

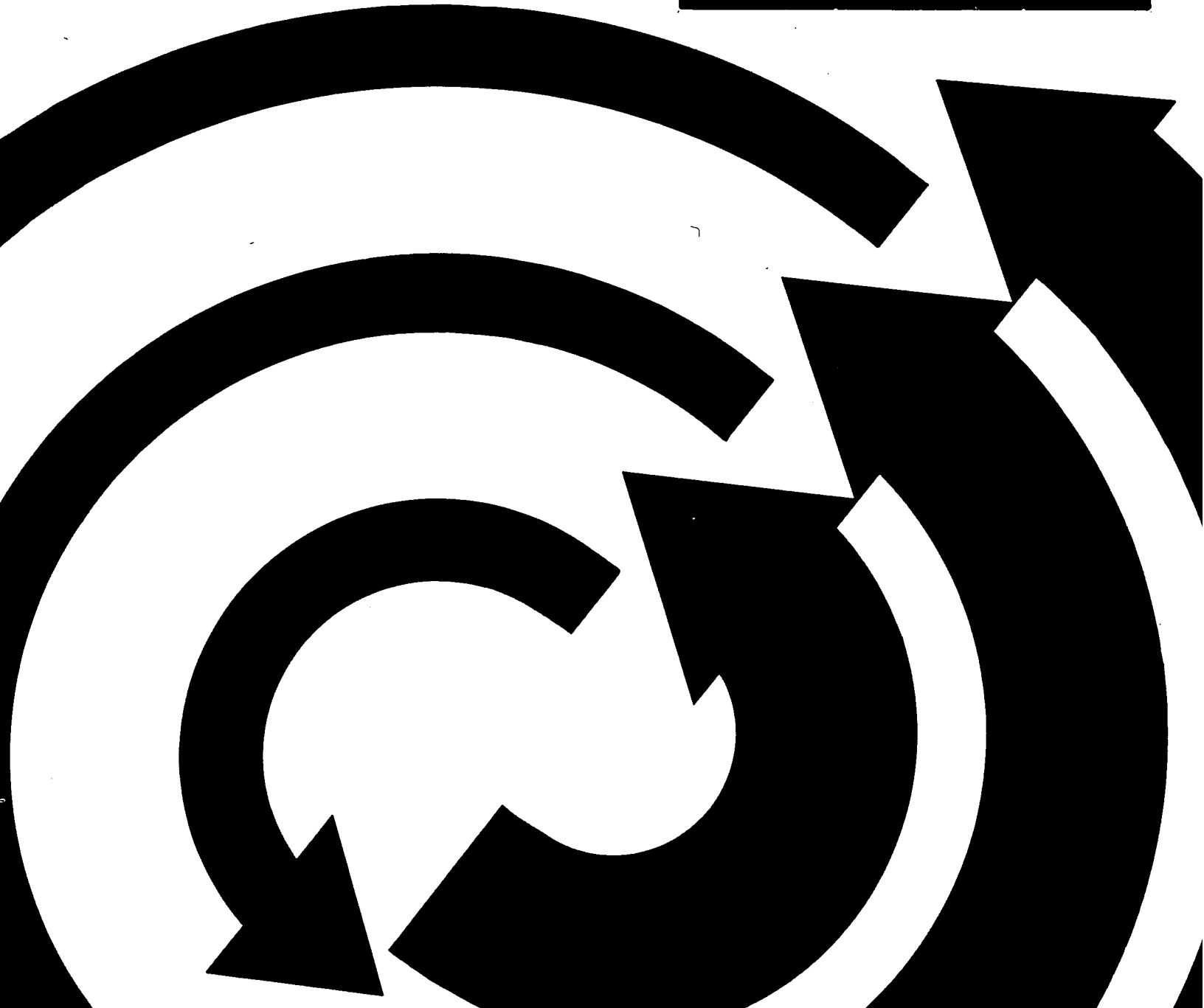
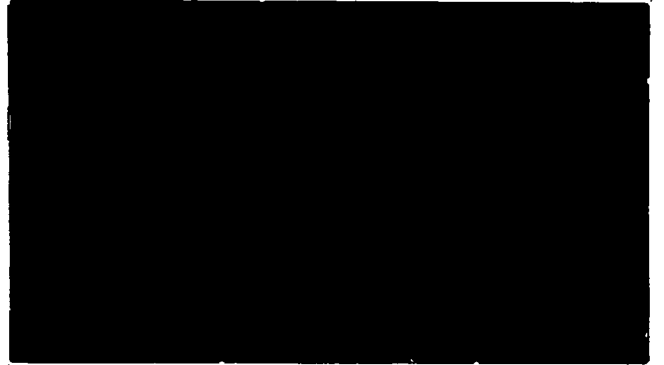


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ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES AS A  
SCIENTIFIC AND HUMANISTIC ENTERPRISE:  
NOTES ON THE RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF  
THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE FIELD

by Mayer N. Zald

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ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES AS A SCIENTIFIC AND HUMANISTIC ENTERPRISE:  
NOTES ON THE RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE FIELD<sup>1</sup>

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DRAFT: NOT FOR QUOTATION

Recently scholars in several branches of social science and in organizational studies have borrowed tools from academic disciplines usually considered as humanities, not sciences. Here I explore the implications of these developments for the intellectual status and prospects of the field. I hope to convince you that it is worth taking a look at our underlying conceptualization of the field of organizational studies, that eclectic combination of social science disciplines and approaches that underlie organization and management theory, organizational behavior research, organizational psychology, and the sociology of complex organizations. Underlying conceptualization is not quite the right phrase; foundational or epistemological assumptions about the organization of knowledge better captures what I am after.

Most of us go about our daily business of teaching and of research without reexamining the fundamental philosophical assumptions used to justify the nature of our core endeavors. Moreover, since the younger generation entered graduate school after the foundational debates were largely settled, many of them have not had to master and examine those core assumptions; they have entered an ongoing stream of research and investigation without deep consideration of the epistemological foundations of the activities to which they devote their lives.

Those remarks apply to all of the social sciences; the situation is even worse in organizational studies, since as a field it emerged after the foundational debates had occurred in the main disciplines from whence it is constituted. It is possible to receive a doctorate in some part of organizational studies without ever having asked whether the field has an intellectual logic and coherence. It is not enough to argue that there is a market for these students -- that argument has been used to sell snakeoil.

Because of the debates that have occurred challenging the positivistic enterprise and because scholars have used methods developed in the humanities for understanding social behavior, I believe the time is right to reexamine our fundamental assumptions about the nature of the field. If those assumptions are wrong, or misguided, how we train students, how we design the curriculum, what we do research on, how we relate to students and to clients, and how we write may all be in for reexamination and redesign.

I will begin by summarizing the bald outlines of the position at which I have arrived. I will then retrace my steps, elaborating the argument. Some of that argument is based on prior writing (Zald, 1988), so I will only sketch it here. However, part of the argument is developed here for the first time. I will spend most of the essay fleshing out what is for me a new conception of the field of organizational studies.

The overall argument can be briefly stated. Like other areas of social science, organization and management theory have been conceived of as scientific disciplines. The model of the sciences that has been employed, however, has been severely truncated, drawn as it has been from the most successful science,...physics. Even if a broader conception of the sciences is introduced, the social sciences and organizational studies are found wanting. Just ask how the social sciences and organizational studies stack up on the common evaluative criterion of progressive cumulation and integration of knowledge. Under a broadened conception of science, it is possible to see substantial progress within the sub-disciplines or paradigms of low consensus (high conflict?) disciplines. Nevertheless, I will argue, a large part of the problem of the social sciences has been that they are not only sciences, but humanities. Their focal concerns are shaped by civilizational traditions, by political and moral interests. Their terms of reference and conceptual apparatus is shaped by the specific cultures and epochs in which they exist. And their objects of attention are historically nested. The problem is not that they are also humanities, but that they have been poor humanities. In the rush to be scientists, scholars have been overly detached from the philosophical, philological, historical and hermeneutic traditions. The first part of the argument then is that organizational and management theory and organization studies need to be reconceptualized as a humanistic as well as scientific area of study.

Organizational studies is not only an academic specialization within the social sciences, but it is or aspires to be an applied discipline. Although scholars vary in how much emphasis they give to the applied side of the enterprise, depending upon personal proclivities and occupational location, the growth of organizational studies in professional and management schools and

external demand press toward the definition of organizational studies as an applied discipline. If the science and problem base of the field was strong, organizational studies could be a powerful applied discipline. Since it is not, organizational studies follows the ratings, and responds not only to academic fads but to the fads and foibles of academic hucksters and the problem definitions of corporate executives. I will want to argue that recognizing organizational studies as part of the humanities changes the base for organizational studies as an applied discipline. As part of the humanities, an enlightenment model, as opposed to an engineering model is suggested. An enlightenment model suggests an educative and autonomous role for organizational studies.

That is my argument. Let me show you how I got there and develop some implications of the position. The next section discusses the limits of social science as a nomothetic and positivistic enterprise. I then turn to a discussion of organizational studies as a humanistic enterprise, first attempting to elaborate the defining characteristics of the humanities and then showing how individual scholars have used humanistic approaches to illuminate a wide range of problems in organizational theory and analysis. The final section argues the advantages of an enlightenment model, based in humanistic traditions, as an approach to the application of knowledge.

#### THE LIMITS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AS A NOMOTHETIC ENTERPRISE

The social sciences have made enormous progress in the last century. Methodological and statistical advances have allowed us to increase our precision of measurement and estimation of models. Moreover, conceptual and theoretical elaboration have allowed us to bring into the open large areas of social life that were intellectually opaque. My argument is not that we have a failed scientific enterprise, but that we have a flawed one. By not recognizing the limits of the enterprise, we have miscast our problems, wrongly stated our conclusions. I want to spend most of my time here presenting a positive programme, not criticizing social science. But the positive programme gets its energy from the failures of certain versions of the social science model, so I will briefly recapitulate the critique.

The social sciences were modelled on the natural sciences. We took from them not only a belief in the value of systematic observation and experimentation but also a belief in the value of strong theory -- nomothetic propositions linked together to explain a wide range of phenomena. The more general and abstract the better. These theories are stated as if they will apply to behavior in all societies at all times.

Now, I do not argue that all general and nomothetically oriented theories are doomed to failure. Indeed there are many areas of social science that may make useful contributions pursuing quite general and abstract agendas. The structuralist programme of Peter Blau, the studies of technological evolutionism of Gerhard Lenski, are interesting projects. I do want to argue that many (most?) of the very general theoretical schemas have come to naught. They have crashed on the shoals of banality. They have proved fruitful and exciting when crafted and fitted to concrete situations of vital interest to citizens.

Many of our major theories and theoretical schemas have in fact been conceptual abstractions from concrete historical and civilizational events and trends. Marxist class theory is a generalization of the western experience. Similarly, self theory in social psychology draws upon the individuation and individualism of modern society. The psychologist Thomas Laudaer has been quoted (in D'Andrade, 1986, p. 30) as saying of experimental social psychology "it is a subtle way of doing ethnography." These abstract formulations drawn from our own experience often don't travel well. A theory of social stratification and social change drawn from the experience of Western Europe does not apply well to India; a theory of bureaucracy based on the emergence of state bureaucracies in the west does not work well for the Incas or the Catholic church in the sixth century.

Not only our theories, but our basic categories of analysis are often made available through a complex historical and civilizational process. Is there any more basic concept than "interest"? Interest group, self-interest, stakeholders, are all concepts that appear in modern social theory as relatively benign and univiversal phenomena. But, as Albert Hirschman (1977) has so persuasively shown, for centuries social thought submerged interests in base passions and

greed. The movement to view human nature as it is, a break from more theologically based views of mankind, and the growth of a theory of statecraft (Machiavelli) led to a more acceptable concept of rational interests. The idea of the social benefits of conflicting and countervailing interests emerges in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a basis justifying both capitalism and democratic institutional arrangements. Both as a philosophic and intellectual conceptualization and in the mind of civic actors, interests had to be secularized, socialized and sanitized. The general argument is that most concepts employed by social scientists come out of an amalgam of common language and historically embedded intellectual usage. They are not emergents from an objectified and detached field of study. Unfortunately, social scientists have been largely blind to the roots of their concepts.

Finally, note how change occurs in the social sciences as contrasted with the natural sciences. It is not the case that we are without cumulation and/or revolutions. But often we open an area for research, develop increasingly complex theories and refined measures and then peter out in technicism.

In organization studies think of the research on administrative ratios, size, and complexity. That was a booming business two decades ago. At first, the results were published in the leading journals, then in secondary ones; today there is no research on it and more importantly, little mention of it in the leading textbooks. It was originally part of a long civilizational interest in the nature of control of large organizations. We actually got some answers to a large question, but as we progressed we forgot the original question.

In the social sciences when we run out of gas in an area, we turn to new hot topics coming out of the practical and political concerns of society. In organizational studies we often pick up on the latest management fad. Often our answers are transformations of older answers, not new and broader theories. Sometimes we return to the classics, and we treat the classics as sacred texts. These processes of problem selection and answer framing resemble the processes found in the humanities disciplines more than those in the natural sciences.



Although we have much in common with the humanities disciplines, we are not very good about that. We just have not spent much time thinking about and organizing our connections to the humanities -- to philosophy, religious thought, history, comparative literature and literary theory, classical studies, and philology.<sup>2</sup> Although individual scholars may in themselves use humanistic methods or pursue humanistic civic goals, organizational studies and the social sciences have not organized themselves to develop the humanistic side of the enterprise. It is not enough to say "read a lot, be reflexive."

Ultimately, the issue is how do we combine a positivistic program of theoretical and empirical cumulation with the enriching possibilities of the humanities. That is a deep and difficult problem. Here, however, I want to discuss organizational studies as a branch of the humanities.

#### AN HUMANISTIC DISCIPLINE

In the secularized modern University scholars have become ashamed of the class and national backgrounds that bred the university. The impulse to pursue progress, virtue, justice and moral uplift which was part of the roots of the emerging social sciences, has been sanitized and pushed aside. In general, the social sciences, except in that modern religion called laissez faire economics, pretend they are value free. In the applied and professional parts of organizational studies the situation is a bit different, since there is often an explicit identification of professional goals with furthering the goals of management; however, many students of organizations proceed in the same value free mode as other social scientists.

Humanistic disciplines in the modern university have fallen prey to the same processes. Although teachers in the humanities often believe they are teaching the best of the received canon, whether in literature, philosophy, or art history, the relativizing impulses of modernism and post-modernism lead them to be less sure that the canon reveals the virtues. Nevertheless, it is well to remind ourselves that in Mathew Arnold's view, a view which justified and shaped much of the development of the humanities for the last century, these disciplines had the responsibility of

preserving and transmitting the best in thought and art of the western tradition. Not a narrow and chauvinistic jingoism of national and class tradition, but an open and expansive view of the attempt of men (mostly) in the long history of western civilization to glean and create truth, beauty and goodness.

Organizational studies has much to gain from opening itself to humanistic traditions. My argument is in two parts. First, as is readily apparent from recent scholarly publications, humanistic strategies of knowledge development are powerful complements to the modes of investigation and analytic strategies common in positivistic approaches to organizational behavior. To show the breadth of the linkages examples are given from several branches of the humanities. Second, in what I consider the more provocative part of my thesis, organizational studies can establish a firmer base for itself as an applied discipline if it links itself to the great traditions of value infused analysis. Organizations are not only instruments for creating products and profits. They are instruments of power and domination. They are major sources of a sense of wholeness and participation or of alienation and worthlessness. They may create the conditions for exercise of civic responsibility or, more likely, Eichmann like conformity. An enlightenment model of an applied organizational studies attaches to the great traditions of analysis of the human condition.

Until now I have assumed a common understanding of what I mean by humanistic academic disciplines. Before developing the argument further, it will be useful to explore that understanding.

### Defining the Humanities

Traditionally, philosophy, literature and languages, art history (fine arts) and history have been the core disciplines of the humanities. Reflection on the growth and transformation of disciplines suggests that easy and traditional classifications may be deceiving. The study of logic, though located in departments of philosophy may also be seen as a branch of mathematics. Linguistics appears to be connected to the humanities in its origins, but in its modern guises is closer to the social and behavioral sciences, and even is connected to the brain sciences. On the

other hand, semiotics is closer to the humanities. As an academic discipline, how does one count history? Certainly, except for the cliometricians, most history eschews the strong form of the positivistic programme: No universal generalizations; explicit evaluative standpoints based on the historians identification with the rise and fall of national and cultural interests or of western social values; a concern for literary style in presentation; the use of literary tropes to render the dramatic structure imposed on the flow of events. Both in its location in the university and in its intellectual commitments much of historical writing faces both ways, toward social science and toward the humanities. It is worth noting that as cultural and social anthropology moved away from the abstract interpretation of social structure to the interpretation of and patterning of world views, they have begun to resemble humanistic and literary disciplines.

What distinguishes the humanistic disciplines from others dealing with human behavior? There is no simple answer, and no answer that fits all of the humanities, but I can attempt a crude one. First, humanistic disciplines render behavior in specific time and societal contexts. Not time as a generalized measurement of distance between events, but specific events in particular time sequences. Secondly, they are concerned with substantive meaning -- how particular objects and symbols relate to each other; what are the roots and background by which symbols, high and low, have achieved their meaning and transformation. Third, they have been concerned with the coherence and transformation of high culture, of the symbol and meaning systems of intellectuals and artists, and how if at all these meaning systems related to other institutions of society. Finally, since the humanities have been interested in the history of ideas, the form and structure of symbols systems, their rhetorical and narrative devices have been of interest, as well as their impact upon social institutions and social change.

Obviously, the domains of the social sciences and the humanities have partially overlapped, even as their goals and methods differed. The boundary between them has been more rigid at some points in time and more permeable at others. The dynamic connection of the humanities to the social sciences involves movement in both directions. As humanistic studies move away from high culture texts and objects they inevitably overlapped with social scientific

studies concerned with the production of social life in all sectors of society. Second, as the methods of analysis became increasingly abstracted from particular times and places and texts, they become applicable to a range of questions and settings beyond traditional cores of humanistic disciplines. Deconstruction starts with high culture texts and ends being applied to the mind sets of immigrants. Semiotics is used for the analysis of paintings but can also be used for the analysis of the letters of corporate board chairmen. On the other hand, as social scientists take seriously meaning and ideas as objects of analysis they find themselves reading and building on the writings of scholars from the humanities.

#### Four Examples

Students of organizations have increasingly used methods and styles of research that have been associated with the humanities. I will mention four areas or styles of scholarship that show great promise for organizational studies, the development of a historically informed organizational theory, semiotics and the close reading of texts, the uses of rhetoric for substantive analysis and meta-methodological reflection, and narrative analysis and policy evaluation.

History and Organizational Theory. Organizational and management history has been around for a long time. Almost every large corporation either commissions a history or becomes the subject of one. Histories of the evolution of state bureaucracies or of particular universities abound.

Although it may overstate the case, until Chandler (1962, 1977) histories of organizations rarely articulated general propositions, nor did they articulate problems and hypotheses of interest to the generalizing social scientists interested in organizations. It wasn't Chandler's hypothesis, strategy leads to structure, that was so important (he got it from Heinz Hartman) although it appears to be a central assumption of some versions of contingency theory. Instead I think it was his comparative historical design and ability to present a plausible explanation of the structural transformation of the modern corporation that made him so important. Chandler's book stimulated a number of quantitative studies of the correlates of choice of divisional and

departmental structure, and a small cottage industry of reinterpretations has developed.<sup>3</sup> In a forthcoming book, Neil Fligstein (1990) demonstrates how state policy shaped the transformation of the modern corporation. Using quantitative techniques, anti-trust cases, and memoirs, Fligstein shows how Chandler's apolitical approach miscasts the history of the transformation of capitalism and its modern embodiment in the corporation.

There is now a fairly large number of historical studies that use historical data to open up or challenge theoretical formulations based upon cross-sectional designs and abstract non-contextualized approaches. For instance, Dan Clawson (1980) has challenged the assumption that bureaucratic wage systems led to greater profitability than inside job contracting.

There are a large number of other writings that are relevant to a merger of history and organizational theory. (See my forthcoming paper, Zald, 1990.) Let me just mention two other historically based analyses to show how they illuminate questions that had been wrongly answered in the ahistoric mode.

Think about the issue of the bureaucratization and rationalization of labor relations. In the traditional, internally oriented functionalist theory of rationalization and differentiation, new departments got created largely in response to problems of managing the span of control. Similarly, standardization is a mechanism of obtaining system wide rationality. By that reading the creation of personnel departments and the bureaucratization of labor relations is treated as an internal management problem. Personnel departments are a delegation of managerial functions that allow greater standardization and a more efficient overview of hiring, processing, and firing. Sanford Jacoby (1985) traces the history of personnel systems and departments up until 1940. Not just an internal managerial matter, Jacoby shows how reformers (including Protestant ministers and socialists) inside and outside of the corporation pressed for transformation of the personnel system to provide a more humane working environment. Less altruistically motivated, during World War I the War Department, especially the Department of the Navy, mandated personnel departments and a bureaucratic job system, in contrast to the drive system, in order to stabilize labor relations and raise shipyard productivity. In a series of quantitative analyses,

Baron, et al. (1986, 1988) have used historical data sets to trace the impact of wars and depressions on the diffusion of bureaucratic labor relations. Contra the Marxists, for instance, who tend to see the bureaucratization of labor as a mechanism for controlling the working class, Barron et al. (1988) show that the banks introduced more bureaucratized job descriptions before manufacturing firms, in order to standardize white collar worker-client relations. We will need to begin to think about the institutional diffusion processes in the creation of the firm.

The historical writings on organization will, I believe, transform our thinking. It becomes much harder to take a pure internalist and functionalist approach. Similarly, Marxist approaches that focus upon labor relations to the exclusion of state and societal processes will also be challenged. Context and diffusion processes become more important. The role of social movements and cultural context take on salience.

A large problem that remains, however, is the relationship of historical description to theory development. The easiest use of historical "facts" is to parametrize variables or to add variables and context to our analyses. That is an advance over ahistorical generalizations, but hardly exhausts the range of ways that history and historical analyses inform theory and research.

Semiotics and the Close Reading of Texts. For many decades social scientists explicitly or implicitly have used forms of content analysis in the analysis of written and spoken behavior. As long as the elements were unproblematic, that is as long as the meaning of the words, including their connection to value, was treated as immediately accessible, the social scientist cum content analyst needed no recourse to linguistic theory, the philosophy of language, speech-act theory, et cetera. The content analyst, as a competent member of the culture producing the text needed no special training or techniques to render meaning. Even if the text was produced in another society, say the Soviet Union, the assumption of traditional content analysis is that the meanings of that text is accessible to a competent Russian speaker, whether or not they have deep grounding in Russian culture.

However, if the analyst begins to question that presumed unproblematic nature of meaning, because the symbols and their connections are not obvious (when for instance, an anthropologist attempts to read the meaning of the myths of the society he is studying, or when a theory of meaning shows how meaning is heightened by or is embedded in contrasts, or when a feminist reading of a text shows how a great piece of literature was based upon a patriarchal view complicitly agreed to between author and reader), then meaning is rendered problematic and a theory or approach to understanding meaning is required. That takes us into the land of the humanities, or, as they are sometimes called, the human sciences.

The methods for rendering meaning are legion. Philological analysis of the roots, transformation, and alternative usages of terms is the oldest. Recently we have seen the development of Straussian structuralism and semiotics as formal approaches. Less formal but more hermeneutic, deconstructionist approaches have unraveled hidden meanings by a combination of freudian, philological, and sometimes pettifogging approaches.

If you think that organizational behavior and written texts require interpretation and that interpretation requires formal method, then you will have to come to term with those parts of the human sciences and with literary theory that specialize in interpretation.

There have been several recent applications of semiotic methods to organizational productions. Steven Barley (1983) rendered the hidden code of funeral homes and their professional employees. Barley shows how these death handlers arrange matters to deny death, to mute it. C. Marlene Fiol (1989) uses a very rigorous and formal application of Greimas' structural semantics to show how corporate annual reports justify or emphasize the value of joint ventures.

Recently we have seen an upsurge of analyses of corporate cultures and of latent or paradoxical meaning of corporate activity. To the extent that the surface understanding of culture is not accepted and to the extent that the interpretation of paradox is treated as requiring rigorous methods, we will find increasing attention to methods growing out of humanistic

traditions. Deconstruction and semiotics are upon us! (Some scholars who are "scientists" will run for the hills!)

Rhetorical Analysis as a Guide to Substantive and Meta-Methodological Analysis. Rhetoric and logic were once taught as equally important topics. Indeed, before Descartes one might argue, rhetoric included logic, since persuasive communication would include logical analysis and presentation. The scientific model emphasizes logic and data presentation, to the exclusion of rhetoric. In a way, as the scientific model gained ascendance, the analysis of rhetoric was confined to fiction, where it emerges as the study of literary tropes and narrative style. Recent writings have shown not only that rhetorical strategies permeate science, even, possibly, to the detriment of truth of disciplinary projects, but they inhibit substantive analysis. Analysis of rhetorical style has most penetrated anthropology, under the influence of Clifford Geertz and James Clifford. Since few ethnographies are replicated, anthropology is especially dependent upon the eye and presentation of the ethnographer. For my purposes, however, a more useful parallel is found in the analysis of the rhetoric of economics.

Rhetorical strategies may be dictated by the discipline, by journal and book editors, or be created by the author within the confines of disciplinary rules. Whether theories are presented as they emerged or as a finished product; whether the first person or third person is adopted; what in a table is interpreted and how tables are presented; how much data is supplied; what is the link between the strength of statistical support and the verbal claims for hypotheses; each of these choices reflects a rhetorical choice as much as a scientific one. (Incidentally, that distinction, between rhetoric and science, may be invalid: by a pragmatic criterion of truth, anything that adds to plausible warrant in a community of scholars is part of the truth claim -- evidence is always rhetorical.)

Economics is a better parallel to organizational studies than anthropology because organizational studies like economics has bought into an experimental Millsian view of science. In the face of a lack of ability to conduct experiments, statistics gives us a non-experimental method of controlling variables. Unlike cultural anthropologists, and like economists, most organizational



theorists aspire to a model of systematic theory and statistical proof. If we could have mathematical models we would. Donald McCloskey has written a block buster of a book, The Rhetoric of Economics (1985), that shows how deeply rhetoric penetrates the practice of economics.

His book presents many examples, but since Paul Samuelson is a much and rightly revered Noble Prize winner, McCloskey's analysis of rhetoric in Samuelson, speaks to the point. McCloskey takes two pages, literally at random, from Samuelson's classic 1947 text. He shows (note that the word shows is a rhetorical ploy on my part -- other words could be asserts, argues, suggests) that Samuelson asserts a mathematical base for his presentation which is not demonstrated and not necessary (much like classicists used to convince those unfamiliar with Greek that they were superior), six appeals to authority, several speculations about what happens under relaxation of assumptions (since there is no quantitative evidence about the assumptions, relaxation provides only speculative argumentation); appeals to hypothetical toy economies to prove theories; and appeals to analogy. Of course, McCloskey is here showing the rhetorical devices in a textbook, but he also shows the rhetorical devices in an important but ill-written article by John Muth and in an article by Gary Becker.

McCloskey's argument is not that economics is a bad science; nor is it that rhetoric is to be avoided. He thinks that economics is "a sweet science." Rhetoric cannot be avoided. But it can be analyzed. For any discipline, sometimes arguments may be as much about persuasion as about evidence and theory. McCloskey argues that as much as possible we should be aware when we are engaging in defense of the forms of science and the currently fashionable rhetorical justifications and when we are producing evidence tightly tied to theory. Moreover, he argues that good science is good plausible conversation and the pretensions of science are to be avoided. As an aside, it is possible that McCloskey has a utopian view of the scholarly enterprise; disciplines have political economies that complicate the achievement of good conversation.

John Van Maanem (1988) draws on the anthropological tradition in analyzing the narrative styles and devices that may be used in organizational studies. He is particularly

indebted to James Clifford, the anthropologist/literary theorist who has done the most to codify the uses of narrative styles in presenting qualitative field research. Since Von Maanem is a leading field researcher in organizational studies, his book is especially relevant to the introduction of literary analysis to the field. His discussion of the difference between realist, confessional, and impressionist modes should be required reading for every field worker. Realist modes present data as if the field worker was only a mirror of some objective reality; confessional modes are written in the first person and include the ethnographer's self perceptions and reactions as part of the text; impressionist modes decrease distance between the ethnographer and the events and minimize time-space order. Part of his message is that different literary modes also allow one to see different aspects of life. Although Von Maanem salutes the older realist mode, I think he really believes that the confessional and impressionist mode, which are more tentative and likely to foster relativized, irrationalist, and loose coupling views of the world are closer to the "truth." For my part, I think that there are multiple truths, partly dependent upon level, units and objects of analysis. Nevertheless, Von Maanem has performed a very important service.

Competent Narrative and Policy Choice. Policy choice confronts managers in organizations just as it does legislators and executives in governments. Most of us teach some form of a rationalistic and explicit model of choice. We teach that one ought to make the objectives as explicit as possible, to develop criteria for assessing the objectives, and to evaluate outcomes. Only a few argue the benefits of anarchy or of irrationality. Yet there are often multiple and conflicting objectives; managers must meet a host of competing pressures; and policies develop over time in an iterative process between problem definition, factual assessment and solution proposal. Philosophers who have thought about these issues talk about a mixture of inductive and deductive processes and modern notions of strategic planning as flexible and iterative build upon these notions.

Thomas Kaplan (1986), however, wants to go even further. He argues that a useful device to analyze and choose policies is to tell competent stories. A story is a narrative that describes change over time. A policy story is a narrative about dilemmas of choice over time,

about how contingent events fit together to impinge upon value choices. A good story is one that is rich, in that it encompasses lots of the possibilities and integrates the elements; a good story must be true, and if the world is complex, a true story cannot just be weighted to one side of the issue (we call a one sided tale propagandistic or biased); finally the good narrative policy analysis meets the literary criteria of consistency, congruency, and unity. Good narrative analysis can be done as a set of scenarios, a set of alternative schematically developed narratives. Kaplan has provided a potential use of literary theory to develop management technology for policy choice.

These four examples have been provided to convince you that methods of analysis drawn from the humanities can be powerful aids to scholarly research and to policy choice. By no means have I exhausted the range of possible contributions. Several forms and schools of philosophical analysis, for instance, can be used to deeply enrich organizational studies. Phenomenology, utilitarian theory, existentialism, pragmatism, the theory of justice, are among the branches of philosophy that have important things to say to students of organizations and to managers. One of our leading decision theorists, James G. March, has turned back to philosophy as he searched for alternatives to interest theory as a basis for designing democratic institutions (March and Olsen, 1987). Rather than presenting more examples, I turn to a side of the argument barely mentioned above -- the humanities and enduring values.

#### AN ENLIGHTENMENT MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES

Organizational studies may be pursued for their own sake. For many scholars, knowledge is a worthwhile end in and of itself, and the study of organizations, like astronomy, numismatics, or zoology, needs no further justification. However, organizational studies also has an applied or utilitarian dimension. Especially in management and professional schools (e.g., public health, medicine, social work, education, law, nursing) the study of organizations is expected to produce results -- positive knowledge to improve organizational performance. Improvement of performance, especially in schools of business administration I need not add, is evaluated largely from the point of view of the dominant authorities -- managers or owners.

Applied fields vary in their strength and autonomy. An applied field is strong to the extent that it has a relatively precise and well articulated theoretical base that lends itself to manipulable technologies (social or physical) that increase performance. It is autonomous to the extent that its knowledge base is relatively complex and esoteric, so that laymen cannot easily duplicate the work of the practitioners. Fields of knowledge may be strong intellectually, but not necessarily lend themselves to application. They may be weak intellectually, but lend themselves to application if manipulable technologies are easily at hand.

Much of organizational studies deals with useful topics. Social scientists have been quite imaginative in developing technology packages to sell to organizational elites. Personnel rating packages, organizational development packages, group participation strategies and programs have come out of one part or another the loose amalgam of disciplines that make up organizational studies. But although these technological packages are useful, they are often not very powerful; that is, how much they contribute to performance is often difficult to discern, nor are they so esoteric that managers feel they cannot get along without the help of practitioners of the craft.

As a consequence applied practitioners often appear to be faddish. You can tell that a field is weak if the personality of the practitioner is a major determinant of practitioner success. Our field has been beset by charismatic gurus.

What I have said to this point largely characterizes applied organizational studies in the engineering model: organizations have problems, they turn to experts supposedly in command of esoteric problem solving technologies. But there is another kind of applied sociology -- the enlightenment model. The enlightenment model was developed by humanistically oriented sociologists appalled by rationalistic, technocratic and wrenching solutions offered for the negative side effects of the industrial revolution. Equally committed to social change and the preservation of local tradition and civil institutions, Karl Mannheim and, later, Morris Janowitz (1970) propose an alternative to engineering models.<sup>4</sup> In the enlightenment model the practitioner-scholar does not pretend to solve specific problems for consumers. Instead, assuming that the citizen-consumer and the scholar share some enduring interests and values in the long term survival and effective

performance of that system, the scholar practitioner tries to make available the reflective capacity of detachment and scholarly breadth to the citizen consumer. The enlightenment approach eschews quick fixes. It recognizes the limits of our knowledge and the complexity and perversity of attempts to change social relations. At the same time it is based on a bed rock of optimism: that reason and knowledge can be used to point the way.

I want to argue that an enlightenment model of organizational studies would quickly turn to its base in the humanities. An explicit attention to this dimension of our endeavor would change the way we conducted our studies and organized our discourse. It would lead to a more complex view of the ends of an applied discipline. It would lead the scholar to be more detached from the goals of the owners. Finally, the enlightenment model highlights the scholars role as a citizen of the society and a critic of organizational practice.

An enlightenment approach to applied organizational studies must reach out to the humanities because they have a tradition of reflection on the moral and normative dimensions of our social institutions, while the social sciences have developed a trained incapacity for moral reflection.

It is not that social scientists are immoral. (In my experience the major difference between social scientists and unethical politicians or business executives is that the former lack the opportunities of the latter.) It is that the objectivist value-free stance of positivism leads them to lack a nuanced base for the discussion of value choice. They are unsteeped in the evolving normative bases and dilemmas incorporated into law and fundamental normative understandings of social institutions. In a word, their analysis of values and norms stops at the limits of their own social class, familial, national and epochal understandings. They are little better, and no worse, than other educated citizens of our time.

Of course, many of the humanities disciplines avoid sustained discussion of moral and normative principles. However, branches of philosophy, jurisprudence, and religious thought include discussion of normative orders and their connection to social institutions. I am arguing for a liaison between organizational studies and these disciplines.

It would be foolish in short compass to attempt to lay out all of the concerns of an enlightenment model. Let me mention a few arenas of organizational studies that might well benefit from a deeper awareness of the history and normative bases of organizational choice and practice. In each case some small group of students of organization have employed an enlightenment approach to the topic. I will discuss worker participation, organizational justice, ethics, conformity and crime, and corporate citizenship and control.

Worker Participation. Stemming at least as far back as the Hawthorne studies, industrial and social psychologists have argued over the benefits of various forms of worker involvement for increasing loyalty, commitment, and productivity. The modern development of quality circles is only the latest uptick in a long term discussion.

A smaller part of this historic discussion places the issue in the context of the transformation of the economy and the alienation of workers from the means of production. Worker participation issues are not only a matter of reducing turnover or shoddy work but also, in a system where many of the joys and frustrations of life are controlled and contained at work, involve notions of citizenship.

I have the sense that these issues have been more important to students of industrial relations systems than to those focused on micro group dynamics. In either case, what is at stake is nesting these concerns in democratic theory and a concept of community, without romanticizing the past or the possibilities for the future. (See Pateman, 1970.)

Systems of Domination and of Justice. The iron cage that we live in is a system of domination. As such individuals are subjected to just and unjust authority. Although there is a well developed philosophy and codified legal system surrounding the judicial apparatus of the state, the judicial system of organizations has received little attention. Philip Selznick (1959), that normatively oriented sociologist of law and organizations, believed this was the major agenda item for the sociology of law. But few have followed his lead. One body of literature considers the relationship of citizens to administrative agencies, the junction of organizational procedures, the state, and citizenship rights.

There is a substantial literature about distributive justice. Largely social psychological, it focuses upon the relationship of the distribution of rewards to effort and the perception of legitimacy of that distribution. Recently, a small literature has developed on procedural justice, again focusing upon perceptions of adequacy of procedures.

A study of justice systems in organizations must expand beyond the social psychological. For one, organizational procedures in relationship to employees are nested in the larger legal system. The extent to which the organization can intrude into the private lives of employees, the nature of the employment contract and the duties the organization can assign to employees, the relationship of organizational constraints on post employment behavior, are all guided by the larger legal system. A second large issue concerns the meaning of justice, philosophically and historically.

Ethics, Conformity and Crime. One of the hot fads in American business schools seems to be the teaching of business ethics. What bothers me about the fad is that the organizational studies faculty, who should have easy access to the substantial literature on white collar crime and corporate deviance, seem not to be involved in this movement. My sense is that the somewhat marginal position of the organizational studies faculty within management schools have led them to soft pedal what could be a major topic for discussion.

It is of course the case that we are largely unprepared to do the analysis of complex cases so dear to ethicists. Yet, ethical reasoning unrelated to institutional realism is likely to have little payoff in facing real world decisions, nor in restructuring institutions to better realize social goals. Renee Anspach (1989) has recently documented the difference between an institutionalist and social scientific analysis and a more abstracted ethicist understanding of the dilemmas involved in life and death decisions in the intensive care nursery. Robert Jackall's recent (1988) analysis of the moral dilemmas of the manager ought to be a required part of the curriculum dealing with managerial ethics. An enlarged view of the role of organizational studies in this debate could be of great benefit.

Corporate Citizenship and Control. One of the historic interests of the macro-sociological approach to organizations has been the transformation of ownership and control. One long line of work goes back to Burnham and Berle and Means, and forward to studies of administrative ratio and then to principle-agent theory. Another line of work is encapsulated in the corporate responsibility literature that developed in the 1960s. A third line, largely generated by James Coleman, examines the growth of the organization as a legal personality and plays out the relations of these entities to each other, to the state, and to individuals.

Here again an enlightenment model keeps us focused on the big picture. Principal-agent theory too quickly leads to design conclusions and assumes an identity between the interests of principals and the interests of the commonweal. The study of administrative ratios for themselves degenerates into technicism. An enlightenment model is not hostile to engineering approaches. It does ask for a more detached and broader consciousness.

## CONCLUSIONS

I have presented a foray into the possible linkage of organizational studies and the humanities. Largely conducted in a scientific model, organizational studies, like the rest of the social sciences, is increasingly using methods drawn from the humanities in order to answer interesting questions. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, this movement has enormous implications for our conception of the discipline, our claims to knowledge and cumulation, and, I might add, our relations to consumers. In a world that is permeated by science and engineering claims to truth, the validation of humanistic endeavors will require effort.

We will have to develop methods for more closely articulating with relevant humanistic disciplines. It is clear that our current training models are inadequate to the task.

I have also argued that this articulation with the humanities will help us create a different kind of applied discipline; we will be able to more fully develop an enlightenment, as contrasted with an engineering model. I suspect that such a model will end up changing the way we write textbooks -- now the discussion of values is saved for the last chapter, or put in footnotes. It may



also change the audience for our wares. The engineering model is most useful for lieutenants.

The enlightenment model is for privates and generals.

## FOOTNOTES

1. An earlier version was presented as the Distinguished Speaker Lecture, Organization and Management Theory Section, Academy of Management, August 15, 1989, Washington, D.C. I am grateful to the Section for the honor and the opportunity.
2. The structure of humanistic academic disciplines as professional and knowledge producing systems has received much less attention from social scientists and philosophers than have the natural sciences. See Zald, 1989.
3. What a compliment to have some of our leading theorists, such as Williamson, Perrow, and Stinchcombe, offer alternative explanations and readings!
4. My encounter with the enlightenment model stems from my long association with the late Morris Janowitz. This paper is dedicated to his memory.

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