

What is Organization?

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Sverre Spoelstra

Introduction

This book is about the relation between philosophy and organization in so far as it concerns organization studies. The book, then, revolves round the interplay between philosophy, organization and organization studies. The purpose is both to ask philosophically the question ‘What is organization?’ and to question the importance of this kind of philosophical questioning for the field of organization studies.

The relation between philosophy and organization is far from straightforward. As Steffen Böhm (2007: 112) put it, ‘the relationship between philosophy and organization cannot be a linear one, as “philosophy” and “organization” themselves are not given constructs.’ From the outset the relation between philosophy and organization might even appear deeply problematical. After all, philosophy has a longstanding tradition that attempts to distance itself from the social (see Rancière, 2004) and hence also from social organizations. Nothing seems further away from the metaphysical speculations of philosophy than the constant search for opportunities and threats in the world of management and organization. This is what Ruud Kaulingfreks (2007) points at when he opposes the radical uselessness of philosophy to the radical usefulness of business and actual organizations: philosophy does not survive in the realms of efficiency that characterize the world of business and management.

Even so, philosophy has become increasingly popular in organization studies. This is evidently true for the paradigm debate of the 1980s and 1990s (see Hassard and Pym, 1990; Hassard, 1993; Pfeffer, 1993). The paradigm debate was sparked by the publication of Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan’s *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (1979). Loosely based on Thomas Kuhn’s philosophy of science, particularly his idea of paradigm incommensurability, Burrell and Morgan identified four paradigms in organization studies. One of the motivations behind the book was to legitimize the development of non-positivistic and non-functionalist organization theory, against the

dominant ‘functionalist paradigm’ in organization studies at the time. The paradigm debate can at least partly be read as a discussion of the desired borders of organization studies. One of the ways these borders were discussed was by gradually introducing ‘philosophical schools’ to organization studies that break with the functionalist paradigm. Thus questions were raised and debated concerning the relevance and importance of ‘philosophical schools’ like Critical Theory, postmodernism, post-structuralism and deconstruction for organization studies (e.g. Cooper and Burrell, 1988; Parker, 1995). Since the invention and subsequent institutionalization of critical management studies (see Alvesson and Deetz, 2000, Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; 2003; Fournier and Grey, 2000; Ackroyd, 2004) philosophy has further increased in popularity. Philosophers like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and – more recently – Ernesto Laclau, Jacques Lacan, and Slavoj Žižek, are today frequently discussed at conferences and in the academic journals of the field (see Jones and Munro, 2005; Jones and ten Bos, 2007).

In this book I am not so much interested in the increasing popularity of philosophy in organization studies as I am in the *precise relation* of organization studies to philosophy. What roles does philosophy play in organization studies? In this book I distinguish two radically different relations to philosophy. The first relation is based upon the under-labourer conception of philosophy. According to this idea, philosophy proves its usefulness for (social) science by unmasking contradictions or by making presumptions explicit. Proponents of this view, whether explicitly (in critical realism) or implicitly, tend to think of philosophy as something that happens outside of organization studies proper, which is seen to fall completely under the umbrella of the social sciences. The second relation to philosophy is a positive, engaged relation to philosophy. I develop the nature of this relation on the basis of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s concept of philosophy. Philosophy for Deleuze and Guattari is creative; it creates a plane of concepts against common sense. Philosophy of organization, in this sense, means asking the question ‘What is organization?’ philosophically, i.e. by creating a philosophical problem of organization. It is this relation to philosophy that is further explored in this text. Hence, the overall idea can be captured as an appeal for more *philosophy of organization* instead of *philosophy for organization studies*.

Before I provide a short outline of the structure of the book, I will first undertake some ‘groundwork’ on the relation between the business school and the faculty of philosophy – a historical theme which is very much present in the background of this text.

The conflict of the faculties

Institutionalization takes thinking into certain directions, directions that it possibly does not want to take. The modern idea of the university is based on this insight. The modern university, as we find it in Kant’s *The Conflict of the Faculties* first published in 1793, is the institution that is protected from other institutions. This does not mean that thinking within the safe walls of the university is freed from institutional habits and definitions; thinking will always have to struggle with the abstractions that common sense imposes on us. It does mean, however, that there are no predefined goals or routes that thought must take, or established truths that thought must defend. It is important, Kant argued, that thought has a place where it is not interrupted by the demands of institutions. The only way to secure such a place is through an institution and the university is the name for this institution.

Kant recognized, however, that pure thought is not the only ‘task’ for the university. The university also performs certain functions for the state. Kant makes the distinction between ‘scholars proper’ and what he calls the ‘businessmen’ [*Geschäftsleute*] of the university, who perform instrumental functions for the government. Contrary to proper scholars, the businessmen are not free to use their knowledge as they see fit; they are under the command of the state. This state command over the university is entirely legitimate: the university needs to perform functions for the state and its interests. These functions fall under what Kant calls ‘the higher faculties’. Kant distinguishes three higher faculties: the first is the theology faculty which has as its purpose the ‘eternal well-being’ of the people; then there is the faculty of law, taking care of the ‘civil well-being’ of the people and finally there is the medicine faculty, whose task is to care for the ‘physical well-being’ of the people (Kant, 1992: 31). These faculties are called higher because they are ‘closer’ to the state: they are essentially designed for functional purposes.

The ‘proper scholars’ don’t work at the higher faculties but at the lower faculty. There is one lower faculty, Kant says, which is the faculty of philosophy.² Contrary to the higher faculties, the lower faculty must be ‘free to evaluate everything’ (ibid: 27). This faculty, Kant argues, is needed for the well-being of society: one faculty must operate autonomously, i.e. absolutely free from interference of the government. The reason Kant gives is that without it ‘the truth would not come to light’ (ibid: 29).³

The university in ruins?

In Kant’s time the dominant pre-established truth restricting thought was religion and state-interest. King Frederick William II sent Kant himself a letter saying how he misused his philosophy to ‘distort and disparage many of the cardinal and basic teachings of the Holy Scriptures and of Christianity’ and continued saying that ‘We expect better things of you, as you yourself must realize how irresponsible you have acted against your duty as a teacher of youth and against our paternal purpose’ (Kant, 1992: 11). A century earlier, it was also this infringement that prevented Spinoza from accepting a chair in Heidelberg.

Today, the dominant force threatening the freedom of thought, as Kant envisioned it institutionalized in the modern university, is widely recognized to be found in capitalism and globalization (e.g. Aronowitz, 2000; Lambert, 2001; Lyotard 1984, Readings, 1996). One might seriously question to which extent the university is successful in keeping

² Kant understands the faculty of philosophy in a very broad sense: it not only includes history and the humanities but anything we would now call ‘fundamental’ research.

³ Here we encounter an Enlightenment idea, quite foreign to most of us now: the idea that society could function on reason alone. Kant says, ‘the government may find the freedom of the philosophy faculty, and the increased insight gained from this freedom, a better means for achieving its end than its own absolute authority’ (Kant, 1992: 59). The ultimate aim is to govern society on the basis the truth itself, whereas the utility of the higher faculties is needed to keep society running. However, as I will argue in chapter 5 through a reading of Spinoza, the idea of a reasonable state is not dissimilar to the contemporary quest for ethical organizational structure.

these new forms of institutional infringement at bay. The modern university is itself more and more taken over by commercialization and commodification, in some contexts to the point where ‘a critical academic in the university is ... against the university’ (Moten and Harney, 2004: 105). Or, worse still, that ‘critical academics tend to be regarded as harmless intellectuals’ (ibid). Their critiques are neutralized or even turned into a profit by capitalist modes of production. For Bill Readings (1996), too, capitalism has overtaken critique: he speaks of a ‘ruin’ of the modern university in which academics dwell.

The success story of the business school

What is the place of the business school in all this? The ‘ruination’ of the university seems to go hand in hand with the rise of the business school at the very same institution. In the climate of the commercialization of the university, resulting in the downsizing of many departments, business schools prosper. Despite some early signs of decline, business schools are still growing faster than any other part of the university (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). In the United Kingdom and elsewhere, many business schools function as cash cows to fund other university departments – with many universities even being dependent on the success of the business school and the MBA in particular (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Starkey et al, 2004).⁴ In terms of Kant, we could say that the business school, ever since the first appeared about a century ago, was designed as a new higher faculty by virtue of its usefulness to the state or, nowadays, capitalism.

The relevance and merits of the business school have recently been severely questioned. Not only for selling its soul to the devil, in this case business, but also for not helping business in any productive way. The cynicism with respect to the relevance of an MBA, for example, is nicely summed up by Ronald Burt, a business professor, who said ‘I have never found benefits for the MBA-degree – usually it just makes

⁴ This is also true for the University of Leicester where this text was written. In 2004 the Vice Chancellor announced two million pounds overall profit in a local newspaper but without mentioning that this would have been a substantial loss without the profits of the Management School (which in turn is heavily dependent on its distance learning program).

you a couple of years older than non-MBA peers' (cited in Pfeffer and Fong, 2002: 81). The observation that 'students have to demonstrate competence to get in, but not to get out', nicely captures a similar feeling (Armstrong, cited in Pfeffer and Fong, 2002: 83). MBA graduates have also been described as 'critters with lopsided brains, icy hearts and shrunken souls' (Leavitt, 1989: 39) to be held accountable for some of the recent financial scandals.

The MBA is perceived by students, as well as marketed by business schools, in terms of a return on investment (Pfeffer and Fong, 2004) and often supported by the state under the banner of the knowledge economy. There is little evidence that business schools are concerned with this criticism as long as they remain profitable: MBA programs look remarkably alike all over the globe (Pfeffer and Fong, 2004). There can be little doubt that business schools offer a product that fulfils a need in the market. In most cases, however, this is not the need for critical thinking that is associated with the modern idea of the university. The research at business schools has also heavily been critiqued: both for being too scientific and for not being scientific enough.⁵ On the basis of these kinds of critiques, one could cynically conclude that business schools are perhaps too good in business, in that they know how to sell products nobody wants.

⁵ Starkey and Tempest (2005: 70) nicely sum up all the criticism that the business school has received in the last 50 years or so: '(i) that the business school was little more than a trade school; (ii) that in transforming itself into not being a trade school business school research has become divorced from the real concerns of business; (iii) that business school education and training does not have positive effects on the careers of its graduate; (iv) that the knowledge produced by business schools is self-referential and irrelevant; (v) that in responding to customer needs the business school has become too market-driven and, in the process, knowledge has been dumbed down; (vi) that the business school has not only failed to deliver knowledge that enhances firm and national competitiveness, but has also been a major source of the wrong sorts of knowledge for management, fostering a short-term, risk averse orientation ... and even new management thinking and practices that have led to contemporary and social crises.' Some, but not all, of the critiques on the business school are still traceable to the ideal of pure knowledge. It would, however, be a mistake to argue that forces from the lower faculties have been completely foreign to the business school: it has always been struggling with different objectives and different demands, precisely because its design has been too high for the traditional, modern, academic climate.

If the university is in ruins it could not be better described by the twin claims of, first, Gary Hamel that the best ideas in management over the past decade did not originate in business schools (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002) and, second, Peter Sloterdijk (1987) that true critical thinking must be looked for outside of the university. In other words, the highest faculty, the business school, produces useless knowledge while the lower faculties (philosophy, the humanities) produce a-critical knowledge. If we can spot any hope in Pfeffer and Fong's argument, it must be their finding that people without business degrees, including 'lawyers, doctors, and philosophers', are at least equally successful in management consulting jobs (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002), which amounts to saying that the lower faculties successfully perform some higher functions.

The idea of the critical business school

It is at this point that critical management studies comes in. The idea to re-institutionalize critique in the highest faculty – and this is, I believe, the idea which underpins critical management studies – is historically a radical reversal of Kant. The conflict of the faculties, Kant's conflict between the faculty of philosophy, the home of the critic, and the higher, functional, faculties is substituted for an internal conflict: a conflict within the faculty of business, or simply business school or management department, itself.

What explains the possibility of a critical business school? It seems that the business school, because of the revenues it draws in as the highest faculty, can afford to be critical. It is not dependent, or at least less dependent than the traditional lower faculties, on the good will or financial backing of the state. Academics at the business school can themselves (of course in varying degrees, depending on the country) encourage and nurture a critical environment. For this reason critical management studies, or critique at the business school, is not a strange idea at all. The business school might even establish an institutional distinction between its departments; perhaps a distinction between higher and lower departments.

This is where this detour into the historical roots of the idea of a critical business school ends, for now. In the conclusion I will return to the

idea of the institutionalization of critique in the business school and I will also ask what role philosophy of organization could play in the critical business school.

Structure of the text

This book consists of two parts and a conclusion. The first part (chapter 1 and 2) might be understood as the methodological part of the book, in which I ask the questions ‘What is philosophy?’ and ‘What is critique?’ through respective readings of Deleuze and Guattari, and Foucault. Chapter 1 conceptualizes philosophy as the creation of concepts against common sense. Philosophy of organization, then, is the creation of concepts of organization against common sense. Philosophy is understood neither as the producer of metaphysical systems, nor as the presuppositions or common sense of ordinary people, but as a combatant of common sense. This idea of philosophy is contrasted with the under-labourer conception of philosophy in which philosophy is valued in terms of its usefulness for science. I argue that this latter conception has been dominant in organization studies.

Chapter 2 deals with the notion of ‘critical philosophy’ as we encounter it in Foucault’s later works. Critical philosophy emphasizes the relation between philosophy and the production of who we are, ‘an ontology of the self’. I relate this notion of critique to critical management studies. Critical management studies, I argue, tends to turn to philosophy in the hope of finding the articulation of a critical method or a critical framework. The strength of Foucault’s concept of critique (as of philosophical concepts in general), however, is not to be sought in its usefulness for organization studies; it must rather be sought in what the concept itself establishes.

In the second part I am no longer concerned with *the nature* of philosophy of organization but with philosophy of organization itself. Hence, I explore different concepts that are part of a philosophical problem of organization. Asking the question ‘What is organization?’ does not necessarily imply the creation of a concept of ‘organization’ (i.e. the term ‘organization’); it can also consist of concepts that are associated with organization. As such, chapter 3 takes its starting point in Robert Cooper’s concept of ‘institutional thinking’: thinking in

terms of complete entities. Cooper is a clear example of someone who engages with philosophy of organization within organization studies. He does not apply philosophy to organization studies; philosophy, in his work, simply happens in organization studies (and sociology) journals. Through Cooper's concept of institutional thinking I explore the relations between critique and institutions. I argue that critical thinking is in need of the help of institutions, even though institutions resist critical thinking.

Chapter 4, 'synergy', is concerned with Spinoza's effort in the *Ethics* to think individuality without relying on parts or wholes. Individuality, for Spinoza, becomes synonymous with synergy. Here, I understand Spinoza as developing the idea of an ethics of organizational structure; the idea that structure contains the good itself, rather than that which facilitates the good.

This reading of Spinoza is pursued in chapter 5, this time in relation to Spinoza's political philosophy: I propose to read Spinoza's concept of absolute democracy precisely as an institutional ethics in which the good is embedded in a particular structure. In the same chapter I also look at Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's contemporary concept of the multitude through a Spinozist lens. That is to say, from the perspective of a Spinozist philosophy of organization.

In the final chapter, chapter 6, I explore the concept of miracle through Spinoza, Hannah Arendt, Gilles Deleuze and others. In doing so, I distinguish a philosophical relation to the miraculous to the one we find in business: the first attempts to articulate the miraculous while the second attempts to conceal it.

The conclusion is a summary of the argument as well as an attempt to think the theory and practice of philosophy of organization in organization studies in relation to Kant's idea of the modern university and the idea of the business school as a critical institution.

PART I

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY OF ORGANIZATION?

Chapter 1

Philosophy

The philosopher takes the side of the idiot as though of a man without presuppositions.

– Gilles Deleuze (1994: 130)

Introduction

Throughout the centuries philosophers have made statements that do not seem to make any sense, at least not according to the established language that we use. Examples include Spinoza's idea that a belief in miracles 'would lead to atheism' (*TTP*, 448),⁶ Bergson's insistence that we laugh at a 'particular mechanical arrangement' (1911: 86), and Heidegger's claim that 'we are not yet capable of thinking' (1993: 369). Or take the following (rather confusing) sentence by Deleuze: 'a clear idea is in itself confused; it is confused in so far as it is clear' (1994: 213). Some philosophers have even maintained that they are not philosophers at all (e.g. Arendt, Foucault), which doesn't seem to make much sense either. Why is it that philosophers make these kinds of

⁶ For citation to the *Ethics* I follow Curley's system: P = Proposition, A = Axiom, D = Definition, C = Corollary, S = Scholium, Exp = Explanation, L = Lemma. Roman numerals before these abbreviations refer to parts of the *Ethics*. References to the *Tractatus Politicus* (or *Political Treatise*) are given by the abbreviation *TP*, followed by the chapter and paragraph. References to the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (or *Theological-Political Treatise*) are given by the abbreviation *TTP* followed by the page number in the *Complete Works* (Spinoza, 2002). Roman numerals refer to Spinoza's letters. All references also include the page number in the *Complete Works* between straight brackets. All translations are Samuel Shirley's (*ibid*), unless stated otherwise.

paradoxical statements? Are these merely unrepresentative examples? Do we need sociological, psychological, or even psychopathological theories in order to explain them? Or has this apparent nonsense something to do with the 'essence' of philosophy itself?

Different concepts of philosophy produce different effects; they also shed different kinds of light on what a 'philosophy of organization' could mean. In this chapter I emphasize the role of common sense and paradox in philosophy through a reading of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of philosophy. When philosophy is understood as being engaged with 'para-sense' (Deleuze, 1994), rather than common sense, it no longer provides any ground upon which the social sciences can stand. Instead, we might distinguish between two concepts of a radically different nature: philosophical concepts and social scientific concepts. They cannot be translated into one another, yet they affiliate. Such a concept of philosophy is by no means common sense within organization studies. As I will argue, organization studies tends to understand philosophy as the under-labourer for the social sciences. Philosophy, thus conceived, becomes something located *outside* of organization studies rather than a positive force *within* organization studies.

This chapter starts with a discussion of the idea of common sense and its relation to social science. Next, I discuss two different conceptions of philosophy in relation to common sense – the Lockean under-labourer conception of philosophy, the dominant conception in organization studies, and the Deleuzian conception of philosophy as para-sense. Pursuing the Deleuzian conception of philosophy, I use the Rwandan genocide to exemplify the radically different relations of social science and philosophy to common sense.

Common sense

We live, literally, in common sense: a sense we have in common (from the Latin, *senses communis*). There is no human life without common or shared sense. Yet common sense, in so far as it can be understood as constituting social reality, is never natural. That is to say, it is never natural itself; social reality cannot be explained by natural laws. While fictions as such might not be against the laws of nature, their contents

cannot be explained through laws of nature. Common sense nonetheless appears as natural; it takes the form of the natural: 'Everybody knows...', 'We all know it is true that...', 'Of course you must...', 'It is only natural to...'. Common sense appears under the guise of nature; it is the creation of the natural within social reality. Common sense is operative without regard to its effects; it is operative without regard to logic or reasoning and it does not need a cause. Common sense is abstracted from social reality. This is the paradox of common sense: common sense is abstracted from the social reality it creates.

The abstractions of common sense, through which we live our lives, are indispensable. They are needed to communicate, to give meaning and purpose to our lives, to form an identity, to recognize and to predict. Nowadays we tend to understand common sense as an inner voice of reason; much like Jiminy Cricket as the 'official conscience' of Pinocchio in Disney's adaptations of Collodi's famous children book.⁷

⁷ Hannah Arendt (1998) argues that the meaning of common sense radically changed in recent centuries. According to Arendt, common sense understood as *sensus communis*, as I also understand the term in this text, has made way for common sense as 'inner sense'; as 'the playing of the mind with itself' (1998: 284). Today, the meaning of common sense would be understood as radically anti-common - as our individual sense of reason rather than a communal sense of reason. A shift in the German language, 'the difference between the Old German word *Gemeinsinn* and the more recent expression *gesunder Menschenverstand*' (Arendt, 1998: 283), supports this idea. Indeed, it is this idea of common sense as the voice of reason that Jiminy Cricket might be understood to symbolize in Disney's adaptations of Pinocchio and this is also the meaning of common sense in the popular phrase 'common sense is not so common', which is usually attributed to Voltaire. Rather than arguing that the idea of common sense as *sensus communis* has disappeared in contemporary use, as Arendt does, I believe we can see these two different meanings used side by side. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, Jiminy Cricket has also appeared in safety films advising children how to deal with dangerous situations (such as fire, traffic, and electricity). Here, Jiminy Cricket, once again understood as symbolizing common sense, is more in line with the idea of a shared (or learned) sense. Similarly, when the contemporary novelist Saramago says, 'Don't be deceived, common sense is much too common to be sense, it's just a chapter from a statistics book, the one everyone always trots out' (2004: 54) and 'common sense is just a kind of arithmetic mean that rises and falls according to the tide' (2004: 202), he also uses common sense in the original meaning of *sensus communis* or shared sense. As a final remark, it is interesting to note that the 'talking cricket'

When we are about to do something stupid there is common sense correcting us. As the novelist José Saramago (2004: 145) says, common sense is always there to ‘throw a brutal bucket of cold water’ over dangerous ideas we form in our heads. Common sense, however, can also be harmful. The abstractions which we inhabit, and which protect us from chaos, tend to impose severe restrictions upon us: thoughts become dogmatic and our bodies behave in programmatic ways; they can stabilize or ‘naturalize’ oppression. Common sense can also cause war and misery. To quote Saramago one more time, ‘Common sense has often been mistaken about consequences, badly so when it invented the wheel, disastrously so when it invented the atomic bomb’ (2004: 47).

Common sense is indifferent to representational truth: it does not matter whether the contents of common sense statements are truths or fictions (in the instances where this question can be resolved). What matters is that common sense itself constitutes truth: it produces truth in social reality. Thus common sense itself, as the producer of the truth in social reality, is the object of the social sciences. For example, when Durkheim (1982) calls for knowledge of the ‘collective mind’, he is essentially indicating the role of common sense in human interaction: the common sense that is formed on a supra-individual level or the common sense of a given society. This, of course, does not mean that social science is itself commonsensical. Quite the contrary: social science intervenes directly into common sense; by showing, for example, how common sense (discursive reality) does not correspond with actual reality (or a material reality), or by showing undesirable effects of common sense.⁸ Social science nonetheless seeks to re-inscribe its results directly into common sense; that is to say into a *shared sense*,

in chapter four of Collodi’s *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, who warns Pinocchio to obey his parents and not to walk away from home, is called a ‘wise old philosopher’. Here, we might see a similarity between Collodi’s understanding of common sense and the Scottish philosophers of common sense, who understood philosophy as rooted in common sense (see Grave, 1960).

⁸ Natural science, of course, also intervenes in common sense but one might question whether or not the results of the natural sciences need a social context to exist. Here the relation between natural science and the idea of social construction is at stake. For example, are quarks socially constructed as Pickering (1984) has argued? An excellent discussion of this question and related questions can be found in Hacking (1999).

which, one should add, in many cases is not bigger than a research community.

Common sense needs affirmation, in what we say and how we act. New common sense pushes aside old common sense: we take part in the recreation of the natural in social reality on a daily basis. Social reality is haunted by a continuous battle over common sense; the changing nature of common sense partly makes up the changes in social reality. We might think of organizations as the systems in which common sense is stabilized. Organizations give us rules and prescriptions; they place us in an organizational culture; they define the natural in working life. Here we could make a distinction between the verb 'to organize', understood as the ordering of common sense (or structuring that is aimed at the continuous regeneration of common sense) and the noun 'organization', understood as a structured place in which the battle for common sense takes place; organizations as places of structure-struggling and organization as structuring (cf. Cooper and Law, 1995: 259).

Common sense can appear spontaneously, without conscious intention, but common sense can also be taught or manipulated: through the education of 'social facts' ('Africa is the poorest continent in the world'), state propaganda ('Of course you vote'), marketing ('Naturally you buy a Honda'), and so on. Social science can also participate in the conscious creation of or intervention in common sense. So-called 'critical' social science in particular can be understood as consciously working upon common sense: it takes a stand in the production of common sense in order to emancipate an oppressed group, in order to change public opinion about social dangers, and so on. Thus critical social science does not coincidentally produce 'shock-effects'; rather, it deliberately aims to disrupt social reality itself by drawing attention to the role played by common sense in social problems, a role that would otherwise go unnoticed or be taken for granted.

Philosophy, too, can be conceptualized in relation to common sense. In fact, ever since Socrates, this is a common way of conceptualizing philosophy within the philosophical traditions. Most philosophers, with the notable exception of the eighteenth century Scottish 'philosophy of common sense' (Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart and others), agree that philosophy is against common sense. There is,

however, little agreement regarding the nature of this ‘against’. In the sections that follow I will discuss two contrasting conceptions: (1) the under-labourer conception of philosophy as we find it in Locke and others, in which philosophy is conceptualized as that which effaces contradictions in common sense and (2) the conception of philosophy as the creation of concepts as we find it in Deleuze and Guattari, in which philosophy becomes the autonomous creator of paradoxical sense, or ‘para-sense’, a sense that opposes common sense rather than that which corrects it. The first conception will lead us to *philosophy for organization studies*; the second to *philosophy of organization*.

The under-labourer conception of philosophy

In relation to philosophy, the term ‘under-labourer’ is first found in Locke. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he writes:

The commonwealth of learning is not at this time without master-builders, whose mighty designs, in advancing the sciences, will leave lasting monuments to the admiration of posterity; but every one must not hope to be a Boyle or a Sydenham; and in an age that produces such masters as the great Huygenius and the incomparable Mr. Newton, with some others of that strain; it is ambition enough to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge ... (Locke, 1976: xlii-xliii)

Locke was perhaps all too humble here; it is unlikely that he actually saw such a minor role for himself in the development of knowledge – especially when one considers the grand theories he develops in the same book. The idea of philosophy as under-labourer, as Locke here defined it for the first time, has nonetheless become a popular conception of philosophy. The central idea is that common sense is not always based upon logic or reasoning. Thus within the common sense language that we use we are often inconsistent, we use ambiguous or ill-defined concepts. As scientists are part of social reality, confused concepts will also enter the works of science. The under-labourer conception of philosophy understands the role of philosophy as ‘clearing up’ this confusion in order to create a tidy environment for the scientist. The philosopher, as it were, becomes the assistant of the scientist. Philosophizing, then, is a purely negative activity; that is to

say, philosophy clears the path of scientific progress by removing some of the obstacles, rectifying linguistic confusion or resolving logical contradictions. One also finds traces of this conception of philosophy in Kant's concept of critique. Kant says that, 'a critique of pure reason' serves 'not for the amplification but only for the purification of our reason, and for keeping it free of errors, by which a great deal is already won.' (Kant, 1998: 149) In more recent times one finds defenders of the under-labourer conception of philosophy in the analytical philosophy of A. J. Ayer and Gilbert Ryle (Winch, 1990) and in the critical realism of Bhaskar (e.g. Bhaskar, 1989).

Central to the idea of philosophy as the under-labourer is a particular concept of science, in which science is understood to steadily progress through the application of scientific methods. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, philosophers of science put this conception of science into question. Science, Thomas Kuhn famously argues in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970), is practiced within the context of a 'paradigm', which can be understood as the common sense in a particular research community. Every so many years the shared sense embedded in the paradigm gets confronted with results that do not fit within the presuppositions of the paradigm. The old paradigm falls apart after which, in a period of 'extraordinary science', a new paradigm will be established. What is important in the context of this chapter is that science cannot advance without common sense; paradigms are necessary for scientific research. Only an environment of shared presuppositions enables 'normal science' (Kuhn, 1970).

Paradoxically, Kuhn's critique of positivist concepts of science, on which the under-labourer conception of philosophy is traditionally built, has not harmed the popularity of the under-labourer conception in social science. In fact, we might say that it has strengthened it. After the publication of Kuhn's book social scientists began searching for their 'philosophical' presuppositions, which resulted in the identification of different paradigms (e.g. Benton 1977; Johnson et al., 1984). Within organization studies, the search for philosophical foundations has become popular especially through Burrell and Morgan's highly influential *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (1979). Loosely based on Kuhn (1970), Burrell and Morgan identify four 'mutually exclusive' paradigms in the social sciences, each

based on different assumptions about the nature of social science and the nature of society. Central to their book was the idea that all theories of organization are based upon a philosophy of science and a theory of society. They argued that different sets of assumptions result in different paradigms in which organization theorists conduct their research. For example, one of the assumptions Burrell and Morgan discuss is organized by the voluntarism-determinism axis: does nature, or 'the environment', determine what it means to be human or do we have a free will? The presumption of voluntarism in social science, Burrell and Morgan argue, results in a type of social research that is different from the presumption of determinism. The link to philosophy seems clear enough: after all, it is simply common sense that philosophers have created 'determinist philosophies' and 'voluntarist philosophies' which are mutually exclusive, thus incommensurable.

The book sparked immense debate throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, with the idea of paradigm incommensurability in particular being heavily criticized (see Hassard and Pym, 1990). What interests me here, however, is not so much the idea of the incommensurability between paradigms. What leads me to conclude that the under-labourer conception of philosophy has risen in popularity is that with the identification of paradigms, philosophy is thought to yet again prove its usefulness for organization studies. Philosophy, in a sense, 'uncovers' the ontological and epistemological presuppositions of science. Philosophy, thus conceived, makes us see how different sets of presuppositions 'bias' social research. Thus while, due to the critique of Kuhn and others of positivist concepts of science, the idea of philosophy as mere 'fault-finding' has lost ground it did not harm the under-labourer conception of philosophy in organization studies in any radical way. What lay in the way of knowledge was a poor understanding of the presuppositions articulated in philosophy, and the paradigms make clear what these were. Indeed, some saw in the combinative strength of different paradigms the possibility of more complete knowledge through 'multi-paradigm' research (e.g. Hassard, 1993; Lewis and Kelemen, 2002; Schultz and Hatch, 1996).

With regards to philosophy, however, something strange has happened. If it is the merit of philosophy to 'understand' the presuppositions of social science, what, exactly, is the difference between a philosopher and

a social scientist? There is indeed no fundamental distinction at all as both the philosopher and the social scientist study common sense. The philosopher has effectively been turned into a social scientist; a sociologist, anthropologist or ethnographer of common sense as it exists within the social sciences.

Through Burrell and Morgan's book many scholars came to realize that there are a number of assumptions at work in sociological research: one cannot simply 'do' empirical analysis, as one always begins from ontological and epistemological assumptions. As I will argue in the next sections, however, these assumptions are not themselves philosophical, even though they loosely refer to philosophical problems in the history of philosophy. In this sense there are few 'philosophical moments' in the paradigm debate of the 1980s and 1990s, even though this debate did create a greater awareness of the kind of problems that philosophers (particularly the philosophers of science) are working with. The paradigm debate, in short, was predominantly a social scientific debate about the role of common sense within social theory.

The positive nature of philosophy

We might say that according to the under-labourer conception of philosophy, the philosopher occupies a staff-function in the organization of knowledge: the philosopher is, so to speak, a quality controller, the one who ensures nothing goes wrong. Philosophy does not have its own nature, it does not create anything; philosophy is there to help science. How could it have a positive function, if knowledge is the exclusive domain of the sciences?

Knowledge of actual reality is the domain of science: through propositions, functions and variables, scientists seek to acquire an understanding of actual reality. The social scientist creates social concepts; concepts that map common sense formations. For Deleuze and other philosophers (like Bergson, Derrida and Serres), however, reality is not exhausted by the actual: reality is made up of the actual, 'the given', and the virtual, 'that by which the given is given' (Deleuze, 1994: 140); the expressed and that which expresses. The actualizations are always doubled by the virtual from which orders and forms that we seek to capture in stable knowledge emerge and disappear. This is how

Deleuze manages to distinguish philosophy from the sciences: that by which the given is given is the unique 'object' of philosophy.

This object of philosophy, however, must not be confused with the search for universal truths. In *Difference and Repetition* (1994), Deleuze fiercely turns against the tradition in philosophy that seeks to establish universal truths. What happens when a philosopher claims to have found a universal? The common criticism (e.g. Fish, 2003; see also the second chapter) is that the clear skies of the philosopher are in fact abstracted from the contingency of the real world. That is to say, they are abstracted from worldly affairs to the point where they are fully disconnected from everyday life and common sense. Deleuze, however, makes the opposite argument: the universal of the philosopher is not based upon abstraction *from* everyday life, but on the abstractions *of* everyday life. Hence when philosophy formulates universals, it seeks refuge in the prephilosophical or in common sense. Deleuze gives the example of Descartes:

when the philosopher says "I think therefore I am," he can assume that the universality of his premises - namely, what it means to be and to think ... - will be implicitly understood, and that no one can deny that to doubt is to think and to think is to be. ... *Everybody knows, no one can deny* is the form of representation and the discourse of the representative. (Deleuze, 1994: 130; emphasis in original)

The universals of the philosopher, Deleuze says, are abstract, but they are in this regard not different from the 'concrete' language we use or the common sense we establish amongst ourselves. For Deleuze, any representation of the actual world in which we live that understands this world as complete is an abstraction. What we experience as 'natural givens', for example the 'fact' that we are individuals or the 'fact' that we live in societies, miss not only what it means to be an individual or what it means to live in a society, but also that this meaning is continuously changing. The earth upon which we live continually invents itself in new ways. To define or to understand what it means to be human (according to Durkheim, the project of sociology), is always only a partial and static picture: nature redefines what it means to be

human continuously. The static orders we form in our representations are in reality always open.⁹

What, however, is 'that by which the given is given'? It is, Deleuze says, difference itself; a pure field of indeterminate flux. As difference is not something actualized, it cannot be captured in knowledge. It can not be discovered as it is not covered – it is a pure beyond which is constantly at play. The method of philosophy is therefore not discovery but experimentation. Philosophy is not concerned with finding actual problems, or with finding solutions to actual problems. Philosophy itself creates problems; as such it is entirely positive. Philosophy is a self-positing system: the problems it creates are not looking for 'real-life' answers, as the 'solution' of a philosophical problem corresponds with itself. Philosophical problems take the side of 'non-being' (Deleuze, 1994) or 'extra-being' (Deleuze, 1990) rather than 'being'. The creation of philosophical problems means entering unknown territories. Philosophy thus allows us to formulate problems in different ways; ways that are not already solved by actual experience. It allows us to think about the world through concepts that are not forced upon us, or pre-structured, by the actualized. In this context, Deleuze likes to compare philosophy to swimming or learning a foreign language:

Learning to swim or learning a foreign language means composing the singular points of one's own body or one's own language with those of another shape or element, which tears us apart but also propels us into a hitherto unknown and unheard-of world of problems. (Deleuze, 1994: 192)

Philosophical concepts are for Deleuze and Guattari (1994) precisely the way by which the philosopher articulates the incomplete or indeterminate nature of our world. Philosophical concepts 'tear open the firmament and plunge into the chaos' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 202).

⁹ Of course, Deleuze is by no means the only one who makes this argument. Norbert Elias (1978), for example, has made similar arguments within sociology.

The para-sense of philosophical concepts

For Deleuze, too, common sense is the target of philosophy. Contrary to the under-labourer conception of philosophy, however, common sense is not corrected by discovering contradiction, but doubled by creation of paradox. Paradox (from the Greek *paradoxon*) should be taken literally here: beyond (*para-*) opinion or common sense (*doxa*); beyond the sense that is the co-producer of social reality. Philosophy is revealed by the paradox captured in philosophical concepts. It is in this context that Deleuze creates the concept of para-sense (Deleuze, 1994): philosophy does not engage with common sense, it counters common sense with para-sense.

Philosophy as para-sense divides things up in surprising ways: ‘it groups under one concept things which you would have thought were very different, or it separates things you would have thought belonged together.’ (Deleuze, 2006c: 214) Philosophy offers a breath of fresh air that allows us to think or see things differently (Deleuze, 1995c; 2006d): a philosophical concept of organization makes us think and see organization in ways we hadn’t before. These divisions and unifications do not simply turn the virtual into the actual; they do not directly invent new forms of living, or new forms of being human.¹⁰ They create the conditions from which new forms can emerge without spelling out exactly what form the new could take. The virtual remains the virtual and not a possible: the formulation of ‘an alternative’. Philosophy, Deleuze (1990) says, ‘counter-actualizes’. Philosophy happens in confrontation with the actual.

Philosophical concepts, despite their practicality, cannot be put to practise in turn; they hang on to a chaotic element and are as such always ‘out of tune’, ‘out of order’, or ‘out of step’. Philosophy ‘plunges into chaos,’ but philosophy cannot stay in chaos, as it would then lose its power to counter-actualize. Philosophy must remain a (non-)relation

¹⁰ For this reason, one can be sceptical towards the likes of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's claim that their contribution to the move towards global democracy is to work out the ‘conceptual bases on which a new project of democracy can stand’ (Hardt and Negri, 2004: xvii; more on this in chapter 5). Philosophical concepts, understood through Deleuze and Guattari, do not provide the foundations for great buildings. They are like quicksand in this regard.

to common sense in order to counter-actualize. Thus, while it is true that, as Peter Winch (1990: 2) says, 'the day when philosophy becomes a popular subject is the day for the philosopher to consider where he took the wrong turning,' it is equally true that philosophy ceases to be philosophy when it loses its (non-)relation with common sense; when it ceases to act on 'the flows of everyday thought' (Deleuze, 1995a: 32). In other words, when philosophy moves too far into chaos it loses its ethics and politics as it fails to attack its prime target. It would therefore be unfair to say that philosophy is not interested in the actual. The contrary is true: its engagement with the abstractions of the actual are expressed by its disengagement. Philosophical concepts move, as Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 199) say, between two 'extreme dangers': chaos and common sense.

How do concepts survive between chaos and common sense? What prevents them, on the one hand, from dissolving into chaos and, on the other, from lapsing into common sense? Deleuze and Guattari answer that they form a plane with other concepts. Every concept has other concepts as its components and is itself a component in other concepts. Philosophical concepts are therefore both absolute and relative (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). They are absolute in so far as they move independently from the actual, in so far as they do not refer to an actual state of affairs. But they are also relative to other concepts: only through their connections with other concepts do philosophical concepts attain a relative stability that allows them to exist. Philosophers never create one concept; they always create a plane of concepts. Thus philosophical concepts do not fight common sense alone: their strength is always a collective strength. Philosophical concepts exist as multiplicities and can never be isolated. This is the reason why it is difficult, if not impossible, to establish links between philosophers operating on different planes. This is what Deleuze and Guattari mean when they say, 'Cartesian concepts can only be assessed as a function of their problems and their plane.' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 27) They do not argue that in order to understand the Cartesian concept of the Cogito, one would need to leave this world and trade it for the metaphysical world of Descartes. What they mean is that one cannot pick one concept and leave the others, on the same plane, behind.

Philosophical concepts, in short, can only be considered a success when they prove their ‘usefulness’ (in the specific sense of *using* them to think and see in ways that common sense does not allow us to think and see, cf. Kaulingfreks, 2007). But this usefulness never consists of isolating a concept and putting it back in a commonsensical context. In the preface to *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1983: xii), Deleuze puts it very clearly:

Like Spinoza, Nietzsche always maintained that there is the deepest relationship between concept and affect. Conceptual analyses are indispensable and Nietzsche takes them further than anyone else. But they will always be ineffective if the reader grasps them in an atmosphere which is not that of Nietzsche. As long as the reader persists in: 1) seeing the Nietzschean “slave” as someone who finds himself dominated by a master, and deserves to be; 2) understanding the will to power as a will which wants and seeks power; 3) conceiving the eternal return as the tedious return of the same; 4) imagining the Overman as a given master race – no possible relation between Nietzsche and his reader will be possible.

Philosophy and social science

Following Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of philosophy, social science is not based upon philosophical concepts. Philosophy and social science do not rest on each other: philosophy is not the condition for social science, nor is social science the condition for philosophy.¹¹ This idea entails a direct break with the commonsensical idea within organization studies of philosophy as the under-labourer. Philosophy, as Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize it, is not the foundation for social science. Its

¹¹ In the context of Deleuze’s understanding of philosophy, it is remarkable how Manuel DeLanda has found an under-labourer ontology in Deleuze’s works. In the introduction of his recent Deleuze-inspired book *A New Philosophy of Society* (2006b: 7), he writes: ‘while philosophers cannot, and should not pretend to do the work of social scientists for them, they can greatly contribute to the job of ontological clarification. This is the task that this book attempts to perform’. For me it remains a mystery how DeLanda has turned Deleuze’s concepts in under-labourers for the social sciences – the very idea being radically opposed to Deleuze’s concept of philosophy. It must be admitted, however, that DeLanda’s rereading of Deleuze is fascinating and not without merits in its own right (see also DeLanda, 2006a).

activity radically differs from the activity of social science, which attempts to grasp and intervene in social determinations. Contrary to social science, philosophical (and therefore para-sensical) concepts touch upon the indeterminate or virtual and, for this reason, only attain relative stability on a plane with other concepts. Social science, in contrast, maintains a direct relation with actuality by asking questions such as ‘How do people actually relate to each other?’, ‘How do people actually organize themselves in organizations and institutions?’ and ‘What collective beliefs do people actually have?’ Concepts in social science attempt to grasp the determined (even when the undetermined nature of the world is acknowledged); they maintain a direct link with everyday abstractions or common sense.

Philosophical concepts do not need to be ‘translated’ into the concepts of social science. Translation (from para-sense to common sense) is precisely what neutralizes philosophy’s positive power. It is exactly this positive power of philosophy which is forgotten in the under-labourer conception of philosophy. Philosophical concepts cannot be lifted from their plane without losing their positive power. This, I think, is what Jones (2003) touches upon when he discusses the different ways in which Jean-François Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* has been ‘translated’ within organization studies. Jones (2003: 514) says, ‘When enlisted simply to make an argument for pluralism, one might wonder if Lyotard has not been effectively disarmed, in a way that makes him say old things in a reassuring way.’ The verb ‘to disarm’ captures precisely what is at stake: when a philosophical concept is read as if it were isolated, as if it were a social scientific concept, it loses its armament against common sense, with the consequence of falling back into common sense.

The strict division between social scientific concepts and philosophical concepts does not divide the practice of philosophy and social science. The contrary is true: it rather points at the interconnectedness of philosophy and social science. In the preface to the English translation of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze writes that science and philosophy are ‘caught up in mobile relations in which each is obliged to respond to each other, but by its own means’ (1994: xvi). Philosophy and social science can battle the same opponent, strive to have similar effects, but they do so through different means: by creating para-sense and by

intervening in common sense respectively. The affiliation of philosophy and social science can go further than each responding to the other from their own faculties and disciplinary traditions. The responses can happen within one single text, as many 'social philosophers' or 'social theorists' (such as Simmel, Goffman, Baudrillard, Bauman, Hardt and Negri) demonstrate in their writings.

Hobbesian common sense

Philosophy helps us in looking at social scientific problems in new ways. Philosophy performs a positive power in organization studies too. Many organization theorists have used philosophical concepts in their research. In this text, however, I reserve the term 'philosophy of organization' for the creation of philosophical concepts of organization; it does not refer to the combinatory power of philosophy and social science in organization studies.

Perhaps the most famous philosophy of organization within the social sciences is Thomas Hobbes' theory of government; or, as Talcott Parsons (1949) calls it, the 'Hobbesian problem of order'. This Hobbesian problem of order is sometimes explicitly elaborated upon (e.g. Ellis, 1971; Keeley, 1980), but far more often it functions as a *presupposed* theory of organization (Kaulingfreks, 2005), meaning that Hobbes in some sense has become *common sense* within social science. In the following sections I will sketch such a commonsensical reading of Hobbes' philosophy of organization and its traces in the Rwandan genocide. This will provide an example of what I've been arguing in this chapter: i.e. how philosophy of organization and social scientific research come together; how they matter for each other in a common project of opposing common sense formations.

In the *Leviathan* (1994), Hobbes sets out his theory of government, answering question such as: Why do people freely submit themselves to the rule of states? What is it that keeps a society together? Any theorizing about these types of questions will deal with questions of ontology. Hobbes rooted his 'solution' to the problem of order in an ontology of human nature. According to Hobbes, humans act out of self-interest by nature: 'of the voluntary actions of every man, the object is some *good to himself*' (Hobbes, xiv, 8 [1994: 82], emphasis in

original). The objects humans are after are scarce due to the likeness of all people: humans desire the same things in life because they only superficially differ from one another. In primitive states humans freely fight each other over scarce objects of desire. Hobbes famously described this primitive state, i.e. a state without restrictions posed by institutions, as a 'war of all against all'. In such a state, the average life is 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short' (Hobbes, xiii, 8 [1994: 76]). To escape from this life humans enter a social contract which forms the basis of a government that enforces rules of conduct upon its people.

This very short summary of Hobbes is, of course, very simplistic. It is indeed a common sense presentation of Hobbes, as one could find it in secondary school textbooks. However, as Kaulingfreks (2005: 31) has argued, it is this common sense understanding of Hobbes that also underlies the 'widely accepted' idea that institutions and organizations are justified because they protect us from chaotic violence. Life without organization is deemed to be unbearable: the existence of organizations is taken for granted because it protects us from chaos. Hence the above presentation of Hobbes is not only commonsensical in the sense that it represents the most popular reading of Hobbes, it is also a common sense formation itself in that most people, in Western countries at least, accept Hobbes' legitimation of organization whether they are familiar with Hobbes or not.

In relation to this commonsensical presentation of Hobbes I will ask two questions: (1) What happens when one applies Hobbes' concept of 'the war of all against all' in order to make sense of social reality? (2) What is the difference between a philosophical engagement with Hobbes' war of all against all and a social scientific engagement? As said, I will ask these questions in relation to the war in Rwanda. The purpose is twofold: to draw attention to the danger of adopting philosophical concepts scientifically – that is, without hindsight to the plane of concepts on which they belong – and to give examples of what I understand 'philosophy of organization' to mean.

Common sense and the Rwandan genocide

After the plane crash on April 6, 1994, which killed Rwanda's Hutu president Habyarimana, Rwanda became the stage for one of the

biggest genocides since the Nazi holocaust: in one hundred days between 500,000 and 900,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed.¹² Since the genocide, many books have been published on the topic, both by journalists and by scholars. Together they paint a complex and often contradictory picture of the historical context of the genocide, its organization and the motivation of the perpetrators. Some of these debates have to do with historical accuracy; the most important of these is probably the debate around the circumstances of the plane crash. Some maintain that the Hutu extremists were responsible (who might have been afraid that Habyarimana avoided warfare) while others have argued that the Tutsi Rebels were responsible for the plane crash (Gourevitch, 2000; Strauss, 2006). Other discussions are of a more conceptual nature, amongst them the question of the nature of the genocide as a whole: according to some the Rwandan genocide is best understood as a primitive tribal war while others understand it as the rational implementation of a narrowly defined plan by the Hutu extremists. It is this last discussion which I will connect to Hobbesian common sense.

Within Hobbesian common sense, 'natural' disasters within the social sphere are thought to happen when society collapses due to the malfunctioning of its mechanisms that control humans' primitive urges. A war of all against all is a state of disorganization. In the Rwandan genocide, the most advanced weapons used for the killings were the machine gun, grenades and mines; most Tutsis were killed by low-tech weapons like machetes, clubs and hoes. Neighbours killed each other. Children were killed. Members of the same families were even reported to have killed each other. If there ever was a primitive war of all against all, Rwanda seemed to provide the example.

Up until today, this is the way many people understand the Rwandan genocide even though most books on the subject now emphasize the organizational aspects of the genocide.¹³ The Rwandan war was and is

¹² The number of deaths from the genocide is not conclusively known. See Straus (2006: 51-52) for a discussion of the different figures.

¹³ According to Scott Strauss (2006), most contemporary accounts of the Rwandan genocide even go too far in stressing the 'meticulous planning' of the genocide. The Rwandan genocide, according to his findings, was neither a tribal or primitive war, nor a meticulously planned genocide.

seen to have been caused by a lack of organization or civilization; by the absence of proper rules of conduct, rule of law, and norms of behaviour. As Philip Gourevitch (2000: 168), a journalist for the *New Yorker*, writes in his book about Rwanda: ‘The Rwandan catastrophe was widely understood as a kind of natural disaster-Hutus and Tutsis simply doing what their natures dictated and killing each other’.

This common sense fiction about the war in Rwanda was not only told through Western media. In Jean Hatzfeld’s book *A Time for Machetes* (2005b), which intersperses interviews with a group of Hutu killers who were active in the commune of Nyamata with short narratives, one of the killers says:

Some offenders claim that we changed into wild animals, that we were blinded by ferocity, that we buried our civilization under branches, and that's why we are unable to find the right words to talk properly about it. That is a trick to sidetrack the truth. I can say this: outside the marshes, our lives seemed quite ordinary. (Hatzfeld, 2005b: 229)

Another widespread idea, which can also be found in some of the books on the war in Rwanda (e.g. Gourevitch, 2000), as well as in the motion picture *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), is that the killers killed in a state of drunkenness. Here alcohol is put forward as that which caused the collapse of civilized norms of behaviour. What Hatzfeld’s (2005a; 2005b) and Strauss’ (2006) research make clear, however, is that most of the excessive drinking took place in the evenings, after the killing raids. Drinking during the day was the exception rather than the rule. To understand drinking as one of the causes for the killings is therefore a lie, as one of the survivors says (Hatzfeld, 2005a: 56).

The organization of the Rwandan genocide

The Rwandan genocide was organized – very far from the images of mass hysteria or bestiality that common sense likes us to believe. As Gourevitch (2000: 95) writes in his book, ‘the genocide was the product of order, authoritarianism, decades of modern political theorizing and indoctrination, and one of the most meticulously administrated states in history.’ Drawing the comparison with the German Holocaust, Hatzfeld (2005b: 47) says that the genocide was

‘the result of plans and preparations formulated essentially by collective decisions’.¹⁴

The meticulous administration of which Gourevitch and others speak was partly the legacy of the Belgian colonizers. While the origin and precise meaning of the terms Hutu and Tutsi remain unclear, only with Belgian colonization that the clear border between two ‘races’ was established (Gourevitch, 2000). The Belgians ‘developed’ the established meanings of Hutus as cultivators and Tutsis as herdsmen. In 1933 they introduced ‘ethnic’ identity cards, which were required in order to govern the country through a system of apartheid in which the Tutsis initially were given all the governing jobs. In the 1950s the hierarchy was turned upside down under the banner of ‘social revolution’, the effect of which was merely another form of apartheid, one in which the Tutsis were repressed.

Yet it is certainly not only the colonial history that can be said to have brought organization in – the genocide itself was planned and organized by Hutu extremists. One of the killers in Hatzfeld’s book attests that the genocide was ‘an explicit and organized plan of extermination’ (2005b: 98), arranged in detail by the Hutu extremists. Another killer has the same suspicion: ‘I think the genocide was organized down to the last detail by the intimidators in Kigali’ (2005b: 166). Yet another killer describes the genocide as ‘an organization without complications’ (Hatzfeld, 2005b: 8). The Rwandan genocide was far more terrifying than ‘primitive war’ or ‘bestiality’. This is well-captured in an observation from one of the survivors, ‘even those

¹⁴ There are nonetheless important differences between the Rwandan genocide and the Nazi holocaust (Lemarchand, 2002). Zygmunt Bauman (1989) explains the efficiency of the Nazi Holocaust in terms of the reliance on bureaucratic forms of organizing that enabled ‘killing at distance’. The striking difference with the Rwandan genocide is that despite its superior efficiency there was virtually no killing at distance as most Tutsi’s were killed by machete. It is also worthy of note that this holds for all levels of the organization. As documented in interviews with killers and victims (e.g. Hatzfeld, 2005a; 2005b; Lyon and Strauss, 2006; Strauss, 2006), even the brains behind the genocide participated in the killing raids. This is equally true for the educated (priests, doctors, teachers, shop-owners): another example against the idea of the Rwandan genocide as an example of primitive war.

animals who would have eaten [the corpses] had all fled because of the din of the killings' (2005a: 34).

The killers and survivors that Hatzfeld interviewed frequently portray the killings as 'work'. In describing the killings, both victims and to a lesser extent killers used words like 'job', 'cutting', or 'pruning' to designate the act of killing, which are words taken from the work on banana plantations (Hatzfeld: 2005b: 144). The following excerpts are taken from interviews with killers:

The intimidators made the plans and whipped up enthusiasm; the shopkeepers paid and provided transportation; the farmers prowled and pillaged. For the killings, though, everybody had to show up blade in hand and pitch in for a decent stretch of work. (Hatzfeld, 2005b: 11)

At first the activity was less repetitive than sowing; it cheered us up, so to speak. Afterwards it became the same everyday. More than anything, we missed going home to eat at noon. At noon we often found ourselves deep in the marshes; that is why the midday meal and our usual afternoon naps were forbidden us by the authorities. (Hatzfeld, 2005b: 54)

Cutting corn or bananas, it's a smooth job, because ears of corn and hands of bananas are all the same – nothing troublesome here. Cutting in the marshes, that was more and more tiring, you know why. It was a similar motion but not a similar situation, it was more hazardous. A hectic job. (Hatzfeld, 2005b: 55)

The killer in the marshes is not bothered by personal questions. He puts great effort into his work. (Hatzfeld, 2005b: 217)

The similarities with work are striking and not only in the use of language. During the three months of the genocide, the killers had a strict daily rhythm, 'going to work' at 9.30am and returning home around 4.30pm after the sound of a whistle. In Hatzfeld's interviews with killers, one might even detect something of a 'work ethic'. As one of the killers remembers, 'most said it was not proper, to mix together fooling around [rape] and killing' (2005b: 90). According to another killer, rapes did not happen frequently until one of the officials declared that 'a woman on her back has no ethnic group' (2005b: 125), after which the number of rapes increased rapidly. Someone else says that

torture was a ‘supplementary activity’, ‘a distraction, like a recreational break in a long work day’ (2005b: 121).¹⁵

The danger of common sense

The common sense idea of the war in Rwanda as a primitive war of all against all is false and must have contributed to the weak and often counter-effective responses from the international community. In fact, virtually nothing was done to try to stop the mass killings from happening. Little was changed in the UN peacekeeping mission, which had been present in Rwanda almost half a year before the genocide started. The mission did not gain the authority to intervene. Its soldiers were not allowed to actively stop the killings from happening. The response was not much better in the months following the genocide. Camps were set up in neighbouring countries for the people who had fled from the war zone. No distinction, however, was made between the victims and the killers. It was ‘a war of all against all’, a kind of natural disaster in which there were only victims. This meant among other things that the *Interahamwe* (literally: ‘those who work together’ or ‘those who stand together’), the Hutu extremists that had largely carried out the genocide, were fed and taken care of. Some refugee camps were effectively providing the opportunity for new rounds of killings. The French finally moved into Rwanda in July 1994 under the name *Opération Turquoise*, a mission which seemed to have done more harm than good. According to Gourevitch (2000: 161), the French mission permitted ‘the slaughter of Tutsis to continue for an extra month, and to secure a safe passage for the genocidal command to cross, with a lot of its weaponry, into Zaire.’

The disastrous response from the international community was surely not only due to a false common sense. Economic motives (as well as the lack of economic motives) also played their part. The French, for

¹⁵ It must however be noted that Scott Strauss’ research does not confirm Hatzfeld’s findings on this point: one finds little evidence of the importance of work routinization in Straus (2006) and Lyon and Straus (2006). In an email correspondence Strauss wrote to me that he ‘did not find a great deal of evidence that the killing resembled routine work. In some cases, I did find such evidence, but for the majority of respondents, the portrayal of the violence was more one of war, crisis, and emergency than routine work.’

example, provided (together with China and South-Africa) large amounts of weapons to the Hutu extremists, even during the genocide (Organization of African Unity, 2000: 137). Others were not too bothered about Rwanda precisely because they had no economic interest in the region whatsoever. Political reasons also played their part. The United States was still recovering from the Somalia debacle, a peace-keeping mission that had resulted in a raid that killed more than a thousand people, and were not eager to move into Rwanda for fear of similar situations. This resulted in a discussion whether or not the term 'genocide' applied to Rwanda. If so, the international community was obliged to intervene on the basis of UN General Assembly Resolution 260A(III) from 1948, which was meant to secure the 'never again' after the Nazi holocaust. The US authorities made desperate attempts to avoid the term 'genocide' for as long as possible, even seeking to resort to the phrase 'there may have occurred acts of genocide'. Madeleine Albright, US ambassador to the UN at the time, was opposed to a mandate that would 'ensure' stability in Rwanda and made a case for the 'promotion' of stability instead (Dallaire, 2003: 506). For the Belgians the idea of 'primitive war' was naturally a convenient way to conceal the legacies of their colonial history in Rwanda. Yet, despite these political and economic reasons, the 'Hobbesian' common sense has undeniably contributed to the incompetent reactions of the international community. This is most obviously true for the aid workers in Rwanda, who certainly did not have the intention to prepare extremists for new rounds of killings. The same can be said of the many journalists who also went for the logic of disorganization, and failed to distinguish between killers and victims.

The role of philosophy

Philosophers are not immune to common sense. It is worth emphasizing that one does not only find this kind of common sense thinking among 'ordinary people'. While philosophy goes against common sense by definition (or, more precisely, by conceptualisation), professional philosophers themselves are by no means immune to common sense. Edwin Curley, a celebrated professor in seventeenth century philosophy, falls victim to Hobbesian common sense when, in his introduction to Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1994), he attempts to take away

the ‘common misunderstanding’ that the war of all against all is really about prehistoric times. Writing in 1993, he ‘falsifies’ this idea by pointing at contemporary examples of Beirut, Somalia and Sarajevo – all examples, says Curley, of the war of all against all. In truth, however, Curley does not take away a common misunderstanding. He merely offers one by applying a philosophical concept as if it were a social scientific concept. Curley is captured by a form of common sense that might be said to be based upon Hobbes’ distinction between primitive disorganization and civilized organization. Rwanda, Beirut, Somalia, Sarajevo; there is plenty of evidence that none of these wars and/or genocides correspond to the idea of a disorganized war of all against all. As Serres notes in a direct commentary on Hobbes:

War is decided, it is declared, ordered, prepared, institutionalized, made sacred, it is won, lost, concluded by treaty. War is a state of order, a classic state of lines and columns, maps and strategies, leaders and spectacle, it knows friends, enemies, neutrals, allies, it defines belligerence. (1995: 83)

What to make of this in relation to philosophy? Have I not simply confirmed, rather than attacked, Fish’s (2003) concern that philosophy is so far abstracted from the real world that any attempt to explain social reality in the terms of a particular philosopher is a dangerous activity? Far from it: the case of Hobbesian common sense and the Rwandan genocide make clear three things.

First, philosophy (or a plane of philosophical concepts) is always in danger of lapsing into common sense. Hobbes, as I presented him in this chapter, is not a philosopher but simply an articulator of the common sense presuppositions in our heads. Second, using philosophical concepts as social scientific propositions (e.g. ‘war is caused by lack of organization’) is precisely that which takes away the positive power of philosophy. Philosophical concepts are not meant to simply point at things that are happening in the world. Third, social science and philosophy can reach similar effects by different means. This is a point that deserves some more space as I haven’t developed it explicitly in this chapter.

Philosophy and social science against common sense

In social science one might attack the commonsensical idea of the war in Rwanda as caused by a lack of organization by studying what actually happened in the war. For example, by interviewing those who were involved, as Hatzfeld and Strauss demonstrate in their books (Hatzfeld, 2005a; 2005b; Lyon and Straus, 2006; Strauss, 2006). In philosophy, one way of reaching a similar effect could be to posit Hobbes as an 'enemy philosopher',¹⁶ which is a strategy many contemporary philosophers adopt (amongst them Hardt and Negri, as discussed in chapter 5). A philosopher is then read as an articulator of common sense rather than as a creator of concepts. However, one can also re-work Hobbes' concepts themselves. I briefly discuss two examples that use this strategy.

Earlier I cited Serres' attack on the idea that there can be such a thing as an unorganized war. For Serres, this does not mean that Hobbes got the picture completely wrong. For Serres there is a 'primitive state,' yet this is 'a pre-ordered state, undecided, undeclared, unprepared for, not stabilized in institutions.' (Serres, 1995: 83) It is a primordial state that according to Serres is present in anything we do: it is not something we overcome through a contract, as in Hobbes, but something that is always present in absence, even in a thoroughly organized society. Serres reconceptualizes Hobbes' war of all against all under terms such as 'noise', 'possibility itself' and 'the multiple'; concepts which form the 'object' of his philosophy (ibid: 2). Without going further into the details of Serres' philosophy of organization, what I want to stress here is that Serres is not simply saying that Hobbes' solution to the problem of order was wrong. He reworks the problem of order itself, the concepts in which Hobbes ultimately finds what we have labelled his

¹⁶ Many philosophers put an 'enemy philosopher' forward in order to position their own philosophy against particular planes of concepts in the history of philosophy. Deleuze's rebellion against Hegel is a clear example of positing an enemy philosophy in order to highlight what he considers to be key differences. Hence, while Hegel is sometimes considered to be a Spinozist, Deleuze maintains he is 'not really' a Spinozist because Hegel 'never ceased to link the plan to the organization of a Form and to the formation of a Subject' (Deleuze, 1988: 128-129). Unlike Hegel, 'real' Spinozists (like Deleuze himself) understand being without relying on a grounding forms or a subject as the proper place of consciousness.

‘solution’ to the problem of order. This is how Serres works against common sense; by practising philosophy of organization.

Foucault did something similar in his 1976 course at the Collège de France, published under the name *Society Must be Defended* (Foucault, 2003). In the fascinating fifth lecture of the course, he presents us a very uncommon reading of Hobbes. The war of all against all, Foucault says, is

not at all a brutish state of nature in which forces clash directly with one another. In Hobbes’ state of primitive war, the encounter, the confrontation, the clash, is not one between weapons or fists, or between savage forces that have been unleashed. There are no battles in Hobbes’ primitive war, there is no blood and there are no corpses. (2003: 92)

Here, Foucault does not use the concept of ‘primitive war’ as a social scientific concept that might be used to represent the reality of some wars. Rather, he uses the concept as part of his own creation of a plane of concepts. In the conceptualization of Foucault, Hobbes’ primitive war becomes a concept that designates an ontological relationality of human life. Foucault:

But what exactly is this state of war? Even the weak man knows – or at least thinks – that he is not far from being as strong as his neighbour. And so he does not abandon all thought of war. But the stronger man – or at least the man who is a little stronger than the others – knows, despite it all, that he may be weaker than the other, especially if the other uses wiles, surprise, or an alliance. So the weak man will not abandon all thought of war, and the other – the stronger man – will, despite his strength, try to avoid it. (2003: 91; cf. 1980: 208)

Human life is characterized as a continuous play of forces: This is what the war of all against all designates for Foucault.¹⁷

Both Serres and Foucault rework Hobbes in order to turn philosophy against common sense. This, I believe, is precisely the essence of philosophy in general. Philosophy is not about uncovering common sense but about creating concepts against common sense. As such, the

¹⁷ One also finds this idea in Foucault’s later works, discussed at length in the next chapter, reworked into the concept of freedom (see Foucault, 1989e).

‘method’ of philosophy is radically different from methods in social science. This, however, is not to say that philosophy and social science can’t have similar political effects nor that they can’t cooperate within one single text.

Conclusion

What, then, is ‘philosophy of organization’ understood through Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy of philosophy? The answer is almost becoming common sense by now: philosophy of organization is the creation of philosophical concepts of organization. Yet what is the relation between philosophy and organization studies?

If the object of organization studies is to be defined as ‘actual organization’ or the behaviour of ‘actual organizations’, then there is no need for philosophy in organization studies. Organization studies can then safely be regarded to fall entirely under the umbrella of the social sciences. Not everybody agrees with this definition, however. Gibson Burrell has said that ‘sooner or later organization studies must enter an area where only the foolhardy dare to tread – the place where philosophy and social science meet’ (1994: 15). Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari’s distinction between philosophy and science, I have tried to show that organization studies can exactly be such a place. This is a place where philosophy of organization is welcomed as part of organization studies itself, not a place where philosophers are allowed to contribute on the condition that they stay outside (Karamali, 2007). It is a place where philosophy is not used to strengthen the territory of organization studies, but to deterritorialize ourselves from common sense formations that we inhabit and that inhabit us (Sørensen, 2005). It is a place where presuppositions are contested instead of a place where presuppositions are discussed and decided upon.

A meeting between philosophy and social science is never common sense. The paradigm debate of the 1980s and 1990s has made clear that the social sciences are themselves embedded in common sense from which there is no straightforward liberation, but the subsequent popularity of the under-labourer conception of philosophy has hardly resulted in ‘a turn toward philosophy’ in organization studies. The neat organization of singular planes of philosophy in paradigms or sets of

presuppositions only results in the denial of the positive power of philosophy: the singular para-sense of planes of philosophy is done away with as particular forms of common sense. Philosophy, as understood through Deleuze and Guattari, only enters organization studies when one installs oneself on a plane of philosophical concepts. From this instalment it is only a small step to ‘doing philosophy’ by inscribing the plane with conceptual changes and the establishment of new conceptual links. In this text I am therefore not so much interested in the presumptions articulated as ‘critical realism’, ‘critical theory’, ‘postmodernism’, ‘post-structuralism’, and all those other schools of which organization studies so often speak. ‘As a general rule, you would be right to think you’ve wasted your life, if your only claim was: “I belonged to this or that school.”’ (Deleuze, 2006a: 141)

Of course, all this is not to say that engaging with philosophy of organization is new to organization studies. In this chapter I have merely attempted to conceptualize what to a certain extent is already happening (see Jones and ten Bos, 2007). I have also attempted to show that philosophy is a fragile undertaking, in organization studies and elsewhere, constantly in danger of being overtaken by a common sense; a common sense that sometimes even disguises itself as ‘philosophy’ as the case of Rwanda demonstrates. In the next chapter, which together with this chapter might be seen as the methodological part of the text,¹⁸ I discuss the concept of philosophy in relation to the concept of critique, mainly through a reading of Foucault’s later works. I will argue that the concept of critique, like philosophy in general, has predominantly been received as performing the role of under-labourer within organization studies.

¹⁸ Of course, this is a rather peculiar methodology in that the outline of the methodology (philosophy as the creation of concepts) is established by its own means (creating a philosophical concept of philosophy).

Chapter 2

Critique

But what, then, is philosophy today – I mean philosophical activity – if it is not the critical work of thought upon itself? And if it does not consist in undertaking and to know how and to what extent it would be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what one already knows?

– Michel Foucault (1992: 8-9)

Introduction

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, in the last chapter I conceptualized philosophy as a positive activity. Philosophy as the creation of parasensical concepts: concepts that collectively confront common sense. I contrasted this idea to the under-labourer conception of philosophy. The under-labourer conception of philosophy denies the positive dimension of philosophy. Philosophy is valued as a function of its usefulness for the sciences. Philosophy, then, consists merely in freeing the sciences from confused language and contradictions, or in uncovering the presumptions that are at work in science. Philosophy as the under-labourer clears the path for scientific knowledge without producing knowledge itself. The distinction, in short, is one between a productive and an unproductive philosophy; between a philosophy that creates concepts and one that takes away confusion and misunderstandings.

On the basis of this distinction, I have argued that organization studies tends to privilege the under-labourer conception of philosophy over the Deleuzo-Guattarian idea of philosophy as the creation of concepts. As a consequence, philosophy is understood as something that happens

outside of organization studies, asking for application within organization studies, rather than that which constitutes a positive force within organization studies itself. Philosophy of organization, then, becomes something that must be judged in terms of its usefulness for organizational research. As the paradigm debate of the 1980s and 1990s demonstrates, philosophy gets valued in terms of its functioning in a field which is not its own: in social science.

The purpose of contrasting these two different concepts of philosophy is not to say that one idea of philosophy is correct and the other one flawed. The conceptualization of philosophy as the creation of concepts is itself a product of philosophizing and not an attempt to establish representational truth.¹⁹ I have not wanted to argue against the idea of useful philosophy: if philosophical concepts prove to be useful in the context of social scientific research it would be foolish to argue against such an application from a purist or principled position. However, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of philosophy as the creation of concepts does remind us of the positive dimension of philosophy. Philosophy is not exhausted by its usefulness for the sciences. What is more, philosophy can only *exist* with a disregard for questions of usefulness or applicability (Kaulingfreks, 2007). To reduce philosophical concepts to their usefulness for scientific research means neutralizing the positive dimension of philosophy. Philosophical concepts are part of a self-referential system that gives it life. Isolation of a philosophical concept takes the positive, or creative, dimension of philosophy away.

To say that philosophy happens with disregard for possible applications, is not the same as saying that philosophy is not supposed to matter for the actual world. Philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari say, does matter for the actual world but not in a straightforward or direct

¹⁹ For example, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of philosophy as the creation of concepts, as set out in the previous chapter, is not very helpful in explaining the behaviour of 'actual' philosophers. That is, the human beings that we, in common sense, usually by profession, call 'philosophers'. This would amount to the 'error' of taking a philosophical concept as if it were a sociological concept. If we want to know more about philosophers thus understood we need to turn to social science, not philosophy, and ask what philosophers *actually* do.

way. In terms of systems theory,²⁰ we might say that philosophical creation is ideally a *closed system* with regards to the actual: that is to say, the components (concepts) of philosophy are themselves not derived from the actual. Yet a closed system must be too strong a term here, because philosophical creation is only possible on the flows of the everyday, and it desires to give birth to new ways of thinking, feeling and seeing in the actual. For Deleuze and Guattari, concepts belong to the virtual rather than the actual. The virtual is an absolutely *open system*. Indeed we can connect to a plane of concepts in many ways, precisely because of its relative detachment from the actual. Yet can we truly say that a plane of concepts is infinitely open to connections? We cannot, because we must be able to connect to philosophical concepts without sinking into the abyss of difference itself; they must keep a relation with our actual lives, they must have some relation to the actual future. Philosophy, in short, is a self-positing system that operates by virtue of its own components but only in a nowhere-land between everyday life and the chaos of pure difference.

There is much more that can be said about this complex relation of philosophical concepts to the actual and the virtual in Deleuze and Guattari. Indeed, there are many ways of connecting them (see, for example, May, 2005; Patton, 2006). In this chapter, however, I will leave the plane of concepts that constitute the concept of philosophy as para-sense behind. Instead, I will address the 'same' problem – i.e. the relation between philosophy and the actual – in an encounter with the later Foucault. In Foucault's terminology, then, I am interested in the relation between philosophy and *the present*; a relation that is characterized by the concepts of *critique* and *care of the self* (e.g. Foucault, 1996; 2005).

First, however, I will discuss the way in which the discussion of the relation between philosophy and the present as we find it in Foucault can be seen as part of broader discussions within organization studies

²⁰ Deleuze himself once declared 'I believe in philosophy as a system' (2006g: 361) in the tradition of the great system-builders like Leibniz and Spinoza. A plane of concepts is 'an open system when the concepts relate to circumstances rather than essences' (1995a: 32). Here, 'circumstances' must probably be understood as that which philosophy creates (new ways of thinking, seeing, etc.); essences are by definition given while circumstances must be created.

about the impact of its theorizing. I will also discuss Stanley Fish's conceptualization of philosophy as the creation of empty abstractions and Hannah Arendt's understanding of the gap between thinking and action. After a lengthy discussion of Foucault's notion of critique and the care of the self, I will point towards some distinctions and similarities between Foucault's conception of philosophy and Deleuze and Guattari's. I will conclude this chapter by exploring Foucault's notion of critique in relation to critical management studies.

Organization studies and the real world

The question how (and if) philosophy matters is an important question for organization studies considering the central importance of philosophers like Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Habermas in the field. If philosophy does not matter, it would also be hard to justify philosophical activity in the management department or the business school.

Whether or not philosophy matters is a question that sometimes comes up in organization studies as part of a broader discussion on the impact of organization studies in general or critical management studies in particular on social reality (e.g. Böhm, 2002; Böhm and Spoelstra, 2004; Brown, 2005; Fournier and Grey, 2000; Grey and Sinclair, 2006; Parker, 2000; 2002a; 2002b; Thompson, 2004). Within these discussions I believe we can distinguish four concerns. While they are oftentimes discussed in one breath, for the purpose of this chapter it is important to untangle them because only two of these concerns directly relate to the role of philosophy within organization studies; the central theme of this text.

The first concern is about the limited impact of academic output in the humanities and social sciences in general. Most academic publications within the social sciences have a very limited audience. Parker (2002a; 2002b), in particular, has shown concern for the impact of much research undertaken in organization studies. Compared to a bestseller as Naomi Klein's *No Logo*, with its clear effects on the way many people think about the commercialization of society, much of academic theorizing is an 'endless glass-bead game', 'doomed to have relative irrelevance in the bigger games that shape our lives' (Parker, 2002b:

184). According to Parker and others, one of the problems that critical management studies is currently experiencing, is that its theorizations are locked into a closed circuit, with virtually no connection to the 'outside world'. This, then, is the first sense in which academic output in the social sciences can be said not to matter: certain practices of academia today hinder the impact of scholarly output on social reality.²¹ This, however, is not related to the nature of philosophy itself. Hence, yet another empirical study of the effects of leadership-style X in knowledge intensive firms suffers from the same problem as yet another article on the relevance or irrelevance of postmodernism for organization studies: both fail to make a substantial impact on 'real life', i.e. life outside academia. Whilst important, since this concern is not related to the nature of philosophy itself I will not pursue this discussion further in this chapter.

Secondly, a concern for the accessibility of philosophy-inspired research within the social sciences. The social sciences, particularly when they discuss contemporary philosophers like Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida and Habermas, are said to lapse into a jargon that can only be understood by the very few; an 'élite bookishness', as Steve Fuller (2004: 87) put it. Critical management studies has also been accused of this. Grey and Sinclair, for example, write:

The effect of the strangulated and pretentious tone of critical management writing is to make it incapable of speaking to anyone outside a very limited circle. This means that the political impact of critical writing is minimal. (Grey and Sinclair, 2006: 445)

To a certain extent this concern has something to do with the nature of philosophy itself in that philosophy speaks in a language that tries to break with the structuring effects of everyday language. As discussed in

²¹ An important factor here is research assessment systems, like the British Research Assessment Exercise, which tend to value journal articles above other forms of output (like books and newspaper articles). In combination with careerism, such systems lead to journal articles that appear to exist only for their own sake (Fournier and Grey, 2000; Parker, 2002a; Thompson, 2004). Other factors that are mentioned include the valorisation of research over teaching (Fuller, 2005) and the bureaucratisation and standardization of education (Jones and O'Doherty, 2005; Lilley, 1998); factors that limit the potential impact of research output on education.

the previous chapter, this has everything to do with philosophy's attempt to confront common sense. At times, however, the problem seems to be bigger than that: one can certainly detect tendencies in some corners in the social sciences to use complex concepts for their own sake; to show off rather than to make a point (some Deleuzian scholarship, which makes a virtue out of discovering 'abstract machines', 'war machines' and 'lines of flight' in all spheres of life, is a good example). Whilst important, few things can be said about this other than saying that using unnecessarily complicated words and concepts is a stupid thing to do. In this sense one might say that Ockham's razor, the idea that one should 'shave off' anything that is not essential to a hypothesis or theory, equally applies to natural science, social science and philosophy.

Thirdly, a concern for 'the critical' in critical management studies. Here, I am thinking of questions like: What does it mean to be critical in critical management studies? Is 'critical' a term for a particular method, derived from some philosophical tradition, or does it refer to a practice aimed at making a difference in the real world? Parker, for example, has questioned whether critical methods (or 'Theories') are needed for critical practices. He asks,

[W]hat Theory do you need to throw a brick through the windows of a McDonald's? Who is most relevant in taking aim at corporate capitalism – Marx, Althusser or Deleuze? Who cares, outside this seminar? Of course we need a theory (with a small 't') to recognize a brick and a window, but do we need a Theory to connect them? (Parker, 2002b: 183; see Böhm, 2002 for a discussion)

This is a crucial question that will lead us back to the under-labourer conception of philosophy towards the end of this chapter.

Finally, the idea that philosophy itself constitutes a removal from the world. Here we are back with Deleuze's complex positioning of philosophy between the virtual and the actual. It is this question with which I start. Firstly, by discussing Fish's (2003) idea that philosophy doesn't matter because it radically removes itself from the world and Arendt's (1978; 1982) idea that thinking itself entails a removal from the world. Then, I will discuss Foucault's take on this problem which allows us to link the natural detachment of philosophy back to the discussions on the meaning of 'critique' in critical management studies.

Philosophy as the creation of empty abstractions

‘Does philosophy matter?’ This is the question which the literary critic Stanley Fish asks himself in a recent article (Fish, 2003). His answer is resolute, ‘No, philosophy doesn’t matter’. Fish arrives at this conclusion by arguing that philosophy operates on a level which is ‘fully detached from any specific circumstances and contexts’ (2003: 393). Philosophical theories, according to Fish, formulate general propositions of universal value, taking the form of ‘that P is universally true’—for example: ‘man is a rational animal’ or ‘it is in human nature to cooperate’. Once this universal proposition is accepted a counterexample (‘*this* man behaves irrationally’, ‘*here* we have hostile competition’) will not alter the verdict as the matter is already decided in a theory of truth which resides outside of this world. If a philosophical proposition (‘man is a rational animal’) is correct, it does not influence us the slightest bit (we will remain rational just like we always have been); alternatively, if a philosophical proposition proves to be false, we do not blink an eye either (we will keep on behaving irrationally as we have always done). Fish concludes his article by telling the philosopher angrily that ‘*everything*, except for your profile in the narrow world of high theory, is independent of the metaphysical views you happen to hold.’ (2003: 417, emphasis in original). Fish’s suggestion is that we shouldn’t care about philosophy: philosophy has nothing to say to the world and the world has nothing to say to philosophy. We might call propositions of this kind, i.e. propositions devoid of life, ‘empty abstractions’. Empty abstractions are propositions which are abstracted from life up to the point where all life is lost. According to Fish this is exactly what defines philosophy: philosophy creates empty abstractions.

Fish’s thesis ultimately rests on the idea that there is no *bridge* between the level of concrete experience and the abstract propositions produced by philosophy. The single thing philosophy does is to move from the concrete to the abstract; philosophy finds universal propositions by ‘abstracting *away* from specifics’ to the point where the resulting abstraction is devoid of any worldly relevance (Fish, 2003: 393, emphasis in original). That is to say, somewhere on the road of abstraction the philosopher gets lost in metaphysical speculations; whether or not these speculations contain truth we do not know, but

we do know that they are irrelevant: they do not matter. We are reminded of the link with theology:

[The philosopher] is, in short, a theologian, maintaining and elaborating an ultimate perspective, and not an historian who has set himself the disciplinary task of relating a historical, mundane occurrence to its contingent and multiple causes. (Fish, 2003: 394)

Fish's theologian-philosopher must be understood as unproductive for the actual world but thereby not necessarily bad or dangerous. Yet there *is* something disagreeable about the philosopher's character. This is because empty abstractions blind us to the concreteness of life. The attempts to 'explain' the concrete through empty abstractions only conceal the things that truly matter. Here Fish turns to the most dramatic example:

Someone defending the benevolence of God in the face of the Nazi Holocaust will be trafficking in theological concepts like sin, redemption, retribution, suffering, patience, the last days, and so on. He will not be considering whether its perpetrators were the unique products of a virulent German anti-Semitism or exemplars of a bureaucratic mentality found everywhere in the modern world; he will not be pouring over diagrams of gas chambers or assessing the effects either of resistance movements or of the failure to resist. His is a thesis not about how a particular thing has happened but how anything—of which this particular is an instantiation and an example—happens, and happens necessarily. His job is not to precipitate an explanation of the event out of the examination of documents and other sources but to bring the fact of the event in line with an explanation already assumed and firmly in place. (Fish, 2003: 394)

The moment of danger steps in when the empty abstraction is used to 'explain' or 'enforce'²² the concrete: we no longer see and we can no

²² We are not far from moving into discussions on the possible link between philosophy and evil. Does the philosopher, if he teaches us blindness, contribute to evil? If a universal proposition ('man is a rational animal') is executed by practitioners ('you behave irrationally therefore you have no right to live'), is the philosopher partly responsible? That is: does the philosopher not only create abstract death but also participate in the production of concrete death? I will not enter the discussions on Nietzsche and Darwin (versus Hitler) and Hegel, Marx and Lenin (versus Stalin) here, nor will I discuss the in my view more important discussions on Heidegger and Schmitt's relations to the Nazi's and

longer act; we become passive because we start to believe in the determinisms of the philosopher's teachings. For Fish, then, philosophy is portrayed as something that provides a fictive common sense that is potentially dangerous, rather than something that is capable of disrupting a dangerous common sense (as I conceptualized it in the previous chapter in relation to the Rwandan genocide).

Fish is clearly upset about something. While he does not make the target of his critique very clear, he seems to point his arrows mostly at the philosopher who mistakenly thinks of philosophy 'as a master discipline whose definitions, formulations, and criteria are pertinent to all disciplines, even though practitioners of these other disciplines don't seem to realize it; this is just an indication of how much they need philosophical help' (2003: 404). This indeed refers back to idea that philosophy can freely judge the sciences, without itself being subject to their judgement (as we find it in Kant amongst others). The idea of philosophy as master-discipline can get translated in the idea that philosophy can be put to use in all spheres of life. It is true, as Fish argues,

the role of propaganda in Soviet philosophy during the years of Stalin. These discussions fall outside of the scope of this text. Here it suffices to say that one of the cards that is usually played against philosophy is that empty abstractions have indeed played an important role in the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. As Hannah Arendt shows in the third part of her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973), the totalitarian regimes of Hitler and Stalin enforced fictions upon reality: empty abstractions were made concrete with horrific consequences. Stalin, for example, once claimed that the world only knew one underground, meaning that all other undergrounds were bound to be destroyed. That is to say: according to the logic of the totalitarian leader, only the empty abstraction contains life or truth. If one were to believe that Fish is right in saying that philosophers produce empty abstractions, one might argue that totalitarian leaders use the method of philosophy in order to establish a fictive world that must be enforced upon reality. The similarity between the method of the totalitarian leader according to Arendt and the philosopher according to Fish is indeed striking, as the following quote from Arendt illustrates: '[The] art [of totalitarian leaders] consists in using, and at the same time transcending, the elements of reality, of verifiable experiences, in the chosen fiction, and in generalizing them into regions which then are definitely removed from all possible control by individual experience. With such generalizations, totalitarian propaganda establishes a world fit to compete with the real one, whose main handicap is that it is not logical, consistent, and organized.' (Arendt, 1973: 362)

that endorsing this idea can lead to misplaced arrogance and unproductive exertions.

The gap between thinking and action

Fish's account of philosophy stigmatizes more than it stimulates thinking. If philosophy is really to be understood as the creation of empty abstractions, 'very few' philosophers exist as Fish himself admits. All this is fine if Fish's text is nothing more than a warning against the very few. My only objection would then be that his advice would have been more helpful if it came with a list of the very few philosophers in this world. Fish is, however, far more likely to be read against all 'professional' philosophers; that is, all theorists that we, in common sense, refer to as philosophers. If this is the case, Fish's complaints provide a legitimation not to bother with philosophy at all, including, for example, any engagement with a philosopher like Foucault (who is very dear to Fish).

Despite this problem there is an interesting tension between Fish's historian (Foucault?) and his theologian-philosopher, a tension that deserves further thought. Fish asserts that the historian, by maintaining a direct relationship with historical particularities, is capable of playing a political role, while the theologian-philosopher loses all political relevance in his or her production of abstract universals. The idea that philosophy detaches itself from commonsensical language, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is indeed widespread and many have pointed to the danger of passivity as a result of this detachment. Most famous is Marx's line in *Theses on Feuerbach*: 'the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it' (1978: 145). Kaulingfreks (2007: 49) warns against this view, 'Marx's wish that the philosopher should not interpret the world but change it is the end of philosophy or, even worse, will result in the apocalyptic end of the world.'²³ Here, I agree with Kaulingfreks when one understands 'to change' in the sense of 'direct intervention in or implementation of a particular practice'. When one uses a philosophical

²³ Marx, of course, does not literally say that *philosophers* should change the world. He does, however, suggest that philosophy lacks the incentive for change that the world needs.

concept in order to change or implement a particular practice, philosophy becomes a dangerous force indeed. Spinoza was also aware of this when he notes that ‘statesmen have written about political matters much more effectively than philosophers’ (*TP*, I, 2 [680]) and ‘no men are regarded as less fit for governing a state than theoreticians or philosophers’ (*TP*, I, 1 [680]). However, contrary to Spinoza’s modest claim of simply ‘understanding’ political actions (*TP*, I, 4 [681]), philosophy as I conceptualized it through Deleuze and Guattari does change the world in an indirect sense: it provides new ways of thinking, seeing and feeling that will necessarily also result in different practices. These practices themselves, however, are not designed by the philosopher. Going back to Fish then, we might say that his objections to the address of philosophy point us to the question whether or not it is *in the nature of philosophical thinking* itself to change the world.

We find one notable discussion of exactly this problem in Hannah Arendt’s works (Arendt, 1978; 2003). According to Arendt, one cannot think in the world. That is, one cannot think while in the presence of others, while one speaks to an audience, or, generally, while one lets the senses sense what happens outside the thinkers mind. Thinking is always a dialogue with oneself, a ‘two-in-one’, which is crudely disturbed when the world interferes with the thinking process (1978: 185). Thinking is therefore radically unsocial. Arendt, however, goes one step further in saying that thinking is anti-political. This is because the ‘material’ of thought cannot consist of common sense, which structures both our private as well as our political lives. Common sense, i.e. the articulations in the world, only obfuscates professional thinking and for that reason must be unmasked and disposed of. As a consequence, the philosopher does not reach positive, i.e. worldly relevant, results (Arendt, 1978: 166-193; Arendt, 2003: 171-173). The ‘professional thinker’, a term she borrows from Kant, is in danger of becoming a stingray, someone who paralyzes by taking away the commonsensical ‘certainties’ without replacing them with something positive.²⁴

²⁴ The metaphor of the stingray was ascribed to Socrates in Plato’s *Meno* (80ab [Plato, 1971: 31]) ‘I feel you are exercising magic and witchcraft upon me and positively laying me under your spell until I am just a mass of helplessness. If I may be flippant, I think that not only in outward appearance but in other

This is also what Deleuze and Guattari warn against when they oppose the positivity of philosophy to the negativity of critique,

To criticize is only to establish that a concept vanishes when it is thrust into a new milieu, losing some of its components, or acquiring others that transform it. But those who criticize without creating, those who are content to defend the vanished concept without being able to give it the forces it needs to return to life, are the plague of philosophy. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 28)

Thinking without bringing something positive to the world or critiquing without creating is what both Arendt and Deleuze and Guattari warn against. Their respective ways beyond this danger are different: Deleuze and Guattari, as I discussed in the last chapter, maintain that the philosopher creates positive forces by producing planes of concepts that have a life of their own in constant struggle with common sense on the one hand and chaos on the other. Arendt's ontological distinction between thinking (removal from the world) and action (giving birth to something in the world) does not permit her to find a positive element in thought itself. The 'professional thinker', or 'professional philosopher', is therefore not capable of bridging the gap between thinking and action. Drawing on Kant's work, for Arendt it is judging that bridges the gap between the un-worldliness of thinking and the worldliness of action (Arendt, 1978; 1982).

In the last years of his life Foucault responded to the same philosophical problem: how one maintains a relation with the world in doing philosophy or in thinking. This is the focus of the next sections.

Foucault and 'philosophy'

Up until the late 1970s, Foucault repeatedly declared that his work was not to be understood as philosophical. In a 1978 interview Foucault says: 'what I am doing is neither a way of doing philosophy nor a way of suggesting others not to do it' (cited in O'Leary, 2002: 141). The

respects as well you are exactly like the flat stingray that one meets in the sea. Whenever anyone comes into contact with it, it numbs him, and that is the sort of thing that you seem to be doing to me now. My mind and my lips are literally numb, and I have nothing to reply to you.'

same year also marks a remarkable turn in Foucault's 'assessment' of philosophy. In the autumn of 1978 Foucault gave a presentation which was initially without title but which is now known as 'What is critique?' (Foucault, 1996). In this presentation Foucault first turns to Kant's short text 'What is Enlightenment?', which he explores in a subsequent series of texts (Foucault, 1986; 1997). In these texts Foucault not only presents a concept of critique but also alters his previous statements on philosophy. Indeed, again in 1978 Foucault light-heartedly says 'I am not a philosopher myself, being barely critical' (1996: 387) and in later texts one finds definitions of philosophy that describe an understanding of his own research. For example: philosophy is that which determines 'the conditions and undefined possibilities of the subject's transformation' (2005: 526), philosophy is 'a way of reflecting on our relation to the truth' (1989b: 307), and philosophy is 'the critical work of thought upon itself' (1992: 8-9). Shortly before his death, Foucault wrote an entry in a French dictionary under the pseudonym 'Maurice Flaubert', opening with the telling words:

If Foucault is indeed perfectly at home in the philosophical tradition, it is within the *critical* tradition of Kant, and his undertaking could be called *A Critical History of Thought*. (Foucault, 1994b: 315)

Foucault's concept of critique as he developed it in his essays on Kant's 'What is Enlightenment' cannot be seen separately from Foucault's 'turn' to the Greeks in the last years of his life (Foucault, 1990; 1992; 2001; 2005). Taken together, these texts form one project in which Foucault is interested in the relation between subjectivity and truth; how one is to shape one's subjectivity by telling the truth – an activity, according to Foucault, which is closely connected to philosophy as practiced in antiquity. Possibly the clearest expression of the meaning of philosophy, as Foucault understands it, can be found in the recent publication of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (Foucault, 2005).

Philosophy and the care of the self

Like volume two and three of the *History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1990; 1992), the lectures that constitute *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* focus on the notion of 'care of the self' (*epimeleia heautou*) in antiquity. This notion of the care of the self is complex. It not only refers to theoretical

formulations on how to shape one's existence, but also refers to particular techniques that help us in taking care of the self (such as fasting, memorization techniques, ascetic practices, and exercises in speaking and walking). During the course, Foucault devotes most of his time to a scrupulous description of these techniques of the self and changes in the notion of the care of the self in different periods of antiquity.²⁵

Generally speaking, the care of the self designates the activity that humans perform upon themselves in order to establish themselves as subjects of truth. Here, subjectivity must not be confused with the notion of the human: humans, for Foucault, precisely create their subjectivity by working upon themselves. The subject, as Foucault uses the term in his later works, is the truth created by reflection and work upon oneself; it is produced through self-management. Care of the self goes hand in hand with an experience of freedom: when one works upon oneself, one experiences the freedom to be otherwise. To take care of the self means to take part in the processes of subjectivation by continuously questioning the limits of the actual and experimenting with the possible. Compared to his work on power/knowledge, Foucault radically shifts focus in that he turns away from the analysis of the production of the passive subject to focus on the way in which individuals actively constitute themselves as subjects of truth. He nonetheless remains faithful to the idea that subjectivity is constituted *through* action, that it must never be understood as a given ground *for* action.

For Foucault, the central insight of the Greeks and Romans was that there is a 'price to be paid for access to the truth' (2005: 15, 189). Accessing the truth can only be established by working upon oneself, through modifying oneself. One only has access to the truth by paying for it with a transformation of one's being. The care of the self was

²⁵ Foucault distinguishes three periods: (1) the Socratic-Platonic period; (2) 'the golden age' of the Stoics and the Cynics in the first two centuries A.D., and (3) the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. corresponding to the transition from pagan philosophical ascesis to Christian asceticism. Foucault speaks of the many important shifts in and between those periods; for example the care of the self as a means to govern in Plato or the care of the self as ongoing test we are never fully worthy of in Stoic philosophy. These changes are of no direct importance in the context of this chapter however.

therefore a practice of philosophy as much as it was a practice of life. The self-techniques, in which the subject becomes ‘worthy of the truth’, are not subordinated to philosophy: they are themselves philosophical. Hence, ‘even as a philosophical principle, the care of the self remained a form of activity’ (2005: 493). It is only in modern times that some philosophers mistakenly start to think that the truth can be attained without a price.²⁶

In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* Foucault briefly turns to Kant in the definition of philosophy as ‘the form of thought that asks what it is that enables the subject to have access to the truth and which attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject’s access to the truth’ (2005: 15). It is this type of philosophy with which Foucault does not want to be associated. Foucault’s thesis is that in modern times, at the ‘Cartesian moment’, this understanding of philosophy has been separated from ‘spirituality’, defined as ‘the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth’ (2005: 15).²⁷ According to Foucault, and contrary to ‘official’ history, it was not the ‘know yourself’ (*gnōthi seauton*) but the ‘care of the self’ that was the primary concept in Greek philosophy: it was only at ‘the Cartesian moment’ when the ‘know yourself’ was separated from the ‘care of the self’ – this is, in other words, the moment where philosophy was separated from spirituality. Descartes discovered a pure or authentic self that is not the subject of spiritual exercise but an object of knowledge; a Self was discovered that exists outside of relations of power. The *cogito* was stripped of any context, released from all worldly ballast: it became pure. Two dramatic consequences, changing the face of philosophy, follow: (1) one no longer needs to take care of the self because the purity of the true self is guaranteed; one only needs to *know*

²⁶ Perhaps the belittling category of ‘armchair theorizing’, with which philosophical theory is sometimes associated (e.g. Meyerson and Kolb, 2000), is rooted in this idea: philosophical activity as comfortable, painless and distanced from social reality. But is observing a manager truly more painful, risky and engaged than philosophical questioning? To me this seems far from self-evident.

²⁷ Foucault’s use of the term spirituality in relation to Greek and Roman philosophy draws heavily on Pierre Hadot’s work (e.g. Hadot, 1995). See Case (2007) for a discussion of Hadot’s analysis of ancient philosophy and its possible value for critical management studies.

the self; (2) philosophy is separated from activity, its task is limited to finding the true limits of knowing (Kant).

A return to antiquity?

Foucault's argument thus appears to be that philosophy has lost its way at a certain moment in history: the moment where the abstract universal was given more value than concrete reality; the moment when philosophizing was separated from an active life. Foucault's return to the Greeks might be understood as trying to undo precisely this undesirable state of affairs.

We must, however, be careful as Foucault repeatedly declared that such a project has never been on his mind. For example, in a 1984 interview he says:

Nothing is more foreign to me than the idea that, at a certain moment, philosophy went astray and forgot something, that somewhere in its history there is a principle, a foundation that must be rediscovered. [...] This does not mean that contact with such and such philosopher may not produce something, but it must be emphasized that it would be something new. (Foucault, 1989e: 443-444)

While Foucault is obviously impressed by the harmony of philosophy and spirituality that he finds in the Greeks, he is not presenting Greek philosophy as an alternative to modern philosophy. What follows, then, is that philosophy, as Foucault understands himself to be a philosopher, cannot simply be equated with philosophy as understood and practised in antiquity. This should not come as a surprise as Foucault often insisted that his work must be seen against the décor of the present and not as merely a history in need of resurrection. He has always been clear that his histories (e.g. madness, sexuality) are to be understood as histories of *thought* that are intended to tell us something about our present thoughts (e.g. Foucault, 1986; 1989d). They are histories that are intended to confront us with our own common sense formations, revealing their own arbitrariness or historical contingency and questioning the structures of domination that these common sense formations impose on us.

Foucault insisted that his work on the care of the self in antiquity is not a proposal for an alternative for our own times, or the articulation of nostalgia. The following passage, taken from the last interview with Foucault before he died, is nonetheless rather surprising:

A style of existence—that's admirable. These Greeks, did you find them admirable?

No.

What did you think of them?

Not very much. They were stymied right away by what seems to me the point of contradiction of ancient morality: between on the one hand this obstinate search for a certain style of existence and, on the other, the effort to make it common to everyone, a style that they approached more or less obscurely with Seneca and Epictetus but which would find the possibility of realization only within a religious style. All of Antiquity appears to me to have been a "profound error." (Laughter) (Foucault, 1989f: 466)

In Greek philosophy we cannot find the practice of 'real' philosophy as opposed to the lost 'Cartesian' philosophy in modernity. What Foucault takes from antiquity with respect to philosophy is the following: (1) Philosophy, while it detaches from particular processes of subjectivation through reflection is nevertheless never detached from the concrete world. (2) Philosophy never arrives; it is a continuous struggle with the common sense formations that shape our existence.

Foucault and critique

The 'Cartesian moment' as the start of the separation between philosophy and spirituality in modernity is merely a starting hypothesis. Directly after introducing the 'Cartesian moment', Foucault begins a rereading of modern philosophy. In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* he tells his audience,

Read again all of nineteenth century philosophy—well, almost all: Hegel anyway, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, the Husserl of the *Krisis*, and Heidegger as well—and you see precisely here also that knowledge (*connaissance*), the activity of knowing, whether [it] is

discredited, devalued, considered critically, or rather, as in Hegel, exalted, is nonetheless still linked to the requirements of spirituality. In all these philosophies, a certain structure of spirituality tries to link knowledge, the activity of knowing, and the conditions and effects of this activity, to a transformation in the subject's being. (Foucault, 2005: 28)

Foucault is not so much dismissing modern philosophy as he is reappraising the power of philosophy that is too often forgotten: the transformative power of thought. Through the work of thought upon itself, i.e. by reflecting upon one's own thinking, one participates in the processes of subjectivation that define who one is. This does not mean that one can simply decide what subjectivity to wear; it means that the dynamic relations of power shaping our existence go hand in hand with a freedom to exercise these power relations (Foucault, 1989e). It is this freedom that enables philosophical activity.

'To read again' is not only the advice Foucault gives his audience; it is exactly what he does himself. He not only argues that philosophy is 'reunited' with spirituality in the nineteenth century (Foucault, 2005). He also finds spirituality in the eighteenth century in his readings of Kant's 'What is enlightenment?' (Kant, 1970b). Thus, when Foucault asks Kant whether or not there is a price for accessing the truth, he finds the 'yes' he is looking for in Kant's notion of critique. Not the Kant who looked for a critical philosophy 'that seeks to determine the conditions and the limits of our possible knowledge of the object' (Foucault, cited in O'Leary, 2002: 139). One finds it, on the contrary, in Kant's *sapere aude*, 'dare to know': to have the *courage* to think (Foucault, 1996; 1997). Courage, Foucault argues, is exactly needed because in order to know the truth one needs to transgress the borders of one's own self: the truth comes at a price. To have a critical attitude, or to speak the truth fearlessly, means that one reflects on the situation that defines the borders of one's subjectivity or the forces of domination that define one's current state. Hence the critical subject looks for ways 'not to be governed like that and at this price' (1996: 384). Critique is 'the art of voluntary inservitude, of reflective indocility' (1996: 386). The connection to antiquity is very clear: the critical attitude that Foucault finds in Kant is particularly similar to the different concepts of *parrhēsia* (free or fearless speech), which he discusses in chapters 19 and 20 of *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, and which would become the

central concept in the courses at the Collège de France (as yet unpublished) and Berkeley (Foucault, 2001) he gave in the following year (1982-1983).

The circle is almost complete: in the *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault used Kant's separation between thinking and knowing as the basis for his distinction between philosophy and spirituality only to return to Kant in 'healing' this exact same distinction. The 'Cartesian moment' appears to be not much more than just that – 'a moment', not the beginning of an epoch. For even the seventeenth century knew a philosopher in which philosophy and spirituality were one: Spinoza, whose central question in his *Ethics*, Foucault says, was: 'In what aspects and how must I transform my being as subject?' (2005: 27) Or, in different words, 'How do I take care of my self?'

In many different periods in the history of philosophy, including modern philosophy, Foucault finds the formulation of a philosophy which is not exercised through a radical withdrawal from the world but through a continuous care of the self. Philosophy is practiced by a transformation of the philosophizing subject living in the world. With this argument, Foucault takes a firm position against the Cartesian philosophers who 'prefer the subject who has no history' (2005: 525). Philosophy, according to Foucault, is aimed at transforming everyday life or the common sense formations that define our being.²⁸ Philosophy asks what our present is (Foucault, 1989d: 407), i.e. the present which makes us what we are. This also explains Foucault's own understanding of his work as a history of the present; the aim of Foucault's 'historical' work is not historical adequacy but immediate intervention in our subjectivities. However, the question of the present, philosophically speaking, cannot be posited in terms of the present. This, then, is the true meaning of critical distance: it is not a distancing from actuality up to the point of empty abstraction, but a distancing from the common sense structures we inhabit because a mere repetition of these terms would only embrace different subjectivities (or common sense formations). Philosophy, then, removes itself from the present in

²⁸ We might characterize Foucault's critical philosophy as 'labouring' the grounds for one's own being rather than 'under-labouring': critique in Foucault does not prepare the ground for something else to happen (e.g. science) but is something that realizes a positive transformation itself.

order to have an effect upon the present. Hence philosophy indirectly participates in the production of new subjectivities.

Foucault versus Deleuze and Guattari

Foucault's emphasis on a direct relation between philosophy and who we are in everyday life (or the actual) might appear contrary to Deleuze and Guattari's idea of philosophy as the creation of concepts to move away from the actual. How, then, does Foucault's understanding of philosophy differ from Deleuze and Guattari's work on philosophy as discussed in the previous chapter?

Such a question cannot be answered in any straightforward way. As discussed in the previous chapter, different planes of philosophy refuse simple comparisons because of the different effects that philosophical concepts produce according to their unique links with other concepts on their plane. In other words, in giving an account of philosophy, Deleuze/Guattari and Foucault make use of different concepts that refuse simple comparison. Sometimes they use the same words, but conceptualized in different ways.

For example, Deleuze's insistence that philosophy is *not reflective* but creative (Deleuze, 1995b) appears to be the opposite of Foucault's idea of philosophy as 'a way of *reflecting on* our relation to the truth' (1989b: 307, emphasis added). It would, however, be false to conclude that their concepts of philosophy are radically different with regards to reflection. Concepts like reflection take a particular form in a philosophy; they are rarely used in an everyday sense. Hence, Deleuze turns against reflection because for him reflection means reflection 'on something' which takes away the creative nature of philosophy:

Philosophy is not made to think about anything. Treating philosophy as the power to "think about" seems to be giving it a great deal, but in fact it takes everything away from it. [...] If philosophy has to be used to think about something, it would have no reason to exist. If philosophy exists, it is because it has its own content. (Deleuze, 2006f: 313)

Philosophy, for Deleuze, is about the creation of concepts that puts the 'on something' in a different light; it creates unexpected distinctions or

conjunctions, that confuse the ‘somethings’ that we thought we knew. Reflection, for Deleuze, maintains a relation to actualized reality. This actualized reality is given and itself not subject to creation. In Foucault, however, reflection upon our relation to the truth gets an unconventional meaning in that the active work of the self upon the self designates a *creative* relation to the self. Reflection in Foucault implicates a transformation of one’s being; the ‘on’ in ‘reflection on’ changes in reflection. Hence, where Deleuze conceptualizes reflection against creativity, Foucault argues that reflectivity is itself creative. Despite the different concepts of reflection, in both cases the term is used to emphasize the creative or spiritual nature of philosophy, as May (2000) has also argued.

Rather than focusing upon the different uses of the functioning of certain terms, one would do better to ask what Deleuze and Guattari’s and Foucault’s philosophy of philosophy establish as a whole. One difference in particular comes to the fore: Foucault conceptualizes critical philosophy as a *direct intervention* in the everyday and not so much as *an opposition to* the everyday as we saw in Deleuze and Guattari. It is indeed true that the distinction between ‘critical philosophy’ and ‘critical social science’, fundamental in Deleuze and Guattari, is hard to sustain in Foucault. His definition as ‘the critical work of thought upon itself’ could apply both to philosophy and social science. Indeed, Foucault’s critical attitude can be found in all spheres of life.

What Foucault tries to establish with his conceptualization of critical philosophy, however, is not so much a clear boundary between philosophy and science as a boundary between different types of philosophy. Foucault’s ‘Cartesian moment’ designates the tendency in philosophy *itself* to place itself outside of history by giving up its spiritual dimension. If we are interested in a conceptual distinction between philosophy and social science, Foucault’s work on philosophy will not be of any help.

This does not prevent us, however, from asking whether Foucault’s work should be understood as philosophy or social science *in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari*. I think that Foucault’s work is indeed an exemplary case of what Deleuze and Guattari understand philosophy to be. This has everything to do with the indirect relation to the present

that one finds in most of Foucault's work, especially in the later Foucault. Hence, despite Foucault's insistence that critical philosophy intervenes into the present, Foucault's own writings are rarely *direct* interventions into the present, as social science is. His histories are rarely if ever accompanied with direct engagements with contemporary politics, let alone with lessons on how to act. As Schürmann (1985: 545) notes, Foucault 'has been reluctant to name any [forms of subjectivation] that are possible today'. Hoy (1986: 19) goes even further when he maintains that Foucault 'refuses to explain how to improve on the present.'²⁹ This, then, might be the difference between the 'techniques' and 'exercises' of the care of the self in antiquity that Foucault so meticulously describes and Foucault's own practise of philosophy: philosophy as Foucault practices it is very much in line with Deleuze and Guattari in that it seeks a life of its own detached from our common sense and opinion.³⁰ He seeks to influence common sense while remaining outside of common sense. While Deleuze and Guattari seek to maintain the autonomy of the philosophical concept by creating a plane of concepts that give each other life, Foucault *creates* a history which also confronts common sense in an indirect way. To

²⁹ It would, however, be an exaggeration to say that we don't have any idea about the kind of connection we could draw to the present from Foucault's work. The importance of his work for the present can certainly be found in the idea that much commonsensical thinking has lost the connection with spirituality. At rare moments, particularly in interviews, Foucault makes these connections himself. For example, in an interview Foucault criticizes 'the Californian cult of the self in which 'one is supposed to discover one's true self. This cult of the self, Foucault continues, is 'diametrically opposed' to the ancient culture of the self (Foucault, 1984: 362). The privileging of the knowledge of the self over the care of the self is therefore not simply a 'mistake' in Cartesian philosophy. For Foucault, it appears rather to be a widespread idea in our thinking which prevents us from maintaining an active relation to ourselves. Something that might also be observed in the field of business and management (see Townley, 1995; Garsten and Grey, 1997)

³⁰ Like Deleuze, Foucault was careful not to offer his opinions as a philosopher. When asked a question unrelated to his research, he once resolutely answered: 'On this question I have only an opinion; since it is only an opinion it is without interest' and 'Sure, I could offer my opinion, but this would only make sense if everybody and anybody's opinions were being consulted. I don't want to make use of a position of authority while I'm being interviewed to traffic in opinions.' (Foucault, 1989c: 323) For both Deleuze and Foucault philosophy opposes opinion.

use the word 'create' here seems certainly justified since Foucault admitted to writing 'a kind of historical fiction' and 'in a sense I know very well that what I say is not true' (Foucault, 1989a: 301). Thus, even though Foucault's own concept of critical philosophy does not allow for a distinction between philosophy and social science, I believe he certainly demonstrates this distinction. Deleuze also understands Foucault's 'histories of the present' in precisely such a way. In an interview in which he discusses Foucault he says:

[Philosophical] thinking has an essential relation to history, but it is no more historical than it is eternal. It is close to what Nietzsche calls the Untimely: to think the past against the present – which would be nothing more than a common place, pure nostalgia, some kind of return, if he did not immediately add: "in favour, I hope, of a time to come". (Deleuze, 2006e: 241)

All this, of course, is not to say that Foucault's philosophical work (in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari) does not have a critical function (in the sense of Foucault) in Foucault's personal life. In the preface to *History of Sexuality vol. 2*, Foucault (1992) tells the reader that such is precisely the case: he writes in order to change his own thoughts. Philosophical practice, in this sense, is quite precisely the work of thought upon itself. What Foucault points at is how doing philosophy establishes new ways of thinking for the philosopher him- or herself. This, however, does not mean that philosophical creation (in the sense of Deleuze/Guattari) is the only means of establishing new ways of thinking. Foucault's notion of critique is much broader than that.

What I take from Foucault's ideas about philosophy and critique, as an 'addition' to Deleuze and Guattari as discussed in the previous chapter, is that philosophical practice *desires* to have an effect on common sense; even to become *part* of common sense in one way or another. Foucault is very clear about this in relation to his own work, 'my hope is my books become true after they have been written – not before' (Foucault, 1989a: 301). We might still agree with Deleuze and Guattari that common sense is 'an extreme danger' to philosophy, but, we might add, it is a purely formal enemy (in the sense that common sense destroys philosophy by definition), not one necessarily to be feared. Lapsing into common sense is a danger for the existence of philosophy itself and not

necessarily a social or physical danger (even though it certainly could be, as the case of Rwanda illustrated).

Individual philosophical concepts do not desire to find an unproblematic place in everyday language, as happened to Hobbes' war of all against all. Philosophers do desire, however, that the philosophical problems they compose lose some of their tension with actuality. Hence, Deleuze and Guattari desire, among other things, that their concept of philosophy contributes to a creative philosophical practice, to a philosophy which doesn't coalesce with marketing and communication for example (see Deleuze, 1995e; 2006a); Foucault hopes that his account of critical philosophy contributes to less Cartesian moments in philosophy and a weakening of the Western culture of self-knowledge; and I hope these chapters contribute to more positive engagements with philosophy within organization studies. Needless to say, philosophical concepts cannot be *reduced* to the intentions of the author of these concepts. They will always be taken up in unexpected ways.³¹

The under-labourer conception of philosophy revisited

After lengthy discussions on the role of philosophy and critique in Foucault and Deleuze, I will now relate the preceding analyses back to the field of organization studies. Despite an increasing interest in the later Foucault (Barratt, 2003; Böhm and Spoelstra, 2004; Brewis, 1998; Chan, 2000; Jack, 2004; McKinley and Starkey, 1998; Starkey and Hatchuel, 2002; Townley, 1995), Foucault's later works remains relatively little discussed within organization studies. This might come as a surprise: not only because of Foucault's status as superhero in critical management studies, but also because of Foucault's work on the concept of critique and its possible connections to *critical* management studies. As an experiment, let us ask the 'under-labourer' question then: is there anything that critical management studies can learn from Foucault's concept of critical philosophy?

³¹ And not always for the good, as recent applications of Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts as 'smooth space' and 'war machine' in Israeli military operations demonstrate (see Weizman, 2006).

Barratt (2003) and Chan (2000) ask exactly this question in relation to Foucault's later work on critique and the care of the self. Both present overviews of Foucault's later ideas on critique (Chan (2000) also of Foucault's genealogical works), after which their answers to the question 'What's in it for critical management studies?' are as correct as they are self-evident: what critical researchers in organization studies can learn from Foucault is 'a certain way of practicing an engaged scholarship' (Barratt, 2003: 1082) and organization theorists 'need to enter into the reciprocal, dual activity of shaping our own subjectivity and thwarting, challenging and questioning the ways in which our subjectivities have been made' (Chan: 2000: 1071, emphasis removed). In other words: just like anybody else in the world, the ('critical') organization theorist would do well to maintain an active relation to him/herself.

If the above sounds like a critique of Barratt and Chan I should emphasize that it is not: I support their main conclusions. There is nothing more for organization studies to 'learn' from Foucault's concept of critique than exactly that which Foucault himself establishes with this concept. And despite the self-evidence of their conclusions, I do not consider Barratt's and Chan's articles to be superfluous. Their work can inspire scholars in organization studies to develop a more active relation to themselves, just as a reading of Foucault can. Or they might inspire one to read Foucault himself.

This, however, is not the full story. At some points in Barratt's and Chan's texts I think I detect signs of disappointment at the modest conclusions to which their analyses lead. For example, Barratt remarks:

It is never wholly clear where Foucault wants to take his idea of freedom and autonomy. At times [...] it is as if he wants to give *only the basic outlines of an alternative*; anything more runs the risk of implying a definitive position. (2003: 1080, emphasis added)

Similarly, Chan argues:

For Foucauldian freedom and resistance *to become useful* for organizational analysis, they need to be sharpened to achieve conceptual and technical clarity. The rest of the paper ruminates upon freedom and resistance to tease out *elements for reconstituting a critical*

approach that inherits the defining characteristics of Foucault's genealogical ethos. (2000: 1061-1062, emphasis added)

Phrases such as 'the outline of an alternative' or 'reconstituting a critical approach' take us straight back to the under-labourer conception of philosophy as discussed in the previous chapter: they articulate the idea that a philosophical concept brings something of use to organization studies. In both Barratt's and Chan's text one can detect an implicit reliance on the under-labourer conception of philosophy: the value of a particular philosopher is ultimately judged in terms of a method, approach, paradigm, or useful metaphor, that he or she might bring to the social sciences. Following this line, critical management studies is itself not engaged with philosophy; it rather needs philosophy in order to know how to be critical.

Hence to Barratt we might ask what *alternative* Foucault would be working towards with his concepts of freedom and resistance? The answer is: 'none'. Just like neo-liberalism, philosophy is not interested in alternatives (albeit for different reasons). Any alternative solution keeps the problem which it solves intact, while philosophy is all about creating new problems: dividing, twisting and connecting established 'knowledge' that opens up new ways of thinking. Hence, Foucault does not offer us an 'alternative' world in which we are free; he offers a concept of freedom which makes us think about the world differently (and which could change the world).

Similarly, to Chan we might ask what 'critical approach' Foucault would bring to what? I seriously doubt that one can detect a critical approach to doing organizational research in Foucault's later work. Philosophical concepts are arbitrary and do not provide a method of doing 'critical' research. Critique in Foucault is not a method, approach or technique because critique does not attempt to establish anything outside of what it is in itself: a transformation on one's being or 'a throw of the dice which necessarily wins' (Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 5). Critique is not a technique; rather, as Foucault discusses in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* and volume two and three of the *History of Sexuality*, techniques (of the self) can be used in critical practice. Here it might be useful to once again point to the difference between philosophical and social scientific concepts as developed in the previous chapter: Foucault's initial insistence that his work has nothing to do

with philosophy is not necessarily inconsistent with his later declaration that all of his work must be seen in the philosophical tradition of Kant. The reason is that Foucault, in his later works, was reworking the concept of 'philosophy' in such a way that it makes sense to call himself a philosopher. Something similar is also true for the concept of critique: 'critique' is simply a word which can be conceptualized in many ways. This is not to say that we pick words at random. Foucault's conceptualization of critique serves a purpose, it tries to do something (more importantly: it *does* something); but it is not the development of a method.

Admittedly, I could well be too quick in translating these particular phrases in terms of a desire for a solid 'critical' alternative to positivistic research in organization studies. I would not necessarily disagree that the analysis above provides an example of an overly interpretative analysis. Many other examples within organization studies, however, can be found to make this point. Here, I am thinking especially of the ongoing discussions that are debating which philosophical tradition is most suitable as a critical basis for organization studies; the most common 'players' are Critical Theory, postmodernism/ poststructuralism (sometimes subdivided in different variations), Marxism and, more recently, Critical Realism (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Burrell, 2001; Parker, 1995; Thompson, 2004). Of course, the relevance of individual philosophers such as Foucault, Derrida and Marx are discussed as well (e.g. Al-Amoudi, 2006; Marsden, 1993; Martin, 1990; Newton, 1988; Neimark, 1990).

As also Böhm (2007) argues in relation to Alvesson and Willmott's work on critical theory (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott, 1990; 1992; 1996; 2003), in these debates heterogeneous writers, who themselves write heterogeneous works, are frequently categorized under one homogeneous signifier. Böhm writes,

We can see in the writings of Alvesson and Willmott that critical theory has often been read in quite simplistic ways; it is seen as a homogeneous, well-packaged body of work that can be critiqued [or accepted] from the 'outside'. The outside from which Alvesson and Willmott critique critical theory is post-structuralism, which again is presented as a homogeneous body of work [...]. (Böhm, 2007: 49)

While Böhm's critique might itself suffer somewhat from a homogenization of Alvesson and Willmott's work, examples of such gestures in Alvesson and Willmott's work can certainly be found. In their preface to *Critical Management Studies* (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992), for example, they argue that postmodernism is too negative to function as a ground for critique on its own and for that reason it is advisable to supplement it with insights from critical theory.

The under-labourer conception of philosophy does, of course, not necessarily manifest itself in gross simplifications of 'philosophical schools'; as discussed in the previous chapter, philosophy might simply be used to point at ontological and epistemological assumptions at work in organization studies. In an earlier article, Alvesson has used critical theory of the Frankfurt School in exactly this sense, to outline 'fundamental assumptions concerning critical organization theory' (1985: 118). Parker (1995: 555) provides another example. Measuring the degree of critical potentiality, Parker argues that Foucault and Derrida will be of more help to critical management studies than 'true' postmodernists (such as Lyotard and Baudrillard) because they would ask for more reflectivity. In the same article he argues that postmodernism could function as 'a grinding stone to sharpen critique', while, according to Parker, it too often functions as 'an excuse for avoiding critique' (1995: 567).

Here, I have here only pointed towards some of the most influential scholars in critical management studies. They are by no means exceptions. They represent rather a widespread phenomenon in organization studies. This, as I have attempted to argue throughout this first part, is not simply the result of an unwillingness to engage with philosophy. It is rather to be understood as an attempt to re-ground social science in a set of presuppositions in times in which those of positivism are being increasingly questioned. Perhaps underlying the attempts in organization studies to use philosophy in trying 'to establish clear theoretical grounds for critical-radical studies in organization' (Parker, 1995: 554) is a forgetfulness of the grounding of positivism, as Comte could only found his positivist project by denouncing philosophy.³² There is in itself nothing wrong with using philosophy to

³² It is worth noticing that Critical Realism has a special place in these debates. Unlike 'postmodernist' or 'critical theorists' in organization studies, critical

articulate presuppositions that are at work in organization studies. Even the lumping together of different planes of philosophy in abstract signifiers has its advantages for organization studies (e.g. it can perform an instrumental function in bringing people together and in setting up larger projects). I hope to have shown, however, that the under-labourer conception also comes at a price. This price is the neutralization of the creative aspects of singular planes of philosophy; the positive dimension of philosophy which is exactly that which escapes presuppositions.

Conclusion

We might inherit a concept of critique, as Foucault understands his concept of critique as a heritage from Kant. However, according to this concept of critique itself, critique is not something we inherit. Critique is something we do. The reason for introducing critical theory or postmodernism as critical methods from the outside is often part of a legitimation game; a particular game that needs to be played in academic environments because of institutional pressures. It is also not difficult to think of 'critical' reasons for such an 'a-critical' use of critique (for example, building an institution that is itself powerful enough to perform a critical function in a broader context). There is, however, only one reason to write a chapter, like this one, on critique: if such an excursion performs a 'critical' function itself – in this case against the common sense idea of philosophy as the under-labourer within critical management studies.

The aim of the first part of this text was twofold: firstly, to ask the question what philosophy of organization is. For this purpose, I explored the concepts of philosophy and critique in engagements with Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault respectively. In these explorations I have focused in particular upon the relation of philosophy to the actual or the present. Despite different emphases, both Deleuze/Guattari and

realists openly value philosophy as the under-labourer for the social sciences (e.g. Fleetwood, 2005; Reed, 2005; Sayer, 2004). Hence, in so far as the under-labourer approach dominates organization studies it could be said that what critical realism openly practises is 'paradigmatic' for critical management studies as a whole.

Foucault propose a creative or productive philosophy: a philosophy that detaches itself from the actual in order to counter-pose it with a plane of concepts (Deleuze and Guattari) or a critical philosophy that gives an account of history which makes us look at the present with a new set of eyes (Foucault). Philosophy of organization, then, is the creation of a plane of concepts of organization (or related concepts) against common sense in order to recreate ourselves as subjects of truth.

Secondly, I have discussed the way philosophy has been received in organization studies. In the first chapter, I argued that philosophy tends to be understood as something that happens outside of organization studies. Organization studies is deeply rooted in the under-labourer conception of philosophy: philosophy as something that helps the social scientist in doing non-philosophical research. In this text I hope to convince the reader of the value of a positive philosophy within organization studies.

By its very nature, however, one can not argue for a positive practice of philosophy by showing its value for organization studies as a field. Its value should be apparent from itself and cannot be measured in terms of what it is not. In a variation on Spinoza's idea that truth is the measure of itself we might say that 'philosophical concepts are the measure of themselves'. In the next part there is therefore little talk about philosophy and organization studies. It is predominantly an engagement with philosophy of organization itself. In each of the chapters I will explore a concept in a philosophy of organization: institution, synergy, multitude, and miracle. These chapters have a common background in that they explore a philosophy of organization which is not built upon preconceived organizations. That is to say, a philosophy which departs from one (Spinozist) productive substance from which everything we know as 'organizations' evolve.

PART 2

PHILOSOPHY OF ORGANIZATION

Chapter 3

Institution

[W]hat institution was ever so wisely planned that no disadvantage could arise therefrom?

– Spinoza (*Theological-Political Treatise*, Chapter 20 [569])

Introduction

The concept of institution is closely related to the concept of organization – sometimes they are treated as synonymous (e.g. Galambos and Milobsky, 1995). In common sense, we often understand institutions and organizations as some kind of durable structure that transcends human lives and their intentions; defined in more technical terms, ‘institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors’ (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 54). Common sense itself, however, can also be understood as taking institutional forms: common sense is itself a relatively durable structure that does the thinking for us. This chapter is concerned with the precise relation between institutions and thinking: How does institutionalization affect thinking? In what way is thinking hampered by institutions and in what sense does thinking need institutions to think? When we recreate ourselves in thinking as subjects of truth, as Foucault calls for, what, exactly, is our relation to institutionalization?

In a recent paper, Robert Cooper (2005) speaks of institutional thinking. This chapter starts with a discussion of Cooper’s conceptualization of institutional thinking, its underlying logic and the way Cooper understands this way of thinking as representative for

social science and organization studies. By moving away from institutional thinking, Cooper reconceptualises organizing as ‘boundary-activity’. I will discuss the possibility of thinking in a non-institutional way, what Cooper calls a ‘generic’ or ‘proximal’ mode of thinking. This will finally lead us back to Foucault’s later works as discussed in the last chapter. I understand Foucault’s concept of critique exactly as an overcoming of the critique – institution dichotomy. Overcoming institutional thinking, then, does not mean thinking outside of institutions: it means thinking *with and against* institutions rather than *through* institutions.

Institutional thinking

In organizational textbooks one often finds definitions of organizations of the kind ‘a group of people with one or more shared goals’.³³ There are many ways of criticising this type of definition, but most people would agree with the clear distinction between individual human beings and the organization, on which the definition is based. Individuals (parts) come together and form a whole (the organization) because they share one or more objectives. The individuals that make up the organization – e.g. employees, shareholders, managers – act in concert according to a structure that fulfils one or more shared goals of its members. Formulated in this way, the human individuals, in combination with other production factors, appear as the bricks, or atoms, out of which the organization is constructed. Once the organization exists, however, one might start to question whether its members continue to share ‘one or more goals’. After all, history provides plenty examples of people who are forced into the structure of an organization without sharing any of its goals (e.g. slavery). In these cases, the organization or institution attempts to enforce a way of behaviour or a pattern of thinking upon its members.

In this common sense understanding of organizations (and institutions), one can see a clear analogy with a Hobbesian or

³³ For example, Robbins (1990: 4) writes: ‘An organization is a consciously coordinated social entity, with a relatively identifiable boundary, which functions on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or a set of goals.’

Rousseauan transformation of rights: either the structure is confirming the individual desires of its members or it infringes on the rights of these members. One gives up freedom (to perform certain actions, to use time as one pleases, or to spend money in another way) for the common good, i.e. the purpose of the organization, in order to gain a personal advantage in the form of safety, wage or return on investments. Such a trade or contract gives rise to tensions which can (and must) be analysed. The bottom line, however, is that we know what human individuals are and what organizations are and that we can analyse the practice of organizations in precisely those terms. Hence leadership could be understood as ‘inspiring other members of the organization to act according to the objectives of the organization of a whole’; refusal of work as ‘acting in a way that disadvantages the organization as a whole’; Human Resource Management as ‘the effective use of individual resources in order to enhance the performance of the organization as a whole’, and so on.

It is this way of thinking, i.e. thinking on the basis of the self-evident nature of parts and wholes, that Cooper calls ‘institutional thinking’:

Institutional thinking sees the world as a system of categories and things. Its objects of attention appear as bounded entities which exist against a background whose main purpose seems to conceal itself from conscious viewing. The object of attention is thus the objective of focused thought which fixes the entity as an object in its own right. This is how institutional thinking frames the social and cultural world for us so that we unthinkingly think in terms of categories and things. (Cooper, 2005: 1689)

Institutional thinking departs from parts and wholes. It divides the world up in different parts and wholes (objects) where the wholes no longer need to be questioned as long as they are considered to be natural. ‘An institution’ in this sense is much broader than what we commonly understand as an institution or organization: the words we use in daily language carry their own institutions. They make sense, i.e. we can ‘unthinkingly think’ them, precisely because they contain institutionalized thought that we accept without questioning. Institutional thinking, then, is not a mode of human thinking; it rather designates the idea that things carry thoughts. These ‘things’ are common sense formations, which we unthinkingly regenerate and thinkingly change.

Against simple location

Institutional thinking is thinking on the basis of wholes and parts. One makes relations between objects without making these objects themselves the object of thinking. The objects of thinking, then, remain outside thought because their existence is self-evident. In different writings, Cooper borrows a concept from Whitehead (1985) to characterize its underlying logic: 'the logic of simple location' (Cooper, 1998a; 1998b; see also Chia, 1998).

Whitehead (1985: 62) defines simple location as the idea which says that 'material can be said to be *here* in space and *here* in time, or *here* in space-time, in a perfectly definite sense which does not require for its explanation any reference to other regions of space-time'. For Whitehead, the logic of simple location is intimately related to the concept of Euclidean space: the idea that clearly distinguishable things, defined by their locations, move from one place to another by the force of universal laws (such as gravity). Once we know these laws the world becomes entirely predictable. For Whitehead this idea is based on simplification, missing primary forces not *in* time and space, but from which time and space effectuate. For Whitehead, true movement is a distortion of nature as a whole, simultaneously redefining time-space relations as well as the identity of 'things'. Whitehead was thus concerned with what we miss out when we present things as complete in universal time and space. To Bertrand Russell, who defended the idea that the world is formed of independent and complete entities, Whitehead once said: 'You think the world is what it looks like in fine weather at noon day; I think it is what it seems like in the early morning when one first wakes from deep sleep' (Russell, 1956: 41). Whitehead was interested in the point where the clear evaporates into the unclear. This is exactly what gets lost in institutional thinking: it is a 'fine weather thinking' in the sense that objects or wholes are understood not only to *have* a perfect nature, but also to *present* their nature.

Institutional thinking attempts to translate raw matter into 'things' (Cooper, 1998b: 137). It is based on the idea that the conditions which

define what a thing is capable of are located in the thing itself. However, for Cooper entities (and identities) do not have natural locations, and 'things' do not have an essence that keeps them together: 'Social terms are not bounded by 'walls' – there are no containers and no contained in the social world' (Cooper and Law, 1995: 243). Identities, subjects, and organizations are generated, and continuously require regeneration, from a groundless mass or abstract field (Cooper, 1976). Forms derive their existence from this mass. In the idea of simple location this mass is denied: the cloud of possibilities that surround any being, always present through its absence, is excluded from analysis and excluded from knowing. Thus Cooper, drawing on Derrida and Serres, argues that the purity of an inside 'can only be attained ... if the outside is branded as a supplement, something inessential, even parasitical' (Cooper, 1989b: 487). Every idea of the fixed is based on the flawed idea of simple location, the idea that there is no beyond: 'What you see is all there is', 'What you know is all there is'.

As with Whitehead, Cooper's dismissal of simple location is equally directed against the idea of the universal in general: the idea that nature consists of a fixed set of laws which determine the 'simple movement' of 'clear-cut, definite things' (Cooper, 1998a: 108). The social and technical world we inhabit, says Cooper, cannot be understood on the basis of universal laws. The idea of the universal, again, is an example of simple location – an abstraction in thinking of the concrete – resulting in the representation of partiality as wholeness. A universal law, even if infinite in its power, is finite in being forever closed: its formula remains forever the same. We find the same idea in Deleuze and Guattari. They say, 'We think the universal explains, whereas it is what must be explained' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 49). So, for Cooper, as well as for Deleuze and Guattari, the moment we have established a bounded entity or a universal (Whitehead's noon), that is the moment when we need to start asking questions – that is when there is an opportunity and a need for thinking. Thinking for Cooper thus involves a displacement of established forms. It has the task to reach beyond the immediately visible and knowable. The task of thinking is to think that which is lost or distorted in institutional thinking. Rather than thinking how parts relate to wholes and wholes to parts, Cooper

and Deleuze and Guattari call for a thinking in which the betweenness is primary to parts and wholes:

The relation between part and whole is one of latency in which part is latent to whole and whole is latent to part. The latent nature of the shared terms means that each implies the other so that they exist in a relationship of *betweenness* rather than as separate terms. (Cooper, 2005: 1698)

Thinking potentiality

What does the dismissal of simple location mean in terms of potentiality? Does potentiality, to be capable of something, mean anything if this capacity is not rooted in a well-defined part or whole? In Book Theta of *Metaphysics*, where Aristotle developed his ontology of potentiality, one finds a critique of thinkers of the Megarian school, who argued that a being has potency only when this potency is active, when it is exercised. According to Aristotle, this is an absurd idea, leading to beliefs such as

that which is standing will always stand and that which is sitting will always sit; for that which sits will not get up, since it will be impossible for it to get up if it does not have the power to get up. (*Metaphysics*, 1047a 15-18 [1966: 149])

For Aristotle, a human being has the potentiality to stand when sitting, or to sit when standing. That is, human beings can be the moving cause of their own movement. This is safeguarded by the idea that being human is grounded in a substance in which the potentiality to sit and to get up find their natural location: as a human being I can talk, as a chair I can bear a human being. It is uncontested, says Aristotle, that to be able to do something is not the same as exercising this potentiality: the potential is different from its actual expression. To get up when one sits, one needs to possess the potentiality or the power to get up, and in getting up one's potentiality to get up is actualised.

However, as Agamben (1999) argues in his essay 'On potentiality', there is more to Aristotle's concept of potentiality than just this simple distinction between the potential and the actual. For Aristotle, he argues, potentiality is not simple non-being, it is the *existence* of non-

being. It is not a what-could-have-been-but-simply-did-not-happen, not an *is not*. Potentiality is fully real, not disappearing in actuality but preserving itself in actuality. This is exactly how the relation of presence and absence in Cooper should be understood: possibilities surrounding the 'real' things we see are present in their absence. The visible makes possible the experience of the invisible. To have the privation of light and sound enables us to experience darkness and silence (Agamben, 1999). The potential *exists*, precisely because it finds its moment of unformation at the very same time as the actual finds its (temporary) formation.

Cooper would agree with Aristotle that a power to get up is needed to actually get up when one sits. He would also agree with Agamben's reading of Aristotle that this potentiality is an existing non-being. There is, however, also an important difference between Aristotle's idea of potentiality and Cooper's idea of potentiality. Contrary to Aristotle, potentiality for Cooper is never *located* within substance, genus or species (frames or boundaries which keep a set of potentialities together), or *defined* by function or law (the idea of the universal). The power is not a power from within, nor a power located in universal laws, but a power from the abstract field (Cooper, 1976). Actualisation finds its origin in the abstract field, or ungrounding mass, from which life folds and unfolds. Heidegger's influence on Cooper can clearly be felt here: Heidegger's Nothing as the background out of which everything emerges resembles Cooper's concept of the abstract field.

For Cooper, the abstract field can never be touched directly. It can only be approached through the divisions we recognize as our world: 'The primary whole is always a lost whole, one which we can only see through the work of division' (Cooper, 1987: 402). As I shall discuss at length in the next chapter, we here see a strong resemblance with Spinoza's thinking. In Spinoza's *Ethics* the finite and the infinite form one substance, Nature or God, where the finite beings (modes) express infinity through infinite attributes (thinking, extension). Cooper argues precisely that the key to the infinite (the abstract field) is through the finite: 'Unity or wholeness can emerge only through division or difference' (1983: 213). One always needs to recognize that the infinite 'whole', or abstract field, is present in its absence. The abstract field is present in the incompleteness and mutability of actualities. Actualities

are always unfinished, or partial, continuously moving through clouds of potentialities:

Each object – chair, cup, spoon – can never be separate and self-contained; by definition, it is always partial, a *con-verse* in a dynamic network of *convertibilities*. The body, too, is necessarily partial, momentarily defining itself through assemblage with another partial object. The understanding and definition of the human agent as essentially purposeful and self-directive now takes second place to agency as the general collection and dispersion of parts and fragments which co-define each other in a mutable and transient assemblage of possibilities and relations. (Cooper, 2001b: 25, emphasis in original)

Partiality, for Cooper, means that anything we conceive of as a bounded thing (the possessor of boundaries), is in fact generated from these boundaries, continually transforming itself through interaction with other partialities. Moving away from institutional thinking amounts to thinking in terms of partiality, betweenness or relationality (as substantives) instead of in terms of the relations between parts and wholes. The potentiality of a human body, for example, can only be understood through the interactions with other partialities. To sit on a chair means entering a relation with this chair: the human body and the chair temporarily co-define each other.

These interactions between partialities, which continuously reinvent our world, cannot be captured in knowledge because they resist abstraction. It is therefore important to realize that Cooper's abstract field is not abstract in itself. We think of it as abstract because we cannot define its essence or draw its borders. That is to say, in institutional thinking we *abstract* from the abstract field. Cooper's abstract field is concrete just like abstract art is concrete. An abstract painting of, say, a human body reminds us of the complex *concreteness* of what it means to be human. As Sørensen (2004: 12) put it, 'all abstractions are simple; everything that is concrete is complex'. Cooper's abstract field, as abstract art, thus reminds us of our forgetfulness of the concreteness of potentiality. In institutional thinking we make the concrete abstract through the logic of simple location.

Simple location and organization studies

Cooper's dismissal of simple location is primarily directed at dominant discourse in the social sciences. Some writings in social science have attributed social origins to complete structures, such as systems and organizations, which are in fact abstractions from far more complex processes of composition and decomposition. Establishing things or 'forevers in thought' has the purpose to stop thinking. It consists of building walls around the present, i.e. locating that which is unlocatable, with the double purpose of creating certainty and advancing 'knowledge'. Simple presence, in its most extreme forms, becomes a collection of moments where one declares the infinite to be finite. This is how some versions of 'progress' (of knowledge) should be understood. Disciplines such as 'sociology' or 'organization studies' (but also 'philosophy', understood in a disciplinary sense) are thought to progress through abstraction upon abstraction. Sociology and organization theory, Cooper argues, all too often blind themselves from what goes beyond simple location. They tend to accept simple location as a given, as a natural fact of life, while the true task for thinking is to ask fundamental questions such as: Where does the logic of simple location lead us? Where would a different way of thinking, sensitive to the abstract field, take us?

An illuminating example of simple location in the social sciences, according to Cooper, is Herbert Simon's (1957) idea of bounded rationality. Simon critiques the idea of Economic Man: he who possesses all relevant information and who makes rational decisions based on this information. Simon corrected models of rational decision-making by arguing that (1) agents face uncertainty about the future, and (2) that there are costs and difficulties in acquiring the required information. In making decisions, Simon argues, decision-makers therefore have to rely on bounded rationality. Decision-making thus becomes a matter of satisficing rather than optimising. Cooper, in his critique of Simon, says that rationality and prediction are not locatable potentialities in the first place: 'we recognize that it's not the rationality that is bounded but rather that the *boundedness* is *rationalized*' (Cooper, 1998b: 148; emphasis in original). In the idea of bounded rationality the ideas of subjectivity and rationality remain unquestioned. That is, in bounded rationality, rationality is located within the minds of individual decision makers: rationality is bounded because boundedness

is attributed to the form of the human mind. Mind, however, is something much more fundamental for Cooper since it directly links us with the undivided mass: the unconsciousness of mind touches the absent presence of potentiality. Forcing the mind to exclusively think in terms of bounded things loses sight of the formation and deformation processes of boundaries.

Another example is the idea of the division of labour. The division of labour, dividing labour into specific tasks or functions, is one of the key concepts in sociology and economics (classic studies are Braverman, 1974; Durkheim, 1984; Marx, 1992; Smith, 1979). While these studies highlight important developments in the industrialization processes that characterise the past three centuries, what is usually forgotten, says Cooper, is what lies beyond the division of labour. This is what Cooper calls the *labour of division* (Cooper, 1989a; 1998a; 2006; see also Hetherington and Munro, 1997): the production of the visible in the stabilized forms of social knowledge, social objects or social objectives. Through labour of division human beings are able to give meaning and purpose to their lives. Vision, says Cooper, is intrinsically di-vision. That is, through acts of division are we able to see, are we able to create meaning and are we able to find purpose. Work or labour serves precisely this function. Hence what one sees in the supermarket is not the unorganised or uninformed mass itself: one sees products of the labour of division. Nor are what one hears and what one says rough data (as statisticians would have it): words are formed through division and are therefore meaningful to us.

For Cooper, for the socially and technically informed world at least, these variations on the idea of simple location are based upon an ontological error: the idea that difference is secondary to being. Thus,

[D]ifferentiation is not a process that occurs (naturally) in the world; rather, it is the world that occurs within the differentiation of dedifferentiation, displacement and uncertainty. (Cooper, 1997: 12)

Cooper's point is not that organization studies, or the social sciences in general, focus too much on organization, and that, as 'poststructuralists', we should celebrate disorganization. The point is that the establishment of 'an organization' in institutional thinking closes the door for thinking about organization (as a generic process).

That is, precisely by being satisfied with ‘an organization’ as such, as a completed structure, we forget the beyond. Being occupied with organizations is thus a way to stop thinking about organization:

If we insist on thinking in terms of *organizations*, we miss the bigger question of how organization as a generic process both structures and destructures our world, how our minds and bodies are caught up in its complex, reflexive dynamics. To think of *organizations* is to think of specific objects external to us. To think of *organization* is to recognize a more general force which includes us in its perpetual movement between order and disorder, certainty and uncertainty. (Cooper, 1998b: 154; emphasis in original)

Organizing as the transformation of boundary relationships

In saying that boundaries do not belong to the world, Cooper is not saying that boundaries do not exist. His point is that boundaries do not *belong*. As dividers, boundaries make up the world, i.e. the world belongs to boundaries. To think of walls not as effect (of building, as in simple location) but as origin is to move from atoms and laws as object for research to boundary-activity (Cooper, 1986) as the origin of life and thought:

Any ‘I’ is the transient and uncertain result of boundaries dynamically shared with ‘you’, ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘it’, and ‘them’. This shared ‘I’ is therefore *common* and *communal* in the most radical sense of a boundary as that which *separates and joins at the same time*. (Cooper, 2003: 166; emphasis in original)

Boundary-activity divides and connects at the same time; a condensing of time and space (unthinkable in Euclidean space where time and space are universal dimensions) where what comes after simultaneously comes before. Boundary-activity informs. Information must be taken literally here: to in-form, that which goes into form (Cooper, 1976). As I noted earlier, the formed is only partial, looking for further connections that will change its identity. Thus, ‘information is not a property of the individual message but of the set of possibilities which surround the message’ (Cooper: 1991b: 3). Here we see a direct link to what Whitehead said to Russell: the moment when one wakes up from a deep sleep is the moment of information: ‘in that imperceptible

moment between the known and the unknown. [Information] lasts but an instant and is quickly gone' (Cooper, 2001a: 169).

To think about boundaries is to think of action (Cooper, 1976; Cooper and Law, 1995). Action does not take place inside or outside boundaries: action is always boundary-based; it takes place in the midst of things, continuously redefining the actual out of a cloud of potentialities. Actions or events make present what was absent, make visible what was invisible, possible what was impossible; they are innocent in the sense of being not-yet-formed, not-yet-defined: 'Action ... occurs in a meaning vacuum, having become detached from clear purpose and outcome' (Cooper, 1976: 1002).

This is also precisely how Cooper understands organization: 'Organizing activity is the transformation of boundary relationships' (Cooper, 1992: 257). Organization or information is always reorganization, not in origin – it originates out of disorganization or unform – but in effect. 'Organizations' (what we in language refer to as organizations) do not organize. The earth organizes. What we commonly conceive as 'an organization' is the result of symbolic reproduction. The ontological moment of information or organization is not to be understood as a simplification of things (in translating matter into form); it is the moment when potentialities, or possibilities, come into being.

One might object that if 'organizations' were in fact continually changing, or continually informing, it would be impossible to actually work in an organization, or to recognize an organization as such. Cooper has two answers. The first we have already discussed: what we see is not sheer matter, or sheer potentiality. What we see is the symbolic order: we see the already divided, the already signified. This answer, however, is not enough in itself, for the question is: How do we act upon this symbolic order? This is Cooper's second answer: What we call an organization, in this regard, is no different from what we call an 'I', a 'we' or an 'it'. Just as 'we' continuously regenerate ourselves by speaking the already-formed concepts (affirming) and by inventing new concepts (informing), 'organizations' also continuously regenerate themselves. Newspapers, for example, recreate themselves on a daily basis through their reports (Cooper, 2005). On an ontological level there is no categorical distinction between human being and

organizations: 'We' are equally part of 'organizations' as 'organizations' are part of 'us'. 'We', as well as 'organizations', produce what it means to be a 'we' or 'an organization' in taking part of the primary processes of formation and deformation – in short: in organizing.

To think openly

Cooper's 'object' of thinking is not objects, but that which goes beyond objects. It is not the objects that resist meaning (they are full of meaning), but what goes beyond objects. In order to see what lies beyond objects, however, one paradoxically *needs* objects: only through the divided can the undivided be felt. One might therefore ask if scholars of organization studies continue to think if they no longer accept 'real' organizations as the objects of thinking. Schelling (1980) has argued that without objects there is nothing to think, or better: our thoughts will never return to us, forever lost in the abstract field. The further we reach to primary mind or ungrounding mass, the less we experience, and the more consciousness disappears. As such, the resulting 'thoughts' would be unable to relate back to ourselves. Thus while in some of his writings, Cooper appears to radically oppose institutional thinking to a radically different form of thinking, conceptualized as, for example, 'proximal thinking' (Cooper and Law, 1995) and 'generic thinking' (Cooper, 1998b), the latter cannot exist without maintaining some relation with the former. In this respect, proximal thinking or generic thinking in Cooper is very much like Deleuze and Guattari's concept of philosophical creation: as discussed in the first chapter, philosophy for Deleuze and Guattari is threatened by the danger of chaos from which no relation to the actual is possible.

Cooper is well aware of the limit of non-institutional thinking. We can never become one with the abstract field – we can only temporally approach it. The life of the mind, as well as of the body, is a continuous dialectical process of learning and unlearning (Cooper, 2003). In order to make room for the new, one must first negate that which is taken as positive. In other words, one must find the partiality in anything that is taken as a bounded whole in order to inform. While we are generally good at learning, i.e. finding a simple location for 'real' things, what Cooper 'teaches' us is that renewal, and hence the possibility of ethics and politics, is grounded in unlearning. Unlearning, however, is not

possible to zero degree. In approaching the abstract field one needs to be careful not to reach 'the point of no return'.

It is impossible to think without objects or live without objectives. It is therefore unavoidable that, in acting, one *selects* objects for displacement. It is precisely the relation of the self to institutional thinking that is the focus of Foucault's later works as discussed in the previous chapter: thinking 'institutes' itself as a particular subjectivity. I will now briefly revisit these works in relation to the concepts of institution and institutional thinking.

Institutionalization in the later Foucault

Foucault's 'hermeneutics of the subject', i.e. his work on the care of the self and critique, did not receive a warm welcome when it was first published. It was, and to a lesser extent still is, predominantly received as a radical break with Foucault's previous works, in particular his work on the relation between power and knowledge (e.g. Flynn, 1985; Habermas, 1987; Schürmann, 1985; Taylor, 1986). Foucault's self-formation of the subject or care of the self raised some eyebrows: after all, is this talk about self-exercises itself not a disguised return to the sovereign subject, the subject ('man') of which the Foucault of *The Order of Things* said that it 'is neither the oldest nor the most constant problem that has been posed to human knowledge' (2002: 421)? For some the apparent turn from a truth to which subjects are subjected to an active and aesthetic truth originating in the subjects themselves, a truth of self-stylization and dandyism, was simply too joyful, too far removed from harsh reality. Some also thought that Foucault fell back upon an essentialist concept of the subject, despite his persistent insistence that this was far from the case.

For example, largely based on Foucault's discussion of Baudelaire's ideas on dandyism in 'What is Enlightenment?', Miller (1993; 1998) went so far as to suggest that the active subject in the later Foucault is to be understood as 'a type who will be primed to worry about the maintenance of outward appearances' (1998: 888) and one who strives for some form of 'organic unity' (ibid: 887). In Miller's strange celebration of Foucault's alleged dandyism, as well as in some of the more simplistic critiques afforded to his work, Foucault's care of the self

was understood as an almost narcissist relation to an essentialist self, a paradigm for the individualist consumer society rather than a self-stylization against it.³⁴ Some commentators thought that Foucault had himself become a victim of institutional thinking. Foucault, they argued, would have been happy to accept the subject as a given object in his research, one that was not an object for thinking. In a late interview, one interviewer tried to rescue Foucault from dandyism by suggesting that the ‘care of the self is in a certain sense care for others’ (1989e: 437), perhaps in the hope of linking Foucault’s work to Levinasian ethics. Foucault, however, seems not willing to give in as he responds:

What makes it ethical for the Greeks is not that it is care for others. From a truth that’s painful, to which subjects are subjected, to an aesthetic truth, a truth of self-stylization. The care of the self is ethical in itself. (ibid)

In fairness to some of the critics, Foucault’s answers to questions about the ontological status of the subject in his hermeneutics of the subject are often sketchy.³⁵ Foucault is not always clear, whether it be in his books or in his interviews, about the precise nature of the active subject. Where does the critical subject get its active agency from? What is the ontological status of this agency? We are sometimes left wondering. Consider the following passage from the same interview in which Foucault draws a link between his earlier work and his present work on the care of the self:

I would say that if I am now interested in how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture and that are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society and his social group. (Foucault, 1989e: 440-441)

³⁴ See Halperin (1995) for a powerful critique of Miller’s biographical interpretation of Foucault.

³⁵ Part of the confusion has to do with the fact that Foucault understands the subject as product – the production of subjectivity in processes of subjectivation – while he uses the phrase ‘the active subject’ to designate a subject that produces itself. It would have been less confusing if Foucault had spoken of *the active human* who participates in the production of his or her own subjectivity and *the passive human* who receives his or her subjectivity.

What, exactly, is ‘active’ about models that are imposed on the self? Here the distinction, or shift in focus, between a subject that actively works upon his or her subjectivity and one that receives it from culture is far from clear. Here, Foucault seems to go too far in trying to see his later work as a continuation of his earlier work up to the point where the independent effect of his later works is almost effaced. The models (or techniques of the self) that Foucault speaks about are the methods that the critical subject uses to establish him or herself as a subject of truth. Critical activity, however, does not simply consist of applying pre-established models. Models are not designed in heaven; through critical practice these models themselves change.

In line with some recent commentaries (Harrer, 2005; Sharpe, 2005; Starkey and Hatchuel, 2002), I understand Foucault’s active (‘critical’) subject as being consistent with his work on the passive (‘subjected’) subject, even if it contains a radical shift in focus. This consistency is exactly to be found in the relation between institutionalization and critique. For Foucault, critique and institutionalization do not cancel each other out; they need each other, indeed, we might even go as far as saying that they reinforce one another.

The institutional element in thinking

Subjectivity is produced through institutionalization. This does not mean that subjects are passive effects, precisely because the Foucauldian subject is in the middle of processes of subjectivation or institutionalization. Institutionalization is not a process that happens separately from human acts; we partly define ourselves by institutionalization, or by constituting ourselves as objects. Hence our subjectivity is itself institutionalized. This is also what Derrida points to (in a discussion of Kant’s *The Conflict of the Faculties*) when he says:

An institution – this is not merely a few walls or some outer structures surrounding, protecting, guaranteeing or restricting the freedom of our work; it is also and already the structure of our interpretation. (Derrida, 1992: 22)

Care of the self, then, means that one participates in the processes of subjectivation, or the production of subjectivity. The subject posits

itself as an object in order to know or form itself. This objectivation of oneself is not something negative; it is a necessary step for reflection since a thought can only turn back to itself after it has hit an object (Schelling, 1980). This object, in critical thought, is our own subjectivity.

It is in this sense that Foucault argues that freedom and power presuppose each other (e.g. Foucault, 1989c). There is no freedom outside of power relations whilst at the same time power relations imply freedom, i.e. the capacity of individuals to work upon themselves (or to 'care for oneself'). What makes the thesis 'there is no freedom outside relations of power' sound counterintuitive is that it goes against the common sense idea of a sovereign subject that is free precisely because it is itself not captured in power relations; that he, she or it can exercise power without constraints. In short, when we understand institutionalization as the stabilization of power relations, critical activity is precisely the disruption or displacement of these stabilizations.

Hence, in the later works Foucault is careful not to reverse the thesis of the sovereign subject, as he was sometimes accused of doing in his earlier work. He avoids thinking the subject as an effect of impersonal processes. When one simply reverses the thesis of the sovereign subject by arguing that the subject is not the starting point of action but the end point, i.e. by retaining the problem but proposing a mirror solution, one still thinks of subjectivity as outside power relations. Instead of saying that subjects are the active actors *above* power (or the possessors of power) one would now argue that subjects are passive products *underneath* power. Instead, Foucault reminds us that giving up the sovereign subject does not imply giving up the idea of an active subject. The active subject, however, needs constraints in the form of institutions or in the form of objects of thought for its own being and hence its own critical activity. In critical thinking, one not only selects a practice of institutional thinking to move away from (a subject-position, or institutional element, that co-defines one's being), one also selects institutionalized techniques that help in realizing this end. These are the techniques of the self Foucault speaks about. The result of critical thinking, then, is a displacement of a subject-position. Furthermore, and this is the crucial point, it consists in the

displacement of a model or technique that constitutes this very subject-position *as* a subject position.

Institutionalized laziness

To say that institutionalization is necessary for thinking, however, is not the same as saying that institutionalization is something that stimulates thinking. Even though one needs to encounter objects in order to think, these very same objects make thinking difficult. By definition, objects refuse thought since the thinking, of which objects are the result, has already been done. As Cooper (1991a: 11) reminds us, 'institutions ... make it difficult for us to think of the 'nowness' or sublimity of the event, since they are continually structuring our thoughts and thinking processes for us.' The danger inherent to any form of institutionalization is that we stop thinking and questioning. In fact, the more powerful the institution is, the less we are inclined to think – institutionalization, the production of 'subjects' and 'objects', makes us lazy by taking away the motivation to posit ourselves as objects. In Foucauldian terms, we are in danger of losing our critical potentiality by being subjected to, instead of participating within, processes of subjectivation. Through institutions we can undergo the structures of daily existence without acting upon these institutions. We affirm, or regenerate, without thought – what Nietzsche (1967) has called the 'yes' (Y-A) of a donkey. Humans exclude themselves from the 'human production systems' (Cooper, 2001c; 2006) through unthought thoughts, i.e. the systems that produce what it means to be human.

Foucault once characterized his own work as an attempt to demonstrate that we are always freer than we think we are. I would suggest that the background of this remark is precisely to be found in the double insight that institutionalization is implicated in critical practice and that institutionalization resists critical practice.

Conclusion

According to Cooper and Foucault, today's loss of critical attitude, to which institutionalization seduces us, is characteristic of our age: some

‘systems have lives of their own which make them fundamentally independent of human control’ (Cooper and Burrell, 1988: 94). For Cooper, this development has to do with the nature of post-industrial systems of production. Not only do modern corporations incorporate bodies into their production, the products (or objects) that these processes produce enter these very same bodies:

The institutional product is also a social product in that we eat it, we wear it, we speak it; it enters our minds and bodies in such a way as to constitute us as a corporate body. (Cooper, 2001c: 326)

Human beings are thus inscribed by institutionalization, which resists ‘human’ intervention: ‘Without our realising it, we are in danger of becoming technical products of the technology we have produced’ (Cooper, 2001: 334). Foucault’s later work reminds us that this inscription is never total: no matter how much we are products of institutionalization, we still retain a freedom to relate to these processes of institutionalization. Cooper’s call for resisting institutional thinking is very similar to Foucault’s call for a critical relation to oneself: one can only resist institutional thinking if one’s own subjectivity is partly defined by it. One can only attempt to move away from thinking in ‘institutional’ terms of organizations to ‘generic’ terms of organization if the organizations you move away from are your own. One can only participate in the information of new forms if the ‘old’ forms partly make up one’s being. As I shall also discuss in the next chapter through the philosophy of Spinoza, for human beings (who are formed) there is no radical or definite outside of the formed.

If it is true that a move away from institutional thinking necessarily includes institutional moments in order to make that move, can we identify such a moment in this chapter? There can be no doubt that common sense ideas, unthought thoughts or presuppositions are at work in this chapter. If Deleuze and Guattari are right, however, philosophy should always be aimed at unmasking these presuppositions in order to turn them into philosophical problems. What, then, is the most striking presupposition at work in this chapter, one that asks for problematization?

Despite the fact that this chapter has attempted to problematize the idea of critical thinking as the absolute outside of institutionalization,

somehow the idea that institutionalization goes against thinking and thinking against institutionalization has remained intact. Critical thinking, even when it needs institutionalized forms, is itself portrayed as de-institutionalizing. Even though I have suggested that thinking and institutionalization can *reinforce* each other, I have not elaborated upon the precise form of this argument. In attempting to depart from the image of the critical mind as that which fights against bureaucratic forms, I have arrived at a somewhat similar destination. Now critical force is said to exist within a mind fighting the bureaucratic forms within itself. It remains to be seen whether or not this mind belongs to the individual, as well as what 'individuality' might actually mean in this context.

So is it possible to conceptualize critical thinking and institutionalization as happening *simultaneously* in the same direction? Can there be a critical thinking not *permitted* by institutionalization, as in Kant's ideal of the modern university, but a critical thinking that is nonetheless *itself* institutionalized? This is the main problem that I shall discuss in the next two chapters, through the concepts of synergy, individuality and multitude.

Chapter 4

Synergy

If I learn to swim or dance, my movements and pauses, my speeds and slownesses, must take on a rhythm common to that of the sea or my partner, maintaining a more or less durable adjustment.

– Gilles Deleuze (1998: 142)

Introduction

One can only escape institutional thinking by thinking institutions themselves differently. Is this not the essence of philosophy of organization, to rethink the problems of order and stability themselves? Many contemporary philosophers have made precisely this problem the central focus of their thinking. The concept of ‘singularity’, which finds various expressions in the work of Deleuze, Nancy, Agamben and Hardt and Negri, to name a few, attempts to explain stability without recourse to inner forces (i.e. internal to that which is stable). Stability, structure, and institutionalization are fully real, both materially and ideally. They do, however, not explain themselves. They cannot be understood on their own terms. An organization is never *simply* an organization: it is never a simple location.

Within organization studies, Michael Reed (1997: 26) has warned against the idea of moving away from institutional thinking towards a ‘flat ontology’ in which structure is ‘denied any kind of ontological status or explanatory power as a relatively enduring entity that takes on stable and institutional and organizational forms (...)’. His warning is in anticipation of situations wherein it almost seems that ‘nouns’ should be avoided altogether. The idea of a world without identifiable ‘things’ is clearly not a world in which the social scientist feels at home,

nor does it give such a researcher much material to work with. A philosophical problem, however, does not need things; all it needs are concepts.

As I shall discuss in this chapter, thinking and institutionalization form a peculiar conceptual pair in the philosophy of Spinoza. For Spinoza, freedom (of thought *and* body) is realized in institutions. The key to understanding this very non-commonsensical concept of freedom and institution lies in Spinoza's concept of individuality, which is the central focus of this chapter. Individuality in Spinoza, I shall argue, is another way of speaking of *synergy*. Hence in this chapter I think of synergy not as an effect (of bodies meeting one another) but as a productive force in itself. Synergy thus understood cannot be explained in terms of the interaction of parts; 'parts' themselves must be understood in terms of synergy.

The chapter is structured as follows. After a brief introduction to the concept of synergy as well as a discussion of the main concepts in Spinoza's *Ethics*, I proceed to discuss Spinoza's philosophy of individuality. This discussion will finally lead to the concepts of identity and synergistic thinking upon a Spinozist plane of concepts.

Synergy and institutional thinking

Synergy is commonly defined as 'the sum of the parts is greater than the whole', a concept that might even be read into Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (even though Aristotle does not use the term).³⁶ Today, the concept is predominantly used in biology (see Corning, 2003) and in both popular and academic texts on management and business. In the latter texts, synergetic effects are often captured under terms such as 'payoff' and 'win-win' situations, in relation to mergers and acquisitions,

³⁶ Aristotle writes, '[T]hat which is composed of something exists in such a way as to be one in its totality, not like heap but like a syllable (the syllable is not the letters, and so "ba" is no the same as "b" and "a", nor is the flesh the same as fire and earth; for after disintegration the flesh and the syllable no longer exist, but their elements, which are the letters for the latter and fire and earth for the former, do exist), the syllable is not only its letters (...) but something else besides, and the flesh is not only fire and earth or the hot and the cold but something else besides.' (*Metaphysics I*, 1041b [1966: 135]).

communication, organizational learning, information sharing, networking, and economies of scale (e.g. Ansoff, 1965; Larsson and Finkelstein, 1999). As Peter Corning (2003) shows, however, in other disciplines too one finds notions that point towards synergetic effects, even if the term 'synergy' itself is not used. Among the many examples he gives are quantum coherence in quantum physics, dissipative structures in thermodynamics, and supramolecules in biochemistry.

The word 'synergy' comes from the Greek *synergos*, which literally means 'cooperation'. Synergy, in fact, still means cooperation if one sharpens the popular definition by saying that the whole is not greater than but *different* to the sum of its parts (Anderson, 1972); or 'the behaviour of whole systems unpredicted by the behaviour of their parts taken separately' (Fuller, 1975: 3). A synergetic effect is one wherein properties are emergent, an emergent property being 'a property of the whole that is not shared by its constituent parts' (DeLanda, 1995: 357; cf. Polanyi, 1968). In these definitions one also includes a phenomenon which is sometimes called 'negative synergy' or 'disergy' (Corning, 2003). Negative synergy designates the situation wherein parts combine into a whole but with an undesirable outcome. For example, if penguins keep warm by huddling together, we speak of positive synergy; if a merger produces less profit than the combined profits of the two firms separately we speak of negative synergy. (Of course, whether an emergent whole is seen as negative or positive depends on the chosen perspective.)

If synergy is the situation where the whole cannot be reduced to the combined powers of its parts, one can find synergy everywhere: any relationship between parts, or any form of cooperation becomes a form of synergy, including involuntary relationships between parts, like slavery or parasitism (Corning, 2003: 147). The universe becomes one great theatre of synergetic effects, one leading to another. As Buckminster Fuller writes, in the spirit of general systems theory:

There is a synergetic progression in Universe – a hierarchy of total complex behaviours entirely unpredicted by their successive subcomplexes' behaviours. It is manifest that Universe is the maximum synergy-of-synergies, being utterly unpredicted by any of its parts. (Fuller: 1975: 13)

Similarly, Corning writes:

[T]he universe can be portrayed as a vast structure of synergies, a many-levelled “Magic Castle” in which the synergies produced at one level serve as the building blocks for the next level. Moreover, unpredictable new forms of synergy, and even new principles, emerge at each level of organization. (Corning, 2003: 298)

In what sense does the concept of synergy relate to a philosophical problem? It may seem that the very idea of synergy provides little more than a paradigmatic example of institutional thinking; thinking in terms of parts and wholes. To a certain extent this might be true. However, the concept of synergy also shows us where the logic of simple location breaks down. After all, the popular formula of synergy, $1 + 1 = 3$, is simply mathematical nonsense: the only information it gives is that wholes cannot be explained on the basis of their parts and vice versa. It shows us the limits of institutional thinking. If one accepts such a view, one thinks of synergy not as effect but as a productive force in itself. This is precisely what I understand Spinoza’s concept of individuality to establish. Thinking synergy, thus understood, amounts to thinking without relying on parts and wholes.

Spinoza as ‘savage anomaly’

Hopefully, the main reasons for an engagement with Spinoza as a philosopher of organization will appear from both this chapter and the next. Spinoza is a highly original thinker, Negri (1991) calls him aptly a ‘savage anomaly’, and his philosophy creates philosophical problems of organization that are as much at odds with contemporary common sense understandings of organization as they must have been in his time. Many have pointed towards the untimely element in Spinoza’s philosophy. Deleuze, for example, says, ‘it is easy to credit Spinoza with the place of honour in the Cartesian succession; except that he bulges out of that place in all directions, there is no living corpse who raises the lid of his coffin so powerfully, crying so loudly, “I am not one of yours”’ (Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 15). Walther (1993: 52) nicely captures Spinoza’s originality in relation to anthropomorphic thinking: ‘If it has been said that there were three blows to that anthropocentric world view, namely Copernican cosmology, Darwinian law of selection,

and Freudian depotentialization of the *ego*, one can say without exaggeration that Spinoza committed all of these crimes at the same time.’

There might, however, also be a historical reason why Spinoza is of particular interest for any discussion of synergy and individuality. This has everything to do with the common sense understanding of the concept of individuality itself. According to Balibar, the ‘strong’ concept of individuality, i.e. our common sense idea of individuality as stressing human independence and freedom, is a relatively recent phenomenon. As he writes:

Nineteenth and twentieth century discussions have prepared us to imagine that a strong concept of Individuality should first emerge in the framework of “individualistic” doctrines. But historically it was just the opposite: such a concept was elaborated on theoretical bases which, to our standards, would appear “holistic” or profoundly *anti-individualistic*. (Balibar, 1997: 32).

As I shall discuss at length in the sections that follow, Spinoza’s understanding of a ‘strong’ individual could not be further away from our common sense understanding: a strong individual for Spinoza is an individual who understand his or her dependence; an individual who is free precisely because he or she understands his- or herself to act out of necessity. In Kant, writing a century after Spinoza, we do encounter a (now) commonsensical tension between individuality and collectivity:

Man has an inclination to *live in society*, since he feels in this state more like a man, that is, he feels able to develop his natural capacities. But he also has a great tendency to *live as an individual*, to isolate himself, since he also encounters in himself the unsocial characteristic of wanting to direct everything in accordance with his own ideas. (Kant, 1970a: 44, emphasis in original)

Individuality and community, for Spinoza, are not adversaries: they are forces that strengthen each other. As Balibar also says about Spinoza’s individual, ‘it is not in the power of natural individuals to become indestructible units, with an invariable composition, but it is in their power (i.e. essence) to look for the conditions in which the cohesion of the parts is secured or even reinforced’ (Balibar, 1997: 20). Understanding individuality as that which resists dependence is foreign

to Spinoza. It is in common sense that we are unable ‘to imagine independence and community not to be contraries, inversely growing and realized’ (ibid: 36). A concept of individuality which breaks down the individual – community dichotomy is precisely what binds Spinoza to many contemporary thinkers. Cooper, for example, reminds us of ‘the double meaning of individuality’:

The original double meaning of the term individual as both separate and connected suggests that the so-called individual is divided and undivided at the same time. This implies a certain distinctive tension between the human agent and the environmental objects that sustain it, for nothing can now be seen as a self-bounded, independent form. Individual and environment become complexly mixed together as a field of dynamic interchanges in which locatable terms lose themselves in a dense interspace of relations. It is this interspace between the individual and the environment that begins to emerge as a prime mover of human agency in the continuous work of cultivating this world. (Cooper, 2005: 1690)

Similarly, Nancy (1991: 7) speaks of ‘the solidarity of the individual with communism at the heart of thinking immanence’. That is to say: to think individuality not as atoms but as singularities opens the way for thinking individuality and community as reinforcing each other. Deleuze (2006b: 191) affirms this relation between Spinoza’s individual and contemporary thinking when he says that ‘Spinoza immediately thinks in terms of “multitudes” [‘singularities as multiplicities’ in Deleuze’s terminology] and not individuals.’ How, then, does Spinoza establish his non-commonsensical, and therefore contemporary, concept of individuality?

Spinoza’s radically open system

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza famously argued that there is only one thing that truly exists: *Deus sive natura*, God or Nature. Such a radical thesis might appear to be suspicious. After all, is reducing everything that exists to one Origin, one Being, or one Law of laws, not simply tantamount to a radical reductionism which could easily slip into totalitarianism? Perhaps surprisingly, Spinoza’s system establishes quite the opposite: his concept of God or Nature is not something that reduces complex reality to one abstract essence but one that attempts to

relieve complex reality from the burden of essences and abstractions that are at play. How does this work?

While God or Nature is the only thing that can truly be said to exist, or the only thing that can be understood on its own terms, its existence is not actualized in established forms: God or Nature *really* exists but it does not *actually* exist. Hence actualized reality is only a partial and temporary expression of God or Nature. For Spinoza, actualized reality consists of finite *modes* (or ‘manners of being’; ‘affections of substance’). The concept of a finite mode is fairly straightforward in Spinoza: it is a temporary thing in the world (e.g. a stone, an idea, a human being, etc.). The modes can only be understood through ‘absolutely infinite substance’ (Nature or God). The concept of God or Nature, then, breathes life (or infinity) in actuality (or finitude) rather than taking life away (by limiting it down to a principle, law or essence). At the heart of Spinoza’s thinking lies the question of how the finite world of modes is related to infinite substance. From the outset it is clear that the finite is not outside the infinite: everything is *in* infinite substance. Modes exist only insofar as they exist in God or Nature. Paradoxically, the finite modes can therefore be said to exist only insofar as they express infinite substance. This is how Spinoza bridges the gap between the finite and the infinite: the finite modes exist because they express infinite substance.

Next to *infinite substance* (Nature or God) and *finite mode* (affection of substance), Spinoza introduces a third concept: the concept of attribute.³⁷ Attributes for Spinoza express the essence of substance but from a particular aspect of God or Nature’s existence. As such they are infinite, as God or Nature itself is, but not ‘absolutely infinite’; each is said to be ‘infinite in its kind’ (*Ethics*, ID6E [217]). That is to say, attributes fully capture the essence of God but from a particular point

³⁷ The concept of attribute dates back to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (1966). Spinoza’s concept of attribute, however, must primarily be understood against Descartes (1991). Descartes distinguishes between different kinds of substance each having one principle attribute: the attribute of the mind being thought and that of the body extension. In Spinoza there is one substance with an infinite number of attributes, each expressing the nature of substance. In this way he avoids Descartes’ mind-body dualism: extension and thought are attributes of the same substance (see Ablondi and Barbone, 1994; Brown and Stenner, 2001).

of view. Out of the infinite number of attributes that substance consists, we (i.e. human beings) know only two: thought and extension.

The concept of attribute in Spinoza is highly complex and frequently debated (e.g. Donagan, 1979; Macherey, 1997; Wolf, 1972). One way is to think of attributes as ‘attributing’ the infinite to the finite: attributes attribute essences of substance to modes. Hence whilst human beings are themselves finite (our bodies die and our ideas are limited), our bodies are affections of infinite substance under the attribute of extension *and* our ideas are affections of substance under the attribute of thought. As Negri (1991: 54) put it: ‘The attribute is [...] the agent of the organization of the infinite toward the world. It is the key to the degrading, emanating, or, better, fluent determination of being.’

Where, then, does ‘ethics’ come in? If human beings do not act out of an inner cause and simply follow the necessary laws emanating from God, how can we still speak of an ethics for human beings? Spinoza answers this question by saying that (finite) humans express infinite substance to a variable extent. Spinoza’s ethics is a call for a maximum expression of infinite substance. Hence, the ethical question can be posed as: ‘How can one be part of Nature or God as a whole?’ Or: ‘How can one reach the eternity of substance?’³⁸

Spinoza’s individual

Spinoza’s theory of ethics is rooted in his concept of individuality. After proposition thirteen in the second part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza interrupts

³⁸ Here I see clear links to some of the theorists that I have discussed in the previous chapters. I read Spinoza, Deleuze and Cooper as exploring the question how ‘one’ escapes the borders that define the one (or: how does one leave the abstract one that ‘one’ is). Hence the central question for Spinoza is: ‘How does one become infinite even though one is finite?’, for Deleuze the question becomes ‘How does one become virtual even though one is actual?’, and for Cooper the question is conceptualized as: ‘How does one approach the abstract field without losing oneself?’ Foucault is also interested in this problem. His concept of critique designates the form of reflecting in which the ‘one’ that reflects changes in reflecting; hence a form of reflecting without a natural base.

the logic of the text to set out his theory of physics. This is the part in which Spinoza defines individuality:

When a number of bodies of the same or of different magnitude form close contact with one another through the pressure of other bodies upon them, or if they are moving at the same or different rates of speed so as to preserve an unvarying relation of movement among themselves, these bodies are said to be united with one another and all together to form one body or individual thing, which is distinguished from other things through this union of bodies. (*Ethics*, IIP13L7S [253])

With this broad definition of individuality, Spinoza sees individuals everywhere. Not just humans are individuals, so are stones and states as well as the parts of our body. Even a couple constitutes a separate individual for Spinoza (*Ethics*, IVP18S [331]). The definition, however, describes two different ways in which an individual can be constituted. Firstly, the situation where one body ensures that another body is kept as part of itself ('the pressure of other bodies'). It is this composition of individuality which Garber (1994) has called 'externally supported individuals'. He gives the example of the wine bottle: 'if the wine in a bottle could be said to constitute an individual body, it would be externally supported in this sense, since it is only because of the causal influence of the bottle that it retains its unity.' (1994: 56) Secondly, the situation where an individual is established as an enduring relation of movement and rest: two or more bodies acting in concert. This, in Garber's terminology, is an example of a 'self-supported individual': 'an individual body which is organized to such an extent that the motions of its parts automatically maintain the appropriate ratio of motion and rest that define the individual as what it is.' (1994: 56)³⁹

According to Garber, for Spinoza 'most individual bodies are both self-supported and externally supported to some degree.' (1994: 57) While he is right in this observation in so far as it concerns human beings, this is only where Spinoza's philosophical problem of individuality starts. Consider the following passage from the same section in the *Ethics*:

³⁹ One can easily recognize similarities to ideas of self-organization or autopoiesis here: a 'self-supported individual' is very much like the autopoietic (i.e. self-creating) system or organization (e.g. Luhmann, 1995; Maturana, 1999; Cooper, 2006).

We thus see how a composite individual can be affected in many different ways and yet preserve its nature. Now hitherto we have conceived an individual thing composed solely of bodies distinguished from one another only by in motion-and-rest and speed of movement; that is, an individual thing composed of the simplest bodies. If we now conceive another individual thing composed of several individual things of different natures, we shall find that this can be affected in many other ways while still preserving its nature. For since each one of its parts is composed of several bodies, each single part can therefore, without any change in its nature, move with varying degrees of speed and consequently communicate its own motion to other parts with varying degrees of speed. Now if we go on to conceive a third kind of individual things composed of this second kind, we shall find that it can be affected in many other ways without any change of its form. If we thus continue to infinity, we shall readily conceive the whole of Nature as one individual whose parts – that is, all the constituent bodies – vary in infinite ways without any change in the individual as a whole. (*Ethics*, 2P13L7S [254-255])

Small individuals are part of bigger individuals, which are part of even bigger individuals, and so on until you reach the ultimate, infinite individual (God or Nature). Hence, individuals are never simple in Spinoza: they can not be explained through the logic of simple location. A human being is not just one individual, it is composed of infinitely many individuals. Some of these bodies are smaller than what we identify as ‘our body’ (e.g. the different organs of the body, the cells in our body), which in turn are composed of even smaller bodies until you reach infinitely small bodies (which Spinoza calls ‘simple bodies’). Other bodies are bigger than our own (e.g. the friendships we have, organizations we are part of, the societies in which we live). God or Nature, the ultimate individual, is thus composed of infinitely many smaller individuals, which all co-define each other.

In Garber’s terminology, then, there is strictly speaking only one self-supported individual which is God or Nature as a whole. Should we then understand all the ‘lower’ individuals, i.e. the finite modes existing only for a limited period of time (to which human beings belong) as ‘externally supported individuals’? The answer is both ‘yes’ and ‘no’. ‘Yes’ in the sense that finite modes cannot be understood on their own terms; they are always the cause of infinitely other finite individuals which they continuously encounter. Their very finitude is a result of this: at some point they will encounter another individual that does not

agree with the internal composition of their bodies and which causes this composition to break down (the individual dies).

The answer is ‘no’, however, to the extent that finite individuals take part in infinite substance. Finite beings are considered to be infinite, in so far as they express God’s eternal essence. When Spinoza speaks of understanding ‘under a form of eternity’ in part V of the *Ethics*, this is exactly what he has in mind: in so far as our thoughts are as fully developed as they are in God, we can be said to live eternally. This does not mean that we become immortal. It means precisely that the eternal ideas that we have, which partly constitute our being, will not die with our physical death. Deleuze (2003: 19-20) puts it beautifully when he says that to strive for living under a form of eternity is ‘in no way trying to stop death’, it is living in such a way that when death comes it only concerns ‘the smallest part of myself.’ Hence to live ethically in terms of Spinoza means living in such a way that as little as possible dies at one’s physical death. The crucial question, then, is how one attains eternal knowledge, i.e. knowledge expressing the infinite essence of God.

Spinoza’s theory of knowledge

In a sense, human beings do not think in Spinoza’s thinking. Or more precisely: our thoughts are not our own; they are always in God. Humans do not think because our thoughts do not originate out of a principle inside us: we think only because we are ‘composed’ of thoughts; the ‘we’ is implicated in thought (and extension) and not the other way around. It is in this sense that, strictly speaking, no idea can be said to be *contrary* to God’s infinite thought. Truth, for Spinoza, only exists at the level of the highest individual, at the level of God; truth is God’s infinite thought, his infinite composition. There is no negative synergy on the level of the ultimate individual. Why? Because God is perfect – God is obviously in harmony with himself; to deny that would be absurd for Spinoza.

Spinoza does, however, make an important distinction between adequate and inadequate ideas on the basis of the concept of affections of substance (or modes). Spinoza writes:

The affections of Substance I call Modes. The definition of Modes, insofar as it is not itself a definition of Substance, cannot involve existence. Therefore, even when they exist, we can conceive them as not existing. (Letter XII, to Lodewijk Meyer [2002: 788])

Why don't modes involve existence? There are two ways of explaining Spinoza's position. One way would be to say that Spinoza only grants truth to the relations between things; to the correspondences between things. In this view, only the laws of nature contain truth, singularities do not. We might argue that we see a typical modern notion of truth here: it is not the individual thing that contains truth but the law this thing represents. This, however, is not how I would propose to interpret Spinoza. As I shall now argue, the concept of affection rather points us towards the opposite idea: the idea that truth can only be found in singular relations.⁴⁰

Spinoza says our body is affected when it encounters other bodies. The whole universe is made up of encounters between bodies. Spinoza distinguishes two different affections: firstly, the affection of a body that agrees with our body or, more neutrally formulated, the situation that two bodies agree with one another. When two bodies agree with one another they temporarily form a larger composition or a larger individual: a new mixture of bodies (a love encounter, for example). This type of affections brings joy. Secondly, the affection of a body that does not agree with another body: a one-sided love encounter, for example. This situation brings sadness. Hence, sadness is caused by the encounter of two bodies that don't agree with one another. All encounters are either sad or joyful. (Of course, encounters, in reality, are much more complex: they can not be reduced to two bodies – an encounter is always, in every situation, a very complex assemblage of joy and sadness.) An ethical life is one of joyful encounters.⁴¹

⁴⁰ My reading of Spinoza in this section draws heavily on Deleuze's ideas on affections in Spinoza (see especially: Deleuze, 1988: 48-51; Deleuze, 1990: 235-254; 273-288). Whether or not Deleuze's concept of 'joyful affection' in particular is an adequate characterisation of Spinoza's thought has been subject to debate. See Macherey (1996) for a rejection of Deleuze's take on joyful affections and Rubin (2003) for a defence.

⁴¹ This is also Spinoza's interpretation of the Christian doctrine 'loving one's neighbour'; to love, or enjoy, the encounters we experience (*TPT*, chapter 13 [511]).

Affections (joy or sadness) do not express truth precisely because they say nothing about the relations between the bodies that meet; they say nothing about the causes. The relations between parts, which compose individuals, contain truth and not the parts. Or better: these parts also contain truth, but only because they are composed of the relations between even smaller parts (and so on until you reach the 'simple bodies', which contain no truth because they are not relational; see Deleuze, 1990b, part III). Affections do, however, correspond to ideas: any affection of the body corresponds to an idea in the mind. It is precisely these 'affective' ideas that Spinoza calls inadequate knowledge (or 'knowledge of the first kind'). Inadequate knowledge is finite or fragmented knowledge, representing the encounter between two bodies which corresponds to a feeling of joy or sadness. An idea in the first mode of knowledge can take the form of superstition or imagination (and, I would add, common sense and presupposition): we explain something without knowing anything about the relations of which this 'something' is composed. The significance of this point should be stressed since it forms a crucial part of Spinoza's philosophy: having inadequate knowledge is for Spinoza worse than simply 'not knowing something correctly'. Knowledge of the mind and the actions of our bodies are part of one and the same substance: one considered under the attribute of thought, the other under the attribute of extension. Hence, inadequate knowledge is not about getting the facts wrong; it corresponds to a mode of living from which we can only depart by reaching adequate knowledge (Deleuze, 2003).

Spinoza only finds truth in the relations between bodies because the relations take part in the infinite composition of nature even if they themselves are finite. Adequate knowledge, then, is knowledge of the relations between modes. Affections, however, never bring about an adequate idea directly because they do not grasp the nature of the relation of an encounter: they merely grasp whether or not a relation is established. There is nonetheless an important difference between joyful and sad affections. Sad affections do not even contain the possibility of forming adequate ideas whereas joyful affections do. This is because there is no relation between two bodies that don't agree with each other. Only when two bodies agree with each other Spinoza says that there is a possibility of adequate knowledge because there is existence.

When we know the relation between an encounter of two or more bodies we reach adequate knowledge. This is what Spinoza calls a common notion: common notions contain truth, or life, because they represent a relation exactly as it is in God. A wise man is thus someone who forms common notions, who knows about life. Spinoza uses the term 'adequate knowledge' for knowledge as it is in God, i.e. transgressing the limits of the modes by expressing that which is *common* to bodies. This knowledge, Spinoza says, is either attained by reason ('knowledge of the second kind') or by intuition ('knowledge of the third kind'). In short: truth, which human beings touch when they reach 'adequate knowledge', is knowledge consistent with infinite substance.

In life, common notions are sometimes hard to distinguish from abstractions, but it is essential to realize that they are opposites. Common notions encompass the relations between singularities, they move from the partial to the partial, not from the universal to the partial (deduction) or from the partial to the universal (induction) (cf. Deleuze, 1988: 54-58). The common designates what Spinoza also calls an 'eternal law'. The concept of law in Spinoza, however, is very far from our common sense understanding of a natural law. A law in Spinoza takes the form of 'This chair supports my back, therefore we cooperate' and not 'All chairs support backs', which is an abstraction. (The opposite situation, 'The chair says crack: we do not cooperate', is not a law. It is simply a sad encounter, from which no common can be derived.)

The problem of the Spanish poet

In Spinoza, the concept of 'life' refers to infinite substance (or eternal ideas; the composition of the highest individual). Spinoza's philosophy is therefore a celebration of life: 'A free man thinks of death the least of all things, and his wisdom is a meditation of life, not of death' (*Ethics*, IVP67 [355]). Death is what a bad encounter establishes: an encounter that decomposes the relations of an individual. It is in this sense that Deleuze could say that an ethical life in Spinoza is characterized by the futility of physical death: the 'free or wise man' loses little when he dies because he has adequate ideas that outlive his finite existence. There is, however, one passage in the *Ethics* which further complicates things and

which has puzzled many Spinoza-interpreters (e.g. Ablondi and Barbone, 1994; Balibar 1997; 1988; Matheron 1969; Montag, 1999):

I have no reason to hold that a body does not die unless it turns into a corpse; indeed experience seems to teach otherwise. It sometimes happens that a man undergoes such changes that I would not be prepared to say that he is the same person. I have heard tell of a certain Spanish poet who was seized with sickness, and although he recovered, he remained so unconscious of his past life that he did not believe that the stories and tragedies he had written were his own. Indeed, he might have been taken for a child in adult form if he had also forgotten his native tongue. And if this seems incredible, what are we to say about babies? A man of advanced years believes their nature to be so different from his own that he could not be persuaded that he had ever been a baby if he did not draw a parallel from other cases. (*Ethics*, IVP39S [342])

In this curious passage the concept of death does not necessarily refer to what we in common sense refer to as 'natural death'. This poses the following question: if individuality does not coincide with the life of a human being as we commonly perceive it, where does individuality begin and where does it end? For example, does the composition of a body (or the organization of a mode) take a fundamentally different form when one falls in love? Can you fall back into the previous composition when this love falls apart? Do you slowly slide over from one composition into another (and back again) or should we speak of a radical break?

These sorts of questions, which I shall refer to as 'the problem of the Spanish poet', get to the heart of Spinoza's concept of individuality, which is also crucial in understanding Spinoza's political philosophy (discussed in the next chapter). At this crucial point in the text, however, Spinoza does not fully explain himself. His rather unconvincing excuse for not going into this problem in depth is: 'I prefer to leave these matters unresolved, so as not to afford material for the superstitious to raise new problems' (*Ethics*, IVP39S [342]).⁴² If

⁴² Understandably, this justification has perplexed many Spinoza-scholars. Montag, for example, wonders: '[T]o whom is Spinoza speaking here? He has heretofore assumed that the readers of the *Ethics* share his critique of superstition; why now, in a passage so located that none but the most dedicated reader is likely to come upon it, in a work that is in itself notoriously for the difficulty to which, indeed,

Spinoza is not offering any help, what can we make of the problem of the Spanish poet ourselves?

One angle on the problem on the Spanish poet is the way it relates to Spinoza's concept of *conatus* (usually translated with 'striving' or 'to persevere in being'). Indeed, it is by no means straightforward to see how the identity-change of the Spanish poet is related to this concept: did the Spanish poet acquire a new *conatus* with his new 'identity' (if identity is a concept we can use in this context)? Was the Spanish poet simply unsuccessful in persevering in his being? And, generally, how is the concept of *conatus* to be understood in the first place, since Spinoza's system does not leave room for an essentialist conception of the self that must be persevered? Furthermore, the idea of *conatus* seems to designate the idea that any individual aims at keeping its relation between motion and rest intact, but what happens when individuals enter larger compositions? If the identity changes as a consequence, can the 'lower' relation between motion and rest (i.e. the lower individual entering the composition of a larger individual) remain intact?

In a lecture Deleuze once said that he does not like the idea of the *conatus*, because 'what [*conatus*] calls an effort to persevere in being is the fact that I exercise my power at each moment, as much as there is in me' (Deleuze, 1980b: no page number). For Deleuze there is no such thing as effort or striving (to persist in being A, to become B) in Spinoza because movement or difference changes the hypothetical ground for effort (an A that must be preserved or a B that must be aspired to) before it can be realised or maintained. This is why Deleuze, in his glossary to the *Ethics* (Deleuze, 1988), does not even allow *conatus* its own entry, he simply refers to 'power'.⁴³

the last line in the *Ethics* alludes ['All things are as difficult as they are rare'], does he imagine a superstitious reader, as it were, peering over the shoulder of the intended reader and thus reading the phrase that appears designed not so much to be heard as to be overheard?' (Montag: 1999: 28)

⁴³ Deleuze is not the only philosopher who struggles with the concept of *conatus* in Spinoza. The deep ecology philosopher Arne Naess, for example, emphasizes that when we adopt the term *conatus* we should always remember that 'no single term is fundamental in [Spinoza's] system' (Naess, 1993: 13), thus emphasizing that *conatus* cannot be taken as the primary force that explains (human) behaviour. Naess, however, does find a place for the concept of *conatus* in his

The example of the Spanish poet, however, is not only interesting in relation to the concept of *conatus*. In the context of this text it is especially interesting how the Spanish poet fits into Spinoza's general thoughts on change and stability. What strikes me in particular is that the identity-change of the Spanish poet is captured in rather negative terms: while he was (presumably) writing wonderful stories before the identity-change, he is now described in far from flattering terms: as an 'adult in child-form'. Furthermore, this change was probably caused by 'a sickness'. Spinoza understands the identity-change as a regression: as a transformation from a life dominated by reason to a life dominated by chance encounters. Hence, in this example the rupture in a previously stable state of affairs is valued negatively. This is crucial in Spinoza's system: stability (and necessity) is valued over change (and chance). Or formulated in non-commonsensical terms: Spinoza associates life with stability while he associates death (or the lack of life) with change.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the relation between thinking and institutionalization. With Cooper and Foucault, I argued that critical thinking cannot simply be seen as taking place outside of institutions. I also promised that Spinoza would go even further by understanding critical thinking and institutionalization as one and the same movement. Now we see how: by means of reason or a love in God, both forms of thinking that go against superstition and imagination, the ethical person becomes more stable; he or she lives the eternal laws of infinite substance whilst being in the world of finite things. (God is stable while the world is volatile.) The externally supported individual makes way for a self-supported individual. In terms of the previous chapter: when institutional thinking makes way for critical thinking, one institutionalizes oneself against the free play of power relations.

Humans are not ontologically privileged above other beings in Spinoza's system. Yet in the *Ethics*, Spinoza does focus predominantly upon the ways human individuals can attain personal freedom. It is only in his political works, where Spinoza starts to question the best

understanding of Spinoza, saying that it is 'a question of maintaining identity, not of strengthening ego or egocentricity' (ibid.). More 'vitalistic' interpretations of *conatus* can also be found (e.g. Garber, 1994; Lefebvre, 2006).

organizational structure for a particular institution: the state. The crucial question then becomes what, exactly, happens to the identity of a human individual when it enters the composition of an institution like the state. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

Thinking synergy

I have been silent about the concept of synergy for some time now. How, exactly, can we say that Spinoza thinks synergy as a substantive rather than as an effect of parts coming together?

It may look like Spinoza's conception of individuality is highly dependent on the concepts of part and whole; that is, on institutional thinking. An individual (a 'whole') is, after all, the composition of *parts*. This terminology, however, is deceiving. Strictly speaking, in Spinoza there is only one whole (i.e. only one self-supported individual), Nature or God. This is paradoxically a whole *without boundaries*. The finite individuals do not contain wholeness. So, even when Spinoza uses the words 'part' and 'whole' in relation to finite individuals, part and wholes don't really exist. As he explains:

“part” and “whole” are not true or real entities, but only “things of reason,” and consequently there are in Nature neither whole nor parts.’
(*Short Treatise*, chapter two [44])

In other words, the ideas of 'part' and 'whole' are abstractions (inadequate ideas) and not common notions. Parts and wholes do not exist because they contain no truth. The truth is *between* parts and wholes: in the relations between them, i.e. in the relations that compose individuals. (We could also say: structure contains truth, and only structure.) If parts and wholes do not exist, can we say that individuals exist? The answer is in the affirmative. In fact, as Balibar (1997: 8) has argued, *only* individuals exist precisely because only that which cannot be *divided* expresses the essence of God or Nature. The literal meaning of individual as undividable applies to Spinoza's individual precisely in the sense that individuals take part in the composition of Nature, which is undividable by definition (i.e. because of its infinitude). In short: finite individuals exist not because of their finitude but because of the infinitude that they express.

An individual cannot be divided into parts without losing something; that is to say, an individual can not be reduced to the sum of its parts. Spinoza's 'individual' is therefore another way of saying 'synergy', even if we don't use the term that way in our daily language (where we understand the term 'individual' to designate an atom or agent). Hence, an individual is not un-dividable in the sense that an atom is undividable. Modes can perfectly well fall apart, but they then cease to exist as that particular singular being.

I would summarize Spinoza's synergetic philosophy as follows: Reason is joyful; joy is the basis for reason! Meet other bodies; enjoy the encounter with other bodies! This is the message of *Ethics*: as a human individual you are ethical when you form common notions, by applying reason to active affections thus forming common notions or by intuition (a direct love in God). As for your body: Spinoza famously maintained that 'nobody as yet has learned from experience what the body can and cannot do' (*Ethics*, IIP2S [280]). It means that one never knows fully of what encounters a body is capable. Bodily existence is not controlled by the mind: body and mind exist simultaneously as the expression of different attributes under the same substance. 'Ethics of the body' means entering larger compositions, to be involved in higher synergies, to be as big as you possible can. This is how Spinoza understands freedom: the bigger relations you are part of the more freedom you have.

Conclusion

For Spinoza thinking is a way to take part in the composition of larger and smaller individuals. As for Foucault, it is a way of saying that by participating in the processes of one's culture, or by setting up an organization, or by thinking about oneself, one's being does not remain untouched. Participation sometimes results in what one might call a displacement of the individuals' centre. It is in this sense that Simondon speaks of 'the non-identity of the being with itself' (Simondon, 1992: 312) meaning that the becoming of an individual is not to be understood as something that simply happens to an individual. This becoming is partly what individuals do to themselves. Human beings *individuate themselves*; they participate in individuation

processes.⁴⁴ Individuals (Spinoza) or subjects (Foucault) constantly exchange parts of their being with the environment and form larger individuals by connecting to other individuals without relying on some mythical centre that remains untouched. This is also what Deleuze points at when he says,

The question ‘What are you becoming?’ is particularly stupid. For as someone becomes, what he is becoming changes as much as he does himself. [...] The wasp and the orchid provide the example. The orchid seems to form a wasp image, but in fact there is a wasp-becoming of the orchid, an orchid-becoming of the wasp, a double capture since ‘what’ each becomes changes no less than ‘that which’ becomes. The wasp becomes part of the orchid’s reproductive apparatus at the same time as the orchid becomes the sexual organ of the wasp. (Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 2-3)

A becoming is continually transforming itself. It is a mistake to think of becoming as a phase in order to reach a goal – what is real is the becoming itself. Becoming in Spinoza paradoxically takes an increasingly stable form. In a sense, becoming in Spinoza is always a becoming-stable. This stability, however, is not to be confused with a stable and actualized world. The stability is not the finite world itself but that which the world expresses. ‘Infinite stability’ can nonetheless be partly realized within the finite world. Such stability takes the form of a particular organizational structure. I will pursue this idea further in the next chapter, but it is useful to keep the radicality of this idea in mind. What Spinoza effectively calls for is ‘an ethics of organizational structure’. The good, for Spinoza, is something we can find actualized as structure, even if only up to a certain degree (that is, not *absolutely*, which is God or Nature itself).

In organization studies, most theorists would argue against the idea of an ethics of organizational structure. Structure is generally seen as something that keeps different elements together, often for functional purposes, but it is the nature of these elements that defines its ethical substance. Organizational structure is merely a form, which can be valued in terms of its effectiveness for a particular purpose, but which can be seen separately from its contents in which good and bad must be

⁴⁴ See Toscano (2006) for an overview of the concept of individuation from Kant until Deleuze, in which a chapter is also devoted to Simondon.

sought. Theories on organizational structure in organization studies normally focus on the effectiveness of particular structures with regards to different contingencies like the nature of the environment (stable, volatile); the size of a corporation (the larger the size, the taller the organizational structure) (e.g. Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967). Form and content is radically separated and when contemporary organization theorists preach flatness and flexibility they generally do so because the environment demands it (e.g. Davis and Meyer, 1999; Kanter, 1990).

As Spinoza and others demonstrate, it is also possible to think of ethics in terms of organizational structure itself. The link between organizational structure and the bad, for example, has sparked interest both within and outside organization studies. Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), for example, makes a connection between the Nazi Holocaust and bureaucracy; arguing not only that the scale of the Holocaust would not have been possible without a particular organizational structure, but also that the evil of the Holocaust is itself linked to bureaucratic forms of organizing (see also ten Bos, 1997). A similar position can be found in Ritzer (1996), who contends that society is threatened by a particular way of organizing.

The following chapter will continue to explore Spinoza's thinking about the idea of an ethical organizational structure. This time, however, in relation to his political philosophy. I will also discuss the contemporary interest in the concept of the multitude, particularly from the point of view of Hardt and Negri's work (e.g. 2000; 2004). Hardt and Negri's project, as I see it, can exactly be understood as a quest for an ethical organizational structure overturning organizational structures associated with oppression, hierarchy and command. The dynamics and consequences of such a position will hence be discussed next.

Chapter 5

Multitude

It is not [...] the purpose of the state to transform men from rational beings into beasts or puppets, but rather to enable them to develop their mental and physical faculties in safety, to use their reason without restraint and to refrain from the strife and the vicious mutual abuse that are prompted by hatred, anger or deceit. Thus the purpose of the state, in reality, is freedom.

– Spinoza (*TTP*, chapter 20 [567])

Introduction

In the *Ethics* Spinoza says, ‘the man who is guided by reason is more free in a state where he lives under a system of law than in solitude where he obeys only himself’ (*Ethics*, IVP73 [357]). In the previous chapter I have discussed how this argument is rooted in the concept of individuality as synergy: we gain freedom by participating in higher synergies, searching for the infinite while simultaneously being bound to a finite composition. It is, however, only in Spinoza’s political philosophy that he starts to ask the question *which* type of state guides reason most fully, i.e. in which state human beings gain maximum freedom. Put differently, Spinoza is looking for a particular organizational structure that ‘enforces’ an ethical life upon its members (or smaller individuals).

Mainly due to the success of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* (2000) and *Multitude* (2004), Spinoza’s political philosophy is today often understood as a philosophy of the ‘power of the multitude’

[*potentia multitudinis*].⁴⁵ This term itself, however, occurs only four times in the *Political Treatise* and almost ‘in passing’ (Terpstra, 1994: 86). It is therefore far from obvious what Spinoza meant by this term. Also in the works of Hardt and Negri the concept of the multitude can hardly be said to have been developed in clear terms. Hardt acknowledged this himself by stating that in *Empire* the meaning of the multitude was only established at a ‘poetic level’ (cited in Mandarini, 2003: 6).⁴⁶ In this chapter I will try to uncover some of the mysteries and paradoxes that surround the concept of the multitude, both in Spinoza and in Hardt and Negri. The underlying idea of this reading is that the concept of the multitude functions on a plane of philosophical concepts that attempts to understand the good in terms of the structure of organizations.

This chapter is structured as follows. I start with a discussion of some of the general ideas in Spinoza’s *Theological-Political Treatise* and the *Political Treatise*. Then, I will introduce the concept of the multitude in light of this discussion and identify some of the problems that Spinoza encountered in his political philosophy. Next, I will explore the concept of the multitude in Hardt and Negri’s works against the background of Spinoza’s philosophy. Here, the aim is not to point towards misrepresentations of Spinoza in Hardt and Negri, or in Negri’s

⁴⁵ The contemporary revival of the concept of the multitude probably finds its origin in Negri’s book on Spinoza, *The Savage Anomaly*, first published in 1981. A French translation followed a year later with no less than three introductions by foremost French Spinozists (Balibar, Deleuze and Matheron) and an English translation by Michael Hardt followed in 1991 (Negri, 1991). The concept of the multitude gained further popularity during the nineties. Since Hardt and Negri’s bestseller *Empire* (2000), its successor *Multitude* (2004), and Paolo Virno’s *A Grammar of the Multitude* (2004), the multitude has become an important concept in political philosophy. Furthermore, in protest movements it has become an important formulation for self-identification. One might argue that the revival of the multitude is similar to the revival of the nineteenth century concept of civil society in the 1980s and 1990s. Both have been identified as *the* political force of resistance for our times and both concepts, it might be argued, lack clear referents. See Keane (1998) for a discussion of the revival of the concept of civil society as well as a discussion of its ambiguous meanings.

⁴⁶ Negri, on the other hand, in a discussion with Alex Callinicos, has denied this ‘poetic’ nature of the multitude: ‘the name “multitude” is not a poetic notion, but a class concept’ (Negri, 2003b; cf. Negri 2002; 2003a).

individual writings on Spinoza (Negri; 1991; Negri, 2004a),⁴⁷ but to understand Hardt and Negri's multitude as reworking a Spinozist philosophical problem. I conclude with some observations about the current revival of the concept of the multitude, both in philosophical thinking and popular culture.

Sad and joyful states

The *Ethics*, as discussed in the previous chapter, teaches us how to become wise and how to become free by means of reason or love in God. In real life, however, very few people read the *Ethics* and even fewer people understand it. And even if someone did fully understand the nature of God, as a finite mode he or she would not be able to always act accordingly:

[M]an is necessarily always subject to passive emotions, and that he follows the common order of Nature, and obeys it, and accommodates himself to it as far as the nature of things demand. (*Ethics*, IVP4C [325])

Due to their finite nature, human beings will never establish lasting forms of happiness; they will never manage to live completely according to reason. It is precisely against this background that Spinoza's political work must be seen.⁴⁸ The difficult question that Spinoza addresses is what to do about the sad people in the world; not only for their own sake but also for the sake of others (because of the sad encounters they provoke). Hence, the *Theological-Political Treatise* and the (unfinished) *Political Treatise* are practical books in the sense that they attempt to deal with the question how larger compositions can be established even if people do not spontaneously agree with one another. As Terpstra

⁴⁷ For critiques of Negri's reading of Spinoza, see Matheron (1982); Terpstra (1994); Walther (1990).

⁴⁸ In this chapter I read Spinoza's political works as a continuation of the ontology he has developed in the *Ethics*. Hence, I understand states as higher individuals. This understanding is in line with the interpretation of philosophers such as Matheron (1969) and Negri (1991; 2004a). There is, however, some debate whether such an approach is justified. In some other interpretations, of a liberal bent in particular, the idea of the state as an individual is denied (e.g. Den Uyl, 1983; Rice, 1990).

(1993: 102) puts it, Spinoza wrestles with the question ‘What should be my attitude towards people who have insufficient reason or none at all?’ Or formulated in terms of an institutional ethics: Can we find an organizational structure in which people increase their power in God even if they don’t initiate this increase in power themselves?

The *Theological-Political Treatise* and the *Political Treatise* differ substantially from each other. In the *Theological-Political Treatise* one can still feel the influence of Hobbes’ contractarianism, at least in terms of the language that Spinoza uses. As I shall discuss shortly, the central problem is captured in terms of obedience. Spinoza here attempts to think of a state where sad people are ‘forced’ to behave according to the dictates of reason or a love in God. It is in this way that Spinoza ‘advises’ on the best way to organize a joyful state. In the *Political Treatise* the problem changes. Here Spinoza attempts to extend the ontology of the *Ethics* to his political theory as vigorously as he possibly can. Furthermore, Spinoza speaks of the possibility of an ‘absolute democracy’; a ‘Godly’ democracy. There is no longer any room for Hobbesian contractarianism. Unfortunately Spinoza did not finish the *Political Treatise* because of his untimely death. He nonetheless left us with a very stimulating text; a text, however, full of paradoxes and contradictions.⁴⁹

Obedience in the name of reason

In the *Theological-Political Treatise* Spinoza effectively argues that sad people need to obey in order to prevent them from doing harm to other people: their bad encounters need to be put to a stop. It is precisely state and religion that are designed to mimic reason.⁵⁰ We obey the state

⁴⁹ One can, however, also wonder if Spinoza would have finished the *Political Treatise* if he had lived longer. As some commentators have suggested (e.g. Balibar, 1994), the fact that the *Political Treatise* remained unfinished might also have something to do with theoretical problems that Spinoza did not know how to solve.

⁵⁰ In relation to religion, Spinoza says: ‘[S]cripture has brought very great comfort to mankind. For all men without exception are capable of obedience, while there are only very few – in proportion to the whole of humanity – who acquire a virtuous disposition under the guidance of reason alone. Thus, did we not

because the state is more reasonable than we are individually, which is also the idea behind the citation with which I started this chapter:

It is not, I repeat, the purpose of the state to transform men from rational beings into beasts or puppets, but rather to enable them to develop there their mental and physical faculties in safety, to use their reason without restraint and to refrain from the strife and the vicious mutual abuse that are prompted by hatred, anger or deceit. Thus the purpose of the state, in reality, is freedom. (*TTP*, chapter 20 [567])

By *forcing* people to obey the state, however, is Spinoza effectively not arguing for a form of oppression? In legitimating the use of force, Spinoza distinguishes three different relations of obedience, which he characterizes as the difference between the slave, the son and the subject:

A slave is one who has to obey his master's commands which look only to the interest of him who commands; a son is one who by his father's command does what is to his own good; a subject is one who, by command of the sovereign power, acts for the common good, and therefore for his own good also. (*TTP*, chapter 16 [531])

State and religion, aided by rhetorics (or marketing), are needed to make sad people obey reason. Ideally, sad people trade their personal right for the reasonable right of the state. Because of their lack of reason they will not see that this is in their own best interest. This is why they are to be forced to obey. According to this idea, the state is not a spontaneous organization: it is the product of the conscious design of (ideally!) reasonable people, each attempting to think of different strategies to 'trick' a population into reasonable behaviour. It is in this context interesting to note that the style of writing that we encounter in the *Theological-Political Treatise* is very different from the geometrical method that Spinoza deployed for the *Ethics* (see Yovel, 1985: 316-137). The *Theological-Political Treatise* is written in a rhetorical style with frequent use of metaphors. It is as if Spinoza is trying to perform that which he prescribes: an obedience not to reason itself, which we cannot fully reach in any durable way, but to a pragmatic device that takes the place of reason in the best possible way.

have this testimony of Scripture, the salvation of nearly all man would be in doubt.' (*TTP*, chapter 15 [526]; see also chapter 14)

Whilst the type of obedience of the subject might offer an elegant solution to the problem of sad people, the problem now becomes how to distinguish sad states from reasonable states (and sad religion from reasonable religion). After all, some statesmen and priests ask for obedience out of sadness themselves: they control us by their own fear and illusions. Human individuals who are not sufficiently capable of living in accordance with reason will not be able to distinguish the sad form of the state from its reasonable alternative. Hence Spinoza famously writes:

[T]he supreme mystery of despotism, its prop and stay, is to keep men in a state of deception, and with the specious title of religion to cloak the fear by which they must be held in check, so that they will fight for their servitude as if for salvation, and count it no shame, but the highest honour, to spend their blood and their lives for the glorification of one man. (*TTP*, Preface [389-390])

Absolute democracy, power and right

Part of the reason for the paradoxes and contradictions that we encounter in the *Political Treatise* is that Spinoza constantly shifts between different aims of his text: 1) a positivistic account of the nature of states; 2) a pragmatic account of the question how to design the best state possible; and 3) an ontological exposition of the absolute state. Here we can recognize a strong similarity to the *Ethics* in which Spinoza simultaneously develops an ontology, an epistemology, an ethics and (mostly by implication) a politics. While the Spinoza of the *Ethics* (quite miraculously, in my view) appears to find some consistent logic which combines disciplines that are mostly seen as incompatible, this consistency is lacking in the *Political Treatise*. As Balibar (1994: 3) writes (in a slightly different context), ‘It seems to me [...] that what [Spinoza] is heading toward, or what we head toward when we undergo the experience of reading him and attempt to think in the concepts he offers us, is a complex of contradictions without a genuine solution.’ I also agree with Balibar when he argues how these contradictions are precisely what makes Spinoza interesting for us today, ‘conferring on his metaphysics a critical power’ (ibid). In my reading of the *Political Treatise* I will focus on those sections that are most in line with the idea of an institutional ethics and which are also most important for Hardt

and Negri's contemporary version of the multitude, as discussed later in this chapter. In particular, the focus will be placed upon the concepts of absolute democracy, power and right.

In the *Political Treatise*, Spinoza aims to find a theoretical formulation for the state-form that is based on reason alone. He finds it in the idea of democracy and more specifically in the concept of 'absolute democracy'. Absolute democracy creates a great synergistic state where sadness, in principle, would be reduced to zero. As mentioned before, however, Spinoza died before he could finish the book. Worse still, he died after having written only a few sentences in the chapter called 'democracy'. As a consequence, we remain in doubt about his concrete ideas about absolute democracy. We do know, however, that Spinoza's famous equation of power and right plays an important part in these ideas. He expresses this equation as follows:

If two men come together and join forces, they have more power over Nature, and consequently more right, than either one alone; and the greater the number who form a union in this way, the more right they will together possess. (*TP*, II, 13 [686])

We can see a clear link to the *Ethics*: Spinoza could argue that a free man 'lives under a system of law' because the rule of law is essentially a positive concept (as it designates the situation where a human being forms part of a larger composition), whereas the rule of law was clearly a negative concept in the political philosophy of Spinoza's contemporaries (most notably Hobbes). The problem of the Spanish poet returns in the *Political Treatise* precisely at this point. An individual neither defends nor surrenders a ground for action when entering a state relation. His identity shifts beyond identifying moments. Consequently there is no social contract to break. In the *Political Treatise* there is no 'free rider problem' as there is in Hobbes, for the atoms, the deciding subjects, are not atoms at all. Every decision is a decision of nature as a whole, which re-establishes identity or subjectivity. Just as *conatus* cannot limit or enable power (because a mode is always a manner of being, and therefore an expression of power itself), right cannot limit or enable power (or: right cannot hinder *conatus*, and *conatus* cannot be against the rule of law: both *conatus* and right are relations of power). Alexandre Matheron summarizes Spinoza's concept of right as follows:

For Spinoza right is quite precise power, and this should be taken literally. To say that I have the right to perform an action is strictly equivalent to saying that I desire to perform it, that I have the physical and intellectual capacities to perform it, that no external obstacle prevents me from performing it, and that consequently I actually perform it. (Matheron, 1997: 212)

The multitude as natural right

Spinoza's concept of right brings us to the concept of the multitude. Before he introduces this notion, Spinoza (*TP*, II, 16 [687]) says: 'When men hold their rights in common and are all guided, as it were, by one mind, [...] that each of them has that much less right the more he is exceeded in power by the others collectively.' That is to say, when an individual enters the composition of the state, his or her right is defined by the collective right of the state. Right is here not transferred but changes 'naturally'. Spinoza continues:

This right, which is defined by the power of the multitude [*potentia multitudinis*], is usually called a state, and it is possessed absolutely by whoever has charge of affairs of state, namely, he who makes, interprets, and repeals laws, fortifies cities, making decisions regarding peace and war, and so forth. If this charge belongs to a council composed of the multitude in general, then the state is called a democracy; if the council is composed of certain chosen members, the state is called an aristocracy; and if the management of affairs of state and consequently the sovereignty is in the hands of one man, then the state is called a monarchy. (*TP*, II, 17 [687], translation modified⁵¹)

This first definition of the power of the multitude is a neutral description: it does not say that the power of the multitude is necessarily a positive force. The power of the multitude can diminish the right of an individual when it exercises inadequate ideas. Understood in this sense, the multitude is always an ambiguous concept: a source of hazardous forces as well as a force crucial to freedom and the just state. Indeed, Spinoza knew the dangers of the

⁵¹ Shirley translates *potential multitudinis* with 'power of the people'. However, for many contemporary philosophers (most notably Hardt and Negri) the distinction between 'the multitude' and 'the people' in Spinoza is of crucial importance. In these readings it naturally becomes essential to translate *multitudinis* with 'multitude' instead of Shirley's 'people'.

multitude first hand. Two of his political friends, the brothers Johan and Cornelis de Witt, were brutally murdered (literally cut into pieces) by an angry mob after The House of Orange came to power in 1672.⁵² Hence, just as any human individual can be a barbarian, so too can the multitude be barbarous. There is nothing romantic about the concept of the multitude as such. It simply says: living in a state means that your power or right coincides with the collective movements of this state.

Strictly speaking, the multitude cannot be oppressed, not even by a dictatorial regime, since every form of government is dependent on the power of the multitude, not just democracy. Chairs are given by the multitude (TP, IV, 6 [698]). Again we see a strong contrast with Hobbes' contractarianism. In Hobbes individuals enter a composition with the civil state to the cost of their practice of natural rights. For Spinoza there is no such difference: the laws of the earth will always prevail. There is nothing outside of Nature: a state is constituted by natural right (TP, III, 3 [690]). The state has the right to do whatever is in its power. This, however, does not mean that the supreme authority can do whatever it likes. As Spinoza explains through a rather grotesque example, it still needs to obey the laws of nature:

If (...) I say that I have the right to do whatever I like to this table, I am hardly likely to mean that I have the right to make this table eat grass. Similarly, although we say that men are not in control of their own right but are subject to the right of the commonwealth, while they depend not on themselves, but on the commonwealth, we do not mean that men lose their human nature and assume another nature, with the result that the commonwealth has the right to make us fly, or – and this is just as impossible – to make men regard as honourable things that move them to ridicule and disgust. [...] For if the rulers or ruler of the state runs drunk or naked with harlots through the streets, acts on the stage, openly violates or holds in contempt those laws he himself has enacted, it is no more possible for him to preserve the dignity of the sovereignty than for something to be and not to be at the same time. Then again, to slaughter subjects, to despoil them, to ravish maidens and the like turns fear into indignation, and consequently the civil order into a condition of war. (TP, IV, 4[697])

⁵² After this horror, or so the story goes, Spinoza told Leibniz that he was about to get himself killed by hanging a sign at the place of the murder saying *ultimi barbarorum* (the worst of the barbarians). He was just prevented by his landlord.

The degree of indignation defines the power of the state (TP, III, 9 [693]); too much indignation gives occasion for many to conspire together, leading to a revolution in the extreme.⁵³ For this reason revolution is always right, by that very fact the right of the sovereign disappears.⁵⁴

Spinoza's analysis, however, goes further than this positivistic explanation of the power of multitude and the right of the state. In the third chapter of the *Political Treatise*, he writes:

[J]ust as in a state of Nature [...] the man who is guided by reason is most powerful and most in control of his own right; similarly the state that is based on reason and directed by reason is most powerful and most in control of its own right. For the right of the state is determined by the power of the multitude [*potentia multitudinis*] that is guided, as it were, by a single mind. But this union of minds could in no way be conceived unless the chief aim of the state is identical with that which sound reason teaches us is the good for all men. (TP, III, 7 [692], translation modified as in footnote 51)

This is a rather puzzling passage. Firstly, it seems to contradict the 'positivistic' idea that the power of the multitude can be based upon unsound reason. Contrary to the earlier definition, Spinoza now asserts that the multitude as 'a single mind' must necessarily be established according to reason alone. Secondly, as Terpstra (1994: 87) wonders, it is not clear why Spinoza feels compelled to use the phrase 'as it were' [*veluti*]: Is it not *actually* possible for the multitude to form one mind? Considered from the point of view of the *Ethics*, we can see why Spinoza argues for this: the relations that constitute an individual (irrespective of its size) have a place in the infinite organization of God

⁵³ It should however be mentioned that Spinoza never uses the term 'revolution', probably because 'the revolution' in the seventeenth century was synonymous with Cromwell, 'the betrayed revolution' (Deleuze, 1980a). Spinoza, however, was probably not opposed to revolutionary spirit; he even drew a picture of himself as Masaniello, a famous Neapolitan revolutionary at the time. Having said that, more conservative Spinoza-scholars (e.g. Smith, 1997) prefer to interpret Spinoza's *conatus* as a call for stability against revolutionary forces, for which evidence can also be found.

⁵⁴ This is an argument contra Hobbes, but especially contra Grotius who grounded his conception of international law in the idea that agreements should under no circumstances be broken (*pacta sunt servanda*).

or Nature. Hence, they can only be based upon reason. At the same time, however, one can only conclude that *actual* states are not made out of a harmonious composition of relations: they always contain 'holes'; smaller individuals that do not match one another. This should come as no surprise because human individuals cannot act on the basis of reason alone. Yet in the *Political Treatise* Spinoza seems unwilling to accept this fact. He seems destined to argue for an infinite ideal ('absolute democracy') that can be actualized in the finite world of modes.

More contradictions

In the *Ethics*, relations always evolve from God or Nature. If we had an infinite mind, we could see that everything forms one harmonious whole. However, due to the finite nature of bodies in the world and the finite ideas parallel to these modes, we experience sad encounters. In a sad encounter we fail to see the necessity and by that very fact our power in God (or expression of right) diminishes. In the opposite situation, i.e. when a relation is formed, the nature of this bond necessarily corresponds to an adequate idea. That is to say: that which keeps an individual together is reasonable.

It is precisely at this point that we encounter a second important contradiction in the *Political Treatise*. In the *Political Treatise* Spinoza identifies two possible adhesive relations keeping the multitude together, hope and fear (TP, II, 10 [685-686]). That is, the sovereign will only stay in power as long as the multitude is kept together by subjection to fear or promises of a better future. It is obvious that fear designates a situation of sadness, corresponding to an inadequate idea. At first sight it should therefore not come as a surprise that the ideal state, or 'completely absolute state' (TP, II, 1 [682]), is not kept together by fear but by hope:

a free multitude [*multitudo*] is led more by hope than by fear, while a subjugated multitude is led more by fear than by hope; the former seeks to engage in living, the latter simply avoids death. (TP, V, 6 [700], translation modified as in footnote 46)

However, while hope is certainly a more positive concept than fear, can it truly be understood as an ‘engagement with living’? Or if it indeed seeks to engage with living, where is the life of the multitude itself? The very definition of multitude in terms of hope makes it incompatible with the ontological idea of absolute democracy, i.e. democracy as absolute as God himself. While hope and fear certainly are important in any formation of community, these concepts are rather strange in Spinoza’s ontology: I understand both fear and hope as *affections* corresponding to inadequate ideas since they are in need of something which is not located in the thing itself.⁵⁵

A third, and final, contradiction will form the conclusion to this part of the chapter. Although in the *Ethics* (particularly in part V, which deals with the way to freedom) the free man is said to live under rule of law, at least one passage in the *Political Treatise* seems to contradict this idea:

[...] if the safety is dependent on some man’s good faith, and its affairs cannot be properly administered unless those responsible for them are willing to act in good faith, that state will lack all stability. If it is to endure, its government must so be organized that its ministers cannot be induced to betray their trust or to act basely, whether they are guided by reason or by passion. [...] Freedom of spirit or strength of mind is the virtue of a private citizen: the virtue of the state is its security. (*TP*, I, 6 [682])

What is puzzling in this passage is how Spinoza all of sudden appears to introduce two types of virtue. In Spinoza’s synergistic system there can be no room for different natures of virtue: the virtue of the human individual does not differ in nature from the virtue of larger individuals. The difference is that higher individuals express virtue more powerfully; or, in terms of the *Political Treatise*, they have more right.

⁵⁵ To my knowledge Deleuze never properly addressed the place of hope in Spinoza’s political philosophy. He would probably dislike it just as much as he disliked the concept of *conatus*. Both *conatus* and hope are Spinozian concepts that do seem to fit his ontology because they both contradict the idea that in Spinoza there is no such thing as ‘a lack of...’.

Hardt and Negri's multitude

Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2000) is written in a very accessible style, aiming at a large audience/multitude (which it has found). This is even truer for its successor *Multitude* (2004). Both books have been criticized for their simplicity (see Passavant and Dean, 2004), for example for taking the philosophers that the books draw upon (most notably Spinoza, Deleuze and Foucault) too lightly. Some of the real-life examples that Hardt and Negri bring forward as proof for the existence of a contemporary multitude are also not always convincing. A notorious example is found in *Empire* where Hardt and Negri suggest that the contemporary multitude is in need of a body 'that is incapable of adapting to family life, to factory discipline, to the regulations of traditional sex life, and so forth', finding some evidence in the realization of this body in 'piercings and tattoos' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 216). As Brown (2004: 473) aptly puts it: this is a 'rather unlovely passage'.

While we frequently encounter unlovely examples and simplistic representations of philosophical thought in Hardt and Negri, it would be a mistake to discard their thought on this basis. Hardt and Negri are bright philosophers; Negri has demonstrated a deep and original understanding of Spinoza (Negri, 1991; 2004a), and Hardt of Deleuze (Hardt, 1993). Their sometimes simplistic shortcuts follow a conscious choice, namely the price to pay for a large audience. In this sense it could be said that Hardt and Negri take Spinoza's style of the *Theological-Political Treatise* to the extreme: the rhetorical effects of the text receive priority over a nuanced exposition of the ideas that are articulated. This is also what Brown points at when he concludes that 'the Spinozist insight which animates [the unlovely passage] is nevertheless worth clinging to' (Brown, 2004: 473). By reading *Empire* against a Spinozist background, Brown even finds evidence for a 'second, shadow text that exists alongside the published *Empire* and which may be reconstituted through a kind of textual reverse engineering.' (ibid: 474) It is precisely such a textual reverse engineering, on the basis Spinoza's philosophical problems, which I also will undertake in the concluding sections of this chapter.

Institutional ethics

As I see it, central to Hardt and Negri's project is the Spinozist search for institutional ethics or, put differently, for an organizational structure that captures the good. For example, in *Multitude* they write:

The distributed network structure provides the model for an absolutely democratic organization that corresponds to the dominant forms of economic and social production and is also the most powerful weapon against the ruling power structure. (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 88)

Here they clearly suggest that the good in itself can be recognized in structure, affirmed by their quite astounding comment that, 'the Colombian drug cartels and al-Qaeda ... may look like networks from the perspective of counterinsurgency, but in fact they are highly centralized, with traditional vertical chains of command' (2004: 89) – a 'rather unlovely' passage indeed. Despite the fact that they partly correct themselves a few pages later when they say that 'the fact that a movement is organized as a network or swarm does not guarantee that it is peaceful or democratic' and 'we have to look not only at the form but also at the content' (2004: 93), at times Hardt and Negri clearly suggest a direct relation between ethics and organizational structure. Considering Spinoza's influence on Negri (Negri, 1991; 2004a), this should not come as a surprise.

In a sense, Hardt and Negri very much start where Spinoza ended. Their project of the multitude is trying to resolve the exact same tension that Spinoza did not manage to overcome: the tension between an infinite form of organizational structure that can be considered good and the implementation of this structure in the finite world. Or, in Negri's terminology, the distinction between a structure based on constituent power (power from below) and one based on constituted power (power from above) (e.g. Negri, 1991). The key question for Hardt and Negri is whether it is possible to actualize absolute democracy, i.e. a democracy without hierarchy or without living abstractions (in terms of Spinoza: without abstracting freedom from individuals). They are looking for democracy without a state, or an organizational structure that is not based on the state-form. What we need, they say, is a theory of organization which described what to a certain extent is already happening:

This is the logic of the multitude [...]: a theory of organization based on the freedom of singularities that converge into the production of the common. Long live movement! Long live carnival! Long live the common! (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 211)

A Spinozist plane of concepts

Hardt and Negri arguably take their four most important concepts from Spinoza: the multitude itself, but also the concepts of absolute democracy, affect and the common (partly through Deleuze's interpretation of these concepts). Unsurprisingly, then, one can recognize many profoundly Spinozist moments in Hardt and Negri's thinking.

Like Spinoza, at the heart of Hardt and Negri's ideas is the attempt to overcome the alternative between the single and the plural. For Hardt and Negri the idea of the multitude, understood as the production of the common through singularities, is based on the insight that 'the production of the common is neither directed by some central point of command or intelligence nor is it the result of a spontaneous harmony among individuals, but rather it emerges in the space between, in the social space of communication.' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 222). Or as they also phrase it:

The multitude designates an active social subject, which acts on the basis of what the singularities share in common. The multitude is an internally different, multiple social subject whose constitution and action is based not on identity or unity (or, much less, indifference) but on what it has in common. (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 100)

As we have seen, Spinoza's ideal of the state, too, was directed against the idea of the abstract in reality. The problem is that the people are too abstract: they cannot form concrete thoughts (or common notions) in their own power. It is for this reason that they need to be helped by means of the reasonable state-form. Hardt and Negri's multitude is also against abstraction: against the idea of the identity of the people under the state, or the idea of the 'uniformity' of the masses. In fact, they use this part of Spinoza's argument in order to criticize the traditional state-forms:

The multitude cannot be sovereign. For this same reason, the democracy that Spinoza calls absolute cannot be considered a form of government in the traditional sense because it does not reduce the plurality of everyone to the unitary figure of sovereignty. From the strictly practical, functional point of view, the tradition tells us, multiplicities cannot make decisions for society and are thus not relevant for politics proper. (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 330)

Spinoza maintains that the contradictions and sadness that we experience in daily life are based on inadequate knowledge and do not exist from the point of view of infinite substance. Similarly, Hardt and Negri maintain that 'these determinations [of a collective will], even though they are ontologically solid, remain contradictory' (Hardt and Negri, 1994: 276).

Like Spinoza, Hardt and Negri also attempt to think of absolute democracy as a durable institution, emphasizing the fluid line from ontology to politics: 'ontology is the development of democracy and democracy is a line of conduct, a practice of ontology.' (1994: 288). The multitude, as they envision it, inscribes our beings and as such it will stabilize itself in a 'profound institutional moment' (1994). The multitude, in this sense, is much more than simply a theory of organization. It is rather to be understood as a 'theory' of organization that we live:

When Spinoza defines the concept as a common notion, he affirms it as a construction of a means of knowing reality, in nominalist terms, but he also recognizes in this logical structure the path that leads to a growth of being as an assemblage, a project. (Hardt and Negri, 1994: 287)

Hardt and Negri, however, also attempt to break with Spinoza in two ways. Firstly, they are not too happy with Spinoza's conclusion in part five of the *Ethics*, where his portrait of the 'free man' is too far away from political action.⁵⁶ In *Empire*, they say:

[I]n this final part of the *Ethics*, this utopia has only abstract and indefinite relation to reality. At times, setting out from this high level of ontological development, Spinoza's thought does attempt to

⁵⁶ See Negri (2004a), however, for Negri's more recent attempt to reconcile himself with the fifth part of the *Ethics*.

confront reality, but the ascetic proposal halts, stumbles, and disappears in the mystical attempt to reconcile the language of reality and divinity. (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 186)

Secondly, they are not too excited about the idea of obedience in politics, which is a central concept in Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*. Obedience, for Hardt and Negri, is just another form of hierarchical control while what they are looking for is control without forms of vertical command. What they try to establish in *Empire* and *Multitude* is to put Spinoza's absolute democracy in the actual world *with* our consent. In doing so, they do not attempt to find the common in thought (in common notions), but in the relations of workers as they exist today. This is the role that 'affective labour' or 'immaterial labour' plays, 'labour that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 108; see also Hardt, 1999). Affective labour, in other words, is what produces the common today.

Amor humanitatis

Considered in the light of Spinoza's conceptual framework, have Hardt and Negri truly found an institutional ethics in the logic of the multitude? Though much more 'textual reverse engineering' can be undertaken, I don't think they have. While I have little problems with the idea of an ontological 'productive' multitude (substance in Spinoza), I do not see how it actualizes its virtual powers in an absolute democracy. Hardt and Negri's claim that the multitude is already happening is not very convincing when it is demonstrated by caricatures of 'real' (Intifada and Zapatista) and 'fake' (Al-Qaeda) network structures. Some of the contradictions that characterize Spinoza's *Political Treatise* also resurface in Hardt and Negri's texts. For example, to me it remains unclear what it is that holds the actual multitude together. The concept of affective labour is in this context interesting but also rather vague. The simplistic reading of this concept, as an increase in the amount of work in which intellect and emotions play a part, does not account for much since obedience – a key enemy concept for Hardt and Negri – manifests itself, not only in the body, but also in mind and soul. I have not yet been able to connect to a

‘deeper’ (more Spinozist?) understanding of the concept of affective labour.

In *Multitude*, Hardt and Negri also present us with another, rather surprising, explanation: that which holds the multitude together, they say, is ultimately a love for humanity. They speak of an *amor humanitatis*, which is best expressed by ‘the patriotism of those with no nation’ (2004: 51). Here it is difficult to read Hardt and Negri through Spinoza’s concept of love in God. The concept of love of God is firstly very far away from a love of mankind, as mankind does not have autonomous existence. In fact, the concept of love does not have an explicit function in Spinoza’s political philosophy at all; it is not linked to the possibility of an actualized political structure. Hardt and Negri nevertheless do seem to suggest, in a couple of pages in *Multitude* at least, that the network structure is based on *amor humanitatis*. But does this not bring us back where we started? If I am correct in understanding Hardt and Negri to say that human individuals form a multitude when they, *separately* from each other, love mankind, then the foundation for the goodness that Hardt and Negri are looking for does not consist in the network structure itself but in a loving that finds its (natural?) location in individual human beings.

Conclusion

The problems identified in this chapter, in both Spinoza’s and Hardt and Negri’s political ontology, should by no means be understood as a critique of their concepts, as a call to discard their ‘para-sense’ as inconsistent nonsense. In this chapter I hope to have shown that Spinoza and Hardt and Negri have created philosophical problems of organization which is well worth exploring.

Fashionable definitions of the multitude, such as ‘an endless colourful array of self-organized groups converging for some purposes and going their separate way for others’ (Graeber, 2002: no page number), celebrate the idea of the ‘revolution-at-work’. The multitude is conceived as a set of political events, best demonstrated by recent anti-corporate activism in Seattle, Genua and other places. Spinoza himself, in contrast, quite explicitly celebrated the stable features of a democracy constituted by the multitude:

a commonwealth can take precautions against being subjugated against another commonwealth. This is what a man in a state of nature cannot do, seeing that he is every day overcome by sleep, frequently by sickness or mental infirmity, and eventually by old age. And besides these he is exposed to other troubles against which a commonwealth can render itself secure. (*TP*, III, 11 [694])

Unsurprisingly, in the fashion of the multitude the philosophical problems that Spinoza and Hardt and Negri create are almost completely lost. Hence the cover of the English publication of the *Multitude* (Hardt and Negri, 2005) reads in screaming letters:

JOIN THE MANY. JOIN THE EMPOWERED. JOIN THE...
MULTITUDE

Such a call seems very far away from a philosophy of organization. One does not join a philosophy of organization. Yet one might be affected by the concepts that it creates.

Chapter 6

Miracle

The dynamics of singularities always results from a small miracle, encounters that may trigger transformations that are no longer singular, since they can upset the entire planet.

– Félix Guattari (1995: 33-34)

Introduction

The link between organization and wonder is nothing new. Adam Smith's 'invisible hand', the miraculous force behind the free market that generates common wealth by the selfish behaviour of individual agents, is perhaps the most famous example. Nonetheless, management literature and organization studies seem to be increasingly fascinated by the new. Management gurus as well as academics in the field of innovation management tell us that we live in a super dynamic world where what's new today is old tomorrow. Our organizations therefore need creative agents who will come up with new ideas for new contexts or even create new contexts themselves (the creation of needs, a product that changes the world). Only the new will fit the new. The spontaneous new, the new that cannot be attributed to an agent, must be met by the creative new, which always finds its origin in human agency. Innovation management is therefore either about creating the organization where the spontaneous new can easily be absorbed, or creating the internal environment in which creative agents can prosper. It is about finding a balance between innovative control and a deliberate, or 'controlled', loss of control with the purpose of letting the new in (e.g. Brown and Duguid, 1991; Dougherty, 1999).

The idea that we live in a 'wild' universe, a universe that is capable of reinventing itself, is as accepted within the realm of management and organization as it is in the world of art or in theology. In Rosabeth Moss Kanter's *When Giants Learn to Dance*, for example, we find the comparison of contemporary management experience to the croquet game in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*:

In that fictional game, nothing remains stable for very long, because everything is alive and changing around the player—an all-too-real condition for many managers. The mallet Alice uses is a flamingo, which tends to lift its head and face in another direction just as Alice tries to hit the ball. The ball, in turn, is a hedgehog, another creature with a mind of its own. Instead of lying there waiting for Alice to hit it, the hedgehog unrolls, gets up, moves to another part of the court, and sits down again. The wickets are card soldiers, ordered around by the Queen of Hearts, who changes the structure of the game seemingly at whim by barking out an order to the wickets to reposition themselves around the court. (Kanter, 1989: 19)

For Kanter and virtually all contemporary management gurus, the key to success in business is acting rapidly on the way the market is reinventing itself. Hence 'if the new game of business is indeed like Alice-in-Wonderland croquet, then winning it requires faster action, more creative manoeuvring, more flexibility, and closer partnerships with employees and customers than was typical in the traditional corporate bureaucracy' (ibid: 20).

The interest for the new is shared by many disciplines. There are, however, many concepts of the new. Hence what innovation management designates by the new is not the same as the newness or originality of a piece of art or the radical new beginning in the resurrection of Christ. In this chapter I will follow the questioning of the new in philosophy. I am particularly interested in the relation between organization and *the absolutely new*; the new that is here today but that was literally impossible yesterday, or the new that will happen tomorrow but that is impossible today. In other words: the new that cannot be deduced from history.

I will address three problems. Firstly, the idea of the absolutely new itself: Is there such a thing as the absolutely new and if so, can we speak of the existence of the absolutely new? Or, to put it simply, *do miracles*

exist? I will answer the question affirmatively by means of short journeys through classical, modern and contemporary philosophy. Secondly, I will address the relation between miracles and organization: Are miracles organized? Do miracles *organize* themselves? Do miracles organize *themselves*? Thirdly, the relation between miracles and organization studies: Is business about facilitating miracles? Do we find miracles in organization studies?

Philosophy and wonder

As is widely known, philosophy and wonder have a long history.⁵⁷ Both Plato and Aristotle understood wonder as the starting point of philosophy (see Plato, 1952, *Theatetus*, 115d). In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle says:

[I]t is because of wondering that philosophers first began to philosophize and do so now. First, they wondered at the *difficulties* close at hand; then, advancing little by little, they discussed difficulties also about greater matters, for example, about the changing attributes of the Moon and of the Sun and of the stars, and about the generation of the universe. (*Metaphysics*, 982b 9-16 [1966: 15])

For Aristotle, wonder marks the beginning of philosophy because it makes us curious. Wondering thus drives us in our search for the truth; it marks the beginning for curiosity-driven research which hopefully progresses into stable knowledge about the world we inhabit. We encounter something similar in the philosophy of Descartes. Descartes called wonder the first of the passions, ‘a sudden surprise of the soul which makes it tend to consider attentively those objects which seem to it rare and extraordinary’ (Descartes, cited in Daston and Park, 2001: 13). Once objects have our attention, we can start our search for truth; we can begin our philosophical investigations.

⁵⁷ The concept of miracle is closely related to the concept of wonder. While one can make a conceptual distinction, in this chapter I will consider the concept of ‘a miracle’ to be synonymous with the concept of ‘a wonder’. This has the advantage of bringing the verb ‘to wonder’ to attention, which is radically different from the only activity that is normally associated with miracles, namely to *produce* miracles.

While I acknowledge, with Aristotle and Descartes, the importance of wonder for philosophy I do not understand wonder as a mere starting point. While the ‘surprise of the soul’ of which Descartes speaks might be useful to attain a ‘higher’ goal (i.e. that of gaining adequate knowledge about the actual world) it also has an intrinsic value. In fact, philosophy itself is partially aimed at wondering rather than initiated by wonder. Deleuze and Guattari, as discussed in chapter one, are very clear about this: the experience of wonder overwhelms us when we move away from the abstractions that accompany us in the world of opinion and common sense. It is only when we move away from opinion and common sense, towards what they call the plane of immanence that we start to wonder and this indeed is philosophical activity itself.

From this perspective we might also understand Nietzsche on the starting point of philosophical activity. Unlike Aristotle’s suggestion that philosophy starts with wonder, in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1999) Nietzsche asserts that philosophy rather begins in horror. I would indeed argue that philosophy finds its *motivation* in horror: in the horror, or discontent, of facing abstract completeness of the incomplete ‘things’ that we encounter in our daily lives. This marks the ethical or political motivation of philosophy. Similar to the idea that philosophy is suspended between chaos and opinion (finding relative stability on a plane of concepts), we could say that philosophy is motivated by the discontent against common sense to move towards the wonder that it finds in chaos. Hence, philosophy itself is not merely wondering. It tries to articulate wonder through the concepts it creates.

Philosophy does not aim at explaining wonders: wonders, as far as they exist, do not ask for an explanation. Avicenna was right when he said that study will actually increase our sense of wonder (Daston and Park, 2001: 136). Yet how would that be the case as we are so successful in explaining the actual world in which we live? This is, as Deleuze explains (e.g. Deleuze, 2001; 2002), because reality is more than actuality. Only an infinitely small part of reality is expressed in the actual; an infinite number of virtual worlds remain unexpressed. To wonder means getting a glimpse of this unexpressed world. To experience that we are *really* surrounded by wonders is to feel the presence of the virtual; to continually be amazed at the world. It is

precisely for this reason that wonders – as I will discuss in more detail later on – belong to the virtual rather than the actual: once a wonder is actualised or expressed it ceases to exist as wonder. This, however, is not to say that wonders are not related to the normal, the banal, and the everyday. The opposite is true: a wonder is intimately connected to ordinary experience (Kaulingfreks and Ten Bos, 2005). As a distortion of the ordinary it cannot be seen separated from it: if ordinary experience changes then that which will be experienced as a wonder will also change.

What remains when a wonder finds actual expression on a plane of concepts is a wound. Philosophical concepts wound us by expressing the wonder that disrupts the actual truths that define our being. In fact, it is likely that there is an etymological connection between the words ‘wonder’ and ‘wound’:

Wonder, from the Old English *wundor*, might be cognate with the German *Wunde* or *wound*. It would thus suggest a breach in the membrane of awareness, a sudden opening in a man’s system of established meanings, a blow as if one were struck or stunned. To be wonderstruck is to be wounded by the sword of the strange event, to be stabbed awake by the striking (Parsons, 1969: 85).

Deleuze also makes this connection when he suggests that the wound is ‘the living trace’ of the wonder, or what he calls ‘the event’ (Deleuze, 1990a: 149). To wonder is to experience wounds in the sense of remaining open, hence vulnerable, to the virtual. When a wonder happens and immediately disappears, we can still wonder through our ‘wounds’ – through our sense of the virtual.

What is a miracle?

When one wonders, one does not necessarily wonder about ‘a wonder’. One might wonder about an event that can be fully explained through established knowledge. How, then, are we to understand the concept of ‘a wonder’ or ‘a miracle’?

Echoing Spinoza, Hume famously defined a miracle as ‘a violation of the laws of nature’ (Hume, 1975: 114 [X, 1, 90]; cf. Spinoza, *TTP*, 447). This definition might seem simple enough, but it gets us in all

sorts of philosophical problems dating back to ancient philosophy. Needless to say, the concept of miracle has never been very popular in modern science. More surprisingly, however, is the fact that theology, too, has downplayed the importance of the concept of miracle. According to the theologian Franz Rosenzweig, 'the Enlightenment theologians have increasingly found miracle to be an "embarrassment", an intellectual encumbrance bequeathed by tradition, best forgotten or at least rendered an innocuous metaphor' (paraphrased in Mendes-Flohr, 2000; cf. Rosenzweig, 1970: 93). Under the influence of progress made in modern science, the concept of miracle has also lost ground in philosophy; that is, until a 'rebirth' of the concept of miracle in the twentieth century.

In the sections that follow, I will start an, admittedly selective, search for major changes in the concept of miracle, paying special interest to this rebirth in twentieth century philosophy. Starting with Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and Spinoza, I will then move on to Arendt, Lyotard and, finally, Deleuze. Through these discussions I will address some of the ontological problems associated with the conceptual relation between miracle and organization.

Miracles from above

In all classic defences of the existence of miracles (most notably Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Benedict) it is God himself, i.e. the God of the Christians, Muslims or Jews, who is the agent behind miracles. The source of the miraculous is therefore, by definition, divine power. Thus if angels or, occasionally, human beings perform miracles, this does not happen according to their own nature – they act as mediators of God. In these classical accounts, God uses miracles in an instrumental way to convince humankind of his existence. God acts outside the order of things that he created, in order to make it evident 'that the order of things has proceeded from him not by natural necessity, but by free will' (Thomas, 1975: 79).

God's ability to perform miracles is due to his omnipotence. His 'free will' is independent of a restricting potency as we know it from Aristotle, i.e. a nature defining what a being is capable of. His omnipotence ensures that the creator of the laws of the earth, or the

laws that define the potency of individual things, is himself not bound to these laws; he can act upon them at will. According to Augustine, however, God should not be interpreted as an agent operating *contrary to* nature, because ‘the will of the great Creator assuredly *is* the nature of every created thing’ (Augustine, 1972: 980). For Augustine, miracles are themselves present in nature, ‘He made the world so full of innumerable marvels in the sky, on the earth, in the air and in the water’ (ibid: 976). In Augustine the Creator does not need to intervene in nature because he *has* created the miraculous within nature. This makes his concept of miracle rather ambiguous: on the one hand God attempts to prove his existence by performing miracles, which can only be attributed to his nature. On the other hand, miracles are defined by our ability to understand an event, i.e. by our knowledge of the laws of nature. For example, a magnet, ‘an incomprehensible stone that attracts iron’ (ibid: 971), was considered to be miraculous in Augustine’s times, whereas in our time it would no longer be considered to be a miracle because we have (better) understood the laws that explain magnetism. So if a miracle exists when it makes us wonder and ceases to exist once we no longer wonder, miracles do not seem to have a nature of their own. However, if this is the case, why can only God be the initiator of miracles, as Augustine holds, and not human beings, stones or water? Surely we can make others wonder?

Thomas Aquinas resolves this ambiguity in Augustine by arguing that a miraculous event presumes an active intervention by God. He agrees with Augustine that a miracle is not contradictory to nature, but for Thomas neither is it in *agreement* with nature. A miracle, Thomas argues, is *beyond* nature. God, in other words, needs his agency to perform miracles, and he is able to do so because of his omnipotence over all matter, like the control of the artist over his work:

[A]ll creatures are related to God as art products are to an artist ... consequently, the whole of nature is like an artefact of the divine artistic mind. But it is not contrary to the essential character of an artist if he should work in a different way on his product, not even after he has given it its first form. Neither, then, is it against nature if God does something to natural things in a different way from that to which the course of nature is accustomed. (Thomas, 1975: 81)

A proper miracle, therefore, takes place outside of the potencies of things or the laws of the earth, and finds its origin in an intervening God: a supernatural Organizer who occasionally plays with the laws of nature.

Why belief in miracles leads to atheism

As discussed in chapter four, for Spinoza there is only one substance that can be understood on its own terms, leading to his famous equation of God and Nature, where God/Nature simultaneously is *Naturam naturantem* and *Naturam naturatam* ('naturing nature' and 'natured nature'), i.e. the power and the performance of this power (*Ethics*, IIP29S [262]). From this equation the idea of a miracle as 'a violation of nature' should be refused a priori (the concept of miracle being dependent on the conceptual distinction between God and Nature). The Creator, or 'supernatural Organizer', who performs miracles, has simply no place in Spinoza's system.

Spinoza's philosophy established an important change: the departure from the idea of Subjectivity as a given, i.e. the idea of a (human) Subject as the possessor of consciousness. For Spinoza saying that there exists nothing outside of Nature means also that Subjectivity cannot exist outside of Nature. Our thinking is equally subjected to the laws of Nature as our body is. The laws of nature effectuate Subjectivity; consequently correspondence theory has no place in his system: 'Truth is the proof of itself', he famously said (cf. *Ethics*, IIP43 [268]). Hence Subjectivity is not an origin but an effect of the laws of nature. Consequently there cannot be a Subject who performs miracles, not even a God, for the simple reason that any subject itself is performed (by Nature).

Spinoza takes his argument as far as he possibly can – ridiculing the idea that God needs miracles to prove his existence. Miracles, Spinoza says, are the direct opposite of the proof of God; they cast doubt on his existence and eventually lead to atheism:

It is therefore far from being the case that miracles—understanding thereby something that contravenes the order of Nature—prove for us God's existence; on the contrary, they cast doubt on it, since but for

them we could be absolutely certain of God's existence, in the assurance that all Nature follows a fixed and immutable order. (*TTP*, 447)

I do not acknowledge a difference between an event contrary to Nature and a supernatural event... For since a miracle occurs not externally to Nature but within Nature, even though it be claimed to be supernatural, yet it must necessarily interrupt Nature's order which otherwise we would conceive as fixed and immutable by God's decrees. So if there were to occur in Nature anything that did not follow from her laws, this would necessarily be opposed to the order which God maintains eternally in Nature through her universal laws. So this would be contrary to Nature and Nature's laws, and consequently such a belief would cast doubt on everything, and would lead to atheism. (*TTP*, 448)

Because miracles do not have a nature of their own, the word 'miracle', Spinoza argues (and in this respect similar to Augustine), can only be understood 'with respect to men's beliefs, and means simply an event whose natural cause we – or at any event the writer or narrator of the miracle – cannot explain by comparison with any other normal event' (*TTP*, 446). If wonders do not exist, *wondering* simply implies a lack of understanding of God or Nature. If the world is simply dictated by a set of eternal laws, conducting our behaviour, there is no need to truly wonder. If we form an adequate idea of something, that is an idea *in God*, this is necessarily reasonable.

Miracles and the human condition

Arendt partly agrees with Hume saying that we have no other option than following 'the law of mortality' (Arendt, 1998: 246), i.e. one of the laws of nature. However, one of the human conditions (i.e. where human being expresses its humanness), according to Arendt, is not captured by natural law. She speaks of 'natality', the capacity to do something absolutely new, the capacity to begin. It is what she calls the power of action, 'the one miracle-working faculty of man' (ibid), which makes human being human. Being able to act, being able to bring something truly new to the world (against the odds of statistics, or against the realm of law), is where human beings give evidence to their

humanness. Therefore Arendt is able to argue that human beings ‘are not born in order to die but in order to begin’ (ibid).⁵⁸ She writes,

[T]he new always happens in the guise of a miracle. The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. (Arendt, 1998: 178)

The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, “natural” ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. (Arendt, 1998: 247)

In Arendt, the Agent of miracles shifts from God to human beings. To demonstrate this view, interestingly enough she cites Augustine:

Because they are *initium*, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action. [*Initium*] *ergo ut esset, creatus est homo, ante quem nullus fuit* (“that there be a beginning, man was created before whom there was nobody”) ... This beginning is not the same as the beginning of the world; it is not the beginning of something but of somebody, who is a beginner himself. With the creation of man, the principle of beginning came into the world itself, which, of course, is only another way of saying that the principle of freedom was created when man was created but not before. (Arendt, 1998: 177)

This passage is yet for another reason interesting, namely for the distinction Arendt makes between man (‘man was created’) and men (‘men take initiative’). Man is the species (humankind) gifted with the power to perform miracles, but only men are actually able to perform

⁵⁸ Drawing on Vico, Edward W. Said (1985) has also emphasized the capacity and importance of humans to begin. Beginnings, in Arendt and Said, are radically unpredictable in their consequences because they do not fit in any known patterns or causal relations. In this context, Said usefully distinguishes beginning from origin: ‘whereas an origin centrally dominates what derives from it, the beginning ... encourages nonlinear development’ (ibid: 373). For both Arendt and Said beginning is historical (hence actual), or rather a beginning is where history ‘begins’. However, where Arendt ultimately does find an origin for beginnings, namely being human, Said follows thinkers like Foucault and Derrida in arguing that being human is itself constantly displaced through beginnings.

miracles. Action can only exist under the condition of plurality, which is established in a place where the actor, i.e. the individual person, communicates with others. Action, according to Arendt, is performed when *men* 'act in concert' but the miraculous must always be attributed to a single actor (a *man*). It is for this reason that Arendt connects action to speech, because it is only through speech that the actor appears:

Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words. (Arendt, 1998: 178-179)

A miraculous event, for Arendt, is therefore always plural, but rests on a power located within the individual human being. Or, to put it in Aristotelian terms, the potential is located within the human agent, but the act, the realization of the potential can only actualise in (free) interaction. We might ask under what conditions human beings are able to act? Arendt has a clear answer to this question: what is needed is a public space, or *polis*, in order to 'multiply the chances for everybody to distinguish themselves' (Arendt, 1998: 197). In free space (law-like) control is lost and established laws are therefore open for contestation. This is the idea that Habermas has developed in his concept of the ideal speech situation, the situation where human beings communicate in a pure form, i.e. not restricted by 'efficient' mediators such as money and power. Not unlike Spinoza's idea of freedom *in* structure, for Arendt and Habermas organization enabling a free space is needed to improve the odds for a miracle to arise.

Burying the miraculous

If humans are born human, as cats are born cats (within a few hours), it would not be... I don't even say desirable, which is another question, but simply possible, to educate them. That children have to be educated is a circumstance which only proceeds from the fact that they are not completely led by nature, not programmed. (Lyotard, 1991: 3)

In this passage Lyotard echoes Arendt's claim of the human as an unnatural species within nature. There is an unnaturalness in being human. Human beings, according to Lyotard, are characterized by something which escapes their nature. For this reason we seek to

acquire a second nature (or culture). Lyotard, however, argues that this second nature is an equally deficient testimony to our 'unnatural nature' as the first. Culture only seeks to reduce our lack or our 'nothing' to something which is known or something which is productive. The miraculous in being human is something that cannot be captured, either by natural laws or by cultural production. This makes an event impossible: once a miracle, or an event, has established itself, it has become part of the order of things and has therefore disappeared. Lyotard argued that every event already contains its own disappearance, 'For every event, whether it stems from a practise, a work of art, or an object, bears its own denial, by dint of its passing and disappearing into a remainder it does not retain and of which what is remainder is soon no longer known' (Lyotard, 1997: 167).

For Lyotard it becomes a matter of testifying to our lack, our not being fully programmed. It is not communication or speech, as in Arendt, which bears testimony to a 'nothing', but arts, philosophy, politics, and ethics – the 'genres' escaping genre (Lyotard, 1983). What these genres bind is not asking what the human is, but *not* asking what the human is, hence to not reduce the human to an essence, thereby forgetting the miraculous (*unessential* by 'nature') in human birth. While works of art are able to disrupt the canons of cultural production, some museums (i.e. an organized space comparable to Arendt's idea of the polis) diminish the power of art. Museums can sometimes become graveyards of events; (organized) institutions where events are memorized rather than revitalized or maintained. Thus Lyotard does not believe in the idea of organizing a vacuumized space (devoid of signification, or the establishment truth of genres) which would benefit the odds of miracles to appear. The event, for Lyotard, always appears prior to any form of organization.

Miracles from below

Contra Arendt, but in agreement with Spinoza, Deleuze holds that Subjectivity is produced, that is: humans do not have an essence in the traditional sense. The idea that miracles find their beginning in human being can therefore not be true; humans have no pre-established subjectivity and can therefore not produce the new by virtue of their own nature. Where Arendt needs speech to ensure an actor as the

performer of miracles, in Deleuze it is precisely the reverse: action, in Arendt's terminology, produces the actor, not the other way around. Or, to put it in terms of miracles: humans do not produce miracles, miracles perform us. The concept of action, however, is avoided by Deleuze precisely because of its reference to actor, as the following passage expresses:

[T]o become the offspring of one's own events, and thereby to be reborn, to have one more birth, and to break with one's carnal birth – to become the offspring of one's events and not of one's actions, for the action is itself produced by the offspring of the event.' (Deleuze, 1990: 149-150)

This passage can be read as a direct commentary on Arendt. Deleuze inverts Arendt, but paradoxically their ethics is very similar in at least one respect: to have *a life* one should continuously be reborn; one should become part of the unexpected; one should become miraculous; one should be multiple (Deleuze) or plural (Arendt). What truly upsets Deleuze, however, is Arendt's idea of humanity as the chosen species. Nature, for Deleuze, has not picked anything or anyone to perform miracles, precisely because Nature *is* the performer of miracles: 'Nature must be thought as the principle of the diverse and its production.' (Deleuze, 1990: 166)

Deleuze argues, possibly contra Spinoza,⁵⁹ that it is not the laws of nature that produce subjectivity but forces *beneath* the laws of nature. It is here that miracles re-enter in Deleuze: miracles no longer come from above, given to us by a great Creator, but from below:

Beneath the general operation of laws, however, there always remains the play of singularities. Cyclical generalities in nature are the masks of a singularity which appears through their interferences; and beneath the generalities of habit in moral life we rediscover singular processes of learning. The domain of laws must be understood, but always on the

⁵⁹ This depends on the interpretation of Spinoza's concept of law. Deleuze, for example, sometimes speaks of the 'the laws of nature' in an opposite sense of what we commonly understand by it: '[the laws of nature] distribute parts which cannot be totalised' (Deleuze, 1990a: 267). According to Deleuze one also finds such a concept of law, i.e. as the producer of singularities, in Spinoza (Deleuze, 1988; 1990b). In the previous two chapters I have also understood Spinoza's concept of law in this sense.

basis of a Nature and a Spirit superior to their own laws, which weave their repetitions in the depths of the earth and the heart, where laws do not yet exist. (Deleuze, 1994: 25)

Since the atomists it has been a well established axiom that something cannot arise out of nothing. Aristotle's 'unmoved mover', or mover without an efficient cause, is therefore a confused idea; every mover must itself be moved. So, one might ask, what is the ground for the New? Here Deleuze's answer is very simple: Nature. In all of his works this is one of the central ideas, expressed in different concepts, all (near-) synonyms: 'the plane of immanence', 'universal ungrounding', 'the body without organs', 'the Event' (i.e. 'the Event of all events'), 'the plane of consistency', 'machinic phylum', 'ideal or metaphysical surface', 'terra *incognita*'... Nature, or any other chosen term, is not a set of laws determining a (causal) run of matter and thought, but encompasses 'the impossible, the possible, and the real' (1990a: 180). Or, 'Nature is not opposed to invention, invention being discoveries of Nature itself' (Deleuze, 1990a: 278).⁶⁰

The ethics of miracles

It is not difficult to see the attractiveness (especially in the sphere of activist politics, where political events need to be captured in durable organization if to have any socio-economic impact at all) of designing a space for the event to occur, or to organize society around an event in the past (the revolution). There is, however, a huge gap between the happening of an event and the capturing of an event. For Lyotard and Deleuze it is precisely the impossible (or the virtual) to which miracles owe their existence – a miracle is quite literally impossible because it ceases to exist once it becomes established:

What becomes established with the new is precisely not the new. For the new – in other words, difference – calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the

⁶⁰ There is a strong link to Foucault's concept of power here: 'On the one hand, the juridical aspect: power uses obligation, oaths, commitments, and the law to bind; on the other, power has a magical function, role and efficacy: power dazzles, and power petrifies.' (Foucault, 2003: 68)

powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognised and unrecognisable terra *incognita*.' (Deleuze, 1994: 136)

The miraculous remains virtual. The miraculous will never be captured in institutionalization. If miracles are impossible, escaping all organization, before and after the 'fact', as this idea suggests, the question shifts to whether or not there is an ethical side of the relation to event and being at all. For Deleuze there is, because 'the eternal truth of the event is grasped only if the event is also inscribed in the flesh' (Deleuze, 1990a: 161). But what is this inscription in the flesh? What does it mean 'to will the event' (ibid: 149) or 'to become the actor of one's own events'? (ibid: 150) How do we put up with the event without giving it meaning, without giving it form? Or, in terms of Lyotard, how do we 'testify' to the impossible? How to plunge into the event? How to be true to nature? These questions, for Lyotard and Deleuze, get to the heart of ethics. Deleuze:

Either ethics makes no sense at all, or this is what it means and has nothing else to say: not to be unworthy of what happens to us. (Deleuze, 1990a: 149)

Not to be unworthy to what happens to us means no more and no less than being true to the miraculous, being true to a truth beneath the spoken truth, the declared truth, the truth of law. Or, better perhaps, it is about being true to Spinoza's Nature, if this is to be understood as including the virtual as much as the actual.

For Deleuze, performance true to the Event is *repetition*: pure difference, as expressed in miracles or events, coalesces with complex repetition. Repetition, for Deleuze, is the opposite of preservation. Preservations are true to the law, while repetitions are against the law, indeed: 'if repetition is possible, it is due to a miracle rather than to law' (Deleuze, 1990a: 2). Repetition repeats the Event in events, where event bears testimony to the miraculous being of Nature, i.e. the Event. If one wants to repeat, say, the French revolution one does not need to memorise its slogans, and if one wants to be faithful to a love encounter bringing flowers home on each anniversary is not the way to go. True repetition is letting the new in, since difference is the only stable factor in Nature, and *a life* is only lived on the waves of Nature. For Deleuze, the organization of space for the miraculous to occur, perhaps in the

form of a constitution, cannot be separated from the miraculous itself. The miraculous *is* what happens: it is that which creates or transforms space. One does not need a law or a constitution to make it happen.

Miracles and organization

The relation between organization and miracles or the new in Deleuze is not one of opposition. Quite the opposite: the miraculous, or the event, is the underlying principle of the organization of nature. Difference is the force behind organization and disorganization, composition and decomposition. If not for miracles organization would be a meaningless term. The idea of the Event (the miraculous as the power of organization) contradicts the idea of Organization (the idea as a fixed set of laws) and precisely for this reason is new organization possible: in an Organized world there would only be one eternal organization which makes the verb 'to organize' meaningless from an ontological point of view. In a different form, one can find the same idea in Arendt. For Arendt, human beings are capable of action, or of organizing the new, because of their gift to perform miracles. If not for this gift, human beings would be incapable of 'radical innovation' (to use a popular term from the literature on business innovations).

The existence of miracles is almost uncontested in twentieth-century philosophy. The debate is about the question if miracles need a helping hand. That is: whether or not the existing laws of nature must be qualified as restricting the chances of miracles to happen and whether or not human beings can organize an empty space where one can operate without being affected by these laws. This relates to a third question: Can miracles ever be actualised? Arendt and Habermas argue that organizing a public sphere does enhance the chances of the miraculous. For Deleuze, however, this is an impossible and counter-effective project. Miracles happen 'behind the thinker's back, or in the moment when he blinks' (Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 1). This is because, for Deleuze, the miraculous must be sought beneath the expressed world, in a virtual reality, rather than in the new expressions or actions in which Arendt finds miracles actualized. It is from this virtual reality that humanness unfolds, not the other way around.

The miracle-workers of the higher faculties

In the introduction I discussed Kant's idea of the modern university. What can we say about the relation of the higher and the lower faculties to wonder in Kant? How does this relate to the business school and the management literature on innovation?

Kant attributed great importance to the power of wonder. We might say that he agreed with Avicenna that close study will increase our sense of wonder rather than diminish it. This is at least true for the two things that were most dear to Kant: the heaven above us and the moral law inside us. Hence, in the famous first line of the conclusion of the *Critique of Practical Reason* (the line that is also inscribed on his tombstone) Kant says, 'Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within' (1883: 260).

Kant, however, is less impressed by the 'miraculous' nature of the actions of businessmen. In the *Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant complains about 'the business of the three higher faculties'. The three higher faculties, we might recall, are the faculties of theology, law, and medicine. As I discussed in the introduction, they are called 'higher' because they perform functions for society as a whole, while the lower faculty (philosophy) is ideally free from institutional pressure; it is the place for pure critique. Kant has no problem with the scientists of the higher faculties, it is the 'businessmen' that he is concerned about. The businessmen are the people who romanticize their research to appeal to the people. They appeal to the public precisely by performing false miracles. It is the task of philosophy, according to Kant, to counterattack these miracle-workers. Kant writes,

The businessmen of the three higher faculties will always be such miracle-workers [*Wundermänner*], unless the philosophy faculty is allowed to counterattack them publicly – not in order to overthrow their teachings but only to deny the magic power that the public superstitiously attributes to these teachings and the rites connected with them – as if, by passively surrendering themselves to such skilful guides,

the people would be excused from any activity of their own and led, in ease and comfort, to achieve the ends they desire. (Kant, 1992: 50-51)

Thus miracles that we perceive in business, according to Kant, are not really wonders. Contrary to the wonder of heaven or the moral law, these wonders are false; these are the wonders that must be shown to be false. It is because of the demands of the people that miracle-workers take their refuge in false wonder. According to Kant, the people say:

As for the philosopher's twaddle, I've known that all along. What I want you, as men of learning, to tell me is this: if I've been a scoundrel all my life, how can I get an eleventh-hour ticket to heaven? If I've broken the law, how can I still win my case? And even if I've used and abused my physical powers as I've pleased, how can I stay healthy and live a long time? (ibid: 48-49)

Has Kant captured the essence of management and organization studies here? After all, is not much of what we call business ethics the logical companion of the eighteenth century faculty of theology? Accounting the companion of the faculty of law? And organizational culture or stress management the companion of medicine? These disciplines indeed portray the ethicist, the accountant, and the human resource managers as miracle-workers. Much of the literature in innovation management would have filled Kant with a similar feeling of disgust. Here the term miracle-worker, or wonder-worker, is nicely chosen: for the miracle-worker is not the performer of wonders but someone who works upon wonders. Miracle-workers do not have a sense of wonder, they are not interested in wounds; they are *healers* of wounds.

Conclusion

We probably speak more of miracles and wonders today than we did a century ago. This is especially true for the realm of business and organization. There is, for example, 'the wonders of Asia' or 'the miracles of the East', or 'the wonder of communication'. It is booming business that truly makes us wonder. Thus organizing, the activity that as Kaulingfreks and Ten Bos (2005) argue, systematically cleanses our world of wonders, or the activity that robs us from our capacity to wonder, appears to have miraculous powers of its own. Are the wonders that organizations create the very same wonders which they conceal? Is

the call for the miraculous as we encountered it in philosophy the same call as we find in contemporary management literature?

They are not the same. The calls are rather opposed to each other: where contemporary philosophy calls for a wounded life, much management literature calls for a healing of these wounds. Their call for innovation and newness, particular of the pen of the management gurus that celebrate profound flexibility in response to the 'wonderful' market, is paradoxically a call upon wonders in their 'disappearing act': the wonders that the market produces must constantly be actualized by a product or service that heals the wound of the market. The power of business is to make wonders disappear: the miracle-workers in business deny wounds by healing. The power of marketing, for example, is that it heals our disabilities through products that will 'restore' our wholeness. Our wholeness, however, cannot be found in laws, series, or correspondences. We are whole as singularities. Stretching the point somewhat, I would say that these two radically different forms of wonder are already present in the Bible. When Jesus walks on water he reminds us of the fact that we will never establish all the laws that govern our being; he makes us wonder by reminding us of the truth of singularity. When Jesus heals the sick, however, he is merely restoring a law of normality. It is this type of wonder that we find in much of the literature on innovation. Contrary to this literature, the miraculous nature of Nature in contemporary philosophy draws attention to the continuous reinvention of nature. Miracles exist, beneath the surface of our daily existence but always in relation to it.

In the concept of miracle we find many links with the previous chapters. We see a link with philosophy itself. Philosophy, as understood through Deleuze and Guattari, must exactly be understood as an approach towards the miraculous. In philosophical concepts we get a glimpse of this radical newness. As a consequence, philosophical concepts don't fit into the normal scheme of things; their para-sense does not correspond with the common sense of everyday life. When we connect to philosophical concepts, we think in new ways and see things differently.

The ethics of miracles point us towards Foucault's and Cooper's insistence to resist thinking in terms of wholes. Foucault warns that one can all too easily become a product of processes of subjectivation. It is

through a constant care of the self that we stay radically open: making sure that we are never identified without taking part in the identification process. Cooper shows us that this is equally true for the terms in which we think. The everyday terms through which we think are themselves institutionalized: they dictate our thoughts, or we unthinkingly think.

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza explains that the products of what Cooper calls institutional thinking are merely delusions: confused ideas which correspond to our finite nature. His philosophy can be read as a quest to overcome these ideas and this limited worldly life. This quest cumulates in his political works, where Spinoza dreams of a miraculous organization that realizes itself in the form of absolute democracy. Hardt and Negri continue this quest. For them the rapid growth of affective labour announces its arrival. Both Spinoza and Hardt and Negri provide stimulating attempts to think the miraculous in permanent (stable, institutionalized) forms.

Organization studies is not separated from the ethical quest for wonder. It is true that organization studies, simply because it is designed as a 'higher faculty' (i.e. a faculty aimed at solving actual problems), often takes the form of miracle-working, as Kant understood it. The more recent turn within the business school towards a lower faculty (i.e. a 'critical' faculty), however, challenges organization studies to articulate the miracle that business all too often conceals. Indeed, organization studies are currently reinventing itself: newness is slipping in at each and every moment, even if we are unaware of it. In this reinvention philosophy of organization has a critical part to play.

Conclusion

Philosophy is not in a state of exterior reflection on other fields or disciplines, but in a state of active and interior alliance with them.

– Gilles Deleuze (2006c: 219)

Foucault famously said that he wanted his books to be read as a ‘a kind of toolbox which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area ... I write for users, not readers’ (Foucault, 1994a: 523-524). The metaphor of theory as a toolbox first appeared in a dialogue between Deleuze and Foucault (Deleuze and Foucault, 2004: 208). Both Foucault and Deleuze insisted that a theory, in Deleuze’s words, ‘cannot be developed without encountering a wall, and a praxis is needed to break through’ (ibid: 206). The toolbox metaphor highlights that successful theorizing is itself a critical practice: a theory is worth nothing if we cannot connect to it. Central to this text was the question how organization studies can connect to philosophy: what is the nature of the connection between philosophy and organization studies when they meet? For me this is, in different senses, a *critical* question.

As discussed in the second chapter, critique for Foucault is an attitude; an attitude of reflection and the constant work of thought upon itself. This attitude is summarized as follows:

The problem is, precisely, to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself within a “we” in order to assert the principles one recognizes and the values one accepts; or if it is not, rather, necessary to make the future formation of a “we” possible by elaborating the question. Because it seems to me that the “we” must not be previous to the question; it can only be the result – and the necessarily temporary result – of the question as it is posed in the new terms in which one formulates it. (Foucault, 1997: 114-115)

The critical scholar asks: ‘Do I want to belong to the ‘we’ to whom I belong?’ and, if the answer is negative, ‘What strategies can I develop to

belong to this 'we?', 'What exit strategies are there for me?' These are, of course, basic questions that human beings ask themselves all the time in different contexts: from the 'critical' consumer when choosing a can of beans from an aisle of beans to more fundamental matters like a weary marriage with children, a strong organizational culture forcing you into identities you do not want to take, forms of political oppression, and so on. In all these situations there are forces at play trying to define what your 'I' or your 'we' is, telling you how to act or what to think. A critical attitude for Foucault is therefore working upon this context that ultimately also determines your identity or subjectivity.

This text has revolved around the relation between philosophy and organization studies and therefore also about the 'we' of organization studies and the 'we' of critical management studies. This is a 'we' to which I quite happily belong. I do, however, feel that the increasing engagement with philosophy in organization studies too often takes the form of a 'non-engagement': that is to say, a relation to philosophy in which philosophy remains something outside of organization studies; something to be applied. While such a relation is itself not (necessarily) problematic, I would be an even happier 'part' of organization studies if the role of philosophy were more positive. Simply put, my concern is that philosophy is too much treated as theory happening outside of organization studies and not enough as a critical practice within organization studies: the under-labourer conception of philosophy is the wall this text needed for theorizing.

In the first part, I asked the question 'What is philosophy of organization?' through readings of Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault. In the first chapter I proposed the guiding idea of *philosophy of organization* against the idea of *philosophy for organization studies*. The under-labourer conception of philosophy, which I identified as the dominant conception of philosophy in organization studies, points us towards the latter: philosophy becomes something that is useful for organization studies, but not something that happens inside organization studies. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari's idea of philosophy as para-sense presents philosophy as something that cannot be turned to use in any straightforward sense. Philosophy, they say, is too loosely connected to the actual world of common sense and

opinion for that. It is in this sense that Foucault's toolbox metaphor can be deceiving: one cannot open a philosopher's toolbox to pick one concept by choice. Unlike hammers and screwdrivers philosophical concepts cannot be utilized in isolation as they always act in concert. In the discussion of Foucault in the second chapter, I explored the relation between philosophy and critique. Philosophy for Foucault performs a critical function if it maintains a close relation to the present; if philosophical truth is paid for by a transformation of one's subjectivity. On the basis of both chapters I defined philosophy of organization as the creation of a plane of concepts of organization against common sense in order to recreate ourselves as subjects of truth. In contrast to such a practice of philosophy of organization, I have been sceptical towards using a philosopher's toolbox as a method or a neat set of presuppositions that one can apply in social science. Such a mechanical relation to philosophy rarely results in the critical attitude that so many scholars in organization studies are looking for.

In the second part I explored four different concepts that occupy a place in philosophical problems of organization. I started with a discussion of Cooper's concept of institutional thinking and its underlying logic of simple location. This discussion formed the basis for an exploration of the relation between critical thinking and institutions. Through Cooper and Foucault I argued that critical thinking is in need of the help of institutions, while institutions are reluctant to offer this help. In the fourth chapter I explored Spinoza's philosophy of individuality as synergy. Finite organizations, for Spinoza, exist insofar as they express the power of an infinite substance. I presented these ideas as a quest for an institutional ethics: the idea that the good must be sought in structures of relations. Following this idea critical thinking and institutionalization not only need each other but also reinforce each other. Spinoza's quest for an ethic of organizational structure in his political philosophy was the subject of the fifth chapter. I discussed some of the contradictions in his political philosophy before reading Hardt and Negri's contemporary philosophy of the multitude against this Spinozist background. In the last chapter I explored the concept of miracle and the idea of an ethics of miracle on the basis of Spinoza, Arendt, Deleuze and others. I understood business as concealing miracles while the task of philosophy is to bring them to life.

The chapters together ask the question ‘What is organization?’ philosophically. Because of the nature of philosophy, this question has not been answered in any straightforward way. Asking the question ‘What is organization?’ philosophically means engaging in philosophical problems of organization that themselves consist of philosophical concepts. Philosophical problems do not offer solutions to problems in the world; a philosophical problem is immediately its own solution. Engaging in philosophy of organization, then, means that one continues asking the question by making inscriptions on a plane of concepts. The purpose is not to fix a metaphysical problem once and for all. Nor is the purpose to find the right epistemology or ontology for the social sciences. The purpose is to create a problem that sparks new ways of thinking, new ways of seeing and new ways of feeling; ways that perform a critical function in a world of actualized institutions and common sense.

‘What is organization?’ in the business school

In the introduction I discussed Kant’s distinction between the higher and the lower faculties. Let us now go back to the questions that I asked in that context: (1) ‘Why should there be a place for philosophy of organization at the business school?’ and (2) ‘Do business schools accept this engagement with philosophy?’

Roland Calori (2002) offers an illuminating perspective on the first question of these two. In a discussion of the possible importance of Bergson’s philosophy for organization studies, he calls for

a double stretching of organizational theorists (whom we might call average thinkers) towards philosophers (whom we might call great thinkers) and towards practioners (generally, and somewhat unfairly, considered petty thinkers). (Calori, 2002: 148)

According to Calori organization theorists do not grasp the finer points of philosophers but they are capable of grasping some of the more basic ideas. These basic ideas can be used to make sense of organizational practice in which only even simpler ideas dominate. Hence, those members of an organization that can be said to think in terms of Bergsonian concepts like ‘becoming’ and ‘relating’ will generally be

good at creating the conditions for organizational development (2002: 147). Similarly, we can also think of the management consultant as someone who ‘double stretches’, as someone who brings a basic version of a philosophical concept to organizations in order to enhance their organizational performance.

I propose to call Calori’s demand for double stretching ‘the trickle-down theory of philosophy’: great ideas of philosophers become available for the benefit of the general public even though some of its subtleties get lost on the way. The role of the organization theorist or management consultant is one of mediator or facilitator: making sure philosophical ideas are somehow linked to the rather simplistic ideas of ordinary people.

Indeed, have I not taken part in this trickle-down effect in this text by giving rather basic accounts of highly complex planes of philosophical concepts? The irony is that this description seems fairly adequate, even though the very idea obviously does not excite me much. In the first part of this text, I have effectively argued against the possibility of the trickle-down theory of philosophy: philosophy does not trickle down into common sense without losing itself on the way. What gets lost is not merely the subtleties of philosophy but the para-sense of philosophy without which there is no philosophy at all. If there is any value in the philosophical parts of this book, then, it necessarily means that the para-sense in the philosophy of organization that was discussed has either been retained or changed.

My answer to the question why engage with philosophy at the business school is very straightforward: (1) because philosophy produces surprising concepts that can perform a critical function and (2) because organization theorists are sometimes better equipped to engage with a philosophy of organization than the ‘professional’ philosopher (i.e. the philosopher at the faculty of philosophy).

On the second question, ‘Do business schools allow for positive engagements with philosophy?’ the rather predictable answer is: ‘that depends’. I have had the opportunity to conduct my PhD research at a business school where an engagement with philosophy is actively encouraged, for example in reading groups on philosophy. This kind of environment is still rather uncommon but the increasing popularity of

critical management studies can be expected to allow for more environments in which philosophy of organization is considered a legitimate practice.

Institutions, however, are not separated from 'us' and in this sense they do not allow or forbid 'us' anything. For this reason I am sceptical towards the claim that capitalism, or some other system, marks the end of critique.⁶¹ Such an idea is by definition based on institutional thought which carves out a place for critique outside history. With Foucault I think that such a place, i.e. a place free from power relations, does not exist. If there is resistance to critique, or philosophical questioning, it means that there is more critical work to do.

The university has always suffered from external pressures, as Kant has identified in relation to the higher faculties. We should not be too romantic about the purely critical institution as this has always been an idea to fight for, rather than a reality. After all, Kant's account of the university was a polemic; an attempt to convince state authorities to found a modern university, and which was only partially realized ten years later in the University of Berlin. While it is undoubtedly true that our post-industrial age is dominated by the institutionalization of commercial products into our bodies and minds, in which the business school plays its part, this does not mean that our minds and bodies were less institutionalized in pre-industrial and industrial times; human nature is defined by the institutionalization of its nature and exercised in a constant struggle and redefinition of this nature. Institutionalization defines us but we also define our institutions: we can participate in the regeneration of institutions or we can change them, giving institutions, hence ourselves, another form.

Philosophically questioning problems of organization can be a way to give the institution 'organization studies' a new form. My hope is that

⁶¹ For example, Jameson (1991: 48-49) writes, 'We are submerged in [postmodernism's] henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point where our now postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and practically (let alone theoretically) incapable of distantiation; meanwhile, it has already been observed how the prodigious new expansion of multinational capital ends up penetrating and colonizing those very precapitalist enclaves (Nature and the Unconscious) which offered extraterritorial and Archimedean footholds for critical effectivity'.

philosophical questioning can gain legitimacy in the business school by virtue of its own power: by showing that a positive engagement with philosophy itself is a valuable 'contribution' to organization studies – even though philosophical questioning does not directly explain actual organizations or directly intervene in common sense. This increasing role of philosophy would of course not mean that philosophy replaces critical questioning of actual organizations. Quite the contrary: if philosophical questioning produces new ways of thinking, these new ways of thinking will naturally make us think differently about the actual organizations with which social scientific research in organization studies is concerned.

Critical management studies must not be understood as a branch of critical social science. Critical management studies is the place where philosophy and critical social science come together: the place where philosophical concepts and social scientific concepts meet without being reduced to one another.

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What is organization?

This book is about the relation between philosophy and organization in so far as it concerns organization studies. The book, then, revolves round the interplay between philosophy, organization and organization studies. The purpose is both to ask philosophically the question ‘What is organization?’ and to question the importance of this kind of philosophical questioning for the field of organization studies.

The central argument of the book is that philosophy performs two radically different roles in organization studies, each based upon a different conception of philosophy. The first role corresponds to the under-labourer conception of philosophy in which philosophy is of value because it performs functions for organization studies: philosophy offers different paradigms, methods or frameworks in which one can perform organizational research. The second, contrasting, conception of philosophy is philosophy as the creation of concepts. In this conception, which is presented through a reading of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, philosophy has a positive dimension which is lost when it is understood in terms of its usefulness for the social sciences. Philosophy of organization, in this sense, means asking the question ‘What is organization?’ philosophically, i.e. by creating concepts of organization.

It is this second conception of philosophy that is developed in the book; by asking what it is (part I) and by exploring philosophy of organization through readings of Spinoza, Robert Cooper and Michel Foucault (part II). Taken together, the two parts argue for a more important role of *philosophy of organization in organization studies*, as distinguished from a *philosophy for organization studies*.

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