

The human in the organization turning from a gear into the machine itself

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Abstract: Over historical time, what mythos and ethos created as “Homo Credo” has transformed into “Homo Rationalis.” Rationalism, and as a result modernist approaches, requiring events to be explained by a rational method supported by independent observations-based on Newtonian physics. This view also shaped the mechanical worldview in social sciences. Activities within organizations followed a logical process within this mechanical worldview. Although this logical process did increase production, it caused humans, as a production factor, to be seen as parts of machines. With technological development, increased competition, accelerated innovations, and dynamics facilitating rapid dissemination of knowledge, this mechanical structure has transformed into an organic one. Because mechanical organizational structures and Newtonian paradigms cannot solve current problems. Attempts have been made to address current issues using quantum physics paradigms. Through quantum theory, one transcends pure reason, and within theory the rational-decision-making human in mechanical organizations has turned into an irrational human. From the perspective of Newtonian physics, the individual within a mechanical organization is viewed as a production factor, a gear in the machine focused on how to produce more. However, even a century later, it appears that the same problems persist for the irrational human shaped by quantum theory. Efforts to push the individual laborer to work more-through flexible work systems and the necessity of keeping up with technological advances-give rise to an objectified human who has literally become the machine itself. This objectified human is made dependent on technology-and therefore on the machine-and is alienated.

Keywords: Newtonian physics, mechanical organization, quantum physics, mechanized human, objectified human

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Introduction

Throughout the advancement of scientific and technical endeavors, questions that trouble the human being have been asked in every era. What makes something a “human”? What elevates something to “superhuman”? Which changes are acceptable from the perspective of humanity? Is it ethical to tamper with human life even via certain “corrective” means? In seeking answers to these questions, humans began to move from a passive observer role toward becoming the order itself (Brooks 2007, 214). Likewise, through these inquiries, the mythos and ethos ages embedded in Western thought gave rise to the primacy of reason-‘logos’-after Auguste Comte’s “Cours de Philosophie Positive.” Thus, the faith-based “Homo Credo” evolved into the rational/scientific “Homo Rationalis.” Humanity’s problems were now sought to be solved through rational and scientific paradigms (Ulgen & Mirze 2010, 44). This rationality demanded a human prototype best suited to the mechanical organizational structure of business management-this human became a production factor alongside machines for maximum efficiency (Kalemci Tüzün 2012, 21; Eren 2013, 228; Kocel 2013, 227).

Within this rationality, Erich Fromm proposed that the fabric of reality can emerge not just from reason but from a combination of reason and emotion. Modern problems demand this combination, and businesses must adapt. Problems are evaluated within the context of rational and irrational approaches. For the issues of business and management regarding humans, pure reasoning isn’t enough. While humans are production factors alongside machines, they also have souls, emotions, and are influenced by a socio-psychological environment. These elements must be managed. In this shift from rational to irrational mind, the result for the individual within the organization doesn’t change. In the mechanical system, the person had to produce heavily under decisions made by others. In today’s reflection, to achieve the same productivity result, individuals are faced with manipulations that subtly guide their will. These manipulations create a dependent human who acts outside their own volition. From another perspective, humans cannot always act rationally. According to Ulgen & Mirze (2010, 45), following Durkheim, modern humans sometimes must behave like primitive humans. Primitive people built sacred “totems.” Contemporary societies erect monuments for their own martyrs. From this standpoint, both primitive and contemporary humans are worked toward the same

outcomes. Through marketing, communication, motivation, and leadership, humans-gears within machines-are made dependent on work. Thus, a rapid evolution toward the machine itself is foreseen.

Human as the gear of the machine

There have been successful management practices since the existence of mankind. The Sumerians managed the human communities they formed around their temples under the leadership of priests. The Egyptians managed irrigation systems and pyramids with a large workforce organization. Hammurabi still guides administrators and lawmakers to govern Babylon today (Eren 2013, 17). The current management process emerged with the Industrial Revolution, which was a result of technological changes, and continued until the mid-1700s and mid-1800s, and essentially with the change in the production relations of societies. In this change, it is noteworthy that production transformed from small and scattered units to large and centralized units-factories located in certain places (Kocel 2013, 46).

There have been major changes in the working routine and work environment of man from the Industrial Revolution to the present. Many of the jobs previously done by hand and with simple tools have become mechanized. This situation has eliminated the crafts done in small shops and the master-apprentice-journeyman relationships. Thus, many small production units were replaced by large factories. In about 100 years, the entire economy of Western Europe, the USA and Japan, based on agriculture and handicrafts, reached its current state (Eren 2014, 9). The transition to this state is addressed within an organizational framework. According to Usdiken and Leblebici (2001), this organization is nourished by three basic roots. One of these elements is the administrative root, which provides the infrastructure for effective and efficient management, and was theorized by Taylor (1911), Mooney and Reiley (1939), Fayol (1949) and Max Weber (1947). The other root is the sociological root, led by theorists such as Selznick (1949), Gouldner (1954) and Blau (1955). The third is the psychological origin, which deals with human relations and was theorized by researchers such as Roethlisberger and Dickson (1946) and Likert (1961) (Sargut and Özen 2010, 14).

Although three separate categories have been put forward for the periods that constitute the roots expressed for the organization, the answer to the questions about which one should be in the foreground, human or organization, has been focused on the organization, that is,

the business. A transformation from the entrepreneurs who know everything and act rationally within the framework of organizations and entrepreneurs to the assumption of people who are expected to have different purposes within the group began to be expressed with the 1960s. This period corresponds to the transformation from economic models of managerial behavior to models created with the ideas of psychologists and political scientists (Sıgır 2012, 37).

There are also some approaches to describe the place of the person in the organization. According to Hatch (1997), the framework of these approaches is formed by the modernist, symbolist-interpretive and postmodern approaches. The modernist approach addresses events with an objective and rational mind. The symbolist-interpretive approach is based on the "Enactment Theory". Here, reality depends on people's experiences, ideas and assumptions. People define reality with the concepts they create and attribute meaning to. In the postmodern approach, all views are rejected. It is assumed that the structure and pattern of events should be addressed not in a rational way, but with paradigms directed by aesthetics and the heart (Ulgen & Mirze 2010, 40-41).

The dominant worldview of the organizational theories generally referred to as the classical period was designs based on the application of a single truth universally. In accordance with the mechanical understanding of this period, organizations were designed in a way that could realize predictable results (Ercil & Sener 2012, 349). The fundamental basis of the view that marked the classical period is rationality. Rationality refers to data that has been institutionalized with the advancement of science and technology. Here, the use of technology provides benefit, but it diminishes and interferes with the human characteristics of people. The use of machines dulls creativity. Machines are certainly very useful. However, they lead people to think in narrow patterns. The patterns imposed on people necessitate standardization (Bolay 2017, 13).

The place of the human being in the organization has been tried to be constructed according to the way decisions are made. Decisions made with an objective and rational mind have resulted in communities being seen as machine-like systems. According to Starbuck (2003), people act rationally and do not see value in making different choices. Systems that function like machines have limited the freedom of choice and control of humans. If there is a rational path,

that path does not contain many alternatives, it is unique. The universe is also seen as a whole of systems that work smoothly (Sıgır 2012, 44).

According to Schwartz and Ogilug (1979), rational thinking is addressed within a systematic thought attributed to Newtonian physics. This thinking is based on the principles of objectivity, causality and mechanical universe. According to the principle of objectivity, events in the universe should be understood through reason. Here, the observed and observer boundaries are sharply separated. In causality, there is a causal relationship between the parts. According to the principle of mechanicalness, the entire functioning of the universe resembles a machine (Bakoglu Deliorman & Bahar 2009, 31). The Newtonian paradigm is summarized as predicting, explaining and controlling managerial behavior. Within this paradigm, human behavior is predicted and controlled (Yasar & Ozdemir 2015, 1).

According to Newtonian physics, the basis of social sciences is explained by the cosmology of classical mechanics. This situation is identified with the great machine. Every event that happens in the universe has a natural and predictable effective cause. The operation of this machine is specific. It is not affected by any human action or intervention and is objective for everyone (Eidlin 2015, 4). The relationship between Newtonian physics and the mechanicalness of organizations also stems from this. The best organizational structure, like a key that does not change from person to person but opens every door, exists within this system. The best organizational structures based on efficiency must be established (Değirmenci & Utku 2000, 78).

It is a possible necessity for businesses operating in a certain system to revise their management techniques and approaches in accordance with the evolving conditions of the day. Regardless of the developments and the type of business, the principle that it has to comply with is the principle of efficiency. All activities are designed in line with this principle, where the human being, a production factor, is the most important element (Kocel 2013, 210). Due to the nature of the business, it is necessary to be efficient. The focal point is the organization itself. In addition, all studies have been designed around the problem of how to create the best organizational structure. As a result, mechanical organizational structures have emerged. This organization has not given importance to humans and has not made them a part of the model (Ibid, 227). The human being here is rational and an extension of the machine (Kalemci Tuzun 2012, 22). In this

structure, it is expected to behave like a machine (robot). This robot should not reflect its personal problems on its work, and a sharp distinction is expected between its work and its other life (Kocel 2013, 227). In interpersonal relationships within the organization, personal friendship, camaraderie and the subjective and emotional relationships that arise from these should be avoided (Eren 2013, 29). According to Luthans (1981), based on the doctrines of Max Weber, an employee should work only in accordance with the principles of the level he is at, rationally, without showing any anger or excessive desire, and without developing an emotional bond (Kocel 2013, 226).

The role of the human being, which is seen as a cog in the machine in classical organizational theories, has continued to evolve within the framework of paradigms related to production and even more production. Neoclassical approaches have revealed that the human being cannot act only like a machine, that he also has a soul, and that he is an individual who fulfills his responsibilities within an environment. It has been stated that it is necessary to address the physical environment with his emotions and environment. It is seen that the human being, who is the subject of paradigm changes in system, situationality and postmodern approaches, has transformed from a machine that physically produces to an object that buys and is desired to consume more (Urgan 2019, 335).

It can be stated that human-specific approaches have not changed much from classical organizational structures to post-modern organizational structures. In classical organizational structures, the structure referred to as modern organizations is focused on pressure and control. When it comes to today's post-modern structures, the practices applied seem to liberate employees, but on the contrary, they turn them into objects. In other words, liberation, humanization or empowerment is the objectification of the individual's body and mind and turning them into a commodity that can be manipulated. In addition, the power created on employees is carried out through personnel management and interdisciplinary organizational behavior information systems. Personnel management and organizational behavior provide discipline by developing objective, reliable and accurate measurement systems for individual performance evaluation, collecting and storing data. In this way, the individual self is objectified (Yıldırım 2010, 386-387).

The principle adopted by classical management is how to use the human element more effectively in addition to machines by dividing

the work into the smallest pieces with technical-detailed work design and performance evaluation systems and by performing specialized work (Donmez & Gokdemir 2023, 47). So much so that a hundred years ago, a furnace shovel was measured according to its coal-taking capacity. The movements of the individual who will use this shovel were modeled like a robot. Thus, it was objectified as a production factor. When we look at today's projection, there is an objectified human model whose movements are tried to be calculated as a body and brain, which is tried to be expressed with technological developments, changing working systems and related disciplines. This corresponds to the human who has turned into the machine itself.

Mechanized human

The object-subject problem arises in the human being who is exposed to the bombardment of advertisements that ideal happiness can be achieved through technological consumption. The subject must have an object and thus experience the pleasure of consumption. Technology prepares the ground for individual consumption and sometimes triggers it (Uylaş Aksu & Işıklı 2019, 65). In this context, the human being, reduced to positive ideologies within a rationality, becomes a mass. The subject of the human being disappears within this mass (Bolay 2017, 82). Starting from this point, Martin Heidegger draws attention to the problems of the connection between technology and the human being. According to Heidegger, technology generally distances the existence of the human being and, in particular, people from their own authentic existence. It objectifies and instrumentalizes (Uylas Aksu & Isıklı 2019, 57).

Problems that arise in the changes that occur with technology are tried to be solved with abstract reasoning skills. There are difficulties in solving today's multivariable problems. The problems that arise are tried to be solved by machines such as computers. Some theorems have been proven by computers. Since these proofs are based on numerous or complicated substructures, there is a situation that is out of human control. Therefore, a type of person emerges who cannot keep up with the machines he has built (Strogatz 2007, 140).

Although people are tried to be reduced to objectivity, their happiness is shaped by their expectations rather than objective conditions. Even if the conditions of people who are not satisfied with their conditions are corrected, the level of their expectations changes. Therefore, their satisfaction levels do not continue in the same way

(Harari 2018, 54). The change in their positions with the increase in expectations can create chaos in rapid changes. A person who has difficulty perceiving changes may feel like he/she is stuck in narrow patterns. Thus, an individual who cannot predict the long-term statistical behavior of complex systems does not know what to do. This problematic area is being tried to be solved by computers, and complex systems are being tried to be understood with reasonably intelligent computers (Strogatz 2007, 139).

It is seen that with the advancement of technology, it is not very successful in reducing the stress experienced by people. Many inventions that save people time have been developed and continue to be developed. These developments carry the expectations about the work to be done in a conventional way to another level. This level always continues to increase. New material luxuries are created. Then the base line of the understanding of gain is redefined. Many people live a life style full of free time, and they are engaged in endless activities about which breakfast cereal, plastic surgery, new model car or new model spouse will make people happy (Saposky 2007, 125). The reflection of the effort exerted to reach these changing demand levels is also seen in organizations. Competition, desire for growth and the drive to make profit are the main goals of a business. These goals confront the working individual with systems that will make them a little more difficult, which can cause problems in their work-life balance (Urgan & Cetindere Filiz 2023).

With technological changes, the necessity of adapting to the systems of virtual enterprises or hybrid working systems arises (Urgan & Erdogan 2023, 258; Urgan & Yalçın 2024, 102). These systems are also expressed with flexibility. Again, lean production systems are considered within the framework of flexibility. In these models, flexibility is basically achieved by combining work organization methods such as new technologies, subcontractors, informalization, increasing production speed, and extending working hours. In the models, the components of the production process need to be continuously reduced in rotation. More work is given to fewer employees. This reduction is primarily aimed at labor. It can be expressed as the current projection of the working systems of Taylor, the theorist of rational working systems from 100 years ago (Özoğlu 2002, 4). As a characteristic example, in Japan, there are people working 60 hours or more per week, which constitutes approximately 12% of the employees (Iwasaki et al. 2006, 537). These working

systems and sociocultural reasons require the gradual extension of daily shifts. This situation corresponds to a workload that is much more than a person can handle, and the work-life balance of the individual working in this system gradually deteriorates. Very serious diseases can be seen in employees who cannot keep up with the working systems physically and psychologically, and even deaths occur (Herbig & Palumbo 1994; Asgari et al. 2017; Iwasaki et al. 2006). Based on this, it is expected that an employee can evaluate the situations that may put his/her mental and physical health at risk and direct his/her own life accordingly. However, within the framework of technological changes, the problematic area in foreseeing and taking precautions for all the changes that the individual has to keep up with and working systems is growing.

From another perspective, according to Isıklı and Küçükvardar (2017, 29), the situation of technology affecting people in all areas of working life emerges in different dimensions. Electronic devices that contain a simple or complex algorithm are not passive levers, objects or tools in the hands of people. The device replaces the tool, technology replaces the technique, and in this case, the concept of human cannot be mentioned. Here, the person turns into a “user”. Technology surrounds and penetrates life, and the person gains a virtual or permanent status at the basis of life. From this point on, a non-essential need is perceived as mandatory (Uylas Aksu & Isıklı 2019, 59).

The widespread technological work systems can create addictive technological behaviors. Just as the physical misuse of digital work devices causes posture disorders in the human body, addiction to technology leads to psychological disorders. This important problem arises due to the strong correlation between addiction to technology and psychiatric disorders. In this context, the fact that employees can be reached at all times and wherever they are in professional business life turns into a concern about encountering problems in organizations. Unlimited internet access on smartphones certainly offers solutions to many problems. However, it triggers addictive behaviors and can lead to psychological disorders such as attention deficit, anxiety and depression (Goncalves et al. 2022).

People’s dependence on technology has been tried to be addressed with Moore’s law, technological determinism and technological singularity approaches (Uylaş Aksu & Işıklı 2019, 60). According to Moore’s law, the number of “transistors per chip”, which constitutes

the minimum cost per transistor, increases approximately twofold. Thus, the number of technology uses increases exponentially (Ozmen & Gunay 2019, 1504). According to Vinge (2017), technological singularity occurs in response to technological developments becoming uncontrollable by human mental capacity (Çagatay 2019, 332). In technological determinism, developing processes occur outside the will of individuals and external technological conditions are binding (Berkson 2020, 74).

Based on all these, the controllability problem of the connection between humans and technology is becoming more and more apparent. With this interaction, people are constantly faced with disturbing questions. What makes a being “human” in the context of mechanization? What is being superhuman? What changes are acceptable for humanity? Is it ethical to play with human life through mechanization? Questions such as these gain importance (Brooks 2007, 214).

Technology isolates people from their bodies and social environments. A human typology has emerged that is constantly occupied with their smartphones and computers. Objects uploaded to social media platforms are severing people’s connection with themselves. Individuals’ experiences are constructed and interpreted based on how others perceive them. People who distance themselves from their bodies, emotions, and physical environments face confusion and alienation. It becomes difficult for people who live separately from their bodies and become alienated to be happy (Harari 2018, 94).

According to Seeman (1959), alienation is caused by social relationship problems between stakeholders in activities within the organization. Dissatisfactions arising from these relationships again alienate them from each other. Alienated labor triggers mass problems (Urgan et al. 2020, 18). The alienated individual feels powerless (Blauner 1964), believes that he lives a meaningless life (Yener, 2004), is unruly (Pars, 1982) and feels isolated (Tutar 2010). Then, he enters a process in which he is convinced that no value is attributed to him (Fettahlioglu 2006).

Alienation can also occur with exposure to too much human interaction. It is assumed that an average person cannot be intimate with more than 150 people. One can be affiliated with different groups. However, getting close to one group results in losing another. Closeness is created by establishing online connections with individuals in different and remote corners of the world. This

connection cannot be shown to the immediate environment. Thus, the individual becomes alienated from the environment formed by the people he/she actually needs and will physically need (Harari 2018, 95).

Platforms created with online networks and social media perceive people as audiovisual animals consisting of ten fingers, a screen and a pair of eyes and a pair of ears connected to a credit card. The online algorithms here are forming in a way that knows no bounds with technology. Augmented reality is being created through devices and online-offline games. Deep biometric sensors and interfaces that are being created between the brain and the computer are aimed at overcoming the boundary between the electronic machine and the organic body and truly penetrating into the human being. Thus, the entire body of the human being can be directed (Ibid, 97).

Technological tools, with their personalized experiences and instant gratification features, allow individuals to stay on digital platforms longer. This process physiologically triggers dopamine secretion and puts people in a cycle. Thus, the connection with the physical world is broken. Negativities emerge with excessive attachment at an emotional or cognitive level (Tanhan et al. 2025, 237).

Conclusion

In this study, the place of the individual in the organization is considered as a production factor. Social sciences, which have been affected by the paradigms formed from Newtonian physics to today's quantum approaches, and therefore the situation of the person in the organization, have been tried to be revealed with a philosophical pattern. The situation in mechanical and organic organizational structures formed by the triggering of technological developments has been mentioned. The mechanical worldview, based on Newtonian physics, has shaped the paradigms in social sciences. Here, predictability is at the forefront. However, the dynamics of quantum and chaos theories, uncertainty, unpredictability and generally the situations where causality cannot be clearly revealed with the changing socio-economic, political, technological and environmental changes of the day have affected social sciences, especially organizations and therefore people (Senyilmaz 2012).

Richard Feynman actually states that the human mind is at a level where it can understand the equations of the qualitative content in changes and produce a solution accordingly. However, it is seen that

this has not been fully achieved today. There is a problem of a human type that cannot keep up with the machines it has built. The progress of non-linear dynamics continues. In fact, multivariable problems reveal more chaotic situations (Strogatz 2007). Within the framework of the paradigms expressed, the role of the human, who is the cog of the machine, as a factor of production, is to be dependent on the motivation to keep up with systems such as flexible working systems and to transform into the machine itself. With the change in science and technology, the motivation of organizations to survive, make profit and keep up with competition triggers this situation and transforms it into a certain systematic. This systematic requires a dependent human type that will serve the organization with its brain, physique and all its cells.

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