THE CONTENDING PERSPECTIVES ON PUBLIC MANAGEMENT: A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT: This article draws upon the philosophy of the social sciences to develop a framework that permits a critical analysis of public management. It uses this framework to construct a taxonomy that enables the identification of the competing philosophical paradigms that underpin contending perspectives on what constitutes good public management, so enabling the articulation of their salient risks and thus their fundamental flaws. It finally proposes the philosophical requirements for a coherent approach to public management reform.

All approaches to public management reform (Peters and Savoie 1998; Dixon 1996; Dixon, Kouzmin, and Korac-Kakabadse 1997; Kouzmin, Dixon, and Korac-Kakabadse 2001) have their origins in conflicting and competing values, beliefs, and attitudes on what constitutes good public management, which are, in turn, a product of perceptions about how the world works and how other people behave. Underpinning these competing world-views are competing philosophical predispositions about what constitutes valid knowledge (true beliefs) and what gives rise to human actions. Public management involves addressing knowledge problems (related to, for example, understanding problem causation and the likely consequences of problem solutions), which is an epistemological issue; capability problems (related to, for example, designing problem solutions), which is an ontological issue; decision-making problems (related to, for example, choosing among competing problem solutions), which is a rationality issue; implementation problems (related to, for example, organizing and coordinating resources to solve identified problems), which is also an ontological issue; and motivation problems (related

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to, for example, the management of employee performance), which is a nomological issue. This article applies a conceptual framework offered by the philosophy of the social sciences to explore the competing philosophical dispositions that give rise to conflicting perceptions on what constitutes good public management. Its objectives are, first, to identify the competing philosophical paradigms underpinning competing perspectives on what constitutes good public management, so enabling the articulation of their salient risks and thus their fundamental flaws; and second, to investigate the implications of recent developments in the philosophy of the social sciences for the methodological foundations of a coherent set of public management practices and behaviors.

A PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

People have selective screens through which they receive knowledge of how the world works and how other people behave. These provide the value-oriented means by which people order events so as to give clarity of meaning to what would otherwise be an anarchic stream of events. They "operate through inclusion and exclusion as homogenizing forces, marshalling heterogeneity into ordered realms, silencing and excluding other discourses, other voices in the name of universal principles and general goals" (Storey 1993, 159). They have both cognitive-rational (objective meaning) and communicative-rational (normative meaning) components, which intermingle to produce an assumptive world: a "cognitive map of the world out there" (Young 1979, 33). This is the structure of hierarchically arranged sets of beliefs, information, values, and norms that people construct as a result of their interaction with their environment and can be categorized as immutable core values, adaptive attitudes, and changeable opinions (Parsons 1995, 375). How people interrogate the social world, and so build their assumptive world, depends, then, on their epistemological predisposition (their contentions about what is knowable, how it can be known, and the standard by which genuine knowledge or the truth can be judged) and their ontological predisposition (their contentions about the nature of being, what can and does exist, what their conditions of existence might be, and to what phenomena causal capacity might be ascribed) (Dixon 2003; Dixon and Dogan 2002).

The epistemological debate within the social sciences concerns the relationship between the objective (materialism) and the subjective (ideationalism). There are two broad epistemological approaches (Hollis 1994): naturalism (inter alia, embracing empiricism, logical positivism, verificationism and falsificationism) and hermeneutics (inter alia, embracing epistemological hermeneutics, existentialism, and transcendental phenomenology). Naturalism, which grounds social knowledge in material forces, has two key traditions: positivism, which rejects unobservables as knowable and requires an agent ontology; and realism, which accepts unobservables as knowables and permits a structuralist ontology. Naturalism proposes two types of knowledge—the analytic and the synthetic (Hempel 1966). Analytic statements are derived from deductive logic and can offer a profound and strong demonstration of cause and effect, explanation and prediction. However, they only produce definitive knowledge of mathematical and linguistic relationships. Synthetic statements are derived through inductive inference and offer a weak and contingent correlation of cause and effect (Williams and May 1996, 25).

While both address the problem of causality in different ways (Popper [1959] 2000), naturalism can only offer reasonably reliable predictions; it cannot identify unambiguous causal relationships. Hermeneutics, in contrast, contends that knowledge rests on interpretations embedded in day-to-day expressions or forms of life derived from cultural practice, discourse, and language (Winch 1990), and thus uses the distinctive insights of linguistic philosophy to understand the meaning of human conduct. It contends that knowledge is generated by acts of ideation that rest on intersubjectively shared symbols, or typifications that allow for reciprocity of perspectives (Schutz [1932] 1967). However, this requires acts of reflexive interpretation to ensure the appropriate contextualization of meaning (Blumer 1969; Garfinkel [1967] 1984). Thus, hermeneutic knowledge is culturally specific, subject to severe relativism, and dynamic and thus open to constant revision, which makes explanation contingent on culture, and prediction problematic.

The ontological debate considers the relationship between the two dimensions of human behavior (Wendt 1991): the external—structuralism (inter alia, embracing anthropological structuralism, functional-structuralism, historical materialism, linguistic structuralism, hermeneutic phenomenology, symbolic interactionalism, language games, post-structuralism, and post-modernism)—and internal agency (inter alia, embracing rational choice theory, social phenomenology, dramaturgical analysis, and ethnomethodology). Structuralism's central proposition is that social structures ("the ordered social interrelationships, or the recurring patterns of social behavior that determine the nature of human action" [Parker 2000, 125]) impose themselves and exercise power upon agency. Social structures are regarded as constraining in that they mold people's actions and thoughts, and in that it is difficult, if not impossible, for one person to transform these structures (Baert 1998, 11). In contradistinction, agency's central proposition is that "individuals have some control over their actions and can be agents of their actions (voluntarism), enabled by their psychological and social psychological make-up" (Parker 2000, 125). Thus, "people actively interpret their surrounding reality, and act accordingly" (Baert 1998, 3). The essential distinction concerns causation: structuralism contends that social action derives from social structures, whereas agency contends that social action derives from individual intention—the top-down structural approach versus the bottom-up agency approach (Hollis 1994, 12-20). Neither approach is adequate to explain the observed complexity of human society. Structuralism can apparently explain the empirically strong correlations between individual behavior and social cohort, but it cannot explain outliers derived from acts of free choice, and agency has the reverse difficulty of not being able to deal with structural imperatives.

From these epistemological and ontological dichotomies emerge four methodological families, which provide a set of flawed lenses through which the nature of the social world is perceived (see table 1).

A PHILOSOPHICAL TAXONOMY OF
WHAT CONSTITUTES GOOD PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Each of the methodological families identified in table 1 supports a coherent set of public management philosophies, enquiry methods, practices, and behaviors. Each is predisposed to particular forms of reasoning as the basis for decision making, and to par-

TABLE 1
Epistemological and Ontological Underpinnings of
'Good' Organizing and Management Propositions

	Epistemology	
Ontology	*Naturalism*	*Hermeneutics*
Structuralism	Naturalist Structuralism:	Hermeneutic Structuralism:
	Presumes an objective social world, knowable by the application of the scientific method, in which structures exercise power over agency, which makes human behavior predictable.	Presumes a subjective social world, knowable only as it is socially constructed, with people's action being determined, and made predictable, by their collective interpretation of this reality.
	Managing for process	*Managing for inclusion*
Agency	Naturalist Agency:	Hermeneutic Agency:
	Presumes an objective social world, knowable by the application of the scientific method, in which people are agents of their actions, with their behavior made predictable by their unconstrained self-interest.	Presumes a subjective social world that is contestably knowable as what people believe it to be, with agency constrained by their subjective perceptions of social reality, which makes human behavior unpredictable.
	Managing for results	*Managing for survival*

ticular nomological presumptions about how people are likely, or prone, to behave in given situations. Each, then, offers a set of flawed good public management propositions. In other words, patterns of public management practice and behavior based on a denial of (1) naturalism or hermenuetics will be unable to deal with problems that stem from the excluded epistemology, and (2) structure or agency will be unable to deal with problems that stem from the excluded ontology.

The Naturalist-Structurialist Perspective

Adherents of naturalist-structuralism would have a predisposition towards a public agency being a bureaucratic organization (Weber [1915] 1947) that has a primary concern with inputs and getting the process right. This they would picture (Morgan 1986) as a machine or a brain. It would have a mechanistic structure with high complexity, high formalization, and high centralization (Burns and Stalker 1961). It would also have a centralized technostructure, standardized work processes, specialized work tasks, order and discipline, and a unity of direction and control. It would have an autocratic decision-making process (Vroom and Yetton 1973) that presumes decisions are the product of

institutional activity by public managers using functional-analytic analysis to generate a set of objective facts, which are used to make satisficing decisions (Simon 1960) that produce incremental change. In terms of Thompson's (1967) decision-making strategies matrix, they would prefer computational decision-making strategies, because they are inclined to be certain about both outcome preferences and their beliefs about cause-effect relations.

Such an organization would engage in a top-down bonding of individuals, through the fostering of an appropriate espirit de corp, with an insistence on hierarchical obedience and organizational loyalty (Burns 1966; Burns and Stalker 1961; Radner 1992; Taylor [1911] 1947). Good public management would thus be perceived as managing for process, with a focus on employee compliance. Thus, organizational policies and practices would be implemented that give minimal discretion to employees, as administrative processes would be strictly controlled by rules and regulations that define who should complete a task, how and when it should be done, with control exercised *ex ante* (Feldman and Khademian 2000, 150). The appropriate control mechanism would be external control, given the weaker coercive influence of needs-satisfying motivators, involving formal and impersonal rules relating to inputs (about recruitment, qualifications, and experience), processes (as technical methods and procedures), and outputs (as performance measures and standards), and involving informally transmitted values (as organizational ethos or philosophy), all achieved by direct management supervision in the form of personal monitoring and work surveillance (Hales 2001, 47-48).

Naturalist-structurialists, with their *homo hierarchus* perceptions (Dumont 1970), would be sympathetic to Herzberg's (1966) presumptions of the 'Adam' conception of human nature, and to McGregor's (1960, 1967) Theory X human nature assumptions. They would believe that employees could very well be dissatisfied with some of Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959; see also Herzberg 1966) job hygiene work environment factors, notably working conditions, money, status, and security. Their respect for rules and regulations would make them particularly sensitive to the procedural justice achieved by the methods used to determine remuneration (Adams 1965; Greenberg 1987). They would believe that people can best be motivated by the organizational satisfaction of their needs. The needs emphasized would be Maslow's (1970) physiological, safety (security), social (affiliation), and esteem needs; Ardrey's (1967) identity, security, and stimulation needs; Adler's (1938) power needs; White's (1959) competence needs; and McCelland's (1961; see also McCelland et al. 1953) achievement, power, and affiliation needs. The underlying presumptions of motivation based on needs-satisfaction is that the individual has a set of valued personal needs that are knowable by the managers and can be satisfied through work. They would presume that employees are largely concerned with Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959) job hygiene considerations, especially policies and administration, supervision, working conditions, and interpersonal relations. Their psychological contracts would presume that managers exercise legitimate, expert, knowledge, and exchange power (Boulder 1990; French and Ravan 1959; Hales 2001), and that employees are predominantly calculative, and thus would make quite explicit claims on the rights and obligations of the corporation in terms of the needs that would be met in return for services rendered (Handy 1976, 41). Employees would be expected to have a work commitment, in Morrow's (1983) terms,

based on the value they place on their organizational loyalty, which would achieve a weak form of Etzioni's (1961) remunerative-calculative organizational engagement.

Their preferred leadership style would be parental (Nichols 1986), within a benevolent-authoritarian or consultative type of management system (Likert 1961, 1967). This style is characterized by Hersey and Blanchard's (1969, 1993) high relationship and high task behavior pattern, which broadly corresponds with Blake and Mouton's (1982, 1984) team leadership style. In terms of Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (1958) leadership behavior continuum, it involves leaders making decisions and announcing them. The focus of leadership is thus on explaining decisions, providing opportunities for clarification, and monitoring performance, thereby ensuring leadership control.

Their preferred organizational culture would emphasize role and thus support compliance, and permit little questioning of the rules and orders of what to do once they have been given by a legitimate authority (Bardach and Kagan 1982). This would support a club culture, whereby strong leaders have power and use it (Handy 1979).

Their preferred approach to public management would involve the application of a hierarchical command-and-control process that permits managers to determine and police what are acceptable (desirable) or unacceptable (undesirable) behaviors in terms of the desired organizational outcomes. The appropriate control mechanism would be external control, given the weaker coercive influence of needs-satisfying motivators, involving both formal and impersonal rules relating to inputs (about recruitment, qualifications, and experience), processes (as technical methods and procedures) and outputs (as performance measures and standards); and informally transmitted values (as organizational ethos or philosophy) achieved by direct management supervision in the form of personal monitoring and work surveillance (Hales 2001, 47-48).

Public managers who adhere to the naturalist-structuralist methodology face the salient management risk of losing control or trust. This is because they are unable to understand either the nature and causation of public management problems that cannot be analyzed and explained by the application of naturalist methods, or why their solutions, which presume a structural ontology, are unable to secure compliance by free individuals. In the absence of control and trust, the manager would not be able to apportion blame for any management failures exclusively onto deviants who failed to comply with corporate rules and regulations.

If faced with the prospect of public management failure, their first instinct would be to express loyalty (Hirschman 1970), in the hope that solutions will eventually emerge, and then to blame noncompliant deviants. Their acts of loyalty would probably include suppressing any information that is critical of management and organizational performance, and punishing those who threaten to make disclosures critical of their interpretation of the cause of, and solutions to, the public management failures. Their envisaged solution would be the strengthening of hierarchical controls. This is because their structural ontology presumes that compliance following a cognitive commitment derived from rational calculation in the context of prescribed rules and regulations, supported, perhaps, by a deontological moral code; and because their naturalist epistemology presumes that people can identify social reality through the observation of patterns in, and correlations between, forms of social behavior, which reflect and represent structural constraints on their behavior. This solution could include setting aside or modifying rules and regulations, using publicity and persuasion to encourage

compliance, strengthening disincentives, making noncompliance physically more inconvenient, difficult, or impossible, and pursuing and punishing rule violators and deviant behavior with heavier sanctions (Hood 1998). This approach clearly discounts, because it denies agency ontology, any need to engage the personal commitment of free instrumental individuals.

The Hermeneutic-Structuralist Perspective

Adherents of hermeneuitic-structuralism have a predisposition towards a public agency having a missionary orientation, with a primary concern with process as much as goals and end-states, which they would picture (Morgan 1986) as a political system or a configuration of cultures. They would be inclined towards one with an organic structure, with low complexity, low formalization, and low centralization (Burns and Stalker 1961; Hague 1978; Mintzberg 1989) that disperses power. Good public management would thus be perceived as managing for inclusion, with a focus on building capacity to achieve results. Thus, managers would encourage employees, as well as members of the general public and other relevant organizations, to work together towards results over which they may have little direct influence, achieved by decentralizing authority, and emphasizing empowerment, teamwork, and continuous improvement to increase participation, with management control determined by how they implement participation (Feldman and Khademian 2000, 150). This is premised on human behavior being predictable on the basis of group-constructed understandings. Thus, people are presumed to be cooperative by nature: ever willing and able to construct the mutual understandings that form the basis for reasoning, what Gergen and Thatchenkey (1998, 26) describe as "communal negotiation, the importance of social processes in the observational enterprise, the sociopractical functions of language, and the significance of pluralistic cultural investments in the conception of the true and the good." They are thus presumed able and willing to engage in communicative rationality (Habermas 1984), involving intersubjective, critically reflective communications, in order to gain understanding in a group context (see also Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987; Reason and Rowan 1981; Gergen 1994). This means that, because discourse occurs in an open environment characterized by broadly diffused transformations (Bakhtin 1981; Foucault 1978), patterns of human activity are ever dynamic, at times incrementally, sometimes disjointedly (Gergen and Thatchenkey 1998, 28). Thus, organizational commitment is to those with whom people share common values and a common vision.

Hermeneutic-structuralists, with their *homo sociologicus* or social man perceptions (Schein 1980), would be sympathetic to Herzberg's (1966) presumptions of the 'Abraham' conception of human nature, and would thus presume that people are concerned predominantly with satisfying human needs of understanding, achievement, and psychological growth and development. They would also be attracted to McGregor's (1960, 1967) Theory Y human nature assumptions, which are that people find work as natural as rest and recreation, can assume responsibility, are not resistant to organizational needs if they are committed, can be creative in solving organizational problems, and are willing to direct their behavior towards organizational goals. They would believe that employees could very well be dissatisfied with some of Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959; see also Herzberg 1966) job hygiene work

environment factors, notably working conditions, money, status, and security. Their sense of collegiality would make them particularly sensitive to remuneration equitability issues, both with respect to the distributional justice outcomes achieved and, perhaps more importantly, to the procedural justice achieved by the methods used to determine remuneration (Adams 1965; Greenberg 1987). They would believe that people can best be motivated by setting goals (Locke 1968; Locke and Latham 1990) to which they can make a commitment. The underlying presumptions of motivations that focus on goals setting (House and Mitchell 1974) are: (1) that there is a congruence between individual and organizational goals that enables an organization to meet individuals' needs, the most important of which are Maslow's (1970) social (affiliation or acceptance), esteem, and self-actualization (distinctive psychological potential) needs, Ardrey's (1967) identity, security, and stimulation needs, Alderfer's (1972) existence, relatedness, and growth needs, McCelland's (1961; see also McCelland et al. 1953) achievement, power, and affiliation needs, and Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959; see also Herzberg 1966) achievement, recognition, responsibility, and advancement needs; and (2) that individuals want to share responsibility for goal setting and achievement decisions. Their psychological contracts would presume that managers exercise personal, referent, normative, and love power, and that employees are cooperative, and thus would be premised on the idea that people tend to identify with organizational goals, which they pursue creatively in return for just rewards, and thus they should be given more voice in their selection and more discretion on the choice of goal-achievement strategies (Handy 1976, 41). Employees would be expected, in Morrow's (1983) terms, to have a work commitment based on the value they place on work as an end in itself, on their absorption and involvement in their job, and on their organization and sectional interest loyalties, which would achieve Etzioni's (1961) normative-moral organizational engagement.

Their preferred organizational culture would be centered existentially on the person, such that the organization would be perceived to exist in order to help people achieve their personal goals (Handy 1979). Peters and Waterman (1982) have argued that communicating a values-driven performance philosophy can be achieved by means of management by wandering around (Peters 1994).

Their preferred leadership style is that of a coach (Nichols 1986), within a participative-group type of management system (Likert 1961, 1967). This style is characterized by Hersey and Blanchard's (1969, 1993) high relationship and low task behavior pattern, which broadly corresponds with Blake and Mouton's (1982, 1984) country club leadership style. Under this leadership style the production of outcomes is incidental to the lack of conflict and good fellowship. In terms of Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (1958) leadership behavior continuum, it involves managers permitting followers to function within the limits they define. The leadership focus is thus on sharing ideas and facilitating group decision making, thereby empowering individuals.

Their preferred approach to public management would involve inspiring a sense of performance consciousness in the form of a mutually agreed set of high expectations. Communicating a values-driven performance philosophy would do this by stimulating and facilitating the necessary behavior change by empowering employees to become creative risk takers and innovators. The appropriate control mechanism would be mutual control, involving the mutual enforcement of group behavior norms relating to inputs (as standards of recruitment to the group), processes (as work methods), outputs (as

performance standards), and values (as ethical standards) (Hales 2001, 47). The expected response induced would be compliance because of a moral commitment (Etzioni 1961).

Public managers who adhere to the hermeneutic-structuralist methodology face the salient management risk that those engaged in participative processes cannot agree on either the nature and causation of management problems, because they cannot be analyzed and understood only by the application of hermeneutic methods, or why their solutions, which presume structural ontology, are unable to secure compliance by free individuals. In the absence of decision-making processes that are collegial, harmonious, and trustworthy, they would not be able to externalize blame for any management failure exclusively onto particular secret enemies within participative processes.

If faced with the prospect of public management failure they would, in the first instance, blame those within the participative processes who do not share their commitment to participative management. (Hirschman [1970] describes this as the voice option.) Their envisaged solution would be to demand the removal of the secret enemies from within and the empowerment of different people to lead participative processes. This is because their structuralist ontology presumes that people are motivated by moral commitments to collectively agreed processes and outcomes, and their hermeneutic epistemology presumes that they willingly engage in reasoning that is intersubjective and value based, involving critically reflective communications using processes that enable them to make and question arguments and so determine the validity of normative judgements. This solution would involve developing strategies that would not only correct public management failures, but also evoke a moral commitment to participative public management. The structural ontology of this approach also presumes that individuals are motivated by collective commitments, rather than by personal incentives, because they deny agency ontology.

The Naturalist-Agency Perspective

Adherents of naturalist-agency have a predisposition towards a public agency that has an entrepreneurial orientation (Mintzberg 1989), with a primary concern with outputs and outcomes, which they would picture (Morgan 1986) as a living organism or in a state of flux and transformation. It would preferably have an organic or organismic structure, characterized by low complexity, low formalization, and low centralization (Burns and Stalker 1961; Hague 1978), because they believe that decisions should be made closest to the point where the need for such decisions arises, thereby maximizing individual autonomy. It would thus have a strategic apex with little or no technostructure, but a significant degree of horizontal and/or spatial subunit differentiation (Williamson 1985, 1986). It would also have an autocratic decision-making process (Vroom and Yetton 1973), which can become consultative when necessary, and which uses instrumentally rational analysis, premised on the self-interest motivation of all actors, to facilitate optimal decision making. In terms of Thompson's (1967) decision-making strategies matrix, they would prefer judgmental decision-making strategies, as they are inclined to be certain about outcome preferences, but uncertain in their beliefs about cause-effect relations. Thus, they would be willing to operate at the edge of competence, by dealing with what they do not yet know using an integrative approach to problem solving that challenges established practices by going beyond received wisdom (Kanter 1984, 1989).

Good public management would be perceived as managing for results, with a focus on performance. Thus, managers improve results by relying on a decentralized authority distribution, so as to expand the ways in which work is conducted, with individuals expected to use their devolved authority to achieve management-established targets, and with control being exercised ex post (Feldman and Khademian 2000, 150). This is premised on human behavior being predictable on the basis of self-interest. Thus, people are presumed to be instrumental, applying functional-strategic rationality to make purposive and predatory decisions on the basis of their own self-interest. Organizational commitment can only occur if it is personally profitable.

Adherents to the naturalist-agency perspective, with their *homo economicus* or rational economic man perceptions (Schein 1980), would be sympathetic to Herzberg's (1966) 'Adam' conception of human nature, and would thus presume that people are concerned predominantly with satisfying their safety, security, and interpersonal relations needs. They would also be attracted to McGregor's (1960, 1967) Theory X human nature assumptions: that people are essentially indolent, unambitious, self-centered; are indifferent to organizational needs and prefer to be directed so as to avoid responsibility; and are gullible. So they would believe Barnard's (1938, 159) proposition that "incentives represent the final residue of all conflicting forces in organization" and that people are rational agents who respond to inputs (such as instructions) in systematic ways and can best be motivated by financial incentives (see also Bushardt, Toso, and Schnake 1986; Clark and Wilson 1961; de Grazia 1960; Whyte 1955). They would anticipate that employees would be dissatisfied at work in terms of Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959; see also Herzberg 1966) job hygiene work environment factors, most notably money, status, and security. Their sense of competition would make them particularly sensitive to remuneration equitability in terms of the distributive justice outcomes achieved (Adams 1965; Greenberg 1987). The underlying presumptions of motivation based on financial incentives are: (1) that individuals value financial reward as a means of satisfying their needs, the most important of which are Maslow's (1970) physiological, safety (security), and esteem needs, and Riesman's (1950) and Packard's (1959) prestige needs (see also Furnham 1984; Porter and Lawler 1965) and perceives that reward to justify the effort; (2) that organizational performance can be measurably attributed to an individual's work contribution; and (3) that increased individual performance does not become a new minimum standard (Handy 1976, 25). Their psychological contracts would presume that managers exercise resource, reward, economic, or exchange power and that employees are calculative, and thus would make quite explicit material rewards that would follow the rendering of services, which would be expressly incorporated into principal-agent contracts. Employees would be expected to have work commitment, in Morrow's (1983) terms, based on their careers, which would achieve Etzioni's (1961) remunerative-calculative organizational engagement.

Their preferred organizational culture is focused not only on task, whereby management is regarded as solving a series of task-related problems involving the adjustment, redefinition, and renegotiation of individual tasks (Handy 1979), but also on supporting quid pro quo exchanges between individuals.

Their preferred leadership style would be that of a developer (Nichols 1986), within a consultative management system (Likert 1961, 1967). This style is characterized by Hersey and Blanchard's (1969, 1993) low relationship and low task behavior pattern, and broadly corresponds with Blake and Mouton's (1982, 1984) impoverished leadership style. In terms of Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (1958) leadership behavior continuum, it involves managers defining limits and followers making decisions. This facilitates individual autonomy by appropriately delegating decision making and implementation responsibility.

Their preferred approach to public management would involve creating incentives for the rewarding of desirable behaviors and disincentives for the punishment of undesirable behaviors, which are embodied in performance-reward contracts. The appropriate control mechanism would be self-control (under the self-determined coercive influence of material incentives) involving the modifying, repressing, or inhibiting of behavior to conform with a set of "internalized rules and norms of behavior relating the processes (methods of work) and outputs (standards) and internalized values relating to the ethical conduct of those carrying out the work itself" (Hales 2001, 47). The expected response induced would be instrumental compliance (Etzioni 1961) with the organizational rules and procedures, based on an economic calculation of the compliance costs and benefits.

Public managers who adhere to the naturalist-agency methodology face the salient management risk of how employees can be prevented form shirking in conditions of uncertainty and asymetrical information (Fama and Jensen 1983a, 1983b; Leibenstein 1976; Ross 1973)—the principal-agent problem. Central to this are two risks. The first is that, because of uncertainty and opportunism, managers will not be able to specify completely and comprehensively the implicit and explicit contracts they have with their agents, in terms of the activities, outputs and outcomes they are expected to deliver in return for their remuneration (Hood 1998, 102). The second is that they will not be able to enforce the executed contracts. In the absence of a comprehensive set of complete and enforceable contracts, managers would be unable either to attribute the cause of public management failures exclusively to noncontractual factors, or to determine a negotiated, contractual solution to those problems.

If faced with the prospect of public management failure, they would in the first instance blame bad luck or rogue behavior by those who have not acted in accordance with the terms of their performance-reward contracts or who have not developed an appropriate sense of personal honor or shame in their interpersonal relationships. Their envisaged solution would be for more diligence to be applied to the drafting of principal-agent contracts and to their enforcement. This is because their agency ontology presumes that people are motivated by personal incentives, and because their naturalist ontology presumes that they can make reliable predictions about the consequences of human behavior by observing patterns in, and correlations between, forms of social behavior. This solution would be expected to initiate the economic calculations needed to induce the instrumental compliance necessary to correct the management failure, but without the

support of the nonmaterial or structural-cultural incentives that are discounted by agency ontology.

The Hermeneutic-Agency Perspective

While those of this philosopical disposition embrace a wide range of behavior, as noted by Goffman ([1959] 1990), in the management literature they are associated with behavior manifesting as the absence of any desire to explain or influence events, or to hold any value commitments because they have been alienated or marginalized from organizational life, as, for example, are Eilstein's (1995, 71) "closet fatalists," Mars' (1982, 70) "cheats," and Leonardi's (1995, 171-173) "criminal capitalists." They would expect to confront organizational processes in a public agency that give rise to "low-cooperation, rule-bound approaches to organization" (Hood 1998, 9), which they would picture (Morgan 1986) as a psychic prison or an instrument of domination. Such a public agency would have a bureaucratic orientation, with an obsession for control (Mintzberg 1989), with a mechanistic structure exhibiting high complexity, high formalization and high centralization, and with a primary concern with inputs and process, but one that can accommodate ambiguous, mutually reinforcing perceptions of its intent, understanding, history, and organization (March and Olsen 1976). In such an organization, conflicts would never be resolved, uncertainties would always be avoided, and solutions would inevitably be shortsighted and simplistic. It would have an autocratic decision-making process (Vroon and Yetton 1973), albeit one dominated by unknowing and untrustworthy interests, that realistically accept that policy is, because of the limits of human cognition, the product of garbage can-like decision processes (March and Olsen 1976; Cohen, March, and Olsen 1972).

Good public management would thus be managing for survival, with plausibility as the basis for reasoning, which involves a Weickian-like, sense-making process (Weick 1995). Organizations would establish, by trial and error, what they can do. Thus, organizational goals could only evolve from action, because they cannot be predetermined; learning could only be by trial and error, because technology is unclear; and who is involved in what is ever changing, because participation is fluid. This characterizes March's (1988, 1994) organized anarchy (see also Cyert and March [1963] 1992; March and Olsen 1976, 1989). The underlying premise is that human behavior is unpredictable, because agency is defined by subjective perceptions of social reality. What an individual believes to be real is, in fact, reality. Thus, people are presumed to engage in nonrational, inspirational-strategic rationality because validity, truth, and efficiency are irrelevant.

Adherents to the hermeneutic-agency perspective with an alienative predisposition would be sympathetic to Herzberg's (1966) presumptions of the 'Adam' conception of human nature, and to McGregor's (1960, 1967) Theory X human nature assumptions. They would certainly believe that alienated employees would be generally dissatisfied with Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959; see also Herzberg 1966) job hygiene work environment factors, particularly policies and administration, supervision, working conditions, money, status, and security. Their cynicism and distrust would make them particularly sensitive to the issues of equity of remuneration, both in terms of the distributional justice outcomes achieved and the procedural justice achieved by the

methods used to determine remuneration (Adams 1965; Greenberg 1987). So compliance occurs only because of fear of punishment that would diminish their capacity to meet their physiological and safety (security) needs (Maslow 1970). The underlying presumptions are (1) that individuals comply because they are sufficiently fearful of punishment for noncompliance, and (2) that those threatening punishment have the power to punish. The relationship between managers, who would be expected to exercise coercive, physical or threat power, and employees, who would be presumed to require coercion to comply, would quite explicitly articulate the rules to be followed and the punishments for noncompliance (Handy 1976, 40). People would be presumed to have no work commitment, which would result in Etzioni's (1961) coercive-alienative organizational engagement.

Their expectation would be an organizational culture that emphasizes power and reinforces the authority of a superior over subordinates, so supporting a club culture under which strong leaders would be permitted, if not expected, to exercise power (Handy 1979).

Their expectation would be the leadership style of a driver (Nichols 1986) within an exploitative-authoritarian type of management system (Likert 1961, 1967). This style is characterized by Hersey and Blanchard's (1969, 1993) low relationship and high task behavior pattern, which broadly corresponds with Blake and Mouton's (1982, 1984) task leadership style. In terms of Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (1958) leadership behavior continuum, it involves leaders making decisions and announcing them. This involves managers providing specific instructions and closely supervising work performance, thereby ensuring dominant leadership.

Their expectation would be that public management would involve hierarchical command and control, with the expected response being alienative compliance (Etzioni 1961), born of the fear of force, threat, and menace. The expected control mechanism would be external control (Hales 2001, 47), particularly by means of random direct supervision. This could encompass the "contrived randomness" mode of control with hierarchical accountability (Hood 1998, 64-68; see also Rose-Ackerman 1978), "'dual key' operations, that is, several people needed to commit funds or other resources, or separation of payments and authorization) with an unpredictable pattern of posting decision-makers or supervisors around the organization's empire" as well as random internal audits (Hood 1998, 65).

Public managers who adhere to the hermeneutic agency methodology face the salient risk that if anyone establishes that they can intentionally and instrumentally promote and protect organizational interests, then their sense of being alienated and marginalized from organizational life because they see no point in trying to explain or influence events or to hold any value commitments, is ill-founded.

If faced with the prospect that public managers can act intentionally and instrumentally, they would, in the first instance, deny such a proposition, then blame fate for their lack of desire to explain or influence events or to hold any values commitments. Their envisaged solution would be to leave well enough alone. This is because their hermeneutic epistemology presumes that people can only contestably know the subjective social world as what they believe it to be, and because their agency ontology presumes that people's actions are constrained by their subjective perceptions of social reality. This solution would involve resisting vigorously any fate-tempting management innovation,

which would only make matters worse, thereby denying the predictive capacity of naturalist epistemological methods and discounting the influence of nonmaterial or structural-cultural incentives associated with structuralist ontology.

ENHANCING PUBLIC MANAGEMENT: THE WAY FORWARD

Social theory suggests that the way forward is to embrace as a process of inclusion Habermas' (1968, 1971, 1975, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1996; see also Barnes 1974; Feyerabend 1976; Knorr-Certina 1981; Kuhn 1970) notion of communicative rationality, which Dryzek (1987, 434) defined as a form of social interaction that "is free from domination (the exercise of power), strategic behaviour by the actors involved, and (self) deception. Further, all actors should be equally and fully capable of making and questioning arguments (that is, they should be communicatively competent). There should be no restrictions on the participation of these competent actors. Under these conditions, the only remaining authority is that of a good argument, which can be advanced on behalf of the veracity of empirical description, explanation, and understanding, and just as importantly, the validity of normative judgements." This would involve the creation of reflexive and pluralized organizational structures and management processes that, by drawing from, and integrating, the wisdom of all competing public management perspectives, can facilitate the constructive engagement of adherents to all perspectives, thereby diminishing the tendency towards the suppression and polarization of perspectives. This would permit and facilitate common recognition, or perhaps even common acceptance, of the validity of these competing perspectives. By so doing, boundaries would be placed around conflicts over public management values, beliefs, and attitudes. This, however, requires an approach to public management that can accommodate a variety of epistemological and ontological imperatives.

The contemporary philosophy of the social sciences offers a way of reconciling incompatible epistemological and ontological contentions through the diverse philosophical and methodological work of Archer (1990, 1995, 1996), Bhaskar (1998), Bourdieu (1998), Giddens (1984, 1993) and Habermas (1975, 1984). They have heralded a very clear attempt to reconcile the epistemological limitations of naturalism and hermeneutics, resulting in the transcendental realism synthesis (Bhaskar 1998), and the ontological inadequacies of structure and agency, resulting in the post-structuration synthesis (Giddens 1984, 1993; but see also Archer 1995 and Bourdieu 1998).

Transcendental realism emphasizes the nature of scientific description of the real world, and seeks to describe its causal mechanisms (Bhaskar 1998). It claims that the real world operates at three levels: the actual (events or processes as they are), the empirical (the perceived nature of those events or processes open to an observer), and the deep (the underlying mechanisms or imperatives that cause these events or processes) (Baert 1998, 191).

Within this typology, knowledge of the real world rests on unreliable empirical perceptions of the actual world, which is itself once removed from deep explanation. Further, the experience of scientific discovery indicates that the explanations derived through this process are subject to revision. However, the phenomena to be explained remain both constant and real. Thus, Bhaskar (1998, 11) distinguishes between "the transitive objects of science" and "the intransitive objects of reality." He claims (12) that

scientific discovery is a cumulative process of hermeneutic-based imaginative model building, whereby transitive knowledge is used to postulate hypothetical causal mechanisms which, if they existed, would explain the relevant intransitive phenomenon. Thus, science involves the identification of a phenomenon, the postulation of its explanation, the empirical corroboration of this explanation, and the discovery of its intransitive generative mechanism that, in turn, becomes a new phenomenon to be explained. This methodology leads progressively to deeper levels of explanation.

Transcendental realism does not overcome the uncertainties identified by the earlier naturalists. The problems of induction and the theory-laden nature of observation remain (Popper [1959] 2000). However, it does embrace them at the ontological level, and it does adopt more sophisticated criteria for reality, one that is free from the constraints of strict falsificationism. It also offers a potential reconciliation of the hermeneutic aspects of scientific discovery identified by Kuhn (1970) with an empirically based approach to inference so as to determine best explanations.

The post-structuration synthesis is as the attempt to adjudicate the ontological tensions between structure and agency (Archer 1995; Bourdieu 1998; Giddens 1984, 1993). In contention is whether the relationship between structure and agency is distinguishable, analytically, from what is related by it. Are individuals and structures distinct, different, but interdependent (Archer 1996, 680)? Giddens asserts that there is an identity—duality rather than dualism—relationship between structure and agency. He argues that social structures exist "only in so far as forms of social conduct are reproduced chronically across time and space" (1984, xxi); and that human agents "have, as an inherent aspect of what they do, the capacity to understand what they do while they do it" (xxii). "The reflexive capacities of the human actor are characteristically involved in a continuous manner with the flow of day-to-day conduct in the contexts of social activity" (xxiii). He thereby conflates them. In contention is whether agency and structure are interdependent (in a duality relationship as asserted by Giddens), or interdependent but different and thus distinguishable (in an analytically dualist or morphogenetic relationship, as asserted by Archer), which means that, with time and power, structure is both a cause and a consequence of agency (Parker 2000).

The combination of transcendental realism and post-structuration suggest a fifth methodological position, one that presumes a social world in which structure and agency only have properties that are manifest in, and reproduced or transformed through, social practice, and in which events or processes are knowable, the nature of which, however, can be only unreliably and contestedly perceived by an observer. The knowledge so gained can be used to generate hypothetical causal explanations for the observed events or processes, for which empirical corroboration can be sought. The discovery of an intransitive generative mechanism becomes, itself, a new phenomenon that needs to be explained. Progressively, deeper levels of explanation of the social world are thereby generated by this methodology.

When applied to public management, this fifth methodological position progressively facilitates deeper levels of understanding of public management processes, permits more subtle explanations of organizational and management problems, and facilitates the enhancement of organizational learning through the reflexive capacities of those it empowers.

In seeking to understand the cause of an organizational and management problem in a public agency, transcendental realists would accept that events occur and processes exist, but would be skeptical of any empirical generalizations about their causation derived from naturalist methods, which they would treat only as preliminary working hypotheses. They would search for a deep understanding of the underlying causation mechanism or imperatives. This would require them to engage with other relevant actors in acts of reflexive interpretation of problems, so as to ensure that they have an appropriate contextualization of meaning, which would involve the application of hermeneutic methods that would enable them to identify perspective reciprocities that result from acts of ideation that rest on intersubjectively shared symbols. This cumulative process of hermeneutic-based imaginative public management model building involves transitive knowledge being used to postulate hypothetical causal mechanisms which, if any can be empirically demonstrated to exist, would explain the relevant intransitive public management phenomenon. This would involve a search for empirical corroboration. If such confirmation is possible then a new intransitive generative mechanism would have been discovered, which would, in turn, become a new phenomenon to be explained. Transcendental realism thus leads progressively to deeper levels of explanation of public management events or processes, thereby permitting more subtle explanations of public management problems.

In seeking to identify how best to deal with a public management problem for which a subtle explanation has been found and agreed upon, post-structurationalists would accept that people have the necessary reflexive capacities to solve the organizational and management problem, but that it can only be actualized, so becoming meaningful human action, when people are empowered and enabled to draw upon the structural properties of an organization. This reflexive capacity is the embodied understanding people gain by engaging with organizational practice, thereby enabling them to learn by trial and error and from the mistakes made by others, so as to determine the relevance of general principles (such as rules, recipes, formal procedures, and judgmental criteria). By this means they are able to garner the understanding needed to solve the management problem as they conduct their affairs with and within the organization. The resultant social practice, mobilized as it is in a continuous manner with the flow of day-to-day conduct, will, in turn, transform the enabling structural properties. This creates the potential for further organizational and management problems, so necessitating the prospect of further organizational learning as the search for problem explanation and solution continues.

In the organizational world perceived through the critical-realist–post-structuration lens, public managers would be advised to accept the following management propositions. First, there are no failure-proof public management propositions, merely suppositions. Second, public management problems must be managed, even if they cannot be solved. Third, what constitutes good public management is an essentially contested concept, clarifiable through constructive discourse. Fourth, constructive

discourses are creative opportunities for people with disparate perspectives to find solutions to threatening public management problems. Fifth, public managers must learn to comprehend and evaluate the intended meaning of the arguments based on a diversity of methodological perspectives. Sixth, conflict is normal and necessary. Seventh, the best outcomes that they can expect from constructive discourses are sets of achievable public management reform goals, implementable strategies, and a tolerable level of conflict. Eighth, achieving good public management is an iterative process that involves learning by doing and learning from experience about what is the right thing to do and how to do things right.

CONCLUSION

The configuration of epistemological and ontological perspectives that gives rise to a set of methodological families offers incompatible contentions about what is knowable and can exist in the social world in which public managers conduct their affairs. Thus, they have incompatible contentions about the forms of reasoning that should be the basis for public management thought and action, and about how people behave or are prone to behave in given situations. Each of them is, however, fundamentally flawed because their underlying epistemological and ontological premises are fundamentally flawed.

The broad conclusion drawn is that good public management requires the confrontation and integration of a disparate set of contending propositions. The challenge is to accept Heidegger's proposition that "thinking only begins at the point where we have come to know that Reason, glorified for centuries, is the most obstinate adversary of thinking" (cited in Barrett 1958, 184), for, as Barrett (247) observes, "the centuries-long evolution of human reason is one of man's greatest triumphs, but it is still in process, still incomplete, still to be."

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