

## Management's Search for Balance

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**B**ill Scott's (1994) basic message is that the "new social contract" we recommend as one important voice in an expanded conversation on the foundations of management practice "is not only passé, it is wrong" (p. 172). In an elegant critique, Scott (1994) argues that our precepts are rehashed managerial liberalism, a philosophical perspective which supports an elitist class of managers in the delusion that they can "separate their private interests from their public responsibilities" (p. 172). Suffice it to say that we do not associate the basic ideas of the new social contract with the elitist world Scott (1994) describes.

A fundamental difference in worldview exists between Scott's (1994) commentary and our essay: Scott (1994) chooses to focus on the negative lessons from past efforts to forge a new social contract, whereas we attempt to distill the best from those efforts. Scott (1994), for example, identifies skepticism, cynicism, and alienation as the last ditch defense of workers against managerial intrusions. Our basic point is that everyone must take more responsibility for making organizations work. Chester Barnard's acknowledged elitism (and Rousseau's chauvinism) notwithstanding, we continue to believe they have helpful ideas for

bringing private interests into closer accord with public responsibilities. It is time to emphasize public responsibility. Egoism, skepticism, cynicism, and alienation are inadequate tools.

Management as pragmatic inquiry requires a search for balance in perspectives and an avoidance of false dichotomies and extreme ideologies. Good management entails a balancing act along a continuum of individual freedoms and social responsibilities engendering theoretical pluralism and multilectic inquiry within the management discipline (Huff, 1981; Mahoney, 1993). Students should be exposed to a variety of perspectives. Too many business students receive a steady diet of neo-Hobbesian stories and positivist rhetoric. We do not contend that such ideas should be suppressed; however, our discipline should provide a much broader view of both (management) science and humanity.

We also take issue with the positivist claim that all value judgments are meaningless. Following Myrdal (1970), we argue against suppressing value judgments in the name of science. Management researchers, managers, and other organization participants should be moralists in that they integrate the resolution of ethical questions into their work. Avoiding ethical questions,

more often than not, demonstrates a lack of courage rather than positivist convictions.

A new social contract requires that firms and universities become a nexus of ethical conversations. The rules of positivism would be supplemented by the ethical rules of conversation described by Habermas (1979) and McCloskey (1985). A conversational approach would widen discourse in the management field so that efficiency, equity, and ethical dimensions of salient management issues are openly discussed.

Our final observation responds to Scott's (1994) concluding quote from Adam Smith that "the man of system . . . seems to imagine that he can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chessboard" (p. 172). Borrowing Mintzberg's (1978) vocabulary, our view is that new social contracts cannot be entirely planned, they must also be emergent. Once again, it is a pragmatic search for balance that is important, in this case the balance between cybernetic,

spontaneous emerging order (as if led by Adam Smith's invisible hand) and the visible hand of human design and planning.

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