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David Courpasson

Soft Constraint
Liberal Organizations
and Domination

David Courpasson
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Advances in Organization Studies

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Advances in Organization Studies is a channel for cutting edge theoretical and empirical works of high quality, that contributes to the field of organizational studies. The series welcomes thought-provoking ideas, new perspectives and neglected topics from researchers within a wide range of disciplines and geographical locations.

Acknowledgements

This book was initially written for a French audience. The English translation aims to make it now available to a larger international readership. It is still marked probably for its initial institutional and cultural 'embeddedness'; moreover, it is part of the project of this book to suggest that in the social sciences, and especially in sociology and politics, the treatment and analysis of certain topics are deeply related to the context in which concepts are thought and developed. This is certainly the case for the analysis of structures of domination, a common feature of organizations and of surrounding societies.

This book tries to combine a critical approach to management with a dynamic view of domination and oligarchic mechanisms. It is situated in the long line of classical organisational and political sociology, and borrows greatly from general sociology.

It has early on benefited from the comments and encouragements of several people to whom I would extend heartfelt thanks: Jean-Claude Thoenig and Catherine Paradeise for their personal and intellectual inspiration, and for their friendship. The book is greatly indebted to their critical and generous discussion of ideas over the years. Likewise, I thank, with much love, Françoise Dany for her continuous support and the numerous critical and intellectual discussions we have been having for (so) many years. She was so helpful and constructively critical in the numerous readings she made that this book is hers, as much as mine.

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And I remember, with love, my father. What would you have said about these «things»..?

David Courpasson
January, 2006

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Preamble

Who shall govern?

Power in the post-bureaucratic age

‘Who shall govern?’ is one of the cardinal questions of organisation studies. Let us take a non-organisational scholar to suggest some hypotheses. For Walzer¹, there are two possible answers:

- He or they who best know how to make use of power should rule.
- He or they who are the most immediately subjected to the effects of power should rule. For, in the political sense, exercising power involves imposing risks on others, and knowing how to judge optimally the degree of risk that is acceptable for those subjected to it.

At any rate, the exercise of power and authority always involve a struggle. Let us recall Plato’s story about the granting of authority: ‘The sailors squabble about who should take the helm; each thinks he should be in command of the vessel, although he has never learnt how to navigate and cannot point to any teacher under whom he has served an apprenticeship. What is more, they claim that navigation is something that just cannot be taught, and they are ready to beat up anyone who claims otherwise.’²

In this story, giving power to those who know how to use it is not enough, ‘because we are not ready to put our trust in the navigator until we have decided where we want to go’.³ The story shows that the political decision lies not in the procedure for building the route, but in determining the destination. The exception would be in an emergency, of course, where the sailors will be guided by the maxim of ‘any port in a storm’⁴, when they allow the

¹ Walzer M., *Sphères de Justice*, Paris, Seuil La Couleur des Idées, 1997, p. 396. It should not be a surprise to begin this work with the thoughts of a political philosopher who writes on social justice and equality. This choice bears witness to one of the issues of this book: theorising about management as a set of mechanisms and principles aimed at regulating the inequality between the people at the heart of organizations.

² Walzer, op cit., p. 397, our trans.

³ Walzer, ibid.

⁴ Walzer, op cit., p. 398, our trans.

expert judgement of the navigator to take them safely to the nearest place. But in every other case, the exercise of power refers to the choice of a collective destination, and to a judgement of the consequences of the risks run by each and every person. From then on, ‘the essential qualification needed to exercise political power is not some specific intuition of human ends, but a specific relationship to a very particular collection of human beings’.⁵

Choosing the destination and judging the risks for oneself and for others is one possible definition of political power.

The current authority problem for the rulers of organisations is precisely that their power is not *political*, but *administrative*. They do not choose the ‘destination’ of the organisation, since that seems to depend on other sovereignties, such as the market, which they refer to frequently enough. Therefore, the evaluation of risks is in many cases reduced to the acceptance, shared more or less by everyone, of inevitable sacrifices made on the altar of collective survival. Furthermore, exogenous threats cause people to believe in permanent urgency and turmoil; no one really controls the vessel, such that the submission of people and things is all the more necessary. This type of power, which is powerful but not supreme, is that of those who can make things slide ‘fatally’ towards despotism – but towards a constrained despotism, that is sometimes legalised, diffuse and flexible that would replace raw violence with the compulsory character of managerial decisions.

How can one dare to speak of despotism at a time of ‘entrepreneurship’ and post-bureaucratic neo-liberalism? The word despotism should not be frightening. It refers to a very precise definition put forward by Montesquieu in *The Spirit of the Laws*⁶: despotism is the concentrated exercise of power, in an area where actions are guided by worry, fear and threat. Despotic government in contemporary organisations is produced by the concentration of power at the top and by the constant use of threats in the building and implementation of strategies in firms.

Those who work in firms, whether men or women, shop-floor or management, younger or older, have daily disheartening experiences of organisational despotism. The latter does not always take on the archaic appearance of terror or slavery. It emerges through the abandonment of individual scepticism, through an egalitarian management philosophy, proclaimed in parallel with the promotion of what is different and better. It emerges in the violence of systematic comparison between people, orchestrated through the assumed justice of management tools. It appears in the well known contemporary approach of individual risk-taking that is possible, desirable and eventually, obligatory.

An analysis of the means by which the managers of organisations succeed

⁵ Walzer *ibid.* p. 399, our trans.

⁶ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, (trad. T. Nugent), New York, Hafner Publishing Co., 1962.

today in making their staff obey, which is by making them accept domination, will make clear the apparent ambivalence between this despotism and the liberalism put on display in organisations.

This eternal question of obedience has to be returned to for, despite the hopes of the rulers in liberal forms of management, some questions still remain unanswered. Why do employees submit to the demands of initiative, responsibility, mobility and all the other contemporary requirements, while liberal management is far from keeping its promises? The ship has still not yet reached the right port. How do we explain why these 'sailors' continue to follow the orders of a 'navigator' who is often powerless and who seems to be leading them nowhere? What is it that justifies their not wanting to reach the nearest port, rise up in mutiny, or change course?

Failing a credible plan for its destination, the ship at least has a protective hull. Perhaps that provides a partial reply to our questions. Threats, fear and the absence of choice or alternatives would ensure the continuance of domination, but one that would be *politically* weakened. Is it not a fact that the commitment, involvement, and initiative of employees in contemporary organisations stem from the same source? If so, one should accept or at least explore the idea that liberal management derives rather from a system of domination than from one of emancipation.

Accepting despotism as a dominant form of government is neither archaic nor nostalgic. It is also not claiming that nothing changes, that Taylor still casts his shadow over workshops and offices, that the barons of forgotten fiefdoms might return, or that bureaucratic organisation might be the lesser evil in the absence of mercy from the capitalist 'wolves'. It is simply a question of clearly recognising that domination and despotism are effective, and perhaps unavoidable, methods for governing organisations.

Introduction

The 1990s appear to have endorsed the primacy of the liberal organisation. Hardly anyone would nowadays question the established and many times illustrated fact that the contemporary firm has only a distant relationship with the oppressive but paternalistic factory of the nineteenth century, or the stifling bureaucracy of the post-war years. The contemporary model of the firm is supposed to be dedicated to the end of hierarchies, employer whim, supervision and strict control. The advent of co-operation, participation, empowerment and decentralisation are celebrated in many sociological studies. No better a place to reward and promote initiative, competence, voluntarism and risk-taking as the incontrovertible qualities of the worker than in the firm. While present in both the managerial literature and in the social sciences of the firm and the organisation, this humanist and liberal concept of the organisation nevertheless hides a large part of the real current conditions for the exercise of managerial power. Despite a triumphalism that goes hand in hand with the advent of the liberal organisation and which heralds the reconciliation of firms and people after decades of exploitation, one may question the real principles that govern individuals in organisations. In other words, the omnipotence of liberal management leads one to study whether domination has effectively disappeared from the organisational horizon.

Everyday events in fact show that the firm is a place of exclusion and suffering.¹ Major organisational phenomena clearly make management appear as a set of instruments and views that set out to constrain and elicit the obedience of individuals. This is nothing new. The rules and principles of action of a government have long been described by political science: obedience against legitimacy, accepted domination, voluntary servitude, principles of order and coherence.... Management subscribes to this tradition; the firm is a place where some 'elected' or 'selected' people have to sanction and reward, to differentiate, classify and rank, so that the individuals are distinguished one from the other. Put simply, the details and the objects of

¹ See for instance Dejours C., *Souffrance en France*, Paris, Seuil, 1998.

this domination have changed, and for some years have taken on the reassuring form of unifying technologies, equity criteria and ... smiling managers.

No Machiavellianism in this. The history of management is first of all not that of shameful manipulation and exploitation following one after the other up to the contemporary saga of social 're-engineering' plans. It is just as much that of the constant and considered search for the instruments and arguments for a (relatively) acceptable domination by (almost) all the members of the firm. In this version, the managerial innovations of the past twenty years take on an aspect different from the magic description given by the bards of modernisation and management gurus. They appear as the symptoms of a management in which flexible constraint holds sway over direct personified command; the gentle violence of the contemporary manager takes over from the Taylorian overseer. But behind this apparent liberalism one can detect the traces of a domination that, although in contradiction with contemporary management precepts, is very much alive.

A rapid review of three major characteristic developments in liberal management during the past twenty years will illustrate our argument, highlighting certain ambivalences in the liberal organisation.

The conformity that lies behind diversity

One of the watchwords of current liberal management consists in cultivating and respecting the diversity of the social body in all of its components. The firm is depicted as a mosaic of biographies, experiences, competencies and personalities that constitute the very richness of its 'human resources'.

However, what does one of the motors of modernisation in the firm, *project management*, reveal? While it is supposed to allow the firm to take advantage of the diversity of its competencies and knowledge, isn't the project also a fantastic producer of conformity? Understanding the project in this way, as something that completes rather than replaces the various descriptions available on the subject, acknowledges the fact that today every manager knows that project work is a quasi-obligation from a career viewpoint. 'Doing a project', or rather, becoming project head, in fact allows one to see oneself as entrusted with the fate of one of many ideas that are supposed to ensure the firm's future. The manifestation of trust shown by the rulers is not to be rejected. Equally, because it facilitates observation and supervision of individuals' competencies, often in a prescribed area, and within a very short time frame (6 months sometimes), a project allows one 'to prove oneself'. It even constitutes a test in itself. People know this very well, and often only take a project on because 'one has to do a project

not just to be rewarded, but in order to avoid stagnating or being punished'.²

The model of project manager has therefore succeeded in promoting in the firm a very high standard of qualities and actions expected from individuals of potential, on which the rulers of the firm can decide to put their money. It has been especially successful in partly breaking down the eternal divide between the expert and the manager, by creating the credible 'profession' of management expert. Behind this model, there lies the implicit requirement for conformity; it is better to follow the prescriptions of the model, including the fact of not being too noticeable.

Behind competency, the order of reputations

The logic of competency has for some years been established as the essential and necessary basis for the management of human resources. It advocates the disconnection of the individual and the work position, and a form of individualisation of one's destiny based on a personalised evaluation of the resources and successes of everyone. It changes the standard of management. The fairness of the criteria for positions emanating from the classification scales negotiated collectively is replaced by the integrity of judgement of the senior hierarchy when the annual appraisal interview comes round. From now on, the case by case approach takes over from collective management. Thus, the question of personal trust comes into play. In liberal management, it even becomes the essential ingredient in the hierarchical relationship. The logic of competency should therefore allow for an individualised management of people, offering each person the possibility of taking full advantage of his/her individual potential.

Despite the numerous assertions that such a path is being followed, one cannot fail to be impressed by the attitudes of prudence and scepticism shown by people in organisations these days. It is rather that a principle of reputation appears to have become established for the criteria in judging individuals, in place of the logic of competency. In the words of a senior manager, in 1996: 'I prefer to recruit someone friendly and easy to get on with, provided that he meets the minimum technical criteria, in preference to a very good expert who is impossible to handle.' What does this mean? First, it illustrates the fact that the requirement for allegiance and obedience is central to the thinking of managers trained in the liberal styles of management. The pragmatism of day-to-day management highlights criteria that are forgotten in the courses and talks given to future managers in their 'MBAs'. Second, it shows that for managers the firm is a market for personal reputations. The first requirement

² Research E.M. Lyon 1997.

of an individual is therefore to know how to make one's self visible, likeable and attractive, not so much through developing one's distinctive competency as through demonstrating one's conformity to the local requirements of managers. Alongside the principle of centralised management of human resources based on the seeking out of the best and those with the greatest potential, local practice develops based on the decoding of reputations. The judgement of competency does not rest on proven success, but on the ability to be integrated without complicating the patiently constructed local order.

It should also be remembered that the individualising concept of competency was placed centre stage at the same time as managerial discourses about the equality of destiny. In the face of the tragic necessity for survival going back to the 1980s, this discussion claimed (as it still does today) that the firm and its members were from now on objectively united against the external threats, in a constrained bond linked to the similarity of their destinies. In this model, the firm as collective, or rather, as *community*, is the condition for survival. While the career management styles, rewards, and levels of performance were becoming individualised, basing themselves on the logic of differentiation, competition, and rivalry between individuals, speeches on the theme of solidarity were declaimed. The coexistence of these two requirements (individualisation and solidarity) has only aggravated the vagueness of the political message aimed at organisation members. Is the liberal organisation individualistic or not?

Behind decentralisation, guilt

Another cornerstone of modernisation is decentralisation of the firm, which nowadays results in effects that are far from the initial theoretical intentions of their promoters. A first consequence of decentralisation can in fact be the resurgence of mediaeval baronies in the modernised form of the 'business unit manager'. As a true ruler, this new professional may hold various roles: manager of an agency, a factory, a branch, a subsidiary, an entire firm even in the case of large groups. The existence of these local 'potentates' shows that, whereas decentralisation was thought to be the removal of the hierarchy advocated by all the management manuals, at the same time it very often leads to the re-establishment of hierarchies that are just as powerful because they rely exclusively on the policy of profitability. The latter offers the manager the paradoxical power of non-choice. Central management and local hierarchical managers would indeed be obliged to act violently and urgently, since exogenous events impinge on them; they are constrained, but paradoxically, all powerful. They would be obliged to take the vessel to the nearest accessible port as quickly as possible, and in order to achieve this, to make use of

the well-known management tools. This despotic logic is applied by everyone in his own sphere.

A first pitfall of decentralisation is therefore to lead to a disempowerment of the rulers (central and local), since neither are actually the *authors* of the decisions that they take. Basically, and then not in every case, they are only *actors* of these decisions.

When taken to its extreme, decentralisation turns each person into a true profit centre, that can be evaluated, compared and classified according to the results achieved. It refers back to a liberal concept of the management of risk. In the minds of many firm leaders, decentralising is ‘delegating the risks to the ground’, by claiming that responsibility is a motivational vector. For us, this decentralisation resembles rather a logic for the selection of people. In the decentralised firm, the central organs of the firm are mainly the places of control and punishment for decentralised action. In these new organisational configurations, it is therefore often the fear of being culpable and not the desire to be responsible that dictates how people should act. By liberating employees and freeing them from weighty hierarchies and corporatisms, decentralisation has resulted in making the individual culpable.

As a result, the somewhat undesirable secondary effect of this development is that it makes the employees become very prudent in the management of their own career risk. Far from cultivating the entrepreneurial spirit, they prefer to develop skills in the arbitration and *management* of risk, rather than in the *taking* of risk. Moreover, this attitude becomes all the more prevalent as the reward policies in firms are now wanting. Since they are often regarded as unfair, the rewards do not justify ‘choosing any option that might cause one to come a cropper’.³ After decades of bureaucracy where the only punishment was the withholding of reward, we have entered a liberal era where the only reward seems to be the absence of punishment. Why risk being guilty of a mistake, if the game is no longer worth a candle?

So, from examining three strong trends of liberal management we can suggest that behind the ideas of project, transversality, competency and decentralisation lie the logics of conformity and disempowerment. In other words, the aim of the search for people to comply with the injunctions of the organisation appears to be still current.

This should come as no surprise. Beyond any fascination or intention to denounce, it must be admitted that the large organisation is, and has always been, an organ of selection (therefore exclusion), of classification (therefore punishment), and of domination (therefore control). As it happens, the large organisation has in fact sought to orchestrate the actions of cohesion and solidarity, having come to regard recourse to the emotional as a vector of performance and membership. But fundamentally, this type of organisation,

³ Research by E.M. Lyon, 1998.

being under the threat of competition⁴, is fearful of the lasting emotional relationships that may arise among its members and between its members and its clients. It aims for flexibility in the interests of managerial suppleness and effectiveness, but also in order to distance people from one another. It has made the political choice of individual mobility, not community.

The social sciences of the firm have today become almost incapable of thinking about the government of people; this is because they often refuse to admit that management has not been created to ensure people's happiness, but in order to supervise their actions and control their behaviour, not in the name of cohesion, but in the interests of efficiency. They have sometimes become tangled up in a revamped humanism, arising from the paternalistic sagas of nineteenth century capitalism and translated in the reinjection of values and beliefs in the 'managerial question' at the beginning of the 1980s (with the project and the enterprise culture). They have sometimes fallen into the trap of abstract denunciation of managerial Machiavellianism, and of capitalist geniuses in the manipulation of the mass of ignorant employees.

In contrast to this trend in contemporary social science, the aim of this book is to open up a new route for the sociology of organisation. In breaking away from the latter's progressive and liberal voluntarism, the orientation of this book is towards trying to re-examine the contemporary organisation from a realist-critical point of view, not humanist-naïve. This realism leads to the study of the construction of the *organisational order*, made up of flexible and violent constraints, implicit or explicit obligations, slow but sure normalisations, objectivations of administrative acts, translated into the obedience of individuals. Henceforth submission must be studied as an action and not as enslavement. But it preserves the deeply hierarchical character of organisational life that is asymmetrical and frankly *unegalitarian*. In other words, it seems opportune to open the file on domination as an essential means of governing liberal organisations.

Furthermore, although the question of the legitimacy of managers is eternal, it is today based on new terms. It is a question of understanding the grounds for the acceptance by the members of the organisation of the accrued and sometimes new constraints that weigh upon them. It is also a question of taking an interest in this question at a time when the political weakness of managers has never seemed greater. In fact, their legitimacy to constrain is today quite incomplete, whereas the principle of obedience is directed towards people who are better trained and educated and who are perhaps more demanding, in a word, more competent. As a substitute for legitimacy, one is today continually faced with discourses of powerlessness. Managers, confronted with the growing uncertainty of survival in a merciless economic war, would only do what force and obscure impersonal threats made them do. The manager himself

⁴ Such organisations that lend empirical support to this book.

would therefore be constrained to constrain. But if he is powerless in the face of mechanisms and criteria that dictate his conduct, he is by definition illegitimate. However, this illegitimacy is currently regarded as normal, inevitable, following the example of the threat that produces it. And the everyday nature of the powerlessness is producing the inverse effect of that sought through the solidarity of the destiny of individuals and their firms.

If the fear that results from the very powerlessness of the rulers becomes the essential medium for mobilising people, how can one expect to establish liberal management on anything other than domination? For all that, we do not consider that the proclaimed liberalism is an illusion. We believe that it nevertheless requires conditions that are not met today in organisations: a development project and credible reward promises, fair management of errors and failures, representative and legitimate bosses, a minimum concern for the fate of others....

This book is conceived so as to develop progressively a sociological and political theory for the government of people in contemporary averaged-sized and large organisations.

The first four chapters will tackle the many controversial theories that exist about the concept of domination. At the very least, no sociologist is indifferent to the idea of domination. One might even say that for a very long time it has remained at the heart of the opposition between the traditions and schools of thought on the phenomenon of politics and on the question of the social order. This opposition is far from having retreated today. On the contrary, it seems to be increasing as the models of individualistic analysis based on the idea of action show their almost indisputable supremacy in many fields of sociological analysis.

It is therefore not a question of refuelling the polemics that are more or less useful for understanding action and domination. What has to be confirmed is that we are far from a complete examination of the question of domination, even if some would regard it as an obsolete topic, consisting only of *a priori* ideologies and compared sometimes to the Marxist figure of exploitation, sometimes to the political spectre of tyranny, or sometimes to the analysis of unilateral dependence.

In order to understand how the idea and concept of domination are in fact quite common, and very useful for understanding the development of organisations, we have to try to study some sources and some controversies, in particular in the field of organisational sociology.

Chapter 1, which is devoted to some American sociological approaches to management, will first re-establish the thread of some of the sociological currents that have regarded the superiority of the organisation over people through more or less violent methods of domination, and which have suc-

ceeded in rehabilitating the bureaucratic concept of the organisation as an efficient method of political organisation. We shall see that management has often been considered by these sociologies as the aid to a goal of a supervisory and control framework. Domination here plays the role of efficiency vector.

Chapter 2 seeks, among the characteristics of current organisational sociology, the causes of the gap between this same sociology and the concept and phenomenon of domination, despite some recent efforts towards reintroducing institutional dimensions into the analysis of organisations. We shall see how the sociology of organisations was able to dismiss the study of domination as something at the level of a functional archaism, seeing in the modernisation of organisations carried out over the past twenty or thirty years support for personal development and employers' legitimisation. From the Crozier study of the blocking bureaucracy to the institutionalist resurgence of the 1990s, Chapter 2 will show that the sociology of organisations continually confirms its humanist and actionist choices that largely prevent it from considering the firm as a political structure, following the example of the authors of Chapter 1.

Chapter 3, devoted to certain founders of political thought on the organisation, analyses some theoretical foundations of the idea of domination, in order to see on what conditions and by what means domination can be an efficient and lasting method of government. We analyse the classic traditional sociological study of domination in the work of Durkheim, Weber, Aron and Parsons. This tradition presents all domination as the partial determinant of conduct, because it must be interpreted and understood by the actors in order to play its 'role' as obstacle or determinant. Constraint is seen both as a *limit* to action and as a *determinant* of action. It reduces the field of possible choice, and partially determines the content. It therefore has a significant and restrictive dimension. This theory will therefore rehabilitate the idea of domination, by separating it from the negative spectres that surround it – subjugation, obedience and slavery – that is, by removing its permanent 'ideological hat'. It will also distance it from Piaget's idea of 'totalitarian realism'⁵, 'among the types of sociological explanation there is totalitarian realism: the whole is a «being», which exercises its constraints, changes individuals (imposes its logic on them, etc.) and therefore remains heterogeneous to individual consciences as they would be independently of their socialisation', in order to see a political phenomenon requiring and assuming the action of people. On such foundations, Chapter 4 introduces a stage in the idea of domination, in the form of the definition of the desirable theoretical framework for the study of domination in a liberal universe and of some hypotheses for research.

It will now be possible to open the empirical debate on domination in Chapters 5 and 6. What is the objective weight of constraints in liberal organis-

⁵ Piaget J., *Etudes sociologiques*, Geneva, Droz, 1955, p. 145.

ations that apparently get back more than previously to the competencies of individuals and to local intelligence? Into what do new managerial policies transform the rules for power distribution in the organisation, and how do people react in the face of the new rules? How, after more than thirty years of firms' modernisation, do leaders succeed or fail in maintaining their authority, what innovations do they seek in order to establish and clarify their power, and what role do the members of the organisation play in the perpetuation of domination?

Through such questions, we shall study in these chapters two different forms of domination. One is violent and direct and based on a centralised and authoritarian change (Chapter 5). The other is gentle and more impalpable and based on policies of normalisation and the search for obedience through conformity to behaviour models (Chapter 6). Chapter 5 includes an example of constraint exercised on professionals, during the period of intensive modernisation of the banks (between 1985 and 1995), when the technologies of segmentation were imposed as instruments of change and domination for new professional systems. Chapter 6 develops two examples of technology policies of control, of objectivation of behaviour and of personal commitment: project management and competency management. This research in fact shows the problems posed by the liberal principles of management for the members of an organisation. It aims to reveal the extent to which organisational liberalism does or does not constitute a plausible framework for individual action, for change or for autonomy. As a consequence, this research will give an account of the contemporary tension between the injunction to act and the fear of being an actor. In particular, we shall see that in the current organisation, this tension brings into play subjectivation processes and the development of despotic forms of management, the identification of behaviour and the necessary bringing into line of the practices of the actors, management's appeal for commitment and the awareness of risk.

Before going further, we need to specify the type of modernisation of organisations in which we are interested. For us, modernisation includes a threefold dynamic. The first is a movement towards increasing the number of rules and instruments that formalise the action and behaviour of individuals and collectives (the *instrumentation* dynamic). The second is a movement for the promotion of responsibility and of growing individualisation of choice, judgement and grounds for action in the organisation (*subjectivation*

dynamic⁶). The third is a dynamic of progressive dissolution of communities and professional solidarity (*disintegration* dynamic). This concept of modernisation is thus equivalent to an increase in the tension between the actor and the organisation. For the modernising organisation is constantly stressing the importance of order and cohesion in a period of individualisation and appealing for critical ability and reflexivity from the members of the organisation. On the basis of this definition, chapter 5 and 6 will then try to show how the mechanisms of government transform themselves into universes in which the people are not increasingly free, but increasingly spurred to act in their own interests.

The research subsequently serves as the basis for a discussion of some current fundamentals of domination generated by liberal management: use of threats, the profound transformation of work communities and groups and the dynamic of management instruments, all of which are analysed in Chapter 7.

Finally, Chapter 8 presents some elements for the establishment of a theory of liberal management, in particular thanks to the study of the political regime of the contemporary liberal organisation.

⁶ This idea of subjectivation is therefore far removed from that of Touraine A., *Critique de la modernité*, Paris, Fayard, 1992, for whom it refers mainly to the emergence of the individual as a subject of history. As for the organisations, the idea of subjectivation tends rather to bring about the sensitive use of reflexivity in strongly interdependent places, where strategy prevails over the community. It is very difficult to be a subject in the contemporary organisation. The sociology can then attempt to analyse the apparently paradoxical conjunction between the subjectivation of actions and judgements and the domination of the 'business' grounds for action. It is con-

Defence of bureaucracy

The perspective for the study of organisations proposed in this work does not stem from some ideological commitment. On the contrary, it is in tune with some theoretical currents, already quite old in themselves, that never abandoned the aim of understanding the organisation and management as systems of domination and constraint. From its origins, American organisational and managerial sociology's main concern has been to analyse how managerial action succeeds in containing people's actions, and how this containment produces efficiency. To give an adequate account, in the few pages of this book, of a long and fruitful tradition of research on organisations and power, constraint and domination, is problematic.¹ Our approach is to imagine a possible chronological sequence in American theories on management.

In a context of social Darwinism, Taylorism was the first instrument to respond to a concern for direct control of individual action. More 'humanist' positions, such as that of Barnard², apparently came along to modify the Taylorian approach. But they too appear to be centred on the search for domination, moral on this occasion, which should be imposed on people. With Simon, whereas the individual and actionist dimension is re-established, analysis nonetheless reveals the strong impact of the organisation on people. This impact operates through cognitive mechanisms producing powerful organisational routines. The culmination of this tradition of study of types of containment of individual action may be found in an author such as Perrow.³ By rehabilitating bureaucracy, when the overall trend from the 1970s was to proclaim the merits of liberalism and individual initiative, he devoted himself to

¹ The reader is asked to excuse the omissions that I have clearly made in order to control the size of this chapter. Apart from the fact that US sociology of organisations is not the book's theme, this literature is much too vast and encompasses too many authors meriting discussion.

² While he is one of the best-known researchers of the so-called Harvard school that founded the 'human relations' approach, Barnard is interesting because he is also an important firm manager. His theory, sometimes judged to be utopian, is based on actual management practice.

³ Known for his work in the field of structural contingency (for example *Organizational Analysis, A Sociological View*, London, Tavistock, 1970), Perrow subsequently developed a critical study on the analyses condemning the bureaucratic and hierarchical forms of organisations.

understanding the organisation through policies of domination and control, as well as analysing the comparative merits of the centralisation and decentralisation of power.

On the basis of this historical review, this chapter aims to show the importance of certain questions that today are forgotten or at least ignored by organisational sociology. It will in particular be the moment to set down the boundaries of arbitrary managerial power, together with the inadequacies of the ideology of co-operation, dreamed of by authors such as Barnard. It will show that, even in an atmosphere of criticism and rejection of determinism of every type, arising partly from the actionism of the 1970s, organisation and management have ultimately deviated very little from their initial aim of seeking efficiency through domination and control.

1.1 Bendix and Taylor: against arbitrary managerial power

One of the characteristics of American organisation sociology is that it is marked by the democratic paradox of American industrial society:

‘(...) democracy stressed liberty and equality for all. On the other hand, large masses of workers and nonsalaried personnel had to submit to apparently arbitrary authority, backed up by local and national police forces and legal power, for ten to twelve hours per day, six days a week’.⁴

In his research on the ideological sources of American management, Bendix, early on, became interested in the contradictions in the liberal model that the American organisation seemed to promote. In particular, he tried to understand how entrepreneurs could justify ‘the privilege of voluntary action and association for themselves, while imposing on all their subordinates the duty of obedience and the obligation to serve their employers to the best of their ability’.⁵ He was then led to record that the American managerial context was stamped at source by a Darwinian trait that made the struggle for survival a cardinal value. This is something that also shows through a quotation from Henderson, recalled by Bendix, when that author wrote in 1896 that the captains of industry ‘fought on the field of battle where the struggle for existence defined those who are “fit for survival”’.⁶ As Perrow⁷ in turn remarks, in this system failure is forbidden: for the person who fails, the worst may happen, including exclusion from the game, and not only submission to the strongest. From now on, an individual and ‘virile’ ethic of success dominates the scene. It relies on messages delivered to employees that contain no ambiguity. A simple

⁴ Perrow C., *Complex Organizations. A Critical Essay*, McGraw-Hill, 1986, p. 53.

⁵ Bendix R., *Work and Authority in Industry*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1956, XXI.

⁶ Bendix, *ibid.*, p. 256.

⁷ Perrow, (1986), *ibid.*, p. 54.

logic for judging failure, which is validated and accepted, provides the criteria for a ruthless and often irreversible selection. As a consequence, respect for entrepreneurial authority is demanded as a condition of success, and, above all, for survival.

Perrow, however, recalls that this warlike and ultra-selective concept of organisational management provoked a violent union response, a kind of concrete expression of the struggle for survival from those who rejected the logic of exclusion.⁸ Bendix too had referred to the questioning of managerial authority. He indeed considers that this protest movement contributed to ‘nibbling away at the glorification of success’. He also recalls⁹ the existence of an article of 1910¹⁰ stating the fact that the legitimacy of a work relationship is also to be gained from the ‘trust, respect and co-operation of the employer’. He therefore concludes that the conditions for success can no longer be attributed to a principle of Darwinian selection. Bendix’s standpoint indeed contains precursory signs of the relational dimension of management, brought together in the famous Human Relations School.

Taylor opened the route borrowed by Bendix. His works helped breach the American Social Darwinism current at the beginning of the twentieth century. Taylor, in fact, sees managerial authority as being based on three principles, which are recalled by Perrow:¹¹

- The application of scientific research to work, which is preferable to allowing tradition or auto-regulation to guide the operation of factories.
- Respect for the interests of the workers, for such a scientific approach allowed management to explore the possibilities for developing workers, by offering them the chance of going as far as their abilities allowed them. In a way, this principle marks the end of the struggle for survival, since each person can find his place in a hierarchy of abilities legitimised by science.
- A desirable co-operation between work and capital. One of Taylor’s premises is indeed that the highest salaries and the highest profits can go hand in hand. There is therefore no need for a collective defence of the workers’ interests, since management itself draws the source of its legitimate authority from this defence.

For Bendix, Taylorism marked the end of arbitrary managerial power all the more because in this approach science decides, as an abstract form of authority, on behalf of the personified but at the same time questionable authority of the boss. Moreover, Bendix analyses the depersonalisation of the

⁸ Perrow, (1986), *op cit.*, p. 55-56.

⁹ Bendix, *op cit.*, p. 271-274.

¹⁰ No references provided.

¹¹ Perrow, (1986), *ibid.*, p. 57.

authority allowed by Taylorism as a means of remedying the inadequacies of employers so far as human resource management is concerned. Although the emergence and functioning of managers had already been celebrated for years, Bendix, in fact, considers that one of the problems of managers is that they do not know how to make use of the abilities of workers. He insists on this point all the more because he considers that the behaviour of workers is, above all, guided by servility. For him, people are most often 'docile, credulous, uncritical and want to be instructed (...) they want to feel united, bound, tied to something, to a cause greater than them that commands...'¹² Henceforth, for Bendix, the value of Taylorian scientism is to propose an efficient means of combating arbitrary managerial power, while remaining coherent with the 'voluntary servitude' that for him is dominant in the behavioural model of the worker. Because he prefers equality in docility to inequality in liberty, the worker can in fact accept authority [managerial], on condition that management demonstrates proof of its ability to prevent individuals' failures through appropriate policy choices. So, after years of Social Darwinism, leadership and domination find a new legitimacy. For Bendix and Taylor, this legitimacy rests on the ability of management to act for the development and the good of the workers. It therefore rests on the efficiency of management. It leaves the door open to the complementary ideology of co-operation, between capital, management and the worker, for the good of all the protagonists in the work relationship.

1.2 The ideology of co-operation: Chester Barnard

Perrow¹³ recalls that up until Chester Barnard¹⁴, the dominant classical theory held that management had been created 'to control the enterprise, divide the work rationally, pay minimum wages to ensure profit, and take advantage of a large and dependent labour market'. Deriving from Darwinism, this concept of management persisted in a form opposing *a priori* the interests of the employers and the wage earners, despite the modifications made by the Taylorian doctrine.

Barnard, whom many regard as one of the two most important writers on the theory of organisations, along with Weber, makes his mark in striking contrast with the first theorist of bureaucracy. For Barnard, organisations are by nature co-operative systems. He goes so far as to exclude from them conflicts, imperative co-ordination and financial incentives.¹⁵ For him, organisations

¹² Bendix, op cit., p. 296.

¹³ Perrow, (1986), op cit., p. 63.

¹⁴ Barnard C.I., *The Function of the Executive*, Cambridge, Mass, 1938.

¹⁵ It is convenient to recall here that Barnard's book was written during a perilous period for organisation management, caused by serious social misery and by the emerging violent action of

have a moral aim. The only purpose of formal organisations is to survive. It is not a question of profit, power or political ideology, still less personal enrichment. Barnard's refusal to see the importance of the material aspects of organisational life [according to him, material incentives constitute 'weak incentives beyond the level of the bare physiological necessities'¹⁶] can be put down to his own job as manager of cost control.

According to Barnard, the power of the organisation is legitimised by society and by its moral values. For him, morality is indeed the fruit of co-operation: men co-operate towards a goal, that of the organisation, and this becomes a common goal. Morality then emerges from these co-operative efforts. Consequently, Barnard develops an organisational view of management, in the sense that it is the system that counts, not the individuals that make it up. For him, the organisation is 'non-personal'. It is not made up of people, or machines, or ideas. It consists of forces. Moreover, management's decisions do not reflect personal choices, since the person, (even the manager), is diluted into the co-operative force of the system. Barnard nevertheless admits: 'every participant in an organisation may be regarded as having a dual personality: an organisation personality and an individual personality'.¹⁷ Nevertheless, what counts most in Barnard's eyes is the result of the collective actions of co-operation for the organisation as a whole. A very revealing example quoted by Barnard to illustrate this viewpoint is that of the domination of the personality by the military institution: 'In military action, individual conduct may be so dominated by organisation personality that it is utterly contradictory of what personal motivation would require'.¹⁸ So, in parallel with a very strong reification of the organisation, which would possess its own personality to support its domination over individuals, (and their selfish interests, we might add), Barnard greatly minimises personal choice. For him, managerial decisions do not reflect personal choice, since the decision-maker belongs to a system, the formal organisation, which constrains him to act according to its imperatives.¹⁹ Of course, one may ask by what curious alchemy imperatives could be produced without a personalised intervention being identifiable at some given moment. Be that as it may, what is important for Barnard is that the organisation is superior to individuals, especially because he regards individual action as not logical. Logic is exclusively applicable to relationships of co-ordination between individuals acting in the name of their organisational personality.

the working classes in the USA. One can imagine that Barnard is writing in order to repel the authoritarian spectre of social Darwinism and Weberian bureaucracy.

¹⁶ Barnard, *op cit.*, p143.

¹⁷ Barnard, *ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁸ Barnard, *op cit.*, p. 88.

¹⁹ Perrow, (1986), *op cit.*, p. 67.

Barnard's concept is very different from that of Weber. For the latter, the organisation is more rational than individuals because those who control it impose an order on the members of an organisation. This control is operated in the interests of goals clearly established by the rulers, in the name of a reasonable clear legitimacy. There is therefore a rationality of managerial control with Weber. This is how Perrow summarises the opposition between Barnard and Weber: 'The duality that pervades Weber is that of the ruler and the ruled; the duality that pervades Barnard is that of organisational personality and the individual personality'.²⁰

Effectively, Barnard and Weber both recognise that organisations are structures of domination. Their positions however reflect the existence of two distinct forms of domination. Weberian domination accepts the personalisation of the rulers, even though it is the bureaucratic rule that serves as the instrument of domination. On the contrary, with Barnard the domination is impersonal. On the one hand, with Weber, the submission of people is rational. On the other hand, with Barnard, the opposition between individual and organisational personalities ends in the superiority and domination of the organisation that is translated through voluntary co-operation. Moreover, Barnard considers that the main resource of domination is indoctrination, that is, the construction of common goals, 'the inculcation of belief in the real existence of a common purpose'.²¹

In this universe of almost unobtrusive domination, without material artefacts, authority comes from below. Subordinates make decisions to guarantee the authority of the person above them. For Weber, there is always a minimum of will and voluntary commitment in an authoritarian relationship, Barnard for his part speaks of the 'fiction of superior authority'. Rather than the order or threat of dismissal, he prefers, for example, to refer to the concept of voluntary resignation, i.e. 'cases of voluntary resignation from all sorts of organisations are common for this sole reason. Malingering and intentional lack of dependability are the more usual methods'.²²

In other words, he thinks that the person could define commitment in an autonomous way. Barnard accepts the punitive function of the organisation²³ which makes its authoritarian fiction completely real. But one finds in the very principle of co-operation the idea that the power of the organisation can only develop and be maintained so long as it is legitimate. Authority only exists through a process of voluntary acceptance of the 'superiority' of the organisation. For Barnard, authority therefore finds its source not in the right to

²⁰ Perrow, (1986), op cit., p. 68.

²¹ Barnard, op cit., p. 87.

²² Barnard, *ibid.*, p. 166.

²³ Barnard, op cit., p. 171.

command, but in the will to accept on the part of the one who obeys. He then speaks of a 'zone of indifference', which means that the decision to execute an order received depends not on the person who gives the order, but on the fact that it is located in a zone of acceptance of obedience that varies from individual to individual. In short, in Barnard one clearly detects a will, a determination to purge the organisation of all non-moral behaviour, of all that is non-logical, because it is non-co-operative.

Barnard seems to offer the analysis of a domination of a particular type: that of an organisational personality that produces constrained consensus and harmony. In this functionalist setting, the individual is reduced, when he makes his entry, to 'the slave voluntarily giving legitimacy to the authority of the master'.²⁴ Barnard then describes a very peculiar co-operative democracy, where theory is seen to struggle for a co-operation that empirical truth labours to establish.

1.3 The neo-Weberianism of Simon: control, constraint and domination

In contrast to Barnard's approach, which, relatively, ignores the individual in a domineering and disembodied organisation, Simon and March's plan was precisely to begin to introduce the question of individual choice. For them, the organisation is not to be reified, even in the name of impalpable values. It must be thought of as a cognitive space, in which action is first of all the deed of individuals.

Simon develops a clearly individualistic vision of the organisation. In a pragmatic way, he reminds us that organisations are made up of individuals: 'an organisation is after all a collection of individuals, and what the organisation does is done by people'.²⁵ Simon's first model that seeks to counterbalance those approaches too exclusively focused on organisational systems, is one that stresses rationality: 'From the moment when the system of values that governs administrative choices is specified, there is one and only one "best decision"'.²⁶ The other, complementary, model is of course that of bounded rationality. Here it is not a question of going through a menu of characteristics, but of seeing how he reintroduces individual dimensions into a theory hitherto essentially dominated by the system. This model ignores the complexity of individual desires, values and the multitude of influences weighing on the decisions. Furthermore, it postulates that people are rational in their intentions, but limited in their abilities. Because their knowledge is incomplete, they

²⁴ Perrow, (1986), op cit., p. 76.

²⁵ Simon H.A., (3rd ed. 1976), *Administrative Behavior*, New York, Free Press, 1957, p. 110.

²⁶ Simon, *ibid.*, p. 204.

cannot accept the consequences of their actions, or draw up an exhaustive list of alternative solutions. Their behaviour is therefore simplistic, and they are condemned to choose systematically the first acceptable solution. Even if the individual has several alternatives available, he will not know how to class them in order of preference, according to March and Simon²⁷. Therefore, the intervention of a player with restricted rationality explains the uncertainty that always weighs on decisions. The decision finally adopted will not be the best in substance, but will be the one that corresponds to the players' cognitive process. From this point of view, the rationality is said to be *subjective* by Simon²⁸, which means that it corresponds to the personal interpretation that the decision-maker makes of the data in the situation that he faces. In this model, the action appears as an attempt to adapt actively and rationally to the pre-existing constraints of the situation.

Whereas Barnard thought that the individual reached rationality through the organisation, Simon therefore considers that individuals are intentionally rational, and life in an organisation does not produce a more rational personality. Briefly, for Simon, every decision or individual choice is nevertheless subject to the influences emanating from the organisation, and from the groups in which the individuals take part.²⁹ The organisational constraints to which Simon refers are the division of work, standardisation of practice, system of authority, information channels, indoctrination, etc. In this theoretical framework, the individual must adapt to the organisational objectives embodied in the constraints. In a way, it is the organisation that wins once again, but not necessarily in the relatively harmonious atmosphere described and desired by Barnard. Simon himself says in a somewhat instrumental vision of the rational individual: 'The behaviour of individuals is the tool through which the organisation achieves its aims'.³⁰

With Simon, there is no form of necessary coincidence between the organisational and individual aims, as with Barnard. The Simonian individual attempts to satisfy personal aims through the organisation, but these aims are not necessarily those of the organisation. This is why the rulers of the organisation look for ways of creating coherence between individual and organisational aims.

The organisation's control of people is therefore exercised through the routines that they obey. These routines are proven solutions implemented in order to meet the requests of the organisation. They lead to a standardisation and a normalisation of behaviour; each person tends to be satisfied with the stan-

²⁷ March J. and Simon H., (2nd ed.), *Organizations*, Cambridge, Mass., Basil Blackwell, 1958, p. 138.

²⁸ Simon H.A., *Models of Bounded Rationality*, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 2 volumes. 1982.

²⁹ Simon, (1957), op cit., p. 102.

³⁰ Simon, (1957), op cit., p. 108.

dards and solutions imposed by the organisation. In the face of this routine and normalised situation, where the requirement for conformity creates uniformity, Simon considers that ‘organisations would function better if human rationality was less bounded’.³¹ In other words, Simon thinks it necessary to find ways of pushing back the bounds of rationality. At the same time, Perrow reminds us that bounded rationality makes bureaucratic control and domination generally possible.³² The cognitive bounds of the person at work allow the organisation to legitimise its own domination, and thus stabilise the work relationships. Even though it constitutes an obstacle to organisational efficiency, bounded rationality, according to Perrow, makes possible the existence of stable hierarchical structures. When he comments on Simon, Perrow however underlines the precarious nature of the domination thus established. Resistance to the routines is always possible. This unexpected resistance makes it possible for new aims to emerge.

One should read Simon’s works on rationality as a model for the analysis of organisational constraint. For him, people do not accept the aims of the organisation because they share them or because they believe in them. This model thus deviates from that of Barnard, where belief, even if it is also constrained, nonetheless eventually becomes embodied in voluntary co-operative acts. In Simon’s perspective, individuals submit themselves to the organisation because the latter possesses mechanisms to validate that the individual behaviours and values are coherent with the perspective of achieving the organisational purposes. In other words, the rulers have the tools for judging and verifying individual conformity, and therefore the tools for possible punishment.

With March and Simon, this principle of instrumented constraint lies moreover at the heart of managerial authority. According to them, the superior has the power because he possesses the tools to construct the environment of subordinates and their perceptions, and consequently to construct their conformity. He gives few orders, but he establishes the priorities. This approach to the boss takes us away from the image of the ‘boss who is in direct command’, or that of participative management, or even that of Barnard’s soldier who ‘decides’, after receiving an order, to engage or not to engage in battle. Simonian management is based on a flexible authority that influences the premises of decisions, for example through recourse to punishments and rewards. Thus, the subordinate will voluntarily restrict the number of alternatives to be considered in order to conform to the norms and routines that are imposed on him. For Simon, flexible authority weighing on the premises of decisions represents the key to the comprehension of action in an organisation. This vision competes with those visions focused on the autonomy of the player

³¹ Perrow, (1986), op cit., p. 123.

³² Perrow, (1986), op cit.

and on his more or less provable ability to take decisions thanks to his free will. Perrow describes as ‘discrete control’ this authority that influences the cognitive premises underlying action and which, according to Simon, originates in the deep structures of the organisation.³³ These internalised premises ultimately serve as a means of constraint. Perrow compares this method of control to two other types of control: *direct* control (giving orders, directly supervising, applying rules) and *bureaucratic* control (specialisation, standardisation, hierarchy). Simon’s view of the organisation is consequently heavily marked by constraint. He offers us the vision of an individual perpetually subjected to stimuli that oblige him/her to adopt pathways controlled by the organisation. This control becomes the only guarantee of trust that one can show to everyone in an organisation characterised by competition and dependency.

1.4 At the end of the road: Perrow and the defence of bureaucracy

In the lineage of reflections on the organisation described above, there have been writings published for several decades that have denounced bureaucracy, both as an organisational form and as a political form.³⁴ In contrast to a liberal model, bureaucracy would be the place for hierarchy and domination, crushing individual wills with impersonal regulation. It would show preference to the system to the detriment of the individual, and in the name of this one would have to prefer alternatives that were apparently less constraining and more ‘entrepreneurial’.

Part of Charles Perrow’s *Complex Organization*³⁵ is nonetheless devoted to an argued defence of bureaucracy in the face of the classic attacks that he regards as, if not illegitimate, then, at least badly targeted. In this sense, he is linked with the authors already mentioned. Certainly, Perrow does not deny that the Weberian ideal type (which is only an ideal type, in contrast to the claims of those who tried to criticise him) is impossible to achieve. He also admits that bureaucracy has weaknesses; being set up to deal with routine and stable tasks, it is no longer efficient if the organisation becomes too temporary. It can also fail when it relies on the idea of an ‘average’ person, who, by definition, does not exist.³⁶ The

³³ Simon, (1957), op cit., p. 79.

³⁴ Here again we are unable to cite the numerous writings of a post-bureaucratic nature. But see Heckscher, Charles and Anne Donnellon (1994) *The Post-Bureaucratic Organization*, London, Sage; for a view that rehabilitates the bureaucratic principle, see Du Gay, Paul (2000), *In Praise of Bureaucracy*, London, Sage.

³⁵ Perrow, (1986), op cit.

³⁶ Perrow, (1986), *ibid.*, p. 4.

thesis that he will defend is however that the essential flaws of bureaucracy arise in fact from the impossibility of bureaucratising sufficiently. This proposition relies particularly on the controversy that he engages in with regard to four themes exploited fully by the detractors of the bureaucratic model.

An initial debating topic raised by Perrow concerns the idea of centralisation. For him, the most important question concerning organisations is a political one. He first admits that bureaucracy has become a means of centralising power in society and legitimising, even disguising, this centralisation: 'Bureaucracy is a tool, a social tool that legitimises the control of the many by the few, despite the formal apparatus of democracy; and this control has generated unregulated and unperceived social power'.³⁷ Simultaneously, though, he considers that bureaucracy helps to purge organisations of the particularist administrative principle that is equivalent to discrimination, which may be illegitimate because it relies on criteria that are invisible or too localised. Perrow's reproach addressed to particularism is that it resorts to specific criteria that are less efficient than universal criteria (for example competency), when choosing and selecting employees. He adds that the organisation often chooses particularism through laziness. According to him, it is more difficult to define competency than to hide incompetence. Perrow then invites us to deplore the collusion, nepotism or power of reputational phenomena, rather than the proliferation of restrictive rules that limit the subjectivity of judgement. For Perrow, the bureaucratic ideal consists of ensuring a minimum of legitimate uses of the principles and tools of management, that is, in the interests of the organisation. From this point of view, bureaucracy represents some progress.³⁸ Bureaucratic objectivity requires the sacrifice of decentralisation.

A second criticism Perrow attacks relates to the sterilising effects of hierarchy.

'A hierarchy promotes rigidity and timidity. Subordinates are afraid of passing bad news up the ladder or of suggesting changes (such an action would imply that their superiors should have thought of the changes and did not).'³⁹ These fears, this resignation even, go hand in hand with the authoritarianism of the boss, his dictatorial side, his rigid and rapid judgements on matters that are never reviewed. Perrow applies himself then to shedding new light on the question of the span of control. Whyte⁴⁰ had suggested that the more subordinates a manager has, the less his supervision is

³⁷ Perrow, (1986), op cit., p. 5.

³⁸ Perrow, (1986), *ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁹ Perrow, (1986), op cit., p. 29.

⁴⁰ Whyte W.F., 'Human Relations – A progress Report', in *Complex Organizations; A Sociological Reader*, Etzioni A. (ed.), New York, Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1962, p. 100-112.

close, and the more autonomy his subordinates have. Perrow underlines that one can also observe the opposite: a large *span* can signal centralisation of power, because it means ‘reluctance to delegate, rather than delegation’.⁴¹ He recalls from the studies of Peter Blau⁴², Marshall Meyer⁴³ or Aston⁴⁴, that dense hierarchical forms do not appear to be in opposition to decentralisation; on the contrary, they can be associated with it.⁴⁵ He reminds us that there are even successes that can be attributed to hierarchism, but ‘if things are going well, we talk of co-operation; if they are going badly, we speak of the “emphasis on hierarchy” or this “goddamned bureaucracy”’.⁴⁶

A third refinement proposed by Perrow concerns the traditional denunciation of the excess of rules. He notes that if bureaucracy causes rules to be multiplied, the latter are not systematically opposed to the autonomy of individuals. On the contrary, autonomy can quite easily be protected by rules that are connected to one another⁴⁷ and thus form a coherent system that can serve as a defence for local action. Rules can then serve as criteria for the guidance of action, not necessarily as a hindrance to action. Perrow notes that, however, while mechanisation and tools allow rules to be incorporated in the machine itself, this does not make a rule disappear: it is simply replaced by an instrument. Another way of minimizing rules would be to make the staff uniform. This would allow the proliferation of rules to be remedied by reducing the necessity for coherence associated with the diversity of people, their expectations and their profiles. But this solution is equivalent to an impoverishing standardisation and is ultimately a dead end.

Perrow finally describes some advantages that the existence of rules may have. They are first of all required by the principle of change itself. In order to change, points of reference and stability are required, if only to know one’s starting point – they serve to reduce the discretionary power that some hold over others. Also, rules can be a protection against punishment or reproach. On this topic Perrow refers⁴⁸ to a very long extract from Wilfred Brown⁴⁹,

⁴¹ Perrow, (1986), *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴² Blau P., ‘The Hierarchy of Authority in Organizations’, *American Journal of Sociology* 73, January 1968.

⁴³ Meyer M., ‘Two Authority Structures of Bureaucratic Organizations’, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 13, September 1968.

⁴⁴ Child J., ‘Predicting and Understanding Organizational Structure’, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 18, No. 2, 1973.

⁴⁵ Perrow, (1986), *op cit.*, p. 32.

⁴⁶ Perrow, (1986), *ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁷ Perrow, (1986), *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴⁸ Perrow, (1986), *op cit.*, p. 21.

⁴⁹ Brown W., *Exploration in Management*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1960, p. 97-98.

in which the latter states that ‘the absence of written policy leaves [him] in a position where any decision he takes, however apparently trivial, may infringe upon an unstated policy and produce a reprimand’. Perrow then declares that rules are not good or bad in themselves. While rules are often accused of causing immobility, crystallising the well-known phrase ‘resistance to change’, according to him we forget to say that they are only one of the elements in a system, and they can serve the interests of certain individuals or groups. Acting as a protective power against antagonism, they can be useful in the context of a struggle or difficult hierarchical relationship. So, ‘good rules are often those that are rarely noticed (...). They simply make sense’.⁵⁰ They can serve to legitimise decisions or unpleasant actions. As justifications and protections, they are moreover useful to both the manager and the subordinate. Rules ‘protect as well as restrict; co-ordinate as well as block; channel effort as well as limit it; permit universalism as well as provide sanctuary for the inept; maintain stability as well as retard change; permit diversity as well as restrict it. They constitute the organisational memory and the means for change’.^{51 52}

The fourth theme discussed by Perrow concerns the legitimacy of the superior’s authority in the bureaucracy. He recalls⁵³ that in one of his comments in *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1947), Parsons reproaches Weber for confusing two types of authority⁵⁴:

- That based on technical competency,
- That based on ‘incumbency of a legally defined office’.

One of the criticisms then initiated by Parsons is that, when Weber defends the bureaucratic model, he neglects the fact that it may lead to the supremacy of legal authority over technical authority.⁵⁵ Perrow however considers that the examples put forward by Parsons to support his criticism are of little pertinence in the organisational world. Perrow reproaches Parsons for using the example of a doctor. According to Parsons, the doctor possesses an authority that ‘rests fundamentally on the belief on the part of the patient that the physician has and will employ for his benefit a technical competence adequate to help him in his illness’.⁵⁶ But Perrow reminds us that the doctor does not

⁵⁰ Perrow, (1986), op cit., p. 25.

⁵¹ Perrow, (1986), ibid., p. 26.

⁵² We should note that Crozier had shown, from 1963 in *Le phénomène bureaucratique*, (Paris, Seuil) in the tradition of Gouldner, how the rule protected the arbitrary power of the superior hierarchy.

⁵³ Perrow, (1986) ibid., pp. 42-43.

⁵⁴ Parsons T., in Weber M., *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (trans. Parsons, T. and Henderson, A.M.), New York, Free Press, 1947, p. 59.

⁵⁵ In our opinion, as will be seen in this book, this supremacy is of a striking empirical topicality.

⁵⁶ Parsons, op cit., p. 60.

work in an organisation in the hierarchical sense of the word, since he is ultimately only judged by his patient. However, according to Perrow, numerous studies of hospital organisation show that medical teams work in a bureaucratic framework and are, in particular, extremely subject to the ladders of prestige.⁵⁷

Moreover, Perrow is opposed to Parsons' idea of the existence of 'powers of coercion in case of recalcitrance' on the part of subordinates.⁵⁸ For Parsons, it is not essential for the possessor of these powers to have 'either superior knowledge or superior skill'⁵⁹ compared with the others that he directs. He then takes the example of a treasurer to illustrate his criticism; the treasurer can sign large cheques and therefore commit the organisation. But, for Parsons, that does not imply that he is more competent than the cashier or a bank employee to sign cheques.⁶⁰ Perrow maintains though that this example is not pertinent, since the treasurer is in this case invested with signatory power not by virtue [legal] of a greater ability to place his name on a piece of paper, but by his technical competency which allows him to judge whether or not such and such a cheque may be signed.⁶¹

Perrow considers after all that bureaucracy is a way of joining legal power with the authority of competency. We would add that from this point of view, one cannot say that Weber ever confused legitimacy with legality. It is simply that in Weber's bureaucratic model legality can be a major resource of legitimacy. In other words, it can avoid endless discussion about the 'right' of such and such a person to carry out such and such an activity. In fact it authorises it by virtue of the roles assigned to each person depending on their competency and specialisation.

Perrow also makes use of Gouldner's work to challenge some readings of Weber's bureaucracy and forms of hierarchical legitimacy that it underlies. He first recalls the three models of bureaucratic commandment defined by Gouldner:⁶²

- Representative bureaucracy, relying on an expertise 'based on rules established by agreement, rules which are technically justified and administered by specially qualified personnel, and to which consent is given voluntarily'.

⁵⁷ Perrow, (1986), op cit., p. 43.

⁵⁸ Perrow, (1986), ibid.

⁵⁹ Parsons. ibid, p. 60.

⁶⁰ '(...) *Thus the treasurer of a corporation is empowered to sign cheques disbursing large funds. There is no implication in this "power" that he is a more competent signer of checks than the bank clerk or tellers who cash or deposit them for the recipient*' (Parsons, op cit., p. 60).

⁶¹ Of course this allegation would have to be discussed on a case-by-case basis. It is presented here only for its power of illustration.

⁶² Gouldner A., *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy*, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1954.

- Punishment-centered bureaucracy, ‘based on the imposition of rules, and on obedience for its own sake’.⁶³
- Mock bureaucracy, in which disobedience of rules is not punished, but nevertheless destroys efficiency.

Perrow then rejects Gouldner’s idea, (already put forward by Parsons), according to which the Weberian model would assume ‘that bureaucracy was a mode of administration in which obedience was an end in itself’.^{64 65} For Perrow, Weber certainly affirms the importance of discipline, but assigns major importance to expertise. This is what he gathers from the following quotation:

‘The primary source of bureaucratic administration lies in the role of technical knowledge (...). Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge. This is the feature of it that makes it a specifically rational (...). Bureaucracy is superior in knowledge, including both technical knowledge and knowledge of the concrete fact’.⁶⁶

For Perrow, the Weberian bureaucratic model ultimately has three characteristics:⁶⁷

- Characteristics relating to the structure and operation of the organisation. The bureaucratic model is characterised by continuity, hierarchism, a systematic division of labour based on specialised functions that favour the development of expertise, on territories, authority and power. Written rule governs, whether imposed or accepted, and actions and decisions are recorded and memorised;
- Characteristics relating to rewards. Bureaucracy imposes the fixity of status, the non-ownership of functions, the obligation to be responsible for the use of the organisation’s property;
- Characteristics relating to the protection of individuals. In a bureaucracy, the rights of individuals are protected against arbitrary power. Here, workers serve voluntarily. Obedience is to the superior’s position and not to his person. The superior only possesses authority by virtue of his position and his obligations.

Perrow finally considers bureaucracy as a particular social structure, founded on the interdependence of people: ‘A citizen must not be able to survive on his

⁶³ Gouldner, *op cit.*, p. 24.

⁶⁴ Gouldner, *ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶⁵ Personally, we are not so sure of the contrary. Without speaking for Weber, we wish to show in this book that research into the obedience of individuals may very well serve as a very important aim of organisations, possibly the most important, even though not the only one.

⁶⁶ Weber M., (1947), *op cit.*, p. 337-339.

⁶⁷ Perrow, (1986), *op cit.*, p. 47-48.

or her own but has to work for someone else'.⁶⁸ Bureaucracy then offers the advantage of giving a position and a mission to everyone, quite independently of the interests of this mission. Above all, Perrow strongly emphasises that bureaucracy is a political system that has the advantage of offering a legitimate authority, based on expertise.

Apart from his personal views, the debates reopened by Perrow confirm the topicality of the opposition between bureaucracy and flexible types of management. They also make it possible to denounce evidence that is too clear, such as the prediction of the inevitable disappearance of bureaucracy. Perrow's argued resistance shows that the problem is more complex. Managerial liberalism may very well need strict and impersonal rules in order to face up to its own excesses.

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American organisational sociology has analysed in depth the political question posed by domination; perhaps because the echo of the turbulent history of the precocious modernisation of firms in this country resonated in the ears of analysts, or maybe because the centralising and even despotic features of Weberian-style models are too opposed to the democratic ideals of the country, so well described by Tocqueville. At all events, reading the authors brought together here allows one first to put forward the evidence that one of the characteristics of the 'classic' organisational sociologies is to have confirmed the victory of the organisational paradigm over the individualistic paradigm. Apart from the theoretical victory of the system over the player, this brief synthesis, which outlines an alternative to certain recently developed theories (see *infra*, Chapter 2), also suggests inclusion on the sociological agenda of the question of the *empirical truth of the organisational domination of the individual*.

Second, it shows that very different forms of domination can be imagined. Whereas, with Taylor, domination is instrumental, with Barnard it is moral in nature. For Simon, domination of the organisation operates through control of decisions and choices, via the production of informational and cognitive routines.

Finally, Perrow reminds us that domination of the organisation can rely on the strength and legitimacy of rules. These approaches show that domination can be more or less violent, and above all, more or less apparent. Therefore, management can rely on a domination project that is more or less coercive. Exploring managerial systems at work enables us to draw realistic portraits of people's lives in organisations that acknowledge the efficiency of bureaucratic systems and its methods of government as well as the stability it produces.

⁶⁸ Perrow, (1986), *op cit.*, p. 49.

Soft constraints extend classical constraints to represent multiple consistency levels, and thus provide a way to express preferences, fuzziness, and uncertainty. While there are many soft constraint solving formalisms, even distributed ones, by now there seems to be no concurrent programming framework where soft constraints can be handled. Basic Introductory Tutorial on Soft Constraints.

INTRODUCTION. Constraint logic programming has evolved as a major programming paradigm for solving real-life problems. This is definitely much better than not finding a solution at all. Some of the constraints can be differentiated as required while others as preferential constraints. Constraint hierarchy forms the set of both hard and soft constraints. SystemVerilog Soft Constraints why soft constraints needed use case of soft constraint soft constraint example Conflict between constraints using soft cons. SystemVerilog constraints declared with the keyword soft is called as soft constraints. any conflict between class constraint and inline constraint leads to a randomization failure, from this it is clear that it is not possible to override the class constraint by inline constraint.