

# Chapter 11

## The Psychological Drivers of Bureaucracy: Protecting the Societal Goals of an Organization

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*Bureaucracy is the art of making the possible impossible*

–Javier Pascual Salcedo

*A democracy which makes or even effectively prepares for modern, scientific war must necessarily cease to be democratic. No country can be really well prepared for modern war unless it is governed by a tyrant, at the head of a highly trained and perfectly obedient bureaucracy.*

–Aldous Huxley

*Whether the mask is labeled fascism, democracy, or dictatorship of the proletariat, our great adversary remains the apparatus—the bureaucracy, the police, the military. Not the one facing us across the frontier of the battle lines, which is not so much our enemy as our brothers' enemy, but the one that calls itself our protector and makes us its slaves. No matter what the circumstances, the worst betrayal will always be to subordinate ourselves to this apparatus and to trample underfoot, in its service, all human values in ourselves and in others.*

–Simone Weil

**Abstract** This chapter addresses the psychological enablers of bureaucracy and ways to protect bureaucrats and society from its adverse effects. All organizations benefit from formalization, but a bureaucracy is defined by the dominance of coercive formalization. Since bureaucrats are not bureaucratic among friends, one might ask what changes someone at work into a bureaucrat and why do bureaucrats and bureaucratic organizations exhibit their characteristic behaviors?

The pattern of behavior arises from fundamental psychology and in particular (1) our capacity for habitual behavior, (2) the difference between intelligence as manifestation of the coping mode of cognition and understanding as manifestation of the pervasive optimization mode, and (3) the phenomenon of authoritarianism as the need for external authority through a lack of understanding of one's living environment. The combination of these phenomena leads to a formal definition, the "Bureaucratic Dynamic," in which the prevalence of coercive formalization scales

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with “institutional ignorance” (as measure of how well workers understand the consequence of their own (in)actions, both within the organization as well on the wider society) and “worker cost of failure.”

Modern organizational theory has become progressively more aware of the inefficiencies and dangers of bureaucracy. The framework developed in this paper can be applied to protect society, organizations, and workers from the adverse effects of bureaucracy. Yet while non-bureaucratic organizations can produce excellence, they also rely on it and are therefore somewhat fragile. Improved protective measures can be developed using the framework developed in this chapter.

## 11.1 Introduction

In 2005 a Dutch insurance company aired a television commercial<sup>1</sup> in which they showed a mother and daughter trying to collect their “purple crocodile” at a lost-and-found department. The clerk reaches for the missing object form—just next to the huge purple crocodile—and hands it to the mother to be filled in. After a few attempts the form is filled-in to the clerk’s satisfaction and he instructs the family to collect the missing object the next morning between 9 and 10 a.m. “But it’s there” the mother remarks. “Yes it is there” the clerk responds with an empty expression to this completely irrelevant remark.

Clearly, the original societal role of this lost-and-found department was replaced by a new goal: procedural correctness, irrespective of the state of the world and the implications of following procedure. The commercial ended with the remark that less bureaucracy is preferable.

We all know these blatant examples of bureaucracy, where form and procedure have become stultifying, any genuine empathy and human decency is absent, and the organization is no longer serving its original purpose efficiently. Yet the most shocking, albeit not normally acknowledged, aspect of these examples is that bureaucrats—outside the direct working environment—are just regular law-abiding individuals who might do volunteer work and who will gladly return something without insisting on a form to fill in first: *among friends no-one is a bureaucrat*.

I consider bureaucracy and bureaucratic mindsets as suboptimal or even pathological for the organization because it has adopted self-serving goals in favor of its original societal goal and for the bureaucrat because he or she is reduced—at work—to a shadow of his or her full human potential. This paper addresses the psychological reasoning on which this opinion is based.

Administration is not necessarily bureaucratic. And formalization—the extent of written rules, procedures, and instructions—can both help and hinder the overall functioning of the organization. In this chapter, I define bureaucracy as the dominance of *coercive formalization* within professional organizations. Coercive formalization

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Rw27vcTHRw>

takes away autonomy and changes a worker into the direction of an automaton: someone who can be easily replaced by information technology or a robot.

All human activities benefit from some form of formalization. Formalization allows automating routine tasks, to agree on how to collaborate, determine when and how tasks should be executed, and when they are finished. As such, procedures should not be changed too often so that they become and remain a stable basis for organizational functioning. Yet procedures should also not be too static and too strictly adhered to so that they lead to stultification, suboptimal task execution, and, above all, to loosing track of the societal goals of an organization. These are all signs of bureaucracy.

The bulk of this chapter comprises the formulation of a psychological framework that explains the phenomenology of bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic organizations. This framework is based on the two cognitive modes—the coping mode and the pervasive optimization mode—that we defined in an earlier paper on Learning Autonomy (Andringa et al. 2013). Since bureaucracy has a lot to do with preventing worker autonomy, it is not surprising that our paper contains relevant ideas. What I found quite surprising, and highly relevant, was how well the “coping mode of cognition” fitted with the bureaucracy literature (Adler and Borys 1996; Weber 1978). In Learning Autonomy we had addressed the phenomenon of authoritarianism: the need for and acceptance of centralized or group authority. In this chapter I show that bureaucracy is a manifestation of authoritarianism in the context of professional organizations. Based on the defining characteristics of authoritarianism, I predict the incentives for coercive formalization, and with that the incentive for bureaucracy, as follows:

$$\text{Incentive for coercive formalization} = \text{Institutional ignorance} \times \text{Worker cost of failure}$$

I call this the Bureaucratic Dynamic. Maximizing “institutional ignorance” and “Worker cost of failure” leads, via psychological mechanisms outlined below, inevitably to more bureaucracy. Fortunately, minimizing these will reduce bureaucracy. I predict that this formula can be used as an effective means to improve our understanding of the phenomenon, to improve effective anti-bureaucracy measures, and to expose ineffective ones.

This chapter provides a transdisciplinary approach of bureaucracy. Transdisciplinarity entails that I will ignore traditional (and often quite arbitrary) disciplinary boundaries and I will address multiple description levels; in particular a number of subdisciplines of psychology (fundamental science level), organizational research (applied science level), policy (normative level), and ethical considerations (value level) (Max-Neef 2005).

I start in Sect. 11.1, with an interdisciplinary analysis addressing how the diversity of bureaucracy can be understood through the degree and the type of coercive and enabling formalization. This analysis outlines many manifestations of bureaucracy that, together with the observation that no one is a bureaucrat among friends, demand a psychological explanation.

Section 11.2, forms the fundamental science bulk of this chapter. In it, I start with habits as effective and goal realizing activities that require only a minimal involvement of the higher faculties of mind because the behavior originates from

and is guided by the (work) environment. This is followed by the observation that the two modes of thought we have defined in our earlier paper on Learning Autonomy (Andringa et al. 2013) match bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic strategies. The two modes differ in the locus of authority: external for bureaucracy and internalized for non-bureaucratic approaches. The centrality of the concept of authority becomes even clearer when I change the perspective to political psychology and in particular to the opposition authoritarians–libertarians. These groups of people differ in whether or not they (*unconsciously*) consider the complexity of the world too high to act adequately and feel comfortable. The shared feelings of inadequacy motivate them to instill order through coercive formalization and group or centralized authority: a phenomenon known as the “Authoritarian Dynamic.” This dynamic, in this chapter, applied in the context of professional organizations, drives the growth or demise of bureaucracy according to the “Bureaucratic Dynamic.” Section 11.2 closes with a short reflection on the (serious) detrimental effects of bureaucracy might have on bureaucrats (value level).

This chapter closes with a shorter section on how three modern management paradigms (applied science and policy level) can be classified according to the prevalence of the coping or the pervasive optimization mode. This entails, in some sense, that experiential evidence has already discovered what I argue from a psychologically informed perspective. Yet this perspective complements and enriches the experientially acquired understanding. I then direct attention to non-bureaucratic or “libertarian” organizations. One crucial aspect of these is that they not only are able to deliver pervasive optimization of all organizational roles, they also depend on it. This entails that they are fragile and easily wrecked by workers with insufficient institutional understanding. I give examples of how this degradation process typically occurs and indicate a number of “red flags.” I end the chapter with a number of conclusions and observations.

## 11.2 Characteristics of Bureaucracy

This section is based on the analysis of organizations with different types, levels and forms of bureaucracy by Adler and Borys (1996). They provide an insightful and fairly comprehensive analysis of bureaucracy and its diverse forms. In addition Adler and Borys propose a structured typology of organizations that matches very well with our recent paper on open-ended (lifespan) development and in particular with the development of bounded or full autonomy (Andringa et al. 2013). Taken together, these two articles provide an interesting generalized perspective on bureaucracy and, in general, on some foundational perspectives on human autonomy and human organizations.

Adler and Borys address the issue of worker autonomy in many different examples and remark “that much of the literature on the sociology of scientists and engineers asserts that employees in these occupations typically aspire to high levels of autonomy in their work and that bureaucratic formalization undermines their commitment

and innovation effectiveness.” Yet other employees might benefit from bureaucratic formalization. Consequently:

Organizational research presents two conflicting views of the human attitudinal or outcomes of bureaucracy. According to the negative view, the bureaucratic form of organization stifles creativity, fosters dissatisfaction, and demotivates employees. According to the positive view, it provides needed guidance and clarifies responsibilities, thereby easing role stress and helping individuals be and feel more effective.

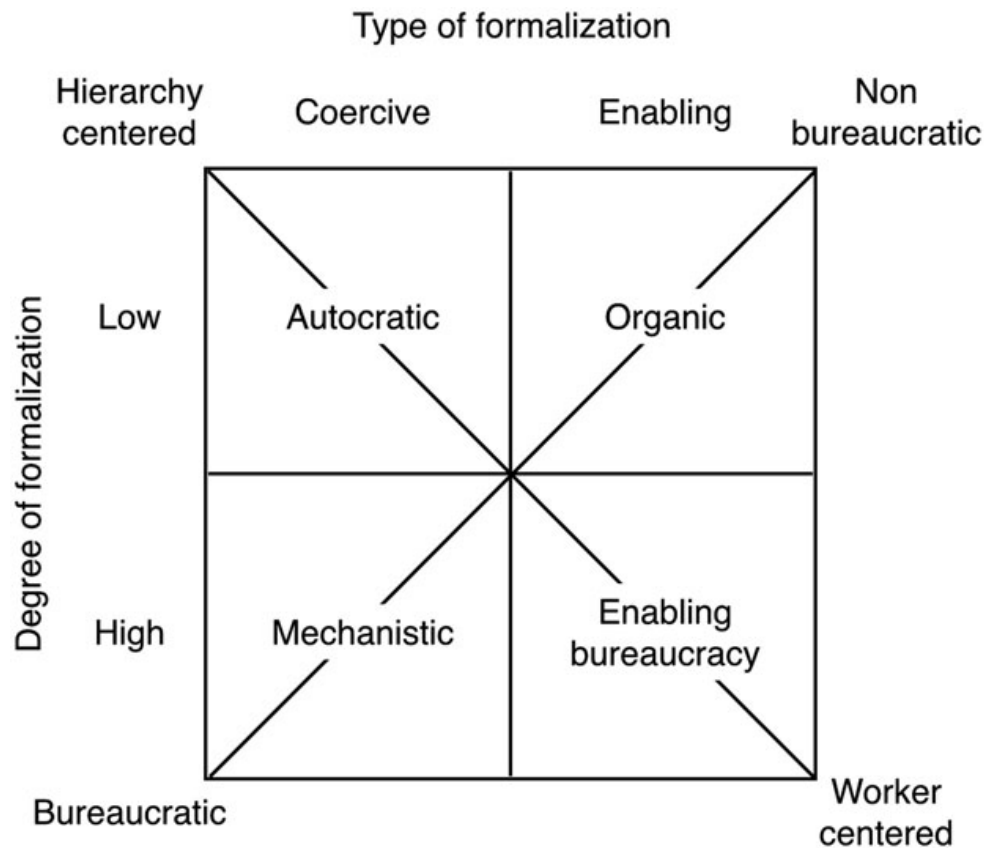
In terms of autonomy, it seems that the bureaucratic form of organization stultifies the functioning of highly autonomous and motivated employees, while it actually provides the less autonomous employees guidance and effectiveness in roles in which they would otherwise not be able to function. So bureaucracy *constrains* the autonomous employees, but *enables* the less autonomous to contribute more effectively. Accordingly, Adler and Borys conclude that the study “of the functions and effects of bureaucracy has split correspondingly with one branch focused on its power to enforce compliance from employees assumed to be recalcitrant or irresponsible and the other branch focused on bureaucracy’s technical efficiency.”

Based on this observation and a number of examples, Adler and Borys propose two structural dimensions for organizations: the *type of formalization*, spanning a continuum from coercive to enabling, and the *degree of formalization* from low to high. This leads to a two-dimensional representation with four quadrants resulting from the intersection of the axes as depicted in Fig. 11.1. The degree of bureaucracy is represented by the diagonal connecting a high degree of coercive formalization—characteristic of a highly bureaucratic or “mechanistic” organization—to a low degree of enabling formalization in the non-bureaucratic, or “organic,” organization. The other diagonal corresponds to a highly centralized, or “autocratic,” organization or a decentralized “enabling bureaucracy.”

The key component of this organizational typology is formalization and Adler and Borys describe many different aspects of formalization. A number of these are summarized in Table 11.1.

It will be clear from Table 11.1 that some degree of suitable formalization is highly beneficial, and probably defining for any organization and as such is broadly supported. Yet, too much formalization or formalization of an unsuitable kind will be detrimental for the employees and the way the organization realizes its societal mission and as such enacts its *raison d’être*.

Adler and Borys couple the two types of formalization—coercive and enabling—to perspectives on the organization. The “enabling approach” considers *workers as sources of skill and intelligence to be activated*. This works, of course, for workers who enjoy to be challenged, who aspire to develop their skills, and who feel a personal or shared pride regarding the work they are performing. In the “coercive approach” *workers are treated as sources of problems to be eliminated*. In this approach the opportunism and autonomy of workers (skilled or not) is to be feared and it leads almost inevitably to a deskilling approach. Deskilling is, of course, resented by those who consider work autonomy and skill-development essential for personal growth, but for the less skilled and probably more insecure workers, who know they will not be able to contribute effectively without strict and firm guidance, the coercive approach



**Fig. 11.1** Types of organization. (Based on Fig. 1 in Adler and Borys (1996))

is a way to contribute on a higher professional level than they would otherwise be able to achieve. Adler and Borys provide many properties of coercive and enabling formalization, which are summarized in Table 11.2.

As Table 11.2 shows, the basic logic of the coercive approach is to curtail the scope of behavioral options of workers through *centralized* and/or (corrective) *group* authority. In contrast, the basic logic of the enabling approach is to use diversity of insights and independent judgment of all employees to improve all aspects of the organization (in the context of all its roles and obligations). As such the enabling approach relies on a combination of group authority and individual authority. But note that the role of group authority differs between the two approaches: in the coercive approach it is to signal and correct any deviant behavior, while in the enabling approach it is a means to aggregate organizational understanding in a common mode of working.

Asymmetries in power, of course, promote the coercive approach, but the same holds for ignoring or actively suppressing the skills and knowledge of the workers since this almost inevitably impoverishes the understanding of the organization and as such it leads to organizations that progressively become out-of-sync with reality: instead the organization creates its own peculiar realities based on whatever pleases the power structure, which progressively makes it more difficult to apply the observations, knowledge, and insights of the workers for the proper execution of the organization's societal role.

**Table 11.1** Positive and negative aspects of formalization. (Based on Adler and Borys (1996))

<i>Negative effects of formalization:</i>	<i>Positive effects of formalization:</i>
Higher absences	Formalization can increase efficiency
Propensity to leave organization	Embrace of well-designed procedure facilitates task
Physical and psychological stress	Performance and pride on workmanship
Reduced innovation	Reduction of role conflict and role ambiguity
Reduced job satisfaction	Increased work satisfaction
Reduced commitment to the organization	Reduction of feelings of alienation and stress
	Can help innovation if it capture lessons of prior
Lower motivation	Experience or help coordination of larger-scale projects
	broad preference and benefits for routine tasks
<i>Formalization is disfavored if:</i>	<i>Formalization is favored if:</i>
Rules benefit managers: especially when rules are also used to sanction	Work is considered as a cooperative endeavor rather than the abrogation of autonomy
<i>Bad rules/procedures:</i>	<i>Good rules/procedures:</i>
Resented	Taken for granted
If possible ignored or avoided	Hardly noticed

Adler and Borys couple the motivations (Deci and Ryan 1987) to participate in the organization to the type of formalization. The coercive formalization corresponds to external (authority enforced, fear of punishment, rule compliance) or introjected motivation (internal or esteem-based pressures to avoid harm) because it does not tap into whatever is intrinsically motivating for the employees. The enabling formalization does just that: it allows motivation based on identification with personal importance or compliance with personal goals. It might even allow intrinsic motivation in the form of completely unconstrained and self-determined activities that involve highly enjoyable states like flow and play.

These motivations—in this order—have been coupled to the perceived locus of causality (PLOC), which reflects the degree the individual or some external authority or influence originates the behavior (Ryan and Connell 1989). It is a measure of autonomy and agency. The more autonomous the behavior, the more it is endorsed by the whole self and is experienced as action for which one is responsible (Deci and Ryan 1987). In particular for activities with an external PLOC individuals do not really feel a personal responsibility and probably no moral responsibility as well. This then suggests that it is possible to realize highly unethical goals by promoting the coercive form of formalization: the workers will not feel any sense of responsibility. This explains why bureaucracies (or more general hierarchical organizations subject to coercive formalization, such as the military, intelligence agencies, or some multinationals) are so often involved in atrocities. Aldous Huxley's quote at the beginning of this chapter acknowledges this as well.

**Table 11.2** Properties of coercive and enabling formalization

Coercive formalization	Enabling formalization
Basic attitude	Basic attitude
Workers as sources of problems to be eliminated. Opportunism of workers to be feared: deskilling approach	Workers as a source of skill and intelligence to be activated
<i>Key properties:</i>	<i>Key properties:</i>
The formal system (e.g., organogram) is leading, workers exist to serve their role	The formal system exists to enable and support the workers in executing the societal function of the organization
Deviation from the protocol is suspect	Deviations from procedure decided by the workers
Procedures often non-transparent to keep knowledge about the organization from the employees to prevent “creative interaction”	Deviations from the protocol signals the need for better procedures or methods and are a learning opportunity
Procedures as assertions of duties (not to help)	Procedures help to explain key components and codifying best practices
“Global transparency” highly asymmetric, with procedures that, for example, help to realize a panopticon (so that employees know that superiors can monitor them at any time)	Procedures to provide insight into personal performance
Global transparency of the organization is a source of employee initiative and as such a risk to be minimized	Global transparency provides insight in the role of processes in the broader context of the organization as necessary source of innovation and improvement for the whole organization
Procedures define, in detail, a sequence of steps to be followed and force the employee to ask approval for any deviation of the protocol (such as skipping unnecessary steps)	
<i>Forces promoting the coercive formalization:</i>	<i>Forces promoting the enabling formalization:</i>
Asymmetries in power	Societal preference for enabling formalization
Absence of reality checks associated with an inward focus in which local conflicts become more important than organizational goals	A necessity of a very complex task environment (such as in times of competitive pressure)
The results of automation (whatever ICT produces) needs to be communicated and followed-up to the letter	Automation first replaces routine operations (their formalization become part of the ICT) and leads to a demand for more skilled employees
<i>Motivation type:</i>	<i>Motivation type:</i>
External (authority enforced, fear of punishment, rule compliance)	Intrinsic motivation (completely self-determined activities)
Introjected motivation (internal or esteem-based pressures to avoid harm)	Identified (with personal importance) or integrated (compliance with personal goals)



In this section I have outlined a number of properties of bureaucracies for which I will propose the psychological underpinnings in Sect. 11.3. This section will focus on why the phenomena outlined before, emerge *inevitably* from basic psychology.

## 11.3 Psychological Roots of Bureaucracy

### 11.3.1 *Habits*

Since the formalization, and therefore automation, of behavior is an integral part of bureaucracy it makes sense to address the topic of habits and habitual behavior because the psychological term “habit” refers to an automatic response to a specific situation (Ouellette and Wood 2003; Wood and Neal 2009). The ability to behave habitually is a wonderful thing, because it means that we have learned to do something so efficiently that our minds are kept free for other things. Habits can be nested so that for example, the habit of driving can be part of daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly routines.

Habits are well-trained perception–action relations that are efficiently combined so that they address our daily affairs with minimal mental effort and their combination may lead to an endless variety of effective, while still seemingly effortless, behaviors. During the execution of a habit it is the environment that determines your actions: if there is a door on your path, you open it. You will not normally initiate the door opening behavior without a door. You can of course, willingly, try to activate door-opening behavior in the middle of a lawn. But nothing in the lawn-environment will activate this particular behavior. This holds for steak cutting, hair combing, wall painting, and turning the page of a newspaper: you can do it whenever you want, but it is only productive (and looks less silly) if you let the environment activate the desired behavior. That is the reason why each habit is activated in situations that provide the affordances to activate the behavior.

The way we respond to *social or work* situations is also for a large part habitual. In particular we find “that mental content activated in the course of perceiving one’s social environment automatically creates behavioral tendencies” (Bargh 2010). The first time we encounter some situation we might not know what to do and to give it all our attention to decide on appropriate behavior, but after a few times practice, the situation is neither novel nor challenging and we respond habitually and according to, for example, the stereotypes activated by the environment. Because of the flexibility of habitual components and because of the minimal mental effort it costs to combine them adaptively, most of our daily activities are habitual, which is good because during habit execution we are left with ample opportunities to direct our attention to interesting, useful, or important things.

William James, one of the first and still one of the greatest psychologists, had much to say on habits. In fact he addresses the topic of habits as one of the foundations of psychology. And what is relevant for this chapter, he explicitly defined habit, 125 years ago, as the flywheel that keeps society (and the organizations that constitute it) stable (James 1890, p 16–17).

Habit is thus the enormous flywheel of society, its most precious conservative agent. It alone is what keeps us all within the bounds of ordinance, and saves the children of fortune from the

envious uprisings of the poor. It alone prevents the hardest and the most repulsive walks of life from being deserted by those who are brought up to tread therein. It keeps the fisherman and the deckhand at sea through the winter; it holds the miner in its darkness, and nails the countryman to its log-cabin and its lonely farm through all the months of snow; it protects us from invasion by the natives of the desert and the frozen zone. It dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which we are fitted, and it is too late to begin again.

So habits do not only free our minds for more important things they also keep us within the bounds of the status quo or pursuits once started. Habits are not a genetic inevitability, but are the result of the way we are raised, educated, and introduced in our professional lives. James defines the role of education therefore in terms of acquiring habits.

The great thing, then, in all education, is *to make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy*. It is to fund and capitalize our acquisitions, and live at ease upon the interest of the fund. *For this we must make automatic and habitual, as early as possible, as many useful actions as we can, and guard against the growing into ways that are likely to be disadvantageous to us, as we should guard against the plague.* The more of the details of our daily life we can hand over to the effortless custody of automatism, the more our higher powers of mind will be set free for their own proper work.

The original text had an emphasis in italic, here I have added an emphasis in bold to focus on the fact that habits may not necessarily be beneficial to us, they might in fact be more beneficial to whoever has defined the status quo and now benefits from the habitual continuation of that status quo. This status quo can typically be some sort of working or living environment that has not been designed by the individual himself, but results from some reasoning that is predominantly or wholly beyond the individual's understanding. In a situation like this we have, as far as work is concerned, no "opportunities to direct our attention to interesting, useful, or important things." In these conditions habitual behavior dominates the work floor and very little of the behavior that characterizes the individual in the rest of its life is visible.

This already explains part of the bureaucratic syndrome by answering, at least partially, the question "What shuts down so much of a bureaucrat's mental capabilities?" The partial answer is that a difficult to understand environment that effectively activates habitual behavior leads to the activation of habitual behavior while denying the bureaucrat self-selected opportunities of intrinsic interest, usefulness, or importance. Consequently, absent the understanding of their significance in the bigger scheme of things, the true bureaucrat has no real responsibilities other than maintaining the conditions in which habitual functioning is facilitated, which is exactly what I saw in the introductory example.

The conclusion that the bureaucrat's single or main—self-imposed—responsibility is to uphold the conditions for its own habitual functioning explains to a large degree the stability of bureaucracies. But note that this is especially the case for work environments that exceed the scope of understanding of workers and management: only here they have no choice but to uphold the conditions in which they function habitually. With sufficient organizational understanding, workers and management can break this cycle. We will return to this topic in the subsection on "Authoritarianism" (Sect. 11.3).

### 11.3.2 *Two Modes of Thought*

The previous subsection already separated a habitual mode of thought, which requires very little attentional control, and forms of cognition that are not (yet) habitual because they do require highly focused attention, for example because they are new, ever changing, or otherwise engaging or challenging. This opposition arises from two large families of cognitive phenomena that McGilchrist (2010) (with extensive justification and highly compelling historical support) couples to the left and right brain hemispheres. In a recent paper (Andringa et al. 2013) we generalized McGilchrist's interpretations as two complementary modes of cognition: the *coping mode* and the *pervasive optimization mode*.<sup>2</sup>

The coping mode is concerned with control: with preventing things (the whole world actually) from spinning out of control. Problem solving and the suppression of interfering diversity are central concepts for this mode. The pervasive optimization mode on the other hand is, as the name suggests, concerned with the optimization of all processes in the context of everything else. Where the coping mode is concerned with the problems of the here and the now, the pervasive optimization mode is concerned with promoting the likeliness of beneficial states in the near and distant future; both here and elsewhere, and for yourself (body and mind) as well as the rest of the world (family and friends, and the natural and social environment). Where the coping mode is highly focused and aims at tangible results in a structured and predictable way, the pervasive optimization mode is much more diffuse; it has no sequential demands and does not necessarily lead to directly tangible results. It does however set-up, in a statistical sense, the conditions for an unproblematic future. The coping mode relies on situational control and *intelligent* problem solving skills. The pervasive optimization mode relies on a broad *understanding* of the world and its dynamics in combination with the skills to relate to and work with these dynamics (Andringa et al. 2013).

The concept of “intelligence,” especially as conceptualized and measured in an IQ-test, summarizes the coping mode because it measures one's ability to produce standardized and expected answers to self-contained problems. Intelligence is proven through the ability to solve problems posed by others. The minimal capacity to do this is simply by reproducing and applying appropriate formal operations without understanding neither the problem nor the situation that gave rise to it. This rule-application ability—apparent as formalization—is capitalized on in a stereotypical bureaucracy.

This can be contrasted to the concept of “understanding”—according to the New Oxford Dictionary “the ability to perceive the significance, explanation, or cause of

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<sup>2</sup> The term pervasive-optimization mode has been introduced in this paper. In Andringa et al. (2013) we did not use a single term and we described this mode as cognition for exploration, disorder, or possibility. In a recent paper “Cognition From Life” (Andringa et al. 2015) we introduced the term cocreation mode of cognition. We decided to use the term pervasive-optimization mode in this paper since the term co-creation mode requires additional explanation.

(something)” —which captures strengths of the pervasive optimization mode. If you understand something you can use it not only reproductively or in a scripted way, but you know how to apply it in novel and open application domains. Consequently you can prove your depth and breadth of understanding through realizing novel or nonstandard results in the world. Conversely you proof your *lack* of understanding by making a mess of your live (indicating the utter failure of pervasive optimization). Another way to proof your lack of understanding is by reducing your life to an existence where very little novel or nonstandard happens (e.g., the extension of a bureaucratic attitude to the rest of life). In positive terms, the discovery of relations (between everything) and the detection of possibilities (in oneself, in others, at work, or in the whole of the environment) is strength of the pervasive optimization mode.

Returning to the example I started with. A bureaucrat is unlikely to act bureaucratically when not at work and especially not while among friends. The pervasive optimization mode seems, therefore, the default mode, while the coping mode is a fall-back mode that shines when the pervasive optimization mode was unable to prevent immanent or pressing problems. Interpreted as such, a bureaucracy is a working environment that forces (coerces) employees into a problem-solving, problem-preventing, or problem-control mode: the coping mode.

As outlined in our earlier paper on Learning Autonomy (Andringa et al. 2013), the pervasive optimization mode assumes autonomous participation in an open, dynamic, and infinite world of nested processes that form dynamically stable and continually evolving entities: the real continually developing and never fully graspable world. For the pervasive optimization mode of being, truth is defined as accordance with reality, which is to be tested by acting in the world; as such understanding and experiences are essentially subjective. This mode of being is particularly effective in situations where new aspects of the dynamics of the world are to be investigated to expand one’s thought-action repertoire (Fredrickson and Branigan 2005) and where novel and creative solutions are appropriate.

In contrast, the coping mode assumes a closed, static, and self-contained (and therefore finite) world, in which entities are symbolic, discrete, and abstract and in which perfect solutions may be possible. It is also a mode in which one is an “objective” observer instead of a participant. It is the world as represented in a computer program: highly functional, perfectly repeatable, and subject to rational considerations, but ultimately devoid of life. In this mode of being, truth is defined as the result of consistent reasoning and consensually agreed on linguistically shared and presented facts. This mode of being is particularly effective in situations in which (immediate) problems have to be solved or addressed in a detached, rational, standardized, and communicable way. Bureaucracies, but also scientific communication, are typical examples of this.

Because the coping mode assumes a closed, static, and self-contained (and therefore finite) world it needs an external influence to maintain the conditions in which it can function in the first place. As we argued in Learning Autonomy, *authorities—defined as processes or agents that create, maintain, and influence the conditions in which agents exist—fulfill this role*. The authority for the left hemispheric coping mode is either its own right hemisphere or some external authority such as parents,

leaders, governments, or cultural influences in the broadest possible sense. In practice, it is a combination of internal and external authority, and it defaults to external authority whenever the right hemisphere is unable to act as reliable authority. Put differently, when the right hemisphere is unable to generate a sufficient level of understanding of the situation, it cannot remain in the lead and the left hemisphere becomes dominant at the cost of surrendering autonomy to some (actually any) external authority. Importantly, this switch is subconscious. Still we can become aware of it through metacognition (like observing a change of emotions and/or a change in attitude or strategy). We will return to the role of *understanding* in the section on authoritarianism.

Table 11.3 provides a summary of properties ascribed to the coping and the pervasive optimization mode. It is based on Table 11.1 of Andringa et al. (2013), which in turn is based on Chap. 1 of McGilchrist (2010). The remarks in *italic* are examples of a bureaucratic (for the coping mode) and a non-bureaucratic (for the pervasive optimization mode) interpretation of these properties. It will be clear from Table 11.3 that the strengths of the coping mode can be used to illustrate typical and/or extreme bureaucratic functioning, while the pervasive optimization mode can be used to illustrate a non-bureaucratic alternative. Note that the original table was intended as a summary of left and right hemispheric strengths to be used in a quite different context: that it can be used to illustrate typical properties of bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic organizations, is a serendipitous observation that I consider highly meaningful.

### 11.3.3 Authoritarianism

At the end of the last subsection, authority was defined as the ability to create, maintain, influence, or exploit a living environment (Andringa et al. 2013). This entails that whenever individuals do not know how to self-maintain proper living conditions, they must rely on some sort of “authority” to keep living conditions within manageable bounds. This need for authority scales inversely with the scope of inadequacy: the more pervasive the inadequacy, the greater the need for and role of authority. Conversely, the better individuals cope with and maintain their own living environment—the more they have internalized authority—the less they need external authorities. This essential (and existential) need for authority is the defining characteristic of the concept of authoritarianism.

Within the domain of political psychology people with a strong need for authority are known as *authoritarians* and those who do not as *libertarians* (Stenner 2005, 2009, 2009). Authoritarians prefer (centralized) group authority and uniformity, while libertarians prefer (decentralized) individual authority and diversity. The structure and properties of authoritarian behavior have been studied in detail in “The Authoritarian Dynamic” by Princeton researcher Karen Stenner (2005). Authoritarianism is characterized by a strong tendency to maximize oneness (via centralized or group control) and sameness (via common standards), especially in conditions where the things that make us one and the same—common authority and shared values—appear to be under threat.

**Table 11.3** Cognitive modes define organizations. Comparing properties of the coping mode of cognition (attributed to the left hemisphere) and the pervasive optimization mode (attributed to the right hemisphere). Associated with each topic, in *italic*, a bureaucratic interpretation for the coping mode and a non-bureaucratic interpretation for the pervasive optimization mode. (Based on Andringa et al. 2013)

Topic	Coping mode of cognition (Left hemisphere) <i>Bureaucratic interpretation</i>	Pervasive optimization mode of cognition (Right hemisphere) <i>Non-bureaucratic interpretation</i>
Main concern	Principal concern is utility	Prioritizes what actually is and what concerns us
	<i>Technically qualified personnel is able to use these utilities to the max</i>	<i>The organization adapts itself flexibly and effectively to the current situation</i>
	The world as a resource	
	<i>The client should support ("feed") and comply with the bureaucracy irrespective its functioning</i>	
Scope	Local short-term view	Bigger picture (broader, long-term view). Draws attention from the edges of awareness
	<i>Focus on short term solutions</i>	<i>Everything that the organization can contribute to the larger world is potentially important</i>
	Deal with what it knows	
	<i>Only what is officially entered in the bureaucracy is exists</i>	
Attitude towards world	Representing the world: the world as a copy that exists in a conceptual form, suitable for manipulation	Experiencing the world: the world as it is, open for novelty and whatever exists apart from ourselves, without preconceptions and not focusing on what it already knows
	<i>Strong focus on rules and procedure in combination with record keeping and written (explicit) communication. Only what can be represented within the bureaucracy exists and is subject to manipulation</i>	<i>The organization in all its functions can adapt to what "the world brings"</i>

**Table 11.3** (continued)

Topic	Coping mode of cognition (Left hemisphere) <i>Bureaucratic interpretation</i>	Pervasive optimization mode of cognition (Right hemisphere) <i>Non-bureaucratic interpretation</i>
Interests	Interested in the familiar and the known, difficulty with disengaging from the familiar	Interested in the novel
	<i>Forms and procedures form the only object of interest</i>	<i>Always interested in ways to adapt the organization to a changing and developing world</i>
	Concerned with what it knows	Concerned with what it experiences
	<i>What cannot be dealt with in the bureaucracy does not exist</i>	New information, new skills, emotional engagement
	Concerned with man-made objects	<i>Competence development of workers is not scripted but develops on the job through individual experience and development. Works should be inherently rewarding</i>
	<i>Because these are typically static and for a particular use</i>	More concerned with living individuals. Living individuals as other individuals
	Nonliving objects specialist. Living entities as tools or instruments	<i>Each individual customer has to be treated in the way most suitable for the individual</i>
	<i>People and animals reduced to numbers that can manipulated in a similar way as other resources</i>	

**Table 11.3** (continued)

Topic	Coping mode of cognition (Left hemisphere) <i>Bureaucratic interpretation</i>	Pervasive optimization mode of cognition (Right hemisphere) <i>Non-bureaucratic interpretation</i>
Strengths	Thoroughly known and familiar	Gathering new information
	<i>Standardized task execution by specialists</i>	<i>Improve understanding of all relevant processes and aspects of the job</i>
	Efficient in routine situations and familiar skills	Good when prediction is difficult
	<i>Training to reduce error frequency</i>	<i>Flexible task execution by generalists</i>
	Prioritizes the expected and generates expectations	Anomaly (individuality) detector: individuals
	<i>Help standard customers first, irrespective of urgency</i>	<i>Adapt organization to the situation</i>
	Things made fixed and equivalent: types. All that is re-presented as over-familiar, inauthentic, lifeless categories	More efficiently when initial assumptions need to be revised or when old information needs to be distinguished from new information. All that is “present” as new, authentic, and individuated
Preferences	<i>Equate people with (case) numbers. Guaranteed equality in treatment of all cases</i>	<i>The ability to guarantee that the societal goal is contributed to, irrespective the situation or the customer</i>
	Preferences for things that are represented as relatively invariant across specific instances, allowing for abstracted types or classes of things	Preference for things that exist in the world. Sensitive to what distinguishes different instances of similar type from each other.
	<i>People (including bureaucrats) should adapt to the bureaucracy. Not vice versa</i>	<i>The organization adapts itself flexibly to the situation and/or changes in the situation</i>
Attention type	Local narrowly selective (highly) focused attention	Broad, global and flexible attention
	<i>Only spend time on formal roles and formal procedures. Unable (and uninterested) to foresee consequences</i>	<i>Spend time on the role and impact of the organization in the context of the larger society</i>



Table 11.3 (continued)

Topic	Coping mode of cognition (Left hemisphere) <i>Bureaucratic interpretation</i>	Pervasive optimization mode of cognition (Right hemisphere) <i>Non-bureaucratic interpretation</i>
Construction of world	Start with pieces and put these together. Bottom-up <i>Organize along formal roles and work-breakdown structure</i>	Start from the whole and go, if required, into detail. Top-down <i>Start with societal role of the organization</i>
Representation of objects	Preference to re-present categories of things, and generic, nonspecific objects <i>People and tasks as numbers or cases. Variations between cases suppressed</i>	Individual unique instances of things and individual generic objects: individuals are Gestalt wholes <i>Uniqueness of people and tasks defines the approach. Variation between cases as guideline</i>
Solution limitations	Problem solving: single solution and latch on to that  <i>All activities framed as problem-solving with a single optimal solution</i> Deny inconsistencies. Suppressing not currently relevant relations <i>Mismatches between bureaucratic reality and actual reality are settled in favor of the bureaucratic reality</i>	Array of possible solutions, which remain life when alternatives are explored <i>Activities are framed as a continual optimization process of the whole organization given its societal role</i> Actively watching for discrepancies  <i>Discrepancies between reality and expectations seen as a learning opportunity</i>
Preferred knowledge type	Affinity with public knowledge <i>Decisions based on written record</i>	Personal knowledge <i>Decisions based on individual experience and understanding</i>
Main emotions	Emotions associated with competition, rivalry, individual-self- believe (positive and negative) <i>Emotions associated with bureaucratic infighting, preserving one's public face, competition within and between department</i>	All emotions. Emotions related to bonding and empathy  <i>Emotions associated with the functioning of the whole organization and its customers</i>
Empathy	Unconcerned with others and their feelings  <i>Rationality highest personal virtue. Career advancement on the basis of objective (not personal) criteria</i>	Empathic identification. Self-awareness, empathy, identification with others  <i>Integrity and moral behavior highest moral value. The organization aims to prevent adverse consequences of its behavior</i>

**Table 11.4** Child rearing qualities used to determine authoritarianism

Authoritarians Children should:	Libertarians Children should:
Should obey parents	Be responsible for their actions
Have good manners	Have good sense and sound judgment
Be neat and clean	Be interested in how and why things happen
Have respect for elders	Think for themselves
Follow the rules	Follow their own conscience

Stenner (2005) used the 5 two-option questions about child rearing values to determine the degree of authoritarianism that are depicted in Table 11.4.

The difference between the answers that authoritarians and libertarians choose is qualitative: authoritarians teach children *to behave in certain proscribed ways* and to obey external authorities (elders, parents, norms), libertarians teach children *how to understand the world and how to act responsibly and autonomously*. The difference between authoritarians and libertarians is, therefore, neither ideological nor political: it depends on a combination of two aspects (1) internal or external authority, and (2) the depth and pervasiveness of understanding of the *current* living environment. Authoritarianism is, therefore, both, a personality trait and a state-of-being that is manifested in some situations, but not in others: the more individuals are brought into situations they do not (have learned to) understand and the more they are pressured to act, the more they will exhibit authoritarian behavior (See subsection Authoritarian Dynamic).

The child rearing qualities reflect the conditions that were identified for the left hemispheric coping mode and the right hemispheric pervasive optimization mode. As such it makes sense to interpret authoritarian behavior as behavior guided by the logic of the coping mode and libertarian behavior as behavior guided by the pervasive optimization mode. It also follows that bureaucracy is a manifestation of authoritarianism. Which also explains the reason why even strong bureaucrats are never bureaucratic among friends: here they are responsible for their own actions, expected to have a good sense and sound judgment, to be interested in others, to think and decide for themselves, and to follow their conscience. It is just that their working environment forces them out of this mode and into the coping mode.

### ***11.3.4 Two Attitudes Toward a Complex World***

According to Stenner (2009) authoritarians *are not endeavoring to avoid complex thinking so much as a complex world*. Authoritarians are just as intelligent as

libertarians<sup>3</sup>, but they understand the world more shallowly and less pervasively. Consequently, two individuals can experience and interpret a shared world quite differently. If it is experienced as too complex to comfortably deal with, one is in a coping or authoritarian mode of being. Consequently one's highest priority is to eliminate all sources of diversity to bring complexity down to manageable levels. And this can explain why people in the authoritarian mode take control over decision processes and become subtly or overtly intolerant to uncontrolled diversity through, for example, coercive formalization. It is not because they think they can do it better—although they might be convinced of that—but because of a strong unconscious urge to establish a larger measure of control over the situation with the aim to simplify it.

In the libertarian or pervasive optimization mode the complexity of the world is well below daily coping capacity and where authoritarians see problems they see opportunities. This can actually be problematic because realizing these opportunities is bound to lead to further social or organizational complexification that might aggravate authoritarians even further. Libertarians are therefore, quite unwittingly, major sources of feelings of inadequacy in authoritarians.

And this leads to a one-sided resentment—a shared and therefore unifying emotion—toward anything beyond coping capacity among authoritarians of which libertarians are typically completely unaware. In fact encroaching bureaucracy can be interpreted as a (low-intensity) war between two ways of facing reality. While libertarians are unaware of any war being fought (because they fail to see any need for it), they can be blamed for co-creating a complex world surpassing authoritarian coping capabilities. And authoritarians, with their limited understanding, share a deep anxiety and are highly motivated to do something about it collectively.

This subconscious anxiety motivates to oppose all sources of complexity, unpredictability, novelty, and growth that complexify, confuse, and destabilize an ordered and predictable state of affairs. In fact people in an authoritarian mode want to distance themselves from all of these things and the people (e.g., immigrants, homosexuals, libertarians) that embody or promote them. One driving emotion is disgust (Frijda 1986; Inbar et al. 2009): the urge to distance oneself from an unhealthy or otherwise harmful object, activity, person, or influence. Authoritarians in this state speak quite frankly and clearly about the moral decline that they see all around them and that disgusts them (and often enough explicitly worded). And they are quite motivated to do something about it. Vocal moral outrage about the organization losing its values and morals (typically in response to some gentle questions about the state of the organization) is an indication of an organization ready to become dominated by an authoritarian mindset and the associated urge to bring the complexity of the world/organization back to within coping capacity.

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<sup>3</sup> Authoritarians might value intelligence more than libertarians. For example more than half of the 21 Nazi Nuremberg defendants had a superior intelligence (belonging to the most intelligent 3 to 0.2 %) and only one had average intelligence (Zillmer et al. 2013). This suggests that authoritarians select on intelligence.

In fact this same process seems to occur on a societal scale during revolutions. In his seminal book on revolutions in the nineteenth and twentieth century, Billington (1980) explicitly mentions the revolutionary's strong motivation to reduce complexity when he concludes:

The fascinating fact is that most revolutionaries sought the simple, almost banal aims of modern secular men generally. What was unique was their intensity and commitment to realizing them.

Billington concludes that popular revolutions invariably aim to bring society back to a simpler state of affairs. Those revolutions, equally invariably, seem to coincide with periods of increased intolerance (against moral violators, freethinkers, or libertarians) and the rise of bureaucracy will not be surprising. It is all part of the same dynamic.

### 11.3.5 *The Authoritarian Dynamic*

This complexity reducing dynamic has a name: it is called the Authoritarian Dynamic (conform the name of Stenner's 2005 book). In its original form it was formulated for the domain of Political Psychology as the correlation:

$$\text{Intolerance} = \text{Authoritarianism} \times \text{Threat}$$

In this "formula" "Intolerance" refers to intolerance to diversity and in particular intolerance to (perceived) violations of norms or the normative order. "Authoritarianism" initially (Stenner 2005) referred to how often one chooses the left-side answers of Table 11.4, which in turn is a (crude) measure of the shallowness of understanding of the world and the need for external (central or group) authority to create or maintain a world in which one feels adequate. "Threat" refers to the perceived threat and/or abundance of indicators of moral decline. The multiplication symbol " $\times$ " refers to the "AND"-condition entailing that for "intolerance to diversity" to become prominent *both* authoritarian disposition and perceived threat are required to build up the motivation to restore order through intolerance (or coercive formalization).

Note that this combination of (1) a low level of understanding of the world—ignorance—and (2) the threat-induced significance of acting appropriately leads to deep feelings of personal inadequacy. This entails that the fundamental driver of the authoritarian dynamic can be reformulated as the "Ignorance Dynamic."

$$\text{Motivation to restore personal adequacy} = \text{Ignorance} \times \text{Cost of failure to act appropriately}$$

The deep feelings of personal inadequacy can—from the perspective of the Authoritarian—only be improved through the realization of a more tightly controlled and less diverse world. Interestingly, violence researcher Gilligan (1997) argues that shame, due to the public display of personal failure to act appropriately, is the root cause of all violence. This is yet another perspective on the coercive nature of intolerance.

There is a perfectly viable alternative approach to improve one's deep feelings of personal inadequacy, but, unfortunately, authoritarians generally do not come up

with this among themselves. This alternative is to educate oneself out of feelings of personal inadequacy through acquiring a deeper and more pervasive understanding as a basis for more advanced strategies. Shallow understanding in combination with normal or good intelligence prevents this. The strength of the coping mode's "intelligent" ways of treating problems as self-contained (such as the problems in an IQ-test) leads authoritarians to redefine or ignore reality until it fits with their current solution repertoire.

This is another way to understand authoritarian intolerance. It is intolerance against anything opposing successful coping with an existing solution repertoire. It is therefore also intolerance against advanced strategies—based on a deeper and more pervasive understanding—that are not (yet) fully understood. Only when the threat level and the "cost of failure to act appropriately" diminish, these coping strategies can be replaced by pervasive optimization strategies. This entails that whoever controls the threat-level, controls the level of intolerance to diversity and growth, the moment intolerance becomes dominant, and the number of people in an authoritarian mode.

The Authoritarian Dynamic can be defined on the level of the individual as well as on a group or even societal level. A single authoritarian in an organization will defer its own authority to the more skilled and knowledgeable around. But the same authoritarian in a context with more authoritarians will be highly motivated to collectively adopt and enforce measures, i.e., introduce coercive formalization, expected to reduce situational complexity and personal inadequacy. Actually a small, but highly motivated, fraction of a society might start a revolution to (re)turn to a simpler, more controlled, and better understood world according to Billington's (1980) conclusions.

For example one of the slogans of the French revolution *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* (freedom, equality, brotherhood), which became the French national motto a century later, is appealing to the libertarian values of diversity and individual authority. Yet it is also consistent with an urge to a simpler and better understood state of affairs, where people are more equal (similar), more brotherly responsible for each other (more able to keep each other to the norm), and free to define new (narrower) social norms. In this light it is not at all surprising that the French Revolution included a period called "the Reign of Terror" in which all perceived opposition to the revolution was punished at the guillotine. It was the period of about a year in a highly chaotic revolutionary decade in which intolerance peaked.

Yet the intolerance to diversity of anxious authoritarians is a normal coping response to a situation of which the complexity has developed out of coping capacity of some fraction (per definition the authoritarian fraction) of the population. It is their good and democratic right to do something about a situation that they perceive as highly troublesome. The problem is that their understanding of society, compared to the libertarian fraction, is lower and this may easily lead to the adoption of sub-optimal or counterproductive strategies. Yet, the feelings of inadequacy and anxiety that authoritarians share and that unite them are genuine and these deserve to be taken very seriously. Ideally they should not be ignored or derided by libertarians, although they neither share nor understand their outlook on reality.

The more pervasive and deeper understanding of libertarians should allow them to understand authoritarians much better than vice versa. This entails that the libertarian fraction of society, at least in principle, holds the keys to the way the authoritarian dynamic will play out. Libertarians can influence the perceived complexity of society through coaching, education, and media and they can in some cases respond adequately to the threats perceived and moral decline experienced by authoritarians. Simply taking these seriously and addressing the root causes may result in a society in which considerably less people are in the authoritarian mode. In such a society many more people feel adequate because they are adequate social actors. The ensuing equality in personal adequacy ensures that most are in the pervasive optimization mode. This equality enhances overall wellbeing (Wilkinson 2006; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009) and it minimizes the probability of a concerted action by authoritarians to overthrow the (morally depraved) status quo in favor of a simpler, but also more regimented and less free society.

### 11.3.6 *The Bureaucratic Dynamic*

I will now come to the core and title of this chapter. How to formulate the psychological enablers of bureaucracy most succinctly? If bureaucracy is a manifestation of authoritarianism, i.e., the prevalence of the coping mode of thought, within professional organizations, something similar to the Authoritarian Dynamic or the “Ignorance Dynamic” should hold. Of course it must be adapted to the particular context of professional organizations.

My proposal, as variant of the Ignorance and Authoritarian Dynamic, for a “Bureaucratic Dynamic” is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Incentive for coercive formalization} \\ &= \text{Bureaucracy incentive} = \text{Institutional ignorance} \times \text{Worker cost of failure} \end{aligned}$$

In this “formula” the role of “intolerance” and “motivation to restore personal adequacy” is played by either the “Incentive for coercive formalization” or the “Bureaucracy incentive” as described by Adler and Borys (1996) and summarized in the left column of Table 11.2. The role of “Authoritarianism” and “Ignorance” is played by “Institutional ignorance.” This is a measure of how well workers understand the consequences of their own actions, both within the organization and on the wider society. Directly associated is their need (often a demand) for guidance in every non-standard activity. The role of “Threat” and “Cost of failure to act appropriately” is played by “Worker cost of failure.” In the case of bureaucracy, the threat is not moral decline, but failing at the job and publicly being revealed as professionally inadequate. This threat pertains as much to the worker making the mistake, as it does to the superior who will be shamed because (s)he did not have the department under control.

Here, again, we have a combination of two factors: (1) institutional ignorance leads to an abundance of opportunities to fail and (2) (high) cost of failure. The

prevalence and seriousness of failure now becomes *the* measure of personal inadequacy. As in the “Ignorance Dynamic” the right side of the Bureaucratic Dynamic corresponds to deep feelings of personal inadequacy that “can only be improved through the realization of a more manageable world,” which, according to the logic of the coping mode, is through coercive formalization.

The Bureaucratic Dynamic, formulated like this, explains both the basic attitude and all the key properties of coercive formalization so characteristic of bureaucracy (see Table 11.2). Workers are seen as sources of problems to be eliminated, and opportunism of (“fools” as) workers is to be feared. A formal system of complex procedure and guidelines—all strengths of the coping mode of cognition—replaces worker’s intelligence, skills, and improvisation ability. Deviations from protocol become suspect. To prevent the natural tendency of workers to use their “good sense and sound judgment” the whole organization is made nontransparent and whatever global transparency exists is made highly asymmetrical so that superiors at any moment can, but not necessarily do, monitor workers so that workers self-impose limits on their behavior.

In this process capable workers lose their intrinsic motivation (“The job is no longer fulfilling and it impedes my personal development”) and identified motivation (“The job is no longer important and its results not satisfying”). These motivations are replaced by introjected motivation (“I’d better do it otherwise I’ll face unpleasant consequences”) and external motivation (“I have no choice,” “The protocol says so,” “The computer says so,” *Befehl ist Befehl*). Quickly enough this state of being becomes habitual. The result is an individual that while at work, has shut down half of its intellectual potential, is stuck in a situation with minimal personal growth potential, and is reduced to an automaton-like shadow of a fully functioning human being.

### 11.3.7 *The Psychological Effects on the Bureaucrat*

While bureaucracy is annoying and frustrating for the client and costly for society, its effects might be worse for the bureaucrat. Compared to a worker in a non-bureaucratic organization, the bureaucrat misses many opportunities to engage in inherently fulfilling activities, to enjoy meaningful activities, to help others, to contribute undeniably to a better society, and in general to give meaning and significance to life.

What happens to the bureaucrat if these high-level human needs cannot be compensated in the rest of life? What level of life quality will result? Somewhat alarmingly, the pattern of these effects resembles those of torture. For example, torture victim therapist Leanh Nguyen (2007) concludes the following:

The most terrible, and intractable, legacy of torture is the killing of desire—that is, of curiosity, of the impulse for connection and meaning making, of the capacity for mutuality, of the tolerance for ambiguity and ambivalence.

This description sounds eerily similar to the description of someone indefinitely locked in the coping mode of cognition. This quote describes a complete inability to experience curiosity, joy, play, and interpersonal contact. An inability for playful



sensemaking associated with intrinsic motivation. This is replaced by a constant need for the certainty and formal clarity. It is as if the pervasive optimization mode has become inaccessible. Does not this resemble the automaton like bureaucrat in the introductory example?

This comparison between bureaucracy and torture might, at first glance seem a bit over the top, but remember that both are about subduing the individual to external authority (just as slavery by the way). Individual autonomy may well be a defining characteristic for health (see Andringa and Lanser (2013) for the role of freedom over mind-states in sound annoyance). From that perspective it makes sense to consider bureaucracy as a low, but prolonged, level of psychological torture that like full-blown torture, may have a profound and long lasting influence on bureaucrats and by extension on society. As far as I know, this topic has not deserved the attention it should have.

### ***11.3.8 Summary of the Psychological Roots of Bureaucracy***

In Sect. 2, the psychological enablers of bureaucracy, I have progressively developed the psychological foundations of bureaucracy by addressing a number of complementary perspectives from different psychological specialisms. I will summarize its main results here.

Step one involved the notion of habits. During habitual behavior it is the environment that drives behavior. Habits free the higher faculties of mind during routine tasks and have as such great benefits. If, however, the use of the higher faculties of mind is discouraged at work, the result is something of an automaton: a half-empty human shell performing routine tasks, but devoid of compassion, empathy, and understanding.

In the section called “Two modes of thought” I showed that (proto)typical bureaucratic behaviors fit perfectly with the coping mode of cognition (Table 11.3). The coping mode is characterized by intelligently solving self-contained problems, while the pervasive optimization mode is characterized by ever-improving one’s understanding of the diversity of the world. This leads to two different attitudes toward “authority.” For the coping mode some (typically external) authority must limit and constrain the world so that one’s existing solution repertoire can be applied. In the pervasive optimization mode the individual internalizes the role of authority and becomes progressively more self-deciding and autonomous as understanding becomes more pervasive and deep.

To study the interplay between authority and understanding, I discussed the phenomenon of authoritarianism as defined by Stenner (2005). This led to the identification of two attitudes toward the world: the libertarian attitude in which the world is full of possibilities and an authoritarian attitude in which a lack of understanding of the world leads to anxiety and feelings of personal inadequacy of which libertarians are generally unaware. These feelings unify and motivate authoritarians to



oppose all sources of complexity, unpredictability, novelty, and growth that complexify, confuse, and destabilize a predictable state of affairs. This drives encroaching bureaucracy.

The emergence of intolerance to (ill-understood) diversity has been summarized in the “Authoritarian Dynamic” in which “intolerance” scales with the level of ignorance (authoritarianism) and “threat-level” as a measure of the significance of not understanding one’s world. Together these lead to a sense of personal inadequacy. The strength of the coping mode’s “intelligent” ways of treating all problems as self-contained (such as the problems in an IQ-test) leads authoritarians to redefine or ignore reality until it fits with their current solution repertoire.

The digression into political psychology allowed the formulation of a “Bureaucratic Dynamic.” The role of intolerance to diversity is apparent as the prominence of coercive formalization. Conform the Authoritarian Dynamic, this scales with the product of “institutional ignorance” and “worker cost of failure.” Public shaming in case of failure is a measure of worker’s inadequacy as a professional and the manager’s inadequacy both as a leader and as a person. This leads, again according to the logic of the coping mode, to the worker accepting (or demanding) and the manager instilling more coercive formalization.

However, in this process workers lose their intrinsic motivation and become gradually more extrinsically motivated and the work becomes more and more habitual. The workers have shut down half of their intellectual potential and are stuck in a situation with minimal personal growth potential.

This then, finally, leads me to question whether the psychological effects on bureaucracy on bureaucrats might be an ignored, yet imminently important, psychological and societal problem. The third and last section of this chapter will not focus on this problem, but on how the societal goals of organizations can be protected from bureaucracy. Fortunately this may also protect workers from the (likely) adverse effects of bureaucracy.

## **11.4 Protecting the Societal Goals of an Organization**

The subtitle of this chapter is “Protecting the societal goals of an organization.” This section addresses this topic for nonprofit organizations because these have a social mission. In the introductory example the original societal role of the lost-and-found department was replaced by a new goal: procedural correctness, irrespective of the state of the world and the implications of following the procedure. As I have outlined in the previous section this is the result of the coping mode running amok in an organization conform the “Bureaucratic Dynamic.” This entails that this section will firstly address a number of management paradigms in relation to their societal goals and bureaucracy, secondly it describes core features of non-bureaucratic or libertarian organizations, and thirdly it formulates safeguards against encroaching bureaucracy. This chapter ends with some reflections and conclusions.

### 11.4.1 *Management Paradigms for Nonprofits*

As summarized at the end of the previous section, the psychology of *not* understanding one's world and in particular ignorance about one's working environment and not overseeing the consequences (both adverse and beneficial) of one's activities leads to encroaching bureaucracy through the generation of more self-centered goals of complexity reduction that progressively erode the focus on the original societal goals of an organization. For nonprofit organizations, of which the mission aims at the achievement of social purposes rather than in generating revenues, this entails that they gradually delegitimize themselves through making their own stability and survival more important than their original *social raison d'être* (Moore 2000). Yet depending on the management paradigm, nonprofits run this risk to varying degrees.

Stoker (2006) describes and summarizes three management paradigms that neatly fit a progression from organizations based on coping mode rationality to the rationality of the pervasive optimization mode. I will describe all three.

#### 11.4.1.1 Traditional Public Management

Traditional public management follows the typical Weberian early twentieth-century template (Weber 1978) in which bureaucracy delivers organizational effectiveness through four features that Stoker (2006) summarizes as follows:

The first is the placing of officials in a defined *hierarchical* division of labor. The central feature of bureaucracy is the *systematic* division of labor whereby *complex* administrative *problems* are broken down into *manageable and repetitive tasks*, each the province of a particular office. A second core feature is that officials are employed within a full-time *career structure* in which *continuity and long-term advancement* is emphasized. Third, the work of bureaucrats is conducted according to *prescribed rules without arbitrariness or favoritism* and preferably with a *written record*. Finally, officials are appointed on merit. Indeed they become *experts by training for their function* and in turn *control access, information, and knowledge in their defined area of responsibility*.

The italic emphasis has been added to indicate concepts arising from the logic of the coping mode.

#### 11.4.1.2 New Public Management

New public management arose as an alternative to the observation “that public service organizations tend to be neither efficient in terms of saving public money nor responsive to consumer needs” (Stoker 2006). As a result it did not arise from positive motivations, but as a solution to the problems of bureaucracy. Stoker describes this as follows.

The solution is to fragment monopolistic public service structures and develop incentives and tools to influence the way that they operate. Key reforms include the introduction of a purchaser-provider divide within organizations and the development of performance targets

and incentives. The aim is to create an organizational home for the client or consumer voice within the system to challenge the power of producers. Consumers or their surrogate representatives, commissioners, would have the power to purchase the services they required and measure performance. The achievement of better performance would be aided by arms-length systems of inspection and regulation to check not only the spending of public money but also the delivery of public services against demanding targets.

New public management then seeks to dismantle the bureaucratic pillar of the Weberian model of traditional public administration. Out with the large, multipurpose hierarchical bureaucracies, new public management proclaims, and in with lean, flat, autonomous organizations drawn from the public and private sectors and steered by a tight central leadership corps

So the key improvement compared to the traditional model is the explicit role and importance of the societal function of the organization, but in this case limited to specific performance targets to be delivered by lean, flat, and autonomous organizations of which the performance indicators are still fully under control of some sort of central leadership that is supposed to represent public and private sector interests.

New public management is clearly aware of important drawbacks of Weberian bureaucracy, yet it is still guided by the logic of the coping mode. However, it has some indicators of the pervasive optimization mode such as greater worker autonomy (within the tight constraints of performance indicators) and some, albeit indirect, representation of consumers and other beneficiaries of the delivered services.

#### 11.4.1.3 Public Value Management

Public value management (Moore 2000) is an emerging new management paradigm that is not so much a response to an existing paradigm but a formulation of the role of nonprofits in modern society (Stoker 2006). Public value management is succinctly formulated as a public value scorecard (Moore 2003) in which an organization should balance (1) the public value produced by the organization, (2) the legitimacy and support enjoyed by the organization, and (3) the operational capacity to achieve its results. In the public value scorecard the performance indicators are translated as measures of performance. Moore (2003) describes these as follows.

Some of the measures are those we associate with the public value produced by the organization—the extent to which it achieves its mission, the benefits it delivers to clients, and the social outcomes it achieves.

Others are associated with the legitimacy and support enjoyed by the organization—the extent to which “authorizers” and “contributors” beyond those who benefit from the organization remain willing to license and support the enterprise. These measures can, to some degree, be viewed as important because they indicate the capacity of the organization to stay in operation over time. But these measures can also be viewed to some degree as measures of value creation in themselves. This is particularly true if we recognize that some part of the value created by nonprofit organizations lies in the opportunities it affords to public spirited individuals to contribute to causes they care about, and another part lies in the capacity of the nonprofit organization to link contributing individuals to one another in a common effort to realized shared social goals.

Still others are associated with the operational capacity the nonprofit organization is relying on to achieve its results. This includes not only measures of organizational output, but also of organizational efficiency and fiscal integrity. It also includes measures of staff morale and capacity, and the quality of the working relationships with partner organizations. And, it includes the capacity of the organization to learn and adapt and innovate over time.

Where the Weberian bureaucracy follows the logic of the coping mode, these measures read as the pervasive optimization mode specified to the context of nonprofit organizations.

The public value scorecard was a response to an earlier score card: Kaplan's (Kaplan and Norton 1996) Balanced Scorecard, for the new public management paradigm through its focus on financial and efficiency measures. The Public Value Scorecard differs in a number of central aspects that are characteristic of the pervasive optimization mode. Moore (2000) formulates these differences as follows.

First, in the public value scorecard, the *ultimate value to be produced by the organization is measured in non-financial terms*. Financial performance is understood as the means to an end rather than an end itself. The end in itself is denominated in *non-financial social terms*. It also notes that the value produced by the organization may not lie simply in the satisfaction of individual clients. It can lie, instead, in *the achievement of desired aggregate social outcomes* of one kind or another.

Second, the public value scorecard focuses attention not just on those customers who pay for the service, or the clients who benefit from the organization's operations; it *focuses as well on the third party payers and other authorizers and legitimators* of the nonprofit enterprise. These people are important because it is they who provide some of the wherewithal that the organization needs to achieve its results, and *whose satisfaction lies in the achievement of aggregate social states as well as in the benefits delivered to individual clients*.

Third, the public value scorecard focuses attention on productive capabilities for achieving large social results outside the boundary of the organization itself. Other organizations existing in a particular industry are viewed *not as competitors* for market share, *but instead as partners and co-producers* whose efforts should be combined with the effort of the nonprofit enterprise to produce *the largest combined effect* on the problem that they are *jointly trying to solve*. In short, a nonprofit organization should measure its performance not only by its ability to increase its market share, but also by *its ability to strengthen the industry as a whole*.

Again I have added emphasis in italic to stress some the core concepts of this approach. The reader can combine these with the italic remarks in the right column of Table 11.3 that interprets the strong points of the pervasive optimization mode in organizational terms. It will be clear that this description matches the properties of the pervasive optimization mode.

Stoker (2006) concludes that public value management rests "on a fuller and rounder vision of humanity than does either traditional public administration or new public management." He identifies a key difference, namely the role of motivation, when he concludes:

Ultimately, the strength of public value management is seen to rest on its ability to point to a motivational force that does not solely rely on rules or incentives to drive public service practice and reform. People are, it suggests, motivated by their involvement in networks and partnerships, that is, their relationships with others formed in the context of mutual respect and shared learning. Building successful relationships is the key to networked governance and the core objective of the management needed to support it.

In terms of motivation, the public value management relies on the power of identified (“I find it important”) and intrinsic (“I enjoy doing it”) motivation. And this can be contrasted to the bureaucratic extreme in which the motivations are mainly extrinsic (“I have no choice”) or introjected (“I’d better do it otherwise I face negative consequences”). The positive motivations are associated with (not only) experiential learning (Andringa et al. 2013; Vygotskiĭ 1978) and the growth of organization understanding, which is, conform the Bureaucratic Dynamic, the key protector against institutional ignorance.

#### 11.4.1.4 Summarizing Key Properties of the Three Management Paradigms

Table 11.5 provides a summary, adapted from Stoker (2006), to which I have added six rows describing properties in terms of the strengths of the coping and the pervasive optimization mode.

### 11.4.2 *Libertarian Organizations*

Until now I have focused mostly on bureaucracy and the personal, organizational, and societal manifestations of the coping mode. But how does the pervasive optimization mode manifest itself in the context of organizations? Stoker (2006) notes that for public value management to work the motivation of workers needs to be “intrinsic” or “identified,” which complies with the organic organization type identified by Adler and Borys (1996). Alternatively one might call organizations that realize this “Libertarian organizations” because the members are dominated by intrinsic and identified motivation, understand what they are doing, are autonomous self-deciders, and, in summary, rely mostly on the pervasive optimization mode of cognition.

Organizational structures that effectively contribute to an ever-changing real world of dangers and opportunities need flexible access to the available competence and enthusiasm. Libertarian organizations must therefore match the available competences and institutional understanding to whatever the world demands of the organization. Where authoritarian organizations realize (at best) proscribed results and predictable mediocrity, libertarian organizations can realize personal growth, institutional excellence, and with that effective contributions to the wider society. They are truly optimizing pervasively.

In libertarian organizations the formal hierarchy is as important as in a bureaucracy, but its role is quite different: it has to manage autonomy instead of enforcing compliance. For superiors who know how to manage motivations and how to convey the role of the organization in society, this is not at all demanding because the very autonomy and commitment of a healthy libertarian organization ensures that it can deal with stability (where efficiency and organizational optimization are priorities) and change (where protection of quality and the realization of opportunities are prominent).

**Table 11.5** Management paradigms. (Adapted from Stoker (2006), which is based on Kelly et al. (2002). The lowest 6 rows have been added as interpretations of the original table in terms of the discourse of this chapter.)

Key objectives	Traditional public administration	New public management	Public value management
Role of managers	Politically provided inputs; services monitored through bureaucratic oversight	Managing inputs and outputs in a way that ensures economy and responsiveness to consumers	The overarching goal is achieving public value that in turn involves greater effectiveness in tackling the problems that the public most cares about; stretches from service delivery to system maintenance
Definition of public interest	To ensure that rules and appropriate procedures are followed	To help define and meet agreed performance targets	To play an active role in steering networks of deliberation and delivery and maintain the overall capacity of the system
Approach to public service ethos	By politicians or experts; little in the way of public input	Aggregation of individual preferences, in practice captured by senior politicians or managers supported by evidence about customer choice	Individual and public preferences produced through a complex process of interaction that involves deliberative reflection over inputs and opportunity costs
Preferred system for service delivery	Public sector has monopoly on service ethos, and all public bodies have it	Skeptical of public sector ethos (leads to inefficiency and empire building); favors customer service	No one sector has a monopoly on public service ethos; maintaining relationships through shared values is seen as essential
Contribution of the democratic process	Hierarchical department or self-regulating profession	Private sector or tightly defined arms-length public agency	Menu of alternatives selected pragmatically and a reflexive approach to intervention mechanisms to achieve outputs
Interpretation in terms of cognitive modes	Typical of the coping mode	Aware of limitations of the coping mode	Transition to the pervasive optimization mode
Role of worker	Skilled obedience	Responsible for assigned tasks and maintaining skills. Customer oriented	Co-responsible for societal role execution and the adaptation of the organization's changing societal demands

**Table 11.5** (continued)

Key objectives	Traditional public administration	New public management	Public value management
Skills of worker	Precision in role execution (aimed at error prevention)	Deep understanding of tasks and role skills	Deep understanding of role skills and broad understanding of impact of own activities on public value
Motivations	Extrinsic and introjected	Extrinsic, introjected, identified, and intrinsic. Role of motivation not central	Identified and intrinsic. Essential role of motivation
Attitude to work	Obedient and unengaged	Professional development	Personal development

In healthy libertarian organizations everyone develops in terms of (institutional) understanding. This entails that eventually everyone can “play” a diversity of formal and functional roles. Basically the only real requirements for a healthy libertarian organization is that everyone in the organization has roles that are often intrinsically motivating, are generally satisfying, and that do not exceed understanding capacity. An organization that satisfies these conditions will remain in a pervasive optimization mode, even in the face of great organizational or societal challenges.

Table 11.6 provides a selection of properties of libertarian organizations formulated to promote the pervasive optimization mode in organizations.

### 11.4.3 *The Dynamics of Encroaching Bureaucracy*

We have probably all been members of a team that functioned amazingly well for a time, but then started to dysfunction and eventually disintegrated. This is because excellence is fragile: it not only delivers pervasive optimization, but also depends on it. In his analysis of how twentieth-century (American) bureaucrats took over education from teachers, Labaree (2011) describes how the “*pedagogically* progressive” vision of education—child-centered, inquiry based, and personally engaging—is a fragile hot-house flower because it depends on broadly realized favorable conditions (i.e., successful pervasive optimization). In contrast, the “*administrative* progressive” vision of education is a weed because it grows under difficult conditions such as erratic funding, poorly prepared teachers, high turnover, dated textbooks, etc. It is robust “because its primary goal is to be useful in the narrowest sense of the term: It aims for survival rather than beauty.”

Labaree accounts a “battle” between the philosopher John Dewey and educational reformer David Snedden. As proponent of the pedagogically progressive vision, John Dewey formulated a complex and nuanced narrative of education as a means to make “workers the masters of their own industrial fate.” In contrast, David Snedden as the champion of the administrative progressive approach, saw education as vocational



**Table 11.6** Properties of libertarian organizations. Intended to stimulate the pervasive optimization mode of cognition

Topic	Property
Vision	A “lived” vision of the goals and roles of the organization is widely shared. It allows everyone in the organization to contribute to its realization via well-formulated procedures and competent improvisation alike
	Approach the organization holistically: optimize everything in context of the whole; prevent at all cost strict compartmentalization of responsibilities and information, because specialism and other forms of close-mindedness are seeds of stagnation and corruption
Motivation	Promote and ensure a predominance of intrinsic and identified motivations
	Allow people to be happy or enthusiastic about what they have done well and allow them to repair and learn from mistakes
Competences	Focus on pervasive competence development
	Promote a deep insight in the societal effects of individual work and the organization as a whole
	Stimulate overlapping competences to ensure organizational redundancy, optimization opportunities, more timely services, and enhanced work satisfaction
	Distribute responsibilities according to available competences, interests, ambitions, and enthusiasm. Ignore hierarchical considerations
	Be alert of indications of low competence, stagnated development, insensitivity to adverse consequences of (in)action, low inherent motivation, low commitment to the organization and the services it should provide (e.g., 9-to-5 mentality), and indicators of lack of enthusiasm
Autonomy	The task of management is to manage worker autonomy
	Competent autonomy of workers is success indicator
	Put real responsibility in <i>every</i> job description and allow a diversification or responsibilities as competence grows
	Stimulate expertise, but prevent specialization
Information	Develop an open information infrastructure
	Allow for ample opportunities for unstructured information sharing
	The Scottish proverb “When the heart is full the tongue will speak” will ensure that really important information will be shared

training in preparation for a life of servitude. As a narrow-minded authoritarian, he understood the world in dualisms and countered nuanced arguments by ignoring them and by repeating reasonable sounding dogma. Labaree (2011) concludes:

Therefore, the administrative progressive movement was able to become firmly established and positioned for growth because of Snedden’s flame throwing. Put another way, a useful idiot, who says things that resonate with the emerging ideas of his era and helps clear the ideological way for the rhetorical reframing of a major institution, can have vastly more influence than a great thinker, who makes a nuanced and prescient argument that is out of tune with his times and too complex to fit on a battle standard.



This is how authoritarians gain control. Not by the quality of argument, but by focusing the discussion, by subtly reinterpreting the goals of an organization in a less rich manner, by ignoring nuances or replacing them by similar sounding oppositions, and by gradually marginalizing and deriding opposition. When authoritarians have gained control they start simplifying, harmonizing, focusing, and reorganizing the organization according to Billington's (1980) observations on revolutions. The rhetoric is a convenient tool. But the real objective, albeit rarely acknowledged, is a simpler, more controlled, and better understood world. Authoritarians bring the complexity of the world, or in this case national education, down to *their* level of understanding of it.

This process matches the Bureaucratic Dynamic that we have formulated.

Incentive for coercive formalization

= Bureaucracy incentive = Institutional ignorance  $\times$  Worker cost of failure

The true drivers of the bureaucratization process are feelings of personal inadequacy among workers. In the case of educators like Snedden, these feelings arose from being lost in the complex world of education in which responsibilities are unclear and the means to realize them even more. The resulting personal anxiety motivates workers to reestablish their sense of adequacy whenever possible: at work they are now in an authoritarian mode. Their colleagues who *do* understand their responsibilities and know how to realize them feel no anxiety. They are and remain in a libertarian mode and are generally unaware of the severity of the anxiety in their (now) authoritarian colleagues.

The authoritarians gravitate toward each other and start to formulate and promote a simplified understanding of the roles and aims of the organization. The libertarian opposition against this simplified understanding is of course based on a fuller understanding of the roles and aims of the organization. But these arguments have no impact on the authoritarians because, in their eyes, the arguments are addressing irrelevancies with no relation of their new, simplified, and more tangible understanding of the organization's scope and aims. While the libertarians waste their time and energy with progressively more nuanced arguments, the authoritarians find each other and may at some point take control over the organization.

When they do, they make their level of "institutional ignorance" the norm. And because they are in the coping mode they will realize this norm according to the logic of the coping mode (Table 11.3, left side). This will, according to the Bureaucratic Dynamic, lead to the introduction of more "coercive formalization" and a shift from being as professional as possible to producing tangible measureable outcomes and preventing errors in realizing these. Preventing worker failure and publicly displayed inadequacy becomes more important than professional success.

At the same time the libertarians in the organization discover that many of the things they used to do—and which still make sense given the logic of the pervasive optimization mode—are no longer officially endorsed because they are incompatible with the new simplified norm. In fact the old way of working has become a liability if it hinders the realization of the new, more tangible, performance measures. What used to be the highest indicators of professionalism, are now costly ways to fail as a worker. The new professionalism is rule compliance and not organizational excellence.

Much of what the libertarian worker motivated, is no longer officially or practically part of the organization's core business. The moment the new management initiates a reorganization, of course according to the logic of the coping mode, the libertarians are faced with a dilemma: leave with professional dignity or succumb to the new normal and deskill and comply. Whatever the libertarian chooses, the result is the same: increased institutional ignorance.

#### ***11.4.4 Preventing Bureaucracy***

I had the doubtful honor to witness such a process in my university. Only two individuals at key positions in the hierarchy drove the process. Fortunately, it was followed by repair measures when the whole process overshot and the organizational costs became too high. This happened after some highly skilled and motivated colleagues had left and others were on sick-leave. At that point workers simply refused to take further responsibility and the department almost stopped functioning. This paper is informed by witnessing this process. Without understanding bureaucracy as well as I do now, the unfolding process was very difficult to counter. Yet it is possible to devise effective protective measures. In Table 11.7 I have formulated a number of "Red Flags" as indicators of encroaching bureaucracy that may be helpful to stop a bureaucratization process before it becomes self-reinforcing.

According to the Bureaucratic Dynamic, the best protection against bureaucratization is preventing worker (including management) ignorance and promoting worker professionalism instead of preventing worker error. A truly healthy and resilient organization maintains a sufficient level of institutional understanding and worker autonomy so that no one feels inadequate and every one contributes to the realization of the organizations *full* societal goals and not only to a single or a few "key performance objectives." Yet as the analysis of the three management paradigms shows, institutional understanding improves over time. For example, the new public value management paradigm starts from the logic of the pervasive optimization mode instead of the logic of the coping mode as would have been the natural Weberian option a century ago.

A future informed public might not accept the products of a bureaucratic organization because it demonstrates, for all to witness, that its management and workers do not quite understand what they are doing. In addition, if my expectation is substantiated that bureaucracy leads to high personal and societal costs for bureaucrats, future societies might simply not accept bureaucracy because it signifies a pathological state of affairs of which the immediate costs are apparent as reduced quality and efficiency, while the full personal and societal costs are deferred to future generations. In fact sustainability arguments might drive this.

**Table 11.7** Red flags. Early indicators disrupting the pervasive optimization mode

	Red Flags
Mission	The absence of a shared, living vision about the organization's goals in a larger societal context
	The advance of a simplified and more focused interpretation of the organizations mission, typically as a limited number of "key performance objectives"
Leaders	Leaders insensitive to reasoned and nuanced arguments by competent individuals at any position in the organization
	Leaders only sensitive to arguments related to goal achievement or procedure. Realizable goals are preferred over desirable goals
	Leaders preferring obedience over autonomy and who curtail work-floor autonomy
	Bureaucrats promoted to key positions
Competences	Neglect of work-floor competences
	Demotivation of highly autonomous, competent and committed co-workers
	Gradual deterioration of quality of the working environment and worker motivation
	The most competent and committed coworkers leave
	Standardization at the cost of curtailing of essential/useful diversity
Uniformization	Strong focus on formalities while neglecting (or indefinitely) postponing content
	Compartmentalization of information and plans
	Mediocracy facilitated

### 11.4.5 Conclusion and Reflection

In some sense this chapter is about the difference between intelligence and understanding as manifestations of, respectively, the coping and the pervasive optimization mode of cognition. Understanding proofs itself as the ability to set up, in a statistical sense, the conditions for an unproblematic future and an interesting and fulfilling life. Failure to do so leads to problematic situations to be solved intelligently. While understanding shines in an open world, intelligence assumes a closed world of self-contained problems to be addressed with an existing solution repertoire. Anything in the way of the solution will be ignored or coercively made irrelevant. While understanding manifests itself through fostering empathic relations, intelligence, as a last line of defense, is self-protective, impersonal, and ruthless.

Without understanding the consequences of one's activities, work is bureaucratic. Since no one is bureaucratic while not at work and especially not among friends, it is the work environment that activates bureaucratic behavior. In this chapter, I have shown that bureaucracy in all its facets can be understood from basic psychology. Bureaucratic behavior is habitual or intelligent rule following. The bureaucrat obediently performs activities that it understands superficially and values marginally, but that it does not endorse or feels responsible for. As such the bureaucrat appears and acts as a dehumanized automaton. It is a pitiful state of being.

The psychological enabler of bureaucracy is a sense of personal inadequacy among workers resulting from not understanding their work and its consequences. This activates the coping mode of cognition and with that an urge to bring the complexity of the working environment down to more manageable levels through promoting coercive formalization. This process can be summarized as the Bureaucratic Dynamic, which states that the prevalence of coercive formalization depends on the combination of “Institutional Ignorance” and “Worker cost of failure.”

Fortunately, in the last century society became gradually more aware of the effects and dangers of bureaucracy. New public management arose as a response to curtail the adverse effects of Weberian bureaucracy as defining aspect of traditional public management. Because it is still based on the coping mode of cognition it will not become a bureaucracy-free alternative. New value management however arises from the logic of the pervasive optimization mode and it *has* the potential to achieve organizational excellence without bureaucracy.

Anti-bureaucratic measures should not only focus on the reduction of the number of rules and regulations because this still follows the logic of the coping mode. It should instead focus on motivating workers to understand their professional roles and to learn to oversee the impact of their activities; not only on the organization, but also on the wider society. This understanding will lead to a reevaluation of the role of formalization and will erode the need for coercive formalization. The organization will no longer focus on preventing errors, but on optimizing the multifaceted societal roles of the organization in ways that are experienced as important, worthwhile, and intrinsically motivating for its workers. Yet organizations that function like this are somewhat fragile and may be eroded from the inside by a fraction of workers that still have an impoverished understanding of the organization and its societal roles. It will be important to develop safeguards to prevent this.

Current anti-bureaucratic awareness stems from the observation that bureaucratic organizations are neither efficient in terms of saving public money nor responsive to consumer needs. Future research may however proof important adverse effects of bureaucracy on bureaucrats and on society as a whole. This may expose bureaucracy for what I think it is: a pathological state of human organization, with equally serious adverse consequences for the bureaucrat and society as a whole.

In the course of writing this chapter I was struck by the consistency and complementarity of disparate scientific results. Science produces wonderful observations and generates deep insights, but it has difficulty in combining these if they originate from different domains. The transdisciplinary framework presented in this chapter allowed far reaching conclusions through the combination of a number of these observations and insights.

For example the work of Adler and Borys (1996) and especially their conceptualization of bureaucracy, in terms of the degree and type of formalization (enabling or coercive), gained theoretical support. The stability of bureaucracies can be explained through the link between bureaucracy and habitual behavior, since bureaucrats feel a self-imposed responsibility to maintain the condition in which their habitual functioning is guaranteed. Furthermore, McGilchrist's (2010) description of the way the two brain hemispheres understand the world and our conceptualization of the

pervasive optimization mode and the coping mode (Andringa et al. 2013), seems to predict how non-bureaucratic and bureaucratic organizations micromanage. This was a serendipitous finding that I consider highly relevant. In addition Stenner's (2005) conceptualization of authoritarianism—as having a problem with a complex world (and not with complex thinking)—helped to understand the psychological motivators of bureaucracy in terms of feelings of personal inadequacy. Finally, Billington's (1980) observations about revolutions always aiming for simplicity, helped to understand why well-functioning non-bureaucratic organizations might be eroded from the inside and turn into a bureaucracy.

All in all, it seems to me that bureaucracy is not just a phenomenon that occurs in professional organizations. Instead it is just one of many manifestations of the interplay between understanding and intelligence that are important for every aspect of live.

## Appendix

Some core properties of the bureaucratic syndrome (authoritarian dominated) and the non-bureaucratic syndrome (libertarian dominated organizations).

Topic	Bureaucratic syndrome	Non-bureaucratic syndrome
<i>Key properties</i>		
Organizational goals	Societal goals of the organization are only adhered in name, but neither understood nor clearly implemented	Development of a broadly shared vision about the societal reason d'être of the organization and the way to realize it
Overall strategy	Stimulating sameness and oneness through standardization and obedience	Continual skilled improvisation on the basis of a shared vision and well-chosen procedures
Competence	Ignoring, discouraging, and demoralizing competent "subordinates." Deskilling	Relying on and fostering all proven and budding competencies in the organization
Autonomy	Subordinate autonomy is not an option. Obedience is more important than competence	Autonomy and competence development of subordinates expected
Content	Complete disregard of content while favoring form	Content is leading, form a means
Organizational development	Structures and procedures adapt to the lowest competence level	Everyone is expected to learn and grow towards autonomous roles in organization

Topic	Bureaucratic syndrome	Non-bureaucratic syndrome
<i>Main conflicts</i>		
Stability versus development	Stability and other forms of high predictability leading. This defines the organization	The workers in the organization are constantly developing their skills in order to improve all aspects of the societal role of the organization (i.e., quality and efficiency)
Form versus optimization	Obsessed with form and formalisms. Centralized optimization of standardized and narrowly defined responsibilities	Actively eliciting creative and decentralized optimization of organizational goals. Disregard of form when counter-productive
Standardization versus diversity	Obsession with standardization and curtailing diversity, at the cost of quality if quality entails diversity	Concerned with the overall optimization of all work processes in context, of which both standardization and increasing diversity are options
Error versus learning	Obsessed with preventing errors and mistakes. The organization redefines itself to produce what it can, not what it should; "race to the bottom"	Error and correction after error part of continual creative optimization of work processes
Short versus long term	Exclusively short-term (form) oriented, neither care for nor understanding of mid of long term goals. However, what is short- or mid-terms depends on the role in the organization	Optimization, by all workers, on all time-scales and all dimensions of success
<i>Structural properties</i>		
Role of hierarchy	Hierarchy formalized and inflexible, based on assumed (but never fully checked) competence of superiors	Hierarchy task dependent, and therefore flexible and competence-based
Perception of authorities	Authorities never fundamentally questioned	Incompetent authorities not accepted, but coached or dismissed
Locus of control	Formation of stable authoritarian cliques, who take control over the institutional change processes to prevent further complexity	Loosely and varyingly linked libertarians at control positions.
Measures of success	Performance measures redefined to what is delivered	Performance measure based on what should be delivered (given reason d'être)
Accountability	Suppression of all forms of accountability at the higher levels and prevention of errors and retribution in case of error at the lower levels	Accountability part of normal institutional learning and competence building

Topic	Bureaucratic syndrome	Non-bureaucratic syndrome
<i>Emotions</i>		
Overall role	Rationality and “objectivity” leading. Emotions treated as irrelevant source of variation, to be suppressed	Central role of positive emotions (compassion, enthusiasm, interest) as key motivators; prominent negative emotions indicative of organizational failure
Emotion of workers	Motivating emotion negative: activities guided by the fear of losing control or being shamed publically	Motivating emotion positive: activities aimed at realizing shared benefits including personal development
Emotions of co-workers	Utter disregard of the feelings and emotional wellbeing of coworkers	Strong focus on the creation of optimal working condition in which coworkers feel optimally motivated to give their best

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