

# The Revenge of Gratuitousness on Utilitarianism

## An Investigation Into the Causes and Consequences of a Collective Repression

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*This essay seeks to demonstrate that the spread of utilitarian rationalism within developed Western societies has had two crucial consequences: (a) gratuitousness and expressiveness, as irrepressible human needs, have been crushed "at the door" of utilitarian organizations but then have surreptitiously re-entered through the window, camouflaging themselves in forms that render them difficult to recognize and enable them to evade the mechanisms of social censorship that protect the image of organizations as the uncontested domain of instrumental rationality, and (b) the expert knowledge produced about organizations since the beginning of the last century has for almost 80 years ignored the expressive dimension of organizational life. From this point of view, the scientific community of organizational scholars has displayed an astonishing sort of collective repression. The forms taken by this repression and the expedients used to reduce the cognitive dissonance inevitably provoked by evidence of what has been repressed are examined.*

**Keywords:** *gratuitousness; utilitarianism; organizational culture; organizational knowledge*

**M**y experience in the field of ethnographic research induces me to believe that in every culture there exist polarities expressing an opposition or complementarity between extremes and conditioning the way in which members sharing the culture perceive, analyze, and structure

their experience of reality. It would be difficult to deny that among these polarities, one that occupies a place of central importance in the developed Western societies is the twofold concept of gratuitousness and utility: the distinction between *gratuitous* action, for which no recompense or reward is expected, and *inter-*

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*ested* action, intended to procure a specific benefit, of whatever kind, for the actor. The gratuitousness-utility binomial also evokes the more general distinction between expressiveness and instrumentality—between, that is, *expressive* action (or aesthetic, in the general sense of the term), shaped by urges and emotions, and *impressive* (pragmatic) action, molded by reason in function of the objective or purpose pursued (Witkin, 1974)—and it is contiguous to and partly overlaps with other polarities: art and science, aesthetic-intuitive and logical-scientific knowledge, play and work, contemplation and activity.

Today it is widely recognized that these distinctions do not reflect an order intrinsic in reality; rather, they are culturally determined. As I have argued elsewhere (Gagliardi, 1996), they have ancient roots in the Western societies, but they reinforced and amplified themselves beneath the rational utilitarianism that spread from the second half of the 18th century onwards and unmistakably characterized that profound cultural transformation that we customarily identify with the advent of modernity and that Max Weber called the “disenchantment” of the world. Although during the Renaissance, art and technique, functionality and beauty, and logic and eloquence were difficult to separate, both conceptually and in the organization of social life, with the scientific and Industrial Revolution, these distinctions turned into dichotomies, and precise hierarchies gradually arose among the values to which these dichotomies referred: Logical-scientific knowledge asserted itself as a superior form of knowledge to aesthetic-intuitive knowledge; the beautiful and the gratuitous were subordinated to the useful and the practical; activity, connected with the exercise of the cognitive faculties of the intellect and its products (science and technology), was conceptually and socially separated from contemplation and imagination and was relegated to the secondary sphere of consumption and leisure; and work and production were accorded greater importance than play and idleness. In this cultural climate, the bureaucratic model of administration, grounded on the principles of instrumental rationality, legality, and certainty, gradually supplanted other forms of administration of the economy and the state by virtue of its intrinsic technical superiority. Within society, utilitarian organizations, that is, forms of social aggregation deliberately constructed to achieve specific ends and largely governed by instrumental rationality, progressively replaced or infiltrated, in a relentless process still ongoing today, communitarian forms of

social aggregation grounded on shared values, traditions, and sentiments largely sheltered against the tyranny of calculation.

As a result of these processes, gratuitousness tended to be expelled or, at any rate, was considered to be, if not illegitimate, then, inappropriate in the world of utilitarian organizations that constituted an increasingly broad sphere of institutional and social life. If modern organizations are by definition the domain of a legal-rational ethos and are characterized by pragmatic forms of behavior shaped by the practical ends to which they are directed, they cannot accommodate expressive and disinterested behaviors driven by impulses, emotions, and ideal aspirations. And if these behaviors do exist within organizations, they can only be secondary, irrelevant, and probably harmful and therefore are to be eliminated. The thesis that I shall seek to demonstrate from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge is that the spread of these conceptions and cultural attitudes has had two crucial consequences: (a) gratuitousness and expressiveness, as irrepressible human needs, have been crushed at the door, so to speak, of utilitarian organizations but then have surreptitiously reentered through the window, camouflaging themselves in forms that render them difficult to recognize and enable them to evade the mechanisms of social censorship, which protect the image of organizations as the uncontested domain of instrumental rationality; and (b) the expert knowledge produced about organizations, in that particular branch of social theory that is the theory of complex organizations, has for more than 80 years ignored (if we can date the origins of discipline to the beginning of the last century and the studies by Taylor) the expressive dimension of organizational life. From this point of view, the scientific community of organizational scholars has displayed an astonishing sort of collective repression. In what follows, I shall first examine the forms taken by this repression and the expedients used both to reduce the cognitive dissonance inevitably provoked by evidence of what has been repressed and to justify that evidence when realistically surrendering to it.

If we rapidly review the history of organizational thought, we note that until the end of the 1930s, organizations were described as impeccable social architectures governed by universal laws and administered in accordance with universal principles. This conceptualization is, in part, understandable to the extent that organization theory at that time was essentially normative theory in that it sought to identify the

features that an organization should have rather than to investigate the functioning mechanisms of real organizations. However, any normative science (i.e., a discipline defined by a task to undertake rather than by an object to analyze) is founded on positive sciences (or sciences of the object), and just as the science of constructions cannot disregard, for example, the laws of physics, so a science that seeks to identify the constructive principles of a social system able to cooperate to achieve a specific end cannot disregard, for example, the psychological laws that influence the human willingness to cooperate. Although, in those years, psychoanalysis had already brought to light the complexity and ambiguity of the workings of the psyche, organization scholars preferred to base their normative theorems on a single utilitarian postulate: that individuals will cooperate in achievement of a collective end only if they receive material and direct benefits in exchange.

Even when, at the end of the 1930s in the United States, the first large-scale empirical research took place on the conditions that favor the productivity of human labor—the celebrated Hawthorne experiments—the hypotheses that the project set out to test were wholly inspired by rationalist utilitarianism: It was assumed that people work more if they receive more in terms of pay, physical comfort, and pace of work. And it was the Hawthorne experiments that first obliged organization scholars to reckon with gratuitousness, because they showed that the workers increased their productivity not because of better lighting, longer breaks, or higher wages but only because they wanted to please the researchers, with whom they had spontaneously established human, disinterested relations. The conclusions were soon drawn: Emphasis was placed not on the gratuitous nature of the action but on the importance of the sentiments in determining whatever action. Sentiments are a resource to be deployed in the achievement of organizational ends, and they are therefore a further factor to consider when constructing the algorithm that establishes the efficiency of a cooperative system. The Hawthorne experiments gave rise to counseling as a corporate function—and as a profession—intended to enhance the psychological well-being assumed to be closely connected with productivity.

From the 1940s onwards, when organizational studies became increasingly characterized as positive science and interest grew in the explanation of the functioning mechanisms of real organizations, the focus was still on the instrumental, material, and mea-

surable aspects of the phenomena observed. The widespread and implicit idea that organizations are the social artifacts that best embody the rationalist ideal of modernity filtered the interpretation of data: The company was viewed as essentially an economy and not as a community, and the concrete behaviors observed were analyzed in terms of their distance or divergence, which was to be corrected, from the cognitive and values-driven components of the implicit model to which reference was being made. Philip Selznick (1949, 1957), who was seemingly influenced by the cynical tradition of European political science, when analyzing the history of the Tennessee Valley Authority (the agency created by the U.S. federal government to develop the Tennessee Valley), lucidly argued that all rationally designed organizations become institutions. That is to say, they gradually lose their purity as sterile mechanical apparatuses for the efficient distribution and coordination of tasks and become, to use Selznick's apt phrase, "infused with" ideality and gratuitousness beyond the specific exigencies of the technical task to perform and thereby acquire their own distinctive character across time.

Selznick considered this process to be pathological. Symptomatically, when applying notions developed by clinical psychology to social systems, he defined informal organization and ideology as defense mechanisms: Just as in the development of the personality there exist unconscious urges whose expression the superego or society prohibits, which are then transformed by means of defensive and adaptive mechanisms, so the organizational system has needs that cannot be legitimately expressed in the formal organization and that seek an outlet, on one hand, in the spontaneity of everyday informal activities and relations and on the other, in the idealization of the organization's role and character. If these ideals are appreciated for themselves and not as instrumental to the organization's original or primary purpose, the process of institutionalization, which turns the organization into a desirable object of identification for individuals and a vehicle of collective gratification, is intrinsically a degenerative process.

Although Selznick's realistic and interpretative approach was taken up by other scholars—in particular, Gouldner (1954), Blau (1955), Dalton (1959) and Crozier (1963)—until the early 1970s, organization and management studies were largely dominated by a rationalist and positivist paradigm, which imposed the analysis of relations among objective and measurable variables as the prime purpose of research and

ignored the ideational and symbolic aspects of organizational life. It was only at the end of the 1970s that there arose a renewed interest in the cultural study of organizations, from the macro perspective of so-called new institutionalism (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) and from the micro perspective of so-called organizational symbolism (Dandridge, Mitroff, & Joyce, 1980; Pondy, Frost, Morgan, & Drandidge, 1983; Turner, 1990). The latter intellectual movement, in particular, suggested considering organizations as cultures, characterized by distinct paradigms to be analyzed using holistic and interpretative methods. Despite attempts by the custodians of the dominant paradigm to restrict this movement's spread by means of mechanisms for the social control of intellectual output (Cummings & Frost, 1995), it rapidly became one of the main currents of thought in organization studies, and it produced an extraordinary abundance of studies and research. The intellectual manifesto of the symbolist approach can be summed up by Duby's (1986) observation that every productive practice is equally determined by the practical exigencies that have engendered it and by particular worldviews and that no productive practice is exclusively such, because it simultaneously becomes a symbolic practice: a way of appropriating reality by imposing one's particular view of reality on it.

Scholars of organizational cultures showed that organizations are replete with sensual and emotional experiences, rituals, ceremonies, and dramas. They explored the interweaving between technical requirements and expressive needs, fully highlighting the forms assumed by the gratuitous in utilitarian organizations. They showed that usually gratuitous actions evade social censorship by disguising themselves as pragmatic actions: Gratuitousness has learned to appear useful in order to survive. (Actually, also the opposite happens, so that pragmatic actions camouflage themselves as generosity: When a company executive was asked about the role of gift giving in his organization, he cited the gold Rolex watch presented to employees on achieving a certain seniority, but the tax authorities had already determined the strictly retributive nature of these "gifts," the value of which was stated on the pay packet and subject to tax! More generally, ceremonial compliance with institutionalized myths and values, though loosely coupled with organizational operations, may serve very practical purposes of legitimation and accreditation).

Relying on empirical findings of organizational culture research, I submit that the forms assumed by

gratuitousness in utilitarian organizations can be classified into four basic types: informal everyday gratuitousness, behaviors expressing substantial rationality, ritual squandering, and innocent ornaments.

#### INFORMAL EVERYDAY GRATUITOUSNESS

The first category comprises the gratuitous actions undertaken, as Selznick (1957) pointed out, within the framework of the informal organization (gifts, celebrations, favors, and every other token of affect and esteem among persons), recognized as such and tolerated—within limits of space and time, implicitly and usually rigidly defined—in the name of the alleged and already mentioned relation between satisfaction and productivity.

#### BEHAVIORS EXPRESSING SUBSTANTIAL RATIONALITY

Forms of behavior inspired by organizational values, which are, therefore, manifestations of substantial rationality, are not usually justified as such but rather are put forward as instrumental to the solution of concrete problems facing the organization, even when they prove not to be functional to the purpose. These actions, which are also gratuitous in the sense that they are inappropriate to the circumstances, are not only tolerated but encouraged by the organizational culture in that they are inspired by models of behavior that in the past have generated gratification and success and as a consequence have been idealized. They are likely to be obstinately and compulsively reiterated despite their obvious failure to solve problems, and they seem to be the most frequent cause of the decline and death of utilitarian organizations (Gagliardi, 1986).

#### RITUAL SQUANDERING

Connected with the behaviors inspired by substantial rationality is ritual squandering: costly actions touted as functional to the solution of specific operational problems but which in fact serve to solemnize adherence to the founding values of the organizational identity. In the course of these collective actions, which have strong emotional resonance and are usu-

ally performed in a rigorously prescribed sequence, the organizational community celebrates its successes, crowns its heroes, and reaffirms faith in its ideals. What characterizes these processes and makes evident their ritual nature to the external observer is the squandering of resources, which is a means to signify that the values shared are inestimable. For instance, although the justification for some corporate gatherings is that they enhance communication and coordination, their nature as praising rituals is immediately apparent. Carefully organized in luxurious hotels in beautiful surroundings and standing in stark contrast to the frugal treatment usually accorded to employees on routine business trips, rewards are distributed for outstanding achievements and thus reinforce the social identities of the members rewarded, while motivating the others to emulate them. It is less easy to recognize that planning processes are renewal rituals, which satisfy emotional needs but whose practical outcomes are trifling when compared to the enormous quantities of time, energy, and resources devoted to them. Broms and Gahmberg (1983) have interpreted strategic planning as a form of self-communication and the strategic plan as a mantra or a mirror in which the organization sees what it should be like reflected—a code that transforms the corporate strategy from a formula for action into mythic thought. This transformation makes it difficult to show that resources have been used inefficiently and allows the opposite to be assumed.

An extreme example of ritual squandering is reported by Wright (as cited in Martin & Siehl, 1983) in his description of the culture at General Motors in the 1970s. At that company, testifying to the rigid subordination of the periphery to corporate headquarters and the value of unswerving devotion to top management was, among others, the ritual with which executives from headquarters were greeted at the airport as they visited outlying sites, sales subsidiaries, or production plants. The ritual, which for top managers resembled the treatment usually reserved for heads of states on official visits to other countries, was justified on the grounds that the visitor had scant knowledge of the city's layout, so it was therefore entirely legitimate and practical. In some cases, the deference was on the extraordinary scale described in the following story:

In preparing for the sales official's trip to this particular city, the Chevrolet zone sales people learned from Detroit that the boss liked to have a refrigerator full of cold beer, sandwiches, and fruit in his room to snack

on at night before going to bed. They lined up a suite in one of the city's better hotels, rented a refrigerator, and ordered the food and beer. However, the door to the suite was too small to accommodate the icebox. The hotel apparently nixed a plan to rip out the door and part of the adjoining wall. So the quick-thinking zone sales people hired a crane and operator, put them on the roof of the hotel, knocked out a set of windows in the suite, and lowered and shoved the refrigerator into the room through this gaping hole. (p. 60)

This episode, which was regarded as "normal" at General Motors, would be stigmatized by auditors, managers, or employees of other companies only because they are used to different forms of ritual squandering, of which they are just as unaware as the General Motors employees in the case described by Wright.

### INNOCENT ORNAMENTS

Examination of the final category—what I have called innocent ornaments—permits reflection on the meager amount of space conceded to beauty by utilitarian organizations. Beauty that is "useless" (in selling a product, promoting the company's image, or obtaining any other advantage in exchange), as well as play or contemplation, has no place in those organizations. Aesthetic experience, understood in the general sense as sensory experience and not just as experience of what is socially defined as beautiful or as art, is rigidly subordinate to intellectual experience. The language of words as it performs its literal and purely denotative function—written communication, in particular, as the bureaucratic act *par excellence*—is preferred to other systems of symbolization and communication, and analytical and discursive sequentiality is given priority over the holistic presentation of sensorially perceivable forms. In general, little tolerance is shown for anything expressive of the imagination, of the emotions, or of individualism. The tendency for the big corporations to require their managers to comply with rigidly defined dress codes, as epitomized by the anonymous grey suit, is well known. But the adoption of colorful and informal garb in the entertainment industry expresses an identical cultural pressure for uniformity.

The artifacts resulting from expressive action and that are not, directly or indirectly, production tools can therefore only fulfill a decorative function as innocent ornaments, which, although they do not serve a practical purpose, are not obtrusive; rather, they are super-

fluous forms with no attention-grabbing ambitions. Within these limits, the members of the organization seize every chance to embellish their physical surroundings and every opportunity afforded by work procedures to beautify the routine of organizational life, giving color—in the literal sense of the word—to the workplace, to a memorandum, or to an action so that they can express their affects and their secret ambitions. But contemporary ethnographic research has shown that these artifacts, given the tendency for matter to endure in time, are able tenaciously and incessantly to transmit particular cultural messages and stimuli. They thus foster the spread and sharing of special modes of feeling and tacit knowledge in a manner all the more efficacious because it evades intellectual and bureaucratic control. From this point of view, expressive artifacts offer a valuable hermeneutic dimension for interpreting the culture of an organization. They may function as clefts in the collective unconscious that reveal deep-lying modes of feeling different from or opposed to the rationalizations that the members of the organization sometimes propound, entirely in good faith, even to themselves (Gagliardi, 1990). For example, an analysis conducted in 1985 of the photographs decorating the annual statements of five leading computer manufacturers for the previous 10 years showed that each company had its specific and implicit vision of the outside world (especially the market) and of its relationship with it. Moreover, as one might expect, these visions differed significantly, even though the companies all operated in the same sector. Yet the theories of the world embodied in the photographs were radically different from those recounted by the texts, and they provided more plausible explanation for decisions taken regarding organization, technology, or product range (Dougherty & Kunda, 1990). I shall conclude my analysis by recounting an episode that vividly illustrates these dynamics.

Some years ago, I was conducting ethnographic research in the information systems division of a large industrial group. The purpose of the research was to improve relations between the division in question, which handled information services for the entire group, and the operational divisions. The information systems division was not generally perceived by its customers as a provider of services but as a power center, striving to impose their diagnoses on the operations heads. Often, it was alleged, the information systems division imposed "advanced" technical solutions that were unmanageable and pointlessly

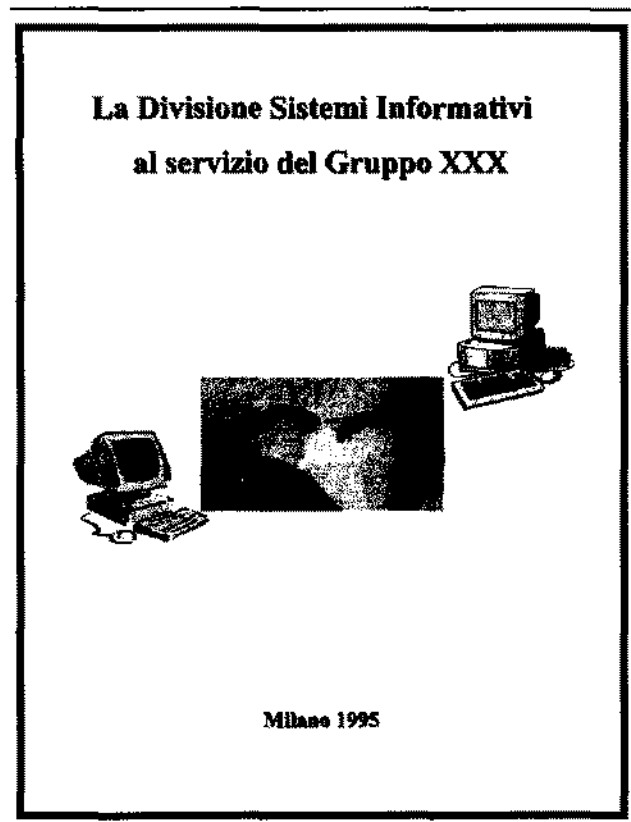


Figure 1: An Innocent Ornament

costly, taking advantage of the fact the customers had no other providers to turn to. The information systems division had responded to accusations of arrogance and "intellectual dogmatism" by mounting a well-organized campaign of communication, propaganda, and training directed at both its customers and its own personnel (the majority of whom were carefully selected information engineers), the intention being to show that its actions were prompted solely by technical rationality and targeted solely on operational efficiency. The results of these efforts had been entirely unsatisfactory, however, and the head of the division showed me the artifacts used during the campaign—booklets, seminar programs, circulars, internal communications—with the disconsolate air of a soldier brooding over his weapons blunted in a lost battle. The item that he showed me with greatest emphasis was a booklet describing the working procedures followed in relations with users, and he carefully explained the spirit of service that had inspired it. The cover of the booklet bore a title consistent with this purpose ("Information Systems Division at the Service of Group XXX"), but my attention was drawn to the innocent illustration that decorated it: a detail

from Michelangelo's fresco of the creation, with the forefingers of God and Adam almost touching, with two computers instead of the two figures.

I asked whether the image alluded to the relationship between the information systems division and the operational divisions and then inquired which of the two subjects corresponded to the Almighty. He was taken aback and looked at the image as if for the first time. Then he answered through gritted teeth, "Us, obviously," and after a pause, added, with evident embarrassment, "I thought it was a good idea. I didn't ask myself why." The gratuitous had once again exacted its revenge on the priests of technical rationality.

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## The Revenge of Gagliardi on Utilitarianism

MARY JO HATCH

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*Pasquale Gagliardi's essay presents ideas of immeasurable importance to ongoing debates about interpretivism and its role in organization studies. In particular, I celebrate his paradoxical rendering of the utilitarian and the gratuitous, which reveals his always aesthetic sensitivities as well as describing some of the ways that paradigms interact. Gagliardi's choice of the term gratuitous, I suggest, is an application of Rorty's method of redescription, an intriguing strategy for paradigmatic interaction in its own right. In the end, however, I complain that Gagliardi may go too far when he employs one of the tactics he describes (disguising gratuitousness as useful) to produce a typology of gratuitous things. Ironic or not, typologies frighten me.*

**Keywords:** *interpretivism; paradoxical reasoning; deconstruction; redescription*

Many years ago, as I was launching my academic career, Pasquale Gagliardi made a gratuitous intervention in my development as a scholar. At an elegant hotel gracing the banks of Italy's Lake Maggiore, Sandy Ehrlich and I presented findings from a study of managerial humor to a group of 30 or so Valhalla warriors (SCOS Workshop participants). In the course of our presentation, I displayed an overhead slide showing, in pie chart form, the distribution of types of humor used by the managers (sarcasm, irony, overstatement, understatement, etc.). Pasquale, visibly agitated, requested a private conversation, and at the conclusion of the session, we made our way into the crisp autumn air of Belgirate, the charming local village. Crossing the street to take in the serene expanse of water, I turned to

face an apoplectic Pasquale and was met by a torrent of criticisms each punctuated by an oversized gesture. The central thesis, as I recall, was the inappropriateness of pie charts in the land of humor, but most memorable was Pasquale's barrage of rhetorical questions: "What are you doing? Oh dear, have you lost your senses? How can you put humor in a pie?"

As I drank in both the intellectual and aesthetic import of this esteemed professor's message, I became aware of several pairs of wide eyes probing us from the security of the hotel lobby across the road. I can only imagine what my SCOS friends were surmising about this sensorially loaded initiation rite, but for me it marked the moment of my interpretive turn. So it is with fond memory of our shared history as Valhalla warriors, and with the adoration of a grateful former



Table 1  
Gagliardi's Deconstruction of the Gratuitous and the Utilitarian

<i>Gratuitous</i>	<i>Utilitarian</i>
detached	interested
expressive	impressive (pragmatic)
aesthetic	instrumental
emotional	rational
beautiful	useful
Compare to: art	Compare to: science
aesthetic-intuitive knowledge	logical-scientific knowledge
play	work
contemplation	action
imagination	conformity

student, that I greet this latest essay from Professor Gagliardi. It is also with delight that I return the favor bestowed upon me on the banks of Lake Maggiore with this open letter to my colleague and dear friend:

Dear Pasquale,

How could you? A typology? A list of gratuitous things? Objects? Dichotomies? What on earth are you doing? Can it be that you, too, have succumbed to the powers of rationality? Oh dear, what are we to do?

My complaint, dear Pasquale, whom I honor and bear such affection toward, is that, as I assume you know better than anyone in this socially constructed world, the gratuitous is never merely gratuitous; it comes premixed with the often ugly (and hence equally sensuously derivative) instrumental, utilitarian, pragmatic, rational, and necessary. So how can the world reduce so easily into such neat piles that, heaven forbid, we might count them out and display their relative frequency of occurrence in a pie chart?

Respectfully yours,

Mary Jo

Let me explain where I think Gagliardi goes awry and, as I do so, tell you what I found provocative and insightful about this essay. Gagliardi begins by deconstructing modernist preferences for the utilitarian in organization studies. I took the liberty of arranging all the terms offered by Gagliardi's deconstruction to highlight the dichotomization he engages in this essay (see Table 1).

Gagliardi's deconstruction exposes the privilege given to the vocabulary displayed on the right side of the table, while he proposes to bring the vocabulary of the left column out of the shadow of its modernist repression. This he does by pointing to the many ways in which, paradoxically, the gratuitous has continued

to exert its influence in organizations in spite of being given very little regard or encouragement. Gagliardi's thesis, as I understand it, is that this move of gratuitousness on utilitarian territory, once it becomes overt, will return organizations and organization studies to aesthetic-pragmatic balance. The revenge on the utilitarian, then, occurs when, on the way to reestablishing this balance, the gratuitous manages to hoist the utilitarian on its own (i.e., the gratuitous's) petard (e.g., Gagliardi's closing example).

Of course, Professor Gagliardi understands better than I the workings of paradox on the utilitarian mind. He obviously wants not to replace the modernist with an interpretive vocabulary but only to let the two complement and perhaps converse with one another. His great fondness for the paradoxical fits this agenda well, and he illustrates his ability to use paradox many times over in the course of writing the essay with statements such as,

1. "They [culture researchers] showed that usually gratuitous actions evade social censorship by disguising themselves as pragmatic actions: gratuitousness has learned to appear useful in order to survive."
2. "No productive practice is exclusively such, because it simultaneously becomes a symbolic practice, a way of appropriating reality by imposing one's particular view of reality upon it" (citing Duby, 1986).
3. "Ceremonial compliance with institutionalized myths and values, though loosely coupled with organizational operations, may serve very practical purposes of legitimation and accreditation."

Gagliardi explains that the rise of modern organizations and organization studies was coincident with the rise of utilitarianism, and so it is not surprising that organizational researchers concerned with organizational aesthetics are frustrated by the problem of justifying a new vocabulary. Gagliardi's revenge of the gratuitous reminds me of Richard Rorty's (1989) directive to liberal ironists to redescribe old concepts from time to time in order to renew selves and revive disciplines and hence to never take one or the other too seriously. Redescription involves "recycling old concepts using new (even contradictory) language for the sake of replacing a worn out vocabulary with a new one" (Hatch, 1999, p. 76), and gratuitousness is the old concept Gagliardi reclaims from its negative associations (e.g., with sex and violence in films).

The problem redescription introduces is that it can be difficult to get the process going due to resistance by those holding power who are likely to advocate

keeping the old vocabulary in place (presumably, these are conservative nonironists). Gagliardi's paradoxical intervention is not a frontal attack like redescription—he is sneakier. Using deconstruction, Gagliardi exposes the privilege enjoyed by the utilitarian vocabulary and the repression of its other—gratuitousness—and then presents evidence of the continued presence/denial of the gratuitous within the dominant discourse of organization studies.

By rendering paradoxical the existence of both the utilitarian and the gratuitous, Gagliardi shows how gratuitousness endures even in the most utilitarian of times and places. It is here that he shocked me by concluding his paradoxical argument with a distinctly modern typology of gratuitous things found in utilitarian organizations (everyday gratuitousness, ritual squandering, etc.). The examples of items on Gagliardi's list are profoundly paradoxical, each demonstrating again how the utilitarian and gratuitous are mixed together by acts of interpreting them. However, by typologizing, I worry that Gagliardi panders to positivist ontology and thus encourages thinking about variables and objective measures of the gratuitous. But then, perhaps it is I who go too far. After all, this is not a very good typology; its items are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. In my heart, I hope that this list is Gagliardi's revenge on utilitarianism: If taken up by modernists, won't it be fun to watch as

they count out instances of innocent ornament and discover their own ritual squandering?

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EDITORS' SPECIAL

## Two Many Birds in One Pie? A Reply to Mary Jo Hatch's Comment

PASQUALE GAGLIARDI  
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As flattered as I am by Mary Jo's perception of myself as a mighty professor, then or ever, the rest of her comments leave me bewildered. The only thing I can say in my defense (if a defense is in order) is that

my teacher in the matter of typologies is one Jorge Luis Borges: "animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed." The proof of a typology is in its taste; I can't help if our tastes differ, Mary Jo.