

From BAH to *ba*: Valence Theory and the Future of Organization

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Abstract

This thesis traces the history of organization from the society of Ancient Athens, through the medieval Church, the Industrial Age, and the 20th century – the latter characterized by the Bureaucratic, Administratively controlled, and Hierarchical (BAH) organization – until today’s contemporary reality of Ubiquitous Connectivity and Pervasive Proximity (UCaPP). Organizations are rarely, if ever, entirely BAH or entirely UCaPP, but do tend to have tendencies and behaviours that are more consistent with either end of a spectrum delineated by this duality. Valence Theory defines organization as being an emergent entity whose members (individuals or organizations) are connected via two or more of five valence (meaning uniting, bonding, interacting, reacting, combining) relationships. Each of these relationships – Economic, Socio-psychological, Identity, Knowledge, and Ecological – has a fungible (mercantile or tradable) aspect, and a *ba*-aspect that creates a space-and-place of common, tacit understanding of self-identification-in-relation, mutual sense of

purpose, and volition to action. Organizations with more-BAH tendencies will emphasize the fungible valence forms, and primarily tend towards Economic valence dominance; more-UCaPP organizations tend to emphasize *ba*-valence forms, and are more balanced among the relative valence strengths.

The empirical research investigates five organizations spanning the spectrum from *über*-BAH to archetypal UCaPP and discovers how BAH-organizations replace the complexity of human dynamics in social systems with the complication of machine-analogous procedures that enable structural interdependence, individual responsibility, and leader accountability. In contrast, UCaPP-organizations encourage and enable processes of continual emergence by valuing and promoting complex interactions in an environment of individual autonomy and agency, collective responsibility, and mutual accountability. The consequential differences in how each type of organization operates manifest as the methods through which organizations accommodate change, coordination, evaluation, impetus, power dynamics, sense-making, and view of people. Particular attention is paid to the respective natures of leadership, and effecting organizational transformation from one type to the other.

Set in counterpoint against Zen-like, artistically constructed conversations with a thought-provoking interior *sensei*, the thesis offers a new foundational model of organization for the current cultural epoch that enables people to assume their responsibility in creating relationships and perceiving effects in the context of a UCaPP world.