

# 1 the role of ideology in shaping human management models

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Good ideologies rather than bad ones

Ideologies transcending empiricism but not inconsistent with it

Conscious rather than unconscious ideology

Man's behavior is in good part determined by what I want to call his ideologies. By ideology, I mean a combination of beliefs, attitudes, and interpretations of reality that are derived from one's experiences, one's knowledge of what are presumed to be facts, and above all, one's values.

Ideologies can be thought of as being 'big' or 'little'. Religions, political systems, philosophies of life, etc., these are all big ideologies, or conglomerates of ideologies. Little or at least medium-sized ideologies deal with a wide range of our functioning in our private and professional lives. For instance, we have many such ideologies in our human management professions. While the number of human management professionals and agencies is large, the services they render are profoundly affected and often even governed by a relatively small number of fundamental assumptions or concepts. Thus, in the field of mental retardation, services were for years dominated by the idea that the retarded were a menace to society. Health services of the future will probably undergo sweeping changes if the concept is generally accepted that health services are a right rather than a privilege. The list of potential examples is endless.

We not only need to recognize relatively broad human management ideologies, but also those that may be strongly held by specific professions or schools of thought, or even by specific agencies. Unfortunately, such agency ideologies are often merely agency myths or agency dogmas, and there is a point where an ideology, a myth, and a dogma merge into one. For instance, today, we recognize that the prevalent ideology of welfare agencies in regard to foster and adoptive placement of retarded infants (*e.g.* 'everybody knows you can't place mongoloids') was a dogma, and being false, was also a myth. But this ideology was powerful, and determined what was done for many decades.

Ideologies are extremely powerful forces that rule and determine a host of behaviors, both important and unimportant ones. Even scientists who pride themselves on being purely empirical in their scientific work are ruled by ideologies. Thus, Weinberg (1970) examines some of the frequently unconscious value axioms of scientists, such as 'pure science is better than applied science', or 'paradigm-breaking is better than tedious detail work'. Kuhn (1962) has rendered a widely acclaimed analysis which appears to have demonstrated that science progresses in discontinuous steps which are attained by rather radical reconceptualizations, many of which are ideological rather than merely empirical in nature. Thus, scientific theories come and go, although they are never provable, and only occasionally disprovable.

This chapter has drawn on some material published earlier (Wolfensberger, 1970a).

They come and go because of the prevailing scientific as well as social and even political ideologies. The history of science is replete with examples where even a formidable body of evidence was ignored or denied because the prevailing ideology could not tolerate or account for such evidence. Lysenkoism in Russian genetics and agriculture is an example. In medicine, the evidence against bloodletting was overpowering – yet it was practised for hundreds of years. Today, one of the most widely practised psychiatric techniques, namely psychotherapy, is supported by only scant good experimental evidence, despite more than 50 years of practice. I, too, have my trans-empirical scientific ideologies. For instance, I am most skeptical about extrasensory perception, even though the evidence for it is very strong. My scientific ideologies find it difficult to account for such evidence. Therefore, I dismiss the evidence.

If a human management assumption, concept, or ideology has rather global implication and is consistently expressed, we often refer to it as a human management 'model'. The term model here is not used in the same sense as in architecture or fashion design, but more in the sense of the word 'paradigm'. It is not necessarily something that others should model themselves after, but an example – a typical expression – of a concept or pattern.

Another way of conceptualizing a human management model is as a consistent pattern in which the behavior of persons is structured by other persons who exercise authority or strong influence over them. Human management models affect and often even dictate the location, design, and operation of human management facilities such as listed in the prologue. For instance, much has been said and written about the medical model which generally implies the perception of the consumer of a human service as a 'sick' 'patient' who, after 'diagnosis', is given 'treatment' or 'therapy' for his 'disease' in a 'clinic' or 'hospital' by 'doctors' who carry primary administrative and human management responsibility, assisted by a hierarchy of 'paramedical' personnel and 'therapists', all this hopefully leading to a 'cure'.

Not only daily management practices, but also the social organization of service systems and manpower structures are usually consistent with and related to the prevailing human management concepts and models (e.g. Gruenberg, 1966). This should not surprise us, because an intimate reciprocity of cause-effect exchanges often link together the social organization (e.g. manpower structures and training) and the management concepts in and of a field.

From the above, one might almost infer that ideologies, and human management models based upon them, are bad. This is not necessarily so. There are good and bad ideologies, and good and bad models. Some good models become bad only when they are inappropriately applied. For instance, the medical model is superb – in appropriate contexts; it has been destructive in others, as when it has been applied to certain problems which are primarily of a socio-pedagogic nature.

Perhaps it is in the sciences where the power of ideologies is to be regretted, because in contrast to human services, science is much more based in empiricism than values, and because ideologies can override facts and empiricism rather easily. However, in human management, I hope that values shall forever reign supreme, at least to a degree. Values are valuable,

and our lives should be ruled by them. But at the same time, we must strive for three goals: good ideologies rather than bad ones; ideologies which either transcend empiricism or at least are not inconsistent with it; and conscious ideologies rather than unconscious ones. Below, I will elaborate upon each of these.

### **Good ideologies rather than bad ones**

Some ideologies are obviously more adaptive than others; and ideologies differ from each other in regard to the degree to which they are consistent with the holder's other and higher-order ideologies. Yet, obviously, it is only by wisdom or hindsight that we can differentiate good ideologies from bad ones. Otherwise, there would be no bad ideologies, because everybody would embrace only the good ones.

Unfortunately, there are probably only two ways to improve the quality of our ideologies. One way is to strive with sincerity to root out all of one's unconscious ideologies which usually are unconscious only because they are 'bad'. If they were good, we would be less apt to tuck them away. Secondly, there are times when we can apply a bit of decision theory. For instance, some ideologies may be redundant but at least they will not do any harm, while others can do a lot of harm; or some may increase our options, while others reduce them. A belief in the theory that mental retardation is primarily hereditary logically leads to treatment nihilism, while an environmental theory impels toward treatment activism. If the hereditary theory is wrong but we adopt it, we lose all human values, by doing nothing where much could be done, and that is what we did for many decades. On the other hand, if we adopt the environmental theory, and it is wrong, we lose little in human values, only in money. If retarded infants can be fostered, but we do not try because we do not believe it can be done, we will have thrown away a valuable option and harmed a lot of children. If it cannot be done, but we try and fail, we have only wasted a little effort and money, and the children are no worse off than they were before.

A good contemporary example is the situation in residential services for the retarded. We have behind us 50 years of failure, and we can scarcely do worse than we have with our past patterns. Some people now say that we should not try new patterns because they are unproven. But in actuality, just about the worst that can happen is that we do as badly as in the past, while the best that can happen is a breakthrough to a new age. Thus, decision theory alone can sometimes dictate that we embrace a new ideology, tried or untried.

### **Ideologies transcending empiricism but not inconsistent with it**

Let us compare the following two ideologies: as many of the retarded as possible should engage in work that is as culturally normative as possible; or homeless retarded children should be institutionalized because no one will foster or adopt them. The first ideology transcends empiricism. It states a principle and leaves it up to the future and empiricism to determine what 'as many as possible' or 'as culturally normative as possible' may mean. On the other hand, the second ideology is so phrased as to be directly empirically testable. There is nothing wrong with an empirically-based ideology,

but it must not be inconsistent with empiricism, and the second ideology is. An example of an empirically-based ideology that is consistent with empiricism is: because most of the severely retarded, and some profoundly retarded, can perform work which, though probably sheltered, is culturally normative in quality if not always in quantity, they should perform such work rather than work which is culturally deviant.

### **Conscious rather than unconscious ideology**

One thing that can be very bad about our ideologies is that more often than not, we are not aware of them. Sometimes we take them so for granted that we lose sight of their existence. An analogy is man's attitude toward air. He took it so much for granted that he did not 'discover' its existence until about 350 years ago. At other times, we simply are not equipped intellectually to formulate our ideologies in words. At yet other times, our ideologies are so bad that we cannot consciously face up to them.

For example, we all claim to believe in equality – and then we practise gross discrimination, but deny it because we cannot admit it and therefore do not realize that we discriminate. In our human management services, we claim to render treatment – and then we dehumanize, and yet deny that we dehumanize. Our educators call for segregated special education of the mildly retarded – and then the evidence shows that with specially-trained teachers, small special classes, and special materials, the special children learn less than they would if left integrated in large classes with regular teachers and classmates years ahead of them. But first we deny the evidence, and when we can no longer deny it, we ignore and usually repress it, and we keep doing that which makes us feel comfortable with our ideology.

There are few things more vicious, more maladaptive, more inimical to individual and collective well-being than unconscious ideologies. The fact that for 200 years, we have adhered, largely unconsciously, to racial discrimination while claiming to adhere to equality is an extreme example. It is a phenomenon that might destroy us.

In the next chapter we will review how ideologies have forged man's patterns of response to devalued groups of fellow men. The rest of the book will then be concerned with the alternative ideologies and patterns of normalization. This ideology, it will be found, is one which draws heavily on empiricism, but throughout, care will be taken to deal with values and to do so at a high level of awareness. The clash of normalization-related values with other values will be rather direct at points, and efforts will be made to sharpen rather than dull the underlying issues. Particularly sharp confrontations will be found in the issue bearing on the benefits versus the drawbacks of juxtaposing deviancy groups and in the issue of human safety and health versus the dignity of risk.