

# The Founder of Post-modern Public Administration Thoughts

## A Review of Farmer's Thoughts

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**Abstract**—Post-modern public administration is a wonderful work in its development history. It is known for its frenzied anti-modernity; it was in full flourish but also was criticized greatly while many of the crosscurrents are misunderstandings to post-modern public administration. By carding the text, starting from David John Farmer, the researchers aim to rectify people's opinions and make an impartial judgment on the post-modern public administration.

**Keywords**—Farmer; post-modern public administration thoughts

### I. INTRODUCTION

David John Farmer made a systematic and complete introduction to Post-modernism, which laid the foundation of Post-modern public administration, so we generally called him the founder of Post-modern public administration.

### II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MODERNISM AND POST-MODERNISM

David John Farmer considered that Post-modernism was not completely separated from modernism, nor appeared after modernism, because the complete paradigm shift was impossible. Post-modernism was the initial state of modernism<sup>[1]60</sup>, they has been accompanied all the time, they are coexisted like the left and right brain, only the dominant positions are different in some groups. For example, accountants and engineers like modernity, but painters and geomancers love post-modernity. Max White made a vivid metaphor, he said that modernism can be seen as a Republican Party, Post-modernism as a Democratic Party, we can live very well no matter which party were chosen to rule, there are no right or wrong between the two<sup>[3]203</sup>.

The main difference between modernism and Post-modernism is the understanding to truth and reality. The ontology and epistemology followed by modernism considered that truth and reality are a definite entity. We are rational people, by simplifying the object to abstract some factors and then use scientific tools to objectively understand and explain it, and the theories insisted that knowledge can be accumulated, so we can continually close to the truth, and that the rational language can objectively grasp the world, restore the original

of the object, try to let the facts speak, and that the words were the truth, so modernism is a kind of things can be said.<sup>[1]58</sup>

And Post-modernism is the limitation to reason scope, it denies a definite truth, and holds that knowledge is not accumulated, because the various researchers are using different perspectives and lenses to observe the world so knowledge is only a variety of complex things and converge into an increasingly wide river. No one knows whether it goes to the truth or not, so there is no grand narrative, the so-called grand narrative refers to the general interpretation of historical development. The language mentioned by Farmer is the code pattern, the concept system, the way of thinking and the way of observation. The language is the construction of society, and it is not objective. The researcher is not a certain center, he is centrifugal and controlled by the social customs, family atmosphere, growth environment and death instinct of Freud<sup>[1]328</sup> and other unconsciousness. We are not omnipotent and rational so our subjects are centrifuged<sup>[1]198</sup>. For example, people study an object M, I think it is M1, you say it is M2, are there actually two M? No. The lenses we observe are different. So which is the real M? Neither. There will not be the result even if we debate heatedly because there is no M as a solid. The object itself cannot speak, so what we see is not the reality, it is the interaction under the influence of unconscious, it is the meaning we artificially give to the object, what we say is not a real thing in fact<sup>[1]23</sup>. The truth that we have always considered is nothing more than a consensus in the meaning of social construction.

### III. RESEARCH METHODS-REFLECTIVE INTERPRETATION

Reflective interpretation is that we have to look at the lens we see things, not things we see. We are not interested in the celestial bodies and cells under telescope and microscopic, but are interested in telescopes and microscopes. These lenses mean the series of assumptions and basic theoretical frameworks that we consider and observe, and they form the way we observe. Reflective interpretation is to answer the following questions: Why can we only see what we are looking at? Can we use different ways to observe it? If we only use a lens to observe, there will be blind spots which hinder us to find new things, and we cannot understand the discovery of others. For example, the wave-particle duality of light, and

classical physics found that light is the particles, and later physicists found that light is a wave, then the light is the particles or wave or both particles and waves? Or neither? In fact, different research tools and method led to different conclusions, light has a wave-particle duality. Morgan has a wonderful explanation for this, he painted a pig, around the pig are butcher, artist, wolf, veterinarian, philosopher, Muslim and child, while the title of the painting is "what is the pig? In the eyes of the wolf, the pig is a meal, in the eyes of Muslims, pigs are unclean animals ... the exact meaning of the pig switches as its reference frame changes, and each frame opened or closed a knowledge dimension.

We have to learn to reflect the lens behind the conclusion, rather than just look at the conclusion itself. There is no ending to debate from different points of view to quarrel is no ending only to find each is reasonable.

#### IV. THE BLIND SPOTS OF MODERNISM

##### A. *The Limitations of Specialism*

Specialism sees too close, so it can't grasp the higher and overall relationship which limits the theoretical explanatory power. For example, we look at a flower at close range, we can only see the context of flowers, while do not know what the flower looks like. But if we constantly look at the flower at a distance, we can see the shape of flowers, grasp the relationship between flowers and leaves, flowers and whole plant, flowers and other insects, and flowers and gardens, and thus we can more fully understand the flowers. The specialism of public administration is characterized by a study of a particular place, focus on the public sector while ignore the private sector, always emphasized the study of administrative functions, leading to the inability to grasp a wider range of relationships.

##### B. *The Limitations of Scientism*

Public administration has two extremes. One is the exclusion of value. Seeing from a practical point of view, the judgment excluding the value of the exclusion of civil servant will appear administrative sin. The other extreme is emphasis on value and ethics, but ethics cannot really control people's behavior and thought.

##### C. *The Limitations of Technicalism*

Waldo believes that public administration can only be regarded as a technology or art. Many administrative reforms are catching the trend then turn to the original after the trend or chase the next fashion.

##### D. *The Limitations of the Enterprise*

The administration uses logic positivism to derive theory from scientific induction, while the economics uses interpretation to study theory. The public choice theory and the new system successfully merged the two to solve the common public goods produced by the public sector and the private sector, but the new blind spot is that it does not make sense to discuss the institutional arrangements for the supply of public goods without knowing the needs.

##### E. *The Limitations of Hermeneutics*

Modernism advocates using scientific tools to explain and understand a unique truth and by the accumulation of knowledge to infinitely close to the truth, but the subject is centrifugal. They are controlled by their own social customs and family customs and instinct and other unconsciousness so they cannot know everything, just to gather into a complex river from their own perspective. There is no single historical construction or unified reality and there is no grand narrative.

#### V. OPINIONS OF POST-MODERNISM

##### A. *Imagination*

Imagination refers to the mirror image of rationality. Rationality is the way of modernism thinking, and imagination is attached to the rationality. But in Post-modernism, imagination is the main way of thinking, rationality is attached to imagination<sup>[1]219</sup>. Post-modernism is not completely separated from modernism, it acknowledges that rationality brings economic prosperity and technological development and other achievements and recognizes that reason is useful. Post-modern advocates us using imagination to relieve our organization constraints and discipline logic shackles. For example, the game, and we create the game is not to create a bunch of rules, and to play the game is not to become slaves of the rules, but to get happiness of re-creation. The best state governance is that there is no legal treatment, nor a pile of laws and regulations, but relying on the country's art of politicians to take care of the needs of each citizen and to stimulate the imagination of citizens.

##### B. *Deconstruction*

Deconstruction is not an essential element that decomposed into indivisible elements, such as quarks in physics, DNA in biology. Deconstruction is to decompose grand narrative. It is a general interpretation of historical development. Deconstruction is to understand what is actually incomprehensible and to think about something that cannot be considered. Just as it is asked to draw a square circle, the deconstruction has the possibility of denying the previously definition. For example, we want to explain a proposition to understand ourselves, and when we use this proposition as a ladder to climb up and continue to go beyond these propositions, we find these propositions are meaningless. We walk down the stairs then tear down the stairs, but we must go ascend to get higher, just as we must go beyond these propositions to see the world correctly<sup>[1]248</sup>. Once we make clear what we understand, in fact, X is essentially Y, that is, the analysis we just did is meaningless, so it must be abandoned, transcended and deconstructed. Deconstruction may return to the origin, for example, to explore the meaning of M. M is determined by the meaning of Y, and then ask what is Y, Y is determined by the meaning of M. Deconstruction has no end, because there is no definite meaning. The meaning is man-made and deconstruction is to subvert the knowledge hegemony of the authority.

Why do we need to deconstruct? We are living in a surreal world, not what we take granted. So we have to use deconstruction to poke the fog and understand the world better.

Surreality refers to the transformation of the imagination in the reality. The border of appearance and reality is vague and what we see is neither reality nor appearance but surreality. Things that we see are the conversion and the interaction of objects, they adjust our video, and at the same time we also give them meaning. For example, the word GARAP, it does not exist in the dictionary. If we put it on all blackboards and walls, we will see it every day, naturally we will give it meaning. It gained life, as if it really exists, that is surreality. The NIKE in our daily life, we link it to high-end shoes and Michael Jordan when we see it. LV, Hermes such brands, which don't really exist, their meanings of the brands are given by people. The soap operas we see, such as the American drama "jailbreak", we will discuss the fate of the characters in the play, and even want Sarah not to die, as if these characters are real. Moreover, if we look carefully at the news, in fact, the various television stations introduce the same event news differently because they have their own tendencies and their own thinking, which is the reality? We turn a blind eye to the things around us, but believe things broadcasted on the television, as if the news thing is true. Since we live in a bunch of symbols surrounded by the surreality, why do we have to desperately admit that what we see is the reality? Deconstruction is the tool for us to see the surreality, it is the reading and rereading to the text, revealing the text behind the research perspective and language logic, revealing the text of the blind spot, rather than blindly believe so-called authoritative knowledge, just as the ladder strategy.

Back to our analysis of public administration, if the theory of public administration is a lens, then the deconstruction is the cleanser of the lens. Farmer deconstructed Simon's "administrative action", questioned from who wrote this book into depth, questioned the identity of the author and considered that Simon was to cater for the publishers and consumers. It also responded to some logical positivism works, such as Barnard, insisted that modernity is the first author of "administrative action" while Simon is the second author. Deconstruction is not to belittle the existing text but to let us bravely face the truth.

#### C. Non-regionalization

All coding of theory limited thinking, and the task of non-regionalization is to remove the imposed language coding. The event is very complex, so it is difficult to use a single subject to solve the problem, and we need a holistic study.

Academic boundaries should be implicated. They should no longer retain the independent field of public administration. The holistic study, whose nature tends to diversify, will collapses the discipline and ends the grand narrative<sup>[1]294</sup>.

#### D. The Existence of Others

The existence of others refers to respect others, recognize the differences of others, and think from the perspective of others. There is no definite meaning means diversification and diversity. Each person's identity is plural, and there are neither pure women nor pure men. Some scholars pointed out that there are 15 genders. Citizens should not be typed, simply classified and uniformly managed. For example, Foucault's shepherd game and urban governance, shepherds are

concerned about the happiness of each sheep, while urban managers develop a pile of law to generally manage the public. Farmer believes that good state governance should be a shepherd, make decision-making process open to citizens, take care of the welfare of every citizen and explain the policy in a language that citizens can understand, although this may only be done by the omniscient God.

### VI. CONCLUSION

#### A. *The Theoretical Position of the Modern Public Administration Thoughts of David John Farmer*

Farmer is the founder of Post-modern public administration. He created a new field of public administration research, constructed the concept system, research methods and research objects and so on, and established the basic research framework of Post-modern public administration and laid a solid foundation for later research. Farmer's writings are classic textbooks of the Post-modern public administration, which embody the author's deep ideology and superb philosophical attainments. But he still lacks of guidance in the practical significance and the descendants expand them further.

#### B. *Reflection on the Theory of Public Administration Thought Caused by the Post-modern Public Administration Thought of David John Farmer*

1) *Contribution to human nature:* Post-modern public administration is full of human concern. The meaning of searching for the continuous deconstruction is to better understand the differences of others, think about the problem standing on the perspective of others and reduce interpersonal conflicts because only understand the language of others better to communicate frankly can give the hope of solving practical problems.

Post-modern public administration is sincere. It allows us to face the facts rather than covers up the flaws. Since we cannot be rational or objective and neutral, why do we say that we are right or admit that he is the only truth?

2) *Contribution to society:* Post-modern public administration conforms to the needs of social development. People under the oppression of modernity become the tool of organization to achieve a formal goal, so our independent creativity is rationally marginalized. Minds longing for being alienated eager to get liberation and catharsis. Post-modernism promotes the idea of respecting individual differences. It provides a good shelter for the young, born in 1980s, wear bell-bottoms with long hair, who are regarded as heresy, and it becomes spirit slogans of people who pursue ideas liberation. Its inclusivity like the sea makes contradicted and turbulent society calm down.

Post-modern public administration provides a philosophical basis and a foundation of thought for citizen participation in the governance. Post-modern thought can finally make us better face our own soul and learn to treat others and ourselves better.

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