

AIDEZ LES MISANTHROPES¹

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Abstract

In this paper I want to explore into the dark side of art. There has been a growing interest in art from the field of organization studies. Since the publication of Strati's seminal work (1999) organization studies have embraced art as a fruitful way of studying organizations. Aesthetics helps us to critically understand organizations and uncovers aspects of organization that till now we have overseen. Organizations have an aesthetic quality where sensibility and emotions play an important role. Although I am in no way opposed to an aesthetic study of organizations. I want to argue that when dealing with art we have to consider the dark side of art. Art is in no way something just related to beauty and sensible wellbeing. Organization aesthetics needs to be careful not to fall into a romantic conception of art as a transcendental field enriching our lives, filling us with joy and giving us insight in life. Art also has a dark side. It disorients us, makes us uneasy. Art can make us very gloomy and take away joy. Art shows us a side of life that has by no means moral richness and does not contribute to joy and happiness. After going into the disturbing aspects of art I will examine misanthropy in art and point out some consequences for organizations and organization studies.

Keywords: Organization studies. Critical theory. Art. Aesthetics. Misanthropy.

AJUDA MISANTRÓPICA

Resumo

Neste artigo quero explorar o lado negro da arte. Tem havido um crescente interesse em arte no campo de estudos de organização. Desde a publicação do trabalho seminal de Strait (1999), estudos organizacionais têm abraçado a arte como um frutífero caminho. A estética nos ajuda a entender criticamente as organizações e revela aspectos da organização que até agora temos observado. As organizações têm uma qualidade estética, onde sensibilidade e emoções desempenham um papel importante. Embora não esteja de maneira alguma, oposto a um estudo estético das organizações, quero argumentar que, quando se trata de arte, temos de considerar o lado negro da arte. A arte não é de modo algum algo apenas relacionado com a beleza e o bem-estar sensível. A estética da organização precisa ter cuidado para não cair em uma concepção romântica da arte como um campo transcendental enriquecendo nossas vidas, nos enchendo de alegria e nos dando percepção da vida. A arte também tem um lado escuro. Ela nos desorienta, nos deixa inquietos. A arte pode nos tornar muito sombrios e tirar alegria. A arte nos mostra um lado da vida que não tem nenhuma riqueza moral e não contribui para a alegria e felicidade. Depois de entrar nos aspectos perturbadores da arte vou examinar misantropia na arte e apontar algumas consequências para organizações e estudos de organização.

Palavras-chave: Estudos organizacionais. Teoria crítica. Arte. Estética. Misanthropia.

There is a tendency to consider the relation between aesthetics and art, and organizations and management, as a healthy one. Organization studies benefit from an aesthetic perspective.

¹ The title is a reference to a work of art by Belgium surrealist artist Marcel Mariën (1920-1993).



Taking art into consideration not only helps to understand organizations better, but it also broadens, by drawing a parallel, the way we look at organizations. Aesthetics introduce different categories so that we look at organizations and management in a different light. This is done from the assumption that art enriches the way we look at organizations.

There is a widespread idea that art always enriches our views on things. Art elevates us into higher spheres. It fills us with joy of living and gives sense to our lives through beauty and harmony. We still have a romantic notion of art as dealing with beauty and the sublime, as a way of finishing the creation. We create beauty and therefore, as Kant put it, ‘nature gives art its rules’ we approach the creation itself, not by imitating nature but by perfecting it, by finishing it (1968). Through the sublime we get in contact with the extra sensorial, with the transcendental. According to Kant aesthetics thus imply a metaphysical experience of limit; we realise there is something else which engulfs and transfixes us. This idea goes further back to Greek philosophy.

Beauty is, as Plato stated, intimately related to truth and goodness. Beauty as mimesis brings us to the essence of things, to the Idea and therefore we are in truth and of course we become better men (1999,III, IV). We consider art, beauty and the sublime as higher aspects of our life, as truthful and intrinsically moral. Accordingly everything that is related or attached to art and beauty benefits from it. It becomes morally higher.

In a sense this is also implicitly implied when we speak of the art of management or of aesthetics and organization. Management and organization are included in the metaphysics of beauty and art and are morally uplifted. The inclusion of aesthetics in the field of organization studies implicitly implies a moral value. Organizations have some relation with beauty and art. Although the field of aesthetics and organization is by no means a unitary field there is a tendency of looking at organizations as a form of beauty, as an aesthetic product. As Strati points out the beauty of organization tout court is one of his interests in the aesthetic understanding of organizations (Linstead and Höpfl 2000:29). His definition of the aesthetic understanding of organizations underlines the transcendental aspects of aesthetics: “Aesthetic understanding of organizational life is an epistemological metaphor which problematizes the rational and analytic analysis of organizations because the logic of these analyses has transcendental features, in that it is supposed to have its basis in what is beyond human conduct and relationships” (Strati 1999:7). Linstead and Höpfl also see beauty as an important aspect of the field of study: “Other organizational scholars, Strati included, have examined the beauty of organizations as a whole, with particular emphasis on rites and narratives about events at work, about working group and leadership styles, and about rituals of collective life identified not

only as beautiful but also as of special significance for the organizational actors”. (Linstead and Höpfl 2000:3) Even Guillet de Monthoux sees Schiller’s *Letters on the Aesthetic education of Man* as a “ combination of aesthetic thinking and art management ideas” (Linstead and Höpfl 2000: 40). Carr and Hancock sum up their edited volume of *Art and Aesthetic at work*: “ For, what many of the chapters contained in this collection are at pains to consider is not only the presence of art and aesthetics within the everyday life of the workplace, but equally, how these are increasingly put to work in the service of a range of organizational aspirations and goals, or, alternatively, how they can provide a range of novel and informative insights into the structuring and maintenance of organizational activities, particularly those which rely upon the continued existence of asymmetrical relations of power and control.” (Carr & Hancock 2003:IX)

It may now appear that the aesthetic understanding of organization is just a matter of understanding beauty in organizations. This is not entirely the case. Aesthetics is more than that. It is also, as Strati stated above, a problematization of the rational and analytic understanding. Through aesthetics we can understand sense making in organization and bring forth the material aspects of organizations like for instance architecture, design and corporate image. Aesthetics makes clear that organizations are by no means an analytic construct wherein sheer rational minds are to be found. Aesthetics drive our attention to the sensorial aspects of working together, to share experiences and the evaluation of interactions.

Another important aspect of aesthetics is its critical function. Aesthetics have a long tradition of critique of rational analysis as if that would be the only way of gaining insight in our world. It is this critical aspect what I want to emphasize here because it criticizes the idea of beauty as something of a higher order and by so doing criticizes the whole idea of beauty in organizations. Aesthetics as a critical inquiry is not directed to uplifting our lives but primarily to give us insight in our world and in ourselves. This is by no means something sublime or elevated but can be exactly the opposite. Aesthetics and specially art may show us aspects of ourselves we rather not want to see. It may even make us ashamed of ourselves.

By so doing aesthetics is strongly linked to ethical judgements and a moral critique of the world and ourselves. By emphasising the borders of reason as Kant pointed out (1968) aesthetics poses a moral judgement. It appeals to a sensibility wherein freedom lies. As Nietzsche never got tired to tell us: only in aesthetics can there be insight of our lives as a whole (1980b §107: 464). That is, according to him our final gratitude towards art (ibid). It makes life bearable. That can only be read – as we shall see – as a moral judgement.

Still the main corpse of studies of aesthetics in organizations, tend to emphasize the

relation with beauty in a moral sense of uplifting the soul and embellishing social reality. In this essay I want to stretch the other meanings of aesthetics and especially focus on the critical aspect of aesthetics through a moral judgement of our dark side: aesthetics unveiling and uncanniness.

Before proceeding, some clarification is needed. It may look like I have doubts about the aesthetic understanding of organizations and disagree with the above-mentioned authors. Nothing could be more besides the truth. Art and aesthetics can make a serious contribution to the understanding of organizations and a dialogue between both organization studies and art and aesthetics can prove to be very fruitful. My doubt concerns the value given to art and aesthetics in organization studies, or, by that matter, the value of art in our culture. Art can be a very disturbing matter. Even more, from a critical perspective, it should be disturbing and not at all related to exaltation or elevation. Art also shows us, what we don't want to see; it shocks us. This shocking aspect of art comes to the fore when we dissociate art from beauty and the sublime. As said, our conception of beauty, or better, the high value we give to beauty, is a very classical concept that has been under pressure from the beginning of the XXth century onwards. If we have doubts about the relation between art and aesthetics and beauty then the aesthetic understanding of organizations should bring these doubts to the fore, making the idea of an art of management or of a beautiful organization prone to critique.

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However, in order to criticize beauty in art I have to make use of aesthetic concepts. Moreover the critique is the subject matter of aesthetics itself as Strati, among others, states.

Heidegger's thesis on the truth of art is a useful starting point. In his work *On the Origins of the work of Art* (1978) Heidegger presents himself once again as the phenomenologist he is. He looks at the experience of art by asking: What is it in a work of art that touches us? To start with the work of art is a thing but a very special thing. We cannot do anything with it. Normally we deal with things in a useful way. That is, things are normally defined by their use. We integrate them in our world. By so doing we make the thing disappear and just focus on the use. They appear in a world, or they bring up a world. The thing is, according to Heidegger, more an equipment. The main feature of equipment is that it is invisible. We only deal with the world it represents. We approach it just to be used. Nobody looks at the hammer but takes it in his hands and hammers the nail. Equipments make up the world. They integrate our doings into a coherent whole. They account for familiarity in the sense that we are not lost in the world: we know what a hammer is. All equipment serves a purpose, without saying that we decide what the purpose is. Purpose is also given by the existence of the equipment. We need a hammer to nail a nail but a nail exists in order to hang things up. So the hammer integrates in the world.

On the other hand we hang things on the wall because there are nails. As Heidegger explained technique gives the possibility of ordering the world in a certain way (1978: 307). Because of equipment we are at ease in the world, we have everything in place. The consequence is that world is about being at ease or about use and goals. World does not stand by itself. World is functionality order and goals. It's not the hammer but hammering. World is hanging the picture on the wall. But the picture itself is again a means to another goal and so ad infinitum.

Although world is a totality in the sense that we cannot escape it, that our existence happens in it, there also is, according to Heidegger, earth. Earth is what is concealed by world, is what is always concealed by the structured familiarity of order. Earth is what makes World possible. No matter how familiar everything is to us, this familiarity is grounded in something unfamiliar, in the strangeness of being in a space, of partaking in the world and not being totally in control of things. There is always a more-than that evades our control. Earth is the ground for World. Earth is there before the equipment is made, before there is a purpose, a goal, and a way of dealing with things. So world always unveils earth in the sense that it shows earth, that it shows the hidden dimensions before order. This same ontological difference we encounter with things. Equipments are things but the equipment conceals their thingly character. We only see the equipment but at the same time it still is a thing. The thing appears when we are able to see the thing past its functionality, past its goal. When we see the hammer as an object and not primarily as that thing to nail. Heidegger's own example is of course world famous; the peasant shoes. The peasant does not see her shoes; she just puts them on and goes to the field.

In order to encounter a thing the familiarity of it must be surpassed. The thing is not functional so we don't know what to do with it. It appears as something strange, new, and unheard of, it amazes us as something with an existence of its own, as something independent of our influence. In the realm of things we are equal to them or they impose their independence upon us. Things appear in a space of non-functionality, of strangeness, of bracketing our world. Things are always concealed behind equipment but equipment can only be as such because it is a thing. Earth is always concealed behind world but world can only exist because there is earth. Things unveil the earth by disrupting world past equipment.

The difference between equipment and things and the struggle between world and earth lies at the core of Heidegger's thesis on the truth of art. The work of art is a thing we encounter. It sets up a world. It does not integrate into our sphere of influence, it cannot be used to our purposes, and we cannot do anything with it. In so doing it opens up a space where we just see the work. The work makes a world and does not integrate into our world. Because the work does not adjust we just contemplate it and try to find significance or try to integrate it (and apply

violence). We fail of course. We cannot use the Mona Lisa as an ironing board as was suggested by Duchamp. Even more, we know beforehand that it is not intended to be used as such. If we still do use it, we just destroy the work of art, as is often the case with design. The Mona Lisa just hangs there. So we have to relate to it. The only way to relate is by inverting the relation. The work does not integrate but the world folds (to use a word from a different discourse) around the work. The world retracts and engulfs the work again but centred on the lack of significance of the work. The Mona Lisa defines the space she is in. The room, the museum is experienced as the place where the Mona Lisa is and all familiarity is constructed around the work. We see stone or iron, we see forms, we open our selves to grasp a meaning out of it and start uttering metaphors: strong, intimate, tender. Metaphors we know fall short or are inappropriate to describe the stone or the iron.

That is the main thing about a work of art. It's there! And everything we can say about it falls short. It is its presence and its power to escape the order of things that drives us towards it. It is just a thing. Unheard, unfamiliar, always strange, incomprehensible. Therefore the work does not support our world, our way of dealing with things. It does not adjust itself to us (see Kärstner 1976 where he calls for an upheaval of things; the last remaining slaves of our civilisation). It exists on equal foot to us. We do not possess it like we possess a hammer. In other words a work of art throws us out of our throne. We are not on top of things but we are confronted with a space wherein things possess autonomy. The work of art opens up a space we are not familiar with. It opens up the world by tearing it apart. This openness shows, or makes us aware of something strange beyond our world, our order. This openness is the experience of truth or *aletheia*. It is the event of openness into the clearance at the heart of our world, of our selves. The work of art shows us the truth of the struggle between world and earth, the autonomous existence of things beyond our grasping. It shows a space wherein things just exist and by so doing it shows our own sheer existence. Because truth always points back to ourselves. It always opens to our own existence. This it does through the experience of *uncanniness*.

If the work of art opens a space beyond the order of things. If it sets up a world. If the work as a thing, negates functionality and only allows for contemplation and nothing else. Then the work is always strange to us. In that sense alone it makes us uneasy. According to Heidegger the effect of a work of art is a *Stoss*, a blow. (1978) Just by being there it provokes a kind of anxiety. We are not in control, cannot grasp it, we do not know how to react to it since it is unfamiliar. Vattimo explains this in his remarkable essay: "Whilst single things belong to the word insofar as they are inserted in a referential totality of significance, the world as such and

as a whole does not refer and thus has no significance. Anxiety is a mark of this insignificance, the utter gratuitousness of the fact that world is. The experience of anxiety is an experience of ‘uncanniness’” (Vattimo 1992: 50) Uncanniness because of our defencelessness in front of a work of art. Our strategies to deal with the world are put into brackets and we are challenged to see our normal interpretations of the world in a new light. Our grounds and familiarity are taken away. According to Vattimo the meaning of the blow is “that of suspending the familiarity of the world, of simulating a preoccupied wonder at the fact, in itself insignificant (strictly speaking, since it refers to nothing, or refers to the nothing), that the world is there.” (1992:51) As I may recall, for Heidegger the experience of anxiety is grounded in the recognition that the world is there, the utter gratuitousness of the fact that the world is. The world does not refer to other matters; it just is and therefore has no significance or sense. (1980:233) This lack of sense is nothing, or nothingness. We are sucked into a void of nothing, a mist engulfing us where everything loses its meaning and consequently we lose our own meaning of existence. We become nothing. That is Angst (Heidegger 1955:32).

The work of art disorients us and challenges our worldview. It challenges us to construct a new one, to change the *epoche*. That is a lot to ask of a work. Heidegger of course is referring to Big Art. The great works which change history and mark decisive points in the history of culture. Art has indeed the power of changing, or challenging history. By giving form, or putting into words, to a collective sensitivity it makes matters come into being. It literarily gives form. And therefore it is recognized as something. By meticulously describing monsters and the super natural, Dante was able to give form to the medieval fear. By naming the monsters they became manageable. They became known and the fear itself was manageable. In this sense one can say that the *Divina Comedia* made renaissance possible. In art we recognize something that has not yet got a form or a name, but it becomes an icon for a culture. Because it is formless one cannot say that it exists. On the other hand because it is recognized one neither can say that it is something completely new. In a sense Plato’s *anamnesis* could be evoked here to make this point clear (see Plato 1999 IV). Of course I ‘m not saying that we remember something from a pre-existent past or from an ideal world. This recognition is the recognition of the power of the work of art to change the way we look at things, to set forth a world.

This is not only a quality of the big works. Every work of art challenges us. Every work of art casts a new light onto the existing world and sets question marks about our interpretations. This it already does by just being. What it says, the subject matter of the work challenges us specifically. Rodin’s *le penseur* is just a thing and it shows reflection. It challenges us to contemplate it and we recognize our own struggle when trying to solve a problem or reflecting

upon our world. It has rightly become an icon for reflection and philosophy.

Walter Benjamin defined the work of art as a *shock* (1982) a bombardment of images that puts the spectator off balance. For Benjamin Film is the art form most characteristic of the age of technical reproduction and he compares it with the frenetic of modern city life; “Film is the art that is in keeping with the increased threat to life which modern man has to face”. (1982:252) By losing its aura art relates to daily life. Not in the sense of integration but once again in the sense of challenging or disorienting the spectator, it becomes an experience of estrangement. As Vattimo rightly says, there is a profound parallel between Heidegger’s *uncanniness* and Benjamin’s *shock*. Both insist on disorientation. “Aesthetic experience appears to be an experience of estrangement, which then requires recomposition and readjustment. However, the aim is not to reach a final recomposed state. Instead, aesthetic experience is directed towards keeping the disorientation alive...The state of disorientation for both Heidegger and Benjamin, is constitutive and not provisional.” (1992:52)

Disorientation challenges my own being. Aesthetic experience always is directed towards my self. It destabilizes my worldview and therefore makes me aware of my way of being, makes me aware of my routines, of my interpretations. It pushes me towards self-reflection. But it does not only confront me with my own patterns of behaviour, it confronts me with anxiety. As setting into work of truth, as opening into a clearance beyond significations, as *aletheia*, it always reveals something about myself. Truth unveils my existence: for a moment I realize that I am, who I am. The challenge of art through the uncanniness it arouses is directed to the totality of my existence. My whole being is at stake and shows for instance my relation to things, my failure to see them. It reveals a very different relationship with world as a struggle between world and earth in the sense of a struggle between significations: it is just there. Art transcends the order of rational life and brings me back to my existential experience, where a union between consciousness and reality is to be found.

Heidegger’s thesis on the truth of art emphasises aesthetic experience as one of Angst or anxiety. Art disorients us and therefore opens up our existence. There is nothing beautiful in this event and certainly nothing sublime. On the contrary. Anxiety and disorientation negate beauty and put aesthetic experience in a very different light. Art is directed to shock, disorientation and anxiety. It destabilizes the world and criticizes it. Aesthetic experience is an experience of uneasiness, of awareness of not accepting the familiarity of significances. It is as Vattimo says, an ‘unfounding’ of the world. “The work of art is never serene, never beautiful in the sense of a perfect harmony between inside and outside, essence and existence, etc.” (1992:53). The work of art is meant to make us uneasy.

This makes art and aesthetics subversive and critical enterprises. Although this critical aspect has always been present in aesthetics it is in modern society that it becomes the core function of it.

As Benjamin explained in the age of mechanical reproduction the work of art has lost its aura, its uniqueness and cult value. The work of art is now defined by its exhibition value, by its *Wirkung*. The work of art becomes an event, an experience and articulates the modern condition by showing (especially in cinema) the disorientation in a life-threatening situation of modern society. Through shock art shows the alienation of modern society and the lack of sense. It makes us aware of our condition. According to Benjamin art should shock if it is to have revolutionary power. In other words art should be critical of the modern condition if it is not to be annexed by reactionary powers. Benjamin was talking of course about the historic avant gardes and especially Dada. In its nihilistic attack on modern society, Dada and the avant gardes in general embarked on an anarchistic destruction of beauty and elevated art. They transformed art by focussing on a critical task: showing the modern condition and especially our alienation. Beauty and harmony are not to be encountered in the urban surroundings. Even more, modern culture has done everything possible to destroy life and enslave man to technical rationality. The historical avant gardes showed our alienation not by being romantic or nostalgic, but just by enlarging the alienation to the extreme. By transforming the work of art into an instrument of critique in the sense of a mirror of our condition. By concentrating on shock. The first consequence of this transformation is the banning of beauty, the sublime, harmony and geniality out of art. Even banning authenticity and sensitivity out of art. The classical ideal of beauty does not match with the actual conditions of modern society. It has become an instrument in the ideology of the oppressing powers. Beauty and art are supported by an ideology of a specific *paideia* for the upper classes. Only they have the sensibility and good taste to appreciate art and the harmony of beauty. According to the Avant gardes art has to take stand against this ideology. If art is really going to be art for all then it first has to revolt against all existing conceptions of art.

The Avant gardes did this by abolishing the work of art altogether. Art is not a matter of works of art anymore but its about an event or experience. The Anti art of Dada attacked the perennial value of art. The work has no intrinsic value of its own (after all it can be technical reproduced) but serves as a platform for an experience. This means that art centres on reflectivity and not on sensible pleasure. Art has value insofar as it makes us aware of the world we live in. Insofar as it shows its liberating power. As Breton said: “*La beauté sera convulsive o ne sera pas*”(1928: last sentence) or as the Belgian Surrealist Luis Scutenaire said about his

friend René Magritte: “Magritte had no desire to serve painting but to use it as an instrument of knowledge and liberation”(1948:9) The work of art is an instrument a key to mobilize experiences and make people aware of their condition. Valuing the work of art for itself is to negate this critical enterprise of modern art. From the Avant gardes on art is directed to bringing anxiety forth. This it does as a political gesture of critique. Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* (the urinary upside down) can be understood as an attempt to rescue the object from its use, from its equipment. Once again Vattimo helps to summarize this all:

“A stability and permanence in the work, a depth and authenticity in the aesthetic experience of creation and appreciation are things we can no longer expect from late-modern aesthetic experience, ...In opposition to the nostalgia for eternity (in the work) and authenticity (in experience), it must be clearly recognized that *shock* is all that remains of the creativity of art in the age of generalized communication. And *shock* ...fundamentally is nothing but metropolitan man’s nervous and intellectual inconstancy and hypersensitivity.” (1992: 58)

Vattimo is not talking about the Avant gardes here but of contemporary art. The transformation of art that started with the Avant gardes and was reflected upon by Benjamin and Heidegger has become the main characteristic of art and aesthetics in our present world. Breton’s words have become the credo of aesthetics: beauty if it is to be has to be convulsive. Art then is by no means a joy and a restoration of sense or significance. Art is (or should be) dangerous. It makes us unhappy and compels us to reflect upon ourselves.

Art has become an art of melancholy. It shows what we are lacking and reminds us of the forgetfulness of being or the concealment of earth and destruction of things by equipments. This it does not by being utopical or nostalgic in the sense of a possible preservation of a happy past or a longing for a return of meaning. Art just states the forgetting and lack of sense in our world. It impedes complacency with the existing world without giving an alternative or an ideal way out. It is up to us to take the lessons we learn from art seriously and see ourselves as what we are. It is my opinion that when talking about art and aesthetics and organizations we tend to left out the critical and dangerous aspect of art and concentrate on a sensibility relationship of sense making. I’ve tried to show that art is much more concerned with the lack of sense and forgetting than with community, recomposition, readjustment and *Geborgenheit*.

One specific aspect of our existence I want to develop further is misanthropy. This is important because it shows how dangerous art and aesthetics can be for the existing order. Especially when we think about the relation between aesthetics and organizations. The hatred or distrust of mankind is a well-known phenomenon and has been recognized since ancient Greece. As far as I know it has never been the specific subject of a study by one of the leading

figures of philosophy. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* for instance does not mention it. If you try Internet you find references to a pop band... and quite obscure self-professed misanthropes. Still misanthropy is regarded as a sin. Christianity of course rejected it from the very beginnings. Love thou neighbours. So do all mayor religions. Humanism is also utterly opposed to it. Morality and ethics condemn it. In general it is regarded as a kind of anomaly with no consistent theoretical position. It is not even regarded as a psychic disturbance that needs to be treated. Probably because the misanthropes don't have any urge to do so and society is not threatened by them. In short misanthropy is not an issue in present day discourse and never has been. Still, it is there.

The main point of misanthropy is that it goes against prevalent discourse on social reality. From the XIXth century on the social sciences have taken centre stage in intellectual discourse. Social science starts from the fact that society exists and that it should exist. Man is a social animal. The social discourse is centred on a discussion about the best way for a society to function. It never discusses the desirability of the social. This has resulted in a social imperative. One has to be sociable and directed to others. Like a friend encountered not so long ago when he was summoned to the primary school of his children because the teacher thought that his 6-year-old boy was not social enough. The psychological fact that 6-year-old children are not capable of being social escaped the teacher.

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This imperative is also backed up by ethics. I just point out to Levinas (1981) and his encounter in recognition of the moral party. Bauman grounds his theory of postmodern ethics in this moral encounter (1993). We recognize the other as other before any rationality. Also Heidegger's phenomenology starts with the *existentialia* of care (1927). Existence is always given in a relation.

In political discussion much attention is given to the organization of diversity grounded on sociability. All in all not much room for acknowledging misanthropy. At this point it is important to state that I'm not interested in an apology of misanthropy. My point is the recognition of misanthropic tendencies in man. I'm just trying to say that we are not supposed to be misanthropes.

It goes without saying that one place where misanthropy is impossible is in organizations. Misanthropes are all unemployed or they conceal themselves very good. It is no surprise that the one place where misanthropy is a recurrent theme is art. Molière is perhaps most famous for it. It is worthwhile to go a little deeper into Molière's play *le Misanthrope* (2000) because it shows some important characteristics of misanthropy.

Alceste is not willing to behave according to social norms. He tries to be as honest as

possible and is opposed to the exaggerated politeness of everybody around him. He criticizes his friend for being extremely nice to other people while, at the same time, disliking them. That makes him a grumpy man who does not behave in public. He has of course big problems with his friend Céline who likes to flirt and is very good at adulating others. Céline likes Alceste but she is embarrassed by his behaviour. In the end Alceste loses his Céline. Molière shows us a misanthrope that does not hate mankind as such but hates what mankind has made of it. Misanthropy becomes a social conscience that mistrusts mankind in name of honesty and veracity. Alceste is without any doubt a misanthrope. He hates mankind but is not an egoist. He is not interested in himself but cares about mankind. He can't stand what man has made of himself. That makes him a misanthrope. One cannot help to feel sympathy for this grumpy critic of society:

“ALCESTE: I expect you to be sincere and as honourable man never to utter a single word that you don't really mean.

PHILINTE: But when someone comes along and shows such pleasure in seeing you, surely you must repay him in kind, respond to his enthusiasm as far as you can, return offer for offer, exchange vow for vow.

ALCESTE: No! I can't bear these despicable mannerisms that so many of your men of fashion affect. There is nothing I hate more than the contortions of your protestation-mongers, the affable exchangers of famous greetings, polite mothers of meaningless words, who bandy civilities with all comers and treat everyone, blockhead and man of sense alike. What satisfaction can there be in having a man express his considerations for you, profess friendship, faith, zeal, esteem and affection, and praise you to the skies when he'll hasten to do as much for the first worthless scoundrel he runs into? No, no! ... There is precious little satisfaction in the most glorious of reputations if you find you have to share it with the whole universe.... I despise the all-embracing, indiscriminating affection which makes no distinction of merit. I want to be singled out and, to put it bluntly, the friend of the human race is not my line at all.” (2000:96)

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The misanthrope despises maybe not humanity as such, but what humanity has become. He hates the so-called politeness and dishonesty. He has good reasons for doing this. He is certainly no egoist, nor a sadist. He is not against society just for the sheer pleasure of it but he distrusts mankind because men play a game of sociability without believing in it, even to the detriment of themselves. The misanthrope seeks veracity and integrity and is not willing to search for the approval of others.

Molière turns herewith things around and the preconceptions we may have had against misanthropy change into sympathy or at least understanding. If we value integrity and living a veracious life, if we value an authentic way of being, then we must feel enraged by the compulsory sociability of society. Misanthropic hate comes from the longing for integrity.

Maybe I am a misanthrope myself. Or, am I? I, of course I thought of myself as a caring person, social, even willing to help others at all times. I am directed to the other and feel engaged to him or her. I am upset when I heard, or encounter examples of people not relating or not willing to help the others, like told of life in big cities where neighbours have no idea of each other. But am I much different? I probably can recall several situations in which I acted like Philinte and was polite without meaning it. Who am I? Philinte or Alceste? Who would I like to be?

Misanthropy appears now as a critical position that is not so unethical as we thought of in the first place. In fact it can be considered as an ethical position of critique against the terror of sociability. The imperative of being social and polite leads to mannerism and demands conformism of individuals. Conformism to group norms and settings that all too often are the result of a power struggle. The group adopts the opinion of the most powerful member and demands submission. This submission presents itself as engagement with the other, as a morality of partenance. What Nietzsche called the herd: the need to be together (1993 band V) The group is held together by the fear of disintegration, by the resentments to the ones who do not want to belong to a group (the pathos of distance). Belonging to a group and conformism to the rules becomes compulsive and is introverted in the individual in the form of conscience. It is us who want to comply. This is seen from the point of view of the misanthrope as a terror. The fear of being left alone drives us to be social. The implicit obligation to comply, to be nice, even at the detriment of oneself. It is misanthropy that brings this to the fore, or makes us aware of the compulsion of being social. Of course I'm not only referring to Molière, although he can be seen as the iconic figure. Nietzsche is the philosopher who is most well known for his mistrust of mankind ("Man is the sick animal"). But then he was a student of Schopenhauer, another not so joyful thinker.

Although misanthropy is hate and mistrust of mankind, it is, in a paradoxical way the result of care for what mankind should be. Therefore misanthropy is a *via negativa* of concern with humanity. Misanthropy shows us a strange reversion. Group behaviour is seen as resentment, as imposing power to others, while misanthropy itself becomes the result of a pity. Misanthropy thus becomes a critique of conformism and an engagement with authenticity. It is time to return to visual art and especially to the paintings of Francis Bacon. I hope that in here all these thoughts come together and it becomes clear how art unsettles us and opens up an insight into our selves.

Bacon's paintings undoubtedly disturb us. There is nothing funny in his paintings. He shows the human figure with a very precise figuration. But the bodies are contorted in a way

that it hurts our eyes. It is like they are wriggled. The body is distorted as if it was plasticine. Such contortions mean crippledness. The faces underline the pain in grimaces of agony and despair. According to Deleuze Bacon paints the invisible forces of sensations (1984:40). He does not paint the effect of sensations but the sensation itself, as it is present in the body. He shows the pain, despair, anger and agony of the body itself. Bacon is a painter of pity for humanity. He shows humanity in the corps itself. And from this he takes everything off in order to get to the essence: the meat (la viande). There is no difference between the flesh and emotions. It is in the meat that we can see the emotion. It is the sensation of the body itself, the sensation of the pity that is shown on his canvas. But is it really pity? In a sense yes. Man is not a happy creature, but maybe he could have been. But it is not a Christian pity based on knowledge of what is best. Bacon does not tell us how it ought to be. He is much more clinical; he just states solitude. But it is also intimacy. We see the figure engaged in solitary activities but of a solitude that excludes the other. It is not that the figures seem to long for another but much more that they have chosen to be alone. This is also the case when they are together. Are they fighting or making love? Is it a loving union or the encounter of the flesh? The latter of course; although they melt into one. Intimate solitude prevails. And the situations are so quotidian! The figures are not engaged in extraordinary activities. They sit, they shave, and they defecate. Here is the intense sadness of it all. The solitary intimacy of the figures, excludes all sociability. There is no togetherness possible in Bacon's paintings. We are alone and in pain. This disturbs me. I had an optimistic view of my life. I, of course, am not like those figures. But is this not exactly what Molière was teaching us? Is it not that I want to be part of a group and not solitary? Is the disturbance not a mirror into myself? And then I start to see humanity as Bacon's figures. All my feelings of belonging to groups could be more a concealment of my solitude, an anxiety for being alone than a longing for togetherness.

One painting in particular is of importance here. The portrait of Pope Innocentius X . Painted after Velazquez. It is the same figure Velazquez shows us. Sitting in the same manner. His hands rest on the chair and he looks straight into the spectator. But while Velazquez shows the power of the pope, Bacon makes him cry. His mouth is wide open in a frozen cry of despair and madness. According to Deleuze this is a painting of a shout, a cry. Just that. He shouts and in this shout he shows the invisibility of why he shouts (1984: 41) Velazquez show us a figure op power. Bacon still shows us power, but a power gone mad, a despairing power of solitude. It remind us of the mad king, sung in Peter Maxwell Davies opera *Eight songs for a mad king*. Innocentius X fascinates us and we thoroughly dislike it. It disturbs us profoundly. Here is somebody who is not able, nor willing to make any contact whatsoever. He is totally in his own

cage and even in one version surrounded by dead oxen. Man encaged in his own world. Is this the ultimate consequence of power? Of decision-making?

But the whole thing is just a painting. Are not all these thoughts projections of my mind? They are just interpretations that say more about myself than about the painting. But it is the painting that makes my thoughts and emotions go around. The painting sets my thinking and my emotions to work. Like Gadamer said. It is impossible not to react to art, just as it is impossible not to move your head when watching a game of tennis (1977: 31). That is what Heidegger was saying about art. It sets up a world and reveals a truth. It disturbs and calls for anxiety. I'm a misanthrope and Bacon is right.

So what about corporate identity and the instruments of HRM with regards to corporate culture? What about personal development programs and coaching management? All helping the employee to develop himself, and everybody is polite and friendly to his colleagues. After all it is for everybody's good and people in organizations work as a team to achieve shared goals. Nobody ask the employee if he wants to be coached. Nobody ask permission to discuss his or her development. There is a team and everyone is part of it, working together. After all we are all human resources and corporations biggest asset. Are we not? HRM helps in motivational matters....

Misanthropy as we learn from Molière and Bacon among others, has a certain point by making us aware that maybe things are not so good as we think. But that unsettles us. Aesthetics and art are by no means beautiful. Art disrupts and makes us uneasy. *La beaute sera convulsive ou ne sera pas*. Are organizations and organization studies so keen in the relation with aesthetics and art? Or are they more interested in a classical conception of art, of a non-shocking art. Are we really waiting for disruption, uneasiness, critique, shock, uncannines, unbounding, and convulsiveness?

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