

Illusion of Orderliness: Macro Theories, Conspiracy Theories and Tables-technocrats

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Abstract

People never cease to seek order. Previous research has shown that there are two ways to achieve control over the functioning of society. The first approach, known as the Newtonian paradigm, is a top-down response to the complexity of state governance through a hierarchical form of organization, integrated functional roles, and command-and-control mechanisms. The second approach addresses the ineffectiveness of all-powerful governments by building self-organizing, self-synergizing, and dynamically changing governance networks. With the development of information technology, the efficiency of both approaches has increased, and managers have tended to use both to simplify the complexities of national governance. However, this paper suggests that we should be wary of falling into a Hegelian order that exists only conceptually, a harmonious order that eliminates contradictions, details, and complexity. This desire for orderliness and fear of uncertainty has led to our worship of grand theories and preference for conspiracy theories. Finally, this illusion of orderliness produces tables-technocrats who focus on theoretical problem solving. They believe that technological solutions to all social problems can be found if new technologies are constantly developed and more complete information is constantly available. But most people believe that tables are the means to organize information in an efficient and standardized way, which leads to the incomprehensible parts not being recorded and computed through tables.

Keywords

Macro Theories; Conspiracy Theories; Tables-technocrats; Illusion of Orderliness.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs and the government never stop looking for order. For entrepreneurs, they want to control the production process precisely and reduce the risks in the production and distribution fields. Meanwhile, government, a more common form of governance, is frequently perceived as having an instinct to expand its influence in the community and to control and organize society as a whole comprehensively[1]. Therefore, reducing the complexity of society, eliminating uncertainty, and integrating the unexpected within the framework of governance has become an ongoing goal for governors. The social system is widely understood to be a complex system composed of an organic combination of economic, political, and cultural elements. In it, human beings are organically connected and cooperate with each other to form groups and interact according to certain behavioral norms, economic relations, and social institutions. It is crucial to note that the main and most distinctive feature of social systems is complexity. Luhman argues that the complexity of social systems arises because of the infinite

combinations of numerous elements, which generate an infinite variety of possible futures. Further, the simultaneous presentation of connections among elements increases the difficulty of studying social systems[2]. The fact that "everything that happens in the system happens at the same time" means that, although the laws of the system do have causal relations when it operates, the elements presented to the observer have "an infinite variety of articulation possibilities" when the system is observed, due to the lack of mastery of the inner logic of social operation. " Although researchers are convinced that the internal functions of a social system can be described, it is still hard for administrators to control the whole social system[3]. Thus, risk avoidance and risk management constitute the endogenous motivation of all kinds of subjects to respond to external complexity, whereas complexity reduction becomes the fundamental perspective for explaining all kinds of social phenomena and social activities. In this case, businesses and governments typically use forms (i.e., a standardized form of paperwork) to collect information and make decisions, and bureaucracies make authoritative assignments through paperwork review, reflecting a paper-based worldview, that is, only the social reality embodied in the document belongs to the real social reality. Conceptually, all applicants lose their human existence and become a collection of parameters[4].

Previous research has proposed three types of responses to complexity: a) the Newtonian paradigm characterized by top-down statistics; b) the complexity paradigm characterized by self-organization; and c) with the development of information technology, the efficiency of both approaches has increased, and managers have tended to use both to simplify the complexities of national governance [5]. The first approach, known as the Newtonian paradigm, is a top-down response to the complexity of state governance through a hierarchical form of organization, integrated functional roles, and command-and-control mechanisms. In Newtonian paradigm, Bureaucracy is often compared to a machine, and this metaphor reflects a mechanistic worldview. According to this conception, all social realities can be regarded as raw materials, and the governing body of society—the bureaucracy—is a huge machine that conducts social governance by processing raw materials in accordance with operating procedures, and social reality is transformed into public goods to provide governance order. For example, in the early stage of the outbreak, the upper-level department will communicate the information items (codes) to be counted to the lower-level department to the grass-roots department. Grassroots workers (including street cadres, residents' committee members, social workers, volunteers, etc.) collect relevant information in communities or villages as required, enter electronic forms and report them level by level. Theoretically speaking, after aggregating the information of the scattered grassroots and establishing a ledger, the higher-level government can grasp all the information about the health of individuals within its jurisdiction. However, in this top-down process of information statistics, grassroots workers need to go door-to-door to make inquiries, which is not only inefficient, but also inevitably has duplication, omission, and errors.

The second approach addresses the ineffectiveness of all-powerful governments by building self-organizing, self-synergizing, and dynamically changing governance networks. For example, after a period of time after the outbreak of the epidemic, as an information statistics unit, some communities voluntarily used existing tools (such as "Questionnaire Star") or developed new tools after fully realizing the inefficiency and low accuracy of top-down statistics. (such as the prototype of Ningbo "Yonghang Code"), community members fill in and update their personal information by themselves. This kind of health certification directly oriented to the certification object is carried out automatically through the active innovation and participation of individuals, which improves the efficiency of information collection and aggregation in the certification work to a certain extent.

However, this paper suggests that we should be wary of falling into a Hegelian order that exists only conceptually, a harmonious order that eliminates contradictions, details, and complexity.

This desire for orderliness and fear of uncertainty has led to our worship of grand theories and preference for conspiracy theories. This illusion of orderliness produces tables-technocrats who focus on theoretical problem solving. They believe that technological solutions to all social problems can be found if new technologies are constantly developed and more complete information is constantly available. But most people believe that tables are the means to organize information in an efficient and standardized way, which leads to the incomprehensible parts not being recorded and computed through tables. This kind of romantic illusion that researchers and administrators should avoid when confronted with complex social problems.

2. Macro Theories and Tables-technocrats

Form is first and foremost a tool for bureaucracy to understand the world. Because the real world is so complex, bureaucracies do not have the ability to obtain a complete knowledge of their audiences, and can only build virtual knowledge of their object worlds based on specific formal elements. At the same time, these abstract forms acquire the ability to reshape the world as long as the bureaucracy makes audit judgments and allocation decisions based on this understanding. Under tabular technologism, critics have pointed out that it is the "tables" who rule, not the classes or people who use them. In order to give continuity to the sequence of these symbols, they are presented to be related to each other in some way. In this way, symbols are seen as "self-determining" things. For example, what numbers to fill in the form is not only from the self-judgment of the person filling the form, but from his speculation about the authority's intentions[6]. As a result, the process of filling in the form has become the realization process of bureaucratic authority. At this point, it is more typical of the blank column phenomenon in the form filling process. An applicant may find that a field on a form does not apply to him. In this case, the form itself may be allowed to be left blank. However, from the point of view of the person filling in the form[7], the reason why the authoritative organization wants to design this column shows that the information in it is meaningful. Therefore, starting from the speculation of the authority's intention, he should fill in some relevant information as much as possible to avoid showing that he is indeed in line with the spirit of authority demands in this respect. Here, every column in the form is so formal that, in the eyes of the person filling the form, every column should not be slack, and the meaningless behavior of filling in the form when faced with a column that does not apply to oneself is to "not slack" for it. A statement of slack, or, in other words, a ritual for recognizing bureaucratic authority[8].

Once established, this "self-circulating system" is not only stable, but also inherently harmonious; the grand theory that represents the emergence of technologism leads us to assume that there is a certain harmony between various interests and to regard it as everything the natural characteristics of society. The magical removal of conflict and the miraculous achievement of harmony removes the possibility of dealing with social changes and historical issues from this "systematic" and "general" theory. Our age is full of the "collective actions" of intimidated masses, of mobs, masses, and movements that are provoked, but none of these have a place in the social structures created by the norms of grand theorists. Here, just as all raw materials must meet corresponding specifications before entering the machine, all social realities must also meet corresponding specifications before entering the bureaucratic process, and the table is the processing of raw materials to make them meet the bureaucracy. Tools to handle requests. To a large extent, the mechanistic worldview presupposes a self-repeating world that operates according to a set of observable laws, which bureaucracy turns into its own rules and implementation to ensure that the world continues to operate in a repetitive manner [9].

3. Conspiracy Theories and Tables-technocrats

Tables have the function of simplifying reality and causal explanations. Society is a complex system, and in the face of complex phenomena, how exactly does the technocratic organization gain knowledge about the problem? Here, in order to understand the reality, it is necessary to simplify, and the table is an effective simplification tool. Through this simplification, it is easier for the technocracy to obtain a formally reasonable view of reality, which in turn makes it easier to rationally define the problem through a table. By reducing complex reality to a limited number of indicators [10], and then presenting the relationship between different indicators in a quantitative form, technocratic institutions can clearly identify the specific causes of specific social problems, which can be explained by the causal explanations presented in the table. propose solutions to problems. In reality, when it comes to issues like security, the tables devised by technocracies are far more complex, and the reasons presented by the tables may not be univariate, but multivariate. But in any case, with the table as a tool, the technocratic can always justify in a reasonable form that it has found the cause of the problem and act accordingly. The psychological motivation behind these two functions is actually consistent with conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories also have the function of simplifying reality and causal explanations[11].

Previous research has pointed out that conspiracy theory beliefs are not based on controllable, analytical psychological processes, but rather on emotional and intuitive psychological processes. All information is emotional, and an important feature of conspiracy theories is the strong emotional narrative. Negative emotions such as anxiety, surprise, and fear are wrapped in conspiracy theories, and negative emotional experiences can increase people's tendency to seek meaning. When people are surrounded by negative uncertainty, they have the potential to instill order in the world through trust in external controls (such as governments), or to stimulate the identification of coherent and meaningful interrelationships from a set of unrelated stimuli, form superstitious connections, and build conspiracy connections. Higher-level cognitions such as decision-making and reasoning are affected by emotions. People in anger have reduced judgment on misinformation, are more easily influenced by misinformation, and are more likely to fall into the trap of conspiracy theories. Beliefs in conspiracy theories are rooted in negative emotions of anxiety, uncertainty or lack of control. Although bureaucracy appears to be a rational institutional entity, tabular technologism suffers from anxiety [12]. It is entirely possible that this process is an irrational policy of gathering information and then disguising itself as a legitimate policy. There are many problems in reality that may be unsolvable, but in the table, there is always a technical solution. There are countless governance problems in contemporary society, many of which are wicked problems. In the face of these problems, bureaucracies cannot do nothing or fall into a crisis of legitimacy, and to make a difference they must turn insoluble problems into solvable problems through their own technologicalization, and tables become Learn about the tools to solve these anti-solution problems [13].

4. Conclusion and Discussion

Constructing problems through tables, and taking reform actions to solve them based on the causal explanations provided by the tables, is becoming a universal behavioral logic for all bureaucracies. But this logic will fail due to the squeeze of eventual social problems. A table is a tool that encapsulates a large number of elements (i, e., variables) into a larger element, thereby forming a more abstract and orderly social governance tool, which makes the illusion of order appear. But when sociologists conduct fieldwork on the micro-mechanisms of how social systems work, a multitude of variables resurface, leading to a massive increase in complexity. The complexity of the system at different scales is different, and different

observation angles correspond to different observation scales. For ordinary people, if he/she only cares about whether the TV can be watched, the TV has only two states: normal and abnormal. But for electrical repairers, it is necessary to find out the mutual cooperation between the electronic components inside, and there will be more states - such as different components are damaged. For the latter, this TV is more complicated. Research on the relationship between scale and complexity believes that reducing the complexity of social systems is limited to a relatively macro level. Although with the development of science and technology, we can reduce the social system on a smaller scale, but we still cannot reduce the overall social system, this is because as the scale becomes smaller, the cost of comprehensive control is also rising rapidly.

So the Marxist Lukacs is pessimistic about managers' attempts to take full control of society, and for the same reasons we share the same concerns about tabular technologism. Lukács takes as an example that a capitalist society can never avoid an economic crisis to demonstrate that the capitalist world, which has been generally tabulated, is still fundamentally irrational. This means that the so-called front control still belongs to the category of the illusion of order. The automatic and lawful social operation process arranged by man is not the whole world we live in, but the tip of the iceberg that has surfaced. Orderly production and life are only partially organized, in fact, a large number of elements and incomprehensible contents are excluded from the system. It is precisely because abstract calculations can never reach these contents, Lukacs argues, that rationalization under capitalist conditions can never reach the height of totality. In this seemingly universally rationalized and tabular world, we can only make detailed calculations and reasonable arrangements for one local system after another, and fail to establish organic connections between each local system, that is, the capitalist world cannot be rationalized in its entirety. This implies that it is impossible to reduce the overall complexity, nor is it possible to tabulate the totality of society. We need to abandon the tendency for total control and focus solely on the establishment of local order. This is consistent with the closed character of social systems pointed out by Luhman [14]. Although Luhman does not actively regard the social system as a local concept, he endows the social system with a characteristic that distinguishes it from the external environment. The social system constantly recognizes what elements belong to itself as it operates (self-referentiality), and What elements belong to the external environment (alien reference). The internal operating logic of the social system only takes effect in a closed system, and does not provide a unified solution [15]. Specialized symbolologies such as jargon, schedules, and interpersonal relationships exist within the system, providing a boundary between the system and the outside world. At the same time, the self-production feature of the social system strengthens the local ordering. The social system ensures the intensity of its own production and makes each element point to other elements, so that each link is continuously connected to other links, and always maintains the With a tense and rhythmic rhythm, this sense of tension and directionality is the basis for the partial tabulation of society [16].

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