

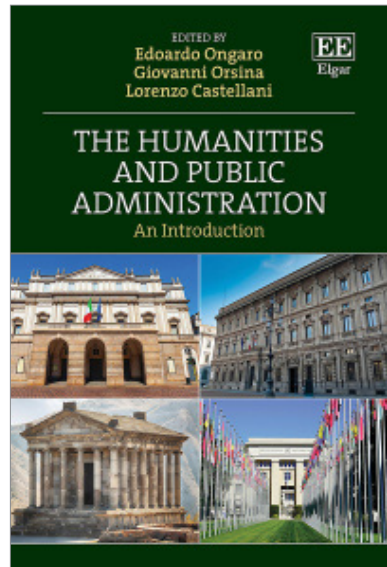
## Book Review

Edoardo Ongaro, Giovanni Orsina & Lorenzo Castellani (eds.),  
*The Humanities and Public Administration. An Introduction*,  
Edward Elgar Publishing, 2025

Change has always been a constant of the world; in different historical periods it has taken diverse forms, more or less spectacular, varied and visible. What we experience today adds two significant new elements: speed and the massive impact of technology. The world has become increasingly dynamic and increasingly conditioned by technological forces. Both public and private solutions are shaped and constrained by these two factors.

Somewhat paradoxically, the volume edited by Ongaro, Orsina and Castellani appears at exactly the right moment: while the contemporary world is absorbed with technical and operational solutions (e.g., *how to integrate AI into...*), this book addresses a more strategic concern: *how do we define what truly matters?* From the authors' perspective (which I fully share), the solution is not merely operational. It requires a deeper understanding of the domains, concepts and strategic paradigms we inhabit. It is almost impossible to respond effectively to challenges we do not fully understand.

The authors' foundational idea is that the humanities can significantly enrich our understanding of the vast field of public administration, and that this contribution can be systematically explored. They also suggest an integrated understanding of the two domains. The main benefit would be a type of understanding that they describe as *different and complementary* to pure scientific rationality (and which I would call superior to it). Essentially, the book proposes to bring the humanities back into the study of public administration.



Social sciences and the humanities need one another, and recognizing and integrating this insight can greatly enhance our ability to understand the major challenges facing public administration today. A small example illustrates this point: if teaching administrative sciences is reduced merely to technical, operational studies, our impact on the world will diminish significantly.

The book contains 18 diverse chapters, addressing the general theme from multiple perspectives – for example, the use of moral philosophy and philosophical anthropology in public administration (Stefano Biancu and Edoardo Ongaro), the power of visual imagery in understanding governance (Wolfgang Drechsler), and the integration of arts and science to build new and useful conceptual frameworks.

Reading this volume can serve as a valuable resource in a key and highly relevant area for our time: how we can better understand the strategic challenges we face, and how we can pursue such an understanding within a specific field – that of Public Administration.

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