

Abstract

Most of the recent organizational studies literature on bodies at work has been carried out in a Foucauldian structuralist mode. This perspective has increasingly been criticised for its tendency to de-materialise the (working) body behind the linguistic world of cognition and symbols. This essay rather attempts to present a phenomenologically informed approach to working human beings as embodied agents.

I explore the Islamic mystic Sufi tradition of meaning making, its doctrine, its bodily practices and its artistic forms of expression looking for insights on how we can look at/feel/express the experiencing self in more holistic ways integrating symbol and body-self, conceived phenomenologically.

In particular, I show how the embodied experience of mystic ecstasy can contribute to the epistemological debate as well as to the broader re-definition of the object of study in organizational studies, the enrichment of fieldwork methodologies and research products.

This paper collects theoretical and methodological reflections on a phenomenologically-informed approach to working human beings. I am looking for ways to speak about working human beings as 'wholes' rather than either as minds or bodies. In order to do so, I first sketch the literature on the body in work and organizations and briefly present a tentative phenomenologically informed approach to study embodiment of work. Then, in the main part of the essay, I turn to a specific (far) tradition of meaning making: Sufism. I explore the mind/body question in this Islamic form of mysticism hoping to gain insights in possibilities to avoid contemporary (Western) dichotomous conceptualizations and representations. On the basis of these insights, I formulate working hypothesis on how embodied working human beings can be conceived/felt/known and represented/evoked in a holistic perspective.

The paper is structured as follows. After a brief review of the recent literature on the body in organizational studies, I sketch a phenomenologically informed approach to the embodied mind/minded body at work as well as the epistemological and methodological problems that such a perspective involves. In the central part of the essay, I explore Sufism, its doctrine and its bodily practices, particularly focussing on the mystic ecstatic experience. This part includes a section on the (radically different) Western approaches to ecstasy. The last chapter discusses the lessons organizational studies can learn from Sufism. In it, I first discuss the epistemological implications and then present working hypotheses for fieldwork and the creation of organizational studies research.

Bodies in Organizational Studies: Modernity, Structuralism and Bodies-in-the-World

While phenomenology's view of the body as 'experiencing agent' has deeply influenced the recent work in domains as disability studies and medical anthropology (Csordas 1994; Jackson 1996), in organizational studies this perspective is still very new and the literature informed by it quantitatively limited (Hassard et al. 2000).¹ The working body has rather mostly been approached in a Foucauldian structuralist mode. Studies have focused on two types of issues. On the one side, they have illustrated the evolution of the dominance of (male) pure thought over the body in Western thought from the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* onwards. On the other side, they have analysed the ways in which (sexed/gendered) bodies are part of every-day practices in organizational settings and are deployed to attain organizational goals through relations of power and control (Gherardi and Poggio 2001; Gherardi 1995; Hancock and Tyler 2000; Hearn 1989).

Foucauldian structuralism is extremely useful in shedding light onto the power-laden processes through which language and discourse construct the body in organizations (see Barry and Hazen 1996; Burrell 1998; Clegg 1998; Hancock and Tyler 2000; Hopper and Macintosh 1998; Jackson and Carter 1998; Tretheway 1999). Based on an analysis of disciplinary discourses and practices in other institutional settings such as clinics, monasteries and schools, Foucault's work has indeed proven to be particularly suitable for application on other organizational setting. His perspective can be interpreted as a further development of Weber's analysis of the fundamental role of institutions such as the monastery, the home and the factory in disciplining the modern man (Hancock and Tyler 2000; Turner 1984: 163).

More recently, however, some scholars working on the body in organizations have manifested increasing dissatisfaction with the important limits of this framework (Newton 1998; Reed 2000). Particularly, they argue that by reducing reality to text and the body as a product of discursive power, structuralism is fundamentally incapable of accounting for the phenomenological *Leib* or 'lived body' (Leder 1990; Turner 1984). Casey's plea for an 'embodied intersubjectivity' (2000), Prichard's discussion of subjectivity as bodily desire (2000), Küpers's analysis of embodiment in the service industry (1998), and Bahnisch discussion of the body in Taylor's thought (2000) are examples of attempts to find alternatives to this fundamental problem in the field of organizational studies.

For instance, from a politically informed anthropological perspective, Terence Turner has rejected Foucault's approach on the grounds of the fatal socio-political implications of his 'substitution of a concrete physical entity for an abstract metaphysical concept' (1994: 30). Namely, the banishment of the subject and its substitution with a body conceived as the passive object of disciplinary representations eliminates 'the possibility of effective political resistance or socially grounded cultural critique of body-related social practices' (1994: 31).

Generally, those authors who reject the structuralist paradigm are equally critical of the Cartesian legacy centred around the mind/body dichotomy. The epistemological, methodological and representational assumptions of neither perspective allow for a full account of the embodiment of human existence (Casey 2000; Gagliardi 1999; Strati 1999). In other words, these scholars reject both the Cartesian dichotomy mind/body and the Foucauldian answer to it (Turner 1984: 48-49).

¹ The prevalence of semiotics over phenomenology –embodied by the metaphor of textuality– is by no means unique to organizational studies but rather characterizes contemporary social sciences as a whole (Csordas 1994; B. S. Turner 1984).

Although the need to account for the embodiment of human existence in the social sciences has been repeatedly expressed, finding a holistic approach to embodied minds/minded bodies still represents today a theoretical and methodological challenge. Some of the possibilities in this direction draw on the phenomenological philosophical tradition and specifically the work of Merleau-Ponty.

Looking for a Phenomenologically Informed Theory of Embodiment

Phenomenology is a 'radical philosophy of experience' (Jung 1996: 1) re-inscribing experience in the life world. Phenomenology rejects the ontological separation of mind and body and holds that perception, as embodied experience, bestows meaning upon the world. Perception is thus 'both sensational and meaningful,' 'a configuration of sensations' and 'these sensations belong to the body as a sentient being' (Crossley 1995: 46). Even language, conceived as a public, 'social-historical institution,' has a 'corporeal character and base' (Crossley 1995: 49). While Language does not exist, languages are situated communicative embodied praxes, and communication is 'contextual intercorporeality' (Crossley 1995; Jung 1996).

The human body has a particular status because it is at the same time *Körper*, an object that can be acted upon, touched and seen, and *Leib*, a subject that is active, that can see and touch (Leder 1990). While the body can self-reflectively objectify itself through language, we generally 'do not relate to our bodies as we do to external object' (Crossley 1995: 53). I do not reflect before acting, but rather, my body relies on its practical knowledge of how to be-in-the-world. The body does not feel in terms of 'I think' but rather in terms of 'I can' or 'I relate to' (Küpers 1998: 338). Analogously to Mauss's 'body techniques' (1978), 'competent bodily action' is cultural and is acquired by doing and repetition (Crossley 1995: 54).

Obviously, this phenomenological approach offers a radically new look onto the body with respect to the modernist and structuralist traditions. Descartes had split the human being in mind and body and postulated the superiority of the former over the latter. Foucault made of the body a product of the mind. Merleau-Ponty rejects the dichotomy and stresses the essential role of embodiment for human beings.

B. S. Turner has criticised this latter perspective on the grounds of its 'individualistic nature [that] prevents it from developing a systematic theory about the social structure which unequally distributes the government of the body' (1984: 57). In other words, Turner blames phenomenology of being unable to deal with the question of power because of its focus on individual experience. Crossley disagrees on this criticism, stressing the socio-cultural elements in Merleau-Ponty's theory while admitting that the question of power is underdeveloped in his work (1996). He then proposes a complementary approach based both on Foucault's and Merleau-Ponty's work, which are not, in his eyes, incompatible (1996: 99). His conciliatory perspective is built on an interesting meticulous analysis of both authors' work.² The problem is thorny not only at a theoretical level but, maybe even more so, at a methodological one. Even if a truly holistic theory of the embodied mind/minded body both as agent and as acted-upon by society was developed, it remains unclear how such a theory could be operationalised both in the field and in the text.

² It is also very original, since conciliation seems to remain unpopular in the social sciences... He succeeds in showing how the comparison of different theories leads to overlook the commonalities and stresses the differences, which become then seen as the most important features of the theories. Nonetheless, the question remains whether proving that the two perspectives do not contradict each other is enough to show that they can be integrated. Because they develop from radically different epistemological frameworks, it might be argued that they actually *cannot* contradict each other, other than at the level of their epistemological assumptions.

In the social sciences, the problem of the intrinsic ineffability of (embodied) experience and its resistance to discursive/symbolic representation has led to the so-called 'crisis of representation' (Marcus and Fischer 1986). Also in the discipline of organizational studies, from a range of different philosophical perspectives, authors have been questioning the capacity of reason to reveal a transparent organizational reality as well as the possibility of its representation in scientific texts (Gagliardi 1999; Strati ref here). We are caught in a double cage. On the one hand, written language remains our privileged tool. This favours the linear structuring of our experiences while selecting the potential repertoire of our expressions and silencing certain (unutterable) aspects of experience (Melucci 1996).³ On the other, the scientific paradigm within a modern epistemological framework defines even narrower admissibility criteria. Worse, whenever, as scholars, we 'bump' into the structural limits of our mainstream approach to the world, we switch to a self-reflexive mode but can hardly re-teach ourselves to approach the world in other ways. In other words, while reflections on the relevance of embodiment as an existential condition of human beings are not uncommon, examples of attempts to apply new perspectives are considerably less numerous and much less ambitious.

For instance, 'phenomenological' anthropological studies have often turned out to be mainly descriptive –reifying– reports of the *symbolic* structure presumably underlying experience. For what concerns organizational studies, up to now, I have not yet run into an *applied* scholarly product that fully accounts for embodiment in a comprehensive *phenomenologically* informed way. If an 'evocative' (rather than representative) use of language is sometimes advocated (Gagliardi 1999; Strati 1999), it is not actually applied. It is in the hope to find inspiration to approach human thought and felt human experience more holistically that I now turn to Islamic mysticism –at once doctrine and bodily practice–...

Sufism, Another Path to Reality

While studies of embodiment in Christian mystic and ascetic traditions have become rather common (Classen 1998; Mellor and Shilling 1997; Turner 1984; Synnott 1993), the body in Islamic Sufism remains today much less known in the West. The interest in Christian mysticism can partially be explained in terms of the reconstruction of a genealogy of ideas about the body and bodily practices functional to the investigation of contemporary topics such as anorexia nervosa (Bordo 1988) and embodied work. At the same time, the relative *disinterest* in the body within other cultural and religious traditions might not be unrelated with the idea that the other's embodiment is intrinsically less problematic than our own.⁴ Over half a century ago, Mauss (1978) showed the contrary: within *any* cultural and historical tradition, the study of embodiment presents us with formidable challenges.

Looking at work in the West through an unfamiliar epistemological framework –the anthropological method per antonomasia (Marcus and Fisher 1986)– might after all teach us something. The ecstatic experience in the Islamic mysticism of Sufi brotherhoods represents an 'extreme' psychophysical experience which gives valuable insights into the problematic body/mind duality and hints to conceive and represent the body more as a truly 'experiencing agent.' Reliance on what is 'extreme' and unique, rather than on modal experiences has proven an invaluable methodology to question 'normality' and broaden the spectrum of what counts as 'human.' Certain domains such as anthropology and disability studies structurally

³ English as a 'working language' for non-native speakers even more so...

⁴ 'Primitive' cultures have traditionally been associated with the body pole of the body/mind dichotomy and anthropology probably is the social science that has paid the most attention to the body (Turner 1991).

assume that what unique can teach us much more about ourselves than what is widespread (Classen 1998).

Sufism as Islamic Mysticism

Thus I had learned that words could teach of Sufism, but what was left could be learned neither by study nor through the ears, but solely by giving one's self up to ecstasy and leading a pious life.

Al-Ghazali⁵

While the followers of the Sufi path consider the essence of Sufism timeless, its historical origins are generally traced back to the beginnings of the Islam (Bakhtiar 1976; Hourani 1991). The term Sufism comes from the Arab *tasawwuf*, whose origin remains uncertain. While most texts indicate its etymological roots in the word *suf*, the wool out of which the clothes of the first mystics were made, others relate it to the Arab word for purity *safa*, *safwa* or to the Greek *sophos*, *sophia* (wisdom) (Bakhtiar 1976; Baldick 1989; Chevalier 1984; Lings 1981). Like all mystic movements, Sufism is a philosophy and a practice based on knowledge through experience. It is a spiritual 'path' leading the mystic to the Real/God (*al-Haqq*) through Love (Bausani 1987; Nurbakhsh 1979; Trimmingham 1971).

The admissibility within the orthodoxy of the specific Sufi way of knowing/feeling God has been the object of religious debates throughout the history of Islam. In this context, orthodoxy is usually understood as Islamic theology, law and tradition, based on the understanding of the prophetic revelation exclusively by means of exegesis based on reason (Hourani 1991; Trimmingham 1974). While the exact meaning of 'orthodoxy' remains itself matter of debate (Baldick 1989), the tension between a scriptural, ritualistic, anti-ascetic Islam⁶ oriented towards this world and a mystical Islam is generally interpreted in terms of the problematic relation between the exterior law (*sharia*), regulating the life of the faithful in society, and the Sufi search for an interior way (*haqiqa*) (Bausani 1987; Chevalier 1984; Hourani 1991).

In the literature, an additional distinction is often made between 'sober' and 'drunken' Sufi schools (Bakhtiar 1976; Baldick 1989; Trimmingham 1974). The former, also called Junaidi (or Iraqi), is tied to Abu'l Qasim al-Junaid (910 A. D.), conforms more with 'orthodoxy' and is generally judged 'safe.' The latter, Bistami (or Khurasani), originates in the teaching of Abu Yazid Taifur al-Bistami (874 A. D.) and is considered more suspect (Trimingham 1974: 4). Sufi claims of self-annihilation into God have indeed occasionally led to clearly unorthodox forms of pantheism or divine moral transcendence (where both God and Sufi united with Him are beyond good and evil).⁷ Classic areas of tension between Sufism and the scriptural 'orthodoxy' are the role of the Prophet as intermediary to God, the veneration of saints (*wali*, pl. *awliya*), and a purely spiritual and allegorical exegesis of the Koran (Bausani 1987). The reconciliation of the two is generally ascribed to Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (1111 A. D.) (Bausani 1987; Chevalier 1984; Godwin 1987). In his thought, the observance of the prescriptions of the *sharia* –the five 'pillars' of the Islam: the

⁵ Quoted in James 1985: 320 referring to A. Schmölders (1842) *Essai sur les écoles philosophiques chez les Arabes*, 54-68

⁶ On this tension within Christianity, see Goodman 1988.

⁷ The most famous case of heresy is Al-Hagg's, who was executed in Baghdad in 922 A. D. for his statement 'I am God/Truth' (Hourani 1991).

faith, the prayer, the fasting, the almsgiving and the pilgrimage— is truly worthy only when accompanied by the commitment of the heart and the orientation of the mind towards the knowledge and the service of God (Hourani 1991).

Trimingham rather interprets the two traditions historically and evolutionistically:

Early mysticism was a natural expression of personal religion in relation to the expression of religion as a communal matter. It was an assertion of a person's right to pursue a life of contemplation, seeking contact with the source of being and reality, over institutionalized religion based on authority, a one-way master-slave relationship, with its emphasis upon ritual observation and legalistic morality (1971: 2).⁸

Only through the centuries did Sufi schools (*turuq*, pl. *tariqa*) developed into geographically stable institutions and did Sufi 'companionship' become a religious obligation. Particularly, from the thirteenth century on, a genealogy in the succession of spiritual guides of each school was established, so that each *sheikh* came to be considered the spiritual heir of the founder (Trimingham 1971). This was the first step in 'the process whereby the creative freedom of the mystic was to be channelled into an institution' (Trimingham 1971: 11).

Sufis inscribe the Sufi path within the Islamic tradition in various ways. In the first place, they refer to specific lines of the Koran (*sura*) that encourage the invocation of God's name – their main religious practice (Stoddart 1976). Secondly, they use the tradition (*hadith*) on the Prophet and his Companions' meditation practices and remembrance of the Divine through repetition and whirling –the dance of some of the Sufi schools (Al-Jerrahi 1981; Bakhtiar 1976; Trimingham: 1971). Finally, they set the Prophet at the origin of the chain of all Sufi initiations (*silsila*) transmitted from master to disciple (Bakhtiar 1976; Stoddart 1976).

The Sufi Path to the Divine

Mysticism is a particular method of approach to Reality (*Haqiqah*, another special Sufi term), making use of intuitive and emotional spiritual faculties which are generally dormant and latent unless called into play through training under guidance. This training, thought of as 'travelling the Path' (*salak at-tariq*), aims at dispersing the veils⁹ which hide the self from the Real and thereby become transformed or absorbed into undifferentiated Unity (Trimingham 1971: 1).

These words take us right to the core of the Sufi 'way.' Sufism is not a philosophy –although it has a well-developed one,– it rather is a *guided process* of learning to *knowing* the *Real* (God) in a holistic way, transcending mere reason. It is not a way of behaving, it is a way of becoming. This stress on the inner dimension is related to the nature of the Sufi goal: while religion in the ordinary sense works towards salvation after death, 'spirituality envisages as its main end the attaining of sanctity [...] even in this life, here and now' (Stoddart 1976: 54).

The aspirant's spiritual path begins with his rite of initiation by a Sufi master (*sheikh* or *murshid*), who then guides the initiated through his travel. The initiation symbolises the death

⁸ According to Maslow, the transition from mystical peak-experience –intended as 'core religious experience'– to institutionalised religion characterises all revealed religions (1972: 352-353).

⁹ According to the tradition, between the individual soul and Reality there are 7,000 veils of light and darkness.

and rebirth of the individual ego (Bakhtiar 1976). The central spiritual method in Sufism is the *dhikr*, term often translated as 'invocation' but whose meaning includes 'remembrance' and 'mention' (Stoddart 1976). By fervently invoking the Divine Name, the initiated learns to free himself from the phenomenological manifestations of the world. This is necessary because 'the phenomenal world is a veil which conceals the Divine' (Bakhtiar 1976: 32) and 'manifestation is doomed to impermanence, and this impermanence inevitably entails separation, suffering and death' (Stoddart 1976: 65). The process of removing the veil and coming to know Reality/God is well illustrated by Ibn Al-Farid:

Existence is a veil in the beginning of the mystic life, and also in its middle stage, but not in its end. The mystic is veiled in the beginning by the outward aspect of existence [created things] from the inward aspect [God], while in the middle stage [period of intoxication during which the mystic has no consciousness of phenomena] he is veiled by its inward aspect [God] from its outward aspect [created things]. But when he has reached his goal [sobriety], neither do created things veil him from God nor does God veil him from created things, but God reveals Himself to the mystic in both His aspects at once [as the Creator and as the universe of created things], so that he sees with his bodily eye the beauty of the Divine Essence manifested under the attribute of the Outward (quoted in Nicholson 1967).

In Sufi Way, the soul (*nafs*) goes through different, ever higher stages and acquires certain qualities till, through grace, it reaches contemplation of God and infinite union with him. The number of stages and their order vary. Smith lists penitence, patience, gratitude, hope, holy fear, voluntary poverty, renunciation (or asceticism), abnegation of the personal will in the will of God (unification), complete dependence upon God, and Love –this latter including longing for God, intimacy with God and satisfaction (1977: 51). Trimmingham refers to the seven-stage system illustrated by Attar: Search, Love, mystic Apprehension, Detachment/Independence, Unity, Bewilderment, and Fulfilment in Annihilation (1971: 154). Each of these seven stages is characterised by the appearance of a differently coloured light.

These few central elements of Sufi doctrine clearly reflect the influence of Greek philosophy, which provided Sufism with a philosophical system conciliating the unity of God and the multiplicity of creation (Hourani 1991). Particularly significant are Plato's 'doctrines of the contemplation of eternal Ideas and intimate knowledge of them; the soul's ascent from the false reality of the senses; and the love of true Beauty' and the Neo-Platonic synthesis of these doctrines (Baldwick 1989: 20). This common heritage has sometimes led scholars to see Sufism as the tradition within Islam bringing it closer to other monotheistic religions, contrary to the scriptural tradition which rather stresses differences (Hourani 1991).

At the same time, Oriental Christian monasticism offered a long-standing repertoire of ascetic practices leading to the intuitive knowledge of God. Next to the *dhikr*, other Sufi practices are the recitation of the Koran, the spiritual retreat (*khalwah*), and meditation (Lings 1981). The spiritual retreat can be considered complementary to the invocation of the *dhikr*, where the former represents a moment of contraction (sacrifice) and the latter one of expansion (growth) (Lings 1981). This is an alternate movement of expansion and contraction that takes the believer to the ecstatic union with God (Purce 1974). Specifically, '[e]cstasy is attained through the repeated enunciation of short invocations, with control of the breath, co-ordinated with body exercises, balancing and inclinations' (Trimingham 1971: 200).

The Ecstatic Experience: Western Perspectives

In the West, most studies of both mystic and non-mystic ecstasy date back to the 1960s and the 1970s, a period in which oriental cultures and cosmologies became popular and stimulated alternative approaches to (wo)mankind and the world. Within the scientific literature, approaches to ecstasy vary considerably with the disciplinary framework of reference. In the diversity of perspectives, two main groups can be distinguished. On the one hand, there are medical and psychophysical studies who look at ecstasy as a bodily and neuronal process. On the other, there are those that look at the meaning of the experience in the (social) context in which it occurs. Again, aside from a few authors –who often are mystics themselves¹⁰–, scientific epistemology cannot but ‘fix’ the phenomenon in either one of the dichotomous categories of mind and body. It should also be noted here that, paradoxically, most Western scholars of Sufism approach the mystical ecstatic experience of union with God from a doctrinal and/or historical perspective and do not account for its phenomenology. This can be interpreted as a cautious way to avoid the explicit comparison with ecstatic states in other religious traditions or not religious, a comparison which could be judged inappropriate from an Islamic point of view.

In a biocybernetic perspective, Fischer (1990) places the ecstatic experience at one end of a spectrum of states ranging from extreme excitation to extreme tranquilization:

Source: Fischer 1972: 190

Ecstasy represents the extreme state on the perception-hallucination continuum, characterised by increasing excitation and going from normality through creativity and schizophrenia. Fischer holds that in a first phase ‘[t]hese [symbolic interpretive] states are experienced in terms of increasing data content and increasing rate of data processing, and may result in a creative (artistic or religious) state’ (1972: 191). In an intermediary phase, the processing of the information cannot keep up with the increase in information, resulting in a schizophrenic ‘jammed computer’ state. At the peak of ecstatic states, interpretive activity ceases,¹¹ there is no longer inflow of information from outside but only ‘rapture being the reflection of the mystic on his own ‘program’.

Most authors have rather tried to identify the characteristics of the ecstatic experience on the basis of mystics’ reports of it. In his pioneering work on the psychology of religions *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James lists four characteristics of the (universal) mystic experience: ineffability (mystical union defies expression), noetic quality (overwhelming experience of feeling/knowing), transiency, and passivity (abeyance of the will) (1985: 302-303). From within a Christian religious tradition, Bucke’s ‘cosmic consciousness’ (1972) is rather characterised by a sense of being immersed in a flame or being filled with light/illumination; joy, assurance, triumph, salvation;¹² and an intellectual illumination, a clear conception (vision), knowing without learning that the universe is a living presence, its essence and tendency is infinitely good, and individual existence is continuous beyond death.

From a psychiatric point of view, Ludwig identifies ten characteristics of the ‘altered state of consciousness:’ alterations in thinking, disturbed time sense, loss of control, change in emotional expression, body image change, perceptual distortions, change in meaning and

¹⁰ The writer Aldous Huxley probably being the most famous of them.

¹¹ For a summary on the philosophical debate on the mediated or unmediated nature of ‘pure consciousness’ see D. Rothberg (1990).

¹² Comparable to Huxley’s ‘gratitude’ (1972) and Prince and Savage’s ‘ecstasy’ (1972).

significance, sense of the ineffable, feelings of rejuvenation and hypersuggestibility (1966: 225-234 as in Greeley 1973: 41-42). Zahener rather distinguishes three types of mystical experiences: '(i) the state of feeling at one with nature; (ii) the feeling of fusion of the self with Deity but with the maintenance of the self-feeling; and (iii) a loss of self-feeling –the fusion of the self with the other so that there is only the one all-pervading element' (1961 as in Prince and Savage 1972: 126).

The brief accounts of these authors' approaches to the ecstatic experience lead to two remarks. On the one hand, because of the ineffability of this kind of experience, all description is inevitably deeply interpretative. Meaning is necessarily ascribed from a particular epistemological framework –be it religious, psychological or simply cultural. This is reflected in the wide variety of terms used to indicate and describe the ecstatic experience (Goodman 1988). On the other hand, while perspectives, definition and descriptions vary, mystics are unanimous on one point: language is inadequate to fully describe this experience (Chevalier 1984; Forman 1990; Godwin 1987 based on Al-Ghazali; James 1985; Nurbakhsh 1979).

The ineffability of the ecstatic experience has led various Western authors to attempt to come to grip with it by comparison with other kinds of experiences, also deemed to precede or transcend the symbolic. Three common terms of comparison have been (i) the regression to an undifferentiated infantile state, (ii) psychosis and madness, and (iii) creative problem solving.

Prince and Savage see ecstasy as 'regression in the service of the ego,' a 'return to an earlier level of functioning,' (1972: 115) like the infantile state, in which there is no boundary between self and surrounding environment. In his/her first three years of life, 'the child develops the cognitive function by gradually differentiating the signifier from the thing signified.' Regression in ecstasy would be the reverse process, the 're-emergence of hallucinatory phenomena' (1972: 120). The phenomenon is similar to the regression of schizophrenic as described by Arieti (1972).

Regression in mystic experiences has also been compared to psychosis. However, the similarity is only partial because, while in psychosis there is often incomplete return, 'a mystical state is a controlled withdrawal and return, a death and rebirth; often a rebirth into a world with a radical shift in its iconography, a death and transfiguration' (Prince and Savage: 1972: 132). Wapnick (1972) suggests that both the mystic and the schizophrenic are illumined by a special light from the inner world; however, while the mystic is able to connect the inner and the outer world, the psychotic separates them. In a radical political perspective, Laing argues that the distinction between the mystic, the mad and the artist is a socially constructed one:

Experience might be judged as invalidly mad or as validly mystical. The distinction is not easy. In either case, from a social point of view, such judgements characterize different forms of behaviour, regarded in our society as deviant. [...] Let us *cure* them. The poet who mistakes a real woman for his Muse and acts accordingly... The young man who sets off in a yacht in search of God... (1972: 104, 111, stress in original)¹³

The comparison between mysticism and madness is particularly interesting because the metaphor of madness is often found in Persian Sufi literature. Sufi recognise that 'while ecstatic experience might lead to integration of the personality, it may equally result in a complete breakdown of all accepted values, in total indifference to good and evil, in madness and schizophrenia' (Krippner 1972: 7).

¹³ The boundaries between moral, physical and social health are always blurred.

Finally, some authors associate the mystic and the creative experiences. For Myers Owens, not only have ecstatic experiences 'produced the world's greatest religious literature,' but also 'flashes of creative insight have produced works of genius in the fields of art, music and science' (1972: 145). She stresses the central role of intuition and imagination in creative endeavour by referring to Polanyi's notion of 'tacit knowledge.' Prince and Savage illustrate this with the example of a mathematician, who finds the solution to a problem by giving up 'the higher conscious logical modes of thinking' and letting 'a more random trial-and-error kind of dream thinking' take over (1972: 117).

The Sufi Way: Coming to Grip with the Ecstatic Experience Through Art

Sufi scholars also stress the inadequacy of language in capturing the experience of union with God. However, they attempt to overcome it through a highly metaphoric prose and (Love) poetry, (ritual) music and dance, and crafted artefacts reproducing the Sufi symbolic repertoire. Art both facilitates the union with God by *stimulating* the mystical ecstatic experience and allows its *evocation* beyond the limits of linguistic/symbolic representation. Even at the doctrinal level, Sufi language is stretched to its evocative maximum through repetition, an intense use of metaphors,¹⁴ and extremely rich symbolism.

As in Platonic thought, beauty plays a crucial role in the Sufi path towards God. The world is considered emanation of divine beauty (Meyerovitch 1972) celebrated in the form of Love poetry. The worshipper becomes the lover longing for intimacy and oneness with God the Beloved (see Smith 1977): he/she does not take cognisance of the presence of God through the brain but through the heart (Titus Burckhardt quoted in Stoddart 1976). In Ibn Al-Farid's¹⁵ verses:

With my Beloved I alone have been,
When secrets tenderer than evening airs
Passed, and the Vision blest
Was granted to my prayers,
That crowned me, else obscure, with endless fame,
The while amazed between
His Beauty and His Majesty
I stood in silent ecstasy
Revealing that which o'er my spirit went and came.
Lo, in His face commingled
Is every charm and grace;
The whole of Beauty singled
Into a perfect face
Beholding him would cry,
"There is no God but He, and He is the most High".

¹⁴ On the use of metaphors to express 'the communion between the psyche and the world' see Kristeva, 1996: 194.

¹⁵ Quoted by Smith 1977: 107 from Ibn Al-Farid, *Eastern Poetry and Prose*, p 142

To day, Djalal-Ud-Din Rumi (1207-1273), the founder of the earlier mentioned Mevlevi order of the Turning Dervishes, is considered the most famous Sufi poet. Nicholson has compared his work *Mathnawi* (the spiritual couplets) –some 26,000 verses– to Dante's *Divina Commedia* (Meyerovitch 1972), while Persian Sufis regard it as inferior only to the Koran (Godwin 1987). The 'Song of the Nay' (reed flute) opens this masterpiece:

In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate.

Listen to the nay how it tells a tale, complaining of separations –

Saying, "Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed, my lament hath caused man and woman to moan.

I want a bosom torn by severance, that I may unfold (to such a one) the pain of love-desire.

Every one who is left far from his source wishes back the time when he was united with it.

In every company I uttered my wailful notes, I consorted with the unhappy and with them that rejoice.

Every one became my friend from his own opinion; none sought out my secrets from within me.

My secret is not far from my plaint, but ear and eye lack the light (whereby it should be apprehended).

Body is not veiled from soul, nor soul from body, yet none is permitted to see the soul.

This noise of the nay is fire, it is not wind: whoso hath not this fire, may he be naught!

'Tis the fire of Love that is in the nay, 'tis the fervour of Love that is in the wine.

The nay is the comrade of every one who has been parted from a friend: its strains pierced our hearts.

[...]16

In her commentary to this poem, Meyerovitch quotes a personal letter to her by a Derviche of Konya:

The reed flute and God's man are one and the same thing: they both lament their *separation*, both are hurt in their heart and are tied. Both are dry, because they are not nourished by their earth, and *empty*, filled only with the air of the musician. When they are alone, they have no voice, their role is to find themselves between the musician's fingers and his lips and to be his *instrument to express his desire*. God's man is brought from the osiery of pre-eternity of the divine world and falls, by force of destiny, in the material world. He has been chained to humanity and nature. His heart is hurt by the burn of separation, he has emptied it from the *desire* for material things, and he has emptied his spirit from this imaginary existence, then he abandoned himself in the hands of God. He's now nothing more than an *instrument* to manifest God's will: this is his only duty (1972: 89; own translation; stress added).

16 Godwin 1987: 88-89.

This brief commentary on the 'Song of the Nay' explains the shared elements in the comparison between the worshipper and the flute that is central in the poem. Both are empty/separated/hurt till they become instruments to express respectively God's and the musician's desire. Both desire as such and the metaphoric form in which it is expressed are sophisticatedly used to bridge between the spiritual and the corporeal. Music is not only metaphorically used as a vehicle to express desire but also plays a fundamental role in Sufi ritual. Music and dance sometimes accompany *dhikr*, the rhythmic repetition of God's 99 names:

The early Sufis found the *dhikr* a means of excluding distractions and of drawing near to God, and it has come to mean a particular method of glorifying God by the constant repetition of His name, by rhythmic breathing either mentally or aloud. [...] Supreme importance is given to the Names and Words (=phrases), for by means of their recital divine energy transfuses the reciter's being and changes him (Trimingham 1971: 194).

Thanks to its vagueness and lack of precise images, music can draw the deepest emotions and, 'when co-ordinated with symbolic words and rhythmical movements (Godwin 1987: 70-71), [it] has power over man's will' (Trimingham 1971: 195; DeNora 1997). Music is the art of harmony, 'constituted at one and the same time of the corporeal and the spiritual' (Godwin 1987: 69). As every art that is practised with the hands, it is composed of natural bodies; however, its effects are spiritual manifestations which imprint themselves onto the souls of the hearers, which are spiritual substances (Khan -). The impression that music leaves onto the soul is analogous to 'the artisan's work on the material which is the substratum of his art' (Godwin 1987: 69). In some schools, music accompanies dance:

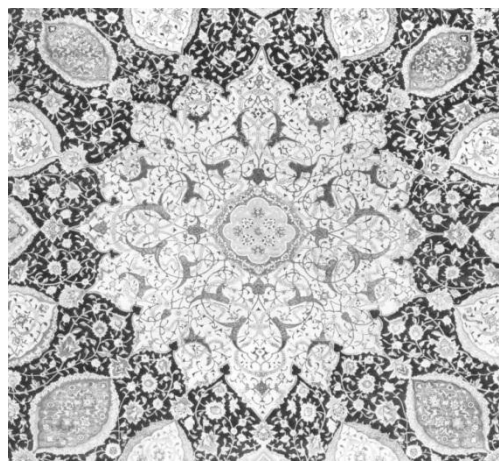
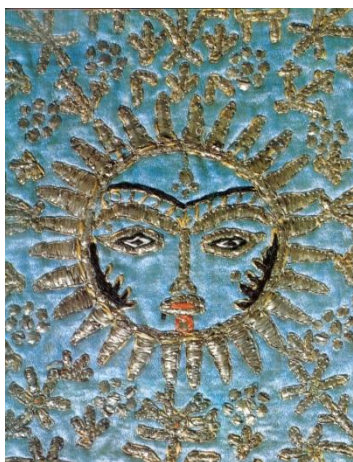
The dancing is a reference to the circling of the spirit around the cycle of existing things on account of receiving the effects of the unveilings and revelations; and this is the state of the gnostic. The whirling is a reference to the spirit's standing with Allah in its inner nature (*sirr*) and being (*wujud*), the circling of its look and thought, and its penetrating the ranks of existing things; and this is the state of the assured one. And his leaping up is a reference of his being drawn from the human station to the unitive station (Al-Ghazali quoted in Trimingham 1971: 195).



Source: Bakhtiar 1976: 71

Other forms of Sufi art are the crafts, in which the rich symbolism can be expressed visually. Bakhtiar (1976) illustrates the rich symbolism of some Sufi craft/art products. The sun stands for the Spirit which lights the next world, while the moon is the light of this world. Light, in turn, is the symbol of Divine Knowledge. When transferred to the

microcosmic plane, the moon symbolises the soul of the mystic which reflects the light of the sun. The light which is reflected by the moon represents the mystic's intuitions.



Source: Bakhtiar 1976: 60, 87

The symmetric figure at the right side is the *mandala*, a reflection of the cosmos and the cosmic processes within all things.¹⁷ It moves from Unity towards its teophany and back to Unity. It recapitulates the permanence of Paradise as an idea and the impermanence as a temporal reality, while integrating the many into the One (Bakhtiar 1976: 87).

Among the innumerable Sufi symbols, we find the bowl (the individual passive, receptive nature), the double axe (the individual active nature as agent), the animal skin (orientation), the gateway (the initiation), the bridge (mediating role), the dragon (encounter of moon and sun), the spiral (the Divine and cosmic axis), ablution (purification of the Spirit), and the cosmic tree at the top of the cosmic mountain (knowledge). Even musical instruments such as the tambourine, the cymbals and the flute, as well as the singer's voice refer to a spiritual order of things (Godwin 1987).

Sufi Ecstasy: On Grace, Art and Body Techniques

The combination of Sufi worship practices and different forms of art/crafts provides the mystic community with a variety of sensory/cognitive stimuli that facilitate their training on the way to God and the expression of their lived mystical experience. According to Trimmingham, it was only around the 12th century A.D. that the Dervishes had acquired a complete technique to induce ecstasy involving 'posture, control of breath, coordinated movements, and oral repetitions' (1971: 199). In his view, this is the phase in the history of Sufism that is characterised by the 'mechanization' of mystical experience: the mystics realise that symbols, colours and smells, rituals and purifications can induce ecstasy even in the ordinary men, who has not undergone the Sufi spiritual path (1971: 199).

We find many of these stimuli back in Greeley's list of most occurring 'triggers' of the ecstatic experience: beauty, music, praying, beauties of nature, quiet reflection, church service, the sermon, little children, the Bible, being alone in church, a poem or a novel, childbirth, etc. (1974: 141; see also Laski 1961). The stimuli of the ecstatic experience present striking cross-cultural similarities, however, it should be noted that in Sufism, both worship practices and art are organic with the quest for the union of God, rather than expression of the fully individualised inner self that does not find expression in language. As

¹⁷ On the symbolism of symmetry, see Bakhtiar 1976: 59.

we have seen in the 'Song of the Nay,' in ecstasy, the embodied mystic literally becomes 'instrument' in the hands of God. The borders between humanity and God ('separation') are challenged and continuity between them established.

It should be noted that Sufism further stretches the role of the body already central in the scriptural Islamic tradition. The proclamation of faith, the prayers, the fasting, the almsgiving, the pilgrimage are embodied symbolic re-enactments (see Sandelands and Buckner 1989: 116), which allow the worshippers to physically and spiritually experience their faith. Bakhtiar describes the meaning of the prayer with the following words:

The motions of the body in the daily prayers –standing, bending and prostration– imitate exactly the ascending, descending and horizontal motions of the Spirit in creating the world, that is, in manifesting Self. Ritual prayer, in repeating these gestures, re-enacts the Creation. [...] The rite of prayer fulfils this Divine aspiration by becoming the mirror on the Face, whereby the Sufi, in prayer, comes to see the 'Face of God' in the most sacred niche of self (1976: 50).

Western disciplinary taxonomy, distinguishing between religion, philosophy, art, psychology, is not conducive to the understanding/apprehending of Sufism, which is a holistic way of being, both individual and collective, at the same time cognitive, symbolic, emotional and embodied (see Sandelands and Buckner 1989).¹⁸ This taxonomy can be seen as the result of the Cartesian interpretation of the Platonic hostility towards the human body and sublimation. Modern science solves the problem of the body by removing/denying it, *de facto* leaving it to other disciplines. In Brown's words:

Modern poetry, like psychoanalysis and Protestant theology, faces the problem of the resurrection of the body. Art and poetry have always been altering our ways of sensing and feeling –that is to say, altering the human body (1972: 422).

Sufism rather integrates these aspects in a system where each part is functional to the whole: the five human senses play a fundamental role in this integration.

Both Western thought and Sufism share the Platonic preference for sight over the other human sense (Classen 1997; Nöth 1990). In Sufism, sight has a key role in the path to God/Reality; the soul is a 'spiritual eye' and mystic knowledge is Light. In Rumi's words:

You are not your body, you are this spiritual eye; if you contemplate the spirit, you will be freed from your body.

Man is essentially eye: the rest is only flesh: what his eye has contemplated, he is that itself. [...]

Sight is the only thing in you that is worthy... Transform your whole body in sight; become sight, become sight (Meyerovitch 1972: 110-111; own translation).

Nonetheless, the particular philosophical role of the eye and sight does not prevent music from becoming a fundamental part of the Sufi ritual, nor does it mean the neglect of the other senses. Rather 'mystical perception seems to be such that *all senses become one*' (Carpenter quoted in Myerovitch 1972: 111; own translation; stress added):

¹⁸ Of course, Islam as such already challenges Western disciplinary boundaries, for instance, between State and Church.

[The] eye spoke while my ear was looking; my ear was chatting and my hand listening;

And while my ear was an eye to contemplate all that was shown, my eye was an ear listening to a song (Ibn Al-Farid quoted in Meyerowitch 1972: 112; own translation).

Integration also takes place at a more general level. The Sufi way to God/Reality is characterised by the progressive removal of the veils which hide it and which are a symbol of the sensual world. However, this transcendence of the body is attained through a complex set of practices where the body always remains central. Embodiment is stressed and used rather than erased, the body is trained and made self-aware not only symbolically but also phenomenologically. Paradoxically, in the ecstatic union with God, embodiment can be transcended only through the body. Myers Owens states:

In contrast, the mystic encounter with ultimate reality renders him oblivious of the body and its sensual responses, and results in a purification of narcissistic tendencies and indeed an impersonalization of the personal in all its aspects (1972: 146).

This paradox is not erased at a doctrinal level, but rather it is expressed by means of the highly integrative language of metaphor, symbols, evocation and art. Contradiction is avoided through juxtaposition of different levels of meaning whose borders are never definitively established. The union of mind/body with God can happen only if the mind abdicates control onto the body, and the mind/body abandons itself to something other than itself, beyond perception/comprehension. In fact, while the mystic is spiritually/physically trained to reach the ecstatic union with God, according to Sufi doctrine, this experience is not induced by the worshipper's will but bestowed upon him by God's grace (James 1985).

The Body and the Mind in the Sufi Way: Epistemological and Methodological for Organizational Studies

Certain practices of the mystics may succeed in upsetting the normal relations between the different regions of the mind, so that, for example, the perceptual system becomes able to grasp relations in the deeper layers of the ego and in the id which would otherwise be inaccessible to it. –Sigmund Freud¹⁹

In the beginning of this essay, I took off for this trip in the world of Islamic mysticism to look for inspiration to approach research in organizations in new ways. Firstly, I hoped to find ways to approach working human beings holistically as *embodied* subjects. While phenomenology provides a good theoretical framework to do this, I was unsatisfied of the applications in the social sciences including organizational studies. Sufism offered a long-standing tradition, a case to test my working hypotheses. Secondly, I intended to overcome the underlying realist epistemology that has led the social sciences to the so-called 'crisis of representation' (Crossley 2001). This epistemological, methodological and textual issue is closely connected with the question of embodiment. If we want to account for the latter, we

¹⁹ As quoted in Brown 1972: 423.

have to radically rethink what we understand as (social) organizational studies, how we do our work in the field and how we produce research. In this last section, I will try to summarise the insights that Sufism has to offer to rethink our work. I start with the epistemological reflections and then approach the methodological aspects of work in the field and the production of social research. In each section, I give some examples of application within the discipline.

Epistemological Implications

Sufism approaches humans as embodied feeling and thinking beings: it is doctrine and bodily practice at once. Applications of such holistic approach in the field of organization studies could be developed along two dimensions. On the one hand, embodiment, bodily techniques and practices could be analysed in their mutual relation to particular symbolic, discursive and ideological phenomena. On the other, this analysis should allow accounting for both agency and structure (see Crossley 2001).

Kilduff, Funk and Mehra's article "Engineering Identity in a Japanese Factory" (1997) is a good example of how these two dimensions can be integrated in applied organizational research. Other, still more developed studies in this direction can also be found in disciplines such as disability and illness studies. In *Venus on Wheels* (2000), G. Frank adopts an (auto)biographical format to balance embodied agent and structure in one text, while C. Mattingly's *Healing Dramas and Clinical Plots* (1998) uses a narrative framework to tell and evoke (bodily) experiences of chronic illness. Both chronic illness and (physical) disability can be considered prototypical in that, in these conditions, the body forces itself to the foreground of consciousness and can no longer be taken for granted (Leder 1990). Albeit in a rather different way, the Sufi ecstatic experience also puts the body at the centre of consciousness both in the Sufi practices and in the process of the meaning making of the mystic experience.

Organizations and Sufi *tariqas* can be seen as analogous in that they there are communities whose members work individually and together towards a common goal. While the former aim (among others) at economic success, the latter have as their core purpose the Unity with God. A shared ideology and practices facilitate the creation of an intersubjective consciousness, leading towards the shared goal. Workers' organizational commitment can be paralleled with mystics' faith: both are necessary condition to the attainment of the goal (see Greeley 1973: 80). This analogy can be extended to other collective social-historical phenomena like, for instance, Nazism, which similarly combines a strong ideology and pervading social bodily practices –both for the Arian race and the persecuted peoples– in function of a higher ideal (Knopp 2000). Barry and Hazen have suggested that corporations fulfil not only the economic but also the *human* need for continuity beyond individual existence (1996: 148). A shared ideology and bodily practices can be analysed in this perspective as conducive to the extension of the ego onto 'something far more durable than any separate ego or any individual body' (Wescott 1972: 27).

While there are different degrees of commitment, faith and fanaticism as well as ethical differences in these types of communities, religious and military groups are often compared in the social literature on the body (Turner 1984; Mellor and Shilling 1997). Typically, the army, the school, the monastery and the factory enact their respective ideologies not only upon the minds but also through individual and collective bodily practices. However, the psychophysical disciplining is at the same time the result of power, as Foucault teaches us, and of the adherence of embodied individuals to it, in a mutual dynamic (Crossley 2001).

The functioning of these institution points to the existence of interrelated levels of meaning/perception: the corporeal/sensorial, the emotional and the symbolic. However, while in Western thought, the rational imperative has obscured the other levels, mysticism fully

acknowledges them as fundamental aspects of existence in this world. Ecstasy is 'apprehension,' a form of 'more direct, immediate, and intuitive form of knowledge [than discourse]' (Greeley 1973: 57) suggesting the existence of 'many levels of human cognition, some of which are not ordinarily conscious' (1973: 54). Within organizational studies, this perspective suggests the reinterpretation of work and work relationships as clusters of cognitive, emotional and bodily competences beyond the mere symbolic. For example, leadership could be redefined and studied as to take into account its 'embodiedness,' rather than as an 'abstract' number of personal traits and/or competences.

At an epistemological level, Sufism clearly points to the limit of discursive thinking in looking for the ultimate truth and thereby undermines a positivistic stance based on disembodied rational cognition (Pyysiäinen 1993). In Sufism (as, to a lesser degree, Christian mysticism) the 'Way of Love' is one with the 'Way of Knowledge' (Stoddart 1976):

According to *him* [the mystic], the experience is more one of *knowing* than of feeling. If anything is heightened in the ecstatic interlude, it is the cognitive faculties of the mystic: he knows something others do not know and that he did not know before. He *sees*, he *understands*, he *perceives*, he *comprehends* (Greeley 1973: 4; stress in original).

These different ways of 'knowing' become undifferentiated and the world is known in its immediacy: 'The subject-object relationship is transcended, [and] there is a complete sense of solidarity of the subject with other human beings and with the universe in general' (Huxley 1972: 47; Meyers Owen 1972). It is the ineffability of the ecstatic experience that demands that it be known by experience rather than through words and reason (Nurbakhsh 1979). Al-Ghazali equates it positively to drunkenness –there can be no full understanding without getting drunk– and negatively to blindness –the blind will not understand colours no matter how you describe them (James 1985: 319-321). These comparisons bring us back to the phenomenological stance described in the beginning of this essay, which considers perception as embodied experience the source of 'meaning' we bestow upon the world. As Walker states, consciousness, often equated with thought in Western writings, 'is no more thought than it is emotion, sensation or movement' (1972: 14).

This perspective carries with it a 'revolutionary' potential for organizational studies. At the most, by grounding 'knowledge' onto (embodied) experience, the legitimacy of 'expertise' solely derived from education and 'abstract' technical knowledge can be undermined. At the least, the hierarchic dichotomy between intellectual and physical jobs, which still represents a pillar of the function classification systems in many Western countries, can radically be questioned.

Specific Sufi body techniques like controlled breathing and whirling at certain (musical) rhythms can also be transposed to the world of work.²⁰ They point to the organic relation between thinking and feeling. This relation reveals the inadequacy of our appreciation of the role the work environment plays in work. We relegate these dimensions to the techno-medical spheres of ergonomics and safety, at best exclusively oriented towards prevention. The potential of a holistic 'care,' both as 'self-care' and as 'care-for-the-other,' as an integral dimension of work relationships is neglected. A switch in perspective could offer new options to stimulate, for instance, creative and problem solving processes, which, as we have seen, escape narrowly defined disembodied rationality (Greeley 1973; Kubie 1961; Sandelands and Buckner 1989).

²⁰ On time and rhythm, see Hassard 1991.

The issue of care leads to the question of the nature of relationship between self and other in work environments. Clearly, Sufism does not conceive the individual as a monadic rational, disembodied being. Rather, it stresses reason, feeling and the body as the human limits through which humanity can be superseded into Unity with God. As we have seen, this perspective stresses the 'instrumentality' of the individual in the attainment of something above and beyond him/herself. At the same time, my sources on Sufism do not seem to indicate a radical questioning of the nature of the worshipper as an individual. While the ties among Sufis, symbolised by the relationship between master and disciple, are particularly strong (Nicholson 1979), relatively little in the literature helps explain the embodied and philosophical nature of this bond. Because the rites leading to ecstasy are carried out in groups, I had expected to find accounts of these experiences stressing their collective character, as in studies of trance induced by rhythmic music (Canetti 1960; Jordan 1995; Vandenbrouck 1997). The absence of the collective dimension should probably be understood in relation to the instrumentality of the ecstatic experience within the religious framework of a highly personal spiritual Sufi path. It is also possible that this interior way has to define itself within and as opposite to the ritualistic and more collectivistic scriptural tradition of the *sharia*.

As a consequence, I believe that Sufism can shed new light on interpersonal relationships only in the sense that it offers a perspective that fully acknowledges embodiment. What it does not offer, however, is new tools to look at the relationships between self and other within a specific community. The former contribution would already add a lot to the understanding of individual and collective identities at the workplace, which have either been approached through statistics based on demographic taxonomies or have been reduced to 'dead' pieces of discourse through analytical deconstruction.

It is interesting to not in this context that critical theorists have held that in modern society there is no place for (collective) ecstasy, which is 'a promise of happiness which threatened civilization at every moment' (Turner 1984: 45 based on Adorno and Horkheimer 1973: 33). This is the reason why ecstasy was de-legitimised in Christianity and the Western tradition as a whole. In this perspective, modern industrial productivity is sustained through the sublimation of desire in renunciation (Turner 1984: 44-45). In these paragraphs I have tried to show, *a contrario*, how mystical ecstasy offers a lens through which we can reinterpret work realities in a more holistic way. I turn now to specific methodological issues in the field and outside it.

METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS I: BEING IN THE FIELD

The implications of the above consideration for fieldwork in organization studies are numerous. The stress on practice and experience points to the need, for a researcher, to be *present* in the work environment, in *proximity* and in *relation* with those people he/she is supposed to write with/about. This may sound a banal suggestion, but a close look on the methodologies used in organizational research reveal that even qualitative ethnographic studies actually underestimate the need to just *be* with the (embodied) other over time. In the words of G. Frank's teacher Barbara Myerhoff:

You study what is happening to others by understanding what is going on in yourself. And you yourself become the data *gathering instrument*. So that you come from a culture and step in a new one and how you respond to the new one tells you about them and about the one you came from (Frank 2000: 14; stress added).

As the Sufi worshipper, the embodied researcher becomes 'instrumental' to reaching a goal. His/her holistic integration in the work and the work relationships allows him/her to use all his/her senses (including the sixth one) as tools to perceive the world. The engagement

with the field is cognitive, emotional and bodily. The acquisition of certain work skills (body techniques) characterizing the community under study represents one of the many possible strategies to 'apprehend' the environment in question.

These suggestions are obviously not to be interpreted dogmatically, but rather as possibilities for complementary and/or alternative perspectives on the world. By favouring the creation of 'shared consciousness' in a phenomenological sense, such a sustained, holistic engagement with the field, helps integrating the unavoidable objectifying look with other dimensions as to avoid mere representation. It also allows more for ambiguity and multiple meanings than a solely textual approach through interview material. The anthropological practice of holding a logbook can enhance the researcher's capacity to self-reflect on his/her field practice. Unfortunately, it is still uncommon to read work in organizational studies that account for the experience of fieldwork as a constitutive part of the used theory and methodology. Some recent (medical) anthropological works offer numerous hints as to how approach ethnography in innovative, more comprehensive ways (see Csordas 1994; Frank 2000; Mattingly 1998).

Methodological Implications II: Creating Research

At the level of creation of research 'products,' Sufism offers, once again, many suggestions. First of all, it uses a variety of forms of expression –most of which would be considered 'art' according to Western taxonomy– to overcome the limits of symbolic representation and its objectifying effects. The use of prose and poetry, music and dance as well as the crafts allows for the integration of different layers of meaning and leaves room for evocation and ambiguity of meaning/feeling as well as for forms of intersubjectivity in research products.

In organizational studies, research could be innovated at three levels. At the first minimal one, studies could maintain a standard (textual) format and attempt a more holistic of their theoretical and methodological approach. This is, for instance, what Kilduff et al. (1997) attempt to do. Another example is Wright's anthropological study on the interaction of bodies and ideology in Mexican maquiladoras (2001). At the second level, researcher could attempt to challenge the (often implicit) formal and aesthetic standards that are imposed to text at an institutional level. Burrell's *Pademonium* (1997) and other post-modern works have already gone in this direction. Finally, the increase in the use of alternative forms of expression other than text should seriously be considered as ways to render organizational realities in different ways rather than as a very minor 'artistic' strand in the discipline. The fact that we are not trained in the use of technologies of sound and image should be faced, rather than considered an insuperable obstacle. Of course, this leads back to the fundamental question of the definition of science and reality and, if we take the mystic way, the acceptance of the blurring of existing disciplinary borders. Examples of products in the academia building on the visual and/or auditory, the taste and the olfactory are much less numerous and their circulation difficult due to the lack of adequate institutional circuits.

May the teachings of the Sufi mystics inspire us in our search...

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Patrizia Zanoni
Organisation Studies
KULeuven, DTEW
Naamsestraat, 69
3000 Leuven, Belgium