A. William McVey
Adler–Aquinas Institute
Manitou Springs, CO, USA

THOMISTIC SCIENTIFIC LEADERSHIP
AND COMMON SENSE TRIAD OF ORGANIZATIONAL HARMONY

Organizational Harmony of the One and the Many

I want to address initially the first topic of Thomistic organizational harmony with a little history about how I became a born again Thomist. I had originally been educated in Thomistic philosophy in a traditional Catholic seminary. It was taught primarily as a preparation for Catholic theology. For the greater part, it was a process of learning in a sequential and structured format the language and definitions of Thomistic philosophy, e.g., definitions of substance, prime matter, genus, species, etc. I cannot say that it was an introduction to the nature of wondering about the organization and aim of life; it was more than anything an elementary introduction into scholastic logic. After Vatican II and a few years of graduate studies in ethics at a secular university, I left any active pursuit of Thomistic study. I moved into the business world in marketing and sales positions, building a modest career. Eventually, I became the CEO of a small manufacturing engineering consulting firm. Although I was not an engineer, I was hired by the owners because of my business development skills.

I enjoyed the company because I was learning about manufacturing and product development. The company also had a quality management division, and it proved a promising profit center. I felt rather comfortable in the domain of statistical process control. Looking back, I believe it was the manufacturing environment that brought me back to my unconscious memories of Aristotle and Aquinas. Manufacturing is an extremely sensible place where one hears the sounds of machines, drills, the odors of fuels,
and the movement of parts. It is a place where one feels all the pieces fitting together. It is not a place of abstract ideas as much as a place where all pieces must fit together well.

It was the time of the late seventies and early eighties, when America was losing badly in the world of manufacturing. We were hit hard by Japan’s sudden amazing mastery of total quality management, especially in the automotive industry. American quality control had become outdated in light of Japanese competition, and panic had set in big time. Of course, it provided a promising opportunity for consulting firms such as Jensen Engineering. There were various schools of quality control, but our firm and engineers were disciples of W. Edwards Deming. It was Deming who had gone to Japan and introduced them to quality management. Basically, he introduced them to the work of Walter A. Shewart in statistical methods and quality control.¹ As a tribute to Deming, the Japanese to this day award the Deming Prize medal of quality to companies of excellence.

Consequently, I attended a course at NYU department of statistics given by Deming on Statistical Process Control. I went somewhat apprehensively because I was not a statistician, but to my surprise Deming spent much of the time lecturing on variation and a theory of knowledge. In one of the sessions, an associate gave a lecture on Deming and the rediscovery of Aristotelian causation. Immediately I sat up because there was something going on much more than just statistical methods of measurement. I was introduced to Deming’s philosophy of management, and it was really a philosophy of practical knowledge based fundamentally on Aristotelian causation, i.e., material, formal, efficient and final causes.

Primarily, Deming called for a return to the Aristotelian principle of teleology in the management of any organization dedicated to the satisfaction of the end user of a product, good or service. The founder of the quality movement held emphatically to two Aristotelian principles. One, the relation of parts to whole in organizational structures is essentially teleological since an organization has machinery, manpower, material and methods in order to perform the functions for which they are designed (end user satisfaction). Two, mechanical efficiency and teleological purpose must be continuously reconciled throughout the organization. It is the task of management to optimize the organization by maintaining the mutual compatibility of these two forces.

Based on the relation of part to whole and teleological purpose, Deming defines business from the perspective of an interactive and interdependent system, and it is here that he begins to sound like a Thomist.

A system must create something of value, in other words, results, the intended results, along with consideration of recipients and of cost, mould the aim of the system. It is thus management’s task to determine those aims, to manage the whole organization toward accomplishment of those aims. It is important that an aim never be defined in terms of a specific activity or method. It must always relate to a better life for everyone.\(^2\)

Deming was a devout Anglican who enjoyed discussing philosophy. As a result, I entered into correspondence with him and discovered that he was a dedicated disciple of Clarence Irvine Lewis, a Conceptual Pragmatist. However, he often quoted St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 12: 14–21, as an example of a system, “A body is not one single organ, but many, etc.” Deming unconsciously falls back to the Greek and Thomistic concern of the One and the Many.

Deming would get upset when he was referred to as the founder of Total Quality Management. Although he presented his famous 14 points of management, he rejected all attempts at constructing a system of management based on technique. The heart and mind of Deming’s vision for transformation of an organization and American industry is in chapters three and four of *The new Economics for Industry, Government, Education, A System of Profound Knowledge*.

What is a system? A system is a network of interdependent components that work together to accomplish the aim of the system. The system must have an aim. Without an aim there is no system. The aim of the system must be clear to everyone in the system. The aim must include plans for the future . . . a system must be managed. It will not manage itself. Left to themselves in the Western world, components become selfish, competitive, independent profit centers and thus destroy the system.\(^3\)


\(^3\) Id.
Deming’s Frustration and His Need for a Thomistic Metaphysics

Deming challenged Western business and industrial education as being overly dedicated to accounting, quantitative work measurement, cost/benefit analysis, administrative techniques and human resource policies. He was a mathematical physicist who suggested that a science or liberal arts education was the best preparation for the management of an organization. He became frustrated with business and government leadership inability to grasp the need for a new Western understanding of an organization.

I believe that he would have appreciated the thinking of Thomistic scholars like Charles Bonaventure Crowley, John Deely and especially Peter Redpath who writes,

Like Aristotle, St. Thomas maintained that every division of science starts with the evident acceptance of the existence of what, today, we would call “operational organizations” or “operational systems.” Unlike other sciences that study one species, or “system” of operational organization to understand its distinctive kind (genus) of organization and its specific principles of operation (species), metaphysics studies all genera and species of organizations in an attempt to discover what are the universal organizational and operational principles that exist in any and every genus or species of organization.4

I suggest that Deming was in need of a born again Thomistic philosophy of organizational leadership and harmony. I am using the terminology born again in order to clearly differentiate the efforts in Thomistic thinking regarding organizational harmony from neo-Thomism. Born again Thomism simply holds that Thomistic thinking is not about logic; rather, it is a philosophy about the habit of wonder. Thomas was not writing about a logic as much as he was wondering about the organizational harmony of God’s universe and human interactive participation in the wholeness of a mind independent reality of organizational networks.

Having been guided for several months in Thomistic philosophy by Peter Redpath, I propose a born again Thomism where we look upon Thomas as an organizational genius. Furthermore, this organizational genius of

---

4 Peter A. Redpath, One and The Many (Graduate Course Transcript 2014), 110.
Thomas is most timely to a postmodern culture where philosophical and management focus is driven by existing in a dynamic information field. Peter Redpath has suggested a Thomistic communication network of principles.

1) “Principles of instrumentalizing (effecting, communicating, establishing) a relation (enabling means, circumstances that include somewhat separately-existing beings, conditions, and opportunity) must precede principles of relation (communion) that generate an actual relation.” I would apply this principle as meaning that an organization must have a leading team of experts possessing knowledge of the market and industry, with the necessary resources and strong vision. It is a matter of the right people, with the right idea, at the right time, with the right vision and the right resources, etc.

2) “Principles of relation having the right qualities in those separately existing beings, overcoming resistance and imparting receptivity (communication networks) must precede principles of unity that can actually establish unity.” If the leaders of an organization do not have the ability to communicate and reach intellectual, emotional and operational harmony, the organization will not achieve a state of optimization. In order for an organization to have harmony, there is no place for self-serving prima donnas and organizational silos.

3) “Principles of instrumentalizing unity (having the right tools, enabling means, circumstances, conditions relating) must precede principles of unity (actually overcoming resistance and imparting receptivity to being related (communicating with each other as a unit), having the right tools to establish unity must precede principles that establish an actual relation of parts into a whole.” Executives, managers and workers must be able to use operational tools such as flow charts, statistical process controls, financial instruments and marketing and sales forecasting, etc., to maintain optimal organizational harmony.

4) “Principles of establishing unity (a causal unit, genus, communication network, an existing thing) must precede principles of instrumentalizing operational relations (enabling means, circumstances for communicating action that include conditions and opportunity for action and a being capable of being qualified to act) must precede principles (quantities and qualities) of action (species, internal delivery system for communicating action: organizational departments or divisions, numerical divisions (to number is to divide and unify a smaller plurality from a larger one of an organization into departments, divisions).”
A communication network is far more than having a computer system, advanced operational processes, financial and metric software, inventory control, etc. It is the continual interpretation of information. “Information is not knowledge. To put it another way, information, no matter how complete and speedy, is not knowledge. Knowledge has a temporal spread. Knowledge comes from theory. Without theory, there is no way to use the information that comes to us on the instant.”\(^5\) There must be an executive level team that creates a knowledge based communication network.

5) “Principles of further instrumentalization of relation by an organizational leader through a strategic plan must precede principles of further qualification of an intrinsic, or departmental delivery system into a qualified internal delivery unit.” A plan is a dynamic instrument that is comprised of feed forward knowledge, i.e., the organization measures where it is going over what period of time and feedback, i.e., what measurements report success or failure of hitting strategic goals and objectives. In this dynamic planning process there must be intense participation from a hierarchy of agents up to senior executive levels and directors.

6) “Principles of qualification of departmental, divisional units (cementing relations among departments through communication of unity, single mindedness of purpose) initiated by departmental heads through communication networks established by them within their divisions of proper tactics (through intrinsic accidents of quantity and quality) must precede transformation of departments, divisions, into an internal organizational delivery system.”

7) “Principle of instrumentalization of tactical operations of an internal delivery system (through intrinsic and extrinsic accidents, like qualified departments and external enabling means existing between them like the existence of transportation and vocal communication network, must precede relations with tactical operations of external organizations to establish an external delivery system for cooperative generation of a product or service that effects an organizational chief aim.”\(^6\)

In a global information environment, organizations, especially business, exist in extremely challenging information fields that call for continuous adaptation. A metaphor about the nature of organizational leadership best serves to describe this contemporary reality.

---


Let us take the example of the Oracle yacht in the American Cup. This competitive world cup yacht racing is comprised of a well-trained crew with a leader helmsman, and the use of a finely engineered catamaran and advanced competitive research using Oracle technology, such as radar tracking and laser range analysis of competitors. The catamaran has 300 built-in sensors that allow for constant and rapid decision-making throughout the race. It is a sophisticated communication network with a skipper and crew who must exist, judge and move as a team driven by a clear common aim, to win. In the American Cup race the technology faces an “independent of mind” reality. It is the awareness that organization of the American team and the yacht must begin with a series of sequential organizational principles long before the race begins. It is Thomistic thinking, however, that clearly identifies the need for a common aim shared by all the team, the support engineering and the competitive research and the necessity of a communication network for the purpose of game strategy and real-time decision making. It is a communication system totally designed to support the team’s commitment to an organizational philosophy of the one and the many and victory.

Organizational Harmony of Hope, Habit and a Psychology of Power

I am careful when I talk about organizational harmony and leadership not to present Thomistic philosophy as a system of organizational management. As much as Thomistic thinking is essential to management harmony, it is not a systems theory of management. Primarily, I am careful about not falling into this trap because organizational harmony is about the leadership of persons who must be motivated, educated and habituated to a common aim. Systems theory and various off-springs such as management complexity and chaos theory, management by objectives, ISO 9000, six sigma are about defined ideas, procedures and processes. Besides these types of engineering systems there are human resource, accounting, financial, employee equity systems etc. All these systems are fundamentally based on ideas about measurable interactions of components, units and work force for optimal output. Much of this systems approach is essential to efficient management, but the Thomist is basically concerned about the nature and practice of the intellectual and moral nature of the leader and his team in an organization.
St. Thomas’s teaching is chiefly about existential judgments, not about ideas. The emotions are crucial in all forms of judging and reasoning, judging to forming every emotion. In fact, we can have no emotion without forming judgments related to ideas. St. Thomas considered business activity in the highest form to be a practical or productive science. He would view any kind of Modern Corporation in the same way. Like every practical activity, it starts in wonder. Wonder is an activity moving away from the emotion of fear through hope to escape from fear. Since all art, science, philosophy starts in wonder, it starts in total conviction, or hope of being able to satisfy a desire, ending the desire in intellectual, volitional and emotional satisfaction. A human aim, or end, is simply a hope or totally conviction-filled desire. The object of that hope or conviction is the final act that stops the movement of desire, puts it to rest, and satisfies it. Good leaders lead by instilling conviction filled, hope filled friendship, desire in a multitude: creating professional friendships.

A great example of this style of leadership is Southwest Airlines grounded on the personalism of the founder Herb Kellerman as described in the book *Nuts! Southwest Airlines’ Recipe for Business and Personal Success* by Kevin Freiburg and Jackie Freiburg, I suggest that this book is a must read on the nature of leadership and organizational harmony. Colleen Barrett, one the original founders, describes Southwest as an organization grounded on a philosophy of common sense:

Let common sense prevail. Southwest employees know from history that when they use common sense to do what they think is right, the company will support them. “We never jump on employees for leaning too far in the direction of the customer. They have to know that we stand behind them, and we do. The only time we come down on them pretty hard is when they fail to use common sense. Common sense may sound easy enough, but it’s a hard thing to define. When we say we are going to be an on-time airline and we are not holding planes for anybody, period, we have to use good judgment. We once had a situation where we slammed the door to a jet way because we wanted to push the plane on time. Fine. But when the passenger coming down the ramp is a paraplegic and can be seen by the opera-

---

tions agent in the jet way and has to sit in a wheelchair for four and a half hours for the next flight—that’s not common sense.\(^8\)

From the earliest days, Southwest was founded as an organization where employees are seen as persons capable of intellectual wonder and a willingness to learn. Herb Kelleher and Colleen Barrett founders of Southwest were intensely inquisitive. Kelleher is a student of life and a voracious reader who digs into issues to understand them thoroughly. Southwest senior officers and all employees at all levels are seen as learners capable of developing the habit of wonder. The organization is known for its Southwest University for People; it is a multitiered learning facility staffed by the Employee Learning and Development Department. Its primary mission is to equip employees to practice the kind of leadership that Southwest Airlines expects.

A Thomist is driven by the importance of living and organizing life by means of intellectual and moral habits. An excellent and concise explanation of the Thomistic importance of intellectual and moral habit is in a small book by Curtis L. Hancock, *Recovering A Catholic Philosophy of Elementary Education*. He writes, “Good individual habits (virtues) are crucial to us because healthy human life is largely a matter of relating means and ends. Virtues are means toward perfecting our human nature and life.” I should like to change this to a description of organizational habit, i.e., habits (virtues) are crucial to healthy and successful organizational life because they are necessary to the relationship of the means and end of the organization more so in the long run more than operational and administrative procedures.\(^9\)

For example, Herb Kelleher has dedicated his leadership of Southwest as grounded on the greatest source of leadership and harmony, the virtuous habit of love. Kelleher’s ethical leadership principle is

> if you are careful about the hiring loving people, it should come as no surprise that acts of love and generosity will naturally spill out of them. It should come as no surprise that when you get enough peo-

---


ple with these attributes in the same company, a corporate character is created that practices love as a way of doing business.\textsuperscript{10}

At Southwest love is defined by example and education for the purpose of becoming an organizational habit. I use the concept of habit because it is not an organizational process. In the Thomistic sense, a habit is part of the organizational system, as Hancock defines the virtue and practice of habit,

One scholar has called habits ‘operational structures,’ a phrase at once that expresses that habits exercise powers toward action and yet do so in a way that involves ease, constancy and purpose. As an acquired operational tendency, a habit is not identical with knowledge or appetite. For we can know things without needing skill to do so, and we can desire things in a random and unproductive way. Nor is a habit identical with the activity toward which it is directed, for we retain our acquired abilities even when we are not performing those actions at a given moment . . . Consequently, a habit is related to a power by giving it a limiting qualitative ability and aim (an operational, determinate structure, as it were) and is related to an activity by enabling it to occur quickly and with comparative ease and proficiency. In this light, we see that habit actuates (by giving structure or form) a power within definite limits, while an activity actuates a habit. Accordingly, a habit is related to a power as act to potency; a habit is related to an activity as potency to act.\textsuperscript{11}

From the perspective of a Thomist, employees at any level of the organization are respected for their ability to achieve excellence in their organizational capacity because faculties of intellect and will are challenged, recognized, affirmed and contribute to the shared common aim. Workers are not programmable robotic automata, rather they are intellectual and moral persons who are capable of making wise existential judgments for the betterment of the customer, the organization and fellow employees.

Through Southwest Airlines, we learn that ethics is not an interesting component in leadership training. At a company like Southwest, motivational psychology, ethics and operational behavior are all one and the

\textsuperscript{10} Freiburg, Freiburg, \textit{Nuts}.
\textsuperscript{11} Hancock, \textit{Recovering A Catholic Philosophy of Elementary Education}, 82–83.
same. It is really an exercise in the rational psychology of Thomas that is best understood as a power psychology. Ethics and Organizational leadership are one and the same reality. Redpath’s call to understand the treatment of moral wisdom in terms of a power psychology is truly one of the most critical Thomistic contributions to understanding of organizational leadership.

To us the reality of ethics rests upon the reality of a power psychology. Ethics appears to us to be misunderstood today, not because there is anything unreal about ethics, but because we have been trying to observe this subject from the wrong perspective. In order for us to re-establish the worth of this subject, we think it is necessary for us to appreciate, once again, in the history of ethics the need for a power psychology . . . how can moral activity belong to human beings, unless it arises from a human power? Surely, it cannot. There simply seems to us to be no way to establish the existence of a reality like moral activity without a power psychology.\(^\text{12}\)

In a sense for a Thomist, the concepts of organizational harmony, ethics and leadership are basically the same. Thomistic philosophy holds that it is by means of a power psychology (ethical leadership) that an organization empowers workers at all levels to move continuously towards a common aim.

Over the past several months as I have been reading Thomistic philosophy, especially Peter Redpath, I began to speak with some business executives and successful entrepreneurs about the nature of organizational leadership. I knew the individuals personally, and I respected them as successful business leaders and good people with deep ethical values. I simply asked them to take a little time and give me their three characteristics of a good leader.

One of the individuals is a Senior Vice President with a large hotel-resort corporation. He is the director of human resources and is responsible for the hiring and training of approximately 15,000 employees a year. He is one of the top human resource executives in the country. He is also a devout evangelical Christian with a dedicated life of biblical study, daily prayer, and worship and a focused family man. His three characteristics

proved very helpful in combining the sense of the Thomistic principles of
the one and the many, wonder and power psychology.

The characteristics of a good leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Create authentic connections with others:</th>
<th>2. Think ahead:</th>
<th>3. Develop self and others:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Inspire trust and manage expectations of stakeholders.</td>
<td>a) Anticipate changing dynamics which can happen at lightning speed.</td>
<td>a) Understand one’s own strengths and weaknesses, constantly seeking to improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Listen to others and develop a shared understanding.</td>
<td>b) Synthesize and simplify complexity to solve for the essence.</td>
<td>b) Unlock potential in others and help them succeed according to their own strengths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Recognize interdependence and connect the dots to ensure success.</td>
<td>c) Experiment, fail often and yet moving towards a goal and doing it quickly.</td>
<td>c) Be surrounded by others who are more talented to raise one’s own game.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Practical Organizational Harmony

Finally, I would like to conclude with a question that I gave Doctor Redpath some months ago that made my rediscovery of Thomism tremendously exciting. It was when I began to realize that Thomistic philosophy is about how human life fits together. As a result, I sent this question to Doctor Redpath.

I have a grandson Joshua who is now seven years old. Since he was a little child, he has always shown a mechanical interest, inclination and aptitude. He is extremely unlike his grandfather who is a mechanical cretin. Yet when he was about four years old, I would make an effort to build things with him with Lego blocks. I seem to have a suitable amount of mechanical dexterity for this technology.

Let’s say, for example, that Joshua and I want to build a house together, and there are no Lego blocks available. Both Joshua and his grandfather have an idea of a house, i.e., we essentially agree on the essential nature of a house. Since we have to build the house, it needs some form, i.e., the size, walls, a roof, a door and a window. We will need material to build the house, so we decide to use paper, and we want thick paper. We
will need glue and scissors to cut the paper (machinery). We will conduct rounds of testing the material and methods of gluing. We will be attempting to compose an idea out of parts.

Soon, my grandson will say, “Grandpa, this is not working! Let’s get the Lego blocks.” It is here that I think my four year old grandson becomes an Organizational Thomist. He is discovering, as Redpath teaches, “parts that cannot be intelligibly united.” The thin paper does not have the necessary viscosity; we have “parts that cannot coexist in a nature.”

Therefore, we get the Lego blocks, and we go into action. These blocks (parts) work well together. There is no contradiction, and it becomes easy for Joshua and Grandpa to exchange design concepts, go into action, try this and that, and mutually build a house that is intelligibly united.

Consequently, it seems the Joshua and Grandpa have learned something about the principle of contradiction and organization. In the real world of construction and organization some courses of action are better than others. In other words, our successful organizational actions show that we have beliefs and habits that conform to the Principle of Non Contradiction (PNC Organizational Development).

My Question

Peter, am I getting a proper understanding of your teaching on non-contradiction (PNC)? I would like to call it the basic principle of organizational development. It is important because all present academic approaches to organizational development is grounded on nominalism, information theory and Kantian business ethics.

The Answer

Yes, you are getting a proper understanding of what I am saying. In recently reviewing St. Thomas and Aristotle’s teaching about unity, from which they partly derive their teaching about non contradiction, they note that we do not arrive at our understanding of unity, or indivisibility, from quantity alone. They say we get it from awareness related to the qualitative indivisibility of a continuum body, to the difficulty we experience breaking some united whole. Like a piece of wood apart. Aristotle and the ancient Greeks, in general, identify unity as a cause existing within a multitude that made the unity unbreakable . . . Aristotle and St. Thomas add that contradiction is a kind of negation, and negation is a kind of privation. We get the idea of privation (resistance to receptivity within the subject)
from an analogous extension of the idea of unity. They think of privation as a principle, a cause of resistance within a potency to the existence of some difference. Hence privation is a kind of unity working as a principle, a cause of opposition.

Aristotle claims that 4 kinds of opposition exist: privation and possession, contradiction, contrariety, and relation. In a way, all 4 are species of privation and possession opposition. Contradictory opposites are the differences that totally resist co-existence, cannot be unities, and cannot enter into organization.

Contrary opposites are extreme differences generated out of a common cause of unity, or principle consisting of opposite extremes of privation and possession of a generic (organizational unity). They divide an organizational unity into species, departments, and divisions, unequally possessing the organizational unity (like a 5-star general and a private).¹³

I have concluded with this dialogue with the Thomistic philosopher Peter Redpath because it speaks most directly to my years in leadership positions in business and the church, i.e., moving members of an organization with passion and dedication to a common aim. The main challenge in this unremitting attempt to achieve that goal is the blending together of opposing forces (personalities, personal agendas, talents, emotions, protection of turf, etc.) for the common aim.

Therefore, I will conclude with a risky over-exaggeration of what Thomistic organizational leadership is all about. It is a matter of constantly getting all the pieces to fit together in a very mind independent world where the leader must find the natural unity, the natural harmony, and intellectually, emotionally and morally blend the forces around for a common aim. This is a foundational principle of common sense philosophy and leadership. It is the “desire to overcome the apparent contradiction that arises from an unshakable conviction about (1) the reliability of our human knowing faculties and (2) the unity of truth (that some true part/whole organization exists in things and human beings can know this truth through an analogous operation, organization, of true judgment in and through the reliable human knowing faculties). This conviction is what Adler and most Thomists, Aristotelians, are groping after in their use of the phrase “common sense.” It is the principle of common sense and first principle of all

---

¹³ Peter A. Redpath, Missive, 2014.
philosophy for all time and an essential principle of European civilization!“

THOMISTIC SCIENTIFIC LEADERSHIP
AND COMMON SENSE TRIAD OF ORGANIZATIONAL HARMONY

SUMMARY

This paper examines the nature of organizational leadership from the perspective of common sense principles. The principles are established by means of a Thomistic metaphysics of the One and the Many, i.e., the Thomistic teaching of the opposition between Unity and Multiplicity. It is this Thomistic metaphysical philosophical science that studies the distinct kind (genus) of an organization and its specific common sense principles of organizational leadership. This common sense leadership is a harmonious blending of psychology, ethics and operational behavior.

KEYWORDS: one and the many, communication network, organization teleological purpose, psychology of power, virtuous habits, characteristics of a good leader, contrary opposites.