

BOOK REVIEWS

*THE CHANGING CULTURE OF A FACTORY*¹

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A Critical Appreciation

by

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Any good book, like a good meal, should be nutrient, palatable, and attractively served; it should be neither entirely standard fare nor excessively exotic. This volume, reporting collaborative efforts of the research team of The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, meets all of these standards. It is attractively printed and manufactured, and replete with solid food for thought; it uses familiar concepts, and introduces new ones. Its palatability will of course depend upon the reader's tastes; this reviewer found it much to his liking.

There are many kinds of meals and of books, and one's enjoyment of either depends in part upon what the consumer anticipates. This book is of a special kind, and the reader will do well to expect neither too little nor too much. He will find richly documented descriptions and analyses of conflicts in a factory, but no formulas or panaceas for the reduction of industrial conflict. He can follow in intimate detail the development of works councils or management committees, but he will find no claim that any more than specific difficulties have been solved. He will see explicit statements of practices followed by the Tavistock consultants, together with a more or less systematic body of theory upon which these practices are based—or rather, perhaps, together with which the practices evolved. But he will not see quantified records of behaviour or of attitudes, changes in which are only descriptively presented. (Such measures, however, are promised in subsequent publications.)

In short, the book consists primarily of a case study of a single factory. Its half-century history is briefly outlined and then, beginning with the moment when the Tavistock consultants were called in, the “working-through” of a series of problems over a period of nearly three years is described in great detail. But the author's basic interest is increasingly seen to be not just the solving of a particular factory's problems, nor even the development of a theory of “industrial psychology”, but rather that of understanding

1. *The Changing Culture of a Factory*: Elliott Jaques, M.D., Ph.D. Tavistock Publications Ltd., London, 1951. pp. 341. 28s.

the principles of human interaction under a given set of conditions of known social organization and culture. Thus the major uses to which the case history document is put are those of social psychological analysis.

A very few basic notions are central to the theoretical analysis of social interaction. One of these is "effective communication". In the social world of the factory, as in any other social microcosm, a very large part of "reality" consists of the behaviours and attitudes of other people. The smoothness with which such a world can be run depends upon the accuracy with which individuals can indicate to others what they are doing, seeing and hearing, what they expect, what they need, etc., and—equally important—upon the accuracy with which they can interpret others' expressions of what *they* need and expect. Jaques spends a good deal of his time in indicating the nature of barriers to communication, some of which are shown to exist at the level of personal fears and wishes, and some at the level of formal factory organization. As an example of the latter, it was much easier to recognize that at every level of the factory—right down to the shop floor—the reality situation is one of reciprocal dependence between supervisor and subordinate, than to work out an "extended executive chain" in which "two-way communication" actually functions at every high level.

The author makes no doctrinaire insistence upon full communication, however. It is possible, indeed, for communication to be too free. Groups tend to prevent this by a process labelled "adaptive segregation". For example, rank and file workers make relatively little attempt to keep themselves informed about the activities of the Works Council, as long as things are going smoothly and as long as they know that the Council is there to be used when needed. "Maladaptive segmentation", however, represents the operation of very different sorts of barriers, as a result of which the transmission of significant aspects of reality is obstructed. This usually occurs as "defence against stress". For example, "Works Council members expressed their annoyance at the disinterest of their constituents by adopting the attitude that it was not their business to communicate with them," and in so doing cut themselves off from the contacts necessary for becoming adequate representatives of their constituents.

Communication takes place, of course, in many ways other than by the use of words, and the meaning of words is affected by many kinds of non-verbal factors. The perceived role of the communicator has quite as much to do with what is understood as does the content of what he says. Smooth and realistic communication, then, demands common understandings among participants in the communicative process, not only in regard to meanings of words but also as to roles of the participants. Jaques and his associates found that "role confusion" was responsible for a great deal of malcommunication both within and between various groups of factory personnel. For example:

"five out of the nine members of the Divisional Managers Meeting were also members of the Board of Directors. The consultant indicated to them how these influences together had the effect of allowing the Divisional Managers Meeting to function sometimes as a concealed Board of Directors concerned with the operation of the Company, sometimes as an executive management committee taking decisions affecting the London factory, and sometimes as a meeting of divisional managers for the discussion of mutual problems with the Managing Director but not taking decisions at all."

Altogether (by methods partially described below) a great deal of time was spent on problems of "role clarification", at every level of factory employment.

The kind of role confusion which proved most troublesome had to do with the exercise of authority, the notion of which is quite as central as those of communication and role. (The subtitle of the book, in fact, is "A study of authority and participation in an industrial setting". "Participation", unlike "authority", is not made the subject of

any special discussion, and is apparently used in the broad, every-day sense of "taking part in the factory system".) The *authority system* is defined as:

"a formal structure which defines and regulates the means and directions in which individuals and bodies may exert power. In contrast to authority as an attribute of a position, *power* is an attribute of an individual or group. . . . Power and authority can vary independently of each other. . . . It is an essential of sound organization that power and authority must not be too disparate . . . When power is too much in excess of responsibility and authority, an explosive situation develops; when power is inadequate authority will be discredited."

These considerations lead to a discussion of "the sanctioning process", by which power is linked to authority. To *give sanction* is "to permit authority to be attached to certain roles and to accept the use of power by persons or groups occupying those roles". But sanction cannot be given without possessing the power to punish—e.g., by dismissal or by striking—which is to *apply sanctions against* the person or group in the role whose authority has been sanctioned. These two kinds of sanctions are exchanged, so to speak, through the *executive system* and the *consultative system*. The most important of the discoveries made by the factory personnel and the Tavistock Research Team—rather slowly and painfully made, usually—had to do with the distinctions between and the relationship between the executive and consultative systems.

One of the problems which gradually emerged was that of felt conflict on the part of many managers between the necessity of giving orders and the desire to extend democratic participation—a conflict symbolized by the words "authoritarian" and "democratic". It gradually became clearer that much of this conflict resulted from a confusion between sanctioned and unsanctioned authority. The pursuit of this problem led to the discovery that there was widespread anxiety (often unrecognized) on the part of managers about exercising authority, even when adequately sanctioned. Such anxiety was variously compounded of feelings of inadequacy, wishes to dominate others, and guilt, for example. Whatever its components, managers were ambivalent about exercising authority, being, unconsciously, quite as much motivated to avoid it as to use it. Hence "the consultative machinery came to be used as an executive by-passing mechanism". Progress in clarification between executive and consultative functions came with the recognition that the executive function was not limited to the top chain of command, but extended right down to the shop floor.

"The section supervisor must be more than a groupless leader. He must have the same leadership, fact-finding, training and organization responsibilities for . . . his team of workers as has the General Manager for his divisional managers. Any differences are not differences in principle, but differences in practice, related to the differences in the problems to be dealt with. The worker, just as the manager, is in his executive role when carrying out his work task."

Once this point of view is adopted, together with its corollary that consultative practices, too, must occur at and between all levels, then the two systems are seen as supplementary ways of solving common problems, rather than merely as reciprocal correctives by which either attempts to redress the wrongs of the other (though they may, incidentally, perform the latter function). Role clarification and therefore good communication are facilitated, in so far as awareness of the distinctive functions of executive and consultant leads to common understanding as to who is acting in what capacity. And, most important of all, this point of view makes it possible frankly to face the perennial issues of "the management-worker split".

The discoveries of Jaques and his associates at this point, and their interpretation of them, will come as a surprise to some readers. They report "deep-seated resistance, both

in the management and the workers, to interference with the management-worker split". Not only does this split reflect long-standing trends in the total society, but its maintenance serves important needs of both individual and group life:

"Management saw the demands of the shop floor working groups as potentially disrupting if workers were allowed too free expression through the executive system. With some relief they left to the workers' representatives the job of being responsible for bringing forward the demands of workers. Ordinary day-to-day complaints or demands could be sidestepped . . . the technical job of production was subject to a minimum of interference. On their side, the workers found it an advantage to have a management which remained split off from themselves. It gave them a scapegoat upon which to vent hostile or aggressive feelings, whether or not those feelings were tied up with the job. Having such an outlet meant that the differences with other workers need not be squarely faced . . . Because of these mutual advantages (and others which are still under investigation) there was unconscious collusion between the management and the workers to maintain the split in the executive system, and to have all demands of the workers ironed out through the consultative system . . . The decision to tackle the problem of creating a coherent executive system means giving up this (from one point of view, useful) collusion."

As the foregoing passage suggests, there has been much borrowing of the thought-ways of psychoanalysis, though hardly any from their technical vocabulary. This indebtedness is particularly great at the level of procedures which the research team followed in the factory. The reader has probably been curious as to whether and to what degree the discoveries and interpretations noted above were understood and accepted by the factory personnel, and if so, how this came about. Much of the answer is found in the description of the process of "working-through". (The phrase is used in a technical sense almost from the first page, but there is no attempt to define it or specify its significance until the final chapter.)

"When we speak of a group working-through a problem we mean . . . that a serious attempt has been made to voice the unrecognized difficulties, often socially taboo, which have been preventing it from going ahead with whatever task it may have had. There is entailed the development of an awareness by the group that tensions exist within it which are lowering its effectiveness; and implied is a willingness to undertake their open discussion as a means of accomplishing their resolution . . . So far as this meant uncovering forces that had gone unrecognized through being consciously or unconsciously ignored or denied, resistances were encountered . . . The method used was to draw attention to the nature of the resistance on a basis of facts known to those concerned . . . to illuminate in the specific situation the meaning of the feelings (whether of fear, guilt, or suspicion) that constituted the unpalatable background to anxieties that were present about undergoing changes that were necessary. When successful, interpretations of this kind allowed group members to express feelings which they had been suppressing . . . and then to develop an altered attitude to the problem under consideration."

The novel and exciting thing about the book, to this reviewer, is the way in which two bodies of thought—psychoanalytic theory and interaction theory—are woven together. To most psychologists, the one has to do with individual personality and the other with social psychology. Most of us are willing to grant, at an abstract level, that personality theorists and interaction theorists are drawing very largely from the same body of data, namely, the behaviour of people in relation to one another. Nevertheless, the two kinds of theorists make use of quite different sorts of abstractions from the common matrix of interpersonal behaviour. This is all very well, of course, and even

necessary, for short-run purposes. Eventually, however, the generalizations derived from the different sorts of observations and abstractions must be interrelated, not only for the sake of an over-view, but also for the sake of "reality testing": if the pieces cannot be made to fit, then one or more of them has been wrongly cut, and we must go back to the original data for different formulations.

In terms of theoretical contribution, it is at such a quasi-interdisciplinary level that this book should be assessed. First off, it must be said that there is no formal presentation of either psychoanalytic or interaction theory, and hence no attempt at completeness. The presentation, throughout, is straightforwardly that of meeting problems, using whatever theory is available to solve them, and incidentally looking for extensions in the theory. And genuine extensions have been made. The careful reader will emerge with a new grasp of the endless process by which personal motives, acquired through interacting with others, in turn direct both subsequent behaviour toward others and subsequent interpretations of others' behaviour. He will see unconscious motives not just as something repressed at an earlier stage in life, but as defensively kept unrecognized by present influences in the interaction process. He will see how some forms of group structuring are clung to, others tried and discarded, and still others warded off because certain forms of interaction are acceptable and others are not; and how, circularly, those social forms which are clung to tend to maintain existing motives, of every degree of consciousness. And, perhaps most significantly, he will see a vivid object lesson in the social consequences of unconscious motives: that which is unrecognized cannot enter the stream of communication, and that which cannot be communicated about cannot be tested in the crucible of reality, as a result of which it could be maintained, modified or abandoned according to the exigencies of circumstance.

In terms of "practical results", the reader who is expecting neither a report of miracles nor tables of barely significant statistical differences will find an encouraging account of slow, hard-won gains at every level of the factory. The consultants persistently refuse to give advice; they take no unsolicited step; they merely point to role confusion, to possible sources of malcommunication in an interrelated system of social structure and motives which are unrecognized or not willingly expressed. What happens as a result of these contributions depends upon the zeal, ingenuity and persistence of the factory groups concerned. A good deal, in fact, did happen. Toward the end of the second year a whole series of interrelated changes took place—changes which could be regarded as occurring at the level of personal insight or at the level of social structure, but which in any case were all of a piece. One is left with a feeling of considerable optimism: if one factory staff can take its own problems so seriously, can face them so honestly, and persevere in applying self-designed remedies, so also, one must conclude, can others.

Experimentally and quantitatively oriented readers may be puzzled by the application of the term "Research Team" to the consultants supplied by the Tavistock Institute. Their services, as described in this book, are exclusively those of providing help, guidance, interpretations designed to increase insight and similar forms of consultative contributions. These constitute research (according to this reviewer's lexicon) only in the sense that a series of events are recorded. It is research at the level of gathering clinical data, without tests of the validity or reliability, but not in the full scientific sense of systematically gathering data designed to test propositions in controlled manner. Though "evaluative studies are being carried out and will be reported subsequently", there is scarcely a hint in the entire volume as to the nature of propositions to be tested, nor as to methods by which tests can be made. This issue was obviously not overlooked, however; in an Introduction by Dr. A. T. M. Wilson of the Tavistock Institute, it is dealt with in the following terms:

"If research interests alone had been relevant, measurement techniques could have been introduced as soon as description of the field of forces, at a first level of approxi-

mation, had been achieved. Within the approach described, however, any action for research purposes alone, without regard to the needs of the client, would be regarded as a breach of the professional role of the research worker."

It must be granted, of course, that it is not easy to reconcile the demands of disinterested research and of very much interested clients. The task, however, would scarcely seem to be beyond the level of ingenuity repeatedly shown by the Research Team in these pages. Furthermore, a policy of forthright confession of their own research interests would seem to be thoroughly in keeping with the Research Team's repeated emphasis on candid expression of one's own motives when recognized and when relevant to joint participation. This is not to say that "action for research purposes alone, without regard to the needs of the client" should be undertaken, given the conditions under which the Tavistock Institute and the Glacier Metal Company worked together. Research of the proposition-testing kind is, after all, one of the procedures by which factory personnel could be helped to test reality. With proper attention to times and ways of making research proposals, then, objective data-gathering would not seem to be incompatible with the client-consultant relationship. Since later publication of such data is promised, perhaps this comment represents only the reviewer's impatience, but at any rate he, for one, would like to have seen such data in the present volume.

The reader who is interested in the theory and practice of group problem-solving will thus be grateful for a book which is at once a documentary case history and a theoretical analysis of the forces at work in a concrete situation. Readers who are also interested in quantitative evidence concerning changes in behaviour and attitudes will be disappointed at its absence, but they have much to look forward to in future publications which are promised.

Psycho-Analysis and Politics. R. E. Money-Kyrle. Duckworth, London. 1951. pp. 183. 9s.

The author has extended the application of psychoanalytical theory to the analysis of politics and morals, by introducing for the first time into a work of this kind the newer theories of Melanie Klein. Persecutory and depressive anxieties, relics of unresolved tensions in the paranoid and depressive phases in childhood development, are seen as basic factors in the psychopathology of politics; disturbances in political thought and feelings are interpreted as expressions of the known psychological defences against these anxieties. These hypotheses are supported by an analysis of particular events taken from recent and past political and social history.

As regards social pathology, the point of view of the impartial student of culture, who "regards the character typical of any culture as normal to it", is set aside in favour of a clinical outlook in which "normal is equivalent to rational". The healthy—or the humanist—society is regarded as that in which, through society's capacity for conscious recognition and rational control of unconscious motives, individual and social behaviour show a freedom from manifestations of unconscious defences against equally unconscious paranoid and depressive anxieties. At the other end of the scale of social health are placed the authoritarian societies. The authoritarian personalities and morality which predominate in these societies are regarded as frankly pathological manifestations of immature control of anxiety by means of unconscious defence mechanisms with a high infantile phantasy content.

It is Mr. Money-Kyrle's view that insight and knowledge contribute inevitably to social health and humanism. But not all types of knowledge and insight are seen as equally effective in this regard. It is psychological and sociological insight as derived from the psychoanalytic approach to unconscious mental processes which holds the key. The healthy insighted individual will find difficulty in adjusting to an authoritarian society