CAPITALISM CORRESPONDENCES AND THE *IMPOSSIBILITY OF THINKING THAT*

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Foucault writes of the system of categorization described by Borges and of *the impossibility of thinking that*. He cites a passage from Borges which quotes a Chinese encyclopaedia in which *animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a very long way off look like flies*. (Foucault, 1977).

This paper is concerned with *the impossibility of thinking that*, not with respect to Borges example, but to a wider interpretation of the Foucault's problem: the impossibility of finding meaning, in the sense of a resolution of the mysteries of life, that is not contingent upon the categories that are used to search for and express meaning and yet the necessity the obligation to do so. The situation is described in Kafka's story within a story in the Trial. The *Law* is hidden behind a never ending sequence of entrances, each barred by an increasingly intimidating and immovable doorman: the seeker of the *Law* waits interminably for entrance just to the first doorway. Finally he is told that the door is designed specifically for him as it is finally slammed shut.

The focus of the paper is not on the categories that prevent us from *thinking that*, but on an alternative mode of approach, through correspondences rather than categories. There are two necessary conditions for understanding correspondences. The first is to recognize the reality of different levels of being. The second is consciousness.

The paper is located in the study of capitalism or business (I use the terms synonymously because in talking about business we mean capitalism). The theme is rather strange in a business context, especially given that the central theme is that we need to take a mystical view of things. By mystical I mean direct perception of different levels of being. The rationale for the theme is that we take business both too seriously and not seriously enough. Not seriously enough in supposing that there can be a society, a culture, a life that is beyond business, not recognizing that we are conditioned by business, in the form of what I will call organizational grammar. Too seriously in seeking direction from business people in areas they have nothing to contribute *qua business people*: education, the media and the direction of the national and the global economy.

Emanuel Swedenborg writes of correspondences as reflections of one level of being in another. His approach is hermeneutic. Events in the sensory or material world, in Swedenborg are reflections, or more precisely expressions, of events at a different level of being: the spiritual world. In the Sufi methodology of Ibn Arabi, multiple levels of being exist and creative imagination as an isthmus, or bridge spanning the correspondences between the sensory world of every day experience and the world of the archetypes (Corbin, 1977; Ibn Arabi, 2000). Archetypes in Ibn Arabi's methodology are transcendental forms, capable of infinitely many expressions, that

are, as it were, at play in the everyday world. So correspondences are not one to one mappings: the archetypes have multiple representations. The Jungian project is concerned with meaningful coincidences, or correspondences between archetypes and the everyday world, the reason, I suppose, that Jung considered the latter part of his work on alchemy and synchronicity so fundamental (Jung, 1968). The modern problem of understanding or articulating the concept of synchronicity and indeed Jung's sometimes confused account of the phenomenon of synchronicity, reflects the impossibility of *thinking that*, referred to by Foucault. We are used to thinking in categories and seeking causes, rather than correspondences or relationships between different worlds that do not have boundaries in the same way as categories: disjoint sets with boundaries in Euclidean space.

The dream world and relationships with the unconscious illustrate the failure of distinct categories and boundaries to exist universally. Dreams transgress the rules, the structures that we impose on the everyday world. In so doing, they contradict Foucault's *impossibility of thinking that*. They also reflect the danger of accepting the possibility of *thinking that*: flirtation with madness. The rediscovery of the unconscious by Freud leads to the reality of different levels of being: consciousness floating on a sea of unconsciousness, formed of forgotten impressions. Jung found many instances of meaningful coincidences (the correspondences of synchronicity), events at one level becoming activated or energised by the archetypes: in Jung the play of archetypes in alchemy and in dreams. In Freud, the unconscious in dreams and fantasies are unrefined by everyday comfortable categories and rational procedures: strangers to the enlightenment project, playing according to a mysterious script or grammar.

Let us introduce the notion of organizational grammar, to distinguish the rules and procedures that programme and condition what we call everyday life, the material world, or what (so called) practical people insist is the real world. According to this notion, the root of the impossibility of *thinking that* is the organizational grammar which we adopt in society, in organizations, or as individuals, to impose a structure, that makes sense of the world: makes it bearable and tractable. Grammar, in the general sense I am using it, has many dimensions. I can think of at least three; formal (informal), social (personal), external to the individual, the society the organization (internal). Grammar consists of a morphology and a syntax. Taking the three dimensions (together with their opposites there are eight combinations (formal external social, formal external personal and so on). Rather than thinking in terms of an algorithm or set of algorithms programming behavior (including thought), organizational grammar has a morphology that ranges from treaties, contracts, agreements at the formal level, to informal cultures, norms and codes at the social level, through to modes of understanding, categories, conditioning at the personal level. The endless list that we could compose makes up a morphology (corresponding to the nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions and so on of language) and syntax consists of the rules that govern the way the elements of the morphology are linked.

Grammar itself is a set of correspondences, a play of archetypes in the material world that might be presented in a rational manner as a grid (or an algorithm) with tight compartments mapping archetypes into the material world. In myth, archetypes are presented imaginatively: each of the characters, Gods, archetypes, angels, play out their destiny according to their own morphology and interact in the looser syntax of

the myth, dream or fantasy. In the respect of the *impossibility of thinking that,* we must be referring to organizational grammar proper: rules of operating in the material world (particularly in organizations and particularly in capitalism) rather than the mysterious grammar, operating at another level of being; in Borges encyclopedia, the koan or the Hermes myth, for example. In archetypal, mythical or angelic representations, archetypes are pure states: in myths archetypes interact with one another as Gods, but they retain their essential nature and only appear as contradictory and puzzling because they retain their integrity intact throughout in spite of everything (Zeus, Venus, Hermes, Vulcan): their nature, like Iago's (*I am what I am*) remains what it is, unaffected by time or death.

We turn the role of grammar in the expression of the archetype of competition expressed in capitalism, a system characterized by private property, financial markets and the variants of the rules regulations and cultures that distinguish varieties of capitalism (Matthews, 2000).

Grammar is a programming mechanism: a necessary mechanism, otherwise life would be unthinkable, but none the less programming. Here we introduce an hypothesis. Consciousness is reflected in the extent of awareness of programming (and unconsciousness), not to programming by organizational grammar as such which is inevitable, but to lack of awareness of programming by organizational grammar. Heidegger spoke of authenticity in this connection. Living authentically for him takes the form of recognition of the inevitability of death. In mysticism, this is expresses by the sufi injunction (*die before you die*), or the notion that in death we receive the truth, in a mode of thought that is different from our own, so we think it is false and only after being presented with it a third time (and three is an irrational number) can we bring ourselves to accept it. Only the fool, the idiot, the youngest son, the lame, or the animal are sufficiently free from organizational grammar (in the material world) to comprehend the grammar of different other levels of being.

This brings us back to the Foucaudian impossibility of *thinking that*. Grammar creates the impossibility, but also reflects the necessity of imposing an approach, or more pr4ecisely a procedure of thought and behavior in the material or sensory world, that has a rationale, but a rationale only in terms of the grammar itself: the grammar operating at a particular time and place. There are no ultimate structures, but correspondences exist. There are many, possibly infinitely many, possible grammars, and varieties of grammar. Organizational grammar reflects the necessity of imposing a procedure for handling events. At the personal level, grammar provides a mode of interpretation, a means of interpretation, a meaning. The meaning imposed by organizational grammar is illusory in the sense that it is legitimized by a particular grammar and arbitrary because correspondences can take many forms.

Capitalism itself is a correspondence. As an abstract economic notion, it is thought of as an organizational form which (among other features) is based on private ownership and the existence of a debt market. New capitalism has evolved to incorporate informationalism in that its products and processes generally have high information content. New capitalism recognizes its own dynamism and its capacity to overproduce, and therefore the need to stimulate consumption perpetually by communicating with the unconscious through signs and symbols that consist of a mix of eroticism and anxiety.

The link between eroticism and spirituality is well documented in mysticism. Consider for example the work of Jallalladin Rumi. Death is the essence of capitalism: death that occurs as a result of endless competition and technological inventiveness inevitably eliminates institutions and organizations or changes them beyond recognition. The best that strategy can achieve is to exert some control on the rate of dieing. The end is always the same, elimination in the search for increased fitness as institutions, organizations and societies co-evolve.

Capitalism as an organizational form is a correspondence to the archetype, competition. The Hermes myth expresses the correspondence at a fantastic or mystical level (Matthews, 1998). Darwinian evolution expresses it in a rational myth. Two propositions govern out assessment in the material world. The first, Darwinian, is that we exist in an environment of scarcity and competition. The second, Freudian, is that the experience of childhood determines the way that we experience later life: organizational level at the personal level operating as history. The correspondence is experienced without awareness of organizational grammar.

The discourse of capitalism (the way we talk about its organizational grammar) has two elements, *competitive advantage* and *performativity*. According to the discourse of *competitive advantage,* what matters is relative performance: only relative performance matters so there is no end to the process and the anxiety of seeking it. Success acts as a magnet, attracting new competition and new technologies which force them to adapt or die. Anything less than success relative to others, is a kind of failure. The process is *performative* and it works through markets and thus interference with markets is counterproductive. Welfare, job security, social responsibility rather than concern with profit are seen as alibis for inefficiency. Organizations are evaluated according to their *performativity:* that is their efficiency, cost effectiveness, productivity, their input output coefficients and their ability to do more for less.

Competitive advantage and *performativity* become the rationale for not tackling scarcity and poverty (and marginalisation) because the dynamism of the system ensures according to the discourse that, in the long term, they cannot exist, and alleviating them in the short term by redistributing wealth represents a return to Statism which is equated with inefficiency and negation of the discourse.

The working of organizational grammar is the process that makes it *impossible to think that*. This brings us to the Heideggerian notion of authenticity. As in the methodologies of mysticism the first step in awakening consciousness is the awareness of temporality, and impermanence: in Kafka's, tale to foresee that the door will be slammed shut.

The essence of categories in the material world is distinctiveness (boundaries). The essence of correspondences is the absence of boundaries: boundaries between different levels of being and at other levels of being (creative imagination for example), cannot be expressed, any more than Borges categories can, in Euclidian space, disjoint, non intersecting sets.

Linking the themes of the paper, the problem with capitalism is not that it is a correspondence as such, but that it is expressed in an organizational grammar that imposes a meaning, an interpretation of itself that makes it impossible to think otherwise: *the impossibility of thinking that*.

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