

THE ROLE OF WORK:  
A *EUDAIMONISTIC* PERSPECTIVE

MICHAEL F. REBER\*

FOR MORE THAN TWO CENTURIES in industrialized societies an inherent problem has persisted regarding the role of education and work. This is due in part to the entrenched cultural dogma of the Cartesian/Newtonian paradigm which views the world as a mechanical device and people as organic machines operating within such a world. More recently, it includes the scientific management approach of Frederick W. Taylor which defines individuals as “human capital” to be used and disposed of at will for the benefit of an organizational enterprise or national economy (Banathy 1991, 1992, 1996, 2000; Makiguchi 2002; Dewey 1997, 2011; Laszlo 1972; Miller 1990, 2000; Savall 2010).

In opposition to this view the progressive educational movement was born and John Dewey, as one of its champions, developed an “organic” or holistic approach to education and work (Tanner 1991). Over the course of time Dewey’s (2011) approach to education and work became the cornerstone of holistic education and more recently the *eudaimonistic*

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\*Michael F. Reber ([bastiatrevival@gmail.com](mailto:bastiatrevival@gmail.com)) is coordinator of the [Frédéric Bastiat Revival Blog](#), an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Value and Decision Science of the Graduate School of Decision Science and Technology at Tokyo Institute of Technology, and a freelance systems thinking consultant in free market economics and trade, government relations, crisis communications, and human resources.

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philosophical school (school of self-actualization ethics) in American culture (ibid.; Norton 1976, 1991).

In parallel with Dewey's progressivism, the field of systems thinking was developing and a prevalent belief emerged, which holds that humanity is moving toward a greater consciousness about itself, the universe, and its relationship with such a universe (Banathy 1991, 1992, 1996, 2000; Bertalanffy 1968; Capra 1982, 1997, 1999, 2004; Laszlo 1972). Pierre Teilhard de Chardin refers to this as the Law of Complexity-Consciousness and states that "evolution proceeds in the direction of increasing complexity, and that this increase in complexity is accompanied by a corresponding rise of consciousness" (Capra 1999, 304). Likewise, Ludwig von Bertalanffy, dubbed the "Father of General Systems Theory," refers to it as anamorphosis. Anamorphosis is, in the biological sense, "the tendency" for an organism "to evolve toward increasing complexity" (Davidson 1983, 223, 227). Bertalanffy also applied this idea toward all system organizations in his search for "natural laws of organization, laws of systems" (ibid., 223). Bela H. Banathy has referred to this as the movement from evolutionary consciousness towards conscious evolution (1996, 313):

We are at a critical juncture of societal evolution where unprecedented human fulfillment as well as a loss of direction, despair, and destruction, are equally possible. However, we are not at the mercy of evolutionary forces but have the potential and the opportunity to give direction to societal evolution by [systemic] design, provided we create an evolutionary vision for the future and develop the will and the competence to fulfill that vision in our lives, in our families, in the systems in which we live, in our communities and societies, and in the global system of humanity.

I prefer to define "collective consciousness of humanity" as *the collective and conscious intent, will, capacity, and ability of humankind to have a sense of wholeness and belonging to the universe, a consciousness that continuously renews and transforms humanity to a higher holarchical level of existence*. Therefore, it is the purpose of this paper to propose 1) a *endaimonistic* definition of education and work and 2) a systems thinking approach toward human resources in order to create a more humane world.

## The Role of Education in a Free Society

### *Philosophical Underpinnings*

Understanding the role of education in a free society means understanding the role of education in a self-actualizing society, where self-actualization is the actualization of an individual's inherent potential worth. Therefore, a self-actualizing society is one in which two purposes as related to *educere* (the drawing out of one's inherent potential) are fulfilled: a) "enhancement of the quality of life of human beings" and b) provision of "the necessary but non-self-suppliable conditions for optimizing opportunities for individual self-discovery and self-development" (Norton 1991, 80).

According to the eudaimonistic philosopher David Norton, enhancement of the quality of life means "the acquisition by human beings of moral virtues, where moral virtues are understood as dispositions of character that are (1) personal utilities; (2) intrinsic goods; and (3) social utilities" (ibid., 80-81). The kinds of virtues Norton employs are cardinal virtues, which are virtues that are "indispensable to worthy living of every kind"—wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice—and distributed virtues, which are virtues that are "indispensable to worthy lives of some, but not all, kinds" (ibid., 81). Furthermore, a virtue consists of the practices (what Howard Gardner calls domains), the good of the whole life, and the good of the community life (Gardner 1993, 1999a, 1999b, 2006). An equation of their relationship can be illustrated as follows:

Practice + The Good of the Whole Life + The Good of the Community Life  
= Virtue

In addition to Norton, Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue*, puts forth the thesis that human life and its activities must be guided by a sound theory of "the good life," that is a life grounded in an Aristotelian sense of the virtues: "The conception of a good has to be expounded in terms of such notions as those of a practice, of the narrative unity of a human life and of a moral tradition" (1984, 258). Also, a conception of *the good life* and with it "the only grounds for the authority of laws and virtues, can only be discovered by entering into those relationships which constitute communities whose central bond is a shared vision of and understanding of goods. To cut oneself off

from shared activity in which one has initially to learn obediently as an apprentice learns, to isolate oneself from the communities which find their point and purpose in such activities, will be to debar oneself from finding any good outside of oneself' (ibid.).

MacIntyre notes that the exercise of the virtues does not "in any way imply that virtues are *only* exercised in the course of...practices" (ibid., 187). A practice, according to MacIntyre, is "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and good involved, are systematically extended" (ibid.). Thus, MacIntyre argues that architecture is a practice but bricklaying is not. Bricklaying is a skill within a practice. The kinds of things MacIntyre calls practices include the arts, sciences, games, and politics in the Aristotelian sense (ibid., 188). Practices sustain communities, but skills do not. Skills are those micro-activities within a practice that assist the practice with achieving internal goods.

Howard Gardner makes this explicit as well in his distinction between intelligence, domains, and fields. An intelligence is "a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture" (Gardner 1999b, 33–34). A domain is "an organized set of activities within a culture, one typically characterized by a specific symbol system and its attendant operations...Any cultural activity in which individuals participate on more than a casual basis, and in which degrees of expertise can be identified and nurtured" (ibid., 82). Examples of domains include physics and engineering. A field, therefore, is "the set of institutions and judges that determine which products within a domain are of merit" (ibid., 1993, 37).

Furthermore, MacIntyre distinguishes between "internal goods" and "external goods." An internal good is a good specified in terms of the practice in question and "can only be identified and recognized by the experience of participating in the practice in question" (MacIntyre 1984, 188–189). In other words, an internal good is the *pursuit of excellence* in a practice. Experts in a specific field who have acquired the relevant experiences of the practice of the field will weigh its worth. On the other hand, an external good

would be something of material or psychological value that is gained as a result of one's contribution to the practice, such as fame, wealth, and/or status.

In addition, when a person acquires these moral virtues, we say that he is living a “meaningful life” or a “good life” or a “happy life.” Norton defines a meaningful life as “a valuable life, and enhancement of the quality of life is enhancement of its value. The value is objective...it is valuable to whoever meets the conditions for appreciation and utilization of value of the particular kind in question. This includes the values-actualizer—her life is intrinsically valuable to her—but extends to such others as fulfill the conditions” (Norton 1991, 81).

Finally, learning, and more importantly, self-actualization, does not happen in isolation and requires necessary and non-self-suppliable conditions to optimize the opportunities for each person to engage in self-discovery and self-development (Norton 1991). In a truly free society which respects the human dignity of each and every person, the best social vehicle for this is voluntary association (Reber 2010). This means that people through their own volition assist one another with acts of human compassion via their collective action, such as with not-for-profit organizations and charities, acts which provide those goods and utilities for self-discovery and self-development.

This belief in “voluntary association” [within] the American experience has come to be defined as the capacity for individuals to live their lives in accordance with the principles of self-government. That is with the understanding that self-government is grounded in the ideal of “justice” as it is embodied in that course of human activity known to us, and expressed so eloquently in our Declaration of Independence, as “The Pursuit of Happiness;” meaning, that happiness is not just a feeling, but both a feeling and a condition.

The Pursuit of Happiness holds that each person is unique and each should discover whom he or she is—to actualize his or her true potential and to live the “good life” within the congeniality and complementarity of personal excellences of his or her fellow members of community. Therefore, through the course of pursuing one's happiness a person is obligated to live up to individual expectations and the expectations of his or her community. And it is within this framework that we subscribe to the notion of limited

government, where each and every member of the community pursues his or her happiness without the restraint of government, but only in the case where one's life, liberty, and property are under threat. (ibid., 1–2)

## The Role of Work: A *Eudaimonistic* Perspective

### *Philosophical Underpinnings*

Returning to our discussion of the “meaningful life” as it relates to education and work, we are led to ask, “Why is the ‘good of one’s life’ contingent upon the practices?” MacIntyre answers this question in relation to the life of a portrait artist. He states that “for what the artist discovers within the pursuit of excellence in portrait painting—and what is true of portrait painting is true of the practice of the fine arts in general—is the good of a certain kind of life” (1984, 190). As we stated earlier, a field is “the set of institutions and judges that determine which products within a domain are of merit.” This merit is what MacIntyre refers to as a set of “standards of excellence and obedience to rules as well as the achievement of goods” (ibid.). By adhering to a set of standards within one’s practice so he may achieve the work that is his to achieve, the practitioner is ubiquitously actualizing his inner potentials and sustaining justice.

Furthermore, Norton (1976) contends that work is not something to satisfy a utilitarian economic agenda or something people hate to do because they have to do it to make a living. Work as discussed here is essential to the unity of life for two reasons. Firstly, “a person is irredeemably and essentially a future to be made present, a potentiality to be progressively actualized, and it is this task of actualization that furnishes the term ‘work’ with its profound meaning” (ibid., 311). In other words, work is what makes a person whole. When an individual is doing the work that is his to do in life, his past, present, and future are all one. Wherever in time we might find this person in his life as he is doing his work, we should find him living out his life as he sees it should be lived out. His past actions build upon the work of his present actions and his present actions build upon the work of his future actions. This is what is meant by “the unity of a life”—Though an individual will never reach his ultimate potential through the work that is his to do, it is

the journey to achieve that potential which defines an individual. *The journey is the purpose and meaning of one's life.*

Secondly, because the practice to which one belongs makes one obligated to the standards of the practice, these standards serve as guides in achieving the work that one feels he must do.

For the goods internal to practices which cannot be achieved without the exercise of the virtues are not the ends pursued by particular individuals on particular occasions, but the excellences specific to those types of practices which one achieves or fails to achieve, moves toward or fails to move toward in virtue of the way in which one pursues one's particular ends or goals on particular occasions, excellences our conception of which changes over time as our goals are transformed. (MacIntyre 1984, 274)

Simply put, “the ends don't justify the means!” One's means must be compatible with one's ends. The goal of *pursuing excellence* in portrait painting does not condone the portrait artist to forego his virtues of justice, truth, and courage in order to create a great painting. In addition, if the portrait artist only cares about external goods—fame, prestige, and money—he loses sight of those ideals that his profession embraces. At the same time, his virtues fall to the wayside and this may ultimately erode the profession from within if neophytes follow his lead, thus contributing to a vicious cycle of “standards erosion” and knocking everyone's moral compass off course.

At the same time one is doing the work that is his to do, the practitioner is also maintaining an Aristotelian form of justice that MacIntyre refers to as the recognition of *desert*, an understanding of “what is due to whom” (1984, 191). Furthermore, in order to be entitled to those things that one deserves, he must “have contributed in some substantial way to the achievement of those goods, the sharing of which and the common pursuit of which provide foundations for human community” (*ibid.*, 202). Norton expands upon this discussion and describes justice as follows:

Justice is the paramount virtue of society, as integrity is the cardinal virtue of personal life. Justice, in the first instance, subsists in principles for the allocation of goods and responsibilities within a social grouping. Concerning the source of these principles, normative individualism [self-actualization] contends that they

subsist implicitly within every person, rising to explicitness as the person attains integral individuation. (1976, 310)

The individual who possesses self-knowledge and lives by it manifests justice, first by not laying claim to goods that he or she cannot utilize, and second by actively willing such goods into the hands of those who can utilize them toward self-actualization. What is expressed in both cases is not “selflessness,” but the proportionality of a self-responsible self that is situated in relations of interdependence with other selves that are, or ought to be, self-responsible. An individual who possesses self-knowledge and lives by its direction recognizes goods to which he or she is not entitled as distractions from his or her proper course of life...And to will to others their true utilities is at the same time the concrete expression of respect for them as ends in themselves and recognition that we stand to gain from the worthy living of others. (1991, 121–122)

In other words, the work that one chooses to do invariably commands him to “accept as necessary components of any practice with internal goods and standards of excellence the virtues of justice, courage and honesty” (MacIntyre 1984, 191). As the practitioner defines his relationships with those in his practice and those of other practices, he comes to understand that he is *only* “entitled to those *commensurate* goods whose potential worth he can maximally actualize in accordance with his destiny, his ‘meaningful work’” (Norton 1976, 311). This kind of entitlement is what Norton refers to as an upper limit entitlement. It is only concerned with self-actualization. Lower limit entitlements are those needs that Abraham Maslow (1987) discusses in his hierarchy of needs: physiological, safety, belongingness and love, and esteem needs.

### **A Systems Thinking Approach to Human Resources**

Because education is the drawing out of one’s true potential and work is that activity which assists an individual in actualizing his true potential worth, it becomes necessary to provide an occupational environment which allows both to occur; hence, requiring an alternative approach toward the development of human resource systems within organizations, i.e., a systems thinking approach toward developing, implementing, and managing transformational human resource systems. A transformational system means



a design which allows 1) anamorphosis to occur and 2) individuals to actualize their fullest potentials in order to actualize the missions of their organizations. Therefore, a systems thinking approach for the design, implementation, and management of a human resource system requires the twin applications of systems design architecture and a human resources strategic outcomes framework (HRSOFF).

### *Systems Design Architecture*

Systems design architecture becomes relevant in designing transformational human resource systems as *social systems*, that is a “meaningful system that is intentionally and collectively designed by a community of self-actualizing individuals for the guidance of human evolutionary development and the direction of positive social development” (Reber 2003, 83). Furthermore, a *community*, in respects to this definition of a social system, is “rooted in the individual and is formed, led and enriched by distinct responsible persons. Rather than a collectivity of people, it is a mutual sharing of their particular endowments” (Nicgorski 1986, 326). Therefore, a working definition of *social systems design* can be extrapolated to mean “a community of self-actualizing individuals, that is, a group of people who mutually share their values, interests, ideals, and knowledge that is germane to the system to be created, and who, through participatory democratic actions, creatively design meaningful systems that are shared with the greater community toward the guidance of human evolutionary development and the direction of positive social development” (Reber 2003, 84). In other words, a transformational human resource system is a system that *interacts* with the greater environment in order to consider a “holistic worldview” (Davidson 1983, 28-29). Figure 1 illustrates the different human resource levels as they relate to each other within a transformational system.

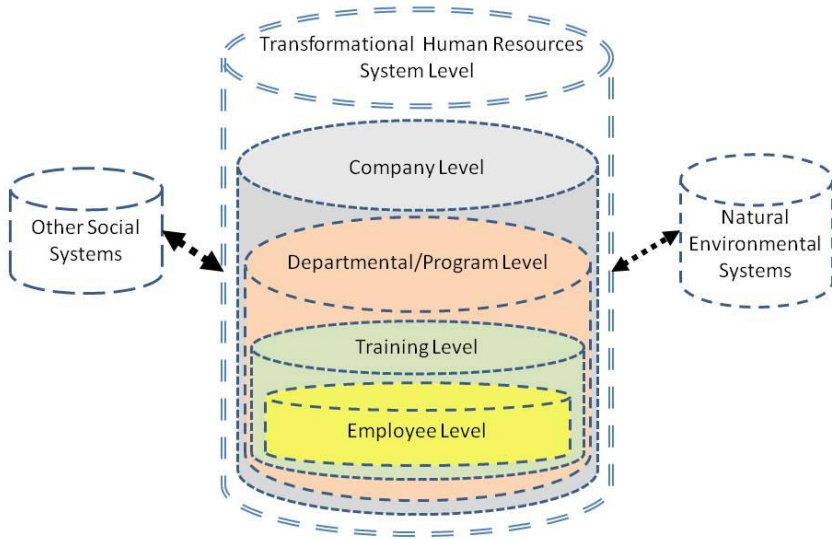


Figure 1. Human Resource Levels within a Transformational System

*Banathy Method of Systems Design Architecture*

Banathy's method of systems design architecture applies a systemic approach and focuses on discovering solutions. A rigid structure of design as analysis—synthesis—evaluation is unrealistic because social systems are too complex to be neatly “boxed.” The truth of the matter is that analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are ubiquitous activities in complex systems and require the designer to choose approaches that create a model that meets the design criteria (Banathy 1996, 56). Hence, designers early in the design process develop a core set of ideas that tell what the systems should be, which Banathy refers to as the First Image of the System. Figure 2 illustrates the synergistic relationship between analysis, synthesis, and evaluation in

developing the first image of a system (Reber 2003, 100).

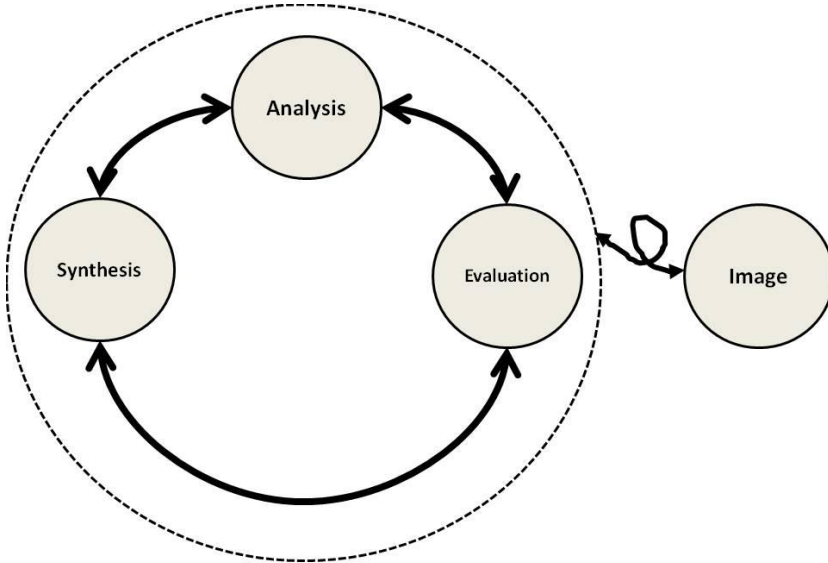


Figure 2. Synergy in Creating the First Image of the System

In creating the first image of a system, the current system must be transcended. This is done by the designers expressing the vision, ideas, and aspirations of the desired future. It is stated as, “We should live in a world that~.” For example, a vision of society for a transformational human resources system could be as follows:

A society in which every individual discovers his innate potential (true self) and lives a life that is commensurate with his self and others in order to, through participatory democratic actions, create a culture that develops and sustains the political, cultural, economic, and environmental spheres of society. (Reber 2003, 120)

Furthermore, the realities which influence the desired system must be identified. For a transformational human resources system within a business organization these could include sociocultural, economic, socio-technological, technological, scientific, and organizational realities. These are coupled with several implications, such as a more employee-directed strategic outcomes design and a more globally integrated economy. These new realities and

implications then give rise to the vision of a future human resources system, such as: An open and transformational global human resources system that exists to: a) assist employees with actualizing their potential worth which in turn assists the company with creating valuable products for customers and providing a rewarding return to shareholders, b) pay remuneration to employees which is commensurate with each person's value, company status, and geographical location, c) create and sustain the next generation of leaders within the company, and d) assist employees with retirement planning.

Once the visions and new realities are stated, the next step is to choose the type of system to be employed. In order to navigate to this, Banathy suggests creating an Option Field, that is, a framework that establishes design inquiry boundaries and creates design options of a desired future system (1996, 63). Ludwig von Bertalanffy in criticizing the U.S. intervention in Vietnam stated that the entire enterprise was "doomed...because our government's systems analysts had failed to use one of the most important concepts of the general systems approach: *boundary definition*" (Davidson 1983, 33). Davidson states that "the purpose of boundary definition is to achieve a focus that is wide enough to include all factors that are relevant" (ibid.). The Option Field that Banathy purports includes four dimensions: focus of inquiry, scope, relationships with other systems, and types of systems. Within each dimension a multitude of possible options exists that work from a closed system to an open system (Banathy 1996, 63). Figure 3 illustrates an option field for a possible transformational human resource system.

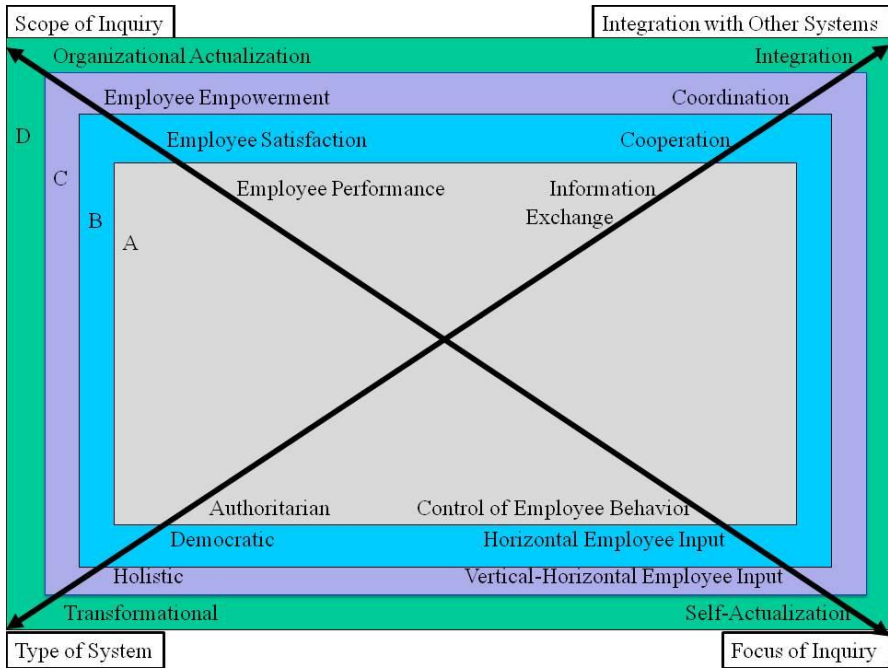


Figure 3. Option Field for a Transformational Human Resource System

The option field illustrates four kinds of human resource systems: Option A Authoritarian, Option B Democratic, Option C Holistic, and Option D Transformational. An authoritarian system is one in which power is centralized at the top of the organization and reward systems such as strategic pay are used to control employee behavior to meet centralized organizational strategic outcomes. The scope is on employee performance using one-way communication from top management to bottom-line employees. Middle management provides feedback to top management on success of centralized behavioral reward systems to meet strategic outcomes.

A democratic system is one in which employees within their individual organizational units have horizontal input into the rewards systems for meeting centralized organizational outcomes. Management’s scope is on satisfying employees desire to design their own behavioral models for meeting outcomes. Instead of top-down communication, cooperation exists between employees and management to influence behavior. Management

tells employees, “We do not care what methods you choose to meet the strategic outcomes we have given you, just as long as you meet them.”

A holistic system is grounded in viewing the organization holistically. Employees are empowered with vertical-horizontal input which means they have the authority to work across organizational units in developing rewards systems for meeting centralized organizational strategic outcomes. This requires units to coordinate their efforts in developing equitable rewards systems.

A transformational system is one in which the scope of inquiry is on organizational actualization via the process of employee self-actualization, as was prefaced earlier in the paper. This requires a paradigm shift in the organization’s concept of work. First and foremost the organizational culture recognizes that individuals are whole persons who are in a process of actualizing their fullest potential worth as human beings and that work is a vehicle by which this actualization occurs in mature individuals. As employees of the organization, each person made a conscious decision to join the organization because he subscribes to the values of the organization and believes in the worthy products it produces for society. Therefore, people do not work solely for financial gain. If this were the case, the proper term here would be “labor” and not work. Under the notion of work proposed here, money, rewards, or remuneration is only one aspect of the benefits derived from producing something meaningful. People work because they wish to produce something valuable for society as well as intrinsically rewarding for themselves, and money, bonuses, or remuneration is intrinsic value incarnate. Therefore, human resource systems must be designed in a manner that recognize a *eudaimonistic* notion of work, and in doing so recognize that human resource systems must be integrated with outside systems in order to be truly transformational. For example, under a transformational human resource management training program a company’s human resources unit would have systems in place for training, development, and succession of management. Outside systems, such as the University of Cambridge Judge School of Business Centre for International Human Resource Management would be integrated into the company’s training, development, and succession program. Research or new insights from the Centre would play a critical role in determining the form and function of the company’s training system.

After an option field is created, the next step in the Banathy Method is to create change dimensions. These dimensions basically show the kinds of models available to the designers, as illustrated in Figure 4. For a transformational human resource system, the context would be a novel context with a trigger of a new system and the focus of change being novelty.

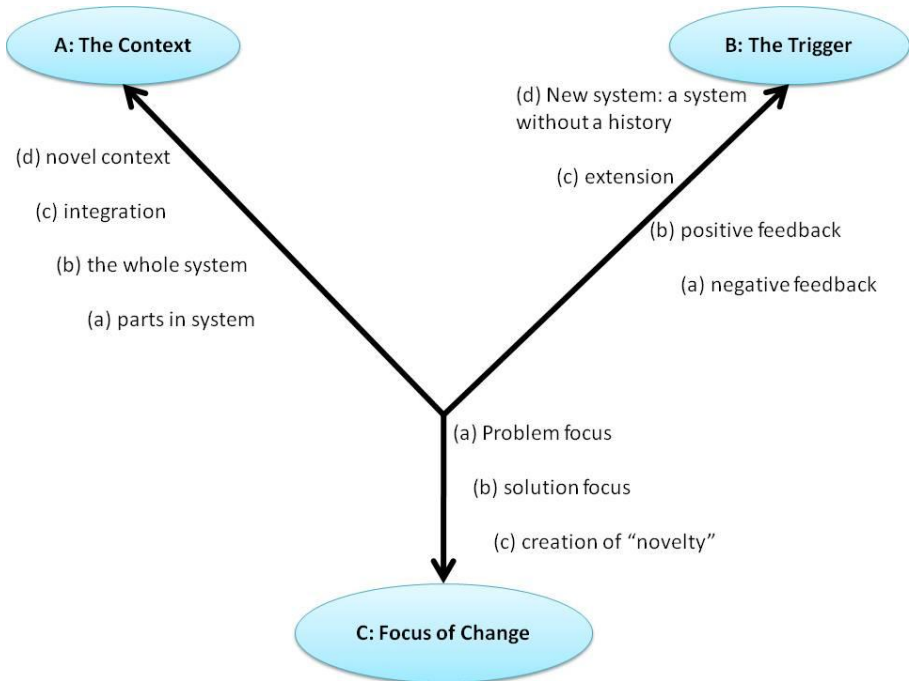


Figure 4. Banathy's Change Dimensions (1996, 114)

After selecting the kind of system to create, the next step in the Banathy Method is to develop values and core ideas upon which the system will be founded. For a transformational human resource system, the principles of self-actualization, symbolic interactionist social psychology, self-government, employee-centered and employee-directed training, and systemic design may serve as core ideas. Furthermore, the following values could be adopted: We believe that...

1. Every individual is unique from birth and actualizes his potential worth until death.
2. Work is the activity mature individuals perform to actualize their potential worth.
3. An organization is the collective actualizing power of self-actualizing individuals who share a common vision, belief system, and values for creating worthy products for society.
4. The world is a symbolic one and people continually *interact*—probe and test—with the environment within which they live in order to adjust harmoniously to its changes.
5. The design of organizational systems best occurs through participatory democratic measures.
6. Human resource systems exist to coordinate the actualization of personal excellences of employees within an organization.

Based upon these ideas and values, an image of a future human resource system can be created, such as, Human resources should...

- Assist individual employees with actualizing their potential worth by identifying their greatest skills and interests and matching those skills and interests with meaningful work in the organization which will in turn create valuable products for consumers and rewarding value for shareholders.
- Assist individual employees with directing their own training and development in order to actualize their greatest potential within the organization.
- Create remuneration systems for employees commensurate with each person's value, organizational status, and geographical location.
- Identify, develop, and sustain the next generation of leaders within the organization.
- Assist employees with retirement planning and utilize retirees in training and development programs.



The new ideas, values, and image which are developed are now part of the new knowledge, context, content, and methods of a human resource system. Using Banthy's Systems Design Architecture, one is able to design a transformational human resource system. The Banathy Systems Design Architectural approach is illustrated in Figure 5.

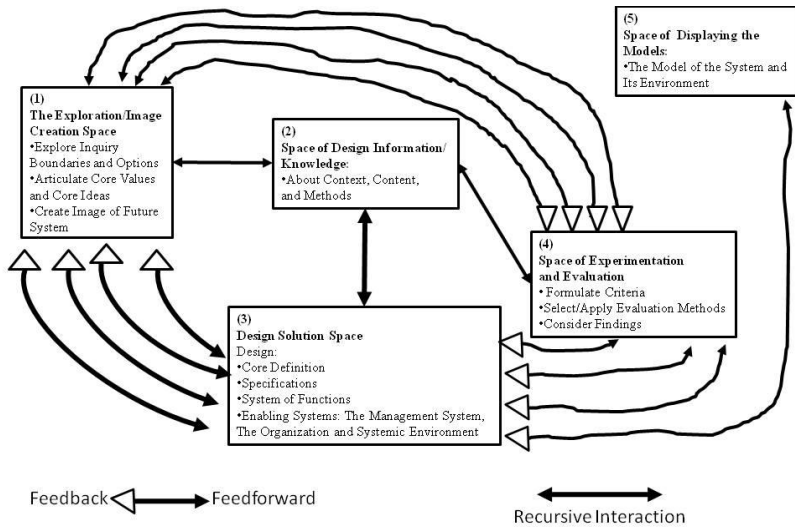


Figure 5. Banathy's Systems Design Architecture and Its Dynamics (1996, 72, 74)

Figure 5 illustrates the iterative cycles of design. Space 1, the "Exploration/Image Creation Space" that was just discussed. As can be seen in Space 4, the designers evaluate what is created in Space 1. Then, when it meets their criteria it becomes part of Space 2. Now, since the Image meets the criteria, which are a) vision of society, b) vision of future human resources system, c) core values, and d) fundamental principles, the designers go to Space 3 which is the "Design Solution Space" for designing a new system through a model of four spirals as shown in Figure 6: 1) core definition of system, 2) specifications of system, 3) system of functions of system, and 4) enabling systems of system (Banathy 1991, 178). Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure 5, what is done in Space 3 is evaluated in Space 4 through a feedback and feedforward loop. After all the work in Space 3 is

complete, evaluated in Space 4, and becomes new knowledge in Space 2, it is then modeled in Space 5 through three different lenses, as shown in Figure 7: Systems-Environment Model or Bird's Eye View, Functions/Structure Model or Snap Shot View, and Process/Behavioral Model or Motion Picture View (ibid., 79-80).

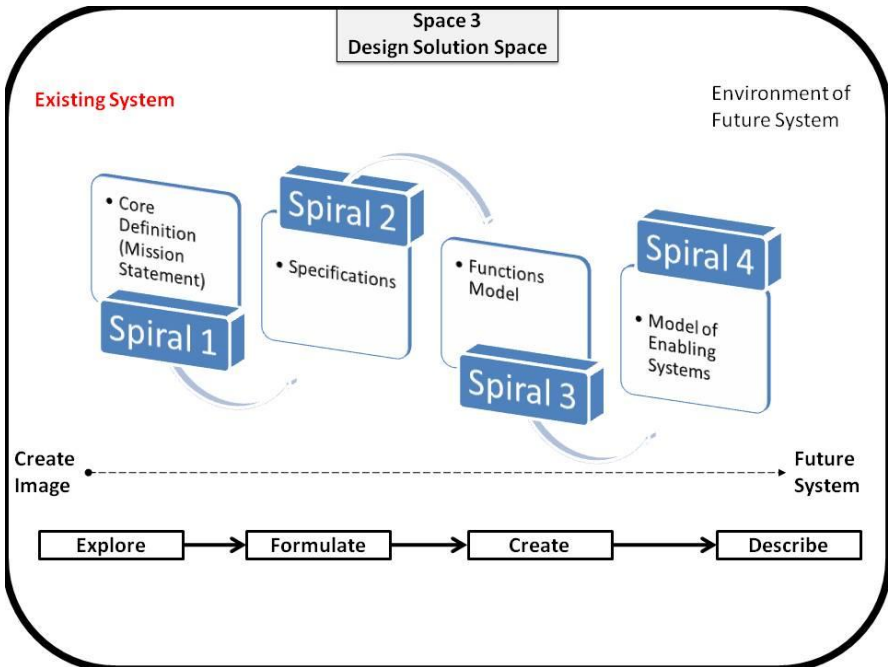


Figure 6. Adaptation of Banathy's Core Definition Spiral (ibid., 178)

	Systems-Environment Model (Bird's Eye View)	Observes the relational arrangements and dynamics between the learning system and its environment (global, national, regional, and local environments).
	Functions/Structure Model (Snap Shot View)	Observes the system at a given moment in time in order to see what the system is and what it does.
	Process/Behavioral Model (Motion Picture View)	Observes the behavior of the system throughout time.

Figure 7. Three Systems Models that Portray Design Outcomes (ibid., 79-80)

*Human Resources Strategic Outcomes Framework (HRSOF)*

Once an actual human resource system is designed, a strategic outcomes framework is necessary to implement it. Under the principle of anamorphosis, social organizations which operate on a global scale grow in such complexity that overall centralization of human resource management becomes detrimental to the mission of the organization. As Jonathan Trevor at the University of Cambridge's Center for International Human Resource Management states in a 2009 lecture, *Exploring the Strategic Potential of Pay*, "the greater degree of centralization [of human resource systems], seemingly the greater the number or instances of unintended consequences...and [such systems] have the poorest track record." Hence, what is required in a transformational human resource system is an overall framework within which local or particular human resource nodes can operate in order to accommodate the needs of individual employees at the point of work, i.e. a Human Resources Strategic Outcomes Framework (HRSOF) that identifies with the visions, core values, and mission and purposes statements of the organization as well as the overarching goals and objectives of the human resource system, but also allows for flexibility so local human resource personnel are able to meet local human resource goals and objectives using local strategic outcomes and applications. Figure 8 illustrates the iterative cycle by which an HRSOF operates.

## Human Resources Strategic Outcomes Cycle

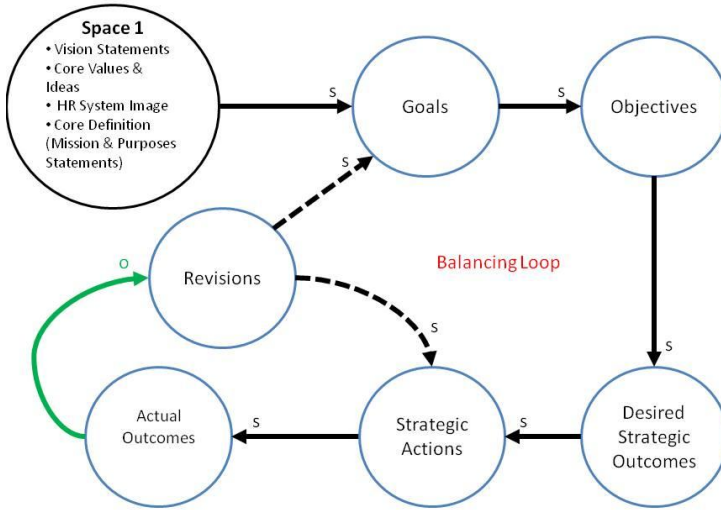


Figure 8. Human Resources Strategic Outcomes Cycle

In Figure 8 the visions, core values & ideas, image of a human resource system, and the mission and purposes statements positively influence the goals, objectives, desired strategic outcomes, and strategic actions and is indicated with a black arrow ( $S \rightarrow$ ) symbol. The “S” means a same directional move. Furthermore, if the strategic actions yield actual outcomes which meet the desired strategic outcomes, then no revisions will be necessary. However, if the opposite is true, then an increase in revisions will be required to close the gap between “actual” and “desired” outcomes. This is indicated with a green arrow ( $O \rightarrow$ ). The “O” means an opposite directional move. This should then have a positive impact upon revising the goals, objectives, desired strategic outcomes, and/or strategic actions. This is indicated with a black dotted arrow ( $S \text{---} \rightarrow$ ) symbol. The dotted line represents unseen positive effects which will only be known after evaluating the next round of actual outcomes.

Figure 9 provides a snapshot of what this framework may look like.

<b>HR Strategic Outcomes Framework</b>				
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Strategic Outcome</b>	<b>On-going Assessment</b>
1	1	March 2012	1. The Tokyo human resource office will have identified for eighty percent of its employees their greatest skills and interests.	<b>Criteria:</b> 1. Local resource matching questionnaires and interviews 2. Company-based strategic outcomes achievement card  <b>Feedback:</b> 1. Formal Local Results 2. Formal company-wide comparison of outcomes
		May 2012	<i>Application:</i> Matching will be completed using the Tokyo-based matching questionnaire and interview process.	
		March 2012	2. The Singapore human resource office will have identified for eighty percent of its employees their.....	

Figure 9. Human Resources Strategic Outcomes Framework (HRSOF)

In Figure 9 a snapshot or compressed view of an HRSOF is portrayed. It employs organizational overarching goals and objectives that guide the local human resource unit in defining its own goals and objectives. In theory, the overarching goals and objectives would be developed through a participatory democratic process which integrates the human resource system information exchange mechanism with other systems. Goal 1 could be stated as, “To create a human resource system that will assist individual employees with actualizing their potential worth by identifying their greatest skills and interests and matching those skills and interests with meaningful work in the organization which will in turn create valuable products for consumers and rewarding value for shareholders.” This goal could be met with an objective, which we can call Objective 1, stated as, “Ninety percent of employees in the company will have their greatest skills and interests identified by March 2012, and then be matched with meaningful work in the organization by May 2012.”

These overarching goals and objectives as well as the local human resource goals and objectives would then be met by developing localized desired strategic outcomes. In other words, a “cookie-cutter” solution in meeting desired strategic outcomes would not be effective in a global transformational human resource system. What may be good for Tokyo may not be good for New York or Paris. For example, Strategic Outcome 1 for Objective 1 could be stated as, “The Tokyo human resource office will have identified for eighty percent of its employees their greatest skills and interests by March 2012. This matching will occur using the Tokyo-based matching questionnaire and interview process and be completed for its employees by May 2012.”

Despite the fact that localized strategic outcomes are applied, it does not mean agreed upon outcomes assessment are disregarded. Localized solutions will need to be assessed using universally agreed upon organizational assessment tools, which means that the human resources community has developed, tested, evaluated, and re-tested assessment tools in order to provide a “best practices” approach for assessing strategic outcomes in a human resources environment. In this way the feedback loop can be closed with much assurance in order to assist the organization with understanding the overall picture of the organizational human resource system. For example, a company-based strategic outcomes achievement card could be used to determine how each of the local human resource offices did in achieving Goal 1 and Objective 1. Those offices falling below the company mean could then re-assess their local matching questionnaire and interview process, make changes to the process, implement the changes, and then re-assess again to see if the company mean has been met.

## **Conclusion**

It is clear from this synopsis that the Taylorian scientific management approach can no longer be considered a legitimate paradigm for managing people and organizations. As stated at the outset, humanity is moving from evolutionary consciousness toward conscious evolution due in part to our recognition and greater understanding of the systems thinking principle of anamorphosis. Furthermore, a *eudaimonistic* philosophy has taken hold worldwide and people are no longer considered “human capital” to be

disposed of at will. Instead, people are recognized as inherent potential worth actualized via the processes of *educere* and life-fulfilling—life-defining *work*. Hence, with a new systems thinking worldview upon us, it is imperative for organizations to design human resource systems using systems thinking design architecture and a human resources strategic outcomes framework. Only then will both people and organizations actualize their fullest potentials and create value for the world.

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