

The Dark Side Of Organizational Knowing

ABSTRACT

Rigorous investigation of organizational epistemology, or what can an organization know and why, is a sadly underdeveloped field. Knowledge management as a field has suffered from naïve assumptions about what knowledge is and how it can(not) be shared. David Seidl in E:CO (2007) made a significant contribution to organizational epistemology, which I want to further problematize. Seidl made two assumptions: one ontological namely that *organizations* know things; and one epistemological namely that knowledge can be defined as perceptual complexity reduction. I wish to counter that persons and not organizations know things and that knowledge is more social than perceptual. I will argue that the problem of social knowing is not so much grounded in the epistemological question of knowledge / nonknowledge – that is in the relations of foreground and background, facts and assumptions or knowledge and hermeneutics, as in the much more radical circularities of eternal return (duration) and the continual (re-)founding of social order. I will be inspired for the first point by Pierre Klossowski and for the second one by Michel Serres.

Key words: epistemology and organization, complexity, Klossowski, Serres, Seidl.

Introduction

Social complexity theory assumes that the interactions, boundaries, and limits to knowledge, power, and organization are interrelated, nonlinear and emergent. Knowing is situated, circumstantial and context-driven. Acknowledgement of complexity thus leads a reduction in confidence in knowledge. But by denying or repressing complexity, one can seemingly boost ‘confidence’ in knowing. The status of knowledge can be maintained by making the nitty-gritty of the processes of knowing invisible. If ontological, epistemological and hermeneutic assumptions are hidden, knowing can appear to be automatic, self-evident and faultless. David Seidl in E:CO (2007) argued for just such a process of complexity reduction in order to facilitate organizational knowing and knowledge management. I wish here to argue against it.

For David Seidl the dark side to knowledge is what in deconstruction goes by the name of *aporia* (Derrida, 1998). Perception or knowing is only possible thanks to unseen means of observation. Either a person sees with her or his eyes or the person looks at her or his eyes (for instance, in a mirror) --- but one cannot see (for instance, the landscape) and see the instrument of seeing (i.e. the eyes) at the same time. The means of perception have to be unseen in order for the seeing to occur. Likewise knowledge requires assumptions. To know requires that key assumptions remain hidden. A well-know practical illustration of this theme is the observation that one cannot all at once conceptualize riding a bicycle (for instance, the rules of physics involved), and actually ride a bicycle. Performing an activity requires hidden assumptions. Seidl calls this epistemological dilemma the 'dark side of knowing'. Knowledge exists thanks to its nonknowledge. For an empiricist, who does not want to acknowledge the hermeneutic nature of knowing and/or perception's inherent dependence on means of perception, the focus on the *aporia* is epistemologically challenging. And Seidl's illustrative paradoxes are deeply engaging --- knowledge demands the ability to address nonknowledge, growth in knowledge always produces more nonknowledge, higher levels of awareness or metaknowledge simply produce higher levels or more abstract types of conceptual blind spots. But by putting his analysis on almost purely epistemological level, Seidl does not address the relationships between power and knowledge or the social nature of knowing. And I think that the dark side of knowing is at least as much a social issue as an epistemological one.

Merging the conceptual worlds of knowledge (epistemology) and power (organization) often in the name of Foucault (McKinlay & Starkey, 1998, Knights, 2002) has become commonplace. *Emperie* [empire] and *empirique* [empirical] (both Old French) are entangled in what I wish to call *emperiqu(e)* or following the etymological line to English: empire + empirical = *empir(e)ical*. *Emperiqu(e)* / *empir(e)ical* points to an asserted isomorphism, parallelism and/or dependency between on the one hand economic and political rule and on the other hand science and technology. *Emperiqu(e)* / *empir(e)ical* assumes that rules / law, truth / science, and methods / generalization are

more important than the individual process of thinking or than experiential awareness.

Looking to etymology, *empirie* is old French {Cil doi seignor qui l'empirie government, Quant il i evident les vertuz si apertes, Il le receivent, sil portent e sil servent: ... *La vie de saint Alexis* mid- 11th century} and refers to that which is imperial, governed by an Emperor, and/or considers itself heritor to the Roman empire (L. imperium). With the industrial revolution, the term was broadened to include colonial and commercial 'empires' and in the late 20th century its use became increasingly metaphorical. *Empirique* (empirical) has a dual derivation: it comes from the Greek word from which (via L. *experientia*) the word 'experience' is derived, and also from a Greek/Roman concept of medical knowledge. In the text of Celus (Roman, 25 BCE – 50 CE) one finds the concept of the *empirici* who were a sect of medical physicians who chose not to think about the (possible) causes of sickness but to discover medicinal substances. They foreswore the study of anatomy and physiology to focus on observing illnesses and of cures. The *empirici* were the forerunners of contemporary biomedicine, producing pharmacological knowledge blind to existential or experiential issues and in the main ignoring illness-experiences. In the 17th and 18th century *empirici* was a name in medicine and literary studies for quacksalvers and uninformed or insensitive readers. But in the same centuries the word gained its current positive status with the philosophies of knowledge and science of John Locke and David Hume.

Empiri(que) / empir(e)ical entails a political truth regime where 'matters of fact' are asserted to be truths inductively derived from experience. But as Hume already asserted and Seidl repeats, the principles of inductive reasoning cannot consistently be inductively derived because one needs the self same principles to start up any process of derivation. But Hume unlike Seidl asserts that infinite regress can only be blocked by assumptions, procedures, or propositions that are maintained because of habit, custom, prejudice and/or power, i.e. via induction (empirical) + power (empire). *Emperi(que) / empir(e)ical* is of course here a play on words asserting that organization or

the structures of power is complementary to the organized or generalizable knowledge of 'reality'.

Seidl, following Luhmann, asserts that organizations are mechanisms for complexity reduction and that their reduction principles, like the aporia in all knowledge, have to remain at least partially hidden in order to work. Complexity "can be conceptualized as a condition where one possesses more possibilities than can be actualized complexity thus means pressure to select, [where] in order to insure its continued reproduction [i.e. existence], [the] system has to reduce its possibilities; that is *reduce its complexity*" (Seidl, 2007: 21). But exactly who or what is the **one** who possesses and/or has to reduce the complexity? And is the reduction normatively neutral? Seidl chooses not to follow Luhmann and to differentiate between cognitively and normatively stabilized structures (Seidl, 2007: 22-23). Luhmann identifies knowledge with cognitively stabilized structures --- i.e. with what in science is self-evidently accepted, such as 'gravity', and falls by the wayside in the event of counter theoretical observations --- i.e. upward 'falling' objects. Normatively stabilized structures (like the law) are not invalidated by counter examples (i.e. crime). I see little evidence in organizational studies that organizations are deeply cognitively stabilized --- i.e. self-evidently known, described and theorized in a particular manner, and believe that their form of normative stabilization is unsteady, temporary and often contested.

Pierre Klossowski and Michel Serres have studied human normative action from a process perspective. They have prioritized thinking above thought and rejected the reification of order. Klossowski and Serres' position implies that order / organization and knowledge / observation should not be collapsed into a single term. Thinking and organizing are on-going processes of volatility, which are complex, unstable and irreducible, and at most temporally and fragilely stabilized. Their complexity entails the ever-repeating self-regeneration of emergent occurrence. Systems or series without end, where variance follows strange attractors, and sense-making is without resolution are indeterminate and complex.

Seidl and Klossowski/Serres agree on an idea-centered concept of research; research needs to be about ideas or knowledge. Description grounded in the repetition of the same assumptions is not likely to add to knowledge. Serres and Klossowski contrast the individuality, particularity, and immediacy of thinking, to the reified, structured, and institutionalized nature of organization. For them, creative thought is emergent --- i.e. thinking and innovating (re-)happen over and over again. If one identifies thinking with becoming --- that is with change, alteration and emergence; one ends up equating thought with the *Being of becoming*. This is similar to trying to make nonknowledge knowable or to induce induction. Thinking requires the circularity of re-beginnings and the dynamism of changing once again. As long as there is life, thinking starts in each moment once again. In the repetition of the (re-)beginning, thinking is circular. Klossowski and Serres identify complexity with this circularity --- that is with continuous motion, recommencement and repetition.

Klossowski and Serres assert that thought operates via the *eternal return* of questioning, doubting and wondering. Thinking has to break through the political and scientific artifices of method and truth, reification and repetition, to exist. For Klossowski, what counts in thinking is the moment of questioning and not the abstract conclusions. Putting thinking before the power / knowledge episteme has a radical effect on how *organization* can or ought to be thought about. Applied social science is itself a form of organization and organizational studies is a form of applied social science. They portray research that does not aspire to power + knowledge as primitive, unscientific, archaic and irrelevant. Exclusion is accomplished in the name of science. Planned change, the technological mindset and economic rationality delegitimize free thought, associative exploration and normative subjectivity.

Lifeworld, poetic, ethnographic and phenomenological research that is not *empiri(que) / empir(e)ical* has continually to be reinvented or it ceases to exist. The repetition of recognized theories and proven 'truths' involves little or no thinking, but merely the copying, reproducing or parroting of what has already been asserted. Repetition of facts, theories and categories, only requires

duplication. The passion and enthusiasm needed for thought and for understanding is a different matter. For thought to be alive, ideas and texts have to be experienced. All ideas, from whatever origins or period, can be thought here and now, and as alive. If thoughts are questioned, reflected upon and investigated, then they are alive. All real questioning lives. Thinkers and thought live perennially --- the time of thought is circular. Thought has no beginning or end. Thinking revolves around questioning and inveighing. Each time an idea is thought – i.e. experienced, questioned and pursued – it (re-)lives.

For Klossowski, the choice for thinking has perpetually to be re-made --- it cannot be embedded, grounded, stabilized or fixed. Organizations deny thinking as a process by creating principles, check-lists, methods, and techniques. Klossowski asserts that lived-thought is actually a *vicious circle* of unending becomings, which entail over and over again the choice for reflection, discussion and engagement. Because the choice to think has continuously to be made and re-made, it is at once always on-going and always repeating. But organization is another matter. Michel Serres asserts that *organization* or institutionalized social order is a product of violent social impositions of rules, order and restrictions. He asserts that social order may be desperately needed, but comes at a fairly high price.

To develop these ideas further, I will analyze two texts --- Klossowski's *Nietzsche's Vicious Circle* and Serres' *Rome*. Klossowski argues that the eternal return of the present, or the always arriving of yet another instance of the 'now', demands that we question the value of purpose, intentionality, and order as epistemological assumptions. Serres asserts that *organization* and especially the foundation-ary acts of institutionalized social order are sustained via scapegoat-ing and violence (Soila-Wadman, 2008). The dark side of thought is formed by repetition (Klossowski) and social violence (Serres) --- both of which are socially ever-present in acts of knowing. I choose Klossowski and Serres as my sources because they are two of the most radical philosophers of the dark side of the social epistemology of knowing.

LIVING THOUGHT

Klossowski's *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* (1998)--- i.e. *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux* (1968) --- contains an epistemological argument that attacks 'truth' in the name of living particularity. In the book what is Klossowski and what is Nietzsche, and what is Klossowski playing Nietzsche, remains unclear; but this is not very important for this writing. Klossowski's book asserts that 'truth' in the social or natural sciences is epistemically bound to repetition and generalization. There is, thus, an epistemological divide between the specificity of existence and the regime of (scientific) 'truth'. Klossowski's Nietzsche identifies social control and conformity with the epistemology of empiricism, where truths of the external, impersonal or lifeless are asserted.

Science, supposedly, exists to restrict thought, behavior and to ensure security. The force of singular existence is made irrelevant by prioritizing the general. Lived existence and authentic consciousness are never general --- they are always individual and specific. By prioritizing an abstract simulacra of consciousness above actual lived consciousness, science contributes to the mastery of a fiction over life. Lived experience is partial, restricted and specific. Science is general and its truths are a-temporal. Scientific theory produces a mythic coherence --- images of general, permanent and stable truth. But lived existence only knows the rise and fall of intensities and discontinuities of fluctuation in energy, force, and power. In science, the force of actual existence is smothered with generalizations of permanence and truth. The living is pushed aside for the generalizable. But a generalizable consciousness or existence does not and cannot exist. There is only specific becoming and occurrence. In the substitution of being for becoming, abstract truth or permanence replaces living relationship, event, and circumstance.

The substitution of the dead-letter for the living context occurs literally via the semiotics of the text. Language substitutes generalized terminology for specific circumstances. The lived world is defined out of existence --- it is

replaced by known and predetermined terminology. Naming the actual, specific and living, becomes impossible when the semantics of the naming process only allows for the repetition of already circumscribed terminologies. Language then speaks the speaker and not the other way around. The code dominates. Klossowski asserts that science with its assumptions and vocabulary de-individuates and standardizes consciousness. This is a semiotic argument --- the naming process as we know it makes direct contact with the complexity of life-force impossible. Linguaging destroys becoming by reducing emergence to preconceptions, whereby standard postulates and clichés predominate.

Klossowski explores how Nietzsche was personally physically confronted by this semiotic crisis. Recurrent severe migraine headaches brought Nietzsche to feel that his consciousness and body were in conflict with one another. But rather than taking consciousness' side and demanding: *Body why have you betrayed me?*, Nietzsche took the body's side and demanded: *Mind why are you with such destructive results, repressing my living substance?* Normally the brain dominates the body, whereby embodiment is sacrificed to abstraction. This insures that the continuity of identity is maintained. Self and identity apparently stay the same, while the body constantly changes. The conceptualized or idealized self appears to be consistent, while the body is re-corporealized over and over again. Consciousness identifies itself with a code of signs embraced as 'self'. The excitations of concrete existence disappear in the abstractions of identity, self and meaning. The body as a concrete locus of impulses, comes and goes, changes and adapts, but the 'self' endures. Actual experience or the awareness of the present only lasts a few seconds. But the 'self' is abstracted into a simulacra of existence, lasting +/- seventy years or more.

For Klossowski/Nietzsche on the one hand there is the possibility of identification with concrete living consciousness, and on the other hand there is the choice to identify with the abstractions of consciousness. The latter focuses on truth, meaning and intentionality; the former is nigh on uncharted. The latter entails complexity reduction, the former complexity

reflection. Complexity is grounded in the body. Aliveness most of the time is captured in systems of signs, wherein signifiers of self, identity and mankind, replace becoming with simulacra. Instead of constantly altering intensities and flux, there is the 'truth' of complexity reduction. Impulses and multiplicity are thwarted; ersatz continuity, permanence and meaning are made to prevail. The succession of discontinuous states is sacrificed to the appearances of intentionality, order, and purposefulness. Consciousness, as a verbal, languaged and intentional construct, is split off from the dynamic force of change and innovation.

In what sort of duration does existence exist? Kossowski emphasizes the continuous recurrence of the now --- time is characterized by the endless repetition of the present. In the endless becoming of the present there is eternal recurrence. The 'now' is both absolute and it is characterized by total contingency. Time is "a condition of possibility" and "an actuality and a necessity" (Lukacher, 1998: 101). Temporality is profoundly paradoxical --- it is pure chaos, potential and possibility, and it is concrete, real and substantial. Time establishes the eternal return of unending difference(s). Time or the 'now' is characterized by a succession of discontinuous states of becoming. But in Western thought, language and logic, Being is prioritized and contact to becoming is closed off. Consciousness is lost in signs with no openings to thinking's processes. Klossowski's assertions, often made in Nietzsche's name, are those of a French semiotician. Nietzsche certainly was out to dismantle the mentalist automaton that locks up becoming in a metaphysics of Being. Human will --- seen as plans, concepts and strategies --- supposedly is hidden or reified in its 'intentions'. Only if the self abandons intentionality can aliveness prevail above identity. Nietzsche wanted to 're-will' the self --- that is to assert fluctuation and intensity. The problem is that when intensity doubles back on itself, and represents itself, it loses itself. The sign representing intensity replaces intensity with a reification or fetish. Real flux has no beginning or end and cannot be possessed, represented or slowed down. The claim that the basic stability required to establish text and language denies the complexity of aliveness, is very much in the critical French semiotic tradition.

Klossowski/Nietzsche asserts that in (most) text that the falsely permanent 'self' is prioritized and that the eternal circle of the now is discarded. Nietzsche attacks this strategy as anti-existential weakness. It is an existential strategy wherein the general and ordered prevails above the specific and living. It is a solution of mediocrity wherein averages are more important than circumstances. Impulses and forces are sacrificed to results and norms. Aliveness disappears behind statistics, and impulses are smothered by the forms they produce. Abstractions – such as “mankind” or “humanity” --- take precedence above living existence and concrete circumstance. The “non-sense” of self, identity and purpose, overwhelm the “sense” of lived awareness. Complexity is thwarted.

The eternal return of complexity is a becoming with no goal or purpose. It is a totally radical principle of emergence, which is utterly at odds with Western epistemological practices. Klossowski/Nietzsche asserts that all there is --- is the rise and fall of intensities --- or a continual disruption of equilibrium(s). Energy and intensity do not seek to endure --- they just increase and decrease. Life is an intensity without telos. The ascending and descending movements of energy deny equilibrium --- energy is its own goal. There is no beginning or end to the continual processes of recombination; energy disorganizes whatever it creates. Organization in the sense of willed and controlled social order is identified by Nietzsche with the oppressive regime of mediocrity. Signs destroy aliveness and false sociability kills authenticity. Nietzsche calls this principle of oppression, “gregariousness.” Communication, relationship and sociability overwhelm authenticity, becoming and energy. Becoming, emergence and duration, or the acknowledgement of the eternal repetition of the 'now', are conceptualized in Klossowski/Nietzsche in terms of being versus becoming, truth versus process, intention versus thinking. The radical embrace of thinking or of consciousness versus doxa, or of cues versus codes, is crucial to thinking or knowing. While Klossowski/Nietzsche clarify what the becoming of thinking looks like, or what epistemological complexity is all about, they do not help us to get closer to organizing as activity or event.

LIVING ORGANIZATION

Can organizing be understood as something more or different from rationalist repression or existential denial? Michel Serres in his book *Rome* (1991) sets out to address just this question.¹ Serres' logic is poetic --- the leitmotifs of back versus white, defined versus emergent and violent versus interactive, are repeated over and over again (Brown, 2005). But with each repetition, the relationships shift and regroup. While the argument of Klossowski/Nietzsche is fixed in semiotic conflict, Serres' thought moves back and forth, reinterpreting its key metaphors. His terms act as shifters, i.e. are open to multiple meanings and interpretations. The terminology keeps adapting --- there is consistency in the processes of thought but not in the signifiers. Truths or meanings are not what count. Motion is crucial. Klossowski/Nietzsche assert ideas as if they were objects. Language is 'this', 'self' is that; "gregariousness" is identified as one thing and intentionality as something else. Klossowski/Nietzsche argues for emergence, change and inconsistency, but the text remains entirely consistent. The definitions, style and assumptions are unswerving. Ideas are reified --- key concepts are stable and seemly possess powerful moral significance.

Serres puts flux into his signifiers. Multiplicity and the (semi-)indeterminacy of the concepts manifest themselves in the shifting meanings. The poetics shift and double-back on themselves, permitting practices of *différance* to manifest themselves. Serres addresses many of the same issues as Klossowski/Nietzsche --- that is the relationship between definition, language and repression; the repetition of the 'now'; the role of flow and complexity. *Rome* is explicitly an analysis of the city's foundational myth, centering on Livy's history of Rome and Romulus and Remus. The question is: *What is entailed in the naissance (birth) of (social or human) order?*

¹ Serres abhors traditional academic debate, which he sees as more oppositional than innovative. He seeks links, connections and interactions, and never writes criticisms of others whose positions are close to his own. Thus there are (almost) no texts by Serres on Deleuze, Foucault or Nietzsche.

To grasp Serres' reflection(s), it is necessary to examine his poetry, wherein the contrast between black and white forms a key element. As I've noted, it is performatively self-contradictory to champion impulse, energy and difference with repetitive or assertive argumentation. Variability and emergence demand language as shifters, *différance* and semantic instability. Serres' use of black and white in *Rome*, meets these demands. Early in the book {+/- page 35 – 75} 'white' is identified with blankness, emptiness and nothingness. White is nonexistent and dead. Substance, actuality, and circumstance are tangible and embodied. Stuff or matter is earthy and physical, i.e. black. Theory is ethereal and empty of hyle (material). Objects are enclosed in their substance and thereby black. Theories seek light and transparency. But experience, circumstance, and world are substantial and specific. Activity requires getting one's hands dirty. Blackness absorbs everything – it is the collection of all elements, dimensions and aspects. In the involvement of events and engagement, complexity and multiplicity, there is confusion, doubt and indeterminacy. The imagery of the tangible, focuses on the world in all its concreteness. Light alone is unlivable --- pure possibility is unthinkable. Pure meaning is totally restrictive and inhumanly absolute. Greece and Jerusalem are symbols of the will to light and to truth; Rome was alive, muddled, unreflective and substantial.

Later in the same book {+/- page 100}, Serres reverses the imagery in his discussion of the 'black box'. Specified inputs and outputs undergo a transformation whose process(es) remain indeterminate. The black box represents "the ensemble of passages from the multiple to the single and from the single to the multiple" (Serres, 1991: 98). What happens in the black box is blank, unknown and indeterminate; it is fragmentary, multiple and not explained. In the black box there is movement, circulation and event. The black box represents the logic of *systrophe* --- literally the 'turning together'. In the *systrophe* many qualities, details and elements coexist without providing explicit definition(s). The *systrophe* flows from the many, or multiple elements of description, to the single 'self' or identity, and back again. It is an ebb and flow of meanings, constituent qualities, and specificities. The black is no

longer concrete, earthly and substantial --- it is transformative, more potential than concrete, and indeterminate.

Serres goes on to describe the dynamics of the black box in terms of 'quasi object's. Quasi objects facilitate social interaction by making circulation possible (Brown, 2002; Carr & Downs, 2005). Human groups can exist in so far as materials, meanings and actions circulate. Interaction is grounded in flow, exchange and distribution. Everything from building materials to rugby balls, money to religious icons, functions as a quasi object. Quasi objects create relationships by changing hands, being shared and getting utilized. Their significance depends on things being done with and to them. As long as they enter into action and become process and event, they realize their potential. Quasi objects are defined in terms of the circumstances and actions that they generate. A quasi object is not an object in-and-of-itself; it is an object via circulation, activity and circumstance. Quasi objects tie persons together into groups --- the quasi object has identity only in so far as it helps to form a group. A rugby ball is only a rugby ball in so far as it facilitates that rugby is played --- the identity exists in the doing. If quasi objects collapse in their ability to marshal activity, they lose their meaning. For instance, money is valuable only as long as it is exchanged. If a society comes to mistrust its quasi objects, then that society collapses. Social existence can only exist in so far as it retains confidence in its quasi objects. It is by engaging with the quasi objects that loose elements of possibility and partial significance are smelted together into event, society and structure. Quasi objects are in the social black box. They make it possible to bring highly disparate elements together into processes, activities and actions. They are the glue that holds all the multiplicity and difference together without repressing or destroying it. The black box brings together but does not destroy. It organizes but does not (necessarily) terrorize. Serres initially used black to point to the material, concrete and earthly versus the idealized, conceptual and rational; but in the second instance, he made use of black to point to in-determinant processes of structuration and social activity.

In the next reversal, Serres redeploys {+/- pages 175 - 200} the metaphor of the box. In place of the black box and the quasi object, he introduces the distinction between boxes and sacks. The box loses all connotations of process, alteration and change, and becomes a metaphor for rigidity and fixed relationships. Boxes have hard edges and point to circumscribed relationships. Sacks are characterized by folds and flexibility. Sacks define fluid margins, heterogeneous spaces, and unexpected proximities. A logic of burlap sacks would (metaphorically) be one of folding and flexibility.

Serres goes on to develop a concept of complexity in juxtaposition to the concept of the 'excluded third'. At issue is the assertion that '*X or not X is true for any statement 'X'*' --- that is, any statement is either true or not true, and there is no third possibility. Serres asserts that a quasi object is always open to multiple interpretations --- a rugby ball is blown up cow hide, a potential source of conflict, and a possibility for unity, identity and cooperation. The law of the excluded third contradicts the logic of social interaction, human event and the possibility of multiplicity. If one applies the law of the excluded middle to society, one gets violence, repression and totalitarianism. In so far as democratic or peaceful society is possible, it must deny the law of the excluded middle. This is why, according to Serres, that those societies that are the most rational and strive the strongest for truth; collapse in violence and anarchy (Hagemijer, 2005). Greece and Jerusalem prioritized truth, clarity of purpose and knowledge, which led to their destruction. Complexity and truth are incommensurable --- Rome accepted multiplicity and difference, and lived with contradiction.

In open thought, there is always another position, an alternative option and a strange or indeterminate attractor. The messiness of events, circumstances, and emergence is characterized by instability, vagueness and multiplicity. The will to define, clarify, and prescribe rejects multiplicity. Contemporary organization is defined in terms of complexity reduction, system order and goals. Rome was defined in terms of mixtures, flows and motion. Modern organization abhors fluidity, indistinctness and indeterminacy. Companies and governments want rules, distinctions and clarity. They determine boundaries

between self and other, the desirable and excluded, the owned and not owned. Modern organization is all about boundary setting --- about asserting the excluded middle or denying the third. But quasi objects are inclusive and horizontal --- they draw in people and circumstances. Their logic runs in the opposite direction to that of the excluded third.

Serres is convinced that a society based on rational clarity, purposeful systems, and social exclusion is inherently and perpetually violent. It exists by defining over and over again its boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. It continually legislates what is permitted and what is not permitted, which goals are to be pursued and which not, what is desirable and what is forbidden. Each definition creates yet another line of demarcation and principle of exclusion. Nonstandard multiplicity is an anathema to rationally planned organization. The excluded third leads to stability, repetition and structure. The fluctuating disorder of pure multitude is inhibited and denied by rational organization. Quasi objects do, undo and redo, order. One can map quasi objects; one can narrate their processes. One cannot legislate free interaction; genuine variability cannot be strategically managed. If one embraces the play of quasi objects, then one recognizes that flows of interaction will evolve and change, transmute and morph.

Events of quasi objects create interaction and flows of change. But modern organization and society are not fluid or participative. Organization determines boundaries and exclusion. Systems define how production is to proceed and what is to be done. The free flow of possibility is repressed. Activity is directed, structured and not free. Serres argues that all of this is achieved via 'scape-goating'. Social order can only be bought at the price of destroying the excluded middle or third. Organization is an act of social violence and exclusion. It demands the destruction of the multiple, complex and emergent. Groups exist by denying the random multiplicity and radical possibility of existence. Only by establishing the principle of 'this and only this' is organization made possible. All that is possible in the variety of flows and impulses has to be denied. This denial does not come gently. Difference is

eliminated violently. According to Serres what the myth of Romulus and Remus illustrates is the violence of the foundation of order.

Organization is grounded in the rejection of heterogeneity. Life's multiplicity is denied; specific definable objectives are prioritized above everything else. Possibility is murdered, complexity is destroyed and diversity is bridled. The choice not taken or the option not honored is honed out of existence. The humanity not followed is violently denigrated. The dominant 'this is' can support no alternatives, options or indeterminacy. The choice not chosen or the other that is not 'us', is ruthlessly killed off. In this sense, all organization is grounded in genocide – that is in the slaughter of some form of humanity. The principle(s) of inclusion and exclusion, differentiation and boundary setting, are investigated by Serres in *Rome* via the image of the one brother who survives and the other who is killed. One option lives and is prioritized, the other option dies and is repressed. Organization is grounded in the violence of the destruction of human possibility and the multiplicity denied.

Serres asserts that only in so far as the play of quasi objects can be accepted is sociability possible without continual foundational violence. If event and interaction are strong, people will need one another and will be so positively preoccupied that they do not need to kill. But as soon as the quasi objects fall still or lose their credibility, the process of goal-setting and defining, planning and restricting, will recommence and scape-goating restarts. Momentary eventfulness and cooperative activity is possible; but the scape-goating needed to maintain the excluded third or middle is always looming just around the corner. Women who do not conform are burned as witches or stoned-to-death, homosexuals face violence, discrimination and ghetto-ization, etcetera. Organization requires foundational action(s). The primary assertion of 'this and not that' --- the basic boundary setting inherent to the organization has to be maintained. Doctors who do not know their patients take decisions that nurses can better oversee, CEOs take product decisions that for instance only R and D really understand, politicians pronounce on matters that they do not oversee. Those in authority often refuse to acknowledge the expertise or value of others.

The act of exclusion, violence and repression is foundational. For order to be maintained, the choices for restriction, boundary and structure have to endlessly be repeated. The foundational act of social order defines the fundamental vicious circle of human society. Society is never permanently started – organization has to be continually re-started, re-done and re-enacted. The time of organization is temporary – initiatory boundaries and closures have to be repeated in all their violence, over and over again. Organization once commenced holds for a period. Difference is eliminated and order is asserted. But sooner or later, the power of the foundational violence loses its hold. The restrictions and borders stop to function and complexity, multiplicity and indeterminacy reappear. Such moments of possibility are scarce and normally are re-repressed as soon as order is (re-)asserted. Organization is (re-)established for just as long as the new ‘choices’ or ‘order’ can be sustained.

The fundamental vicious circle of human society according to Serres is grounded in the destruction of complexity, multiplicity and human possibility. Scape-goating --- or the violent rejection of some human possibilities in order to validate the ‘truth’ being adhered to, prevails. In the ex-Yugoslavia and the Caucasus, who does and does not control the state and have economic power has literally been fought out with the loss of life. The options not honored and the possibilities rejected are dismissed, abused and cursed in every possible way. Those in power label the ‘road not taken’ as negatively labeled as they can.

Moments of quasi object activity define a liminal space between all the human violence, wherein constructive interaction can occur. Disgusted and tired, fearful and anxious, humanity sticks to the results of the last scape-goating for as long as it can. Recreating organization is painful and violent, dangerous and threatening. The vicious circle will come round again, and order will have to be re-started. The violence done to existence in the re-starting of the cycle of organization makes recommencement something to be dreaded.

Conclusion: Thinking, organizing & complexity

Organization and knowing have continuously to be (re-)established and (re-)founded. Organization entails repetition, renewal and recommencing. It is a 'vicious circle' in the sense that it entails continuous repetition of the 'now' of the (re-)beginning and of the recommencing. The dark side to organizing and knowing entails the human and epistemic violence of complexity reduction:

Organizations create their knowledge in the form of decision premises, which make decision-making possible by *limiting* the number of possible decisions. In other words, organizational knowledge makes observations possible, but at the same time it implies nonknowledge, which means unobservability. Regarding organizational observations, this means that they are at least as much based on nonknowledge as they are on knowledge. Because of the specific mode of reproduction, which can be referred to as uncertainty absorption or equivocality reduction, the demarcation between knowledge and nonknowledge, or observability and unobservability, is particularly strict. (Seidl, 2007: 24)

I obviously agree with almost all of this essentially epistemological argument, but assess its social and human import very differently than Seidl does. Organization is indeed characterized by complexity reduction or possibility elimination. But I refuse to call the repression of awareness and/or the banishment of the otherness of the other, 'knowledge'.

Organizational knowledge may indeed be the nonknowledge of human awareness or sociability. In the eternal return one instant follows upon the other in a succession of recommencements where existence emerges over and over again. But I must not fall into the paradoxical vicious circle of trying to define the Being of becoming. Serres avoids self-contradiction by making the vicious circle all the more rigorous. Organization re-begins again and again. But each recommencement implies a moment of scape-goating wherein multiplicity is sacrificed to order. Organizations hold their participants in their grip, grounded in the death of chaos, possibility and aliveness, which is attached to their initiatory act(s). Organization as Klossowski /Nietzsche assert is life-denying in its repression of intensity, flow and emergence. And

Serres' social logic of quasi objects only offers partial and temporary moments of respite. All the assumptions and rules needed for quasi objects to occur require social organization --- that is, foundational acts of organizing. Organizing and organization cannot really be avoided.

The mania of current management practice(s) of re-initiating or re-starting organizations as often as possible via re-organizations, strategy development, mergers and acquisitions, etcetera, weakens their quasi objects. Current practice favors exclusionary violence. Scape-goating is being (re-)enacted in shorter and shorter cycles. Existence as thinking, creativity and flow, is in principle always possible. What is needed is the possibility to make links, favor interactions and to encourage relationships. But how to encourage multiplicity and flow, and to minimize violence and scape-goating, remains a little explored territory.

Complexity has been examined here as the continual restarting of thinking and (social) organization. Thinking and power, and ideas and social order, can all be collapsed into complexity reducing or denying hegemonious epistemes. But to do so one has to repress thinking's dynamism and emergence. One can argue that complexity reduction is the most efficient avenue to knowledge consensus, but complexity reduction requires the enforced inhibition of self-awareness. A simulacrum of agreement can be achieved by imposing assumptions, procedures and thought patterns. But the use of postulates has to be repressed, the role of theories left unexamined and the mechanisms of perception ignored. The media of knowing has to be black-boxed so that 'the message is the message'. After forty years of an epistemology-in-use influenced by McLuhen (1967) wherein 'the medium is the message', can the processes of knowing really be ignored without coercion, bad faith or violence? Processes of knowing can be defined, prescribed and structured; but to do so one has to deny movement, change and the inherent instability of living relationships.

Thinking and social order share that they re-start, re-establish and re-create their activity constantly. In every moment of the 'now', thinking and social

interaction are (potentially) recommencing. The complexity of thinking is unstable, troubling and makes the 'self' uncertain and indefinite. The complexity of the social is even more profoundly troubling. The relationships, exchanges and interactions of the social require boundary-setting and exclusion to exist; processes that victimize the excluded. Complexity describes the aliveness of thinking and society. But the cost to 'self' and in violence to humanity of these processes has to be faced up to.

I disagree with Seidl's conclusion that:

.... organizations are intelligent to the extent that they are able to re-enter nonknowledge into knowledge; in other words, to the extent that they are able to produce representations of their nonknowledge, which allows them to base their calculations on nonknowledge as if it were knowledge. (Seidl, 2007:27)

Persons think and are conscious and live, not organizations. As Klossowski/Nietzsche insist, the ever-restarting process of complexity entails creativity and change, experiential duration and fragile self-replicating cycles of order and disorder, often characterized by implicit violence, instability and tentativeness. Thinking and organizing entail repeating processes of motion and instability whose flux and volatility need to be respected and cannot simply be controlled by 'complexity reduction'. Organizations as the holders or providers of quasi objects can make human social interaction possible. But I question how far organizations can 'represent' their own principles of exclusion and boundary-setting to themselves without destabilizing themselves. I know of no organization that openly acknowledges and deals with its own principles of inclusion and exclusion, partiality and limitation-setting, boundary imposition and restrictiveness. Only some are (de facto) permitted to buy the product, get the service, receive the promotion, or profit from the success. The borders and confines of wealth, power and possibility form the determinate nonknowledge of organization and this knowledge is not going to be opened up for participation, discussion or transparent negotiation.

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