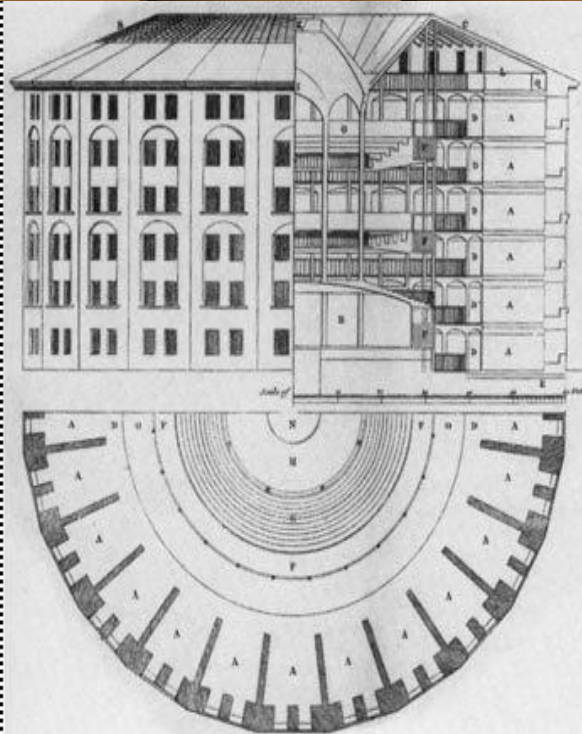


Organizations as Psychic Prisons



Psychic
Prison



Psychic Prisons

- Organizations can be explored as places where people become trapped by their own thoughts, ideas, and beliefs, or by preoccupations originating in the unconscious mind.
- This offers insights into the psychodynamic and ideological aspects of the organization.



Exploring Plato's Cave

- Socrates considered how one man's report to the other confined persons would not have been enough to change their beliefs. What they had seen and heard was reality to each of them.
- As a group, the cave prisoners could have possibly developed an alliance and a stronger belief regarding their perceived reality, as distorted as it may have been.



Groupthink

- “groupthink” to describe organizations that are trapped within their socially constructed world oblivious to outside influences and ideas preventing them from changing with the times.
- “assumed consensus”. This may occur when there is a dominant leader and a group of followers that are unwilling to express concerns or ideas contrary to the leader’s thinking.
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljPYmSdyVZc>



Organization and the Unconscious

- Freud believed “repression” allowed the cultural development of human sociability.
- The common theme remains that humans are prisoners to their unconscious past.



“Scientific Management”

- Taylor’s life and the development of “scientific management” are perfect examples of how unconscious concerns and preoccupations can have a dramatic effect on organization.
- His childhood environment of discipline and authoritarian parental relations correlate with his “scientific management” structure of organization.
- Although he saw himself as a peacemaker and believed that he could promote harmony in the organization, his methods of control and rigidity caused a great deal of unrest and dissatisfaction.



“Scientific Management”

- His preoccupations and ideas dovetailed perfectly with the concerns of the organizations of his day. Hence rather than be dismissed as a crank he became a kind of infamous hero.
- The resolution of his own internal struggle resulted in productive innovations, ideas, and methods of control that had wide social impact.



Organizations and the Patriarchal Family

- Many found Freud's theories to be too extreme and sexually preoccupied. These critics suggest understanding organization more closely relates to the patriarchal family.



Patriarchal Family

- Historically organizations have been male dominated and characteristic of male values, such as, need for aggression and outspoken behaviour.
- Women have held jobs where the function was to serve, support, and please the dominant male. The dominant male role relates to the hierarchical relations evident in the patriarchal family.
- In the patriarchal family organization fortitude, courage and heroism with a bit of self-admiration are encouraged similarly to the determination and duty that a father expects from his son.
- Matriarchal values contrast with an emphasis on unconditional love, optimism, trust compassion, and a capacity for intuition, creativity, and happiness.



Critics of the Patriarchal Organization

- Suggest the male dominated psychic structure tends to foster feelings of impotence, fear and dependence on authority, while the matriarchal influenced organization are more compassionate and open to creativity, with less hierarchy.



Unconscious Extensions

- Viewing organizations as unconscious extensions of family relations can be helpful to gain understanding of the corporate world.
- Corporate life may change similarly as the role of women and gender-related values change in our society.



Organization, Death, and Immortality

- Suggests that we repress fears regarding weaknesses and mortality.
- With this notion we can bring significance to our individual lives relating to the larger organization and shared norms, beliefs and social patterns.



Organization, Death, and Immortality

- With emphasis on the world, we can emphasize the concrete and real nature of our own existence within this larger world. In doing so, we switch our conscious concerns away from our own mortality.
- With the efforts given in shared systems of religion, national history, ideology and shared values we are a part of something bigger and something that continues beyond our own lives



Quest for Immortality

- Organizations can be understood in terms of a quest for immortality in that structures of activity created in the workplace can live on for generations. If we are a part of that structure a part of us lives on, too.
- Most of the basic conceptions of organization focus on the idea of making the complex simple. By dividing tasks and functions into distinct components we simplify and obtain more control. With that feeling of control people may feel more powerful and more in control of their own life.



Organization and Anxiety

- Organizations revert to childhood patterns of behaviour to protect themselves.
- There are *3 types of defences: dependency mode, pairing mode, and fight-flight mode*



Organization and Anxiety

- With *dependency mode* the group changes its focus to a particular leader to save them. Sometimes the group will focus on a past symbol or person that is idealized. The group is usually distracted and immobilized with in fighting instead of problem solving.
- With *pairing* the group believes a God-like figure will emerge from the group to save it. This usually paralyzes the group's ability to take effective action.
- The *fight-flight mode* is a response in which the group projects fears on the enemy. The enemy can be seen as someone or something within the organization or within the external environment that is “out to get us”. This mode will unite the group but is usually ineffective to resolve the problem due to distorted perception of the danger.



In Conclusion

- In conclusion, *organizations as psychic prisons metaphor* gives us many theories to examine related to the unconscious influencing and control of behaviours and actions within the organization. These theories allow for critical thinking and perhaps a deeper understanding of the dynamics of organization.
- If the unconscious past can control the present, perhaps greater knowledge to understand positive and negative unconscious development could aid future generations to find more personal happiness personally and harmony within organizations.



In Conclusion

- The author describes how significant the relationship is between societal controls to repress a libidinal culture and the rise of formal organization with development of industrial society. Mastery and control of the body is necessary for control over social and political life.



In Conclusion

- It is Gareth Morgan's idea that any organization must develop self-knowledge. If not, then the organization will be trapped in a psychic prison. And if you do not work with the uncontrollable unconscious, it will not be eliminated, but only banished or submerged to a point from where it will reappear later.
- *"The invisible dimension of organization that we have described as the unconscious can swallow and trap the rich energies of people involved in the organizing process."*
- *"Irrational qualities never accept their banishment idly and are always looking for a way to modify their rational other side."*
- *"It is pointless to develop corporate cultures that thrive on change if underlying preoccupations and concerns are not addressed."*