Thomas B. Greenfield

Against group mind

An anarchistic theory of education

> Public education deals with a collectivity of
> children on behalf of a collectivity of adults, and
> inevitably results, no matter its professed aspirations
> about the individual, in the care and feeding of group
> mind. (Wherever grades are given for the way one
> thinks, it follows.) That is what this article is against.
> Admittedly, as the note at the end of it suggests, it
> was originally conceived as a one-sided advocacy
> matched against two other sides for the sake of an
> argument at a conference. But Greenfield's tongue is
> not really in his cheek. Because his points are
> seriously made, it seems entirely right to start off a
> journal about education, a word which too often is
> presumed to refer exclusively to public schooling, with
> a writer who takes dead aim against that schooling's
> most salient feature.

An anarchistic theory of organization recognizes the
individual as the ultimate building block in social reality.
Whatever it is that joins man and mankind exists in people.
Whatever allows speech, understanding, sympathy, dominance,
submission, rejection, and inflicted trauma, and whatever allows
social intercourse, finds expression through the individual. Within
the limits set by nature and our ephemeral life, we make the
world we live through. We make it out of the self that reflects,
chooses, wills, and imposes order on itself and on others.

I offer not a philosophy of anarchism applied to
organizations, but a glimpse of the anarchy that inheres in all
thought and that tyrannizes (and humanizes) us under the guise of
Logic and Social Order (1). In Lewis Carroll's little fable, Achilles
gives the Tortoise a lesson in Logic (2). When Achilles says we

must all accept conclusions derived by Logic, the Tortoise answers simply, "But **why** must I?" When Achilles fails by Logic alone to demonstrate the truth of Logic, he then reveals the real and only force of Logic by saying the Tortoise **must** draw the necessary inference, for otherwise Logic will take him by the throat and compel his acceptance. Of course, it is not logic that will so assail us, but rather other people who attack us when we reject the Logic that is in their minds (3).

Organizations hold the power of life and death over us, as for example in the questions of whether the foetus has a right to life and whether Karen Ann Quinlan has a right to die. But these questions and all that lie between them are answered not by abstractions, but by other people. As Sartre said, Hell has no need of brimstone and turning on the spit. Hell is other people. It exists here and now. We ourselves make it. Once made, we call the resulting order organization.

An anarchistic theory of organizations may be summed up in two statements: first, a statement that rejects group mind and rejects an overarching social reality, thought to lie beyond human control and outside the will, intention, and action of the individual (4); second, a statement that acknowledges the tumult and irrationality of thought itself (5). Acting, willing, hoping, passionate, fearful, mortal, fallible individuals and the events that join them are therefore always more complex, interesting, and real than the ideas we use forever vainly to explain them.

As someone infected with anarchistic thought, I should stop at this point and possibly leave also. But as we all know, we must go on -- for politeness' sake if for no other reason. And for the most part, we do go on. What we go on with is life, in all its ambiguity, possibility, promise, apparent victories and defeats, its pleasure and pain.

Let me offer twelve short observations that may illuminate and helpfully elaborate what I have said to this point.

1   It is the individual that lives and acts, not the organization. It is therefore the experience of individuals that we must seek to understand. Huxley (1977, pp.11-12) says it clearly.

> We live together..., but always in all circumstances we are by ourselves. The martyrs go hand in hand into the arena; they are crucified alone. Embraced, the lovers desperately try to fuse their insulated ecstasies into a single self-transcendence; in vain... We can pool information about experiences, but never the experiences themselves. From family to nation, every human group is a society of island universes.

The world we know is created by our perception of it. We learn to see and we build what we see. As Kant said, we do not create our world, but we do make it. This observation is true about the world in general, but has its greatest force and importance in the interpretation of social reality. Clearly, there is something "out there" that contains forces man does not control. The individual does not give birth to herself or himself; nor can the individual by will withstand death. But within these limits, the individual has enormous creative scope. As Wittgenstein (1961) makes us see, the ideas in our heads are not so much models of the world as models for the world (6). We believe in the ideas in our heads; we trust our models for the world, so deeply that we make them true. We will them to be true.

3 (It is pure anarchy that accounts for the non-rationality in the numbering of these points. See No. 6 for an "inexorable" logic to explain it.)

We live in separate realities. What is true for one person is not for another. In that sense, we live in different worlds. Each of us, as Huxley says, is an island universe. There is no action - however terrible or appalling it may appear to some of us - that is not sensible and rational to others. Some months ago, I found it virtually impossible to read press stories of how certain prisoners in a rural province of India were routinely blinded by police who thrust acid-tipped needles into their eyes. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi expressed her revulsion for the action and ordered the dismissal of the officers involved. When British reporters reached the town where the horrors were done, they found civil disobedience in the streets in front of the police station. The demonstrators were protesting, however, not against the police, but against Mrs. Gandhi. They wished to see the police reinstated as their only effective protection against outlaws whose crimes they saw as much worse than anything the police did. The practice in rural India is to safeguard personal wealth in gold, and this is often kept in bands tightly fastened to fingers or arms. So to remove their life savings more conveniently, the bandits had simply lopped off the victims' hands or arms. As one citizen said, "We never heard from Mrs. Gandhi when that happened."(7)

4 Individuals act out of will and intention. If we are to understand organizations we must understand what moves people to act and we must suspend, if we can, our own judgment of their action. This task is difficult because our judgment of acts clouds our observation of them. It is difficult also because people usually hide their wilfulness - certainly from others and often from themselves as well. Yet the study of intentionality is the

key to understanding organizations.

   5   Facts and values are closely interwoven. Positivistic
science insists on splitting them and disregarding the values. It
thus ignores the most important part of our lives and falls into
the error of thinking that values can be derived from facts.
Facts decide nothing.   It is we who decide about the facts.
Hodgkinson (1978 b, p. 220) sums up the conundrum of facts and
values in the following aphorisms:

> The world of fact is given, the world of value made.
> We discover facts and impose values.
> Facts must go undefined.
> Values are special kinds of facts; but never true or
> false.

   6   Modern science and ancient philosophy have taught us
to think that a universal logic and rationality governs the world.
And we are taught to hope as well that those who master the
logic and the rationality may also govern the world.   But ideas
both ancient and modern give a glimpse of the chaos that inheres
in our supposedly universal logic and rationality.   Zen (Suzuki,
1955) sets out to "break the mind of logic", and that perhaps is
what we must do as well if we are to see past it to other
realities.   It is a delicious irony that Charles Dodgson could write
Alice in Wonderland and then turn his hand to a parable that uses
Logic to unhorse Logic itself.   He shows that at the heart of
Logic is something illogical.   As Winch (1958, p.57) points out,
"inferring a conclusion from a set of premises is to **see** that the
conclusion does in fact follow" (Emphasis added) There is
therefore also an intentionality in logic, mathematics, and
apparently objective science.   For Wittgenstein, it is we who are
inexorable, not mathematics.   And he says, "That is why it is
inexorably insisted that we shall all say 'two' after 'one', 'three'
after 'two' and so on."   For Bertrand Russell, $1 + 1 = 2$ was not
only a proposition of symbolic logic and mathematics, but also a
declaration of intent meaning "Know that" or "Know that ·I am
aware that" $1 + 1 = 2$. (8)

   7   Individuals are responsible for what they do.
Organizations and our habit of thinking in categories ease this
sense of responsibility.   As Hodgkinson (1978 b, p. 173) points out,
the required allegiance to the organization removes notions of
right and wrong.   The organization is not only reified, but also
deified.   The individual is thereby no longer author of his act, but
agent for a larger reality.   Absolutist Christians often speak -
usually through clenched teeth - of loving the sinner and hating
the sin.   This schizophrenia of thought serves both to sanctify the
Christians and to justify what they are about to do to the sinner.

8   Hodgkinson (1978 b, p. 208) says, "We are all either administered or administering", while William Blake says, "I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Man's."   And G.B. Shaw's Don Juan (1946, p. 169) argues that is is better "to be able to choose the line of greatest advantage instead of yielding in the direction of the least resistance... To be in Hell is to drift: to be in Heaven is to steer."   This leads us to think that it is better to run organizations than to be run by them.   And so we slip into seeing the force of the Machiavellian position: the "reasonableness of evil", the wisdom of "rejecting kindness and love for self-interest; trust for fear." (Segal, 1974, p. 158)

9   The alternative to action, and probable evil, is disengagement.   Orwell uses the metaphor of Jonah inside the whale to express the individual's best approach to forces that are totally beyond his control:

> The whale's belly is simply a womb big enough for an adult.   There you are, in the dark cushioned space that exactly fits you, with yards of blubber between yourself and reality, able to keep up an attitude of the completest indifference, no matter what happens.   A storm that would sink all the battleships in the world would hardly reach you as an echo. (Orwell, 1957, p. 43)

The image here is of security attained by personal detachment from the maelstrom that swirls around the individual.   But detachment from events does not mean non-awareness of them. As Orwell says, we should think of the whale as transparent.   In this circumstance, Jonah becomes an observer who can see what others locked in the struggle are oblivious to.   Because his detachment and security let him see things that remain hidden to others, Jonah as observer bears the obligation to describe what is happening and to make us aware of it.   This task also becomes the obligation of the social scientist, who sets out to understand and explain organization.

10   History and law should be our models for studying organizations, for these branches of knowledge know of no completion and recognize the interests of the writer and the advocate as crucial to what is declared to be true and right.   So it is that Feyerabend (1975, p. 17), quoting the historian Butterfield, finds that history provides a model for knowledge generally and not least for that knowledge we call scientific:

> History is full of 'accidents and conjunctures and curious juxtapositions of events' and it demonstrates to us the 'complexity of human change and the unpredictable character of the ultimate consequences

of any given act or decision of men.'

In the study of organizations, the analysis of our language and the flat description of what happens appear as our best approaches and methodological tools.

11 Language is power. It literally makes reality appear and disappear. Those who control language control thought - and thereby themselves and others. We build categories to dominate the world and its organizations. The anarchist wants to let the reality of people within the categories shatter them and thereby reduce the control. In the words of Thomas Szasz (1976, pp. 46, 42), "the less a person understands another, the greater is his urge to classify him - in terms of nationality, religion, occupation, or psychiatric status... In short, classifying another person renders intimate acquaintance with him quite unnecessary - and impossible." And he adds, "... the human larynx and tongue are actually used as claws and fangs, and words as venom." Organizations are sets of categories arrayed for the linguistic and other wars that people wage among themselves.

12 As Wittgenstein pointed out, propositions are not merely models **of** the world; they are models **for** the world. They offer ways of understanding the world and also of creating it. We should pay closer attention therefore to the study of reality and social forms through propositions. Here are some propositions from Wittgenstein (1961, p. 15) in which he reverses commonsense understanding and makes the world dependent upon our propositions or models of it:

2.1	We picture facts to ourselves.
2.12	A picture is a model of reality.
2.141	A picture is a fact.
2.1511	That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it.

Propositions are thus pictures of the world. Their truth lies in our understanding them and in their power to make us believe in them and act in accord with them. Here are some propositions from Hodgkinson (1978, pp. 202ff):

1.221	Language is the basic administrative tool.
1.2211	Language cloaks power and has power.
1.36	Policy goes beyond logic.
2.1	Administration secures services **from** men **for** organizations.
2.12	To advise can be to command.
6.1	Administrative power is a function of the will. The contest of wills is the pragmatic test of power.
6.121	There is such a thing as the judicious rage, the

calculated loss of control.
6.132   Beware of friendliness in the realms of power.
There is no need to beware of friendship. It
does not exist.

An anarchistic conclusion

Anarchy does not fit neatly into a box. Neither does
reality. This non-fit says it all. We press a few pieces of
multi-faceted reality into our minds and live as though we were
omniscient gods. That is why we must needs learn to unloosen
our minds and let them run freely. If we are to understand what
we ourselves and others see as reality, we should follow R.D.
Laing's dictum when he says, "I have made an arrangement with
my mind: I let it do anything it wants to." And that is the nub
of anarchism in the study of organizations: while we ourselves are
bound, we may yet free our minds.

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NOTES

1.   Most of what I offer in this vein has been written over the
past decade in various articles. Some of these are listed
below in the references. I do not claim the ideas advanced
in these articles as uniquely mine. I just say the assembly
of them is my own and that I have been trying to organize
and advance them with enough clarity to force their
acceptance in a field that for the most part has managed
to conduct inquiry by ignoring them. Perhaps I have only
rattled the bones of a skeleton in the intellectual closet, but
for doing so I have had sometimes to face the anger and
sometimes the indifference of my colleagues who study
organization theory in education. I wish I could say with
Kant that I more feared being misunderstood than refuted.
What I have found instead is that many of my colleagues
who study educational organizations are simply embarrassed
by my statements and choose therefore to ignore them as
they would a social gaffe. This response brings to mind
Szasz's proposition (1975, p.145) that bears perhaps on the
social organization of knowledge: "A 'paranoid' is a person

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who insists you don't like him when in fact you don't, but when the polite thing for him to do would be to keep quiet about it."

2. The significance of Dodgson's deceptively casual victory over Logic is seen in Winch, who "draws the moral" that the "heart of logic" cannot be represented logically.

3. The difference between Logic and logic is that the first is held to be holy, unassailable, and universal. In Szasz's terms (1976, pp. 37-38), Logic is a metaphor used for strategic purposes. The humbler logic is man-made, fallible and open to correction. Kaplan (1964, pp.6-11) argues for qualitatively different logics with "logic-in-use" being a natural logic and "reconstructed logic" an artificial logic. He perhaps best evokes the distinction by quoting John Locke: "God has not been so sparing to men to make them barely two-legged creatures and left it to Aristotle to make them rational."

4. Arrow's General Impossibility Theorem points to the problem of ordering preferences rationally, especially in groups. As expressed by Hodgkinson (1978a, p.272), the Theorem states: "Either we must accept the Fascistic notion of some kind of group mind, or else the group leader must himself impose his own will by force or guile."

5. I acknowledge here Feyerabend's (1975) crusade against method and his outline of an anarchistic theory of knowledge. The idea echoes as well the mysticism in Wittgenstein's (1961) thought.

6. Wittgenstein's ideas are terse but often expressed with beauty and clarity. He is a philosopher whose life and ideas bear examination together. See Malcolm's (1958) **Memoir** and the accompanying poignant biographical sketch by von Wright (the **Sunday Times,** 7 December 1980).

8. For the sources of these ideas and a discussion of them, see Greenfield (1979a, pp.177-8) and Hodgkinson (1978b, p. 83).

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