

THE LEVIATHAN OF RATIONALITY: USING FILM TO DEVELOP CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION IN MANAGEMENT LEARNING AND EDUCATION

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Dogma is an ever-present danger to reason and rationality. In times of climate emergency and the dawn of a new geological era known as the Anthropocene, dogma becomes particularly disabling and dangerous for business and management. However, recent research findings in the study of creativity and imagination in management learning and education provide some promising ways of responding. Here I draw on techniques in experiential learning and contribute to the call for “disciplined imagination” (Weick, 1989) to explore what can be learned from the study of film for stimulating classroom creativity. The paper is devoted to a close analysis of *Leviathan* (2012), an experiential and avant-garde contemporary masterpiece in ethnographic filmmaking. I find that existing approaches to creativity need to be supplemented with greater attention to the technological apparatus of cinema and its affective materialities. Drawing on the work of Gilles Deleuze, this essay shows that cinema can produce what we call an *event of thought*. This requires the generation of original concepts, and we propose “becoming Go-Pro” to best harness the affects and heightened existential awareness stimulated by *Leviathan* and to help delimit the contours of this event. With this concept, we produce findings that challenge prevailing concepts of reason and rationality in management studies.

There's a tendency toward dogma in management education. Dogma confines and perverts the pursuit of reason and rationality and finds expression in a variety of ways in management studies, including rote-learning, narrow theoretical specialization, routinized empirical study, and “gap spotting” (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011; Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). It is also the product of a general lack of interest in, or reflexivity about underlying epistemological and

ontological assumptions that inform (or deform) our reason and rationality (Chia, 1996; Cunliffe, 2002; Clegg & Ross Smith, 2003). Even the critique of the business school and its management education has become something of a dogma with its ritualistic calls for greater diversity, critical theory, “holistic” thinking, and methodological pluralism. These various dogmas and the “stand-off” between established paradigms and schools of study in what was once called the “fragmented adhocracy” of management studies (Whitley, 1984) narrows and confines intellectual creativity and imagination.

This is worrying at a time of climate and ecological emergency that reflect the forces of a new geological epoch or era widely identified now as the “Anthropocene” (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000; Zalasiewicz et al., 2008; IPCC, 2018, 2019; Lenton et al., 2019). Allied and co-implicated with wider emergencies, there is a very real fear of social- and political-system breakdown that may well entail the eclipse of the very basic rights and liberties associated with liberal democratic governance under which business as we know it has been allowed to flourish. In this emerging period of crisis, we are challenged to re-think the very basic categories and distinctions used in our reason and rationality. Old distinctions between nature and culture,

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for example, no longer make much sense. With dramatic and often unprecedented changes in local weather systems, for example, we might be prompted to ask whether the climate is a *natural* phenomenon, susceptible to “realist” description and analysis, or a *cultural*, or political *construction*? An outcome of human activity, in other words. Conceived *either* as natural or man-made, we can imagine ways in which business might be made with it. But what if weather is now more like an “agency”—and one that is more complex and unpredictable precisely because of the dynamics of this un-thought through human-nature entanglement? More extreme still—and taking up some of the consequences of thinking of climate as a “socio-natural assemblage” (Castree, 2005), some may begin to pose questions that ask if weather is part of a system that is somehow “aware” of us, looking at us, responding in ways that exceed the scales of our measuring instruments? Can we do business in these conditions? Can we prepare managers who could manage in these situations?

Where the causes and consequences of unprecedented climatic and other geophysical events are acknowledged to exceed the capacity of prediction and control, dominant methods and assumptions of rationality in scientific inquiry are also brought into question (Lovelock, 1979; Palsson et al., 2013; Lenton, 2016). To respond, new forms of openness and intellectual collaboration are required, at the very least to enable dialogue and collaboration across the social and natural sciences. Specifically for social scientists in management and organization studies, there is also a need to escape existing paradigms premised on the strict separation of *nature*—a domain of law-like movements that operate autonomously of humans—from *culture*, where we still assume there is an individual or collective human that enjoys a certain liberty and space for creativity, self-fashioning, and construction (Belmont Forum, 2012; Chakrabarty, 2016; Latour & Lenton, 2019). However, considerably more ingenuity, creativity, counterintuitive thinking, and imagination will be required if management learning is to find ways of participating with the Anthropocene in ways that help mitigate or even survive the profound upheaval and emergencies it entails.

In this essay, I report on the results of a pedagogic exercise designed to stimulate creativity and imagination using the ethnographic documentary film, *Leviathan* (2012), which asks us to confront many of our most basic assumptions about being-in-the-world. Filmed and directed by the anthropologists Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel of the Sensory Ethnography Lab

at Harvard University, *Leviathan* is remarkable for its sensorial and affective qualities and is widely considered a landmark movie of visionary aesthetic power (Landesman, 2015; Westmoreland & Luvaas, 2015; Stevenson & Kohn, 2015). According to some, it “gestures to a sort of ontological poetics and politics for the so-called Anthropocene” and attends to the foreboding and apocalyptic sense that we are living in end-times (Stevenson & Kohn, 2015: 49). On one level, the film seems preoccupied with the application of rationality and technology in the industrialization of deep-sea trawler fishing that is rapidly emptying the oceans of sea-life and contributing to our contemporary climate and ecological emergency. However, as we shall see, the film is not in any way didactic or instructive. Rather, it invites reflection on a more-than-human relationality that marks the limits of established reason and rationality in management learning. However, these insights are hard won and demand forms of creative engagement beyond extant assumptions popular in studies of creativity in management learning.

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In a recent review of research devoted to the study of creativity and imagination Ancelin-Bourguignon et al. (2019) note the prevailing assumption that treats creativity as if it were a “property attached to a subject.” It is now common, they write, “for creativity to be understood as a mode of free expression that unlocks ability in all fields. It seems that it is humanity, not God, who now creates something from nothing” (p. 8). No doubt this assumption prevails because of the continuing popularity of the application of modern psychology in management studies as found in models of creativity, including the influential and widely cited “componential model” (Amabile, 1983, 1988, 2012), and the study of “flow” and creativity in Csikszentmihalyi (1996). Greater attention to the relational and organizational complexities of creativity can be found in studies of art and aesthetics in organization studies, which date back to the seminal publications of Gagliardi (1990) and Strati (1992, 1999) (see also, Linstead & Höpfl, 2000; Carr & Hancock, 2003; Taylor & Ladkin, 2009). These scholars, for the most part European, ground

their aesthetic turn in the writings of Alexander Baumgarten (1714–1762) that is taken up by Kant in *The Critique of Judgement* (1790) and which largely establishes the contours within which the distinctive contribution of aesthetics and sense perception help advance modern reason.

Since Kant, aesthetic knowing can be understood to stand in some considerable tension to the desire for a complete rationalization of knowledge. Important 20th century readings of Kant through Martin Heidegger, Theodore Adorno, into Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze, have progressively identified the tensions and aporias introduced into “Reason” by the pursuit of aesthetic knowing (Shaviro, 2012). Short of a nuanced treatment of aesthetic theory, we can note that the cultivation of sense perception can erode those foundational dualisms in Western thought from which reason and rationality are derived. Aesthetic knowing can lead to the dissolution of the subject–object distinction, for example, and undermine the possibility of establishing a reliable or consensual reality: It can stimulate imagination, but also de-center assumptions about agency and causality; it can also elevate and demote, lead to hope and despair, or vision and confusion (Bersani & Dutoit, 2004). Given these features, it seems a little reductive to treat creativity as something that can be simply trained, instrumentalized and managed in organizations to support dominant commitments to utilitarian values that underpin ongoing efforts to control and rationalize work.

I build on recent efforts to develop creativity through aesthetic knowing, which attends to what is being called a more “relational” ontology that is more attentive to a post-dualistic sensitivity (see Thompson, 2018). This relational turn acknowledges that creativity cannot be isolated and reified within psychological or cognitive processes bounded by individual agency. This prompts us to ask, “What contribution to creativity might be made by shared experience and pre-personal or collective ‘affects’ available in the cinematic experience?” These are questions that are now attracting increasing attention across a range of approaches in management and organization studies (Borch, 2010; Gherardi, 2017, 2019; Kenny, 2012; Fotaki et al., 2017). However, how does film help develop this relational ontology, and what role should we ascribe to materials, objects, and technologies in film that more radically de-center the aesthetic knowing of human agents?

Film is a collective, and at its best a profoundly immersive experience that offers a potent resource to test and study the role of creativity and imagination in management learning and education

(Billsberry et al., 2012; Buchanan & Huczynski, 2004; Champoux, 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2015). However, in the main, this literature tends to use film dogmatically and in rather superficial ways. More often than not, film is deployed merely as a backdrop or illustration of existing theory and principles in management practice and study. Signs of a possible emerging second wave in film studies can be found in a few recent papers that offer significant intellectual novelty and considerably more creative and imaginative interpretations of management and organization (Zundel et al., 2013; Holt & Zundel, 2014; Griffin, Learmonth, & Piper, 2018; Ayikoru & Park, 2019). These give greater insight into the experiential and intellectual fertility of film, and allied to what some see as a “visual turn” in management and organization, in which some aspire to a more “transcendental” or metaphysical experience, the future of film pedagogy looks promising and exciting (Bell et al., 2014; Hassard et al., 2018; Linstead, 2018; Wood & Brown, 2011; Wood et al., 2018; Walz et al., 2016).

Although more capable of responding to a relational ontology, this burgeoning second wave of film studies has not yet turned its attention to the distinctive media and unique material and aesthetic qualities and experience of film. Their theorizing, or the *practice of theorizing* (Weick, 1989), is in many ways limited and suffers from the same inhibitions as that of the early pioneers. In these approaches, theory tends to be *applied* rather than something that is immanent or emergent with film, for example, with the consequence that research practices tend to *defer to* or reify “Theory.” This enables theory to *colonize* film and diminish or contain the capacity for experience. In so doing “Theory” is made to work as an etic or “meta” phenomenon into which researchers house their findings, interpretations, or extractions they make from films under analysis. Challenging and advanced as the theory might be (drawing on Gregory Bateson and Lev Vygotsky in the case of Zundel et al., 2013), and explicated and applied to management learning and education in ways that clearly demonstrate the authors’ capacity for creativity and imagination, we are still left asking: *how did they develop this creativity?* and, how might film best be used pedagogically *to develop and inspire the practice of creativity and imagination among students of management?* Can we work with films in ways that do not subordinate it to the purposes of theoretical and intellectual mastery or control? What happens to reason when we give up such control? How can we avoid the subversion of reason that can attend immersive aesthetic experiences in which powerful imagery acts with

persuasion and rhetoric to manipulate the viewer? Moreover, can we deploy film, or even allow film to *deploy us*, and in ways that furnish the possibility for the beginning of a genuinely original thinking (Heidegger, 1968)¹?

To answer these questions I draw on methods associated with experiential learning (Reynolds & Vince, 2007), and in particular techniques associated with “photo-elicitation” and the “social photo-matrix” (Sievers, 2007, 2008; Warren, 2012; Shortt & Warren, 2012). In advancing these techniques, we are able to inspire an affective-laden form of associative thought that stimulates considerable creativity among film-viewers. However, we find that *Leviathan* produces a series of affects that demand something more than an embodied or corporeal extension that essentially returns the viewer to their human subjectivity. Contrary to most uses of affect theory emerging in recent management and organization studies, “affect” as theorized by Brian Massumi and others (Blackman & Venn, 2010; Clough & Halley, 2007; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Massumi, 2002; Thrift, 2007) should lead out of the subject and invites us to consider the force of affect in a collective or pre-personal dimension of

¹ With this thought about the beginning of thinking, we enter profoundly complex problems for the question of reason and rationality. Martin Heidegger’s 1954 work on *Was Heisst Denken* (the ambiguity “What is called thinking/What calls thinking” is lost in translation, Heidegger, 1968) is widely recognized as one of the most important philosophical contributions in the continental tradition to have worked on and possibly out of these problems. It is a work upon which most contemporary philosophers in this tradition continue to labor. In his opening statements in *Was Heisst Denken*, Heidegger proposes that “We come to know what it means to think when we ourselves try to think” and goes on to suggest “If the attempt is to be successful, we must be ready to learn thinking.” And yet, “As soon as we allow ourselves to become involved in such learning, we admitted that we are not yet capable of thinking” (Heidegger, 1968: 3). Such reflexive paradoxes recall the popular “double-loop learning” of Chris Argyris, and provide more direct inspiration to much of Karl Weick’s work. However, whereas such theories in management development confine reflexivity to the achievement of a second-order level of underlying rules or values that control decisions and thinking where practical action in the world is enhanced and elevated, Heidegger takes the aporias of thinking *about thinking* to a more profound existential crisis marked by what he called “ereignis” a coming into view, an “event” of thought, or in more recent English translations of Derrida’s texts, “propriation” (see Derrida, 1992).

shared being, in something like an “affective atmosphere” (Anderson, 2009).

As a site of affective atmosphere, film and its affects helps us pose a more fundamental question to the history of reason and rationality in management learning and education (March 2007; Townley, 2008; Burrell, 2013): Who or what is in control in the relation between man and nature, and what kind of control can our faculty for reasoning expect or cultivate? In this paper I address these issues of control by exploring and pushing the associative-rich affects of *Leviathan* to a point of *subjective-loss*, or loss of control. At this point there is a possibility of something that we call an “event” of thought. Through this event, we become (momentarily at least) loosed from our all-too-human subjectivity, thus allowing us to begin to participate in what some see as the film’s “post-humanist observation” (Chkhaidze, 2017) and “trans-corporeality” (Connor, 2019). This event stimulates a style of thinking that recalls Martin Heidegger’s (1959) identification of an alternative mode of being in the world he called *Gelassenheit*, to which we find valuable connection. However, we find a greater a capacity to engage *Leviathan* by drawing the lineaments of this event of thought from the work of Gilles Deleuze (1986, 1989), and in particular the possibilities for this “event of thought” in cinema cultivated by the work of “concept creation” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

I first explore what Deleuze calls the “liquid image” before proposing the concept “becoming Go-Pro” as a way of navigating and making sense of this event. This gives access to and allows us to work on the impersonal and vital forces harnessed in *Leviathan*’s cinematic collective assemblage. In these ways we nourish and seize the event of thought to extract or enact a series of what Deleuze calls “percepts” and “affects” that open up and mark out a space of not-knowing². This can be dangerous of course, but marks the emergence of an *originality* of thought and thinking that serves as a “supplement” (Derrida, 1976) to those in management learning and education who work (knowingly or unknowingly) within established reason or rationality or rationality and those who seek to replace

² To work effectively with Deleuze, one must distinguish between what he calls “percepts” and the more familiar notions of (to) “perceive” and/or “perception”: “Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them . . . [and] go beyond the strength of those who undergo them” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994:164). A careful reading and exposition of chapter 7 in *What is Philosophy* is preliminary to the kind of analysis we are attempting here.

dominant forms of reason and rationality with more critical grounds.

For the critical school of management studies, there is something wrong with capitalism; capitalism pervades all phenomena, including most if not all knowledge practices that are implicated in its reproduction, and as capitalism is illogical and contradictory, the reasonableness of these knowledge practices in management are fatally compromised (Townley, 2008). One must find another ground for reason. Normally this ground is established by attachment to some vague notion of emancipation or some commitment to bringing about an alternative system of economic production and distribution (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992, 1996; Parker, 2002). *Leviathan* would then be analyzed for its capacity to portray the oppressions and resistance that form a system of economic production. Or, these grounds might be assumed neither critical nor uncritical but founded on the derivation of a pure logical a-priori and a-historical set of conditions for the exercise of knowledge. Science, for example, is typically conceived to produce value-free knowledge that simply establishes the facts of the matter, on to which political or value-informed knowledge come to make decisions (Habermas, 1971). The supplement of reason to which the event of thought leads *splits the difference* between a critical and non-critical, or mainstream, management studies. It neither adds nor takes anything away in any propositional or substantive form to reason. Instead working the supplement in *Leviathan* opens up radical and often disturbing *unknowing*, because it is here that the most generative forms of creativity are made possible. Here, we might say, “something happens” to the subject (Knox et al., 2015). This brings reason to the point of breakdown, but at the same time reason always starts again and in ways that leave open future possibilities that resist stabilization and incorporation into procedure or method by which thought can be trained or exercised and rendered vulnerable to dogma.

CREATIVITY, AFFECT, AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The screen fills with darkness. A pause; and then, slowly, we become aware of the sound of wind blowing, or an animal breathing, a low hollowing white noise. Members of the audience may have started to become aware of their own bodies—pulsing, and breathing, maybe twitching (Helmreich, 2010). A dry “glitchy” scratching of sounds washes through the room. It sounds

like particulate matter, looping in rhythmic pulse, perhaps the soundtrack of a DJ turntablist: soft, slow, dreamy, hypnotic. And yet, unsettling. Suddenly, something metallic has been struck. A clang. Resonating, swelling, and contracting in waves that palpate and reverberate through the viewers’ bodies. A few moments later a soft beating glow of a red sun-like form slowly rises from the lower right-hand corner of the screen. It then sinks down again, before arising once more. For a few moments it gently bobs up and down. Without warning the screen fills with exploding stars. In an instant, the mood has changed. Thousands of miniature beads of red, blue, and yellow sparkle and flash against a vast seesawing blackness. Sky or sea (we’re not sure) fills the screen, but violently swinging from left to right and back again, accompanied by an intense grinding mechanical clank that we hear against a background of white noise.

The film ostensibly follows life on board a New Bedford, Massachusetts fishing trawler, but for 87 minutes the viewer is immersed in, and becomes embodied by, a turbulent and often surreal experience in which it is very difficult to secure any definitive perspective, self-consciousness, or spectatorial position. Objects and images come in and out of focus, the screen is murky, dark, and blurred, periodically punctured by an occasionally recognizable item of equipment, a winch, for example, or a fishing net. There are also many scenes in which it takes time to make conventional classificatory sense. Images that form the figure of a human face, for example, are at times shot in super close-up, filling the whole screen with something that appears more like a landscape of earth-like depressions, pockmarks, and hillocks, rivulets, valleys, and pathways. Composed of a skittish and kaleidoscopic montage, objects also variously mutate or dissolve as colors bleed across boundaries, evoking an almost hallucinogenic experience. The soundtrack is also remarkable, registering the deep bass and industrial subsonic sounds of droning, clanking, and the screeching of metal on metal. However, the incessant dissolution and resolution of image and the cacophonous whirring of noise is not gratuitous. Rather, the form is absolutely essential in conveying the affective and embodied charge of the fishing experience. Such techniques are crafted and vital to the realization of a film that goes beyond seeing the ocean-going shipping vessel simply as a metaphor or parable for our more general and contemporary *life-technologized*, tempting as this interpretation might be.

Such an intense and powerful aesthetic poses a considerable challenge to description and our responses necessarily reflect the struggle to contain and describe such experiences. In these ways, however,

the film offers a very promising medium in which to develop forms of learning based on the growing movement of arts-based teaching and learning (Adler, 2006; Taylor & Ladkin, 2009; Statler & Guillet de Monthoux, 2015; Ward & Shortt, 2020). Visually experimental and disorientating, without recognizable plot or character, and no voice-over explanatory soundtrack, the film demands creative engagement by its audience and remains open to a multitude of experiences and interpretations. The film is not didactic, instructive, or in any way representational. Nor is it best viewed as a film with a secret theme or message that requires deciphering. Instead, its highly fashioned aesthetic creates affects that test our very capacity for sense-making, while heightening embodied and existential awareness in ways that open up more metaphysical and transcorporeal dimensions of being.

Our understanding of the ways in which creativity is stimulated in organization and harnessed for organizational development has been much advanced by those working in the traditions of experiential learning, founded in the writings of people like Malcolm Knowles, David Kolb, Kurt Lewin, and Donald Schön. Enriched by approaches that attend more fully to the contribution of existential subjectivity and identity, especially as these play out through psychoanalytical and group dynamic dimensions of organization (French & Grey, 1996; Burgoyne & Reynolds, 1997; Reynolds & Vince, 2007), we are beginning to better understand how to engender and liberate greater creative depth and complexity in organization. The Kleinian-influenced group psychoanalyses of Wilfrid Bion and others in the Tavistock tradition, for example, has been particularly instructive in extending our appreciation of unconscious processes. In the best of this work, the unconscious is conceived beyond the confines of a personal intrapsychic process, and as something that operates in a *trans-personal* and system or group dynamic space. Here, the work and influence of Burkard Sievers and associates on visual imagery is particularly instructive (Sievers, 2007, 2008; Warren, 2012; Short & Warren, 2012; Mersky & Sievers, 2019).

Extending the pioneering work of Gordon Lawrence and his development of the social-dreaming matrix (see Lawrence, 2018), Sievers and others have found ways of extending the study of the unconscious in creativity by developing what they call the “social-photo matrix” (Sievers, 2007, 2008; Warren, 2012; Shortt & Warren, 2012; Mersky & Sievers, 2019). The method brings together developments in arts-based management education practice (see Berthoin Antal et al., 2019 for a recent summary and review) and

long-standing work in the aesthetic understanding of organizational life that followed in the wake of Gagliardi (1990), Strati (1992, 1999), Linstead and Höpfl (2000), and others. Sievers is trying to create conditions in which the group can generate “new thinking and new thoughts,” following Bion’s rich and suggestive insight that thoughts might exist for which a thinker has not yet been “found” (Bion, 1970: 104, et passim). One exercise involves the display of photographs taken of the university campus by members of the group who sit collectively in front of the images to work on response and interpretation. Deploying processes of association, amplification, systemic thinking, and reflection, the tutor attempts to solicit the unconscious and what Bollas (1987) calls the “unthought-known.” Sievers tracks and records the interactions between group members as they work on the photographs, and in an illuminating way shows how tutors or the group host/consultant carefully harnesses energies that trigger or generate collective associations among members. One picture of an empty hallway in front of an escalator, for example, stimulates an exchange in which members connect and build association: “This is a zone of high danger,” one suggests, “the atmosphere is precarious,” another responds. “Maybe the students are already evacuated.” “My immediate impression was hospital, clinic and sterility—like staying in front of a door that protects against an epidemic.” “I got the impression that I was standing behind this door in a totally smoked-up room” (Sievers, 2008: 239–240).

We see creativity here as a dynamic process in action, stimulated by the kind of heightened awareness available as one begins to appreciate how the way one sees the world is an outcome of “negotiation” between an *inner* world—of memory and biography—and the *outer* world, or what is taken to exist ontologically as external reality. One has to guard against manipulating students by suggestions that reflect too much the pre-occupations—or in the practice of psychodynamics the “counter-transference”—of the tutor. However, careful attention to these conscious or unconscious manipulations can avoid these outcomes, and in this exercise reported by Sievers, members and tutors worked together to *collectively* arrive at new and often terrifying understanding of the university and its role and function in society. No longer seen as a seat of learning, for example, members begin to develop insights in which the university takes on features more usually associated with a reservoir or car-park, or something that exists to keep young people off the unemployed register. When worked on more fully, analysis can achieve insights that present the

university as a center of state-sanctioned authority, repression, and control. In this tradition of group dynamics, the development of such interpretations is understood to be emotionally very intense. Creativity is treated as the outcome of energies stimulated by the rubbing together of personal blockages or repressions with external stimuli, but it is “the group” that is deemed agentic in allowing us to get in touch with memories or associations otherwise denied, or to which we stubbornly remain ignorant. This thinking elaborates complex models of entangled individual- and group- defense mechanisms through which elements of psycho-biographic memory are drawn out of the individual by the group and seen as elements “carried” by individuals on behalf of the group.

SCREENING *LEVIATHAN*

This attention to subjectivity and existential being is apposite to the study of films like *Leviathan*. Despite the abstract and visually perplexing nature of the film, it was the plight of the fisherman (barely present as a recognizable human image) that initially seemed to occupy the concerns of a number of students in the room. Reflecting on this attachment to human and character, and what might be an over-literal reading of the film, the following observation was made during the class in an effort to try and prompt another way of seeing:

There is so much preoccupation with the human and with jobs, and I hadn't seen the film quite like that. I am not saying you are wrong. But to me, the human was kind of a small part of it. It didn't seem to me like a human perspective about life on a shipping vessel, on a fishing trawler (Tutor 1).

A few moments later, one of the group starts speaking: “I think it was so shaky all the time, the whole movie. It was not only shaky, but some of the angles . . . instead of looking straight up, they were diagonal, or even upside down.” “It made me feel seasick,” another confessed. However, as we were able to help students relax, their minds seemed to loosen, which allowed them to generate and follow associations in ways that gave themselves more to the embodied and affective qualities expressed and put to work in the film. In a sense, we had to suspend their desire for instrumental reason and to manage their impatience to apply what they had learned in their modules on economics, accounting and finance, or organizational behavior.

There are a few moments of silence. One student then draws our attention to the appearance of eyes in the film. As they spoke, they become very animated

and excited: “because their eyes, you don't see anything to expect (sic). *There is nothing in there!*” In one or two very brief moments the camera catches the eyes of the fishermen, and they do indeed appear vacant or “hollow,” but the student's tone of voice and extemporaneous elaborations seemed to reveal a possibility that they were lamenting or even condemning a life that for them seemed to offer little hope. As they worked through their thinking, the student arrived at reflections that expressed forms of rationalization in which resignation or apathy were imagined to be the only way of surviving or accommodating to such a life. This attention to eyes also helped open up our eyes to a series of connections and associations in the film that did not appear to observe any literal or rational sequencing (either in terms of time or ostensible plot). These connections perhaps reflected a more intuitive series of links inspired by the experience of filming to which the post-filming montage and editorial cuts were made in ways to encourage the audience to respond in similar ways. As the directors explain, “while we were editing the film, we were thinking more of painters, more than about other filmmakers. We were thinking about Bosch and Breughel and Escher and Turner” (Castaing-Taylor in MacInnis, 2013: 63). In one astonishing sequence, the screen pulsates with the protruding eyes of hundreds of different types of fish sloshing in the blood and viscera of dismembered parts of their deceased brethren. The viewer is placed right inside the pools of water on the fishing boat, as if swimming with the fish—and it takes a while to make sense with our habitual classificatory categories and descriptive prose (fish, human, swimming, water).

At this point, another member of the audience made a very insightful and creative association between the eyes of the fish and the “eyes” of the fishing net in which the fish are trapped. This kind of juxtaposition and moving visual rhyme is unique to cinematic montage, but drawing first on Ehrenzweig (1967), we were able to cultivate something akin to what he calls a “scattered attention,” one that allowed us to attend to the rhyme and rhythm of these movements. For Ehrenzweig, *a scattered attention* allows viewers to attend more fully to the greater complexity of patterning immanent to the movement explored in modernist abstraction and available to viewers when art is conceived in less-representational or figurative terms. This is extremely insightful when reflecting on one sequence of the film in which dismembered body parts are seen accumulating at a drainage outlet. Subject to progressive stages of deformation and dissolution, these parts become

bloodied globs of watery-matter whose movements are followed by way of an editorial cut to an additional camera placed outside the boat. From this camera we see the remains being swilled or pumped back into the ocean. This is horror, of course, but there are also significant other patterns that order the material and register in more aesthetic and affective experience. One student admits that “I physically couldn’t watch it anymore.” We wondered if the sense of seasickness and visual confusion was a response to efforts to fix form and to hold on to more literal readings seeking representational or narrative control.

Recognizing and containing this disorientation allowed us to help students navigate the shifting waters upon which we all seemed to float in the heady or “affective atmosphere” of the screening room (Anderson, 2009). In more strict Deleuzian terminology, the film extends and generates a “compound of *affects* and *percepts*” in “blocs of sensation” that endure in a life of their own beyond the capacity of the viewer to perceive or make subjective sense. Working with the obsession with eyes, we were able to develop other associations. We recalled a scene in which the front of the bow of the fishing vessel filled the screen with its vast metal green forepeak. On either side of the bow, little dark circular protrusions are set against a background of white discs. Might they be a set of eyes on the brow of a face? Are they looking at us? Below the “eyes,” the plunging white water from the prow line at the bottom of the screen seems to form what now appears to be a row of white teeth, fixed in a hideous grin. It is an arresting and disturbing realization—or vision—that invites us to consider the distinction between the animate and inanimate, machinery and animal. Who is watching who, or what, here? Who is hunter? Who is hunted?

This blurring of images transgresses all fixed form. Like Deleuze found in his reading of *Moby Dick* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 243–245; 248–250), in *Leviathan* one can become immersed in percepts and affects that dissolve the boundary between fishermen, fishing trawler, human, animal, sea and sky. Fishermen “marry” mermaids and become fish or fishlike in the form of close-up images of eroticised tattoos on the arms of the fisherman. The close-up of a human face becomes a landscape. Meanwhile, a ray fish swirling in bloodied and liquefying matter takes on the appearance of an angel, screaming in terror or ecstasy. Allowing ourselves to go with the principle of a scattered attention permits us to attend more fully to the colors that bleed across the outline of various forms. We perceive a fragility of matter, which only momentarily *forms* as objects, periodically looming out of what can become experienced as a more basic primordial *color-movement*. Here, streaks of red and

blue swoop left and right, often beyond the frame of the camera. Color-movement also becomes the foreground of our attention, so much so that we might think color has become a character itself or a possible medium in which to make sense.

“[T]he film extends and generates a “compound of affects and percepts” in “blocs of sensation” that endure in a life of their own beyond the capacity of the viewer to perceive or make subjective sense.”

As we follow the inversions and reversals of perspective achieved by the swirling and swooping of the camera, we are increasingly drawn into color-movement. We begin to notice how the sea and the sky appear to change place as the viewer is taken from below to above. At times we experience the sensation of swimming. Other times we are flying. After a while, we are no longer sure whether we are flying or swimming. With such affects, we might have occasion to consider the vast firmament under which or over which the tiny fishing vessel and its contents are being propelled. The vessel appears lost, cast adrift and subject to inhuman forces (Clark, 2011). For some this becomes highly suggestive of the limits and even futility of human endeavor.

LIQUID IMAGE: TOWARD AN EVENT OF THOUGHT

Student and teacher have to find ways of relaxing the fantasy of control nurtured by the reification of cognitive faculties in order to work most creatively with *Leviathan* and in ways that help seize the conditions for new thinking. In our screening of the film, there were inchoate signs of this creativity and admission of a greater range of that embodied, affective, and unconscious experience recently identified by “affect theory” (Blackman & Venn, 2010; Clough & Halley, 2007; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Massumi, 2002; Thrift, 2007). These signs were embodied and often evident in asides, gestures, and throwaway comments, and we became aware of them in the twitching, fidgeting, and shuffling of bodies. It was as if bodies were being made animate, despite the best intentions of their owners! Bathed in blue, as we were, from the glare of the screen, we sought to work on one of the asides made to color in an effort to see what patterns and relations might be elicited and to explore a capacity for what some have called “thinking in blue” or “thinking with blue” (Beyes & De Cock, 2017). Blue remains one of the prevailing colors in the film, one that seems

to stitch the images together, but one that also invites a transversal movement of thought and association, transversal by virtue of the movements affected across and sometimes against the surface of the montaged sequences.

Blue is not something we simply see, but *something we see with*—in the key of blue, we might say. It is a percept that stimulates affects that puts our thinking to work in ways that wouldn't be possible without it. As we relax our desire for familiar forms, our vision can follow matter and its relations in a more molecular and vital state. The blue of the mermaid tattoo, for example, inked on the arm of the fisherman as we see him shucking scallops, bleeds into the blue of his eyes, which in turn yield to the blue of the ocean and skies. These are “movement images” for Deleuze that in *Leviathan* connect across categories or species distinction and elevate what might appear everyday mundane activities to something more intensive or extraordinary. For some these movements can bring the viewer into touch with the “cosmic” or transcendent (see Wood & Brown, 2011; Linstead, 2018). Thinking with “blue” in another register might also suggest a particular form of organization (see Beyes, 2017), perhaps a tragic fate for the fisherman and the trawler condemned to a dismal and bleak experience as it rakes the remnants of life (and its life) from the fading blue of the oceans.

In seizing the affects of “thinking blue” we need to extract the affective semiotics of film, and to do this it is important to recognize the influence of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) on Deleuze's writings on cinema. For Peirce, there are signs that work in part non-cognitively, and outside subject–object dualism, which for Deleuze come to do their work in an affective register. In his typology of signs, *thinking with blue* would reflect an affective thought based on the material affectivity he grants the sign, what he calls in his 3-step sense-making classification, the sign of “firstness.” Following blue in *Leviathan* opens up movements and flows, often complex and intricate in patterning that Deleuze might call examples of the “perception image.” Under the influence of Peirce, Deleuze identifies the emergence of what he calls “reume-signs” in the treatment and fascination with moving water of the “French school” of pre-war cinema (L'Hernier, Epstein, Gremillon, Dupont, etc., see Deleuze, 1986: 76–80). The *reume-sign* refers to “perceptions of that which crosses the frame or flows out” (ibid: 217). Not only is the sign captured in images of moving water, but in the very *form of perception* that makes moving water *the basis upon which the camera sees*. In these films, the reume-sign is possible because of “the liquid status of perception,”

which helps create a perceptive system distinct from human earthly perceptions—or that expands and extends what is possible for humans (etymologically from *humus*, of course—i.e., the earth) to perceive. As Deleuze writes, the liquid image “tends towards an acentred system where the images vary in relation to one another and tend to become like the reciprocal actions and vibrations of pure matter” (ibid: 76).

In a sense *Leviathan* and its affective qualities allows us to become watery beings. But if we can be remade as watery beings, Deleuze also shows how water often becomes a character in itself (i.e., L'Herbier's *Le Torrent*). This is achieved by the realization of “liquid perception” that comes from somewhere outside our habitual modes of seeing, habits that Levin (1988: 53–166) calls the “empire of everyday seeing.” Liquid perception allows us to reach out or extend our corporeal awareness. At certain moments in the films of this French school, there is a decomposition of form into material matter that produces a becoming-water of vision. For Deleuze, this provides a medium for something like clairvoyance. In the “shower of sparks and a whirlpool of floating spots” in Dupont's *Vaudeville* (p. 77), Deleuze writes, the film creates original images that convey visionary experience that for some characters in the film foretell the future. Here perception resonates on an affective level that can draw the viewer into a shared medium forming a collective body-assembly of viewer-screen sound-and-light imagery. In watching film our thinking becomes, in various ways, *affectively film* or *filmic*. Here, thinking can merge with and become part of the specific material qualities of film and what we might call the *film-subject-viewer-assembly*.

This is a dimension of cinematic affect that has been ignored in the use of film as a pedagogic resource in management learning and education. The material affectivity of film is also difficult for established practices in experiential-learning methods, given its preoccupation with psychoanalytical biography and its quest for subjective (re)integration. By contrast, our attention to this liquid image opened up and marked out a “thin” interval in sense-making that helped liberate movement, vital energies, and material forces beyond what could be integrated by a subject (Bennett, 2010; Macauley, 2010). Carried or registered in moments of transition as viewing bodies variously twitched and trembled, this interval marked the possibility for something that can be identified as an “event of thought” (Deleuze, 1990, 1994; Deleuze & Guattari, 1994) provoked by the shock to thought brought about by the affects and percepts in *Leviathan*. Immersed in the liquid image

we no longer knew what or how to think, but with the help of “amplification” and “free association” (Sievers, 2008), we were able to begin responding to the material affects of technological apparatus. “It looked like CCTV footage” one student reflected. Another then built on this to make the point that “It doesn’t seem as if some-*one* deliberately filmed it” (*emphasis added*). This was a particularly incisive contribution that seemed to make connections to the apparent lack or subordinate role of human agency in the shaping and direction of the film. It also drew our attention to the unique qualities of the Go-Pro camera used to shoot the film.

BECOMING GO-PRO: THE EVENT OF THOUGHT

Originally designed for the “selfie” filming of live action and extreme sports, the Go-Pro has been most popularly associated with a genre of short “sports-action” films, including popular online uploads of video shot from the head mounts of mountain bikers as they plummet down the side of mountains or cliff edges. The Go-Pro is basically a miniature camera that uses a mobile phone camera lens less than an inch in diameter. It is cheap, versatile, practically indestructible, and waterproof up to 30 meters in depth. In filming *Leviathan*, the directors experiment with footage captured from mounting these cameras to the bodies of fisherman and to the boat, but also under the keel, and on the end of 16-foot poles, which are rhythmically swung, plunged, and then retrieved from the sea. Go-Pros were also positioned high up on masts, fixed to chains, attached to gantry frames extending out over the prow of the boat, and also left to float free in water and its debris. The camera allows filmmakers to *extend* the conventions of human vision and corporeal sensibility while gesturing toward an anonymous and nonhuman perspective. Were we also “becoming Go-Pro” as a response to this visceral and intellectual shock of *Leviathan*? This was a question asked spontaneously and in reaction to the shock of affects brought about by the film. We later came to understand this shock as something which might mark an “event” of thought and out of this hiatus of knowing we are able to draw the concept “becoming Go-Pro.” Might this concept be deployed to develop thinking about management education in ways that avoid dogma and address key questions of rationality and reason as these apply to management learning?

We might first note that in “becoming Go-Pro,” one is becoming aware of the particular affordances or qualities of the camera, which make the viewer acutely aware that they are watching mediated

images. This helped us make sense of the dissonance or oscillation we experienced between immersion and awareness of *Leviathan* as a technologized spectacle. Parker and Cooper’s (1998) idea of the cinema as “cyberorganization” or extended “nervous system” is helpful here, but what is overlooked in their treatment of cinema is the experience of shock that attends the experience of *becoming-with* a man–machine nervous system. The production and viewing apparatus of cinema is often harnessed precisely to exploit this sense of dissonance and to stimulate the possibility that the viewer might become aware that their thinking, their image-thoughts, are not uniquely their own, but the product of an extended prosthetic sensorial being (or becoming). One is completely unprepared for this shock and one has to be completely unprepared for shock to give rise to the possibility of “an event” of thought. In *What is Philosophy*, Deleuze and Guattari (1994) explain that an “event” happens not simply as a change to a state of affairs in the world, but in something more like an *ontological* register, in which we are *forced* to think at the same time that we are overwhelmed and unable to know how or what to think.³ Subjects are formed or reformed out of events, broken down from their aggregate being—or what in the language of Deleuze and Guattari is called the “molar” state—giving chance to decomposition and the emergence of a more “germinal” or molecular flow (Ansell-Pearson, 1999) that becomes indistinguishable from any exteriority, a world of objects, for example, or a state of affairs.

In Deleuze’s philosophy, an event extracts from what he calls “virtuality” hitherto unseen or unknown forces, relations, and combinations of things. For Deleuze the virtual is opposed to the actual, but is nonetheless real. This offers a more capacious sense of what can be real than is customary in modern metaphysics, allowing for realities that are “impossible” or non-sensical or non-presentable, but nonetheless real and efficacious—and Reason cannot ever entirely eliminate its dependence on this dimension of the real. Importantly, it is real in the sense that it makes possible new and unforeseen arrangements of matter, of things, bodies, and states of affairs and yet the virtual is always in excess of anything that might have been actualized in a “state of affairs”: “the event is pure immanence of what is not actualized or of what

³ Deleuze works out his thinking of the event with much more careful philosophical rigor in *Difference and Repetition* (1994), first published in 1968, and *Logic of Sense* (1990) published in 1969, which also draws inspiration from Stoic thinking.

remains indifferent to actualization” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994:156). Something like death might be conceived as virtual. It persists as an intrusion into everyday lives or—because we can never be done with it, complete it, own it, or know it—an “event.” The event of death constantly shadows and interrupts, threatening to undo subjectivity and the fragile hold our existential being has on any reality or state of affairs. Admission to the event asks we give up control, but in so doing gives rise to radically new ways of thinking, experienced as if we were thinking for the first time, and at the same time questioning who or what it is that is doing the thinking. We are in a sense born anew out of the event. Moreover, the event provides the motor for the struggle with rationality, but in and of itself is neither the product nor the guarantor of rationality. It (re)generates something more like the beginning of thought, as we realize what is given to life and thinking observes no ground, principle, or axioms. For some this will entail risk, but with a certain generosity we can say the event gives rise to the possibility of an extended and embodied or corporealized “reason,” as it gives (renewed) life or possibility for life.

Through this event of thought *Leviathan* helps limit or provide (re)definition of “the human” at the very same time that the prostheses of the cinematic nervous system take us into affects and thoughts that transgress the limits of the terrestrial human. At times the associations and interpretative work this makes possible was experienced as overwhelming, with images dissolving and tumbling over one another in an almost vertigo of thought that as we have seen poses a considerable challenge to our capacity for description. A streak of white flesh blurs from the dissipating hand of the fisherman, becoming-fin of a fish, cut, and sliced, giving to shooting stars in the prism of a bead-of-sweat cast out into the ocean night. One student confessed that he had “felt the need to either leave the room, but I just didn’t want to get up and leave, so I just went on my phone.” It was at this precise moment that we saw the glare from the i-phone screen reflected in his face. It struck us with the force of shock. As we looked around we saw the whole room punctuated by these little squares of light. Was this another feature of becoming Go-Pro?

With this concept of becoming Go-Pro, we were able to reason a series of analytical extensions. Is it possible that in using the Go-Pro camera the directors, consciously or otherwise, were seeking to explore and treat a new historical consciousness immanent to a new dominant technological prosthesis based on the ubiquity of cameras and social media? In becoming Go-Pro we were perhaps taking up those features of

human–technology relations that Walter Benjamin (1968: 223) reflects on in his *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* where he writes, in a well-cited passage, how “Each day the urge gets stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction.” Young people increasingly navigate and envision the world through the omnipresence of miniature cameras, and it was remarkable in this respect how the observations and comments of the students were in many ways akin to the fractured snapshots of the film. Their associations seemed to tumble over themselves in a rapid proliferation of “jump-cuts” that mirrored those being made in the film. Were we, *or are we all* increasingly thinking with or even *becoming* Go-Pro cameras? If so, how do we develop pedagogic resources that can help to better navigate this world for management learning and education?

Like the directors of the movie, the teaching team became preoccupied with piecing together the shots, finding relations and retrieving or even nurturing the decentered “flows” of liquid images to help stimulate and channel creative energies. Hence, by extracting or becoming attentive to certain experiences, the event could be named as “becoming Go-Pro” and in so doing begin to acquire some shape, which is the moment at which we turn away from the virtual. The relation between concept and event in Deleuze is a matter of considerable debate in Deleuzian scholarship (cf., Buchanan, 2000; Bryant, 2011; Davies, 2013), and for some, putting a name to experience might grasp after the event in ways that possibly denude it of its a-temporal ruptural qualities that should otherwise linger as confusion, stupefaction, and unknowing. On the other hand, while always falling short, concept creation extends and seeks to fulfill the event (which is by definition always unfulfillable). Concepts and events can be mutually productive and in proposing “becoming Go-Pro” we drew attention to, opened up, or helped constitute, affects that extended beyond the confines of the film. In this heightened sense of creativity and experience, it dawned on us that the newly opened business school building on the university campus where we were showing the film was itself somewhat titanic in scale and ambition (cf., Sievers, 2008). In thrall perhaps to the tragic “thinking blue” allowed us to enter an experiential space that enabled us to perceive and (re)imagine the architectural design of the school as one that resembled the inside of an ocean liner. The accompanying launch and self-promoting fanfare seemed now a little more gauche, bombastic, and hubristic than it had before. Was the world different, or was our relationship to it different?

Were we becoming different? Or were there signs that we were *becoming the media of affective forces* that were now making the world anew?

For specialists in critical management studies, the idea of the school as a lumbering behemoth might not come as a surprise, but to *experience this affectively* is very different from the dogma of cognitive and cerebral instruction through which students are led to understand how the business school could be *intellectually* perceived in this way. We were able to imagine and bring to life a sense of experience inside the school that was physically akin to being inside a Leviathan, or the belly of a whale. We know the whale is an endangered species, but are we able to experientially explore the possibility that the business school is also perilously close to its own irrelevance and extinction? At this point, things began to slow down, contributions became more cautious, more trepidatious even. As people struggled to articulate their response to the film, there were signs that some were beginning to experience an inchoate sense of being all at sea. Was this interruption of normal sense-making and the event of “becoming Go-Pro” helping us develop a more contemplative disposition in response to aesthetic and interpretive demands of the film? If so, this recalls Heidegger’s (1959) important thesis on “*Gelassenheit*” as a mode of “reasoning,” and it is to this possibility we now turn.

GELASSENHEIT AS MODE OF REASONING?

This is an obscure term in the canon of Western philosophy and one that shows Heidegger’s reading of a mystic tradition in Christian and philosophical thought that can be traced from Eckhart through to the poetry of Holderlin and Rilke. In the standard 1966 English translation, *Gelassenheit* is rendered as “releasement towards things” (Heidegger, 1966: 54) to which Anderson and Freund note a series of additional meanings and nuances in German associated with “composure,” “calmness,” and “unconcern.” It is important to clarify that for Heidegger *Gelassenheit* lies “outside the distinction between activity and passivity,” and “does not belong to the domain of the will” (ibid: 61). However, and far from passive, it appears possible that the embrace of *Galassenheit* allows the subject to engage a “higher activity” marked by what he calls an *Ent-Schlossenheit*—or what might be translated as “resolute openness” in English (p. 81). Many specialists working on Heidegger have found this concept extremely helpful in explaining the affinities between Heidegger and Zen, Buddhist, and other forms of Eastern thought, and it is well-known that

Heidegger corresponded with a number of scholars and exegetes of these traditions (Levin, 1988; May, 1996).

The turn to various forms of process theory (Helin et al., 2014; Hernes, 2014; Langley & Tsoukas, 2017) has helped elevate and galvanize what had once been only a minor or counter-tradition of interest in Heidegger in management and organization studies, first advanced in Cooper (1976) and taken up by students around him in more recent years (Chia, 1996; Chia & Holt, 2006). Drawing from this literature, we can note that once we are able to shed our will to desire or *know Leviathan* as an *object* of interpretation or explanation, through what we called becoming “liquid-image,” we may have realized something close to *Gelassenheit*. Moreover, this helped animate energies of a becoming-together that for some might inspire experiences of a becoming-with-expanded-cosmos. In *Leviathan*, there are moments of vision-like experience. At one point we seem to be precariously balanced, twisting erratically atop the vast and unruly oceans beneath the infinite dark night. The camera movements and montage produce gyration and a circulation or “flip-flop” of sky and sea: Above and below spin in endless circulation. Such moments certainly recall the work of Heidegger. However, this sits in some tension with the Deleuzian influence in shaping our thought, and which produces different lessons for reason and rationality in management learning and education.

The complexities and nuances of these differences deserve an entire paper, but for our purposes here we can draw out one or two suggestions. Deleuze was famously suspicious of Heidegger and extended sections of *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze, 1994: 64–66) treat and tease out these differences, much of which can be traced to their respective readings of Nietzsche. Whereas in Heidegger the language is portentous with gravity, and even what some might detect as a piety of thought, for Deleuze, there is more anarchism, even frivolity, a gay science that cultivates and harnesses agitation and restlessness. Inspired more by Deleuze, one sets out on a discovery and proliferation of ideas and concepts in response to *Leviathan* that do not necessarily cohere in the way Heidegger seeks with his commitment to “Being” as a sovereign object of contemplation and eternal return. Although both decenter the all-too-human will to control, Heidegger leads more to contemplation, and one that seeks to “let beings truly be” in the *happening* of an “open clearing” (1977: 445). Deleuze, by contrast, seeks more *unruly* interventions and pursues digression that generates a kaleidoscope of partial images and thought that break any *telos*.

In the event of thought Deleuze seeks only to seize upon those elements that cannot be fully contained in the mediation of thought but that register through affect and experiences in ways that break open the subject to futures without rest or contemplation. We have seen this in *Leviathan* where we explored how the film encouraged its audience to *embody* “image” in ways that dissolve the cognitive will to power. *Leviathan* produces affects that are multiple and dissipative, blurring boundaries and form to release images that are contained neither by dualism or any dialectic of part or whole that might otherwise pull us toward an emerging one, a fourfold, a truth, or Being. Instead, we are charged with material or elemental energies, cracked with fractured images: the flash of a bloodied fin/hand (fish/human), the gasp of an ocean . . . shucking-oysters-breathing-smoke-and-diaphanous-vapor-cloud. No telos or end-point, and perhaps little or no point at all, such affects might simply concatenate a series of incongruous items and desiderata without resolution; however, they might also activate dormant or what Deleuze calls “virtual” (yet to be actualized) dimensions of being in which we catch some experience of the monstrous-becomings of other-than-human life as explored in *Leviathan* (cf., Thanem, 2011).

There is no nobility of thought here, but possible experiences and becomings that cannot be predicted. We may realize our all too human limits to know and rationalize, or divine the possibilities of something else at work and in control, something capricious, inhuman, unruly, and unreasonable. In so doing, one might realize the importance of ceding the desire for control based on axiomatic principles of rationality while reaching for new “diplomatic” ways of negotiating a shared existence with the cosmos in times of the Anthropocene (Stengers, 2011; Latour, 2016, 2017). In the event of thought, we have to seize the affective intensities of becoming-other associated with novel experiences and forge concepts that mark this originality and reconfiguring of the relations that hold us bound to the subject-object schema, or to the interior world of thinking that sits cheek by jowl with an exterior world of reality. Following here Buchanan’s (2000:79) reading of Deleuze, “the event is the sense we *make* of what happens . . . To the extent we take charge of events we counter-actualise what occurs. We see beyond actions and live the purity of the event.”

Finally, this passage though the event of thought offers what Deleuze calls elsewhere a “superior empiricism” realized by the activation of a thinking that

comes from elsewhere, one seemingly outside the willed intention of an egocentric cognitive individual human agent. We have shared evidence of the becoming active of thinking in our analysis of *Leviathan* that we developed and shared with the students watching the film. We were all able to share, however confused and inchoate, experiences that went beyond a didactic or dogmatic response to a presumed given state of affairs represented in the film. Moreover, “becoming Go-Pro” offered a way of working more immanently with the superior empiricism of *Leviathan* and in ways that avoided reducing the film to the status of an illustration of pre-existing theory. Future research might usefully build on this experiential learning to test how we might further harness the event of thought for management learning and education.

CONCLUSION

In the current conditions of possibility for the production of knowledge in higher education, we have seen that films such as *Leviathan* offer considerable resources that can stimulate radically alternative modes of thinking for management learning and education. However, dogma is an ever-present danger, one example of which is the conventional syllabus of management education that remains grounded on an extremely limited conception of reason and rationality. Often based on little more than reductive assumptions of economic cost-efficiency, teaching is typically reduced to imparting information and rote learning. As argued here, this does not bode well for graduates who are increasingly being confronted by the ravages of climate change and global warming that according to many recent reports now threatens the very existence of human civilization (Lenton et al., 2019). It was always so, but the Earth is becoming realized as ever more precarious, unstable, and unpredictable in this moment labeled the Anthropocene. For some, it has become active or “vengeful” (Lovelock, 2006), seriously challenging if not defying our modern systems of rationality and science, particularly in relation to our most basic categories of time, space, and causality (Latour, 2017). Management, as it is currently taught and practiced, has little to offer in these circumstances, and what evidence we do have for organizational responses to extreme or unprecedented events does not suggest great hope (e.g., Weick, 1993; Vaughan, 1996; Perrow, 1999).

How can we teach students in business schools a greater openness to these more-than-human forces

and to their associated relational ontology, where things so outlandish as “plants as persons” (Hall, 2011) or “thinking trees” (Wohlleben, 2016) might have to become something like business partners? Can these more-than-human forces and phenomena be conceived as allies that help us make greater sense of our emerging condition of being and the possibilities for business in the Anthropocene? One way to progress toward answers to these questions might be to invest greater resources in experiential-based learning that engages more fully with affects that attend dissolutions of our “paramount reality” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Drawing first on elements of experiential learning and the inspiration to creativity achieved in the social-photo or photo-elicitation matrix (Sievers, 2007, 2008; Warren, 2012; Shortt & Warren, 2012; Mersky & Sievers, 2019), we sought to enrich and extend the possibilities for a “disciplined imagination” in student learning. However, we were encouraged to bypass much of the psychoanalytical explanatory metanarrative that seeks a depth or truth-model of subjectivity. In so doing, we were able to focus and amplify moments of creativity and association through lateral association in which the subject as such began to ever so slightly *recede* or *dissolve*—yielding to moments of *thinking otherwise* in which objects and materials were granted greater force and agency. This opens up exciting possibilities for the development of management learning and education based on an expanded and enriched version of reason and rationality.

The dangers of manipulation are very real with this form of pedagogic practice, and one must be vigilant against clouding reason with too much impassioned rhetoric that seeks to “benumb” an audience. However, there would be no reason without affective manipulation, even if that affect is sought through an appeal to work within or to agree to establish reasonable procedures within which cognitive rational dialogue would conform. We cannot separate reason from corporeality (Townley, 2008), and there is inevitably some manipulation in all pedagogy—teaching without this is almost impossible to think of. However, art does not instruct. It produces affects and percepts that invite responses, but does not lay out a systematic argument to which the viewer or reader is made subject. To do so would not be art. In this respect, *Leviathan* is open to many different readings and corporeal *becomings*. Nor is there moral instruction or truth in the film. This is key, but also key to the affects of the film. For example, the killing on display is neither endorsed nor condemned. Viewers are left to decide

for themselves—is it beauty or horror? It appears impossible to decide. This impossibility is what helps create the conditions for the event of thought, and through this event one is capable of a “supplementary” reason that involves the generation (or release) of associative imagery. The shock of undecidability and un-knowing can also be harnessed to teach care, caution, modesty, and reserve, which help make real a teaching space in which each moment requires a balance to be found—without the reassurance of transcendental ground or legislative protocol—between free-wheeling creativity and the paralysis that comes with doubt and not-knowing.

Here I sought to exercise a similar care, balancing conventional expository logic that builds the elements of an “argument” with clarity and rigor, while also working on a form of composition or writing that embodies some of the percepts and affects of *Leviathan* in an effort to “carry” this into the readers’ thinking. One of our most generative associative images, drawing on Deleuze’s work on cinema, allowed us to conceive of the possibility that we were capable not only of thinking *of* water, but of thinking *with* and even *from* water as cinematic image. With this “liquid image,” we discovered intellectual resources more immanent to the filmic experience and which did not rely on the importation of any vast theoretical architecture. We were also able to conceive of and work with image in ways that did not reduce it to the status of mere reflection of *a priori* theory or paramount reality. Instead, we sought to grasp image as something more nondualistic and primordial that seized on *thinking* (as) image. Moreover, in this radical monadism (not dualism) our bodies are also image, extended and implicated with an image-world that is not artificially separated out as “nature” or “reality.” Body-worlds form part of an extended “system thinking” that is only part human. *Leviathan* helped us conceive or become aware of our participation in a man-machine techno-nature that specifically encouraged us to explore, to recover, or *become*, watery-beings. By giving access to strange and unfamiliar patterns and thoughts, our thinking was in sway to forces perhaps beyond the human. It is as if water-images and liquid perception thinks through us, which is suggestive of the possible play of a multi-species ecology of mind (cf., Bateson, 1972) that some might even want to label “Gaian” (Lovelock, 1979).

In pushing our experiences collectively we were able to achieve a heightened sense of the material affectivity of what we called a *transcorporeal* and *animate world* (the materiality of water-image, the

materiality of blue, becoming Go-Pro, etc.). This stimulated form of creativity and interpretation that surprised if not shocked participants—tutors included—and formed part of what we called an “event of thought.” Such events seem to provoke the beginning of “reason” (cf., Blum, 1974) that is prior to any systematization or formalization of reason as rationality and comes before more fully worked out critical or emancipatory, collective and embodied reason developed in recent critical traditions of management studies (Townley, 2008). Perhaps most novel in our thinking was the possibility that the contemporary viewer of *Leviathan* was perceptively and affectively constituted by an event of thought to which we forged the concept of *becoming Go-Pro*. This offered novel and insightful reflections about the condition of studying in a business school, precedents for which can be found in Wagner (1978), who drawing on Weick’s early work (also March & Olsen, 1976) tries to make room for a “theory of play” that gives ground to what he calls “arational” and “alogical” thought processes. Similarly, Newark (2017) has shown the importance of “absurdity,” and more recently Izak (2015), also drawing on March (1976), bears affinities to the proposal we have developed here in his calls to attend more fully to the role of “foolishly unmanaged sensemaking.”

Fragmented in their consciousness, disordered in their attention spans, and overwhelmed by sensorial overload, we can draw the conclusion that students of business and management today need new resources to organize and narrate a world that appears less and less amenable to the control of exclusively human agency. The best and most creative thinking seems to come through an “event of thought” that demands, generates, and proliferates concept creation. In contrast to the dangers of a retreat to passive contemplation as a form of reasoning inspired by Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit*, such creation envisages a mode of active and practical participation or experimentation in world-making. This paper sought to introduce and put to work a mode of theorizing, or supplemental reason, provoked by associative thinking and sensory stimulation that can lead to what we have called an “event” of thought. The carefully sequenced and expository style here seeks both to retrieve and (re)enact the conditions of this event so that we can offer these results as a form of reason or “reasoning”—and at the very least an enactment that retrieves and makes possible the beginning of reason. For those learning about business and management, it seemed as if, at least for some, *Leviathan* provided the possibility in which the world could announce itself anew, experientially “refreshed”

in ways that provoked doubt and uncertainty in what we might call the ontological reliability of the world.

“In pushing our experiences collectively we were able to achieve a heightened sense of the material affectivity of what we called a transcorporeal and animate world (the materiality of water-image, the materiality of blue, becoming Go-Pro, etc.). This stimulated form of creativity and interpretation that surprised if not shocked participants.”

No doubt this leaves us still needing to find ways of conceiving or (co-)designing viable forms of business and management with life-forms other than human in which we are not wholly out of control, but also not entirely in control (see Tsing, 2015; cf., Whiteman & Cooper, 2000; Banerjee & Linstead, 2004). With all our talk of the Anthropocene and Gaia we may currently be giving birth to a new *Leviathan*, but one this time around that escapes the bounds of the nation-state as conceived by Thomas Hobbes (Latour, 2017). Responding to these challenges will surely pose an even greater existential test to schools of business and management. In this light, early pioneers in cybernetics such as Norbert Wiener, and Stafford Beer with his Daphnae experiments—in which Beer sought to enroll pond life into the decision-making processes of corporate organization—might not appear quite so eccentric or marginal to the business school of the future (see Pickering, 2010). Indeed, these may be suggestive of the kind of associative thought capable of subverting an emerging contemporary dogma of reason associated with the restricted rationality of big-data analytics (Zuboff, 2019) and its fantasies of algorithmic control.

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