Models of Man and Administrative Theory

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To the memory of John Pfiffner who gave me the spark to develop this line of thinking.

■ Administrative theory can no longer legitimize the functional rationality of the organization as it largely has done. The basic problem of an earlier time was to overcome the scarcity of material goods and elementary services. In that period a great amount of toil in work settings was technically and socially necessary and even inevitable, which is not true at present. What brings about the crises in today's organizations is the fact that by design and operation they still assume that old scarcities continue to be basic, while in fact contemporary man is aware of critical scarcities belonging to another order, i.e., related to needs beyond the level of simple survival. Thus, the Social Darwinism that has traditionally validated management theory and practice has become outdated by the force of circumstances. This article is an attempt to reassess the evolution of administrative theory. It takes models of man as its point of reference (namely, the operational man, the reactive man, and the parenthetical man).

From the late 1800's to the present, a dramatic turn has taken place in the approaches to organization and work. There was a time when success in business was considered coincidental with virtue, and the teachings of Malthus, Darwin, and Spencer found ideal conditions to thrive. Thus the influential sociologist, William Graham Sumner, did not hesitate to claim that there would be no point in integrating the interest of employers and employees. Antagonism between those interests was legitimized by the "mores" and social science of that time. That the decisive criterion of human value then was success is indicated by the vogue of Elbert Hubbard's *Message to Garcia*, Orison Swett Marden's *Power of Will*, and Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, which was published in 1936 and sold over four million copies.[1]

The image of man implied in those popular books was in accord with the type of management which Taylor and the classic writers were advocating. Yet today, books which boast of wide public acceptance and are often required reading in business schools and schools of public administration are, among others, Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, Roszack's *The Making of a Counter Culture*, and Reich's *The Greening of America*, all of which are notorious for their indictment of established organizational and social systems.

It is a current commonplace that an atmosphere of crisis surrounds contemporary organizations and is reflected in the theorizing we do about them. Practitioners and academicians continuously experience this crisis in their everyday lives. The internal and external environment of today's organization is plagued with a high degree of ambiguity and confusion. The current literature in our field consistently shows that there is a

The author has subtitled this article "The Rise of the Parenthetical Man."

widespread concern about how to approach the problems confronting us. In focusing on these difficulties, several scholars have implied that there is emerging a nascent model of man, the development and clarification of which is essential in order to overcome the present critical state of the art and theory of administration. For instance, James Carroll sees an "increase in awareness" which is "spilling over and inundating . . . existing social systems." He also discerns the birth of a new type of personality which no longer "fits easily into organizational and institutional value structures based upon previously fixed perceptions and concerns."[2] And, Anders Richter suggests that United States bureaucracies are in need of what he calls "existentialist executives" whose personality structure would be similar to the psychological paradigm depicted by Carroll.[3]

The orientation proposed by Carroll and Richter, and many others, is predicated on the idea that we need a point of reference, a central focus, in order to develop some sense of direction in dealing with administrative problems. We have to understand what types of contemporary social circumstances are now affecting each individual and in consequence the organizations. In fact, contemporary history is pregnant with a new type of man, whom elsewhere I have called the "parenthetical man."[4]

This article is an attempt to reassess the evolution of administrative theory. It takes models of man as its point of reference (namely, the operational man,[5] the reactive man, and the parenthetical man). Throughout the history of our field, theoreticians and practitioners, in their writings and actions, have uncritically made assumptions about the nature of man. Today, however, an administrative theory unconscious of its psychological implications can hardly be satisfactory.

Traditional Models of Man

In administrative theory the operational man is equivalent to *homo economicus* in classical economics; *homo sociologicus*, largely assumed by the academic model of sociology; and *homo politicus*, which David Truman, Christian Bay, and Sheldon Wolin have described as the prevailing model of established political science.[6] Basic psychological characteristics are common to these types which lead them to conform to the criteria inherent in the industrial social system and therefore only to seek the maintenance of that system.

The validity of the operational man has been characteristically taken for granted. He has been seen as an organizational resource to be maximized in terms of measurable, physical output. Indeed, the implication of this approach for organization design can be briefly sketched. It entails (1) an authoritarian method of resource allocation in which the worker is seen as a passive being who must be programmed by experts to function within the organization; (2) a concept of training as essentially a technique for "adjusting" the individual to the imperatives of production maximization; (3) a view that man is calculative, motivated by material and economic rewards, and as a worker is detached from other individuals psychologically; (4) a view of management and administrative theory as value-free or neutral; (5) a systematic indifference to the ethical and value assumptions of the external environment; (6) the viewpoint that issues of personal freedom are extraneous to organization design; and (7) a concept of work as essentially postponement of satisfaction.

An alternative to the operational man was first suggested in the Hawthorne Studies four decades ago. This was the beginning of the Human Relations School, which viewed man as more complex than traditional theorists assumed.[7] In comparison with the operationalists, the humanists (1) had a more sophisticated view of the nature of human motivation; (2) did not neglect the external social environment of the organization and therefore defined the organization as an open social system; and (3) did not overlook the role of values, sentiments, and attitudes in production.

The model of man developed by the humanists may be called "reactive man," with all that the term implies. For humanists, as well as their predecessors, the industrial system and the enterprise function as independent variables. The main objective of management is to enforce behaviors supportive of their specific rationality. Although humanists were ostensibly more concerned about workers and more knowledgeable about their motivations, the ends sought were really unchanged. They developed procedures for the cooptation of informal groups, the use of "personnel counseling," and skills in handling particular human relations to arouse positive reactions towards the purpose of the enterprise. They saw the worker as a *reactive being*. Adjustment of individuals to work settings, rather than their individual

growth, was the main objective. The final outcome of mass application of "human relations" was the *total inclusion* of the worker within the organization; in other words, he was to be transformed into what W.H. Whyte, Jr., has called the *organization man.*[8]

Has the practice of management progressed beyond this point? Viewing the evidence, the answer to this question can hardly be other than a resounding "no." The operational and reactive models are still largely shaping the organizational and social systems of this country. In intellectual milieus, these models are under strong criticism, but no widely accepted alternatives to them have yet been presented.

Yet some features of organizational settings which were largely neglected in the past are today receiving considerable attention. For instance, greater emphasis is now placed on process rather than structure, tasks rather than routines, ad hoc strategies rather than principles and prescriptions, and on what has been called changing organizations, nonhierarchical organizations, and participative management. The environment is more than ever a central concern, which somewhat accounts for the current influence of the systems approaches. In addition, freedom and self-actualization have become prominent themes in books and classrooms.

These are considerable improvements, but they are peripheral at best. Overall, present administrative theory and practice are not adequate for present needs. Concepts of changing organizations, for example, are framed in reactive terms, i.e., tested as to their capability to respond uncritically to fluctuations in their environment, without taking responsibility for the standards of quality and priorities of that environment. Such reactive theory seems to rely on a naive view of the nature of inputs and outputs. It considers inputs as consisting of people, materials, and energy, and loses sight of the value and ethical factors in the environment, whose rationality and legitimacy are typically ignored. The environment is accepted as given, and its episodical, vexatious framework becomes an undisputed normative pattern into which so-called changing organizations ought to fit. These are really "adaptive organizations," whereas changing organizations should be identified as those possessing capabilities of affecting and modeling the environment according to criteria not necessarily given. In other words, the management of micro-organizations has to be seen as part of a general strategy geared to the management of the whole society.

Another issue involves the integration of the individual and the organization. Those who advocate such an integration overlook the basic, twofold character of rationality. There is, in fact, a rationality whose standards have nothing to do with administrative behavior. This rationality, called substantial and noetic by Karl Mannheim and Eric Voegelin[9] respectively, is an intrinsic attribute of the individual as a creature of reason, and can never be understood as pertaining to any organization.

Indeed, noetic rationality is not systematically related to coordination of means and ends from the standpoint of efficiency. It derives from the immanent imperatives of reason itself, understood as a specific faculty of man, which rules out blind obedience to requirements of efficiency. Thus, it may very well happen that historically a high degree of development in pragmatic rationality can coincide with a "high degree of irrationality in the sphere of noetic reason."[10] Human behavior occurring under the aegis of noetic rationality only may be administrative by accident, not by necessity. The organization and its leaders can judge if a behavior is rationally instrumental to its goals but never its adequacy to noetic rationality. Indeed, it is the privilege of the noetic rationality to judge the organization. To distinguish and separate the two rationalities is therefore a condition of a sound administrative theory. Adolf Eichmann was probably a perfect bureaucrat whose crime consisted precisely in identifying noetic rationality or the Kantian categorical imperatives of "practical reason" with the "categorical imperatives of the Third Reich."[11] And more recently, it is the chronic tension between the two rationalities that makes the decision of Daniel Ellsberg to reveal the bulk of the so-called secret Pentagon Papers so perplexing.

It is my contention that the model of the parenthetical man may provide administrative theory with conceptual sophistication to confront issues and problems involving tensions between noetic and functional rationality.

The Rise of the Parenthetical Man

Actually, the parenthetical man cannot avoid being a participant of the organization. However, in striving to be autonomous, he cannot be explained by the psychology of conformity, as can

those individuals who behave according to the operational and reactive models. He possesses a highly developed critical consciousness of the hidden value premises of everyday life. Indeed the adjective "parenthetical" is derived from Husserl's notion of "suspension" and "bracketing." Husserl distinguishes between natural and critical attitude.[12] The first is that of the "adjusted" man, unconcerned with noetic rationality and locked in his immediacy. The critical attitude suspends or brackets the belief in the ordinary world, enabling the individual to reach a level of conceptual thinking and therefore freedom.

The parenthetical man is both a reflection of, and a reaction to, new social circumstances that are more perceptible now in advanced industrial societies like the United States, but which will eventually prevail throughout the entire world. As Robert Lane has pointed out, behavior patterns tend to become widespread in advanced industrial societies that only residually exist in societies in previous stages of evolution. Indeed in the past, such patterns could be detected only in exceptional individuals. Socrates, Bacon, and Machiavelli, for instance, possessed the psychological capability that Lane calls "differentiation of ego from inner world and from environment,"[13] which made them capable of seeing their respective societies as precarious arrangements. While the bulk of the population in those societies interpreted themselves and social reality according to conventionally prevailing definitions, they had the capability to suspend their circumstances, internal as well as external; by so doing, they could look at them with a critical eye. Such a capability clearly qualifies as parenthetical. Indeed, suspending is here equivalent to bracketing, to putting circumstances between parentheses. Parenthetical man is able to step from the stream of everyday life to examine and assess it as a spectator. He is able to remove himself from the familiar. He deliberately tries to become rootless, an outsider in his own social milieu, in order to maximize his understanding of it. Thus the parenthetical attitude is defined by the psychological capability of the individual to detach himself from his inner and outer circumstances. Parenthetical men thrive when the period of social innocence ends. For this reason, what Lane calls the "knowledgeable"[14] society is the natural environment of parenthetical man.

In a survey of peasants living in the Middle East, Daniel Lerner asked villagers how they would behave in the role of governor of their country, as residents in a foreign nation, as a newspaper editor, etc. He discovered that they were so rooted in their social conditions that they could not imagine themselves in such roles. Theirs was a social world ontologically justified, the very opposite of a circumstance where chances can be exploited and possibilities can be explored.

On the other hand, Robert J. Lifton found highly rootless behaviors among Japanese youth, which he calls "protean."[15] To illustrate, one of his respondents observed: "For me, there is not a single act I cannot imagine myself commiting."[16] There are many similarities between protean and parenthetical man. However, one single difference between them is basic: instead of indulging in an inconsequential relativism as the protean seems to do, the parenthetical man is ethically committed to values conducive to the primacy of reason (in the noetic sense) in social and individual life. Consequently his relationship to work and the organization is very peculiar.

The nature of this relationship can be made clear by looking at the typology Robert Presthus presents in his book, *The Organizational Society.*[17] Were we to assume that Robert Presthus' three types of man characterize the range of persons in modern organizations, we would only be dealing with upward mobiles, ambivalents, and indifferents. A fourth model, the parenthetical man, must be added to this triad. This fourth man would be one who would not overexert himself to succeed according to conventional terms, as the upward mobile does. He would have a strong sense of self and an urge to find meaning in life. He would not uncritically accept standards of achievement, though he might be a great achiever when assigned creative tasks. He would not yield to the easy escape of apathy or indifference, because passive behavior would offend his sense of self-esteem and autonomy. He would strive to affect the environment, to draw such satisfaction from it as he could. He would be ambivalent towards the organization, but not in the manner described by Presthus. His qualified ambivalence would derive from his understanding that organizations, as bounded within the sphere of functional rationality, have to be dealt within their own relative terms. Presthus' ambivalents are emotionally undisciplined, psychologically locked in, and easily discouraged when they fail to influence their environment. It was probably an awareness of this desolate picture of the present "organizational society" that prompted Robert Townsend to write

that his book, *Up the Organization*, "does not come to grips with the problems of America's twenty million poor," but "with the eighty million psychiatric cases who do have jobs."[18]

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An increasing number of individuals are becoming aware that the elimination of unnecessary toil is now a feasible possibility, and cognizance of this fact conditions their attitudes toward work and the organization. It is difficult to motivate this kind of person with traditional managerial practices. To manage micro-organizations without focusing on their conditioning by the macro-social system is seen as fallacious, to say the least, by an increasing number of people. A young executive, a much-honored graduate of the Yale Class of 1970, said: "I don't want a job figuring out new ways of marketing paper plates. This society produces too much, and we ought to stop. This isn't where our priorities ought to be."[20] Organization development and renewal only makes sense today to the extent that they represent an attempt to give people a sense of true social participation.

This is why it is not enough today to manage organizations, and why it is necessary to manage the whole society. The environment of advanced industrial societies, in which survival is no longer the main reason to work, is generating a new attitude toward the organization. The psychological syndrome described by Presthus tends to be dominant in societies in which the "fear of job loss" is pervasive.[21] When scarcity of jobs is perceived as a result of distorted institutionalization rather than an essential lack of social capability; when the inability to get work is no longer considered as an inherent pesonal defect; and when unemployment is subsidized and production of goods declines in importance; then the individual tends to see reflected in the micro-organization the same malaise of the total social fabric. As a result, he is encouraged to become less of a conforming docile worker and more of an active political being. In such a climate, politics becomes ubiquitous in the sense that everyone strives for the right to satisfy his own needs at all levels of interpersonal relationships. In a low level of accumulation of capital, delay of personal satisfaction may be mandatory; it no longer seems so, however, where capital accumulation is high. It is in this context that the recent expansion of the concept of management makes sense. Indeed, it is significant that the management of society is now becoming a central issue.

One of the main problems to be considered in the overall guidance of the social system is the design of new kinds of organizations or new work patterns. Galbraith has pointed out that our present affluent society is plagued by contradictions. It is a system capable of eliminating drudgery even to the point of completely abolishing labor as we have known it; nevertheless, we are not facing this concrete possibility systematically.[22] But the more conscious of this possibility the average individual becomes, the less he is willing to engage in unnecessary toil. The fact that the great majority of industrial workers do not find their "central life interest" in their labors is a matter of increasing social significance. There are growing indications that their off-the-job life is desolate and contaminated by their job situation. Their discontent with their job may, in turn, alienate them from the global society.

The average worker in the present advanced industrial society realizes that he is losing competence in dealing with himself and the overall environment. Instead of improving the quality of life, technology, as an uncontrolled force, is jeopardizing the possibility of man as a creature of reason. And since such an outcome is not inherent in technology but derives from the episodical political and institutional framework of advanced industrial systems, a new level of human consciousness is appearing. It encourages people (mainly the young) to jettison reactive behaviors. Such people feel that it is their responsibility to redefine the priorities and goals of both organizations and the global social system in order to develop their "own individual bents and proclivities, to consume not simply manufactured goods, but freedom itself."[23] Paradoxically, technology

is, in fact, the prime contributing factor to this revolution in modern society.

These are some of the reasons that are moving the affluent society toward parenthetical lifestyles. While the implications of this model for organization design are beyond the scope of this article, it is well to point out that a parenthetical approach to organization design is emerging. It is visible in the behavior of many concerned individuals, scholars, and practitioners (again most of them young) who are trying to "beat" or "disestablish" existing traditional administrative systems. It is certainly implicit in the attempts at designing nonhierarchical and client-oriented organizations;[24] in agencies and strategies such as those aimed at protecting citizens and consumers (e.g., the Federal Trade Commission, Citizen Group Association (of California Consumers), and the various activities of such men as Ralph Nader and Saul Alinsky); in the determination of restructuring the entire social system from the standpoint of ecological imperatives,[25] new social priorities (e.g., John Gardner's *Common Cause*), and new criteria of quality of life (of which the movement of "social indicators" is indicative).[26] It is a sign of the times that *Up the Organization*, by Robert Townsend, which has been a bestseller and been taken seriously in lay as well as in professional circles, was presented by the author as a "survival manual for successful corporate guerrillas."[27] In its long history, the traditional organization is now reaching its moment of truth. Its lure is vanishing. Our field is now ripe for a Kantian deed, a Copernican Revolution. We need no less than a radical critique of organizational reason.

Notes

1. See Reinhard Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963), chapter 5.
2. James D. Carroll, "Noetic Authority," *Public Administration Review* (September/October 1969), p. 493.
3. Anders Richter, "The Existentialist Executive," *Public Administration Review* (July/August 1970).
4. This article derives from a longer paper entitled "The Parenthetical Man," delivered at the National Conference of the American Society for Public Administration, Denver, Colorado, April 18-21, 1971.
5. I am indebted to John Pfiffner for this expression.
6. See David B. Truman, "Disillusion and Regeneration: The Quest for a Discipline," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. LIX, No. 4 (December 1965); Christian Bay, "Politics and Pseudopolitics: A Critical Evaluation of Some Behavioral Literature," *American Political Science Review*, Vol LIX, No. 1 (March 1965); and Sheldon S. Wolin, "Political Theory as a Vocation," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. LXIII, No. 4 (December 1969).
7. See F.J. Roethlisberger and W.J. Dickson, *Management and the Worker* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964).
8. W. H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1957).
9. See Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1940), pp. 51-66; Eric Voegelin, "Industrial Society in Search of Reason," in Raymond Aron (ed.), *World Technology and Human Destiny* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1963); and also, Jurgen Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).
10. Voegelin, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
11. Phrase attributed to Hans Frank by Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 136.
12. Edmund Husserl, "The Thesis of Natural Standpoint and Its Suspension," in J. J. Kockelmans (ed.), *Phenomenology, The Philosophy of Edmund Hussert and Its Interpretation* (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1967).
13. R. E. Lane, "The Decline of Politics and Ideology in a Knowledgeable Society," *American Sociological Review* (October 1966), p. 654.
14. *Ibid.*
15. R.J. Lifton, *History and Human Survival* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1970), pp. 311-331.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 319.
17. R. Presthus, *The Organizational Society* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1965).
18. R. Townsend, *Up the Organization* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcet Publications, Inc., 1970), p. 121.
19. On this point see J. K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1958).
20. Judson Gooding, "The Accelerated Generation Moves into Management," *Fortune* (March 1971), p. 103.
21. Anders Richter, *op. cit.*, p. 419.
22. Galbraith, *op. cit.*, p. 263.
23. M. Harrington, *The Accidental Century* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1969), p. 272.
24. See W. G. Bennis, *Changing Organizations* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966); and O. F. White, Jr., "The Dialectical Organization: An Alternative to Bureaucracy," *Public Administration Review* (January/February 1969).
25. See Arthur Pearl and Stephanie Pearl, "Strategies for Radical Social Change: Toward an Ecological Theory of Value" *Social Policy*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (May-June 1971). The authors advocate a "new type of ecological cost-benefit analysis, on a worldwide basis, in which planning must move us from a goods-oriented society to one oriented toward quality of life and human service" (p. 33).
26. See Bertram Gross (ed.), *Social Intelligence for America's Future* (Boston: Allyn Bacon, Inc., 1969), and, on the same subject, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (March 1970).
27. Townsend, *op. cit.*, p. IX.