

The Organisation

by Nicholas Soh

'The Organization' tells of an alternate, dystopian universe where an elite organisation is formed upon the discovery of the normal distribution in the 1800s. Armed with this knowledge, they are able to calculate the likelihood of occurrences statistically; something Normal Citizens cannot do. The Organisation conducts experiments and analyse empirical data effectively in secrecy and exert political influence through its findings. In this way, the entity became known to be all-knowing and were successful in uniting countries and gained ascendancy of the world. By present day 2015, The organization has successfully guided Man into a monotonous existence where each individual is allocated a job to work in by age twelve, with no room for flexibility. The protagonist, during his work at a clothing factory, discovers the phenomenon of the normal distribution and consults The Organisation in hopes of seeing a better tomorrow.

Today, it is my turn to change the world, albeit in a small way. While I did not realise it at the beginning, I now know I am on the brink of discovering what has tipped the scales in the favour of The Organisation for the past two centuries.

There has been order to everything in the world since the 1800's. Legend has it that Carl Friedrich Gauss was the founding father of The Organisation, the entity from which all of modern innovation stems. He, along with a team of scientists and mathematicians, came up with The System: a way to ensure that the decisions they make are successful despite the fortuitous nature of the world we live in. Revered as all-knowing, nations' leaders regularly consult with The Organisation on matters relating to policies. By the mid-1800s, having gained a stellar reputation, The Organisation released The Manifesto, which detailed their vision for a New World Order: a systematic, united world without conflict. A world in which every citizen is a contributing member of society, everything is fair and just. They promised normality and security amidst the conflicts in the world. Needless to say, the world rallied in support, and they claimed ascendancy.

Throughout the years that The Organisation has been in power, they have implemented many policies that are curious indeed – The Semmelweis Rule, which dictates that doctors have to wash their hands and sanitise medical equipment once for every five minutes of contact with patients, is just one of the many that perplexed citizens at the point of implementation. Odd as these often appear, everyone abides by them and nobody ever questions the plans that The Organisation has for us. Time and again, Normal Citizens are reminded that there is a reason for everything; the death rates in hospitals fell sharply in the years that followed The Semmelweis Rule. We do as we are told.

We now live in stability and peace, work efficiently and have longer life expectancies than before. But we have also become stoic. From the age of five, all Normal Citizens are placed in public, homogenous schools and for seven years, we are educated in a multitude of Functions: Healthcare, Agriculture, Energy, Transportation, Manufacturing, Construction and so on. At age twelve, we take an Aptitude Test which measures skill levels, intelligence and physical characteristics like height and weight. Based on these test results, we are put eternally to work on exactly one Function. From that point on, we are stuck with that one Function, till the day of our demise. The only promise of advance comes exactly once every five years, when a select few

are chosen to join The Organisation. How The Organisation decides such a thing is just another one of the many mysteries that shroud our world in secrecy.

Like any other Normal Citizen, I took the Test, and was ordered to report to Manufacturing. On my first day of work at the clothing factory in which I now spend all my days in, I was taught all that I needed to know for the rest of my life: how to identify defective pieces from those that were not, and to separate them. This has been my life every day since.

For 10 years, I have done the same thing; I wake up, pick up a 1000 g loaf of bread at the bakery, have my breakfast, clock in at work, sort clothing, return to my shoebox apartment, have my dinner and I go to bed. But a year ago, I noticed that whenever a new batch of graduates joined the factory, there seemed to be significantly more defects than before. A peculiar phenomenon, given that 'The Manifesto' which The Organisation disseminates, leads us to believe that everything is the fruit of Chance. Intrigued by my discovery, I broached the issue with John, the factory supervisor. Like me, John was initially assigned to Manufacturing as a child. But with a stroke of good fortune, he was selected to join The Organisation and has been supervising factory operations ever since. To my alarm, he bellowed in response, "Just do what you're supposed to do. There's a role for everyone and it is not yours to think!" His words echoed that of The Organisation's, which preaches that efficiency through specialisation is key to the success of mankind. As much as his statement unsettled me, if there really is a productivity downfall at certain points in the year, then the obvious course of action to take is to change. Hence marked the start of my collation of the daily number of defects as opposed to those that were not.

Today, with a year's data on hand, I attempted to make sense of it. On majority of the days, around 10 per cent of the pieces were defective, with the frequency of occurrence dwindling as the defect rate either rose or fell. I organised the data such that I could see the frequency of each percentage point defective products, and drew them on a piece of paper. As my eyes scanned the chart, a pattern materialised – I had drawn a shape akin to that of a hill. I was also able to confirm my suspicions: the percentage of defects stood at the right end of the hill on the days immediately following the influx of graduates that year. "But what do I do with this information?" I wondered aloud to the listening walls in my apartment. With the question in mind, I slipped the papers into the pocket on the underside of my coat and headed out the door. "Since John isn't going to listen to what I've got to say, I shall bring it to The Leader."

As I approached the gates of The Fortress, I explained to the guards what I had uncovered. They exchanged knowing glances before guiding me in. A mixture of wonderment and fear filled me as I stepped through the

hallowed halls. Gazing about me, I saw laboratories filled with personnel; some in white lab coats bustling about their experiments, while others stood hunched over box-shaped devices that shone a strange light upon their faces. As I finally stood before The Leader, I thought about how few people could boast of having ever been in His presence. Between nervous gulps of air, I shared my findings and voiced my concerns for the factory. With a sigh, The Leader said, "What you have uncovered here is the Normal Distribution. As you might have realised on your 'research endeavour', there is an equation that allows us to calculate the likelihood of an event's occurrence by chance to within 1 per cent of error, or by any other percentage of your choosing. Impressed as I am by your courage and innovation, you are not the first person to have discovered this. You see, the applicability of the Normal Distribution is so commonplace that those before you who have come forward with similar findings, have also given us what we have found to be of great use. In fact, all of the policies we have formed over the years are the result of empirical data accumulated and tested within these walls. Unfortunately, the ascendancy of The Organisation rests on such knowledge being kept out of the hands of Normal Citizens and we cannot allow you to take to the streets with your findings. But rest assured, the data you have collected will be analysed. You know the name Semmelweis of course." I nodded nervously in response. The Leader continued, "Over a century ago, he too, stood before The Organisation with a claim quite like yours. If what you say is right, you will have changed a part of the World."

With that, two burly men hustled me unceremoniously into a pitch-dark room, and like the other Normal Citizens who had come close to discovering the wonders of the normal curve, was told to say my last words.