The Human Condition and Organizational Studies: Is there a Road Ahead?

In the editorial presented for the first special edition on organizational studies (os) —issue 78, volume 30— we dealt with criticism and highlighted its robust and comprehensive nature for the purpose of studying organizational phenomena (Gonzales-Miranda & Rojas Rojas, 2020). For this second edition, we would like to reflect on another relevant subject for os and all the other perspectives that enrich management thought and research: *The ideas on which we study and project the human condition*. Perhaps the ideas shaping our perception and thinking about organizations require considering the limits we often set in conceptualizing the erosion of humanity and the "philosophy" behind many of the theses supporting contemporary organization and management literature.

Do we accept people live in a world where socialization and individuality spin around the organization and its management processes, which are *per se* focused on achieving, as their ultimate goal, an infinite supply of goods and services for hyper-consumption and hedonism? Do we accept we live in a world centered on a global market that demands organizations and their management processes to engage in a radical transformation of humanism and of the institutions designed for taking care of human dignity and society? The answers to these questions could make us scream or remain in a deep-cut silence after acknowledging the kind of neo-humanism we now witness in what is known as the "*barbarian enterprise*" (Durieux & Jourdain, 1999). The millions of unemployed people, the countless workers who have seen their working hours become more flexible, and the high number of amendments to labor codes around the world warn us of a radical transformation of the ethics and morals of those who plan and support contemporary organizational work. How can we understand the subjective condition that emerges from those who lead the contemporary business war? How can we understand the subjective condition of managers who often sacrifice and numb their rationality and emotions in order to "succeed" in a market game focused on satisfying profitability interests? It then becomes necessary to think about how and where this new subjectivity that unfolds and reigns in the competitive world of our times is emerging.

The rise of os, from an epistemological perspective, resulted from the identification of an *object of study* and some methods and theoretical frameworks that try to answer, from a different angle, the problems of management and organizations that some academics refer to as toxic (Collignon & Vers, 2013), and that end up in a reification of the human being thanks to the organizational processes (Lane, Koka, & Pathak, 2006), thus detaching an individual from its social reality (Czarniawska, 2006). We accept there is a standard opinion —although not a free-of-controversies agreement— on the importance of the Contingency Movement in recognizing the organization as an object of interest and analysis of the new conditions of modern work. Such movement promoted the emergence of analytical categories different from those developed by the organizational theory created in the United States (Gonzales-Miranda & Rojas Rojas, 2020). This occurred in a contradictory way —and why not anecdotally— to its original intentions of generalizing ideas based on empirical results (among other objectives). os question the universal proposal made by Taylorism and argue that *everything depends* on organizations. Thus, it can be said that os do not accept totalitarianism and hegemonic organizational intervention ideas that seek to spot and justify "successful" and free-of-errors processes as a decalogue of a perfect route that is free from all human dysfunctions. os cast doubt in particular analyzes that problematize the efficiency and success of a series of external and internal organizational factors. In that sense, there will no longer be only a better way to manage organizations, but as many better ways as there are organizations (Gonzales-Miranda, 2014).

One way or another, os gather some of the main assessments of the situation, the context and the environment to study, understand and comprehend the illusions and *hidden faces* of management and of organizational forms (Chanlat, 2003). It is then a matter of focusing on the organization, turning it into an object of study in itself. Hence, and opposite to organizational theory, os intend to go beyond the mere object of production processes and their instrumental improvement, to study the individual within an organization as a rational and social being that is built by reinforcing the world of societies. We insist on the thesis

(consensus) that the Contingency Movement —from its interdisciplinary approaches (economics, sociology, psychology, political science, management, anthropology, and psychoanalysis) towards large business organizations and quantitative data— prescribed great understandings and predictions regarding business results. Therefore, we join those who have claimed that this movement promoted the study of all types of modern organizations and led to the advent of os.

It goes without saying that, before the emergence of os, a specific field of functional and operational nature known as "organizational behavior" appeared in the administrative and organizational scenario (Cooper & Robertson, 1987). Historically Anglo-Saxon and pragmatic by right, this field sought to use part of the contributions of the social and human sciences to prescribe a series of *recipes* focused on being able to maximize the "humanity" of the subjects who work, suffer and survive in the organizations. Today, at the risk of receiving well-founded criticism, this enthusiasm remains in force and has been delving into more intimate dimensions of the individual in order to control from *within* those "forces" that hinder the efficient machinery of productivity (Mitchell & Larson, 1987).

Faced with this concealment or reductive, conscious and predetermined denial of the working person, os have focused from the beginning —and continue to do so— on studying the condition of the human being under subordination relationships, not only exposing the uses and abuses of such control and subjugation practices, but also fostering spaces for reclaiming and, above all, valuing the human dimensions left aside by administrative ideas. The typical technocracy of psychology and its concern for motivation —and for any form of intervention on human behavior directed towards the productive interests of profit, in terms of higher performance— were challenged, putting into question its adaptive and instrumental conception (Chanlat, 1994). Within this context, it is clear that such claims raised concern about the training of future managers, leading to the formation of certain groups or currents of thought that, in Colombia, focused on studying the human dimensions with the aim of promoting the understanding and teaching of the organization and the administration.

Specifically, the *radical humanist* "school", led by the Humanism and Management Group, emerged at HEC Montreal at the end of the 1980s. The influence of this academic group reached Colombia with great impetus at Universidad del Valle and EAFIT University. From these institutions, a vast academic production that highlighted the need of placing the human being at the core of management thinking and training was built and disseminated. Among the courses that resulted of the alliance between the aforementioned universities and the Humanism and Management Group, we would like to highlight the Human Sciences Seminar (*Seminario de Ciencias Humanas*), which has bear an important impact on the training of teachers and researchers who wanted and dared to think carefully about the human dimensions with which the curricula of both administration courses and organizational research were planned. Based on the basic principles of the human sciences, this seminar tried to address some questions, such as what is the human being or what are the limits of the human, to take stock of the human being as a species (phylogenetic perspective) and as an individual (ontogenetic perspective) (Lastra & De la Rosa, 2006).

From the above, the psychic, linguistic and cultural dimensions of individuals were rescued and valued. The seminar also aimed to lay the foundations for an education in administration and management that recognized the human being in a real and lucid way and that, thanks to this, gave rise to a "human management" approach that respected, valued, defended and deployed the entire nature of humanity in accordance with its origin, vocation and mission. Another relevant initiative is Jean François Chanlat's work titled *Ciencias Sociales y Administración. En defensa de una Antropología General*, which, in the same vein of the aforementioned seminar, sought to defend a general anthropology that contributed to the understanding of administration, its importance, and its role in the training of administrators (Chanlat, 2002).

Several issues have been problematized around the human being and organizations. One of them, perhaps the most recurring, is *rationality*. This concept holds a key role both in the development of organizational forms and in management, in general. After being conceived and socially constructed in various ways throughout history, rationality was rigorously questioned from the critique of *instrumental reason* developed by Horkheimer (2002) and other thinkers of the Frankfurt School. This perspective has been instrumental to the various lines of thought that could be included in the field of os. In fact, and as an example, the bureaucratic organization can well be interpreted as a view that, based on instrumental rationality, "seeks to generate a self-referential, autarkic system, [...] building a differentiated world from the broad social dimension, where the kingdom of rationality prevails" (Montaño-Hirose, 2001, p. 196). Such rationality was part of Taylorism, which assumed depersonalization as a necessary condition to achieve prosperity thanks to the faithful obedience to

a set of orders derived from scientific reasoning, ending up in a single and unique way of doing things that, in turn, constrains the human being as an instrumentalized means for the lucrative purposes of the capital. For this motive, the idea of modernization has deeply penetrated the administrative discourse. Determined by the efficacy of instrumental rationality and world domination at the hands of science and technology, management science has echoed these principles to boost rationality within its context of action, pointing out at reification through individualism and material prosperity (Gonzales-Miranda, 2019).

In that sense, the work by Farias (2021), titled "The managerialization of state relations in Argentina (2015-2019): *Cambiemos* make us change?," shows how management practices in Argentina, represented by a group of senior officials of the Macri administration, sought after transformations in the state nature, conceived as inefficient and bureaucratic, towards an approach more akin to the instrumental rational criteria of agility, modernity, and efficiency. In addition, Jurado and García (2021) reveal how historical requirements in the evolution of the capitalist system and the rational/functionalist conception of the organization have switched the idea about the managerial function of the owner-founder of a company towards the establishment of a group of salaried managers.

The paper "Inter-institutional cooperation mechanisms: Some common practices," prepared by Herrera-Kit, Balanzó, Parra and Rivera (2021), provides an analytical framework regarding cooperation practices and also introduces a series of features that could be taken into account in the definition of inter-institutional coordination alternatives for promoting the convergence of public-sector-based initiatives in policy-making areas and different management levels, considering that inter-institutional cooperation commonly takes place in complex organizational settings.

Based on the perspective of loosely coupled systems, Arango-Vásquez and Gentilin (2021) propose a review of this subject in their paper "Organizational couplings: A literature review." This work contributes to the understanding of the organizational problems and views that could expand the explanation on how we assume and project the life of an organization.

Another feature that has nurtured the field of os is the concern for emotions/feelings, particularly in what can be specified around affectivity. This is not a new issue in the administrative field. Since the well-known studies at Hawthorne workshops by the Western Electric Company, in 1920, social sciences have been deeply involved in rigorous methods for information analysis. Thus, the affective-related issue has been studied from the dynamics of informal relationships that account for the logics that define the understanding of feelings that, although not in-depth addressed, anticipate certain aspects of the human being that had not been considered until that moment. Nowadays, such dynamics are subject to new regulatory rationales thanks to a series of management models that look for their submission. Coaching, neuro-linguistic programming and spiritual leadership are some examples of the new faces that strive to recap actions from the past under the idea of productive efficiency, which seems to give no step back in the struggle to prevent/resist human objectification.

The problematization of the idea of searching human efficacy from the subjective and affective characteristics of the human being is represented in this edition through the work by Garcés and Stecher (2021), who expose, from the perspective of the critical social psychology of work, the adverse implications of the implementation of lean management for the experiences lived by workers. Such perspective is revisited as a model that starts from recognizing the human being as a merely technical, neutral and applicable instrument to any context.

The research study by Tabares, Correa, and Herrera (2021) is an outlook at how computer systems promote reconfigurations in the content of work, the social interactions, and the structural frameworks in a health organization. As the authors mention, "the social construction of technology and sociomateriality imply recognizing that technological change is shaped by social and material elements that redefine it and that, in turn, affect work, practices and communication in organizations; that is, an organizational transformation is configured" (p. 94).

An additional examination of subjective affectivity is observed in the paper by Ocampo-Salazar and Cardona (2021), who contribute to the discussion around the dimensions of power from a Foucauldian governmentality perspective. These authors dare to think and problematize the implications of organizational actions in the construction of subjectivities by the citizens of Medellín (Colombia). Based on this, the authors do not believe that public management is a matter of objectivity and thus, with certain philosophical suspicion, seek to account for its influence on both urban behaviors and urban daily life.

In addition, Saldaña and Aguilar (2021) manifest the importance of understanding and projecting ludic initiatives in os. In particular, they make visible some renovating positions that grant a new look at emotions, aesthetics,

humor, learning, narratives, rituals, symbolic life, and, in general, the feelings that are put into play in the perspectives that magnify or set limits to organizational culture. Within the framework of the capitalist seduction process, these authors focus on depicting the way in which the organization becomes a space where the joyful and aesthetic social game is also present. From a ludic conception, the researchers rethink the drivers behind the production of the subjectivities that protect the functioning of the market capitalism we currently experience.

Enhancing the perspective on subjectivity in os, Chanlat (2021) presents a state of the art study on how Western business thinking, especially European and North American literature, is concerned about accounting for the "forming" subject. From the three positions about subjectivity found in business thinking —*no considerations, consideration towards financial performance,* and *consideration towards emancipation*—, the author established the need to strengthen the critical view of subjectivity in management. It is about putting into play the central values of anthropology to enrich the critical apprehension of managerial actions, since management practices, training and research cannot be handled innocently.

The work by Cruz Kronfly (2021) delves into the understanding of how capitalism operates and shapes the society in which it is strengthened. In his opinion, a new administrative thought (NAT) and the insights of os could help understand that current capitalism constantly mutates in the search for new foundations that guarantee that organizations have a subject not only for its mobilization, but also for defending this economic system in the assumption of its values and principles. This work invites readers to reflect on the multiple ways in which capitalism sets and projects the human horizon that solidifies and sweetens the mission of contemporary organizations.

Going in another important direction, López (2021) dares to expose the importance of thinking about the territory and its social relations, trying to enlighten, in a transdisciplinary way, the field of os. This work uncovers important questions that seek to promote an understanding of local particularities as new alternatives to rethink the process of organizations, the process of organizing, and the singularities anchored to what is organized.

Despite all the academic efforts to recognize and secure dignity at work, we see the need to work in new theoretical frameworks that deterritorialize the flourishing of performative acts that subtly build disagreement and disrespect in organizations, from where we could understand the deployment and the development of proposals that allow

an organizational functioning of dehumanization at work; it is even possible to think that this kind of discourse will distort if it does not lead to a real transformation. Reasons for this can be found in high numbers. One is that the capitalist system we live in does not surrender and is constantly updated with discourses that increasingly please oppressive dynamics, but that in reality hide a profound ignorance of the defense of what is human.

Accordingly, we recognize we are witnessing a world of organizations and an administration accused of eco-suicidal and dehumanizing work processes with respect to individuals and nature (Pfeffer, 2020; Neef & Smith, 2014). This implies returning to the questions of how and where the human condition is assumed in organizational education and research. Is it not true that alterity and the future of management centered on modern humanity are at stake these days? In fact, such questioning should not be seen as a minor problem for scholars and management educators. Therefore, we believe that the great difficulties of our societies and of business globalization force us to put the idea of humanity and the attributes of the human condition into discussion once more.

The new contemporary problematizations about management and os should not take for granted nor close the problem of human dignity in organizations and administration, since questioning the capitalist production system embodies a problem about how management assumes the human condition, opening possibilities for development and, at the same time, barbarism. This is important now that, in the blink of an eye, anywhere in the world hundreds of people appear questioning administrative and political practices by organizations and governments that painlessly violate and undermine human rights and the protection of nature.

The contemporary social unrest behind many protest acts leads us to think about the idea of humanity that surrounds the macro-and-microprocesses that inspire organizational development, as well as the types of leadership criticized from contemporary social turmoil. We reinstate that trying to make the causes of global protests visible is a task that forces us to question and consider the maximalist and achievement morality, which circulates in the entrepreneurial and "managerial" spirit focused on filling pockets with money by offering, at any cost, products and services to a society that ambiguously wanders its happiness.

We suspect that the current state of the world, in terms of the precariousness of work and human care, makes us stand before a puzzle that dramatically problematizes the humanizing task of management and os, especially if

we recognize that, since the beginning of the last century, the philosophy of suspicion warned that man can be a criminal beast or a pristine angel in the face of the other and himself. Ignoring human plasticity to do good and evil is not an issue that can be shelved in the curricula that assumes a human ideal eminently respectful of otherness and the identity of peoples. Disregarding the negative nature of the human condition implies being willing to accept that our existence will be infinitely condemned to coexist with values and practices that corrupt the dignifying ideal for all human beings. The obstacles set by the human condition to forge a cooperative, fraternal, supportive and respectful society must once again be addressed in the classrooms and in academic communities that pursue an authentic human development for people. Like the dog that bites its tail, we feel we must go back to our past and see that yearning for an infinite progress focused on the market has led us to social exile at a cost that ignores the principle of human dignity, which promotes respect for the differences among citizens who accept the social contract of welfare for all.

Therefore, we insist that asking ourselves about the misadventures of the working subject, of the citizen who walks on the street in search for an increasingly scarce job, among other situations, brings us closer to understanding why and how the individuals of a planet in the Milky Way have gradually decided to consume themselves in the agenda of techno-science-economy revolution, within which the "new secular bible" of management appears (Legendre, 2002), and from which the lines of flight are further delimited for the inhabitants of this world. However, once the coronavirus is over or under control, the streets will once again gather the subjects who fight their hunger and needs desperately, without much expectation of being acknowledged. With this in mind, are they not proof enough of the terror that triggers the sinister principle of pursuing the infinite accumulation and control of property and wealth on this land?

Intellectuals, politicians, and scholars might wonder how and where it is possible to contemplate that current production and social systems support formal financial economic growth and the exponential increase of forsaken people resigned to their situation. How and from where does the man of our times think and believe in the structural indefinite progress of wealth and the silent complaint powering violence and territorial cruelty? In addition to this, the technological-related issue has been primarily rescued. The efficiency traded by large technology companies in order to create a better place to live, and which certainly has positive aspects to rescue, has led to the nar-

cotic effects of a comfortable existence in everyday life. Its algorithms have comforted us but also wreaked havoc on our privacy (Foer, 2017), causing human elements to be considered obsolete and expendable (Carr, 2010).

What can we do then to reconsider the new twists in which humanity is gambled in organizations? This is an invitation not only to encourage reflections on this neuralgic topic, but to go further. There is a transformative act that requires boldness, in which even os have dues yet to pay. Critique, as we expressed in our previous editorial, demands acts of courage and resistance that go against the ruling systems of power, and that dismantle the existing processes of alienation and ignorance in order to offer reliable alternatives for factual and structural change. It is an ethical action. In this act of dialogue and self-reflection, it is important to recognize that we are still far from a transformative contribution of organizations that truly vindicates the human.

Today, the development of os and the administrative field becomes a challenge for thinkers and students of the organization and management. The automation of work and the financialization of knowledge have consequences over our humanity, although it seems that depersonalized and objectively profitable efficiency takes us a great advantage. Not failing during the process becomes a heroic act in which we must remain and critically resist. It is time now for the bells to alert us about the leadership that is boiled within the individualist and hedonist leader (Dufour, 2007), who intentionally forgets the needs that can be satisfied to the other and to nature. To re-problematize the human condition in the framework of os is one of the ways to re-enact the dream of a country like ours (Colombia), which adorned the Swedish academy with yellow butterflies in 1984, while thousands of *Aurelianos* continued to roam —since then and until these days— the streets of a modern Macondo that is connected to the global network, which gently demolishes the basis of humanist acts that opened doors to jealously receive other individuals. Will Macondians —who have experienced more than *one hundred years of solitude*— continue to be condemned not to be accepted nor thought of with their dreams and values just because they are not bewitched by the spirit of infinitely enlarging their pockets?

Once again, we would like to thank all the professionals in the field who answered our call to this special issue, made up of two editions. Without them, the disciplinary field selected by Innovar Journal Editorial Committee would not have been able to display the fruitfulness and progress of os. In this second issue, we gathered eleven papers from various countries, and multiple ontological and methodo-

logical perspectives. We find a characteristic and plausible constituent of os within this diversity. We also thank the authors of the two reviews that outstandingly map out two books that, in their opinion, are faithful proof of the organizational thought. Moreover, we thank Innovar Journal Editorial Committee and the School of Economic Sciences at the National University of Colombia for relying on us to bring forward this special edition. We were aware of the honorable and challenging nature of being the Guest Editors, especially when we recognize that we really need to learn and understand in fine detail and rigorously the heritage of an academic community that, in Colombia, has flourished amid numerous difficulties, to acknowledge its own achievements and weaknesses. Finally, we thank the editorial team for devoting its efforts to this noble work, which allows all of us to present these academic products to the critical-thinking community in this field.

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