Abstract

Organization theory contains a number of perspectives on activities undertaken in various organizations and companies. The once dominating and very much unproblematised tradition of positivism has been subject to much criticism, comments, and reflections. Today, organization theory is very much a polysemic and polyphonic field of inquiry including great differences and disagreements. However, most criticism of the positivist tradition speaks from within the vocabulary of positivism and its underlying master concept of rationality. Rationality remains the key notion that has to be acknowledged in order to write legitimate organization theory. Rationality operates through a binary logic: either there is rationality or there is non-rationality. This binarism is unsatisfying for various reasons. The paper suggests the notion of transgression, formulated by George Bataille, as representing a true post-rationalistic concept that can be used to overcome the spectre of rationalism. Transgression is after rationality: it neither speaks its language, nor crosses its tracks. Transgression operates on a different plane than ratio. The paper concludes that postpositivist organization theory (e.g. post-structuralism, feminism, postcolonial studies) should departure from positivism in order to gain freedom of thought, unrestrained by outmoded notions and concepts.

Life will dissolve itself in death, rivers in the sea, and the known in the unknown. Knowledge is access to the unknown. Nonsense is the outcome of every possible sense.

George Bataille, Inner experiences

If someone says ‘I have a body,’ he can be asked ‘Who is speaking here with his mouth?’

Ludwig Wittgenstein, On certainty

Introduction

Deleuze (1988 writes: ‘We are wrong to believe that the true and the false can only begin with solutions . . . this prejudice goes back to childhood, to the classroom: It is the schoolteacher who “poses” the problem; the pupil’s task is to discover the solutions. In this way we are kept in a kind of slavery. True freedom lies in a power to decide, to constitute problems themselves.’ Organization theory has developed from being primarily based on rationalistic assumptions on human nature and the functioning of social systems, into a highly polysemic and polyphonic field of studies (Weick, 1999; Scherer, 1998; Câlas and Smircich, 1999). Under banners such as linguistic turns, ‘literary turns,’ or the ‘emergence’ of a poststructuralist organization theory, most corollaries and assumptions derived from a mechanistic or rationalistic view on organizations have been put into question (Czarniawska, 1999). Still, much positivist research is undertaken and is not very much questioned. Therefore, it is problematic to talk of a post-positivist or postrationalist organization theory as being some kind of successor to previous attempt to understand how organizations work. Positivist and postpositivist (or pre-postivist) studies are undertaken side by side (Wicks and Freeman, 1998).

One of the most frequent critiques on positivist organization theory is its belief in autonomous, rational, and self aware activities based upon the individual human being’s logos, rationality (Gergen and Thatchenkery, 1996; Sotto, 1998). This one-dimensional perspective has been questioned from various points of view and by thinkers as diverse as Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger, through poststructuralist philosophy (Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida) and further into — following a generic trickle down mechanism — organization theory. The human subject is removed from the intellectual centre and is reconceived of as a web of beliefs, ideas, impressions, and sensations that are closely entangled with external environments. Nevertheless, the decentered subject is, at least when it is
mobilized in organization theory, too weak a construct. As Newton (1998) has pointed out, in organization theory the subject is in a binary position to rationality; either the human being is the master of rationality (in the case of mainstream organization theory), or rationality (at least in terms of individual mastery) is excluded from the realm of humanity (in poststructuralist/postmodernist organization theory). This binarism is troublesome since, as Deleuze puts it, ‘everything interesting happens in the middle’ (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987). The end positions at the continuum are too removed from everyday life experience.

This paper aims at problematizing human existence and the notion of rationality and the binarism that rationality operates through by using the notion of transgression. Transgression, the notion used foremost by the French philosopher George Bataille, provides opportunities for overcoming the binarism of rationalism. By thinking of human existence as being based upon transgression, much of the rationality problem is mediated. The notion of transgression does not belong essentially to the domain of poststructuralism but rather to what Ansell Pearson (1999) has called biophilosophy, or process philosophy (cf. Bergson, 1998; Deleuze, 1994; Whitehead, 1978; Bell, 1998), philosophy that does not assume transcendental categories but aims at a post-dialectical, post-binary thinking. The aim of the paper is to provide alternative perspectives on the subject than those suggested within the positivist/post-positivist/rationalist framework that dominates organization theory today.

The paper is structured as follows: First, the notion of social order and its implications for modernism is discussed. Second, science is examined as being the primary form of human knowledge in modern societies. Third, the notion of transgression is introduced and discussed as being a post-binary model for subjectivity. Finally, some implications are pointed out.

**Social Order: Ordering Societies**

Cornelis Castoriadis (1997) writes: ‘The world — not only ours — is fragmented. Yet it does not fall to pieces. To reflect upon this situation seems to me to be one of the primary tasks of philosophy today.’ It has been argued that all social science, to some extent, deal with the problem of order (Thrift, 1996). The problem of order implies a problem of agency; How is order possible in a society of accountable, autonomous subjects? Social formations must be able to coordinate individual initiatives into predictable behaviours that produces order. In contemporary society, human beings are imposed with the imperative to ‘make something out of themselves,’ to act as accountable, entrepreneurial subjects. Thus, various forms of individualism are expressed and demonstrated by human beings in society (see e.g. Taylor, 1991). Yet, the need for order, stability, and predictability remains, at least to some extent. These two opposing forces, the centripetal force (individualism) and the centrifugal force (the request for order) constitute a set of problems within the social field. This set of problems can be reduced to the actor-structure problem that has bothered philosophers and social theorists, to name a few, as varying as Plato, St Augustine, Hobbes, Mill, Marx, and Simmel. In organizational theory, institutionalists (e.g. Meyer and Scott, 1992; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991), constructivists (Berger and Luckman, 1967), actor-network theorists (Latour, 1999; Callon and Law, 1989), and poststructuralists/postmodernists (Chia, 1996; Boje, Gerphard and Thatchenkery, 1996; Kilduff and Mehra, 1997) have contemplated the relationship between individuals and structures preceding the individual. Organization theory and management theory problematize how management ideas, expressed in terms of concepts (‘TQM,’ ‘continuous improvements,’ ‘Business Process Engineering,’ and so forth) serve to create stability and order through constituting a set of desirable and legitimate behaviours and roles discursively, from ‘within’ the management idea par préférence (Keenoy, 1999; Xu, 1999). In much organizational theory, the actor is postulated to either be willing to accept to be a part of a structure and develops a conscience collective, to speak with Durkheim and consensus theorists, or is, as suggested by Marxists and critical theorists, more or less aggressively subjugated by social structures. Either perspective implies an agency problem. In some cases, the subject is robbed of its ability to act and think (Newton, 1998).
Habermas (1984; 1987) seeks to restore agency in social theory by using the notion of ‘communicative rationality.’ This project has rendered Habermas epithets such as ‘the last modernist’ or the ‘last rationalist.’ It is easy to have sympathy for Habermas’ attempt to bring back agency into social theory, but there are, however, other meaningful perspectives; it is possible to start from Habermas’ point of departure, but to take different routes. Habermas’ endeavour to turn society into a ‘modern project’ is profoundly resting upon the notions of ‘communication’ and ‘rationality.’ Habermas’ project is departing from the decentred, post-structuralist subject and subscribes to the Enlightenment view of the self-reflective, autonomous, and rational subject. Rather than re-encapsulating the subject into the autonomous, rational, and self-aware entity assumed in a logocentric ontology, I want to think of the subject as it is conceived of by Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, and post-structuralist organizational theorists. Instead of following Habermas’ way out of the bleak Weberian ‘iron cage’ society, I want to try to make use of Heidegger, the later, ‘ethical’ Foucault and Bataille. Rather than seeing the subject as being endowed with a set of stable qualities, it can be conceived of as continuously ‘transgressing’ across the social field. By simultaneously being partly rule-following, partly emotional, partly strategically acting and partly randomly behaving, the subject transgresses the distinction between actor and structure.

Rather than invoking rationality as a category carrying explanatory potential for organizational activities, it is possible to talk of ek-sistence. To Heidegger (1996), Man — Da-sein — ‘ek-sists’ as being-in-the-world. The notion of ek-sistence is a play with the words to exist, and the Greek eksta-sis, to ‘be outside oneself.’ To claim that Da-sein ek-sists is to claim that Da-sein exists ‘within him- or herself,’ as well as ‘outside him- or herself.’ Da-sein’s ek-sistence is therefore simultaneously as being an individual locus of experience, and ‘from the outside,’ as a member of society. The notions of transgression and ekstasis are pointing out the same phenomena: Man exists/ek-sists, not solely as being concealed within a single human body (the existence of human bodies as a factum brutum is beyond doubt in most scientific inquiries), but also, simultaneously, as being outside the self. The subject transgresses the self, in ekstasis — ecstasy — and thus break down categories of actors and structures. Through the process of transgression, the subject is making use of him or herself, not through the use of ratio, thinking, Vernunft, cognitive abilities, but through overcoming the self as it is projected upon the body. Therefore, transgression is a profound, basic, and time-space independent possibility of human behaviour carried out throughout the social field. To allude to Erich Fromm, the transgressing human being is not escaping from freedom, but from him- or herself, from predictability, stability, and boredom (cf. Luhmann, 1990: 118). Transgression is an escape into the unknown, into what is external to the familiar and taken-for-granted.

The notions of transgression and ek-sistence are related to the notion of power. In much organizational theory, power is entangled in connotations of repression, exploitation, and alienation. This perspective of power is one-dimensional and does not take into account the gratifying, enabling, and productive qualities inherent to power. The notion of transgression embraces the latter perspective on power. To transgress is to make pleasurable use of the instances of power, its ‘embodiments.’ Transgressing in sexuality is to play with desires, taboos, roles, and norms: to transgress the self is to play with ideas of identity, taken for granted ideas about the relationship between mind and body, and the role of the self; to transgress social categories (the carnival, turning social formations upside down, serves as an archetypal metaphor for transgression en masse), is to play with social categories such as classes, habitus, and positions in society. The role of transgression in organizations is of great importance since it enables structures and active subjects simultaneously. To use a functionalist metaphor from elementary physics, the centripetal force (the demand for structure) and centrifugal force (the escape from the self) can be kept in equilibrium through a continuous movement, a movement at one place. By transgressing the self, the individual human being can accept that his or her body is used in organizational activities. Transgression is a way of stretching life outside what is known to create new challenges. Transgression is beyond ratio, thought, and thinking, it is a challenging and productive mode of ek-sisting within organization.
‘Rational’ explanation of human lives: Science and Thinking

Martin Heidegger (1968) says that the modern world is the world wherein scientific reasoning dominates at the expense of thinking — thinking whose name is philosophy. In an age of progress and reason, science has gained a position where its objectives and goals have become ends in themselves, and thinking has become an endeavour for a limited amount of human beings. Heidegger (1968: 50) writes: ‘every thin­ker thinks only one thought. Here, too, thinking differs essentially from science. The researcher needs constantly new discoveries, inspirations, else science will bog down and fall into error.’ Thinking is a process, not an end, because there is never such a thing as an end in thinking; therefore thinking is beyond or outside explanation and truth in terms of departing from the formulation of nomological knowledge. Thinking never follows the unilateral paths of scientific knowledge but aims to, Heidegger says, to unconceal Being. The experience of transgression belongs to the realm of the continuous process.

In a similar critique, Gaston Bachelard says that science put forth rationalistic explanations for phenomena. As a consequence, psychological aspects are not inte­grated into the analysis. Bachelard writes:

In the first place we must criticize the modern scientific explanations which seem to us quite inappropriate for prehistoric discoveries. These scientific explanations ori­ginate in an arid and cursory rationalism which claims to be profiting by recurring factual evidence, but which is, however, quite unrelated to the psychological con­ditions of primitive discoveries. (Bachelard, 1964: 21)

Science always works within the vocabulary of ratio (logos): things have to be useful, they have to be integrated into the totality of things that constitutes the world, they must have a meaning, they must be intelligible. Lyotard (1991: 69) argues: ‘What are called the human sciences, for example, have become largely a branch of physics. Mind and even soul are studied as though they were interfaces in physical processes, and this is how computers are starting to be able to deliver simulacra of certain mental operations.’ In scientific explanation, phenomena do, by definition, have to be intel­ligible, they should make sense to us (Latour, 1999). But Bachelard argues that we should aim at other explanations: ‘Once more the explanation by the useful must give way to the explanation by the agreeable, the rational explanation must give way to the psychoanalytical explanation’ (Bachelard, 1964: 33). By limiting science to the domain of the rational, productive and teleolo­gical explanations, science runs the risk of only studying a minor part of human lives. Bachelard argues that ‘the conquest of the superfluous gives us a greater spiritual excitement than the conquest of the necessary. Man is creation of desire, not a creation of need’ (Bachelard, 1964: 16). Needs specify what is absolutely necessary to satisfy, while desire seeks the extraordinary, the excessive. Science operates within the domain of need, not the domain of desire. Thus science reduces the totality of human existence into being characte­rized by goal-orientation, utility maximizing, and progression. In short, human existence become a mean, not an end in the metaphysics of practical reason. Science always wants to lead us away from the place where we are at the present, into a future, that is, the better, more productive, safer, saner, and more rational world that science promises to put forth when operating under good conditions. Nevertheless, human existence is much more diverse, multifaceted, com­plex, and rich than its scientific projection; desire, the primary force of humanity, as Deleuze and Guattari (1983) depict it, cannot fully be subsumed under science because science investigates the rational whereas desire belongs to the beautiful, the pleasurable, the amusing, the entertain­ing. Desire seeks to escape from boredom, predictability, taken-for-­grantedness, it seeks ekstasis, transgression. Transgression is not (at least not primarily) a scientific concept; it cannot be captured by ostensive definitions, it does not represent a specific set of behaviours, phenomena, or activities, it cannot be boiled down into statistics. Transgression belongs to the realm of thinking; it is meditative, not calculative (Heidegger, 1966), it aims at saying something about human existence in the world and in society, it expands outside of the rational, the productive, the progressive. Transgression is cumber-some to employ as an analytical concept, but it also captures some of the profoundest human desires — the desire to be more than a separate human body encapsulated in logical, meaningful and
productive reasoning. Transgression is a concept that unifies the inside world and the outside, the individual human being and the community, and acknowledges behaviours and activities that is outside of the realm of the intelligible as being interesting and perhaps even meaningful.

**Transgressing and Order**

Habermas (1985) places Bataille alongside thinkers such as Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida as a follower of Nietzsche, and talks of Bataille’s notion of transgression as ‘acts of self-de-limiting.’ Habermas (1985: 100) writes that ‘in the process of dissolution, the monadically closed-off subjectivity of self-assertive and mutually objectifying individuals is dispossessed and cast down into the abyss’ in Bataille’s writing. Bataille thus shares with Heidegger, Habermas argues, the will to ‘overcome subjectivity’ and therefore, in a debt to Nietzsche, seek to ‘unbound’ the subject through ‘Dionysian violence.’ To Habermas, Bataille aims at overcoming the subject through the notion of excess. Richardson (1994) writes: ‘Bataille’s whole ethos was based on a refusal to fragment the world up into tidy categories and he regarded it as pernicious to separate out any one factor or set circumstances from the entire nexus of relations comprising any totality’ (Richardson, 1994: 34).

Bataille talks of inner experience as ‘a voyage to the end of the possible of man.’ Experience has to be viewed from the ‘outside by intelligence.’ Bataille writes:

Inner experiences not being able to have principles either in a dogma (a moral attitude), or in a science (knowledge can be neither its goal nor its origin), or in a search for enriching states (an experimental, aesthetic attitude), it cannot have any other concern nor other goal than itself. (Bataille, 1988: 7)

Inner experiences are not scientific, based on rational experience, or productive in its conventional sense. Bataille writes that ‘progress negates ecstasy, sin — equates life with project, sanctifies project (work); in the world of progress, once project is recognized as the serious side of existence, life is nothing but permissible childishness.’ Inner experience is ecstasy: in ecstasy, ‘one can let oneself go — this is satisfaction, happiness, platitude’ (Bataille, 1988: 52). Bataille mentions ‘poetry, laughter, ecstasy’ as modes of non-knowledge that draws from inner experiences. In addition, inner experience is not based upon discursive or narrative modes of thinking: ‘Being most often discursive, its progress is reducible to the linking of words, and discourse, the words, which permit us to reach objects with ease, attain poorly the inner state, which remain strangely unknowable to us’ (Bataille, 1988: 140). Bataille contends: ‘Man can find himself only on the condition of escaping, without rest, from the avarice which grips him.’ Transgression is one of the main concepts in the writings of George Bataille. Transgression means to step over a certain point that normally cannot, or should not be passed; to transgress boundaries is to break down boundaries — transgression is a departure from the given, the existing, the normal, the world as we know it. To Bataille, transgression is a basic feature of human societies. All societies need mechanisms for transgression in order to survive. Transgression is mediating order and disorder (cf. Serres, 1995); order cannot to maintain without running the risk of being turned into disorder — order is in a void without disorder — and disorder is not a proper state without references to order. Transgression is the mechanism where order and disorder face one another, and is simultaneously dissolved and reinforced. Transgression is both subversive and reactionary; it operates in-between, in the middle, across entities, structures, and spheres.

To Bataille (1987), eroticism is one of the generic forms of transgression. Sexual intercourse is a prerequisite for reproduction, and thus it bridges life and death: ‘Eroticism, it may be said, is assenting to life up to the point of death.’ (Bataille, 1987: 11).Eroticism is based upon the desire of human beings to be beyond themselves, to be ‘beyond being.’ At the same time, eroticism is, Bataille argues, causing anxiety because it gives a feeling of danger when the self is at stake. The price paid for being beyond oneself is to loose oneself. Bataille writes: ‘The sovereign desire of being is what is beyond being. Anguish is the feeling of danger related to this inexhaustible expectation’ (Bataille, 1992: 22). Eroticism draws from the order/disorder dichotomy that is inherent in all transgression. The self is casted into a partial dissolution in intercourse; Bataille says that ‘the transition from the normal state to that of erotic desire presupposes a partial dissolution of the person as he exists in the realm of
discontinuity.’ (Bataille, 1987: 17). As a consequence, Bataille points out eroticism as a belonging to the realm of existential reflection; when the self dissolves the whole existence become a prompt of reflection and contemplation. Bataille (1987: 31) writes that he ‘regarded Eroticism as the equilibrium in which being consciously calls his own existence in question . . . I am losing myself.’

Transgression means to overcome a limit, a restraint, a boundary, that has been established to classify, discipline, and organize the in­dividual in everyday life. To transgress is to put in question what is, to do not what is expected, but to go the other way around; transgression turn things upside-down, it break through the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life. Transgression carries a potential for getting out of the familiarity of the day-to-day routines and operations. But transgression is not subversive in the conventional meaning, that is, in terms of changing the route of history or establishing alternative ways of living that opposes traditional, preceding modus vivendi. Transgression rather confirms the traditional, existing structures. Taboos serve as limits that restrain the individual human being: ‘Transgression does not deny the taboo but transcends it and completes it . . . There exists no prohibition that cannot be transgressed. Often the transgression is permitted, often is even prescribed’ (Bataille, 1987: 63). In addition, Bataille, following the Durkheimian tradition (Durkheim, 1995; Merrin, 1999), distinguishes between the profane world, the world of the taboo, and the sacred world, the world of transgression. Bataille writes:

Transgression is complementary to the profane world, exceeding its limits but not destroying it. Human society is not only a world of work. Simultaneously — or successively — it is made up of the profane world and the sacred, its two complementary forms. The profane world is the world of taboos. The sacred world depends on limited acts of transgression. (Bataille, 1987: 67-68)

The sacred world is reached through transgressing the taboos of the profane world. But transgression does not violate the taboo as such, i.e. make it obsolete or outmoded, but rather reinforce the taboo: ‘transgression piled upon transgression will never abolish the taboo.’ (Bataille, 1987: 48). Transgression enables human life and society to be composed by these two forces: the profane world and its taboos, the sacred world and its ecstasy achieved through transgression: ‘Organized transgression together with the taboo make social life what it is.’ (Bataille, 1987: 65). Transgression is neither opposed to order, nor to disorder. Transgression is the synthesis — ‘organized disorder,’ Bataille says — that manifest order as being the legitimate state of things. The order of society is never challenged by transgression. Revolution emanates, Francis Bacon argued, from ‘discontent’ or ‘poverty’ and claimed that ‘the rebellions of the belly are the worst’ (cited in Arendt, 1963: 112). Transgression does not derive from discontent or poverty; it rather derives from desire, pleasure, and contentment. Transgressions operate on the level of desire, the ‘will to pleasure.’ There is nothing revolutionary in transgression; on the other way around, it reinforces what is existing, what is present. Moreover, transgression is universal; it exists in all societies and in a multiplicity of forms. Transgression is neither radical, nor conservative, it is human — the mark of transgression is the mark of humanity. Without transgression no humanity. No society can subsist without humanity, no society can be maintained without transgression. Still, transgression implies a potential for radically new experiences and insights that can produce a desire for new forms of being, new forms of organizing, and new forms of thinking.

**Illustration: Consumption**

To transgress is to overcome limits and restraints. The most obvious form of transgression is contemporary society is to overcome the subject, the self. Human beings are, at an increasingly level, inscribed with individu-ual qualities; human bodies are thought of as having thoughts, reason, preferences, dispositions for feelings such as love, anxiety, envy, and so forth (Rose, 1989). In late modern/postmodern societies, there is a general belief in the possibility for achieving authenticity, that is, the state where the individual human being become aware of him or herself and loses all doubts about he or she is (Taylor, 1991). The notion of authenticity rests upon the Aristotelian idea of potentiality, the dispositions for various abilities and skills that reside inside the human body that can come to life when being used in various ways. ‘Know thyself,’ was the dictum of the oracle of Delphi;
The quest for authenticity boils down to this imperative. To be authentic, to be a true self, is to achieve a state where one knows everything there is to know about the self. In modern society, the individual human body, inscribed with a personality, a biography, an ethos, and a set of preferences, is increasingly accounted for in all the activities the subject undertakes. This progressive individualism that appears to be without any similarities or counterparts in human history provides the individual with an immense variety of possibilities for undertaking activities. When the subject becomes accountable for his or her actions, and ceases to be an outcome from some divine will, a destiny, or mechanistic forces innate to nature or the world, the world unfolds as an open-ended possibility. Human beings are free to act and think and only the limits of ratio, logos, restrain the actions of human beings. Human being is cast into the world, free to do whatever he or she wants to do, limited only by oneself. Human being becomes responsible for his or her being-in-the-world.

The unrestrained potentiality of the world might appear frustrating to the individual human being; in an individualized society, the individual becomes accountable for not doing what he or she wants. Feelings of discontent cannot be explained teleologically; boredom has no meaning, it does not have some trans-cendental, underlying purpose, but is merely a waste of my life. When I fail in doing what I want to do, I cannot blame traditions, the history, or to the smallness of man in God’s impressive creation. Being set in a position of continuous accountability is, at least when aiming at mastery of one’s life, to be anxious; I have a feeling of anxiety for not undertaking enough productive activities with my life, I waste it, I do not adequately strive toward the final state of authenticity, I do not fulfill myself. The gift of subjectivity and an individual, accountable self is thus not only gratifying but also demanding since gifts are always dependent on exchange: Gift demands counter-gift (Derrida, 1992; Mauss, 1954). When failing to demonstrate adequate behavior directed toward legitimize, that is, self-fulfilling — activities, anxiety is experienced. To be encapsulated in one’s own reason and autonomy implies that happiness is not a question of fate but of diligence: the individual human being determines the ‘quality’ of his or her own life. As a consequence, the encapsulated subject has to be transgressed in order to escape the self and its anxiety. Transgression is a salvation. To transgress the subject, to experience the feeling of being ‘outside of oneself,’ to belong to a community that does not determine itself and that is larger than the individual innate qualities is an escape from the realm of individualism. Individuality, the belief in human rationality and ability to think for him- or herself, is gratifying and liberating. Individuality is also one of the most contested ideologies of the modern society, buttressed by the enlightenment belief in humanism, and modern consumerism’s need for individual productive consumers endowed with qualities such as preferences and tastes (Du Gay and Salaman, 1992; Miller and Rose, 1997; Sturdy, 1998). The ideology of individuality, and its outcome, the accountable and rational subject, is not at stake in modern society. It is rather one of its main constituents, as a being that, it can be transgressed in order to be reinforced and manifested in its absence.

The modern capitalist society rests profoundly upon consumption, the final use of the products and services fabricated throughout society in various companies and organizations. Consumption does not only reproduce the socioeconomic apparatus and all its exchanges, flows and ruptures (Purdon, 1997; Baudrillard, 1993), it also provides possibilities for the individual to transgress the subject. Therefore, consumption is at the very heart of modern society: first, it fulfills the continuous supply-demand cycle inherent in capitalist production, second, it is the medium through which individuals transgress-se themselves and co ipso manifests the subject. Consumption is therefore the double manifestation of the given order; it reproduces economic conditions, and it reinforces the most central entity or the economic condition — the consuming subject. That is why modern society is characterized by consumerism: to consume is to, if we express it in positive terms, to constitute order at the same time as order is put into question. In a more gloomy manner, one can argue that the individual human being is fettered to the existing (repressive) social order through his or her own unreflected cooperation. Consumption appears in various guises.

Jean Baudrillard has discussed consumption, not from the perspective of transgression, but in terms of being a social practice wherein human beings demonstrate their social attachment. Baudrillard writes that ‘the fundamental, unconscious, and automatic choice of the consumer is to accept the life-style of
a particular society,’ and continues to say that consumption is ‘no longer therefore a real choice: the theory of the autonomous and sovereignty of the consumer is thus refuted’ (Baudrillard, 1988: 37). Consumption is not undertaken, at least not in the most frequent cases, to satisfy some physical need. Most consumption is directed toward products that signify or represent specific qualities the consumer wants to demonstrate (cf. Veblen, 1994; Bourdieu, 1984). Consumption therefore operates on the level of desire. Baudrillard writes:

Pleasure is not the primus motor for consumption . . . Pleasure would define consumption for itself, as autonomous and final. But consumption is never thus. Although we experience pleasures for ourselves, when we consume we never do it on our own (the isolated consumer is the carefully maintained illusion of the ideological discourse on consumption). Consumers are mutually implicated, despite themselves, in a general system of exchange and in the production of coded values. (Baudrillard, 1988: 46)

When consuming, the subject demonstrates his or her social awareness; therefore, consumption becomes infinite, it disperses throughout the social field as a primary form of sociality: ‘consumption becomes, not a function of “harmonious” individual satisfaction . . . but rather an infinite social activity’ (Baudrillard, 1988: 41). In modern society where supply in many cases exceed demand, the focus has changed from the supply side, the domain of production, into the demand side, the domain of consumption. As a consequence, labour is increasingly turned into being consumers. Baudrillard (1988: 52) writes that ‘labor productivity is increasingly replaced by the productivity obtained through technological and organizational improvements and increasingly investments are being redirected to the level of the corporation. But as a consumer, the individual has become necessary and practically irreplaceable.’

The consumer society produces consumers. Consumers reinforce the mechanisms of a capitalistic society through the act of consumption; To consume is to circulate capital. Consumption is a primary activity in a society based upon the circulation of capital. It provides, as we learn from Simmel and Foucault, possibilities for individuality and collectivism simultaneously. The consumer escapes authentic, self-reflective existence, moves into (repressive, or as Debord [1977] would had put it, spectacular) pleasure, at the same time as the basis for the existence as a consumer is reinforced. Consumers consume and are thus turned into future consumers. There are two major aspects of this transgression that deserves notice. First, this transgression is highly artificial inasmuch as the need for much consumption is removed from any biological need, but is, as Baudrillard points out, socially and semiotically based. Consumption can be undertaken successfully without being derived from some human need as such. Second, the dispersal of consumption is infinite. Just as the domain of the reproducing capital is increasingly expanding, the act of consumption can expand greatly. Consumption never ends: It is circular and disjunctive.

Transgression through consumption is one of the most widely encouraged form of transgression. It is even an imperative in capitalistic societies, depending on the circulation of capital. When transgression is subsumed under capital, it appears to be exploited; consumers are depicted as forever being used by the faceless, ruthless capital. That is not the case. Transgression always precedes the economic system. Consumption is one form of transgression among many, but serves it purpose as an illustration because of its general form. Consumption is, as opposed to other forms of transgression, very much standardized across cultures and tradition. Consumption could however exploit human beings, but that is another, specific form of uncontrolled consumption outside the domain of transgression.

Discussion

Transgression exists in all human societies; transgression is a profound human desire that appears in various guises depending on the properties of the society in which the human being spends the majority of his or her life. Without the possibility for transgression, human lives and society would rest upon linearity, predictability, and ready-made structures and artefacts. Transgression rests
primarily, as all authentic art does, on movement; movement is the leap from actuality to possibility, from stability to change. Movement entails extension of what already exists; when transgressing the self, the stability of the self is stretched outside of the self, reaching new possibilities, just as the great novel stretches language outside of itself and provides new opportunities for expression (Deleuze, 1997). The movement, the leap, the extension of the transgression is the mark of the civilized society, the society wherein individuals are given the opportunity to affirm their existence and produce novelty simultaneously. As transgression reinforces what is, it is not radical, it is not aimed at change per se, but change for us. It is movement at one place (Kierkegaard, 1992: 342). The consumer transgressing the self through the act of consumption reinforces the structure from where transgression has to depart, yet the transgression produces an extension outside of what is actual. The consumer society is therefore never at peril through transgression, nor is the subject, but the stable, predictable, indeed actual self is: It is lost for a moment, only to be recaptured and reconsolidated. Nevertheless, the notion of transgression provides a potential for new ideas, new worldview, and new objectives. Transgression could produce beliefs that are turned into demands for radical changes in the existing world order. The unintended consequences of transgression are without boundaries.

In late modern/post-modern societies, individuality is an imperative, an opportunity, and a norm (Townley, 1995). Individuality is taken for granted. Human being exists. This existence is sought to be rationally conceived and thought of. ‘I am.’ ‘I am myself.’ ‘I am true to myself.’ Human being is thought to be the master of one’s being. In that pursuit, human being makes use of knowledge. Knowledge provides us with insight into the realm pervaded and colonialized by knowledge; in the realm of non-knowledge, it does, however, become impotent. It ceases to serve its purpose, it no longer makes sense. In the poetic space, the space of inner experience, the realm of ekstasis, of transgression and existence outside the self, the realm of faith (Kierkegaard), human being dwells in non-knowledge. Human being dwells in pleasure since he or she is no longer fixed and coherent. To be outside of the self is a prerogative, a relief, a remedy. When being outside the self, human being overcomes binary oppositions. Lack of individualism is the distinctive mark of the premodern or pre-differentiated society and is therefore a reminiscence of an atavism, an antiquated social formation. There is thus a belief in change or progression in human nature across societies with various degrees of differentiation. As societies evolve (i.e become increasingly complex), human beings change. The sociality of human beings is evolving. The primordial qualities of human beings do however remain: One such quality is the need for transgression. As a consequence, the binarism of the subject is mistaken. There cannot be an absence or a presence of rationality as any kind of physical entity which is inclusive or conclusive. The notion of transgression captures and points out the shortcomings of the binary machines of rationality (e.g. good/bad, right/wrong, fair/unfair, etc.). Rationality is not a quality but a relation between various components that are assumed to have a certain configuration. Transgression operates through these taken-for-granted relations. It is at the fringe of self where experience, stumbling on the verge of the unknown, is with one foot over the bottomless gap of the unfamiliar.

In organization theory, positivist rationalism (practical reason or technological rationality) is widely subscribed to. Transgression provides an alternative to this doctrine. It refuses the binarism of rationalism but embraces the inner experiences of being. As Deleuze (1988) points out, the freedom to formulate problems without necessary having a preference for a solution in mind is the goal of all thinking. When different forms of rationality are directed always at the solutions to human problems, much human experiences are reduced to anomalies or simply irrational behaviour. This ignorance is inherent to the modern projects; various perspectives and world-views, may be formulated from a feminine, a non-Western, or a non-heterosexual point of view, have been largely neglected, ignored, or excluded throughout modernity. One explanation for this ignorance may be the all-encompassing belief in the purity of ratio. Serres (1995: 73) writes: ‘Rationalism is the vehicle of death. Science must dissociate itself from it.’ To open up for alternative views and reformulations on organizational activities are beneficial for thinking, which in turn, might provide us with radically new ideas on how everyday life and organizational activities could be administrated and managed. New forms of societal organization might open up for a more pluralistic, joyful, and fair world. Transgression represents the
idea of departing from what is at hand, into what are possible and desirable worlds. The present doctrines are neither the last words to be said, nor the closure of the book.

**Conclusion**

This paper addresses the meaning of accountability that is always dealt with from within the rationalistic tradition in organization theory. Derrida (1981: 19) says: “everyday language” is not innocent or neutral, it is the language of Western metaphysics, and it carries with it not only a considerable number of presuppositions of all types, but also presuppositions inseparable from metaphysics, although little attended to, are knotted into a system.’ The notion of accountability, bringing forth ideas about individuality and personal mastery cannot escape the speech of rationalism. Organization theory still struggles to dismantle the positivist tradition. The idea of transgression has been used to provide alternative perspectives on individuality and accountability. Transgression is a post-rationalistic, and not just a non- or anti-rationalistic notion. It neither speaks the language of rationality, nor crosses its tracks. By rethinking the most profound assumptions and their contested corollaries, organization theory can develop in new directions, problematizing and theorizing new phenomena and problems, without references to the ready-made puzzles inherited from positivist studies such as the inabilities of its analytic scheme to fruitfully examine the contradictions, paradoxes, and inconsistencies that are always inherent to managerial activities.
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