SOCIETY AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL RELIGION

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ABSTRACT

Organization is a word that everyone uses. Still, not all the implications of this concept are known. This paper explores the concept of organization and how it was handled in cybernetics and the sciences of management; it also tries to bring to light, by explaining its meaning and migration from biology to cybernetics, what consequences follow for society. The relation that exists between society and organization is one of subservience. Under the form of the panorganizational movement (B. Rappin), the life of mankind is being transformed. Society, thus, must undergo a radical transformation to become an "organization of organizations", a process that should produce a global unity of mankind. This line of thought has roots in cybernetics (which by its very name is related to the idea of government), a discipline that is concerned with promoting efficiency. The result can be only one: the annihilation of individual freedom and cultures, civilizations, etc.

Keywords: management, tyranny, cybernetics, religion, society.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Organization" is a term that is used and understood by most people. Even so, it is interesting to examine what is hidden underneath the daily usage of the term. Organization is a concept that is bound to biology, to cybernetics, sociology, the science of management. It pertains to everyday life since the life of every community is based on a type of organization. Order and organization belong together. "Organization" is not just a simple form of order, it implies something more. "Organization" might be used to describe groups of persons engaged in diverse activities meant to achieve something; the goal might be short-term or long-term. Such an association, in order to be effective, works according to rational programs of action, making use of the most appropriate tool necessary. There is also implied the existence of comprehensive rational planning. An organization represents a way to bring unity to a multiplicity of components. A science of organization would be a science about the way organizations are built and made more efficient. As we shall see, the concept of organization is not a neutral one; it contains the seeds of an anthropological revolution.

In a sense, the concept of organization is bound to what might be called the essence of modernity and to the industrial revolution, which characterizes the Western world. The West or the Occident is more than a geographical designation.

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Those names express a concept or an idea, which is intimately related to the concept of organization and to the theology of management. Comprehending what "the West" is a way to understand the transformation the world is experiencing today. This concept of "the West" has undergone and still undergoes changes. "The West" has also changed the world and triggered globalization and globalism. The presentation and explanation of the concept of organization are a necessary step if those processes (and their consequences) are to be understood. According to the French thinker Baptiste Rappin the sciences of organization and management are an expression of this hidden worldview. It expresses the same logic of organization and efficiency that Jacques Ellul assigned to the "technical system" or "la technique".

2. THE MANAGERIAL REVOLUTION

The French author Baptiste Rappin has written extensively about this subject matter. Besides the general description of what the sciences of organization are, he highlighted the theological and religious undertone thereof. Rappin shows that, although there are three major paradigms in the epistemology of the sciences of management/organization, they are all related to something common[182]. The three paradigms are positivism, constructivism, and interpretivism. The underlying ontological unity is the modern metaphysics of the Self/Subject, the modern outcome of searching for the ultimate ground of reality, an approach that once led to onto-theology. The consequence of making out of human subjectivity the ground of reality was the apparition of a worldview in which every other being ids reduce to a tool, to an object, a worldview in which the object is mediated by representation; it is a root of the future technocratic mindset. The act of representation objectifies the external world and its contents. Those contents become objects and as such, they enter into a relationship with the human subject, a relationship based on calculation and technical manipulation[183]. In this process, the ground of things is no longer something transcendent and external, but something internal to the human subjectivity itself. Representation becomes the place where evidence and certitude are born. The real becomes real through the action of re-presentation. The science of organization and the management belong to this technocratic scheme of metaphysical development so peculiar to the West, a movement that produces universal uniformity whenever Western ideas are adopted by different cultures and peoples. The organizational sciences belong to the same dynamics of Western metaphysics, participating in the drive toward the general uniformization. This is a calling, and the organizational sciences do this in the framework set up by the managerial society, a form of society

[182] Baptiste Rappin, "D'unité ontologique des épistémologies gestionnaires et de ses consequences" ["On the ontological unity of management epistemologies and its consequences"], in *Management et Avenir*, 2011, 3 (43), p. 476.

[183] *Ibidem*, p. 478.

completely new in the history of world[184]. The consequence of this metaphysical and historical development has created a kind of mindset that ignores the finitude and historicity of human existence. It has produced the domination of method and technique in human life; the truth depends on the method used. The result is what might be called techno-science, a fusion of method and epistemology, whereby the method is epistemology; science is subordinate to technical applications. We get to the truth only by applying the scientific method. According to this line of thought, the history of metaphysics has now produced the era of the instrumental and technical reason – the era of the "technical system/society"; bound to it is the conception of truth as correspondence. The diverse sciences and approaches used to understand the world and objectify things.

This underlying basis of modernity represents, in a sense, the revolt of man against Being (or against God if construed in Christian terms). Even the notion of sovereignty as a concept essential for political thinking belongs to this process of rebellion. It is a quest for power. The three paradigms of organization science are three different ways to objectify (the three paradigms of the organizational science mentioned earlier) their domain of application, groups of people, institutions, and the individual himself. The innermost part of man becomes their target. The organizational sciences express the same drive; they incarnate it in the highest degree[185].

This attitude is expressed in the concept of modern technique. In opposition to the ancient, non-modern technique, the modern one is based on science, on the conscious pondering of the criteria of knowledge, and on the best methodology. It is a mindset driven by considerations of efficiency, rooted in rational methods. According to J. Ellul, modern technique is a system, self-driving toward increased efficiency, and an environment wherein modern man spend his life. It has become a new kind of reality, which N. Berdiaev has described in his work *L'Homme et la machine [Man and Machine]*; the Russian thinker contends that humankind has entered a new age, an age he dubbed "the era of organization". Technique is not something present exclusively in industrial centers, plants, etc. Technique is a search with rational means aiming at efficiency. It seeks the best means to do something. Other, less efficient techniques are not accepted. "Organization" is an expression of this "technical system/society", maybe its crowning. "Organization", or *Gestell [the Device]*, can be defined along these lines, as G. Agamben does referring to M. Foucault's concept of "device". It consists of a set of practices, of different types of knowledge, criteria, even institutions whose aim is to manage, control, and give a certain type of guidance aimed at accomplishing something useful. The management, the control, the governance employed by it are applied to the behavior, gestures, and thoughts of the individual. In the domain of organizational sciences, this drive can be seen as the methodology of research and intervention, and in the

[184] *Ibidem*, p. 480.
[185] *Ibidem*, p. 482.

concept of operationalizing the knowledge already acquired. Research is not a pure search for truth. It is an intervention. The methodology of research-intervention aims to transform "the organization worlds" (*mondes organisationnels*) according to the norms of the canonical reason. Researchers who adopt these norms become the true scientists or scholars of the "era of organization". The ones who undergo this transformation are people, researchers, functionaries, etc. who henceforth become a kind of living inventory ready at the disposal of the organization. Another essential idea is that of actional knowledge/information. Academic knowledge has to be transformed in order to conform to the demands of the managerial sciences. The goal of this reformulation of knowledge is to offer to the people in charge the capacity to reflect upon things and to act. Science and action are here in a state of fusion, whereby epistemology becomes methodology and vice versa.

3. CYBERNETICS AND MANAGEMENT

Despite having roots in the transcendental philosophy that posits the transcendental subject as the main constitutive element of knowledge and the world (Kant's philosophy, Descartes's as paradigm, for example), modern instrumental knowledge has a very strong streak of empiricism and naturalism; they are the paradigm of what is considered knowledge. They affirm a monistic view of reality. No room for transcendence or for an inner reality – transcendental-reality of man. These two takes on reality (the naturalist-empiricist and the transcendental) are overcome by cybernetics. The cybernetic point of view, focused on the notion of feedback loop and self-correction, transcends the opposition between the transcendental philosophy and naturalism-empiricism. Cybernetics offers a unified vision of the world (natural, artificial, and human). This was possible by employing a new notion of information. Cybernetics opened the doors for a new type of naturalization of the human condition[186], a more sophisticated version of reductive physicalism. The constructivist paradigm in management sciences is based on an anthropological view brought forth by cybernetics. Its foundation lies in the identification between the brain and computer. Thinking is identified with computing. The reciprocal assimilation of brain and computer was buttressed by the specific notion of information as defined by cybernetics. This scientific notion of information makes it possible to unify the domains of matter, organism, machine, and the enterprise[187]. This position represents a naturalistic and monistic take on life. The managerial sciences follow the project of cybernetics to unify the world by around the concept of information[188], and a further objectivation of the world.

[186] *Ibidem*, p. 485.
[187] *Ibidem*.
[188] *Ibidem*, p. 486.

Such worldviews can be found in the work of Ludwig von Bertalanffy or Norbert Wiener[189]. Wiener introduced a new concept of "organization" that is made of smaller organizations. He also stated that reality, irrespective of scale, could be understood or treated as an organization. This concept of organization is closely tied to the concept of information and to the conviction that any organism and organization maintains its cohesion by possessing the means to acquire, employ, retain, and transmit information. From his views one can deduce a fractal understanding of organization, which repeats itself at every level of reality; it follows that this kind of order can be applied to any kind of entity [190]. Cybernetics, through its name, shows its linkage with the idea of government. Insights gained from the domain of cybernetics are laid at the foundation of management/ organizational sciences. The "organization" denotes a type of inner structure that ties the different parts of a body, etc., together. It is a kind of order that contains the goal. It is a new conception regarding the living beings. The notion that the life of a living is due to it inner organization stems from biology. What defines a living being is not its visible form, but the internal order, the organization, the inner layout that bind together the different parts. Due to the introduction of this concept in biology, life began to be defined only in an immanent way, losing any relationship to, transcendent determinations. "Organization" denotes, henceforth, a kind of higher-order structure to which everything perceived about beings refers. The use of the concept of organization in biology translates the attempt to bring together the visible part of a living being with its invisible structure in a coherent whole, whose end goal is itself.

Life becomes a phenomenon which can be explained only by referring to the inner structure, the inner organization[191]. As Rappin states, in Lamarck's works, the border between non-life and life is given by the type of organization present in the non-living things and living beings. Life is the result of the parts that interact, the fluids that operate within the organism (which build a network), and a motor cause. The organization is what gives life, and the different sorts of living beings differ because the organization is actualized differently in various contexts (in George Cuvier's view). Physiology is a science of organization. With the advent of cybernetics, the notion of organization migrated into the societal realm and even into the areas of enterprise and bureaucracy. The most important step in this process is the connection established between the concept of organization and the concept of information as defined by cybernetics. This new concept of information is not the same as the one used daily and has its roots in telecommunication, physics, and statistics.

This notion of information is not the one that can be interpreted and understood by people who talk on the phone. It is something that can be quantified by using

[189] Baptiste Rappin, "La conceptualisation de l'organisation chez Norbert Wiener entre science et ontothéologie" ["Norbert Wiener's conceptualization of organization between science and ontotheology"], in *Histoire de Science*, 74-1, 2021, p. 147.

[190] *Ibidem*, p. 148.

[191] *Ibidem*, p. 150.

codes. Information becomes a statistical problem of combination and ordering. And the semantic aspect is no longer essential to it. The best formula for communication and information in the scientific sense is based on binary units. If there is meaning in this kind of formal communication, then it comes from the structure of the message. The meaning of the message will be driven by patterns. When applied to the living being, the cybernetic approach does not start with a molecule, but with the living organism as a model. A living organism is a structured message, and it can be transmitted[192]. The main purpose of an organism is self-preservation, maintaining homeostasis, which is attained by processing internal and external information. Information is the content being exchanged with the external environment insofar as the organism adapts itself to it and insofar as the organism applies to this content the results stemming from the adaptation process. To be alive means to have adequate information, to react appropriately to external and internal influences, and to self-correct. Learning belongs to this process, too. Information, like the organism, has a purpose to fulfil. Every action has a purpose and follows a goal. Even if it does not attain the goal, the intention was there. Hence, the value of an action can be ascertained by its efficiency in attaining the proposed goal. Cybernetics is, hence, a science of efficiency since it pertains to purposeful action. Due to this concept of purpose, cybernetics steps in a realm that was impervious to behaviorism. It considers the structure and the features of the studied organisms. The purpose here, the goal-oriented action, is not the manifestation of subjective arbitrariness, but a physiological fact[193]. For Robert Wiener the focus of interest is not any particular kind of being but a certain type of behavior. Namely, the focus lies on purposeful behaviors and actions that are subjected to feedback loops. The feedback loop appears to be the essence of organization[194]. This model of purposeful action offered reasons that justified the identification between brain and computer. The feedback loop is of two kinds, one that might be called negative, the other positive. The last one is the feedback loop that led to learning.

In this context another concept must be introduced, namely the concept of entropy. It is a component of what Rappin names the religion of organization/ management. The concept of entropy, stemming from thermodynamics, comes along with the representation of the thermic end of the universe. Entropy has found its way into cybernetics and become an element used for defining information. In a closed system, the quantity of entropy gives the measure of its disorganization, and the quantity of information offers the measure of the quantity of organization. Information is the negative of entropy. Information is linked to organization and differentiation. More entropy means more disorganization and an increase in uniformity. Order is fragile, and the menace of entropy lurks in the dark. For Wiener, in our world, entropy works at a very large scale, so we should not worry. Instead, "organization" and information develop themselves. There is hope, and man can

[192] *Ibidem*, p. 156.
[193] *Ibidem*, p. 158.
[194] *Ibidem*, p. 159.

battle entropy. Islands of "organization"/ order can be built, like isolated patches of distinct information, even if only in a temporary manner.

An organization is a structure that survives because it is open and receives variety/information from the external environment, and by setting up a process of control and regulation that makes possible steering the actions toward the intended goal. This openness to the environment is essential. To exist, the organization needs supplies of energy and information from outside, thus, making the relationship necessary. It follows from this premise that non-efficient organizations do not exist; there existence is proof of their efficiency. To exist, organizations need to introduce differences and lack of balance in the environment around them. They must produce destabilization in the surroundings. There must be a departure and an arrival point, etc. Hence the existence and self-preservation of organizations entails the creation and conservation of crises. It can be said that entropy is necessary for organizations to exists since it creates domains of difference, allowing the circulation of information. Only the existence of a rift can give birth to the level differentiation that allows the existence of the flow of information. Living things exist and persist in time by transmitting their own inner organization, as already mentioned. According to Wiener, organisms are structured just like messages. Even if life is governed by the laws of physics and is influenced by entropy, it yields a reproduction scheme that guarantees its stability in time. Adaptation to the surroundings is the key word. To preserve the structure of an organism, there is a need for adaptive feedback, for the capacity to change the way it reacts according to the new information, and to take the lead and the advantage. In a sense, this behavior is a kind of fight. This process cannot take place without the presence of a disturbance that induces changes in the relationship between an organism and the environment. The disturbance (the noise) is a requirement in the evolution of organizations because it give opportunity to different type of answers, of solutions. In a sense, it is order from disorder. Organizations are not entities that fasten themselves in the frame of an established order, becoming frozen structures. Organizations seem to consist of a series of re-captured des-organizations.

4. THE RELIGION OF MANAGEMENT AND CYBERNETICS

The concept of organization is at the heart of an enterprise which can be considered religious. According to N. Wiener[195], the scientific action should strive to combat entropy. The role of the scientist is to fight against the archenemy, the Evil that is entropy. Entropy is the condition of the possibility of destroying any kind of organized form of existence. The notion of entropy develops ontotheological and ontological meaning. Ontologically, it represents the principle of annihilation of life, and, from a theological standpoint, this destructive power is identified by Wiener

[195] *Ibidem*, p. 169.

with the Evil. The organizations, the "Organization" are seen as the principle of life. Cybernetics takes part in an existential struggle. "Organization" is a revolt against Destiny whereby the managerial sciences are the sacred books of the panorganizational movement. It is the new package of the industrial religion Henry de Saint-Simon preached about. The concept of "organization" lies, hence, at the core of what Henri de Saint Simon called the industrial religion. The managerial and organizational sciences, cognitive sciences, and cybernetics belong to it. The panorganizational movement and its possible realization on Earth would be the completion of the French Revolution. According to Saint-Simon, a technocratic managerial governance of mankind represents the realization of the French Revolution. Such a managerial form of governance would replace the obsolete and traditional form of governance, which Saint-Simon considered medieval in its outlook, and in opposition to the modern industrial (technocratic-managerial) form of society. The goal of technocratic governance is to achieve the "positive society". The French Revolution is, in Henri de Saint-Simon's opinion, incomplete due to some bad actors – scientists who replaced theologians and lawyers that blocked the ascension of industrialists to power. A new relationship between the people and the government must be established based on coordination, harmony, participation, and mutual help[196].

This new industrial order will erase the differences and conflicts between different classes of people (This outlook is present at the core of the contemporary managerial project). This new kind of government should be based on rational, scientific, objective decisions, and impersonal relations between its members. No decision or relation would be arbitrary. This process requires a complete change of the mindset of the people, a kind of anthropological revolution; new mental representations, new behaviors, and new habits have to be imprinted. Frederick Taylor was aware of this fact. His conviction was that this managerial approached should be introduced in all areas of life[197]. His conviction has become a reality. Most, if not all, domains of society have been invaded and transformed by the scientific management of life, so to speak. Individuals, institutions, etc. are accompanied by experts whose task consist of bringing them in accord with the demands of the organizations.

The dominance of the science of organization and scientific management does not induce stability. They express an ideology of movement and transformation. The speed of the execution of a task becomes paramount. Speed is something that relates to the actualization of useful knowledge – *actualisation de savoirs*. The introduction of time-measuring devices in the workshops attest to this situation. The idea to produce faster and faster, as if there were no limits to this performance, exemplifies this mentality. The workers are caught in the same process, and they need to take

[196] Baptiste Rappin, "De la révolution managériale a la mangement révolutionnaire" ["From managerial revolution to revolutionary managment"], in *Le Philosophoire*, 2019, 51, pp. 190–191.

[197] *Ibidem*, p. 192.

part in the ongoing learning process to adapt to the demands of each new progress of science and technique. Long life learning is another face of this process of integration and adaptation typical for the organizational mindset.

5. CONCLUSION

Organizations and institutions do not go together. As Baptiste Rappin shows by quoting Peter Drucker, an organization that binds personnel and knowledge exists to promote change and innovation. Organizations are meant to destabilize older and persistent structures. It means giving up all that is established (*établi*)[198]. It is a perfect embodiment of the permanent revolution. The first thing scientific management must do is to drop systematically what came before. Institutions and organizations do not go hand-in-hand. The principle of organization follows a Darwinian kind of logic, based on the ongoing adaptation of the feedback loop to the environment and the action exercised by the organization on the environment. Only the agile and adaptive organization should survive.

Institutions and sciences of organization are opposed to each other. An institution is a structure that exists to establish and preserve something: family, community, society, etc. It is a structure or a set thereof that maintains a certain social state; their function is of preservation. It is not dedicated to permanent change and innovation. The idea of abandoning everything, as Peter Drucker states, that was established to the annihilation of every institution and even of the very idea/process of establishing institutions. When institutions, including here culture (the symbolic and the normative), are transformed into an organization, they become part of the Darwinian process of adaptation. Applying scientific management to something leads to the destruction of the domain or activity that is under the organizational governance. The New Public Management is the neoliberal version of this technocratic organizational governance. In the name of efficiency, the organizational sciences and management have infiltrated and distorted all domains of activity, such as school, university, medicine, and so on.

Cybernetics and the organizational sciences display a strong religious and theological aspect[199]. Cybernetics claims it fights off entropy through the circulation and organization of information. This conviction undergirds the panorganizational movement, which is the enterprise to transform all societies in an "organization of organizations". The results of this endeavor are not the ones stated by Wiener. It produces sameness and uniformity, and undifferentiation; it actually accomplishes what entropy does. The religion of organization picks up an activity started by the Western Church, which is the incorporation and uniformization of the whole world, but not in the name of God as the Western Church did.

[198] *Ibidem*, p. 194.

[199] Baptiste Rappin, *Au fondament de managment. Theologie de l'organization [At the Ground of Managment. The Theology of Organization]*, Vol. 1, Nice, Les editions Ovadia, 2014, p. 185.

From an Eastern Orthodox perspective, this development is the heirloom of the notion of absolute divine simplicity, which denies that there are real distinctions/differences in God. This position is not a Biblical one, where one can see that there are real distinctions in God. This notion has roots in Aristotle and Neoplatonism. According to this view, God is absolutely simple, there are no differences in Him. He is defined as pure act. This means that God lacks potency, and everything is actualized from eternity. This actualization is necessary because in God essence and existence are identical; God is necessary existence. On one hand, this conception denies the biblical Revelation where it can be clearly seen that there is multiplicity and, thus, differences in God, and on the other hand it promotes a type of homogenous unity as the highest good. The religion of organizations and management does the same thing. It tries to realize concretely universality as a pure act, denying and deleting potency and difference in society and the world, which now becomes completely unified due to the process triggered by the managerial reason[200]. The science of organization and management is a spiritual and intellectual tool used for converting people and larger groups to this religious vision articulated with the help of cybernetics. It used to make partake in this holy mission of unifying the world and in the annihilation of difference (peoples, culture, civilization). Everything becomes an organization. In this process of self-actualization of the organizational Godhead, freedom and difference disappear, and the individuals have to undergo a process of domestication, of becoming very docile, tame beings. They become subservient to the pan organizational dynamics, which is the supreme Good.

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[200] *Ibidem*, p. 189.