case for the essentiality of public administrators in appropriately enhancing transparency is furthered by challenging a second mistaken presumptions of administration, the presumption that administration and politics are and should be distinct. This presumption (#2) is the politics/administration dichotomy commonly attributed to Woodrow Wilson, to whom many attribute the founding of U.S. public administration. Neither of these attributions is entirely correct, and political scientists have for a century railed against both the possibility and the desirability of the dichotomy. Politicians alone are very limited in their ability to make clear and detailed policy, in part because we the people have conflicting purposes, even the good but inherently ambiguous purposes of freedom, equality, and our general welfare. We value constitutional democracy as a means to weigh purposes and programs, to sort out peacefully and in the light of public discussion acceptable compromises between conflicting purposes. But our political campaigns, built with sound bites financed by campaign contributions, favor simplistic polemics, as if public policy is a succession of zero sum games settled at each election. In fact, policy comes through compromises found to be acceptable for the moment, not ultimate truths discovered in full detail. The compromises are temporary and uncertain. Administrators, at all levels, cannot avoid shaping policy details and evolution. When a police officer responds to an alarm at night and sees me round the corner after working late, the important policy in my life is how the officer understands the situation and interprets an officer’s role in it. The devil is in the details. Administration and policy go from the legislator to the front desk and to the officer on the beat.

We, as citizens, need assistance in identification and understanding of issues. Public administrators, facing the details of programs and of the conditions in which they operate, can be partners with, or checks upon, the politics that shape public concerns and understanding. Politics, alone, distorts the issues because of intention, pressure, or ignorance. Note that trust in the administrator, by the press, the politician, and the public is essential in bringing public administrators into the dialogues of democracy. Note too that active roles by administrators bring risks. This I admit, and to some extent celebrate.

In Praise of a Guilty Conscience
Wilslawa Szymborska
translated by G. Drablk

A buzzard finds no fault with itself.
A panther has no qualms.
Piranhas do not doubt the rightness of their actions.
A rattlesnake accepts itself without reservation.

A self-critical jackal does not exist
Locust, alligator, trichina and gadfly
live as they live, and are pleased with it.

The heart of a whale weighs a hundred kilos,
but otherwise it is light.
Nothing is more bestial
than a clear conscience
on the third planet of the Sun.

The pertinence of administrative perspective and experience brings a third challenge to common presumptions. The presumption (#3) is that we are to do it right; we do not muddle through even if we are not articulate about what “it” is – because we don’t agree upon what “it” is. Charles Lindblom’s *The Science of Muddling Through*[^4] won its place as a premier classic of public administration literature for good reason: administrators are appropriately uncertain because this is an uncertain world. The title of this lecture “I know I’m wrong, so how can I be right” reflects Lindblom’s point, both as concerns of science and design. Lindblom titled his exploration the “science” in that he was describing what is rather than prescribing how to deal with this reality. To move from science to design, which Lindblom began address in a subsequent article *Still Muddling and Not Yet Through,*[^5] we seek prescriptions for the difficulties of uncertainty. These include (a) to build flexibility in programs (good planning does not burn bridges in front of us but enhances future options), (b) to expect to change programs by learning from experience, (c) to measure results to give meaning to our experience, and (d) to link the players who initiated the program and its administration, for the necessary joint involvement in future adjustments. Feedback, interaction and trust are essentials.

In giving administrators a continuing role in design (more frequently redesign), administrative ethics assume a broad meaning. It is a deeper responsibility than honesty, a larger responsibility than living to the law, and a more positive responsibility than avoiding evil. Yet administrative ethics too commonly presumes (#4) ethics is a business of defining the law, and of what it prohibits. The concern of ethics should rather go beyond the letter of the law to the pursuit of the public interest. It is a “positive” ethic of breadth and action in that it takes initiatives to pursue this interest, rather than simply acting within constraints of law and ethics meant to prevent wrong doing. For example, it concerns not just information and data to be used directly in administration but that which will provide the basis for or come from academic research. Administrators contract for research for understanding that they seek, and then place financial and other barriers on data for research that others initiate. Legal openness of public data reduces the problem, but there remains much discretion that, if wisely used, facilitates independent research and offers access to data and insights for fruitful investigations.

**The Nature of a Positive Administrative Ethic**

The positive administrative ethics proposed here challenges three additional common disabling presumptions by being an ethic of realism, an ethic of optimism, and an ethic of respect.

First, this is an ethic of realism, or pragmatism, and as such challenges the common prescriptions (#5) of fashionable administrative ideologies, or enthusiasms. Because it accepts, even makes use of, uncertainty, it eschews dogmatism. It shuns ideology. Ideologies eventually reveal their particular flaws. But the fundamental flaw of all ideologies is that they are ideologies, convinced of their correctness rather than looking for experience to rechart the course. PPBS, Zero Base Budgeting, and Management By Objectives left us useful tools. But each was replaced, as it became clear that to pursue it as an ideology brought failure and impossible burdens. The irony is that each was replaced by a new ideology (as today’s Pay for Performance), not recognizing that the core problem was not the earlier ideology, but ideology itself.

Second, this is an ethic of optimism, which challenges one of the most pernicious of ideologies and presumptions (#6): that good administration makes hard choices. In use, this is too often a “mean” prescription, in two senses. It usually involves substantial harm to others, while rewarding the person administering the tonic for being “tough.” It also is of poor quality,
because the problem provoking action comes from the lack of foresight or preparation and because the options considered come from a too limited search for solutions once the problem exists. The positive ethics suggested here involve training for how to deal with hard choices but give more attention to how to avoid the situations in which choices are limited to bad alternatives.

Third, this is an ethic of respect, which challenges the common prescriptions (§7) that apply metaphors of war and the less malicious but still inappropriate metaphors of Monday Night Football that unfortunately are primary models for many administrators, especially those coming from the private sector. The ethic of respect does not view the management of public policy as primarily a challenge to control others. It does presume that others who have different perspectives have some truth in these perspectives. It presumes that within the perspectives, persons of good will can be found for constructive sharing and mediation of differences.

**Timing**

This is the best of times and the worst of times for a positive administrative ethic of breadth and action. It is the best of times because this ethic is so needed and because our information age is providing powerful new tools for such an ethic. But the present environment makes this not just a poor time, but one of the worst of times for administrators to take initiatives. Public rhetoric is dominated by anti-government, anti-tax, anti-compassion, anti-checks, anti-discussion, and anti-information. On balance, is this time for incremental rather than assertive reform? Our political/cultural environment is often dysfunctional, which argues for assertive reform. But part of the dysfunction is that it penalizes or crushes the promotion of needed changes. This is aggravated by the corrupting and culturally fragmenting nature of our interest group representation and campaign financing. Given these dangerous waters, does intelligence lie in looking for limited progress, rather than in proving valor? Given this environment, caution and care are appropriate; the purpose of this paper is not to inspire suicidal commitment.

**Tools**

Return to good news. Today’s information technology, while it presents problems and risks, offers a new dimension for the pursuit of transparency. In new orders of magnitude, it provides information and abilities to search and understand the information. This makes opportunities for new efficiencies to strengthen the power and the reputation of administrators. In health care we soon will have comprehensive personal health records that reduce redundant tests and prescriptions, nearly eliminate contraindicated prescriptions, speed up and improve diagnoses, and better protect patient privacy. This technology can simultaneously reduce costs and improve the quality of health care. More directly to the argument of this paper, information technology enhances administrators’ capacity to identify problems and opportunities, to monitor program outcomes, and to inform the public. The personal health records can, while protecting individual privacy, assemble data bases of symptoms, treatments, and outcomes to guide protocols, guide research for better diagnosis and treatment, and guide public health programs.

Effective use of these tools depends upon understanding how establishing trust makes administrators a better part of our checks and balances. An ethic of optimism and respect is seeing politics as more than zero sum conflicts that fight over the division of a pie that is presumed to be of fixed size. It is an ethic that pursues trust. Trust, not money, is the essential oil of democracy. Trust oils the discussion and compromises. Money oils corruption. Information, like action, is among the primary contributions administrators can make, especially to democracy. But we should ask what information, in what form, in what format, in what vehicles? For now and the long term, value can be found in establishing trust in regular
reporting of quality information and of integrity in the interpretation and dissemination of information. Successful government examples in establishing such expectation include epidemiology and economic and financial data. Even these successes offer opportunities for improvement. For example, epidemiological data deserve expansion and deeper mining to tell more about how primary care, environments, income disparities, and lifestyle affect diseases and hospitalization.

Consider educational data. These too deserve more detailed analysis to reveal that average student test scores are poor measures of the quality of schools, and that the details in these same measures easily say much more. For example, consider the table the Utah Governor's Office of Planning and Budgeting included this year in its summary of the FY 2007 budget to question the argument that Utah schools are OK because even with the lowest per-pupil spending in the country the state’s scores are above average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Assessment Education Progress</th>
<th>Fourth Grade</th>
<th>Eighth Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utah</td>
<td>U. S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amer. Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Sample size was insufficient to permit reliable estimates

While Utah is similar to national averages in the All Student category, the weighting by race and ethnicity places Utah behind in every subgroup. GOPB Budget Summary, 07, 143

The data first show the argument false: Utah’s averages are not better; they show Utah’s overall average benefits from Utah’s homogeneity, and that the facts are that all the subgroups measured, including the “White” population, are not served as well in Utah as in the rest of the nation. A further implication is that the discrimination and disadvantages of poverty that hurt minority populations find even less compensation or correction in Utah than in the rest of the nation. How much more would we learn by factoring in relative levels of family income and of the parents’ education for the subgroups and compared with U.S. levels? How might this understanding affect expectations of state support for public education? How might it affect public sensitivity to the relative advantage and disadvantages faced by the subgroups of Utah’s population? Developing these data is less challenging than disseminating them. How will they be read? Forty years ago I believe they would have been read as an indictment of our biases and failures. Is that so today? How important is it to combine such data with strong public leadership for more equitable and complete educational programs, across all populations, and to make certain the data are not used to characterize the subgroups in ways that feed the discrimination the data evidences. The dissemination of such information was particularly initiated by former Governor Walker’s attention to educational achievement. This year the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget included it in a report of limited circulation. Was this a prudent testing of the waters? Is more required? Did it go too far or not far enough in reflecting and in shaping the political and cultural environment?

Transportation is less challenging in cultural terms, not in economic and political terms. Who pays costs (dollars and other costs such as pollution and accidents) and who creates costs? The
public sees gas pump signs reporting gasoline taxes and signs on trucks reporting taxes paid for these vehicles. So, many presume that state highway expenditures are fully financed by highway users. Utah’s public budgeting documents have finally begun to reveal the real situation. For a decade Utah has been transferring more than $100 million dollars a year from the General Fund to highway construction, an amount that approached what would have been lost by exempting food from the sales tax, an exemption the legislatures found too expensive. The state holds the gas tax steady, not even adjusting for inflation, and provides new spending of sales tax revenues for highways, while gas, unlike food, is exempted from the sales tax that funds basic state programs. Highways consume scarce land, particularly urban land; cars and trucks consume the capacity of our air to absorb pollutants. Yet Utah subsidizes the consumption of land and the pollution of air by avoiding charging the costs to the users, encouraging more consumption and expenditures. Do the subsidies differ by user (heavy trucks, light trucks, and passenger cars)? Precise measures are not possible, but existing methodologies give ball-park figures. It has been decades since Utah reported such analysis. Do heavy trucks still benefit from higher subsidies than do other vehicles?

The irrationality of subsidizing the consumption of scarce resources relates to broader transparency of the taxes. To what extent do the consumers of water pay for its costs and to what extent are they subsidized? The subsidies raise questions of fairness, and also result in more government spending because they increase demand for the water. New supplies cost more than existing supplies that were cheaper to develop.

There can be regular reporting of the purpose and amount of each tax preference. Such reports, commonly called tax expenditure budgets, were initiated by the U. S. Treasury in 1969 to become a fixture at the Federal level. The Utah Tax Commission makes a form of this report for sales tax exemptions. But they face opposition, even umbrage to the label “tax expenditures.” These reports suffer from incompleteness and lack of exposure. It also would be possible to regularly measure the tax system as a whole, for its incidence (who pays) and progressivity (the relative burden according to taxpayer income). Utah Tax Commission studies of progressivity could be regularized. Should there be a note estimating changes in progressivity for each proposed change in the tax laws, just as there now is a fiscal note on bills affecting spending?

**Fairness in Transparency**

In promoting transparency, how do (should) we balance harms to the system and harms to the individual? Presumptions concerning transparency deserve differentiation. The rebuttable presumptions probably should be to seek transparency for institutions and institutional actions and to preserve privacy for individuals.

Transparency and the indicators it develops should focus upon enlightenment: it is for understanding, rather than measures for formulaic rewards (which tend to corrupt the measures and the actions, as in the problems of MBO and Pay For Performance). It is for a broad perspective that presumes uncertainty, not a narrow focus that presumes absolute value. It is for a tolerance and mutual respect. It is for self-criticism that is facilitated by the self-confidence coming from mutual respect. It is an acceptance of searching for and revealing irony, especially in our own limited perspectives.

How do administrators build and protect their capacity to improve transparency? The political and cultural environment does, as we presently see, influence this capacity. Administrators themselves enhance this capacity by building public trust in both the integrity and the power of public administrators and the agencies in which they serve the public. It is what Aaron Wildavsky called “confidence,”[6] by which he meant the establishment of trust in the administrator.
Another means to enhance the administrator’s effectiveness has to do with the ability and willingness of the administrator to be bold. That depends upon the financial and professional independence of the administrator. It depends upon living below one’s means, having marketable education and experience and cultivating professional contacts. These affect performance in one’s present position as well as reducing dependence upon that position. This comes too close to an admonishment or sermon to be pursued here, and so it is time to conclude.

**Conclusions**

We have committed to democracy based upon dialogue because we consider political justice to be majority rule if it is based upon open dialogue and operates within the constraints of a constitutional democracy – that is, if it is majority rule constrained to protect basic rights from a tyranny of a majority. A second reason for democracy based upon open dialogue is a response to uncertainty. When not certain of how to achieve our purposes, or even of our purposes, we trust the outcomes and flexibility of open public dialogue more than our ability to find and select a benevolent autocrat. We trust a democracy of dialogue, in large part because of a hope that the dialogue is informed.

Uncertainty gives its own reasons that democracy needs transparency. Presumptions need to be questioned and adjusted. Programs need to be assessed and revised. Conditions need to be measured and faced. These are needs for information, openness, and flexibility – needs for more transparency.

There are two challenges to meaningful transparency. First, transparency is not always appropriate. It is inappropriate when it violates reasonable individual privacy, as in revealing my health conditions. It is inappropriate when it biases our processes of justice, fairness, and equality, as in biasing juries. It is inappropriate when it gives selected persons unfair privilege in the market place, as in inside information about financial decisions. To fairly deal with these problems we need not only law but to cultivate sensitivity and a presumption that transparency be restricted when there is a possibility that it transgresses in these matters.

The second challenge is the natural forces opposing transparency. Transparency is challenged by external political pressures. Transparency also is uncomfortable for those in positions to enhance it. It reveals our own work to the world, for criticism of our actions and for attacks on our programs. It takes away a fundamental administrative power of privileged information. The discomfort and the concern for power might be chalked up to selfishness and ineptitude. But situations that raise these concerns are complicated and create ethical dilemmas as to which issues should be addressed and when. These are dilemmas of priority and of risking or building a program’s success.

Transparency is intellectually and ethically difficult because of the limited resources of the administrator and the limited attention spans of the audiences, limitations that require care in selecting topics and effective dissemination of information. These are challenges to administrative skills, but more to the most fundamental of ethical dilemmas: what issues most deserve public attention and how are these issues to be selected and revealed? For administrators it is a matter of understanding the administrators’ role within our political processes, in conjunction with elected officials, the press, and academics. It is a matter of how to build the trust that allows these roles to be played well.

Administrators’ challenges are growing rapidly. We are citizens of the world, being daily affected by the rest of the world and daily affecting the rest of the world. These effects, going in both directions, add complexities and uncertainties of great magnitude – perhaps of orders of
magnitude – certainly of uncertain magnitude. These are uncertainties and complexities that
give new reasons and new difficulties in addressing the right issues, building program flexibility
and appreciating uncertainty, and establishing the means to learn from and adjust to
experience. These are increasing so fast that we even must question whether we can continue
to claim civilization: that it will survive; that it meets its responsibilities.

Fortunately we have access to stronger tools by which to leverage these tasks. Two have been
suggested. First is information technology that offers new power in sighting and measuring
needs and opportunities. Information technology offers greater ability to monitor program
progress and to model the outcomes of program adjustments. Information technology offers
new means to communicate: to inform a democracy of dialogue.

The second tool is a positive administrative ethic that accepts responsibility for initiatives, going
beyond an ethic deciding what not to do. It recognizes uncertainty, as an ethic of humility
building processes to learn and adjust. It seeks more than zero sum games. While seeing
administrators as crucial components in our system of checks and balances, it respects the roles
of others and of our political processes. It focuses on providing information for democratic
dialogue, rather than replacing or handicapping that dialogue. It challenges administrators to
judge the fairness, reliability, and priority of information that others can use to decide the
directions of public policy. It places administrators in constructive tension with, and as team
members with, political leaders, the press, academics, and others in a democratic dialogue to
further the public good. It challenges administrative ethics to judge dilemmas of how to balance
their adversarial and cooperative roles. It challenges administrators to build the respect for their
information, so that their information will be informative to our democratic dialogue.

Instant Living
Wisława Szymborska
translated by G. Drablk

Instant living.
Unrehearsed performance.
Untried-on body.
A thoughtless head.

I am ignorant of the role I perform.
All I know is it’s mine, can’t be exchanged.

What the play is about
I must guess promptly on stage.

Poorly prepared for the honour of living
I find the imposed speed of action hard to bear.
I improvise though I loathe improvising.
My way of life smacks of the provincial.
My instincts are amateurish.
The stage-fright that is my excuse only humiliates me more.
Mitigating circumstances strike me as cruel.

Words and gestures that cannot be retracted,
stars no counted to the end.
my character like a coat I button up running -
this is the sorry outcome of such haste.

If only one could practice ahead at least one Wednesday,
repeat a Thursday!
But no Friday’s already approaching with a script I don’t know.

Is this right? - I ask
(in a rasping voice, since they didn’t even let me clear my throat in the wings.)

You’re deluded if you think it’s only a simple exam
set in a makeshift office. No.
I stand among the stage-sets and see they’re solid.
I am struck by the precision of all the props.
The revolving stage’s been turning for quite some time.
Even the furthest nebulae are switched on.
Oh, I have no doubt this is the opening night.
And whatever I’ll do
will turn for ever into what I’ve done.