

## **The Third Space of Knowledge. Leadership and Creativity**

### **Concluding remarks at the conference on Leadership and Creativity, Bramstrup, June 2004.**

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#### **Introduction**

At the conference on Leadership and Creativity, Bramstrup June 2004, I had the opportunity to try to summarise our three days of lectures, performances and discussions. This short paper represents a summary of my summary, inviting participants to improve and comment on my points. I will start by presenting what for me seemed to be the central concept of our discussions, i.e. the concept of knowledge. From there, I will briefly summarise those three themes, which for me emerged as the basic themes during our discussions.

#### **The Mystery of Knowledge**

##### ***The Weird World of Mind and Reality***

According to Cartesian philosophy, knowledge is the result of a correspondence between mind and world. According to Descartes, the world can be divided into *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. The thinking subject and the external – not-thinking – world.

Thus, to know something is to establish a link or a correspondence between mind and reality. Just listen to the words: A “link”. “Mind and reality” – as if mind isn’t reality and thoughts are models “corresponding” to an external world. To know something is to decide what is and what isn’t the case. To know something is to transport knowledge from the external world into the mind. Consequently, knowledge is the store of facts (in the computer- age: the memory of information), and to share knowledge is to transport knowledge from one file to another.

Still, most epistemological theory implicitly assumes that this weird world of correspondences, of minds outside reality and realities outside mind, constitutes the indisputable precondition for talking about knowledge. You may disagree about what comes first. You may be “realist” or “antirealist”. Still, however, the very distinction between mind and reality is beyond discussion (for a recent example see Klausen 2004).

In accordance with this theory, modern knowledge management theory defines knowledge as a substance. Knowledge management is equal to management of physical processes. It is a theory about how to file, to transport and to provide access to knowledge substances.

##### ***Critique of “the ghost in the machine” paradigm***

Inspired by e.g. Edmund Husserl’s critique of the Cartesian philosophy, in 1949 the English language philosopher Gilbert Ryle reacted against this paradigm. He characterised the idea that there should exist a certain thinking device, which did not belong to the world, as “the ghost in the machine” paradigm. As a result of his criticism, knowledge cannot primarily be understood as knowledge-of something. Knowledge-of presupposes knowledge-how. With his famous statement in *The Concept of Mind*: “Knowing-that” presupposes “knowing-how” (Ryle 1949).

With this proposal, Ryle broke the mystery of knowledge. Knowledge is more than knowing-that. He passed from the first to the second space of knowledge. i.e. from simple knowledge to situative knowledge. However, he did not reach the third space of knowledge: The space in which the mystery of knowledge occurs: The space in which new knowledge is created.

### ***The Third Space of Knowledge***

In order to enter this third space of knowledge, the Cartesian paradigm must be replaced by what I would call the phenomenological paradigm. This paradigm states what should be obvious: that the thinking mind is part of the world. This implies that also the mind is part of the world. The mind is an extensive thing and can be studied as such. But it also implies that the world is – creative. Creativity belongs to the world, not just to the human mind.

This third space of knowledge has been explored by many modern philosophers, among others by the French philosopher Michel Serres (cf. Serres 1997). According to Serres, in order to learn something one doesn't just go from what one knows to what one doesn't know. It is the change of "view" that represents the real learning, and it is only by changing one's view that something new is created. "In crossing the river, in delivering itself completely naked to belonging to the opposite shore, it has just learned a third thing. The other side, new customs, a new language, certainly. But above all, it has just discovered learning in this blank middle that has no direction from which to find all directions." (Serres 1997 p. 7)

### ***Spaces of Knowledge***

Inspired by the American anthropologist and epistemologist Gregory Bateson, in a new book, *The Knowing Society* with the subtitle: "The mystery of knowledge, learning and culture" (Qvortrup 2004) I have systematised the spaces of knowledge with a special focus on the third place of knowledge, creative knowledge.

In accordance with Ryle's critique of Cartesian dualism, in the 1960s Bateson suggested that learning and communication can be divided into four categories: first, second, third and fourth order learning (Bateson 2000 [1972])<sup>1</sup>. Taking inspiration in Bateson's categorisation, one can identify four forms of knowledge from a phenomenological or systems theory approach. First order knowledge is simple knowledge: Knowledge about something. Second order knowledge is knowledge about knowledge, i.e. reflexive or situated knowledge. This category corresponds to Ryle's "knowing-how". Third order knowledge is knowledge about knowledge about knowledge, i.e. knowledge about the preconditions for reflexive knowledge. Finally, one can identify a fourth order knowledge, which represents the social evolution of knowledge or experience, i.e. the collective and perhaps unconscious knowledge process and the total knowledge potential. This is what Edmund Husserl calls the knowledge horizon of society.

The theory proposed here builds on this idea. Its main claim is that a mundanised subject observing the world in order to know about the world - and all subjects are mundanised subjects - must make the following forms of observation:

- it must observe the world as an object of observation
- it must observe itself in the world
- it must observe the world as a precondition for observing the world

In addition it must be presupposed that the world, including the subject observing the world, exists as a precondition of knowledge. I furthermore presuppose that this world is dynamic, i.e. that it changes and thus makes change of knowledge possible. Finally, I also assume that changes in the world take place by virtue of the world itself. The mundanised subject changes the world through its observation and it is changed by the world through its observation: It transforms the world and is transformed thereby, whether this last change is called socialisation or learning.

This implies that one can identify four forms of knowledge:

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<sup>1</sup> See also the detailed review of Bateson's categories of learning in Qvortrup 2001.

Knowledge category	Knowledge form	Knowledge designation
Knowledge	Knowledge about something	Factual knowledge
Knowledge about knowledge	Knowledge about the situatedness of knowing	Situative knowledge
Knowledge about (knowledge about knowledge)	Knowledge about conditions of knowing	Systemic or creative knowledge
Knowledge about (knowledge about (knowledge about knowledge))	The world as precondition of knowledge	World knowledge

Where the first forms of knowledge represent observation-based forms of knowledge, i.e. relations between subject and world (including the subject's knowledge of itself as a subject in the world), the fourth form of knowledge is not knowledge about the world but the world as knowledge.

First order knowledge is knowledge about something. For instance, I know that from where I am sitting I can see a beautiful bed of rhododendrons, and I know that the large plant in the middle is a *Rhododendron Cawtabiensis*.

Second order knowledge is knowledge about the knowledge situation, i.e. the capacity for self-observation. Not only do I know that the shrub out there is a *Rhododendron Cawtabiensis*, but I also know that I know it because I had to elaborate my wishes to the owner of the nursery I bought it from. I also know that the fact that I consider it beautiful may be because I planted it myself. In other words, I am not only capable of categorising what I see, but I also have the ability to stand next to my own observation and consider it.

Third order knowledge, cf. Bateson's classificatory scheme, is knowledge about knowledge about knowledge, i.e. knowledge about the systematic of knowledge that my knowledge is part of. It can, for instance, be knowledge of the botanical systematics, which lead to the designations of species that I employ. Or it can be knowledge of the aesthetic criteria for beauty, which make me find my garden beautiful. My aesthetic preferences could be caused by a predilection for English garden aesthetics rather than the more formal French or Italian classicist garden aesthetics.

This knowledge category can be called "creative knowledge" because the one who knows or just get a glimpse of the conditions of his knowledge is able to change these conditions. Traditionally, this category of knowledge has been called "transcendental knowledge", because it transcends the explicit knowledge. It may also be called the "event of knowledge", because it is not the specific instances of knowledge, for instance in a performance or in a musical piece, but it represents that which happens when these instances are experienced as a totality, i.e. as an event.

Finally, fourth order knowledge is knowledge about the preconditions for the knowledge systematic represented by the entire cultural system, into which these knowledge forms and judgments of taste are embedded. For Bateson this fourth order knowledge is a very particular form of knowledge, which cannot be contained within one person but resides in the social community of which the individuals are members.

## The Basic Themes of the Bramstrup Conference

During the three days of performances, lectures and discussions, three basic themes emerged:

- Communication through art
- Leadership of creative processes
- Art(ist) in residence

I will briefly summarise these three themes.

### ***Communication through art***

Here, art is observed as a communication medium. When persons communicate or phenomena are observed through art – the third form of knowledge – one may address the conditions or basic assumptions of that what is said, i.e. the decision premises of that what is decided.

At the conference, this was exemplified by the former managing director of Novo Nordic, Mads Øvlisen. When I talk with my employees through a work of art, we can address the basic conditions of our communication, he said. Or, similarly: Through art we can talk about that which otherwise cannot be talked about.

For me this implies that one should make a distinction between so-called “tacit knowledge” (cf. Polanyi) and the third form of knowledge. According to Polanyi, bicycling is tacit knowledge, because one cannot verbally instruct others in how to ride a bicycle. However, bicycling certainly is not art. Thus, tacit knowledge does not represent that, which cannot be talked about, but it represents that, which cannot be explicated, e.g. dance, gestures etc.

### ***Leadership of creative processes***

Here, the leadership of art performance was the main example. One case was the explicit leadership of the conductor, while another case was the implicit leadership of the string quartet, i.e. that the playing of the string quartet is lead but something else than the primarius.

To conduct means con-ducere, leading through. Thus, a conductor is a medium for observation. Those who are conducted may observe something special through the conductor.

Three types of observation can be made through the explicit or implicit conductor.

Ex-acting: Here, the function of the conductor is to make exact acting possible. This relates to the first form of knowledge. The actors – musicians – play the right notes at the right time, i.e. they are informed by factual knowledge.

Inter-acting: Here, the function of the conductor is to make acting together – interaction – possible. This relates to the second form of knowledge, situative knowledge. Through the conductor the actors – e.g. musicians – observe each other, not just in order to play exact, but in order to observe themselves through the other. What and how should I play, observing that the other plays this or that? Situative knowledge supports improvisation, and improvisation means: Observing myself through the other. The musician plays as he does instructed by the performance of the others. This may be termed second-instructedness.

Trans-acting: Here, the function of the conductor is to make acting possible according to the transcendental of the work of art, e.g. the piece of music. This relates to the third form of knowledge, creative knowledge. The actors do not just observe the notes or each other, but through the conductor or through their collective spirit they observe what Aristotle called the “catharsis” of the work of art. Here, the musician plays, what he plays, observing the “spirit” of the collective action. Thus may be termed third-instructedness.

### ***Art(ist) in residence***

Art can be defined as a communication medium. Observing the world through art – or through science – is to observe the preconditions of our common observations, or the transcendental of knowledge. Through art we understand – or we get a glimpse of that fact – that every observation is an observation made according to an otherwise in-observable attitude.

Art or artists in residence is re-contextualised art or artists. To introduce art in a business company or to invite an artist into a company is to introduce a new view into the company. It is to invite the employees to observe the otherwise in-observable attitude on which all everyday observations and actions are based.

During the conference, different metaphors for re-contextualised art or artists were suggested:

- *The readymade metaphor.* Here the artist uses the business enterprise or the organisation as Duchamp used readymades. He re-contextualised the object and thus created a new vision of that object. The enterprise is used by the artist as he would traditionally use canvas for his oil painting.

- *The diplomacy metaphor.* Here the new place of art, the organisation or enterprise, is defined as a negotiation arena for people speaking different languages, and to be an artist in residence is to be a translator or mediator between world views or languages. However, the artist in residence has certain privileges. He has “diplomatic passport”.
- *Art gallery or atelier metaphor.* Here the organisation or enterprise is a context for art, a place to decorate or in which to place the art works.
- *Organisation engineering metaphor.* Here the artist in residence is invited into a new enterprise environment in order to change this environment. By tradition, the manager would have invited an organisation consultant. Today, he invites an artist.
- *Trojan horse metaphor.* Here the organisation is the enemy of the artist, who has slipped into this foreign realm by hiding his real intentions. Having entered this new world, it is his intention to change it from inside – not knowing that entering a new place is to change yourself accordingly.
- *Sameness/otherness metaphor.* Here the artist represents something different from the organisation. A new view or a new spirit is introduced into the organisation with the aim of inspiring the employees – cf. the fact that inspiration means exactly in-spirate, i.e. to introduce a new spirit.

## **Instead of a Conclusion**

I certainly dare not to conclude this personal summary of the Bramstrup conference. However, I am looking forward to continue the understanding of art as a third space of knowledge and its implications for communication through art, leadership of creative processes, and art and artists in residence.

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