The Active Society Revisited

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Chapter 6

The Actively Drifting Society[1]

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Amitai Etzioni's aim in writing *The Active Society* is a venerable one that has been with sociology since the beginning. In it he attempts to lay out the basic principles by which we might build the "good society," in no small part through the resources that social science has to offer. As such, the book may also be seen as something of an argument for the value and salience of the social science disciplines. His treatment is also nothing if not ambitious and thorough. In this respect, Etzioni puts himself in the tradition of thinkers, running all the way back through St. Simon and Comte, who wished to see social science put on the societal throne as the keepers of intelligently designed collective action. Also in line with his sociological ancestors, however, Etzioni's proposals come up short as a solution to the problem of the "good society." In schematic form, his argument is relatively simple: use the information and knowledge-generating capacity of "postmodern" (post-WW II) society to devise and implement plans that allow a society to meet its goals. *In principle*, it should be possible for groups to figure out what they want and plan accordingly to achieve those wants. *In practice*, however, the ideals become very difficult to execute.

In this paper I argue, that getting a grasp of the difficulties lies in evaluating the arguments in light of contemporary organizational theory. Etzioni began with a background in organizational sociology,[2] and organizational theory of the 1950s and 1960s was obviously influential in much of his argument. Furthermore, formal organizations as social actors play a central role in his plan for an Active

Society.[3] It is my contention that if we turn the contemporary lens of organizational theory onto the proposal for the Active Society, it becomes clear that Etzioni was overly optimistic with regards to all aspects of his proposal: the ability to achieve any meaningful consensus on societal "goals," the possibilities for rationally-controlled collective action,[4] and the usefulness of knowledge production in guiding these endeavors.

One of the master metaphors for the book, the notion that "postmodern" (post-WWII) democratic societies are "adrift," is itself drawn from the institutional school in organizational theory.[5] For institutional theorists organizations are best seen as being enmeshed in complex and institutionalized socio-cultural environments, and much of what occurs within and through them makes sense only if this is taken into account. A "drifting" organization is one in which what happens is not (or is perhaps only partially) the expected outcome of purposively planned activity. Rather, organizational outcomes are shaped by such forces as local cultures, the demands and influence of informal groups within organizations, cooptation, unintended consequences, and contingency. Organizations have "natural histories"[6] and are subject to a large number of forces that are removed from their stated purposes. As such, many organizations, in a very important sense, are not directed toward *a* "goal," and what actually occurs in and through organizations is often very different from what is ostensibly planned. Organizations, then, proceed along their life courses without intelligent direction. They tend to drift from action to action, activity to activity, outcome to outcome.

According to Etzioni, the typical "postmodern" (post-WWII) democratic society[7] is "adrift" in a similar way. It is in need of better control processes so that it might effectively realize its goals rather than drifting aimlessly through history. Totalitarian societies (e.g. the former Soviet Union), on the other hand, are relatively effective in terms of control processes, but are deficient in building consensus. Direction in these societies is from the top down so that there is a "plan"—decision making is purposeful and implemented—but it is not shaped by a thoroughgoing societal consensus about what ought to be done or how. The task for the Active Society is to steer a course between the "drifting" democratic and "overmanaged" totalitarian states. An Active Society is one that is both effective in building consensus with regards to goals and means, and effective in implementing the means to achieve those goals.

The basic approach contains three major features: cybernetics (knowledge); implementation (power); and consensus building processes. It is through *consensus-building* processes that groups can arrive at their goals. These processes answer the question, "Active for what?".[8] Once we know what it is that we want to accomplish, we can put *cybernetics* to work in order to determine how to go about meeting our goals. For Etzioni, the postmodern society has vast capabilities for knowledge production. Ostensibly, we now have the ability to generate an understanding of the causal dynamics of the social and technical worlds that provides

the basic resources needed to inform decision-making geared toward effective accomplishment of our consensual goals. *Implementing* factors have to do with issues surrounding the use of power to put our now-informed plans into action. Implementation processes themselves are infused with both consensus-building and cybernetic factors in order to constantly monitor, evaluate and readjust strategies of action. Underlying all of this is the requirement that all individuals are integrated into "cohesive societal units" that represent the interests of their constituents. The primary vehicle for social action is the formal organization.[9] What Etzioni has in mind is a society that is organized as something of an ongoing social movement or set of social movements in a state of "permanent revolution."[10]

The Active Society is one that, in short, adds more activity—more knowledge, more actors, and more considerations in goal formation, decision-making, and implementation processes. In the process, it increases *complexity*, and it is here that I will argue that the proposal meets its undoing. From the point of view of organizational theory 35 years later, it seems clear that Etzioni's "means" and "goals" run at cross-purposes. If anything, his proposals stand a better chance of increasing the "drift" that he wants to avoid. From the increasingly blurry lines between knowledge and politics to the increasing difficulty of making "rational" decisions in hyper-informational and complex contexts, many things that Etzioni recommended would lead farther away from, rather than toward the society which is the "master of itself."

The critical problems can be illuminated from the perspective of ongoing modifications to the classical Weberian roots of organizational theory, where organizations (bureaucracies) are taken to be rationally planned means designed for the achievement of specific purposes (or goals). While it is not entirely accurate to classify Etzioni's own approach to organizations as a classical or "rational systems"[11] approach,[12] the overall thrust of the Active Society proposal is overwhelmingly rational in nature. At its core, the argument rests on the assumption that organized social activity can operate on the basis of at least quasi-rational decision-making for the accomplishment of stated purposes, or goals. In contrast, a central thrust of organizational theory, beginning in the 1950s and moving on through the following decades, has been geared toward dismantling the viability of the rationalistic "planning" picture of organizations. It is not that Etzioni was unaware of this. At many points in the book, he addresses the arguments that were present at the time of his writing. However, he was unable to foresee the extent to which the basic picture has been revised.

This is not to say that rationalistic notions do not have any place in organizational or societal analysis. Rather, it is best to see the extent to which organizations can approximate a rational model as a variable.[13] However, much of the argument given in *The Active Society* specifies conditions that push us farther away from rather than toward more rationality. In Vaughan's terms, we might say that Etzioni is enamored with the "bright side" of formal organization, but fails to solve the

problems of the "dark side."[14] It has been becoming more and more clear that organizing, while it may generate effectiveness, efficiency, predictability and the like (aspects of the bright side), simultaneously generates unanticipated, unpredictable, and uncontrollable outcomes (aspects of the dark side). While one might place his or her faith (as Etzioni does) in effective "cybernetic" processes for reducing and correcting for problematic outcomes, that potential has been seriously questioned both from within organizational theory and in the sociology of science and technology. A re-envisioning of the normative aims of the Active Society, if possible at all, will require a rethinking of how these might be achieved given the insights of contemporary organizational theory.

The Question of Goals

Multiplicity, Conflict, and Power

We begin with the question of goals as the most important starting point because without a secure answer to the question, "Active for what?" the entire enterprise ceases to have any meaning at all. The book was written based on the assertion that "societal goals" are *not* being met. We can only make that judgment or assumption if we first have an idea of what the goals are. Furthermore, we must presume that it is possible for large social groups to continually generate and agree upon *operational* goals, or goals that point clearly toward specific kinds of actions. Without stable and clear goals, we will not know what, if anything, needs to be done, nor will we know when we have been successful in doing it.

Very importantly, for Etzioni, those goals must be consensual. Totalitarian states, Etzioni asserts, are fairly effective at meeting goals, but those goals do not reflect the wishes of the population. Thus these societies are "inauthentic" with the result that many social groups are "alienated." A "society is *inauthentic if it provides the appearance of responsiveness while the underlying condition is alienating.*"[15] Alienation is a condition that results from "the unresponsiveness of the world to the actor, which subjects him to forces that he neither comprehends nor guides."[16] Hence, it is not enough for groups to have goals. Rather, those goals must derive from societal members themselves, and goals and means must be responsive to the needs of all.

Even prior to Etzioni's writing there was good reason to question the entire premise that we can meaningfully think of groups (read: society; collectivity; subcollectivity; etc.) as having consensual goals that can to be pursued to everyone's satisfaction.[17] This assumption falls apart on at least two fronts. The first set of problems occurs if we take the "goal" of generating consensual goals seriously and involves difficulties in the multiplicity of, and conflict between, various goals.

Etzioni is aware of these difficulties, but, as I will show, his solutions are far from satisfactory. The second set of problems follows from the first. Given multiple and conflicting goals, the route to consensus generally leads to increasing degrees of abstraction, and hence ambiguity in the goals themselves. In such situations, holding to the notion that organized activity is directed toward goals becomes less and less plausible. Given high levels of ambiguity, "goals" tend to become something more akin to *ex post facto* explanations of events or legitimizing symbolic claims rather than the ends that drive organizational means.

Starting with the first set of problems, we can take the notion of goals seriously, but we have to grapple with the problem that goals are often multiple and conflicting. This occurs across organizations, across subunits within any particular organization, and across individuals within organizations. Given multiple and conflicting goals, meeting certain goals usually occurs at the expense of others. Etzioni is not unaware of the problem and mentions it several times in passing,[18] but then goes on to skirt the underlying issue. His basic suggestion seems to come to some form of compromise that occurs through a multiple "tier" structure of political discussion:

> Each [subgroup] forms consensus among its members and sends a representative to the next tier which is composed only of representatives. Their number is smaller than the number of units on the lower level, and the diversity of their perspectives is likely to be of a lesser degree, because they tend to represent an "average" view of their constituency rather than an extreme one. These representatives then may work out a consensus for the whole unit. If the diversity is still too great, consensus is expected to increase if another tier is added . . . in which the "averaging" effect is expected to repeat itself.[19]

Leaving aside the question of how many tiers might be acceptable or feasible, the basic process is one that *might* produce something as a goal, but it is not likely to be anything that would meet the requirements of the Active Society argument.

There are at least three possibilities, none of which seem to lead us to where the Active Society is supposed to go. One possibility is that a new "meta-goal" is formed and provides the basis for decision-making, but many constituent units are unhappy because, in the consensus building process, the multiple and conflicting goals of collectivities, sub-collectivities, and groups at all levels have been so altered that no one has gotten what they want. As such, this first possibility might represent a consensus of sorts, but many interested parties are alienated and thus that consensus is inauthentic. In fact, the tier structure is structurally not unlike that which produces oligarchy, as Michels observed long ago.[20] In terms of classical organizational theory, it also represents a good example of how to produce "goal displacement."[21] In particular, the goal of those groups involved in consensus formation will itself become the formation of consensus. Whatever the beginning goals were will cease to be the primary criterion upon which successful

negotiation is based. Presumably displacement, as one aspect of organizational drift, is something that the Active Society needs to avoid. However, it is not clear how this avoidance will be accomplished since goal displacement appears to be written into the proposed process of consensus building.

A second possibility might be slightly less distasteful because it may involve less alienation, but is not necessarily "authentic." That is, if everyone's goals are, *in fact, changed* in the process of consensus formation, then the "average" goals have *become the new goals* so that everyone is happy to have gotten what they wanted (they are not alienated). However, the victory may well be pyrrhic because the initial (*actual*?) goals have disappeared. We are now left with the basic quandary that we may or may not have "authentic" goals. How can we tell the difference between the production of "true" consent and the "manufacture of consent?" In the process of social communication and compromise have we actually "authentically" changed what we want, or have we become the victims of "false consciousness?" By Etzioni's own reasoning, the latter is a distinct possibility, since not all groups are seen as being equal in their ability to influence the consensus building process (see below).

It is here that we run into the most serious problem within Etzioni's argument, which is that any agreed upon goals are apparently constructed through the exercise of control over ideology production. To use one of Etzioni's own examples: "if ego uses power to advance one of his central values in the face of reluctant but not opposing others,[22] and the power he uses is based on appeals to values—let us say in an educational campaign to convince white southerners to extend civil rights to Negro-Americans—the use of power seems to advance the active quality."[23] This statement comes from his discussion of power (chapters 13-14), and it indicates that the exercise of power will be required in consensus formation. Yet it is perplexing to note that his definition of power is a typical distributive rather than collective one: "*Power is a capacity to overcome part or all of the resistance, to introduce changes in the face of opposition.*"[24] Considering the fact that goals are supposed to be consensual, it is difficult to come to terms with this stance on power. The general implication of the argument seems to be that some groups (e.g., white southerners) just don't know what is good for them. As such it must be up to the liberal intelligentsia to make the "correct" judgments regarding both that which is desirable and the means by which to obtain it. We then use various forms of "symbolic violence,"[25] such as educational campaigns, to manufacture a consensus around the wishes of those groups who control the means of mental production. Attempting to ground the "correct" view in an appeal to values, as Etzioni does, doesn't do us any good since we don't know whose values we are supposed to use. If we want to step back and worry about consensual values first, we won't make any progress, since we will only change the source of the multiplicities and conflicts.

In any case, once we have arrived at this point, Etzioni cannot exclude, for instance, totalitarian or fascist states from the "Active Society" category. He is, of course, keen to do so,[26] but if "authenticity" is in the eye of the beholder (which it explicitly is for Etzioni), then we have no secure criteria for distinguishing between the campaign to change the beliefs of white southerners and the goal-construction campaigns instituted by Mussolini or Hitler. Just to take extreme instances, one need to look no further than some prominent instances of genocide or attempted genocide (e.g. those against Native Americans in North America, Tutsis in Rwanda or Jews in Nazi Germany) to find that activities that Etzioni wishes to exclude as illegitimate have often been backed by substantial popular support. Instances of this kind are dismissed as inauthentic, but Etzioni's own acceptance of power into the consensus formation process leaves us with no clear way to tell the difference between the authentic and the inauthentic.

In order to clarify, let us briefly turn the tables the other way. One of the "goals" of the United States presumably has been equality. The equality is supposed to include all racial and ethnic groups, classes, sexes, etc. Let us presume momentarily that the goal of equality has been achieved and that this is, in part, because of an "authentic consensus." This is possible under only one circumstance, which is that all collectivities or sub-collectivities whose goals include the maintenance of inequality (e.g. economic conservatives, social Darwinists, or the aforementioned white southerners) have, in fact, been silenced. In what sense can we claim an authentic consensus when its achievement will obviously involve leaving out the concerns of certain collectivities? In the end, Etzioni has no secure way of distinguishing between Hitler oppressing Jews and the liberal Left oppressing white southerners. The means by which Etzioni distinguishes fascist from active societies is via the direction of consensus. In the case of fascist states, the "structure is imposed in its members"[27] from the top down. But, given the role that power might play in consensus formation we can't distinguish that imposition from the impositions of the liberal Left. He obviously favors the liberal Left as the "correct" way, but this is not based on "authentic consensus" but only on his own personal, moral, and ethical proclivities. If we are to require that consensus emerges from the authentic wishes of social collectivities, *but* that this might mean the application or use of ideological power resources, then we are going to have to live with the consequences.

One might fall back on trying to ground the left-liberal "correct" consensus by emphasizing that distasteful philosophies such as those produced and enforced by fascism obviously create human suffering and exclude entire groups from consensus building. As such, they certainly do not create the "Active Society" because they simultaneously create alienation, inauthenticity, and worse. But, once again, it difficult to see the authenticity in egalitarian courses of action for those collectivities that do not desire egalitarianism (and here we can replace the term "egalitarian" with almost any proposed "goal").

All of this is not to say that societal groups *cannot* have goals. In fact, the third possibility in consensus building is that identifiable goals are formed, and almost everyone is in agreement about them. Most organizations and collectivities do profess specific goals such as the prevention of war, equal rights for women, or the promotion of interest in numismatics. However, the character of those goals is not particularly in line with rationalistic notions. The kinds of goals that are likely to be consensually accepted within large constituencies tend to be non-operational. That is, they tend to be the kinds of goals that don't provide for easy translation into the specific means by which the goals should be obtained, or even easy translation into what it means to meet the goals.

In classical organizational theory, a common way to conceptualize goals was to stipulate that an organization has an overarching, primary goal or set of goals. Organizational leadership then designs a series of sub-goals that culminate in the fulfillment of the primary goal/s.[28] Organizational structures and processes (the means) are then designed to ensure that all of those goals are fulfilled. While the mapping here is not entirely precise, in more recent organizational theory sub-goals often appear to exist, not as things that dictate means, but as things that are constructed to justify and explain the kinds of means that are available and put to use. The overarching, higher level goals, on the other hand, often appear to be myths that legitimate an organization and its activities.

Ambiguity, Uncertainty, and Garbage Cans

Shortly after the publication of *The Active Society* one of the more useful and enlightening analyses of "goals" appeared in the form of "garbage can" theories of organizations.[29] In traditional theories of organizations, goals are taken to be the impetus for action. Organizations (and here we can insert societies, collectivities, sub-collectivities, etc.) have goals and these goals guide action. Garbage can theory stands this on its head, and observes that goals appear more as *ex post facto* explanations for action. Actors have (or are) bundles of solutions or energies which, when put into operation, actually *create* goals. Rather than action being devised to meet goals, goals are devised in order to account for the kinds of activities that are available or have been undertaken.

For the Garbage Can model, under certain conditions organizations are best seen as "organized anarchies."[30] The three conditions that generally produce a greater tendency toward organized anarchy are: 1) operating with a variety of unclear and inconsistent goals; 2) unclear technology, or a situation where procedures and processes are not well understood by members; and 3) fluid organizational participation providing for shifting and unclear organizational boundaries and audiences. The master concept here is uncertainty—uncertainty about what needs doing, about how to do it, and about who is demanding, doing, or evaluating that which is done. "From this point of view, an organization is a collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations . . . solutions looking for issues . . . decision makers looking for work."[31] It is important to note that public service organizations are among those that are very likely to produce these conditions. As such, they have strong tendencies toward organized anarchy and drift. Similarly, much of the Active Society argument points in that direction. Increased activity will very likely produce increased goal ambiguity, and increased ambiguity will very likely produce greater task uncertainty. Similarly, increased activity produces much more fluidity as all constituencies face a much more complex and turbulent environment filled with a large number of neighboring constituencies all carrying multiple and conflicting concerns.

Etzioni's explicit intention is to build a society that is something of a permanent, large-scale set of social movements with some level of consensus on goals.[32] If this were to be accomplished, the kinds of goals produced would almost certainly be of the ambiguous and abstract type. We can trace this back at least to Durkheim and the argument that, as the diversity of experience and interests increases, the elements of our "collective conscience" become more abstract, settling on such vague notions as justice and equality.[33] Given diversity of perspective and interest, the more we introduce specificity into our stated goals, the more we run into direct conflict between units over the content of those goals. This is very clearly seen in Social Movement Organizations (SMOs) whenever they attempt to form alliances or coalitions around specific issues, and/or when they compete for the same organizational resources such as active members.[34]

A great deal of recent research into the dynamics of social movements has pointed to the importance of the "collective action frame" as a source of unity, symbolic focus, and mobilization for both old and new movement members. In order to increase the scope of their appeal, either to attract more members or to allow cross-movement collaboration, SMOs engage in processes such as frame alignment,[35] in which the movements attempt to make their understandings of the issues resonant with those of potential allies and their surrounding culture, and frame diffusion,[36] where a movement's frame is spread across movements or cultures. "Master frames,"[37] that form the focus for broad-based movements, tend to condense in highly abstract and ambiguous terms, forming around such things as "rights frames"[38] and "environmental justice frames."[39] Even groups with seemingly specific and agreed upon goals such as nuclear disarmament,[40] or death penalty reform,[41] experience serious disagreement on multiple levels when it comes to defining the problem at hand and devising approaches aimed toward solving the problem. The disagreements can even reach a point at which there are disputes over whether or not consensus-building itself is a worthwhile goal.[42] This presents a serious difficulty since it is possible that an Active Society could

arrive at a consensus that consensus about goals should not be a goal. In any case, if consensus is to be built from the wishes of the members of social collectivities, then holding that consensus together will push in the direction of more abstract and ambiguous goals. As the ambiguity increases, we are pushed closer and closer to the likelihood of ending up with garbage cans and myths.

Using another example from Etzioni, we can take equality to be a goal of U.S. society. Etzioni's definition of equality seems to be largely distributive, yet it is vague enough to accommodate multiple and conflicting interpretations. For Etzioni, "*Equality* exists if any randomly drawn sample of the membership of a society receives the same share of the assets as any other random sample of the same size drawn from the same membership."[43] He also goes on to note that while democratic societies, such as the U.S., stress consensus (itself a dubious claim), they are inegalitarian in including "many passive and alienated collectivities."[44] What is not at all clear is that the United States is inegalitarian under all interpretations of what "assets" are. If assets refer to such things as income and wealth, then it is clear that the U.S. is inegalitarian. However, there is, of course, a clear difference between equality of outcome and equality of opportunity. It is relatively safe to proclaim "equality" as a national value, but it is not at all the case that there is anything like a consensus in the United States on the assertion that it is inegalitarian under all definitions. Many people believe that the United States already provides equality.

Here the entire premise of the book crumbles, and needs to be rebuilt upon new assumptions that take into account the variability among different observers.[45] The Active Society is one that meets its goals. If one of the goals in the United States is equality, and many people already regard the United States as providing equality of opportunity, then the United States must already be, in some significant sense, an Active Society. Obviously not everyone thinks so. But this just serves to illustrate the point that once we introduce any degree of specificity into the goal, we stand a good chance of losing consensus about what the goals "really" are, and what, if anything, should be done in order to reach them. In any case, there is a significant sense in which the question of whether we are adrift or intelligently "directing" ourselves depends on whose goals are being met at any particular point in time. The only thing that we have learned so far is that Etzioni has some goals in mind that haven't been met.

However, even if we grant some level of agreement about the need for action, the ambiguities do not lose their salience. With reference to the garbage can argument, goal ambiguity carries over into uncertainty about technology. Obviously inequality is an unmet goal for some observers, and as such, often becomes an issue for other observers. Hence, the question might shift to the means by which we address various concerns about equality. For those who wish to appear concerned and "active" with regard to inequality, we can simply add non-discrimination clauses to our constitutions and hiring rules, ensuring the concerned public

that we are in favor of equal opportunity. Equal opportunity assurances seem to represent one of those institutionalized norms that act as a "coercive" means to organizational isomorphism.[46] The formal prohibition against restricting anyone's opportunity becomes the means because the "goal" is nothing other than equal opportunity. For those who take equality to mean equality of outcome, these means will obviously not suffice; they might suggest more proactive strategies such as progressive tax structures coupled with increased social services, or affirmative action programs coupled with quota systems. As opponents to these types of programs are quick to point out, such attempts have the ironic consequence of trying to overcome inequality through the introduction of some form of inequality.

In fact, Etzioni does run directly into this problem, and, as with many other difficulties, brushes past it with incredible haste and no clear answer. The result is the production of another serious contradiction within the argument. He notes that consensus building will occur among actors who differ in social power, and that "by and large, the compromises made . . . and the values implemented are closer to the preferences of the powerful than the weak."[47] Worse yet for the basic argument, we *can't use consensus-building processes to produce greater equality* because this will require that the more powerful actors implement decisions that will decrease their own power. As he admits, "The privileged groups in control of the state can hardly be expected to consent to a policy that would significantly curtail their privileges and power. *The substantial increase in equality required for an active society will have to be produced through some process other than consensus-building.*"[48] Here we return to the same point as above: that the juice of the Active Society is apparently not an authentic consensus deriving from its participants, but a construction produced via power struggles over the definitions of values, goals, and means. At its root, by Etzioni's own argument, the Active Society must be alienating and inauthentic for at least some of its constituents.

The third condition that favors garbage can models of organizing is organizational fluidity, where organizational boundaries are uncertain and "the audiences and decision makers . . . change capriciously."[49] In terms of the argument here, we can translate this into the concept of environmental complexity. The Active Society presumably must accommodate the demands of all collectivities at once, greatly increasing the complexity of the environment for all collectivities. This leads us to a double-edged sword. First, the complexity of an organization tends to "map"[50] itself to the complexity of its environment.[51] In short, as an environment becomes more complex, the organization itself tends to become more complex. If Active Society constituencies are all to take each others' demands seriously, then the organizations serving those constituencies and the organizations that make up the society's "controlling overlayers"[52] will tend toward greater complexity as means of coping with the varying demands from persistently large numbers of other constituencies. Second, as organizations become more complex, the degree of conflict and disagreement between units tends to increase.[53] The first edge of

the sword is that greater disagreement and conflict are produced *within* organizations of the Active Society, while the second edge is that greater disagreement and conflict are produced *between* organizations of the Active Society. Once again, the conditions outlined push us farther away from the likelihood of consensus and closer to the garbage can.

Ambiguity, Garbage Cans, and Myths

The garbage can picture leaves us with a difficulty. Organizations cannot, and usually do not, appear to be one damned thing happening after another. This presents a difficulty both for organized anarchies and for sociological explanation. To the extent that they exhibit garbage can tendencies, how can organizations justify themselves? Similarly, how can sociology account for the disjuncture between the appearance of rationality and the seemingly less than rational link between action and goals observed by garbage can theory? In order to offer such an account, we need to make the distinction between what an organization presents to its various publics on its formal "front stages" and what occurs on the organizational backstage. Many times, formalized goals and the appearance of rationalized structures designed to meet those goals are constructed as myths ensuring the legitimacy of the organization.[54] Various aspects of organizations such as organizational charts, formalized procedures, and stated goals are constructed by organizations to provide a "front stage" appearance. The front stage picture depicts action that is rationally guided toward culturally acceptable goals, and acts to shield the actual day-to-day activities of the organization from intensive scrutiny. Educational organizations must present themselves as providing skills and knowledge to students;[55] scientific organizations must present themselves as rational, positivistic rule followers,[56] and so on. An organization has to *appear* to be pursuing legitimate goals, and it must appear to be doing so in a rational manner lest it lose its legitimacy.

Later neo-institutional theory[57] has added greater sophistication and complexity by introducing the notion that organizations largely take on a form that is, in one way or another, required by the organization's environment. Similar regulatory structures, the copying of structures and practices across organizations, and the influence of professionalized experts all contribute to giving organizations their shape.[58] As such, the simple model that organizations are tools formed to accomplish some stated purpose or goal is highly questionable. For Etzioni and the rational view of organizations, means are things devised to reach some predetermined goal. In more recent organizational theory, *day-to-day "operational" goals co-emerge with or follow from means, and overarching meta-goals serve ceremonial functions as symbolic myths.*

It is important to recognize that the degree to which front stage presentations and back stage activity are related is *variable*.[59] For example, the extent of coupling between formally stated means and goals occurs to a greater or lesser extent depending upon how easily we can evaluate the coupling between stated goals and actual outcomes.[60] If the stated purpose of the organization is to produce toothpicks, then we can be fairly clear about such things as whether or not toothpicks were actually produced and how many toothpicks were produced. We can, furthermore, measure the efficiency of toothpick production across various organizations and arrive at some judgment about which kinds of activities and structures are best for producing toothpicks. On the other hand, if the goal of an organization is to produce "educated and enlightened citizens," as it may be for many universities, the evaluation of activity and outcome becomes much more difficult. Different actors (such as the Registrar's Office, the Sociology Department, the students' parents, and the president) are apt to have differing interpretations and evaluations of what this entails and are able to justify or demand a much greater range of "activity" as legitimate means. In short, the more ambiguous or abstract the goals, the looser the coupling becomes between stated organizational goals and actual organizational activities. We are likely to end up with practical, day-to-day goals that come from garbage cans, and stated goals that serve the front stage function of providing for legitimacy.

In sum, on the question of goals, Etzioni's argument fails to produce any reason to believe that operational consensual goals are possible, nor does it provide any reasonable method by which consensual goals of an operational kind might be produced. Rather, since the Active Society proposes nothing other than an increase in the number of active participants in goal-setting processes, we can only expect that any increases in activity will be accompanied by increases in ambiguity and conflict over goals. The route to meaningful consensus would lie in less, not more, activity. Within an Active Society, to the extent that any consensus does occur, we can expect it condense around highly abstract symbolic issues that are of little practical import. As such, we can expect that questions about defining goals and deciding which ones to pursue will eventually come down to questions about social power. We are then left in a situation where our current society (or Etzioni's back in 1968) may or may not be counted as "active" depending upon whose goals are being met at any particular point in time.

Complexity and Decision-Making

Following closely behind the problem of goals are problems involved in decision-making. If we think of actors as having goals, then we also must be able to presume that they are able to establish the means by which to meet those goals. Here

we run into a host of difficulties as well. Ideally, decision makers are purely rational, making decisions that maximize benefits while minimizing costs. The ability to make perfectly rational decisions involves, among other things, a clear set of preferences or goals, complete information about alternative courses of action and their consequences, and the ability to calculate the costs and benefits of a given course of action in relation to goals. Beginning at least with Simon,[61] the purely rational model has come to be widely recognized as impossible. Preferences are not always clear, decision makers cannot have complete information either about potential choices or about outcomes, and even given a set of alternatives cannot adequately rank them with regards to cost-benefit balance in light of preferences. Rather, the generally accepted principle has been that decision makers operate on the basis of "bounded rationality" and "satisfice" rather than "maximize" when engaged in decision-making processes.[62]

Since Merton,[63] social scientists have paid a great deal of attention to the unintended consequences of social action. We might say, in these terms, that maximization of outcome involves maximizing intended consequences, while minimizing costs means, at least in part, the ability to avoid or adjust for unintended consequences. Bounded rationality and satisficing take unintended consequences for granted. Given the limits on rationality, we can generally expect decisions to have some kinds of unpredictable consequences. The extent to which our decisions maximize intended and minimize unintended consequences should be taken—as with the extent of multiplicity, conflict, and ambiguity in goals—to be a variable that depends on the social conditions under which decision-making occurs.[64] And, as in the case of goals, the Active Society pushes us toward less rationality rather than more. Rather than expecting increased Activity to decrease the problems of unintended consequences and societal drift, we should expect it to increase those tendencies.

Etzioni is fully aware of the basic difficulties of rational decision-making and explicitly accepts the standard critique given by Simon.[65] In fact, he takes it as a "central proposition . . . that *societal decision-makers do not have the basic capacities for making rational decisions.*"[66] He also rejects what he defines as the major alternative to the rational model, which is a "muddling through" style of "incrementalism" where, in the face of complexity, actors make piecemeal changes to existing policies or courses of action. He goes on instead to define a strategy called "mixed-scanning [as] an active approach to decision-making" (Chapter 12). Mixed-scanning is presented as a hybrid form of decision making where an approximation of the rationalistic model is employed to make fundamental or "contextuating" decisions, while an approximation of the incremental style is used to make "bit-decisions":

> Contextuating decisions are made through an exploration of the main alternatives seen by the actor in view of his conception of his goals, but details and specifications are omitted. . . . Bit-decisions are made incrementally, but within the contexts set by fundamental decisions. . . . Bit-incrementalism overcomes the unrealistic aspects of comprehensive rationalism . . . and contextuating rationalism helps to right the conservative bias of incrementalism.[67]

Over the long run, good decisions (at both levels) are then ensured by continual evaluation of the actual effects of decisions in light of desired goals.[68] This basic distinction between "contextual" and bit decisions mirrors the classical distinction between strategic and tactical, or operational decisions.[69] While Etzioni provides an admirable attempt at synthesis, we don't seem to have, nor does Etzioni's discussion provide, any reason to believe that this strategy will result in better decisions. In fact, as with the problem of goals, the recent thrust of organizational theory suggests that the Active Society will *increase* the difficulties associated with decision-making. We can divide the problems here into two interrelated dimensions. The first set of problems has to do with difficulties in rationality that remain, or perhaps could be even worse, under mixed scanning. The second set includes problems regarding the ability to use evaluation processes to correct over time for sub-optimal or unintended outcomes.

First, contextual (strategic) decisions are not in any way exempt from the difficulties of rational action.[70] The omission of details and specifications does not mean that these decisions are not subject to levels of uncertainty similar to those of operational decisions. Focusing on context rather than "bits" does not decrease uncertainty. It simply shifts uncertainties to another level of phenomena. Furthermore, strategic decisions, in general, may be more subject to uncertainties stemming from the problem of goal ambiguity. Since contextual decisions are aimed toward general policies and directions, they are more likely than operational decisions to be directed toward goals of the abstract and ambiguous kind. In other words, contextuating decisions are of a relatively "unbounded" kind. The more "contextual" the decision, the more likely decision makers will be to face uncertainties, not only from a lack of knowledge about alternatives and consequences, but also from greater uncertainties about the actual preferences (goals) involved. In fact, it is very likely that contextuating decisions will be directed toward goals that mostly serve symbolic legitimacy functions and that the decisions themselves will serve similar functions. Thus, strategically, a social welfare agency should provide quality therapeutic services to its clients, while operationally it tends toward an emphasis on frequent visits to its clients and accurate budget calculations.[71] Similarly, strategic decisions in educational organizations emphasize imparting knowledge and skills to students, while operationally, concern tends to focus on the number of students put through or the number of programs aimed at disadvantaged students.[72] The tendency to quantify as a means of reducing complexity is generally one of the strategies used to reduce complexity and aid in rationalizing organizational activities.[73] Yet it is also this tendency that leads

toward goal displacement as the "goal" of Activity becomes meeting operational standards rather than fulfilling contextuating goals. As Weber observed long ago, organizations have a way of generating the dominance of formal over substantive rationality.[74]

Hence, mixed-scanning is not likely to reduce complexity, and probably increases the tendency toward organized anarchy and garbage can decision-making, because it explicitly decouples the organizational front stage from its back stage. Contextuating actions are often actions that help deflect attention from all of those back stage bit decisions (or non-decisions). As such, the "shield" between front and back is formalized and thus strengthened.

Furthermore, Etzioni seems to take the primary problem of rationality as the lack of information and knowledge—hence, cybernetics as one of the primary pillars of his proposal. While difficulties of rationality may, at times, come from a lack of information, it is just as damning to have too much information.[75] In fact, it is generally in the limitation of information that we find we are able to increase the rationality of our decisions.[76] While the lack of information in decision-making can certainly hamper rationality, the more fundamental difficulty is the inability to deal with complexity. We now have quite a bit of evidence to suggest that, as the degree of complexity increases, the likelihood of system failure increases. Under certain conditions, complexity results in "normal accidents,"[77] or more generally "routine nonconformity,"[78] and more information or better cybernetics does not seem to hold any way to avoid them. The key here is that the accidents, or unintended consequences, are normal—that they are expected and are generated from within the system itself. Perrow arrives at the conclusion that complex systems will generate accidents as a normal part of their operation based on a study of the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant disaster, while Vaughan[79] focused on the space shuttle Challenger disaster. In neither of these cases is it safe to argue that cybernetic control processes were deficient.

Common understandings of system failures such as these attribute breakdowns to chance and/or error on the part of humans within systems. However, there is much to suggest that system failure is a *routine* part of organized systems. As Perrow has put it:

> Normal accidents emerge from the characteristics of the systems themselves. They cannot be prevented. They are unanticipated. It is not feasible to train, design, or build in such a way as to anticipate all eventualities in complex systems where the parts are tightly coupled. They are incomprehensible when they occur.[80]

Perrow's model for explaining "normal accidents" is quite instructive for the Active Society argument. Systems vary along two basic criteria: the complexity of interactions between system parts, described as either linear or complex, and the degree of coupling between parts of the system which can vary between loose and tight. When the interactions within a system are highly complex, breakdown (routine nonconformity/unintended consequences) can be expected to occur because minor errors send unpredictable ripples of disturbance out through the rest of the system. However, this tends to lead to major, disastrous consequences only when the parts of the system itself are tightly coupled. With loose coupling there is generally a good deal of slack between parts and hence, there is time to react, make changes, adjust, and avoid difficulties. For Perrow, organizations such as universities and public service agencies tend to fit these criteria. However, with tight coupling, as in nuclear power plants and space missions, minor perturbations ramify and spread rapidly and in unpredictable ways and do produce major disasters such as nuclear plant meltdowns and space shuttle explosions.

Ironically, much of the Active Society argument points in the direction of moving social systems toward both *increased complexity* and *tighter coupling* between different societal sub-units. Interactions in contemporary industrial or post-industrial societies are already nothing if not complex. Complexity is increased further as the number of Active units increases. However, increased Activity alone is not the aim, but rather increased Activity toward greater interdependence (coupling) between societal units. This occurs both in the consensus-building process and in implementation processes. Consensus building requires that all Active units have to take all other units into account. Eventually control activities must do the same lest we produce an inauthentic order and alienation. Etzioni is able to make this sound simple because the abstract description of recommended processes is typically linear.[81] Once again, what is avoided is the issue of complexity. We can take the typical capitalistic, democratic society as a complex system with loose coupling, which accounts for the tendency of such societies to "drift." We can then we can ask which direction the system needs to move in to become "Active." We clearly cannot move to linear or simpler interactions without attempting to build something on the order of Orwell's society of 1984. This would move us closer to the totalitarian model and the "overmanaged society." Hence, the direction must be toward tighter coupling between system elements, coupling persons into multiple interest groups, and those into sub-collectivities and collectivities whose interests are expressed by formal organizations, all of which are tied into political action. The result is pushing the "social system" toward an increasing likelihood of generating unintended consequences with more complex, unpredictable, and potentially damaging results. As such, the proposal, if fully realized, stands a greater chance of increasing drift, unpredictability, disaster, and unintended and uncontrollable processes in general. The more "Active" we become along the lines of Etzioni's proposal, the less we are able to achieve anything that approximates a rational model.

Evaluation Processes

The second set of problems with Active Society decision-making processes lies in the assumption that consistent evaluation of decisions can provide for self-correction over time. A typical response to handling the likelihood of system disruptions is to add various feedback and safety mechanisms that monitor system functions and outputs, produce information to be fed back into the system, and provide information for system monitors to make adjustments or repair problematic elements. In other words, evaluation and feedback mechanisms are added to ensure that all is working as expected. This corrective, however, comes with several problems of its own. One is that any evaluation process itself typically involves a whole host complex decisions with regard to what needs to be evaluated, when, by whom, by what methods and using what criteria. This feeds further complexity back into the premises of decision-making with regard to the action in question. In other words, evaluation is itself subject to the problems of goal ambiguity and bounded rationality, and adds further system complexity, thus exacerbating the initial difficulties.

Perrow, for instance, found that feedback mechanisms and warning systems make up an integral part of the normal accident.[82] Given complex interactions, when information is provided about problematic system behavior, no clear mode of address is available. The difficulty lies not in the failure of specific and well-understood components, but in the unpredictable interactions with the entire system. Evaluators and operators are incapable of comprehending all possible contingencies, warning "signals" become "noise," and routine responses to component difficulties can go on to exacerbate the breakdown process. In terms of general organizational analysis, this difficulty has been observed at varying levels of organizational complexity as "deviance amplification"[83] or "error-amplifying decision traps."[84]

A second and related problem has to do with knowledge and its generation. Evaluation has a tendency toward bringing out the ambiguities, multiplicities, and conflicts within goals. The question "Is it working?" is ultimately tied up in the question of "What is it supposed to do?" We know from studies of scientific and technical controversies that these two questions are often inseparable. An evaluation of the "facts" frequently cannot provide the basis for deciding whether or not something is working because how the facts are produced and interpreted is often entangled with assumptions about what it is that we are supposed to find. In terms of the philosophy of science, this has been called the "underdetermination," and in other contexts is referred to as "interpretive flexibility."[85]

It may be instructive to look at an instance in which there are seemingly clear goals, highly developed cybernetic processes for decision-making and evaluation, and clear means for implementation. Collins and Pinch, for example, describe the controversy over the performance of the Patriot missile in the Gulf War of 1990-1991.[86] The manifest goal in this case was seemingly quite clear: to use Patriot missiles to shoot down or otherwise disable Iraqi scud missiles. The ability to determine the success of this course of action should also be relatively straightforward—either Patriots shot down scuds or they did not. Yet, the question of the success of the Patriot missile was far from easy to settle. Over the course of a congressional review of Patriot performance, estimates of the effectiveness of the Patriot ranged from 100 percent to 0 percent. The difficulty comes about because the question of the Patriot's success includes two inseparable issues. One is the question of what counts as success, and the other is the degree to which the Patriot itself can account for success under varying definitions. Rather than one simple definition of success—"the Patriot shot down scuds"—Collins and Pinch list 21 definitions that were used or implied over the course of the controversy.[87]

At the most concrete level, a Patriot can dud a scud warhead, damage the scud, divert it from its path, or "intercept" it which means that the Patriot and scud crossed paths in the sky. But there are also more general and abstract goals involved such as saving the lives and property of military and civilian populations. At yet higher levels of abstraction and generality, we can define other goals, such as making civilian populations feel safer, thus boosting their morale; protecting Israel (or making it feel protected) from scud attacks so that it would not enter the war; increasing the sales of Patriot missiles based on the belief in their effectiveness and so on. One (among many) of the problems here is that many of the general goals, such as keeping Israel out of the war, can be achieved for a host of complex reasons. There is little way of determining the effect of the Patriot on such matters. Yet given the ambiguity of the goal, it is possible to claim that the Patriot contributed because it is impossible to know what would have happened had the Patriot not been deployed.

But even on the question of the effectiveness of the Patriot for accomplishing concrete goals, the answers are not easy. In one sense, a Patriot that effectively tracks scuds or pieces of scuds (for they were wont to break into pieces) can be called successful on those kinds of criteria, but this does not necessarily come with a reduction in destruction or the saving of lives. In fact, there was evidence to suggest that Patriots engaged (whether in a way intended or not) various targets on or near the ground. In this case, the Patriot is successful if those engagements exhibit the "intended" function of chasing scud missiles. It is, however, simultaneously unsuccessful if it explodes on or near the ground and causes death and destruction. Hence, the "success" of the Patriot here depends on which of the multiple goals one selects.

One might argue that this isn't instructive for the Active Society because the Patriot system is a technical not a social one,[88] or that this represents an extreme case. But all attempts at reaching some "goal" and evaluating the effectiveness of actions are likely to run into the same kinds of ambiguities and conflicts. This has long been recognized in organizational analysis as a "contradiction model

of effectiveness" which considers "organizations to be more or less effective in regard to the variety of goals that they pursue, the variety of resources that they attempt to acquire, the variety of stakeholders inside and outside the organization, and the variety of time frames by which effectiveness is judged."[89] In fact, social policy directives, having more complex purposes and means from the beginning, are likely to generate worse contradictions than hardware systems. Consider, for instance, that neo-Marxists and neo-conservatives can both regard the state as ineffective in promoting economic growth and social welfare simultaneously. Yet neo-Marxists argue that welfare has suffered because of an overemphasis on economic growth, while neo-conservatives argue that economic growth has suffered because of an overemphasis on social welfare.[90]

Even if we restrict our focus to one specific aspect, social welfare for instance, we see the same contradictions and ambiguities. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Right to Work Act (PRRWA) was ostensibly passed in order to meet the general goal of most welfare programs—to alleviate poverty. Six years later, it is not at all clear what effects those reforms have had or whether or not they have been "successful." We can take a relatively simple question such as, "Are poor children better off?" Apparently there is evidence to suggest that many poor children are doing much better on a range of measures, alongside evidence that the poorest of the poor children have come to be worse off.[91] So has welfare reform helped poor children or not? One of the primary stated goals of the reforms was to get welfare recipients off of welfare and into the workforce. This has certainly happened, so the program is successful in that respect. However, the underlying assumption is that this "sub-goal" meets the larger goal of improving conditions for poor families. That has seemed to happen if we look, for instance, at certain aspects of education and health, but it has not happened if we are concerned with such things as financial security, improved housing conditions, neighborhood safety, or crime.[92] For those whose goal is the reduction of welfare rolls, the PRRWA is successful. For those whose goal is to make poor people better off and assist in regaining self-sufficiency it is much less so.

Furthermore, when relatively ambiguous goals do face evaluation, later activities within organizations tend to center around meeting the evaluation criteria that are most easily measured.[93] So, for example, the goal of educational processes becomes ensuring adequate scores on Standards of Learning exams whether or not students are actually learning anything of value. Similarly, since deans find it very difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate the scholarly work of faculty, they tend to count publications, and the goal becomes publishing as many things as possible.[94] In other words, evaluation processes themselves tend to contribute to the problem of goal displacement.[95]

Etzioni notices the potential for contradictions in evaluation processes.[96] However, his proposed solution is that "reality-testing" is enhanced if we encourage more pluralism in knowledge production. Yet based on what we know from the sociology of science, this will likely lead us farther away from rather than toward more usable forms of knowledge and hence, farther away from the ability to use that knowledge as a premise for increasing the rationality of decision-making. Etzioni's idea is that the "less restricted the *participation* in the contest among knowledge producers . . . the more effective will be the knowledge *supply*; and the less politically-based the decisions regarding the *outcomes* of the knowledge contest."[97] While more pluralism in knowledge production may be a worthwhile principle with regard to social policy issues, it is actually unlikely to produce "knowledge," or at least any form of knowledge that would produce *less* politics. In traditional epistemology, knowledge is something that occurs when our depictions of reality correspond to nature. In this sense, a plurality of observers is a good thing for knowledge production because it is one means by which the biases of specific observers or modes of observing might be reduced. As such, it brings us closer to objectivity and truth. More recent views of knowledge give a different picture.

Beginning with the appearance of Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,[98] and continuing over the past 40 years, traditional epistemology has been taken apart by post-empiricist philosophy of science and by detailed empirical work in a wide range of other disciplines.[99] The post-empiricist conception takes knowledge to be something that occurs when our depictions of reality fit into established and professionalized cultures of knowledge producers. It is social groups of knowledge producers that select knowledge. As such, the production of "knowledge" tends to be associated with the ability to *restrict* the number and variety of knowledge producers. When restrictions on participation in knowledge production is weak, discussions tend to get very noisy and are likely to produce a lot of conversation and disagreement, but precious little "knowledge."[100] The difficulties in evaluating the effectiveness of the Patriot missile (see above), for example, did not appear when those operating the Patriots were the only reporters of information. The controversy and uncertainty emerged only after a plurality of observers was introduced. Plurality tends to produce, not more accurate and less politicized knowledge, but more conversation and disagreement so that the knowledge arena becomes more politicized.[101] This is probably in line with the general normative spirit of the Active Society, so the argument is not that better political results would come from restricting the number of knowledge producers. It does, however, seriously undermine the extent to which we can trust in cybernetics to formulate and evaluate optimal social action.

Once we have recognized these basic problems, we arrive back at the question of conflicts over power. When goals, decision situations and outcomes are ambiguous and under dispute, decision-making tends to come down to questions of the power balance between the "dominant coalitions" of actors within organizations.[102] Furthermore, power struggles over decisions and goals tend to increase and amplify unintended consequences.[103] Hence, as with other aspects of the Ac-

tive Society argument, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the realization of Activity will not lead in the direction which is intended, but will stand to increase societal drift.

Conclusions

The argument presented here suggests that if we increase the degree of Activity along the lines suggested by *The Active Society*, the ability to predict and "steer" toward desired societal outcomes stands a good chance of decreasing. The goals that are pursued become more ambiguous, more numerous, and more likely to be in conflict. The knowledge required to design potential approaches to goals is subject to similar conditions. The decisions that get made surrounding arrays of goals become less "rational" and more subject to power considerations. The results of events and decisions become less predictable and more likely to produce unexpected consequences. Any approximation of an evaluation and adjustment of our efforts is entangled in the same web of difficulties.

The picture sketched here appears to be quite pessimistic. However, the intention has not been to argue that a more responsive, less alienating society is impossible. Nor has it been to argue that increased political activity is a bad idea. It has been to argue that the Active Society, as envisioned by Etzioni, is very unlikely to produce more responsiveness or less alienation. On the whole, the Active Society argument fails to take into account the complexities that come with developing and guiding large-scale social action. More importantly it fails to meet the problem of distributive power head on. If we are to begin to rewrite or revise a vision that satisfies the normative ambitions of *The Active Society*, then we need to take the "dark side" of organizations seriously. It might be worthwhile to take our starting point to be, not the optimism associated with viewing organizations as tools for the efficient fulfillment of goals, but the pessimism associated with Weber's warnings about the iron cage. Additionally, we are likely better off taking the central question to be, not how to increase consensus and develop more knowledge for better decision-making and implementation, but how to decrease the extent to which organizational outcomes are conditioned by the unequal distribution of social power. If we shift our central assumption about organizations, from one that sees them as effective tools for the fulfillment of societal goals to one that sees them as clumsy but powerful tools in the hands of their "masters,"[104] then we do indeed need to write a very different book. It is perplexing that Etzioni ran into that problem directly but did not set it aside and take it more seriously. His observation that "The privileged groups in control of the state can hardly be expected to consent to a policy that would significantly curtail their privileges and power. The substantial increase in equality required for an active society will have to be produced through some process other than consensus-building"[105] could easily serve as the central problematic for future inquiry.

Notes

1. This paper has benefited greatly from discussions with Stephan Fuchs who also kindly commented on an earlier draft. I also thank Damien White and Laura Lewis for comments. Remaining errors and difficulties are mine alone.
2. See, e.g. Amitai Etzioni, *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations,* New York: Free Press,1961 and *Modern Organizations*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964.
3. Etzioni, *The Active Society: A Theory of Societal and Political Processes*, New York: Free Press,1968, 97-99; 407-410.
4. This despite his own skepticism about these possibilities. Further elaboration will be given below.
5. See, e.g. Philip Selznick, *TVA and the Grass Roots*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949.
6. Charles Perrow, *Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1986, 158.
7. Society seems to be equated with the nation-state. This is itself a problem, but exploration of that issue is beyond the scope of this paper.
8. *The Active Society*, 12-13.
9. Ibid., 97-99; 407-410.
10. Ibid., 397-400.
11. See, e.g., W. Richard Scott, *Organizations: Rational, Natural and Open Systems*, Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2003, Ch. 2.
12. Etzioni's own work in the Active Society and elsewhere is based on only partial acceptance of the rational model. For Etzioni, the rational model has to be balanced by a "natural systems" model in which attention to the issues of coordination and control need to be balanced by attention to the question of the legitimacy of that control. In short, organizations do plan for efficiency, but pure efficiency concerns must be tempered to remain in line with societal norms and values (see, especially, *Modern Organizations*).
13. See, e.g. Stephan Fuchs, *Against Essentialism: A Theory of Culture and Society*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001, 132-137.
14. Diane Vaughan, "The Dark Side of Organizations: Mistake, Misconduct and Disaster," *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1999) 271-305.
15. *The Active Society*, 619, emphasis original.
16. Ibid., 618.
17. See, e.g. Peter Blau, *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1955; Charles Perrow, "The Analysis of Goals in Complex Organizations," *American Sociological Review* 26 (1961) 854-866.
18. *The Active Society*, 317; 430; 478.
19. Ibid., 478.
20. Robert Michels, *Political Parties* [1916], New York: Free Press,1949.

21. See, e.g. David Sills, *The Volunteers*, New York: Free Press,1957.

22. It is not clear either what the difference between opposing and reluctant are, nor what we should expect if others are opposing rather than just reluctant.

23. *The Active Society*, 350.

24. Ibid., 314.

25. Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*[1970], London: Sage 1990.

26. *The Active Society*, 12-13.

27. Ibid., 13.

28. E.g., Herbert A. Simon, *Administrative Behavior*, New York: Free Press, 1957.

29. Michael D. Cohen, James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17 (1972) 1-25. James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, *Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations*, Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1976.

30. Cohen, March, and Olsen, "A Garbage Can Model...", 1.

31. Ibid., 2.

32. *The Active Society*, 399.

33. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*[1893], New York: Macmillan, 1984.

34. See, e.g. Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, " Framing Process and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000) 611-639 @ 625-627.

35. David A. Snow, E. Burke Rochford, jr., Steven K. Worden and Robert D. Benford, "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization and Movement Participation," *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986), 464-481.

36. Benford and Snow, "Framing Process...", 627-628.

37. David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest. In *Frontiers of Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992, 133-155.

38. See, e.g., S. Valocci, "The Emergence of the Integrationist Ideology in the Civil Rights Movement," *Social Problems* 43 (1996) 116-130; G.I. Williams and R.H. Williams, "All We Want is Equality: Rhetorical Framing in the Fathers' Rights Movement," in *Images of Issues*, ed. Joel Best, New York: DeGruyter, 1995, 191-212.

39. See, e.g., S. Cable and T. Shriver, "Production and the Extrapolation of Meaning in the Environmental Justice Movement," *Sociological Spectrum* 15 (1995) 419-442; S.M. Capek, "The' Environmental Justice' Frame: A Conceptual Discussion and Application," *Social Problems* 40 (1993) 5-24.

40. Robert D. Benford, "Frame Disputes within the Nuclear Disarmament Movement," *Social Forces* 71 (1993) 677-701.

41. H.H. Haines, *Against Capital Punishment: The Anti-Death Penalty Movement in America, 1972-1994*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

42. Benford, "Frame Disputes...", 690.

43. *The Active Society*, 517, emphasis original.

44. Ibid., 517.

45. Fuchs, *Against Essentialism*.

46. Paul DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48 (1983) 147-160.

47. *The Active Society*, 516.

48. Ibid., 516-517, emphasis added.

49. Cohen, March, and Olsen, "A Garbage Can Model," 1.

50. Scott, *Organizations*, 268-270.

51. Paul R. Lawrence and Jay W. Lorsch, *Organization and Environment*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967; John W. Meyer, W. Richard Scott, and David Strang, "Centralization, Fragmentation and School District Complexity," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 32 (1987) 186-201.

52. *The Active Society*, 112-113.

53. Lawrence and Lorsch, *Organization and Environment*.

54. John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure and Myth and Ceremony," *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (1977) 340-363.

55. John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, "The Structure of Educational Organizations," in *Environments and Organizations*, ed. Marshall W. Meyer, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978, 78-109.

56. Stephan Fuchs, "Positivism is the Organizational Myth of Science," *Perspectives on Science* 1 (1993) 1-21.

57. See, e.g., Dimaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited" and *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

58. Dimaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited," 150-154.

59. Meyer and Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations..."; Fuchs, *Against Essentialism*.

60. Dimaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited."

61. Simon, *Administrative Behavior*.

62. Ibid.

63. See, Robert Merton, "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action," *American Sociological Review* 1 (1936) 894-904.

64. Fuchs, *Against Essentialism*, Ch. 3.

65. *The Active Society*, 263-266.

66. Ibid., 265, emphasis original.

67. Ibid., 283.

68. Ibid., 286-291.

69. Alfred D. Chandler, *Strategy and Structure* , Cambridge: MIT Press, 1962.

70. See, e.g. Richard H. Hall, *Organizations: Structures, Processes, Outcomes* , Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2002: 152-159.

71. W. Richard Scott, "Professional Employees in a Bureaucratic Structure: Social Work," in *The Semi-Professions and Their Organization*, ed. Amitai Etzioni, New York: Free Press,1969, 82-144.

72. Meyer and Rowan, "The Structure of Educational Organizations."

73. Fuchs, *Against Essentialism*, 134-136.

74. See, e.g., Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, New York: Bedminster Press, 1968, 973-975.

75. M. Feldman, *Order Without Design*, Stanford: Stanford University Press,1989.

76. Fuchs, *Against Essentialism*, 132-136.

77. Charles Perrow, *Normal Accidents: Living With High-Risk Technologies*, New York: Basic Books, 1984.

78. Vaughan, "The Dark Side of Organizations."

79. Diane Vaughan, *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture and Deviance at NASA*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996

80. Charles Perrow, "Normal Accident at Three Mile Island," *Society*, 18 (1981) 17-26.

81. See, e.g., the discussion of mixed-scanning decision-making, *The Active Society*, 286-288, and the discussion of consensus-building noted above in note 19.

82. Perrow, *Normal Accidents*.

83. Karl Weick, *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

84. P.R. Schulman, "The Logic of Organizational Irrationality," *Administration and Society*, 21 (1989) 31-33

85. See, e.g., Wiebe Bijker, *Of Bicycles, Bakelites and Bulbs: Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999; Harry M. Collins and Trevor Pinch, *The Golem at Large: What You Should Know About Technology*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

86. *The Golem at Large*, Ch. 1.

87. Ibid., 18.

88. Though the acceptance of the social/technical distinction is not secure. (See Bruno Latour, "Where are the Missing Masses? Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts," in *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, ed. Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992, 225-258.

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90. Ramesh Mishra, *The Welfare State in Crisis: Social Thought and Social Change*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984, 26-100.

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92. Marcia K. Meyers and Judy M. Lee, "Working Poor: How Are Families Faring?," *Children and Youth Services Review* 25 (2003) 177-201.

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94. Robyn M. Dawes, "Social Dilemmas, Economic Self-Interest and Evolutionary Theory," in *Morality, Rationality and Efficiency: New Perspectives on Socioeconomics*, ed. Richard M. Coughlin, Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1991, 17-40.

95. Steven Kerr, "On the Folly of Rewarding A, While Hoping for B," *Academy of Management Journal* 18 (1975) 769-783.

96. *The Active Society*, 175.

97. Ibid., 176.

98. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

99. See David J. Hess, *Science Studies: An Advanced Introduction*, New York: NYU Press, 1997, for a review of the field of Science Studies.

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101. There is, however, an important limit to this, since complete monopolization tends to produce dogmatism and a lack of innovation. Innovation in knowledge production tends to occur when there are a small number of knowledge producing networks (see Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.)

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103. Vaughan, "The Dark Side of Organizations," 278.

104. Perrow, *Complex Organizations*.

105. *The Active Society*, 516-517.