Received May 2000
Revised December 2000
Accepted February 2001

Towards a transcendent epistemology of organizations

New foundations for organizational change

Bengt Gustavsson
School of Business, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Keywords *Philosophy, Organizational change, Individual behaviour*

Abstract *Epistemology of organizations denotes how we can gain knowledge of organizations. A critical, postmodernistic analysis suggests that the only knowledge we can gain from our traditional concepts of organization is emptiness. A proposed solution is to increase the understanding of individual and group consciousness. Individual consciousness is categorized in materialistic, dualistic and transcendent views, and group consciousness in interactive – defined in terms of its content and dependence on spatial and symbolic interaction – and collective, dependent on a subliminal transcendent consciousness. The last category is further divided into logically deduced and experiential sub-categories. It is argued that the present understanding of organizations is based on interactive consciousness and needs to move beyond that level in order to progress. An alternative transcendent epistemology of organizations is introduced, based on transcendent experience, and a model of organization based on the transcendent epistemology is suggested. This model features a transcendent transition –* transcition *– as a basis for organizational change, and two cases are analyzed. It is concluded that a new paradigm based on a new science of consciousness is needed in order to do justice to the vast potential of human consciousness.*

In this paper it is argued that an understanding of organization should be founded on an understanding of the origin of the organizational construct, namely of human consciousness, and in that pursuit go beyond, or transcend, the concepts of organization held in consciousness. The paper starts with a brief discussion on deconstruction of concepts, continues with the problem of consciousness in terms of concept/contents and offers an alternative view featuring transcendental consciousness; it goes on to collective features of consciousness and relates them to organizational issues and how an organization can be understood from this perspective.

The idea of something coming out of nothing has occupied philosophers for ages. It can, for example, be traced in narratives of the creation process. The Bible focuses on the transcendent word of God in order for us to understand that "that which we see has not come about from anything visible" (Heb. 11:3). In the Edda, the ancient mythology of Scandinavia, and in the Veda, the ancient literature of India, the beginning of the creation process is similarly described in terms of nothingness:

Journal of Organizational Change Management, Vol. 14 No. 4, 2001, pp. 352-378. © MCB University Press, 0953-4814

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 15th Annual International Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism, Warsaw, Poland, 9-12 July, 1997.

- *Edda:*

  In the beginning of time
  there was nothing
  There was no sand,
  no sea, nor cool waves
  The earth was not,
  nor the sky above.
  The immeasurable void there was,
  and grass nowhere[1].

- *Veda:*

  The nonexistent was not
  the existent was not
  then the world was not
  nor the firmament
  nor that which is above (the firmament)[2].

Do such descriptions of the creation process belong only to ancient mythologies, or can we learn something in the field of organizations? Can we find the inner hollowness, nothingness, the emptiness of organizations, fundamental to and yet beyond the knowledge constructions we use to understand and manage them?

The branch of postmodernism devoted to deconstructivism shows us the futility of our mental representations. By peeling away layer after layer of constructed meanings of the text, the deconstructivist can show us how all the meanings or identities are provisional, relative and under constant threat of being "erased" (Derrida, 1997). The meanings can be traced to a prior network of relationships of meanings, and further back almost to infinity, or "zero degree" of sense (Appignanesi and Garratt, 1995). In this way, deconstructivism takes us beyond the scientific, political and cultural meta-narratives with an unexpressed aspiration to relieve mankind from the power of the mental images. As applied to organizations, deconstructivism guides us through the phantoms of constructed organizational images and reveals their inherent emptiness. In this attempt, the deconstructivists take us beyond the constructions – in this case concepts on organizations – to the verge of the transcendent emptiness (Haney, 1995).

Are we, then, left in the emptiness of the manifested and objectified world? Can we speak of an existence beyond the emptiness of the constructed meanings, a hyperessentiality? The mere concept of a being beyond being would represent metaphysics, the privileged and absolute meanings the deconstructionists attempt to undermine because, as they claim, "there is no primal experience we can simply turn to, no neutral language, no neutral tools" (Evans, 1991, p. xix). Can we thus solve the unsolvable problem of making the transcendent being alive, without seizing repeatedly used illustrations (metaphors) or drift into the glittering relative? Derrida (1982) claims we cannot. Any being beyond existence and essence can only be asserted negatively, i.e. what it is not. In theology, this problem has given name to a

concept called "negative theology": the view that no word that applies to anything in the world also applies to God – God is not like us in any way that we can say (Coward and Foshay, 1992). If we are to investigate a phenomenon beyond comprehension and concepts, are we thus left to a "negative being-ontology", or do we leave the field open to speculative metaphysics? Are we forever bound to understand organizations through finite concepts, or negations to them, or through assertions that organizations are given by superhuman entities or laws?

This paper suggests that a possible solution to the problem can be found in the experience of the "empty" consciousness: an understanding of organization could be based on an understanding of consciousness itself and in its form of group consciousness, as organizations necessarily are collectives of human beings. There are different notions of consciousness, some seemingly opposite. To put the following analysis in perspective, the paper briefly reviews different conceptions of consciousness in organizations, starting with individual consciousness as a foundation for the discussion of collective consciousness.

Individual consciousness

The ontology of consciousness can be described from the materialistic, the dualistic, and the transcendent notions. The materialistic view, dominating in the natural sciences and medicine, is based on the evolutionary notion that consciousness is generated when matter, i.e. the nervous system, reaches a certain level of complexity (e.g. Eccles, 1980; Hofstadter, 1980; Jaynes, 1982; Delbrück, 1986). Matter is the aboriginal element that has the capacity to create awareness, emotions, spirituality and other qualities associated with consciousness. As evidence for the materialistic notion, physiologists have long pointed to evidence that damage to the brain causes certain functions, such as speech and hearing, and vital functions, such as the heart beat or respiration, to drop out. In surgery, one can stimulate certain parts of the brain and produce actual thoughts, compulsions to act, images, spoken words, or the movement of a particular body part. This is claimed as evidence for the argument that all our mental and motor life is in the brain. And doing away with the brain function altogether erases the mind completely, it is assumed, as after prolonged anoxia or severe trauma (Dossey, 1989).

The problem with the material approach is finding a corresponding precise and material explanation of consciousness. As Ashby (1952) noted, the model does not really specify the conditions under which the spontaneous generation of consciousness will occur, which leads to a variety of definition problems. What is consciousness and what is it not? Does a stone exhibit enough complexity to create "consciousness?" Perhaps, but probably not, a materialist would say. If we focus on living beings – does a dog have consciousness? Probably, but what is the difference between that and human consciousness? Is it the learning ability, the ability of introspection, or what?

In the dualistic school of consciousness, dominating in psychology, there is less concern with the relationship between mind and matter. Mind and matter

occupy ontologically separate worlds that somehow interact. Consciousness is independent of matter, and matter does not have consciousness as its basis (Klein, 1984). The cognitive approach to organizational theory has its roots from this perspective, particularly representationism (von Krogh and Roos, 1995) – the idea that the mind should represent a reality of objects, events, and states independent from the mind that can correspond partly or fully to the outer world.

Both the materialistic and dualistic views usually define consciousness in terms of its content, i.e. the impressions, emotions, dreams, logical thinking, etc. The items of interest and the degree to which they are reflected in individuals determine the quality of consciousness, and the content reflection is often represented on an ordinal scale ("high health consciousness", "low environmental consciousness", "weak team consciousness"). In this connotation, it is better to exchange the term "consciousness" with "awareness" or "empirical consciousness", as the noun used as prefix to consciousness restricts the understanding in space (consciousness defined in terms of singular items) and time (items are usually of temporal interest).

In the variety of notions that are labeled the transcendent view of consciousness, the effort is to go beyond the content and examine consciousness *per se*, given, of course, that there exists an ontologically distinct entity that we can call consciousness. If consciousness is defined in terms of its content, the problem is that our self is just a derivation of the objects of thought. When my consciousness is filled with the sensory impressions of a rose, my self would constitute that rose, just to be shifted a minute later to a new sensory impression, the vase. The same argument can be used for intellectual activities (my self is my thoughts) or emotions (I am this feeling). According to this view, the self must be a level of consciousness beyond, or transcendent to, the object of thoughts, feelings and sensory impressions, a level which enables all experiences and unites the various elements of experience. The transcendent views of consciousness exhibit a multiplicity of approaches, but they have one aspect in common: they describe a level of consciousness beyond, and fundamental to, ordinary empirical consciousness. Two subgroups within this view can be identified: the logically deduced, and the emphasis on experience.

In the logically deduced group we find philosophers from a variety of traditions: the ancient Greeks, the ancient Indians and the Veda literature, Kant and the German Idealism, Husserl, and others. Transcendental consciousness is here logically deduced as a unity of the objectifications held by our empirical consciousness. Kant (1929) argued that without this unity, the highest synthesis in our experience that constitutes the I, no knowledge can take place in us, and no unity in the various elements of our knowledge can occur. This pure, original, and unchangeable consciousness Kant calls the transcendental apperception, which is a "pure" consciousness; pure in the sense that it is not consciousness of any objects – it has no content except itself. The content of objects in our thoughts is the empirical consciousness, which is constantly changing. It is through these representations of our self-consciousness (which

could be called objectifications) that we know ourselves, but the representations must come from one self-consciousness, otherwise our self would be as many-colored as our representations. Thus there must be, according to Kant, an original connection of all representations. He describes a transcendental consciousness that constitutes the junction, or connection, of all our thoughts. Thoughts are for Kant objects, limited representations (objectifications), while the transcendental consciousness is an empty representation. But as all thoughts have form, we can never know the pure I, the transcendental subject, as we only can know ourselves through the thoughts. The I in itself ("*an sich*") is separate from its thoughts and experiences, and we can never have the slightest idea of the I.

The paradoxical problem for the logical transcendentalists was that transcendental consciousness could not be described or understood by the intellect, as it would become a separated object for the intellect. Thus one can only speak of something that cannot be ascertained by knowledge or experience. Instead, they referred to death as with Plato (Hackforth, 1955): "if we cannot come clearly to know anything when united to the body, there are only two alternatives: either the attainment of knowledge is altogether impossible for us, or it can be ours after death; for then and only then, will our souls be by themselves, apart from our bodies". Or they denied any possibility of experiencing it, as with Kant (1929, p. A346), who claimed that we can only have an indirect awareness of the transcendental I via the thoughts, the I's representations.

A different approach to transcendent consciousness is that of emphasizing experience of the unfathomable consciousness beyond content. Schelling suggested that experience could be a solution to the deadlock of the German Idealists, who identified a unity of consciousness, devoid of subjectivity, that could never be known. In a famous passage he wrote:

> In us all dwells a secret, marvellous power to retire . . . into our innermost Self, stripped of all that which was added from outside, and there to perceive the Eternal under the form of unchangeability. This perception at first convinces us that anything at all is in the true sense, whereas everything else only appears . . . (Schelling, 1820, pp. 1:318; Schulte, 1984).

As opposed to Kant who only perceived of the innermost self as an empty representation holding together our experiences, Schelling describes the transcendent experience in terms of a definite state with qualities, such as eternal and incessant.

Husserl (1992) tried to solve the problem by bracketing the phenomenal world, including mental representations, and performing a transcendental reduction in order to reach the transcendental subject. The reduction "inhibits" the world of phenomena and their validity, by simply putting it inside a set of parentheses, but at the same time it does not dispute the existence of the phenomenal world. On the contrary, Husserl claimed, we get access to the phenomenology of the being as such, because the ultimate basis for any judgment is *ego cogito*, the thinking "I". Husserl's investigations into the transcendental ego – by fencing off all externally imposed meanings by the

transcendental *epoché* (bracketing off the objective world) – gives us a clue to the potential of the transcendental consciousness of the knowing, feeling and experiencing subject. He claimed that in a "transcendental self-experience the ego is originally accessible to itself" (Husserl, 1992, meditation 9). It is an experience devoid of the objective world, even the "facts of the inner experience" (Husserl, 1992, meditation 9), indicating that an experience of a basic state of consciousness is attainable.

Although Schelling and Husserl pointed in the direction of experience to do justice to the transcendent state of consciousness, they never suggested how this could be accomplished. Among the experiential approaches found among eastern philosophers and teachers this is more common, as they often emphasize methods or approaches such as meditation, yoga, or Zen. This is also found in various mystical traditions in different religions, such as Kabbala in Judaism, the Gnostics in Christianity, and Sufism in Islam. There are, however, a number of descriptions of transcendental consciousness in the literature indicating that such experiences are not restricted only to mystical traditions, but are also found among ordinary persons. The following experience of a transcendent state of consciousness comes from the writer J.A. Symonds (quoted from James, 1952, p. 296):

> Suddenly at church, or in a company, or when I was reading, and always, I think, when my muscles were at rest, I felt the approach of the mood. Irresistibly it took possession of my mind and will, lasted what seemed an eternity, and disappeared in a series of rapid sensations which resembled the awakening from anaesthetic influence. One reason why I disliked this kind of trance was that I could not describe it to myself. I cannot even now find words to render it intelligible. It consisted in a gradual but swiftly progressive obliteration of space, time, sensation, and the multitudinous factors of experience which seem to qualify what we are pleased to call our Self. In proportion as these conditions of ordinary consciousness were subtracted, the sense of an underlying or essential consciousness acquired intensity. At last nothing remained but a pure, absolute, abstract Self. The universe became without form and void of content.

In the eastern philosophical tradition, descriptions of this kind of experience are found in abundance in the Upanishads (800500 B.C.). A common theme here is that the state of transcendental consciousness is also a state of absolute being, which is a common source of mind and nature. In the *Mandukya Upanishad* (7th verse), for example, transcendental consciousness is described as:

> . . . not that which cognizes the internal objects, not that which cognizes the external objects, not what cognizes both of them, not a mass of cognition, not cognitive, not non-cognitive. It is unseen, incapable of being spoken of, ungraspable, without any distinctive marks, unthinkable, unnamable, the essence of the knowledge of the one self, that into which the world is resolved, the peaceful, the benign, the non-dual . . . (Radhakrishnan, 1953, p. 698).

The description is basically a negative one, stating what transcendent consciousness is not, with a negative being-ontology, but with the important difference that the description also asserts qualities of a hyperessential being.

Two properties of the transcendent view are important. First, the experiential view of transcendent consciousness does not conceive of the transcendent and empirical consciousness as existing separately in two worlds

(c.f. the dualistic view), or of transcendent consciousness existing on a level beyond empirical consciousness (c.f. Kant), where consciousness is seen in a digital empirical/empty manner: either having content, or separated from content. In some of the experiential traditions, consciousness is rather seen as analogous, where the experience of thought refinement goes from gross to subtle levels of thought until the state of pure subjectivity is experienced (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, 1966). Even in this subliminal and highly abstract state, there are levels of transcendent structures, which are elaborated on further below, and a most abstract state sometimes called "flat being", or pure consciousness. In some of the experiential traditions, the aim of human development is to infuse the transcendent level to co-exist with empirical consciousness through practices of various kinds (e.g. meditation, ethical living, prayer, transformational practices).

The second important property of the transcendent view is that experiences of transcendent consciousness are described as universal, which indicates that being is a common source for everyone and hence a level that unites people. Experience of this level of consciousness is described as cognition of a greater range of comprehension and existence, which changes the level of inner perception and the individual's perspective of the reality, or being "immanent in the myriad of things" (Robinson, 1967, p. 142). A summary of the different concepts of consciousness discussed in this section is shown in Table I.

The dominating view of consciousness currently used in organizational analysis, content or empirical consciousness, lacks fundamental aspects of the human being and her social context. An organizational analysis should include the transcendent level in order to do justice to the human being's full potential and the opportunities it opens up for organizational change. The discussion has so far only dealt with consciousness from an individual perspective. The next section introduces a vital problem that is of decisive interest when we are speaking about organizations: group consciousness.

Table I.
Summary of notions of consciousness

	Concept of consciousness			
			Transcendent	
Features	Materialistic	Dualistic	Logical	Experiential
Ontology	Property of complex matter	Body and soul	Empty unity of impressions	Being, pure self
Defined in terms of	Content (empirical)	Content (empirical)	Non-appearence of impressions	Experience of pure self
Quality	Degree of reflection of content	Veridical perception	Unobtainable for knowledge and experience	Degree of reflection of self in empirical

Group consciousness

Group consciousness can be defined in terms of a mental unity between people, either by content, by being, or both. Different notions of group consciousness can be categorized from the proximity/distance principle: whether group consciousness is bound in physical and/or symbolic space, or if it can extend beyond such boundaries. Thus, we can speak of an interactive group consciousness, which requires a physical/symbolic interaction, and a collective group consciousness, which in principle has no such boundaries.

In the interactive group consciousness the constructing of a group consciousness is on the basis of content-specific images, coming from a daily routine, idea, vision, belief, emotion, which are shared by a group of people. The specific content in the consciousnesses of two or more persons has to be somehow negotiated to mean the same thing to all persons, or at least develop a similar intersubjective understanding. Such notions appear in organizational language in the form of different themes and phenomena, exemplified in Table II.

Being dependent on content, whether concrete or abstract, interactive consciousness requires some spatial interaction of people or their symbols to symbolically or more concretely exchange and develop the symbolic intercourse. A corporate culture, for example, requires for its generation and development a meeting between minds in order to exchange ideas, emotions, values, etc. This meeting can take place in physical space (offices, conference halls, board rooms, etc.), in cyberspace, through stories, and also in more abstract symbolical interactions (logotypes, uniforms, perceiving the company's products in the store or the street).

There are a number of influential thinkers and schools within this strand of thought. In the late nineteenth century, George Herbert Mead (1972) conceived the emergence of mind and self out of the social process of significant communication, which has become the foundation of the symbolic interactionist school of sociology and social psychology. Contemporary to Mead was Emile Dürkheim (Thompson, 1982) and his works on a group mind

Examples of interactive consciousness	Illustrated
Customer consciousness	The employees have the interests of the customer/client constantly in their minds in their daily work
Environmental consciousness	The environmental concerns are lively in the awareness of management and employees so that they are constantly seeking to minimize and improve the organization's negative impact on the environment
Crisis consciousness	The management and employees have an awareness that the organization is in deep trouble and need to take drastic measures to survive
Competition consciousness	The organization's members are constantly thinking of improving their performance *vis-à-vis* competitors on the market and their fellow employees

Table II.
Examples of interactive group consciousness

in society, where communication took place by means of exchange of symbols[3]. In psychology, McDougall (1939) proposed that a group mind, not the individual's mind, could describe the collective actions of a society, which communicates in the "circumambient physical media in which they (the individuals) move and have their being" (McDougall, 1939, p. xiv). Later influential sociologists are Berger and Luckmann (1966), who argue that the meanings of the social world are transferred to the individual through language and symbols. The individual is, however, part of the ongoing construction and reconstruction of the symbolic universe, but his/her contribution is so minute that it is mostly the subjective meanings of others, past and present individuals, that are transferred to him/her. The philosopher Karl Popper (Popper and Eccles, 1981) suggested a World 3 consisting of products of human minds, such as stories, explanatory myths, scientific theories, social institutions and the work of arts. These are conceived as objects that we learn by practice and active participation in how to understand the World 3 objects and how to "see" them. Similar ideas of a group mind in the natural sciences were suggested by Kuhn (1970) in his paradigms – constructed thought collectives of non-questioned assumptions about nature, scientific rules and methods, acceptable results, etc.

We can also find interactive group consciousness represented by cognitive schema theory. The schemas, scripts and maps shared by the group are basically charts of the content of the group consciousness and the processes leading to the group consciousness (e.g. Sims and Gioia, 1986). Janis "group think" would serve as an example of dysfunctional consequences of interactive group consciousness when a single schema dominates people and this domination becomes self-reinforcing (Weick, 1979). A particular branch of cognitive interactive consciousness is called "connectionism" (von Krogh and Roos, 1995), focusing on network interrelations. The rules of the network of activities in the organization connect people: each member knows what needs to be done in relation to what others in the organization are doing and thus a group consciousness is created relying on the predetermined activities. Information on important activities building these networks is often called "nodes" (examples are found in Bougon's (1992) case of childcare and Weick and Roberts (1993), case of a carrier's flight deck). We may also define most of the cultural approaches to organizations, particularly the symbolic perspective, as describing an interactive group consciousness. Symbols are the expressions of culture, for example the language, actions, and artefacts. These expressions are the carriers of the collective meanings in the minds of the people.

The understanding of interactive group consciousness in its various forms is based on the proximity of individuals and /or their shared symbols, together with the intellectual and emotional content of consciousness. This is not, however, the case in a physically/symbolically non-interactive group consciousness, or collective consciousness. The adjective "collective" here denotes a singular foundation of consciousness for a group of people that is common to all of them. As Husserl says:

> I experience the world and the others in me within the framework of my transcendentally reduced pure consciousness-life, and the meaning of this experience is that is not my private, synthetical creation, but an alien, intersubjective world which exists for each and everyone and which objects are accessible for each and everyone. And yet each and everyone has their own experiences, their own phenomena . . . (Husserl, 1992, meditation 43, my transl.).

An understanding of collective consciousness is based on some sort of transcendent consciousness interlinking people on a subliminal level. Notions of collective consciousness are ontologically and epistemologically heterogeneous and can be categorized in the same manner as individual transcendent consciousness: in the philosophical and experiential subcategories, but here we must add a third: a structural subcategory.

The philosophical collective group consciousness finds representatives from Plato in *The Republic* to Hegel's writings. This category is denoted philosophical because these writings are based on a logically deduced understanding of a collective consciousness based on a transcendent level. Plato, for example, speaks of a unity found in the "real being" that unites us all and through which all members of society are affected (Plato, 1890), and Hegel speaks of the collective spirit, *Geist* (Hegel, 1971). As an intellectual notion, philosophy has the role of making the society aware of this inherent unity of mankind: to reveal the indwelling unity and close the gap between the one and the many (Mure, 1965), through education (Plato, 1890), in order to liberate the mind and thus create an ideal nation state (Hegel, 1971).

The experiential category of collective group consciousness differs from the philosophical in terms of its implementation strategy: it emphasizes experience of the transcendent level of consciousness through meditation methods or similar approaches, which is indicated on the collective level through various effects. Most known is the Maharishi effect based on the group practice of Transcendental Meditation and more advanced methods called the TM-Sidhi programme (Aron and Aron, 1986). The idea is here that as individuals transcend the empirical consciousness, they experience a greater range of existence that changes inner perception, not only in themselves, but also to some degree in the whole population. The quality of collective consciousness is understood as the degree to which the transcendent consciousness is reflected in the whole population[4].

The structural category of collective group consciousness is perhaps the most heterogeneous of the three. We find proponents here from a wide variety of disciplines, including anthropology, psychology, biology, and philosophy. Their common features are transcendental structures, fields, or phenomena that are shared by a collective of people. The structures occupy a common level to populations, and they are not dependent on spatial/symbolic interaction between the members of the population. The structures are, in other words, "mediated" on a transcendent level, or, in terms of physics, by means of a field effect. They can be further categorized on a scale in terms of absolute and relative they are ontologically described as eternal and given by Nature or God (absolute), or they are temporal and generated by experiences (relative). They

differ from interactive group consciousness in that these transcendental structures are not dependent on physical or symbolical interaction for their process of creation or their function.

An example of absolute structures is Lévi-Strauss's (1967) structural anthropology, ideas that have given the name to this category of collective group consciousness. Lévi-Strauss conceived of cultures as shared symbolic systems that are different on pre-conscious levels. The only unconscious activity of the mind consists of imposing forms upon content, structures we all have in common on a transcendent level, and by which we all are guided. He also describes them as the same in all cultures, primitive or civilized (universal character), as well as the same in ancient and modern times (eternal attributes).

Another example of absolute structures is found in Plato's theory of the forms (1955), which says that the constituents of real being are not the transient mutable objects apprehended by our senses, but immaterial forms, immutable and eternal, the objects of thought or reason, existing independently of any mind, and in some way participating in, or imperfectly imitated by, sensible objects. In apprehending these forms, the soul finds its proper activity and its full satisfaction, but it cannot adequately apprehend them while obstructed and hampered by the body, hence the need for renunciation of the body's desires and pleasures, and the justification for what Socrates calls the "training for death", as discussed above (Plato, 1955, p. 5). Empirical knowledge, i.e. knowledge apprehended by the senses, was thus imperfect to Plato, and the only true knowledge was found in the forms on a transcendent level of consciousness. Examples of forms are the "just itself", the "beautiful itself", the "good itself", "the holy itself"; or the being of any object, for example "greatness, strength and health". In a passage of The Republic, Plato gives another, practical, example of the forms, where he claims that carpenters making beds and tables are "looking towards the form" (Plato, 1890, p. 281) of the furniture when they are produced, as if Forms were blueprints at the depth of consciousness of the carpenter.

Carl Jung's archetypes give an example of a transcendent structure on the border between absolute and relative structures. For Jung, consciousness can only be determined if it has content (which resembles a materialist's view of consciousness), and the unconscious of a person can only be demonstrated by its contents. The contents of the collective consciousness, or collective unconscious as Jung called it, are known as archetypes (Jung, 1990a). The collective unconscious is called "collective" by Jung because it is a layer of the personal unconscious that it rests on, which does not derive from personal experience. It is not individual, but universal; it has content and modes of behaviour that are "identical in all men and thus constitute a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us" (Jung, 1990a, p. 4), and does not develop individually but is inherited (Jung, 1990b). Jung describes the archetypes as universal, but he does not give them eternal attributes. He takes an evolutionary viewpoint in the forming of the archetypes;

they are formed as a response to typical situations in life. There are as many archetypes as there are typical situations, Jung claims. He gives three examples of archetypes: the shadow; the anima (the magical feminine being, or the archetype of life itself); and the wise old man (or the archetype of meaning) (Jung, 1990a).

Finally, an example of transcendent structures in the collective consciousness that are relative and changing can be found in the morphogenetic fields; the controversial work of biologist Sheldrake (1981). He derives his theories from the field concept in physics and proposes that every system has its own morphogenetic field because each has its own characteristic form. Thus, there must be a morphogenetic field for protons, another for nitrogen atoms, still another for water molecules, crystals of sodium chloride, muscle cells of earthworms, kidneys of sheep, elephants, etc.

The form of a system, according to his hypothesis, depends on the accumulated formative causation from previous similar systems. The form of the morphogenetic field therefore depends on what happened before, so there is some built-in memory in them (Sheldrake, 1989). The forms are also valid for mental activities, which can be transmitted to other individuals and groups of individuals without physical or other apparent contact. Sheldrake thus describes a collective, non-interactive and transcendent form of learning, which is more or less universal but mutable in constant evolution.

Table III summarizes the discussion on group consciousness.

Type of group consciousness	Description		
	Ontology	Intersubjectivity	Quality
Interactive	Empirical consciousness	Physical/symbolic communication	Degree of content reflected in population
Collective	Transcendent consciousness	Transcendent unity, field effects	Transcendent aspect reflected in population
Philosophical	Logically deduced	Awareness of inherent unity	Unity in population
Experiential	Subjectively experienced	On collective subliminal level	Degree of transcendent consciousness reflected in population
Structural	Intersubjective qualities shared by group or all	Non-interactive	Guides human thinking and action
Absolute	Given by nature or God, eternal		
Relative	Human memory "storage", temporal		

Table III.
Notions of group consciousness

A transcendent understanding of organizations

Assuming that the genesis of organizations is in the consciousness of man (and not in exogenously imposed structures or systems), the understanding of organizations must be based on the transcendent consciousness of man, or a transcendent epistemology of organizations. The opposite argument that organizations are not epiphenomenona of human consciousness is a cognitive mistake of reification, and attributes the humanly constructed concept "organization" as real. Such a mistake creates an organizational ghost world where the constructed organizational concept is separated and alienated from its originator in human consciousness. Indeed, this is the case of an exorbitant amount of organizational analysis, where a flood of new concepts are presented as if they were entities outside ourselves.

Many great minds have warned us about this flaw of understanding the social world, including Hegel (1971), Marx (*Verdinglichung*, 1976), Lukács (1971) and others of the Frankfurt School, Parsons (1951), Berger and Luckman (1966), and Berger and Pullberg (1966). Weber (1964), for example, considered the use of metaphors, now much in vogue in organizational analysis, as highly dangerous if they become reified. And they often are. The danger could consist in depriving the individual of his definition of his situation and of the choices available to him, for example, by referring to the "system needs" or "the interests of the organization", as if "the system" or "the organization" was a person with specific needs that the individual is subservient to. This does not deny that an organization has "needs" or interests, but that is a question of the individuals' needs and interests in a collective form and is always open to negotiation in some form. Reification and hypostatisation lead to passivity, determinism, the individual becoming victim of imposed definitions, confinement to narrow thinking and many more social and organizational dysfunctions. Organizational theorists such as Silverman (1970), Cooper (1983) and Weick (1979) have pointed out the problem, and we are advised to "be aware" of the problem, whatever that means. Can we intellectually dissociate ourselves from the meanings and concepts we are attached to? Silverman, who explicitly dealt with the problem of reification and organizational analysis, offered his action theory as an alternative, i.e. an analysis must be based on the meanings actors attach to their actions rather than explanations that assert that action is determined by external and constraining social or non-social forces.

The analysis must be taken further. The organization has to be understood as an epiphenomenon of consciousness. The analysis must be based on a level of consciousness beyond the concepts – a transcendent epistemology. Understanding interactive group consciousness, which is based on the intersubjective understanding of some specific content, is not enough. Also, it is not sufficient to base a transcendent epistemology on individual consciousness, as organizations are necessarily collectives of human beings. The investigations of group consciousness in this paper have led to various notions where the only transcendentally reduced categories are found in a collective

consciousness that is founded on the notion of a transcendent consciousness common to all human beings. Thus, a transcendent epistemology of organization would start in the collective consciousness of the organization.

The term "transcendent epistemology of organization" can be understood as a highly contradictory statement. Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, is usually considered to be knowledge of an object of knowledge, whether it is a physical or conceptual object. If we are to go beyond, to transcend, an object of knowledge, how can we speak of knowledge? Even if we were to follow the path of epistemological idealism, i.e. to claim that there can be no objects of knowledge independent of our consciousness, we would still be speaking of an object of knowledge. The argument earlier claimed that the objects of knowledge are empty, at least in the conceptual domain that we call organizational theory, whereas a transcendent consciousness is a hyperessential phenomenon. The emphasis here is the importance of experience of consciousness beyond its content, and this expands the definition of knowledge-as-content to knowledge-as-transcendent-experience.

A transcendental reduction, according to Husserl, is not sufficient to reach a knowledge-as-a-transcendent experience, as it rests on a logical analysis and intellectual process working with concepts and mental objectifications. It is, says Britton (1939), only for thinking minds that there is a structure in nature, and a world without minds would be a world without structures, relations, and qualities – a world without facts. An intellectual transcendence cannot be reached in a discursive manner; it has to go beyond the level of concepts and logic.

Collective consciousness and epistemology of organizations

The proposed transcendent epistemology promises knowledge that is beyond a spatially and temporally limited conceptual understanding of organizations. The crucial questions regarding a transcendent epistemology of organization are what and how of an epistemology of a collective consciousness of the organization. Some features can be derived from philosophical and other descriptions of a collective consciousness at a general level (organizations in general). Collective consciousness does not necessarily mean a flat and empty consciousness as it can be said to exhibit certain qualities ("hyperessentiality", or being beyond being). As discussed below, depending on the description, one can conceive of collective consciousness at various levels, ranging from the innermost pure consciousness, the completely abstract, silent, and quality-less field of consciousness, to levels of unmanifest activity but still on a transcendent level, represented by the various notions of absolute and relative transcendent structures. Let us first briefly describe the "model"[5] and review the organizational theorists who have tried to conceptualize these levels in understandings of organizations.

The "model" (see Figure 1) starts with pure consciousness – a completely abstract and quality-less field of consciousness. Further up in the hierarchy, we find the absolute "structures" in the pure consciousness – absolute in the sense

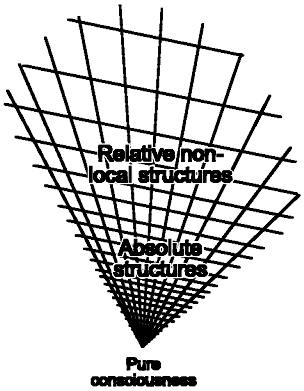

Figure 1.
Transcendent levels of collective consciousness

that they are not subject to change but are given by Nature or God. Thus, this would be the level of the forms (Plato) and structures (Lévi-Strauss). An example of organizational analysis that starts from this level is the Lévi-Strauss-influenced analysis by Turner (1983), who tried to "read" the organization in terms of ordering principles, which are reflections of the underlying structure in the unconscious of the actors. Another example of organizational analysis that starts from this level is that of Cooper (1983), who argues that "the Other" would be that transcendent structure which mediates the differences in an organization.

At the "top" level of collective consciousness, we may conceive of a transcendent structure, shared by groups of people in the collective consciousness, where meanings, apprehensions, skills, etc., are "stored" as structures. This is denoted "relative and non-local structures", which indicates that this level of collective consciousness can be influenced and formed, and that this influence is not necessarily universal – it can be confined to certain groups of people. We may call this level a "collective memory" which is influencing many or all people in their interpretation of reality, a memory that changes when meanings, apprehensions, skills, etc., change. This "top" level of pure consciousness may in itself be conceived of in levels: from universal to individual "memories"; from slowly changing to rapidly changing "memories". Examples of these different levels would be Jung's archetypes, which border on absolute structures and are slowly changing and universal, and Sheldrake's morphogenetic fields, which change relatively quickly and are more limited to certain populations. An example of organizational analysis that starts from this level is by Berg (1985), who describes a "symbolic field" that stores the commonly shared stock of symbolization of reality in the form of conditions for communicating meanings, but the symbolic field does not contain any meaning in itself.

A model of group consciousness of the organization

Adding the interactive level of group consciousness provides us with a complete picture of group consciousness of the organization. Interactive consciousness exists simultaneously with the collective consciousness, but is

restricted to the interaction of people and/or symbols. The hierarchical analysis of levels of group consciousness indicates that the interactive consciousness is determined by collective consciousness. The collective consciousness thus sets the frame for the interactive consciousness. There are many researchers who use interactive consciousness as the starting point of their analysis, and we have a number of researchers with a cultural and symbolic perspective, most of them (but not all) adhering to an interactive understanding of group consciousness. This paper has argued that the analysis must not stop at the interactive level, because it can lead to reification and relativism. The theoretical and empirical evidence for collective consciousness must be included in order to transcend the objectifications on the interactive level. Thus, the model assumes that both the interactive and collective consciousness are present simultaneously, but on different levels of abstraction, i.e. that the actors in an organization both generate an interactive consciousness by their being together for any reason in an organization, and, simultaneously, they are connected on a more abstract level of consciousness on a transcendent level.

A concept closely related to the interactive consciousness is group climate, which is the "top" level of the model (Figure 2). There is no clear consensus of what distinguishes culture and climate (which in most cases is defined as interactive consciousness). Alvesson and Berg (1992) suggest that the difference between the two concepts consists of a focus in cultural studies on the underlying mechanisms behind the organization's collective world views, whereas in climate studies the focus is on how the culture of the organization is experienced. Climate would therefore represent an expression of the things on the surface of all organizational and psychological processes. The climate also easily reacts to outer changes and is partly determined by the culture, or deeper

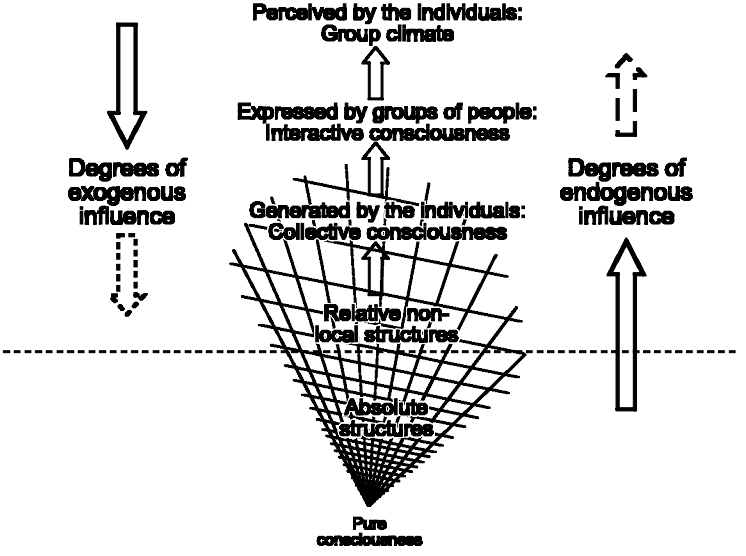

Figure 2.
A model of group consciousness of organization

underlying organizational symbolism (Dandridge *et al.*, 1980). The group climate is the most tangible and concrete aspect of the group consciousness in an organization and it is therefore also the most local.

The direction of the arrows in the centre of the model may indicate that all influence is endogenous (inside out) and that all levels in the organization are nothing but manifestations of pure consciousness. This metaphysical and deterministic perspective is in sharp contrast to exogenous (outside in) theories, which view organizations as almost completely determined by the environment, e.g. contingency theory. The difference is a difference in perspective. In a paradigm that puts primacy on a transcendent epistemology of the organization, where the innermost levels are conceived as spatially non-localized, it would be difficult to determine the dichotomy of external-internal with such perspective (c.f. Maturana and Varela's (1980), arguments on autopoiesis). It would be up to the observer's ability to comprehend the wholeness to determine whether an organization is seen as endogenous or exogenous.

Assuming that we can identify an endogenous-exogenous boundary to the organization, we can argue that the less abstract the level of consciousness, the more it is influenced by exogenous factors. This perspective is indicated in the model by a boundary for exogenous influence somewhere in the middle level of transcendent consciousness (indicated in Figure 2 by a grid). The structural notions of collective consciousness are given by Nature or God ("absolute structures"), while at less abstract levels we would find structures generated by humans in their apprehension of meanings, invention of skills, etc. This level in turn consists of levels in terms of how fast the structures were generated and how widespread they are ("relative structures"). At still less abstract levels, at the interactive level, the influence can be seen as almost entirely exogenous to the transcendent consciousness, as the influence is limited to the interaction of the group and/or symbols only.

Implications for organizational change: transcendent transition *(transcition)*

The proposed model can help us to understand organizational change from a transcendent perspective. As discussed above, the transcendent consciousness contains a coexistence of infinite silence with transcendent activity. The transcendent transition process, or "transcition" process, emphasizes emptiness as a prerequisite for change. It is necessary to go beyond a previous state in order to reach a new state, a fact the postmodernistic project could be said to represent: the positive feeling of transcending a negative ideology in favor of something else (Jenks in Appignanesi and Garrat, 1995). Jung (1996) defined the transcendent function as rendering a transition from one attitude to another possible in psychology. He was particularly interested in the transcendent function of opposites:

> The opposite position signifies a tension charged with energy which is giving birth to something living, a third . . . which is a movement out of the deadlock between the opposites, . . . which leads to a new phase in the existence, a new situation (Jung, 1996, p. 13).

In the ancient Edda mythology of Scandinavia, this process of transcition is described dramatically as the birth of creation at large: "burning ice, biting flames" (Crossley-Holland, 1993, p. 3); a region of fire (*Muspell*) and a region of ice (*Niflheim*), both insupportable for life, and between them a giant void called *Ginnunga-gap*. In this emptiness, life began. In Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's *Apaurasheya Bhashya* ("uncreated commentary") of the Rig Veda, the creation process involves four distinct stages:

(1) collapse of the first state;

(2) state of non-activity, involving the total annihilation of the first syllable to the unmanifest silence of pure consciousness;

(3) state of all possibilities; and

(4) emergence of the new state (Wallace, 1993).

This interpretation of the Veda illustrates the importance of gaps in the creation process. In the Apaurasheya Bhashya commentary, it is described as a continuous process, while in the Edda and the Rig Veda it is described as states in a distant past. Nevertheless, whether we prefer a process or a state interpretation, the importance of the unmanifest, silent nothing in the gaps is found as fundamental in the creation in each rendering.

We can learn many things from the organizational transcition process. As Prahalad[6] has pointed out, economic evolution does not follow an incremental path, but rather a path of discontinuities. New technologies arise which quickly render older technologies obsolete. New ways of marketing and organization are invented to adapt more successfully to changing situations. These discontinuities are difficult for big multinationals to handle, because they are following the old recipes of success that once made them big. The mental maps of these big organizations are geared towards historical patterns. Their biggest problems are not to learn new things that are happening, but to unlearn old patterns.

The following two cases illustrate this process. One case reports on a change program with no elements of transcition and one case involves the transcition element.

Case 1: Change program devoid of transcition

This problem became obvious to the author when studying a planned cultural change program at the Postal Sales, a division of the Post Office in Sweden (Gustavsson, 1999). The aim of the program was to create a new customer consciousness among the front-line staff to meet new competition following deregulation of the previous monopoly. The Post Office was in crisis due to a perceived misfit of the organizational knowledge structures with the environment. Two main reasons were considered for this misfit: a hierarchical and rule-based culture, and badly coordinated change programs. The Post Office had been a civil service authority for 350 years. Ardor and conscientiousness were words of honor – "the letter has to be delivered

regardless of the weather". It was an enterprise based on duty to pre-defined work tasks, which were regulated in detail from headquarters. At the Post Offices, the customers' wishes were executed according to regulations and rules.

There were many change programs at the Post Office, but they were badly coordinated, and the messages were too many and indistinct: tellers could not relate the overall business missions, goals and visions for the company. The language top management used in the messages was often experienced as bombastic and difficult to understand: "we don't speak the same language." The messages were also experienced as paradoxical: the goals of the changes were confusing and even experienced as being contradictory. The change program focused on an increased understanding of the customer and "local presence", i.e. the local employees should increase their abilities to take responsibility for and meet their customers' needs. The program should help to create pride and self-esteem in tellers and salesmen that would help them take the initiative to create something special in the customer encounter.

The program consisted of successive seminars over two years for all of the 10,000 employees of Postal Sales. The local people themselves conducted the seminars, and by October 1996, 7,424 persons had participated in the two-day seminars. Early "exit polls" of the participants' attitudes to the seminars in two districts indicated that they enjoyed themselves during the days; roughly 50 per cent thought it would have great value for them in their work; and 1/3 thought it would benefit their customer relations. When their new attitudes were put to the test in daily encounters with the customers, however, there were no noticeable changes. The Customer Satisfaction Index, surveyed regularly at the Post Offices, did not change significantly. There were no changes in customer consciousness, and the target of $110 million in extra sales was far from reached.

The failure of the change program at the Post Office cannot be explained in simple terms. However, at Postal Sales there was no element of transcition, as old mental maps were challenged with new. Interpreting the case from the theme of this paper, one can argue that the program to change from the old knowledge structures in the culture of the Post Office to a new, customer- and competition-oriented awareness did not include any transcendent change. There was no collapse of the initial state (the old mental maps); there was no state of non-activity and annihilation of the previous maps before the new maps could emerge. Even though the program had a model approach socially, the result was a confrontation of new maps with the old. There was no transcendent function available for the participants to make a transition from their old maps to the proposed maps. The project ended with no tangible change in customer consciousness, a phenomenon many change consultants' experience when they operating on the level of interactive group consciousness only.

Case 2: Change program involving transcition

As a contrast, the author studied a project where the participants were taught to systematically transcend (through meditation) (Gustavsson, 1992). Two cases were studied within a division of the Swedish Telecom Company for a period over three years. Both cases studied interventions with the Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique. The program was introduced to the employees as a general program for improved well being. The first case studied the top management team, and the second case the main office of the division. A number of standardized and self-invented instruments were administered in a pre-/post-test research design, measuring changes in individual as well as organizational variables. Among them were creative climate, group spirit, holistic thinking, defense mechanisms, and perceptions of changes in the overall structural characteristics of the organization. In addition, qualitative questions were included in the company study of the employees' changes in meanings, both experimental individuals and work teams, and control individuals and work teams.

The results indicated a changed perception both individually and in the work groups. An example of individual change was from one manager who claimed, "My conception of the world has changed, and things that were solid reference points before aren't as solid anymore and have not been replaced by new solid reference points. Now I have got used to questioning things that everybody takes for granted". Changes in the group perception included increased demands for a more creative climate, new perceptions of leadership, and improved holistic thinking.

The transcition process operated here in the collective group consciousness, enabling the previous mental maps to be transcended in order for new, or altered, maps to develop. The process was spontaneous, no *ex ante* formulated maps were introduced. Encouraged by these results, we have recommended a research strategy for change in the collective consciousness in the organization based solely on the changes in collective consciousness (Gustavsson and Harung, 1994), where the effects of an in-house group of practitioners of the TM-Sidhi program would be measured.

Seeing an organization from a perspective of the dynamic process of transcition in the collective consciousness may open up a new avenue of understanding and new avenues of research. For example, it raises the question of organizational boundaries. As distinguished from the interactive consciousness, the interactions in collective consciousness are not dependent on spatial or symbolic interaction. According to this perspective, human beings are interconnected on a transcendent, abstract level in their consciousness. A transcendent interconnectedness contradicts the notion of organizations as being unique entities; the implications for organizational change are many. On a philosophical level, awareness of the "indwelling unity" and "unbounded horizons" (Husserl, 1992) can change the behavior of individuals individually as well as individuals in an organized activity (i.e. organization). Traditional empirical evidence of a transcendental interconnectedness following the

practice of meditation methods on a national level was mentioned above (Orme-Johnson *et al.*, 1990), and on the regional level indicating prevention of crime in Washington, DC, in 1993 (Hagelin *et al.*, 1999). On an organizational level, Broome (1995) found striking improvements in psychological and physiological stress parameters in both experiment and control groups, which he, after ruling out the interactive effect, suggested to be the operation of a local version of the Maharishi effect, where individuals transcending empirical consciousness positively influence the entire population.

The transcition process is based on an organizational self-referral process, i.e. in order for a change process to occur, the collective consciousness has to know itself and become the object of its own knowing. This aspect is often neglected in organizational change theory in favor of external objects of knowing. Examples of these are environmental adaptation, and benchmarking, which focus on knowing others and their knowledge of themselves. The autopoetic systems theory (von Krogh and Roos, 1995) suggests that the knowledge and beliefs held on an organizational level generate a closed self-referential system, where the organization simultaneously reinforces its beliefs and creates its own environment. Autopoiesis highlights the important aspect of the self-interacting process of knowledge and reveals that the knowledge of the organization is found within itself, i.e. within the individuals making up the organization, not from an external point of view. The organization is to be seen not as an entity, an object of study, separate from the observer; it has to be studied as a self-referential consciousness. Knowing those dynamics is to know the key to organizational change.

A transcendent epistemology as a foundation for organizational change ultimately leads to the question: what knowledge? Augustinus, one of the early influential men in Christianity, says: "Don't seek outwards, but retreat into yourself, in the innermost of man abides the truth" (quoted from Husserl (1992, last sentence, last meditation, No. 64)), while Hegel argues that "mind is ... in its every act only apprehending itself, and the aim of all genuine science is ... that mind shall recognize itself in everything in heaven and on earth." The famous seer at Delphi told us to "know thyself" when asked for advice about the mundane problems of the world. This was interpreted by Hegel not as any externally imposed knowledge on the mind; on the contrary, self-knowledge is the "absolute law of mind itself" (Hegel, 1971, p. 1). And in the Buddhist tradition, one speaks of two kinds of wisdom: the wisdom that understands the conventional, and the wisdom that understands the inexpressible and inconceivable ultimate (Lopez, 1996). To gain wisdom one should practice the ultimate, or non-conceptual knowledge.

Husserl's phenomenological project aimed at creating a universal base for the sciences by reducing all knowledge to the transcendental subject. In Paul Rioeur's words, Husserl is thus "transforming solipsism from a problem to an argument" (preface to Husserl, 1992). The arguments raised above concerning transcendent interconnectedness and self-referral indicate that individual knowledge on the transcendent level actually is universal knowledge, but only

on a transcendent level. This is not an egotistic knowledge, as egotism happens when the mind is getting absorbed in the content of the empirical self, while a transcendent wisdom is based on going beyond the content of the mind. Such descriptions of universal knowledge inside oneself are exhibited in the Edda, for example, where Oden, mightiest of the gods, was transcending and reaching a self-referral state where he could "grasp everything, grow and enjoy" (*Havamål*, stanza 142, *Den Poetiska Eddan*, 1957. See also Harung (1996)). Note the expression "grasp" here: a transcendent knowledge is not related to particular knowledge of any specific object but rather to an intuitive, expanded apprehension of knowledge, which we may call wisdom.

Such transcendent wisdom would disqualify any comparison between computerized information and information systems, which have their own legitimacy on the information processing, or knowledge-specific level. A transcendent wisdom relates to a silent knowledge, which, in the moment it is explicated, loses its expanded quality and risks being reified. Wisdom comes from within and requires a feel for *Geisteswissenschaft* (science of consciousness, like phenomenology or hermeneutics) that engages the subjectivity of the researcher (Slater, 1999). A transcendent epistemology of organization would necessarily be based on a silent knowledge. As Parikh *et al.* (1995) have shown, decisions made by managers all over the world are to a great extent based on intuitional knowledge. Investigations into a transcendent epistemology of the organization would enhance our understanding of the intuitional processes underlying managers' decisions.

It could also open up avenues to what could be denoted organizational spirituality. Wisdom beyond the tangible is often connected to experiences that are often called spiritual, although not necessarily in an institutionalized form. There is a growing understanding that spirituality in its various forms is an important ingredient in organizational life (Mitroff, 1999; Gustavsson, 1997; Chakraborty, 1992); it motivates and guides managers and others in their organizational decision making. A transcendent wisdom includes fields which may seem remote to the operations in the organization but which are of considerable importance to its *modus operandi*. The ancient texts, quoted in the beginning of this paper, may have more to teach management than just nice and thought-provoking thoughts. They may teach us to transform their words of wisdom into action, i.e. to start transcending the phenomenological world in order to enrich and understand it more thoroughly.

Conclusion: a new paradigm?

The main ideas presented in this paper are not new – on the contrary they are very old! They are ideas that have been discussed for thousands of years around the globe, but surprisingly, management scholars and practitioners have adapted little of them, except perhaps for private use. There is a great need to explore these ideas further, both in theory and in practice. How will an organization based on a transcendent paradigm look and behave? How will change processes occur? How can a transcendent organization be initiated?

How can it be thoroughly understood? Or is that a self-contradiction of terms? Are we forever reduced to relegate transcendent questions to the mystical category and leave them unexplored?

It is time to throw off the burden imposed upon us of what is science and what is metaphysics and have the courage to explore the innermost layers of human nature. Management and organization are disciplines dealing with human beings, and they should be based on human sciences. Consciousness is the most intrinsic feature of an organization, and organizational theories should do justice to its vast potential. The development in the post-industrial economy represents a shift beyond the conception of the human being as a muscular production resource in favor of a learning and knowledgeable partner. Learning management and knowledge management is, however, still based on cognitive models, where consciousness is defined in terms of its content and seen as spatially confined to individuals. Communication between individuals' consciousnesses is also seen as spatially confined to interaction between the individuals. By expanding our knowledge of consciousness from the outer shell to its inner transcendent emptiness, as described by ancient philosophy and empirical research, learning and knowledge can capture the inner dynamic and meanings of the human being as well as the boundlessness of its scope. A truly virtual organization exists primarily in the inner space of consciousness, not in outer cyberspace.

A transcendent epistemology of organization should be based on methods using the subject as an instrument; what is needed is a new organizational *geisteswissenschaft* (science of consciousness), where introspection and meditation are used not only as phenomenological research methods, but also as instruments of transcendent change. The new perspective has the potential to throw new light on knowledge management and tacit knowledge as the understanding of knowledge generation and dispersion in organizations from a transcendent level unfolds. It can substantially improve our understanding of learning processes in organizations and how change in knowledge works in the transcition process. The new science of consciousness also has the potential to withdraw the management and organizational sciences from the grip of natural sciences, with their materialistic ontology and research methods, where the material paradigm has utterly failed, and make it a truly humanistic discipline, by harmonizing organizational development with human development, including spirituality. The ideas in this paper can help provide a foundation for the development of this new science.

Notes

1. Voluspå 3 (*Den Poetiska Eddan*, 1957).
2. Rig Ved 10.11.1 (10.129) (Wilson, 1888).
3. A common interpretation of Dürkheim is, however, that he is proposing systemic laws guiding society, who were not socially constructed. He defended his position and emphasized that his collective mind was not a transcendent being soaring over society, but

"only a composite of individual minds ... through the exchange of symbols" (Thompson, 1982, p. 14).

4. For a detailed discussion of the Maharishi effect, see Drühl, Langstaff, and Monson "Towards a synthesis of the classical and quantum paradigms: vedic science" as a holistic approach to organizational change in this issue of *Journal of Change Management*.
5. "Model" is used here in view of the lack of a better concept, which can be misleading. Here, the "model" designates the graphical description in order to categorize different notions of collective consciousness within one framework.
6. C.K. Prahalad, University of Michigan, in his valedictory address to the 1996 annual convention of the Madras Management Association, Feb. 3, 1996. In Gustavsson (1997).

References

Alvesson, M. and Berg, P.O. (1992), *Corporate Culture and Organizational Symbolism*, de Gruyter, New York, NY.

Appignanesi, R. and Garratt, C. (1995), *Postmodernism for Beginners*, Icon Books, Duxford.

Aron, A. and Aron E. (1986), *The Maharishi Effect – A Revolution through Meditation, Scientific Discovery of the Astounding Power of the Group Mind*, Stillpoint Publishing, Walpole, NH.

Ashby, W.R. (1952), *Design for a Brain*, Chapman & Hall, London.

Berg, P.O. (1985), "Organization change as a symbolic transformation process", in Frost, P.J. *et al.* (Eds), *Organizational Culture*, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.

Berger, P.L. and Luckman, T. (1966), *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, Doubleday, New York, NY.

Berger, P.L. and Pullberg, S. (1966), "Reification and the sociological critique of consciousness", *New Left Review*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 56-71.

Bougon, M.G. (1992), "Congregate cognitive maps: a unified dynamic theory of organization and strategy", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 324-48.

Britton, K. (1939), *Communication: A Philosophical Study of Language*, Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trubner, London.

Broome, J.R.N. (1995), "Stress management and organisation development: effects of transcendental meditation on psychological, physiological, and organisational variables at the worksite", unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of Business Administration, University of Cape Town, South Africa.

Chakraborty, S.K. (1992), *Management by Values – Towards Cultural Congruence*, Oxford University Press, Delhi.

Cooper, R. (1983), *The Other – A Model of Human Structuring, Beyond Method: Social Research Strategies*, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA, pp. 202-18.

Coward, H. and Foshay, T. (Eds) (1992), *Derrida and Negative Theology*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY.

Crossley-Holland, K. (1993), *Norse Myths*, Penguin, London.

Dandridge, T.C., Mitroff, I. and Joyce, W. (1980), "Organizational symbolism: a topic to expand organizational symbolism", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 77-82.

Delbrück, M. (1986), *Mind from Matter? – An Essay on Evolutionary Epistemology*, Blackwell Scientific Publisher, Palo Alto, CA.

Den Poetiska Eddan (the Poetic Edda) (1957), translated by Björn Collinder, Forum, Örebro.

Derrida, J. (1982) *Margins of Philosophy*, Translated by Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, first published in 1972 (*Marges de la Philosophie*, Paris).

Derrida, J. (1997), *Of Grammatology*, Transl. by G.C. Spivak, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD, originally published in 1967 (*De la Grammatologie*, Paris).

Dillbeck, M.C., Landrith III, G. and Orme-Johnson, D.W. (1981), "The transcendental meditation program and crime rate change in sample of forty-eight cities", *Journal of Crime and Justice*, Vol. 4, pp. 25-45.

Dossey, L. (1989), *Recovering the Soul – A Scientific and Spiritual Search*, Bantam, New York, NY.

Eccles, J.C. (1980), *The Human Psyche – the Gifford Lectures*, University of Edingburgh 1978-1979, Springer International, Berlin.

Evans, J.C. (1991), *Strategies of Deconstruction: Derrida and the Myth of the Voice*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.

Gustavsson, B. (1992), *The Transcendent Organization*, School of Business, Stockholm University, Stockholm.

Gustavsson, B. (1997), *Transition or Transcendence? A Study of Indian Managerial Values*, MCHV, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta.

Gustavsson, B. (1999), "Three cases and some ideas on organizational re-and unlearning", 6th Workshop on Managerial and Organizational Cognition: "Rethinking in/by? organizations/collectives", University of Essex, 1-3 June.

Gustavsson, B. and Harung, H.S. (1994), "Organisational learning based on transforming collective consciousness', *The Learning Organization*, No. 1 Vol. 1, pp. 33-40.

Hackforth, R. (1955), *Plato's Phaedo*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Hagelin *et al.* (1999), "Effects of group practice of the transcendental meditation programme on prevention of violent crime in Washington, DC: results of the national demonstration project, June-July 1993", *Social Indicators Research*, 47, pp. 153-201.

Haney, W.S. (1995), "Deconstruction and sanscrit poetics", *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, Vol. 28 No. 1.

Harung, H.S. (1996), "Vedic psychology and the Edda poems", *Journal of Human Values*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 19-36.

Hegel, F. (1971), *Philosophy of Mind*, translated by W. Wallace and A.V. Miller, foreword by J.N. Findlay, Clarendon Press, Oxford, (originally published 1830).

Hofstadter, D.R. (1980), *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*, Basic Books, New York, NY.

Husserl, E. (1992), *Cartesianska Meditationer, En Inledning till Fenomenologin* (original title: *Cartesianische Meditationen, Eine Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 1929), Daidalos, Göteborg.

James, W. (1952), "The varieties of religious experience – a study in human nature", *Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at the University of Edingurgh 1901-1902*, Longmans, Greenwich, CT (originally published 1902).

Jaynes, J. (1982), *The Origin of Consciousness in the Break Down of the Bicameral Mind*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, MA.

Jung, C.G. (1990a), *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, (first published in 1954).

Jung, C.G. (1990b), *The Concept of Collective Unconscious: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Read, Fordham, Adler, and McGuire (Eds), Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, (first published in 1936).

Jung, C.G. (1996), *Den Transcendenta Funktionen, (The Transcendent Function)*, Själen och Döden. Om Individuationen, Collected Works of C.G. Jung, translated by L. Freij and P. Wiking, Natur och Kultur, Stockholm (originally written in 1916).

Kant, I. (1929), *The Crirtique of Pure Reason*, translated by N. Kemp Smoth, Macmillan, London (originally published 1781).

Klein, D.B. (1984), *The Concept of Consciousness. A Survey*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE.

Kuhn, T.S. (1970), *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions International Encyclopaedia of Unified Science*, Vol. 2 No. 2, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL (first published in 1962).

Lévi-Strauss, C. (1967), *Structural Anthropology*, translated by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf. Anchor Books, New York, NY.

Lopez, D.S. (1996), *Elaborations on Emptiness. Uses of the Heart Sutra*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

Lukács, G. (1971), *History and Class Consciousness*, Merlin, London (first published 1923).

McDougall, W. (1939), *The Group Mind – A Sketch of the Principles of Collective Psychology with Some Attempt to Apply them to the Interpretation of National Life and Character*, Cambridge University Press, London.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1966), *The Science of Being and Art of Living*, International SRM Publications, London.

Marx, K. (1976), *Capital*, Penguin, Harmondsworth (first published in 1867).

Maturana, H. and Varela, F. (1980), *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living*, Reidl, London.

Mead, G.H. (1972), *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, (first published in 1934).

Mitroff, I.I. (1999), *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America*, Jossey Bass, San Fransisco, CA.

Mure, C.R.G. (1965), *The Philosophy of Hegel*, Oxford University Press, London.

Orme-Johnson, D.W., Alexander, C.N. and Davies, J.L. (1990), "The effects of the Maharishi technology of the unified field – reply to a methodological critique", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 34 No. 4, pp. 756-68.

Parikh, J., Neubauer, F. and Lank, A.G. (1995), *Intuition. The New Frontier of Management*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Parsons, T. (1951), *The Social System*, Free Press, Glencoe, IL.

Plato (1890), *The Republic*, translated by Thomas Taylor, The Walter Scott Publishing Co., London.

Plato (1955), *Phaedo*, translated by R. Hackforth, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Popper, K.R. and Eccles, J.C. (1981), *The Self and Its Brain*, Springer International, Berlin.

Radhakrishnan, S. (Ed. and translator) (1953), *The Principle Upanishads*, Allen & Unwin, London.

Robinson, R.H. (1967), *Early Madhyamika in India and China*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, WI.

Schelling, F.W.J.v (1820), *Fr. W.J. Schellings Sämmtliche Werke. Erster Band. Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie. Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus. Abhandlungen zu Erläuterungen des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre*, Uppsala 1816 (first published in 1794).

Schulte, N. (1984), "Self and being – an investigation into the experiental basis of Schelling's philosophy of consciousness", dissertation, Department of Philosophy, Univeristy of Amsterdam, Soma Boekenservice, Lelystad.

Sheldrake, R. (1981), *A New Science of Life. The Hypothesis of Formative Causation*, Blond & Briggs, London.

Sheldrake, R. (1989), *A Return to Living Biology, The Search for Meaning*, Crucible, Northamptonshire.

Silverman, D. (1970), *The Theory of Organizations*, Heinemann, London.

Sims, H.P. and Gioia, D.A. (1986), *The Thinking Organization. Dynamics of Organizational Social Cognition*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Slater, P. (1999), "Dynamic religion, formative culture, and the demonic in history", *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 92, January.

Thompson, K. (1982), *Emile Dürkheim*, Ellis Horwood, Chichester.

Turner, S.P. (1983), *Studying Organization through Lévi-Strauss' Structuralism, Beyond Method: Social Research Strategies*, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA.

von Krogh, G. and Roos, J. (1995), *Organizational Epistemology*, Macmillan, Hampshire.

Wallace, R.K. (1993), *The Physiology of Consciousness*, MIU Press, Fairfield, IA, New York.

Weber, M. (1964), *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Free Press, New York, NY, (first published in English in 1947).

Weick, K.E. (1979), *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.

Weick, K.E. and Roberts, K.H. (1993), "Collective mind in organizations: heedful interrelations on flight decks", *Administrative Science Quartely*, Vol. 8, pp. 357-81.

Wilson, H.H. (1888), *Rig-Veda Sanhita – A collection of Ancient Hindu Hymns*, Vol. 6, W.F. Webster, London.