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WHY ORGANIZATION SOCIOLOGISTS SHOULD REFER TO TARDE AND SIMMEL MORE OFTEN

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues for an increased volume of references to Gabriel Tarde and Georg Simmel in the field of organization sociology. The text emphasizes the importance of these two sociologists in understanding the role of imperfection in organizing and the phenomena of fashion and imitation in contemporary organizations. Tarde's theory challenged the antinomy between continuity and discontinuity, considering finite entities as cases of infinite processes and stable situations as transitory. Simmel's theory of fashion explores the democratic and democratizing nature of fashion, which satisfies the demand for social adaptation and differentiation. They both saw fashion as a selection mechanism for organizational forms and managerial practices. Furthermore, referring to Tarde and Simmel can help counter the overemphasis on identity construction and the neglect of alterity in social sciences. The construction of identity often overlooks the inevitability of difference and alterity, which are essential aspects of collective projects. Lastly, this paper discusses Simmel's concept of the stranger and its relevance in analyzing the experiences of foreigners and their potential advantages as "double strangers" in academia and society. The conclusion is that Tarde and Simmel's contributions offer valuable

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insights for understanding the dynamics of management, organizing, and social interactions in contemporary organizations.

Keywords: Fashion; framing; identity terror; imitation; secret organizations; strangers

INTRODUCTION

I remember a conversation with my late friend, Swedish sociologist Inga Hellberg, who told me: "Barbara, you are not a sociologist. You do not quote Weber and Durkheim!"[1]

I've given that conversation a great deal of thought. Well, yes, I am not formally a sociologist. I am a transdisciplinary organization scholar and take inspiration not only from my original academic disciplines (psychology and economic sciences) but also from ethnology, narratology, and sociology. And it is the latter discipline that led me to Tarde and Simmel.[2] In what follows, I explain why those two scholars in my opinion require more attention, by giving examples of how they have been used in organization studies.[3] I do not intend to present their contributions in detail, because my hope is that this text will entice the readers to do it themselves. Instead, I begin with short biographies, to locate these authors in the historical context.

Gabriel Tarde (1843–1904)

Tarde was born in Sarlat, a town in the province of Dordogne, France. He studied law in Toulouse and Paris. From 1869 to 1894, he worked as a magistrate and investigating judge in the province, allegedly indulging in writing texts on criminology (Czarniawska, 2009). In 1894, he was appointed Director of Criminal Statistics at the Ministry of Justice in Paris. In 1900, both he and Henri Bergson were given chairs in modern philosophy at the Collége de France. (He asked that his title be changed to sociology but was refused.)

Tarde soon became known in English-speaking communities: His 1890 *Laws of Imitation* was published by Henry Holt in 1903 and reprinted in 1962. Macmillan published his 1897 *Social Laws: An Outline of Sociology* in 1899 and reprinted it in 1974. Tarde was among the authors that Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess quoted most often in their 1922 *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*.

After the 1960s, however, the scientific fashion changed, and it was only Giles Deleuze and Niklas Luhmann who continued to read Tarde (Czarniawska, 2009). Then, more than 30 years passed, and in the late 1990s, a "Tardomania" exploded (Mucchielli, 2000), with reprints of Tarde's original works in several languages.

Why did Tarde come back into fashion? Many explanations have been offered. It seems that his work resonates well with that of many contemporary sociologists. (Almost) no one is surprised at the idea of connecting sciences to arts and philosophy; as Luhmann (2002) noticed and as everyone can see now, information can, in fact, increase ignorance. Also, Tarde's work preceded concepts of

networks, cultural capital, and culture industry; reading him, one can have an impression that he is speaking of virtual reality (Irenius, 2002). It could also be that Tarde's voice better fits the present times of darkness. The 1970s were more optimistic ….

Georg Simmel (1858–1918)

Although the popularity of Tarde and Simmel is comparable, their careers differed. Simmel's father died when Georg was a boy, and a friend of the family was appointed his guardian (Wolff, 1950). He left Simmel a considerable fortune, which allowed him to lead the life of a scholar, despite his lack of proper university employment.

After graduating from the gymnasium (high school), Simmel started to study history at the University of Berlin, but he soon switched to philosophy. In 1881, he defended his doctoral dissertation on "The nature of matter according to Kant's physical monadology." Between 1885 and 1900, he was a "private docent" (a lecturer paid only via students' fees), and from 1900 to 1914, an "extraordinary professor" (still without salary) at the University of Berlin. It was only at age 56 that he became a full professor at Strasbourg University. A year later, he applied for a chair in Heidelberg but was refused – not for the first time.

> Applications, supported by most authoritative recommendations and a most impressive publishing record, were regularly turned down. It could be that the appointment committees and the assessors they approached to opine on Simmel's work resented his Jewish origin. (…) It is likely, however, that even more than Simmel's birth certificate the gatekeepers resented the substance of his sociology: so blatantly at odds with the standard sociological writings of the time, so different, so (…) *alien*, so *Jewish*. (Bauman, 1991, p. 185, italics in original)

In the United States, Simmel was seen as a sociologist rather than a philosopher. Many of his sociological writings were published between 1893 and 1910, particularly in *The American Journal of Sociology*. And like Tarde, Simmel was often quoted by Park and Burgess (2021) in their *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*. In the 1970s, however, interest in Simmel's work waned. According to Kurt H. Wolff (1950), the US sociologists had been trying to free themselves from the European influence even earlier and had chosen to redefine sociology as an "empirical and quantitative study" (p. xxiv). Interest in Simmel's writing returned in the 1990s, probably even earlier than did interest in Tarde's writing, judging from the words of Zygmunt Bauman in 1991: "It is only now that Simmel is beginning to be recognized as a most (perhaps *the* most) powerful and perceptive analyst of modernity …" (p. 185).

Prophets of Imperfection

As to understanding the inevitability of imperfection and its role in organizing, there are few sociologists more aware of it than Tarde and Simmel were. As Vargas (2010) reminded his readers, Tarde's theory

> suspends (and puts in doubt) the antinomy between the uniform continuity and the punctual discontinuity or, more precisely, which considers the finite entities as peculiar cases of infinite

> processes, the stable situations as movements of blockage, the permanent states as transitory agencies of processes to come (and not the opposite). (p. 214)

As to the necessity of imperfection in organizing, it cannot be put better than it was in Simmel's (1906) quote:

> The strenuous organizing forms which appear to be the real constructors of society, or to construct society as such, must be continually disturbed, unbalanced, and detached by individualistic and irregular forces, in order that their reaction and development may gain vitality by alternate concession and resistance. (p. 448)

Alan Scott's (2009) comment regarding Simmel can be applied to both Simmel and Tarde: Their theories focus on "the unintentional unfolding of a logic inherent within a community of whose working actors are largely unaware. Such an approach is both anti-mechanistic and anti-rationalist" (p. 281).

So, why quote them now? What follows are only some examples of use of their theories in studies of organizing; I am sure a great many more are possible.

BECAUSE FASHION AND IMITATION ARE KEY PHENOMENA IN CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATIONS

Fashion was long a phenomenon treated with disdain and neglect in social theory and organization studies (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1995). Blame is usually attributed to Thorsten Veblen (1899/1994), who claimed that fashion promoted "conspicuous consumption"; he contrasted it to valuable productivity (Czarniawska, 2005). He was probably unaware of the work of a French sociologist, 14 years his senior. Gabriel Tarde had, by then, claimed in his book, *Laws of Imitation*, that fashion was already a strong force in antiquity, although he admitted, in agreement with the later scholars, that it was the 18th century that "inaugurated the reign of fashion on a large scale" (Tarde, 1890/1962, p. 293, n. 2). Changes in fashion, he contented, were caused not by a search for perfection, but by boredom, which was in turn caused by customs:

> In the case of industry and fine arts, it is for the pleasure of change, of *not doing* the usual thing, that the part of the public which is influenced by fashion adopts a new product to the neglect of some old one; then when the novelty has become acclimated and appreciated for its own sake, the older product seeks a refuge in the cherished habits of the other part of the public which is partial to custom and which wishes to show in that way that it also *does not* do the same thing as the rest of the world. (Tarde, 1890/1962, italics in original)

As it turned out, it was Simmel (1904/1971) who received the task of reviewing Tarde's book (Frisby & Featherstone, 1997, p. 13), and he expanded on the topic in his *Philosophy of Fashion*. He saw in fashion a democratic and democratizing phenomenon, which intensified with the progress of civilization, primarily because fashion connected two opposing tendencies: equalization and individualization:

> Fashion is the imitation of a given example and satisfies the demand for social adaptation. … At the same time, it satisfies in no less degree the need of differentiation, the tendency for dissimilarity, the desire for change and contrast. (Simmel, 1904/1971, p. 296)

Simmel's theory was embraced by Herbert Blumer (1969/1973), who postulated that fashion is a *selection mechanism* that influences the market and distorts the demand and supply curves, both using and serving economic competition. Its key element is a *collective choice* among competing tastes, things, and ideas; it is oriented toward *finding* but also toward *creating,* what is typical of a given time.

Sociologists interested in fashion emphasized its paradoxical character: It requires invention *and* imitation, variation *and* uniformity, distance *and* interest, novelty *and* conservatism, unity *and* segregation, conformity *and* deviation, change *and* status quo, revolution *and* evolution. It spreads via "diffusion by transformation" (Tarde, 1893/1999, p. 41), a process that later Tardeans called "translation" (Serres, 1974), to avoid being mixed with "diffusionists." Fashion would not be able to proceed without constant translation, which permits it to appear in many different guises in different times and places.

I have illustrated that understanding of fashion with a study of city management in three European capitals: Stockholm, Warsaw, and Rome (Czarniawska, 2002, 2004). Fashion there seemed to be the main selection mechanism of organizational forms and managerial practices; of problems and solutions. But I was hardly the first: F. Stuart Chapin, a US sociologist inspired by Tarde, attempted to analyze the causes or the motives and circumstances behind the fashion of the "city manager plan" in the US municipalities. Although first observed in 1908, it was similar to what I found in Rome in 1997. Chapin's (1928) explanation was inspired by Tarde and suggested

> […] the rhythmical character of imitation. It diffuses from central models enjoying prestige, it spreads by geometric progression in many directions, in some cases it is refracted by its media more considerably than in other cases, it reaches a point of saturation, and the old model declines before some new model which has set up a wave of counter-imitation. (p. 208)

Thus, Tarde made it obvious that it is necessary to conduct processual studies of fashion if one wishes to capture the development of a fashion. Simmel (1904/1971) also criticized much of the history of fashion for its sole concentration on the development of its contents: It is necessary to report what is in fashion but also to inquire, "Why this? Why here? Why now?" A focus on time and space may help to redefine fashion – from a deviant irrationality on the part of erring managers, to the key to pattern recognition, to a better understanding of the dynamics of management and organizing (Czarniawska & Panozzo, 2008).

BECAUSE THEY WILL HELP TO COUNTER THE "IDENTITY TERROR"

> To exist is to differ; difference, in a sense, is the substantial side of things, is what they have only to themselves and what they have most in common. One has to start the explanation from here, including the explanation of identity, taken often, mistakenly, for a starting point. Identity is but a *minimal* difference, and hence a type of difference, and a very rare type at that, in the same way as rest is a type of movement and circle a peculiar type of ellipse. (Tarde, 1893/1999, p. 73)

If so, why, at present, is the focus of social and political sciences entirely on "identities," whereas "alterity" is a concept used by some anthropologists to denote "the Others"? Peter Brooks (2011) called it "an identity paradigm" and explained it with two developments central to the 19th century: urbanization and colonization. Newly arrived peasants, working people, and urban criminals needed to be *identified*, and so were the natives, perceived to be so similar to one another.

Although the issues of identity and alterity were born in relation to persons (originally, social psychologists such as G. H. Mead took it for granted that a "self" consisted of similarity and difference), they have, over time, been transferred, by analogy, to nation-states (Anderson, 1983/1991) and to such legal persons as corporations (Lamoreaux, 2003). Apparently, people grouped within the new borders needed to know what they had in common, as the differences were only too easy to demonstrate. The immigrant waves then encouraged people within the old borders to pay attention to their "traditional identity." Such "searches for identity" are, in the opinion of Ian Buruma (2002), behind most of the present world troubles.

Organization theory followed the fashion, and theorists began to pay attention to organizational identity construction (e.g., Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Schultz et al., 2000; Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). In social studies in general, it was mainly Giles Deleuze (1968/1997) who continued the Tardean tradition, and my colleagues and I used it in our studies of European capitals (see, e.g., Czarniawska, 2002, 2008).

We discovered that the cities were busy constructing their own difference, for which the Other was but a foil. Image construction, a truly significant work, consisted of a constant mix of identification, negation, and differentiation. Although some "Other" might have been constructed in this process, it was often no more than a prop, amorphous and shifting in adaptation to the image of "the City."

The need to distinguish between identity and alterity construction has been justified by the different places they occupy in various attempts in the construction of a collective image. Thus, if a discourse focuses on the cultural alterity of immigrants living in Sweden, the creation of "Swedishness" thus obtained is implicit; it is a byproduct of the construction of the Other. Such text *attributes* difference. The opposite can be said of a discourse aimed at discerning the "Swedish identity." Images of the Other are secondary to its primary aim – are its byproducts. Such text *affirms* difference. Whereas the attribution of difference has been granted a great deal of attention in recent social science writings, the affirmation of difference has not.

Another distinction we observed was that between opposition (as Deleuze called a degree of sameness) and alterity (an affirmation of difference): Stockholm is different from Oslo in a different way than it is different from Korpilombo,[4] whereas Warsaw and Rome are "unique." The general claim of city managers in Rome was that Rome differed from any other city; no image of the Other was necessary. Such an image does not emphasize the alterity of the Other but the alterity of the Self.

Still, the focus set on identity construction in organization studies is, in a sense, justifiable. Organizing means knotting together – people, things, actions. That is but one way of building associations. And, as Tarde (1893/1999) said,

"to associate means to become similar, that is, to imitate." Each collective project requires as*simila*tion, however temporary. The problem begins when this temporality is overlooked (although projects, by definition, are temporary), and the inevitable re-production of difference and therefore of alterity is interpreted as a failure in the process of identity construction.

The subordination of identity to alterity or vice versa needs to be seen as a local and historical phenomenon. One can venture that the cities under study and most of the social sciences subordinate alterity to identity, at least partially because of the globalization of the media. But this was not the case always and everywhere. Tarde, speaking at the turn of the previous century, was aware that alterity of the self was fading from attention, perhaps as one of the victims of globalization. But because globalization is always met with resistance, alterity moves have never vanished completely. Bringing them to light can therefore aid in the interpretation of phenomena that are puzzling when explained only in terms of identity, just as they were puzzling to us in our studies of three cities.

BECAUSE STRANGERS ARE WITH US

In our article "The thin end of the wedge" (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2008), we analyzed biographies of the first European women professors, many of whom, it turned out, were foreigners who had immigrated to the country in which they worked. The observation that encouraged us to do this study was the fact that being "a double stranger" – to the academy and to the country – seemed to facilitate rather than obstruct their position. In our analysis, we were helped by Georg Simmel's (1909/1950) concept of the stranger:

> The stranger is … not … the person who comes today and goes tomorrow, but … the person who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, so to speak, the *potential* wanderer: although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself. (p. 402, italics in original)

To explain this concept further, Simmel added that the inhabitants of another planet are not strangers, as for the time being they do not even exist for us. And the natives of other countries are not strangers, as long as they stay in their own country.

Simmel's picture of the stranger has usually been interpreted as having been developed from the symbol of "the wandering Jew" and interpreted positively. It has been used, among others, by Rose Laub Coser (1999), in her study of immigrant Italian and Jewish women. She claimed that:

> He [the wandering Jew] may derive as much advantage from his partial belongingness as he may be disadvantaged by being an outsider at the same time that he is disadvantaged by having demands he cannot honor made on him by the new group. He may understand the group's shortcomings better than true insiders do, and he may be praised or hated for his objectivity. In any case he will have multiplied his opportunities – at the cost of secure belongingness – to form weak ties even with those with whom hostilities are customary. Although much pain ensued from this, advantages came from it as well. (Coser, 1999, p. 47)

We analyzed the biographies of four women, and although we emphasized that the reasons for their successes were many and interactive, including the politics and the culture of Europe at the turn of the previous century, Simmel's image of a stranger has been extremely helpful – gender aside. The point that we found especially relevant for women transgressing the "ordinary" by entering academia was the alleged "objectivity" of the stranger:

> He is not radically committed to the unique ingredients and peculiar tendencies of the group, and therefore approaches them with the specific attitude of "objectivity." But objectivity does not simply involve passivity and detachment; it is a particular structure composed of distance and nearness, indifference and involvement. (…) he is freer, practically and theoretically; he surveys conditions with less prejudice; his criteria for them are more general and more objective ideals; he is not tied down in his action by habit, piety and precedent. (Simmel, 1909/1950, pp. 404–405)

Relationships with the stranger, Simmel (1909/1950) continued, are also more abstract than are relationships with compatriots:

> [W]ith the stranger one has only certain *more general* qualities in common, whereas the relation to more organically connected persons is based on the commonness of specific differences from merely general features. (p. 405, italics in original)

This quote suggests that if the stranger is a woman academic, her womanhood may be overlooked because it does not correspond to the local standard of femininity. In her study of the way strangers are perceived, Margaret Mary Wood (1934/1969) made a summary of "the special sociological characteristics of the relationship of the stranger which Simmel presents" (p. 247): mobility, objectivity, confidence, freedom from convention, and abstract relations. Viewed together, these characteristics form a clear contrast to the stereotype of a woman, at least in European societies. Thus, if a woman were a stranger to academia, she would be a different kind of a stranger – a stranger in reverse, as it were. In Simmel's view, an intellectual was basically a stranger (Bauman, 1992). Indeed, his description of a stranger seems close to the stereotype of a scientist. But does his description agree with the common perception of present immigrants? After all, "from the perspective of the native majority, all strangers are identical" (Bauman, 1991, p. 72).

At present, Ansgar Thiel and Klaus Seiberth (2017) and Antonella Golino (2018), among others, believe that Simmel's analysis is highly pertinent. As Golino (2018) put it, "[h]is vision of the foreigner, in relation to the complex situation of the migration of people at war to Europe, appears extremely poignant today" (p. 190). The present fashion of "multiculturalism" ignores Simmel's observation that, as a reciprocal action, a conflict not only dissolves social relations but also generates them. Thus, though inspired by noble intentions, multiculturalism often reinforces ghettoization.

Although Golino emphasized the "objectivity" of the foreigner – someone who can therefore present the autochthons with a more correct image of their society – Simmel's observation can be used as an argument for going further than the integration of "strangers," to a general *hybridization* (Nederveen Pieterse,[5]

2006, 2015). After all, as Golino (2018) said, "[m]igration (…) constitutes a non-secondary source of social change …" (p. 195).

But who could better understand and apply Simmel's idea of a stranger than Zygmunt Bauman (1991), who singled out the most difficult obstacle for a stranger's acceptance in another society – the striving for a perfect order:

> The stranger's unredeemable sin is (…) the incompatibility between his presence and other presences, fundamental to the world order; his simultaneous assault on several crucial oppositions instrumental in the incessant effort of ordering. It is this sin which throughout modern history rebounds in reconstitution of the stranger as the bearer and embodiment of *incongruity;* indeed, the stranger is a person afflicted with incurable sickness of *multiple incongruity*. The stranger is, for this reason, the bane of modernity. (pp. 60–61, italics in original).

Will postmodern societies be able to overcome "the horror of ambiguity" (Bauman, 1991), so necessary for successful albeit imperfect organizing, as demanded by James G. March (2010)? The present efforts at "organizing integration" (Diedrich & Czarniawska, 2023) reveal this constant fight between striving for the perfect order and accepting incongruities.

BECAUSE FRAMING PHOTOS IS NOT THE SAME AS FRAMING PICTURES

Erving Goffman's (1974) concept of "framing" has become immensely popular in social sciences and organization studies. Yet it is only scholars interested in film and photography who noticed that he meant by what in other languages (in French, for example) is called e*ncadrement* – choosing the focus and the limits of the background rather than putting a frame around a picture. The difference becomes obvious when reading Simmel's (1902/1994) article "The picture frame: An aesthetic study":

> What the frame achieves for the work of art is to symbolize and strengthen this double function of its boundary. (…) which exercise indifference towards and defence against the exterior and a unifying integration with respect to the interior (…). (p. 11)

Although Goffman's framing decides what is the focus and what is the context of a picture, Simmel's frame "defends" the picture from its surroundings. It is, indeed, an "ornamentation," as he called it. Such ornamentation is relatively well known in the world of management. One example (although the authors do not invoke Simmel) is to be found in the study of "wrapping," used by Japanese companies in their accounting reports (Sabelfeld et al., forthcoming). Indeed, managers often put frames around certain pieces of their work, and like many inexperienced art owners, they often choose a frame that is richer than the picture it surrounds. But those Japanese accountants do it intentionally.

In scientific analysis, however, Simmel's frame may not be of much use:

> […] in more or less tasteful milieus, one no longer finds photographs from nature in frames. The frame is suited only to structures with a closed unity, which a piece of nature never possesses. Any excerpt from unmediated nature is connected by a thousand spatial, historical, conceptual

> and emotional relationships with everything that surrounds it more or less closely, physically or mentally. (p. 14)

Thus, when studying "the nature of management and organizing," we unavoidably do "framing," but must not put the results into "a frame" (unless by it we mean a book cover – an "ornamentation").

BECAUSE SECRET ORGANIZATIONS ARE MANY, THOUGH RARELY STUDIED

Secret service organizations, such as intelligence agencies, are not often studied, as access to their doings is difficult. A possible solution is to rely on historical material (as has been done by Costas & Grey, 2014, 2016; Parker, 2018; Siebert & & Czarniawska, 2018; Stohl & Stohl, 2011). But Simmel (1906) was first: Although he studied secret societies, the organizing principles are similar in all secret organizations. So, although Sabina Siebert and I noted that building distrust is a common occurrence in both secret and non-secret organizations, Simmel (1906) had already stated that "[v]eracity and mendacity are (…) of the most far-reaching significance for the relations of persons with each other. Sociological structures are most characteristically differentiated by the measure of mendacity that is operative in them" (p. 445).

Simmel defined secrecy as "consciously willed concealment" (p. 449) and emphasized that it characterizes all commercial relationships:

> […] all commerce of men with each other rests upon the condition that each knows something more of the other than the latter voluntarily reveals to him; and in many respects this is of a sort the knowledge of which, if possible, would have been prevented by the party so revealed. (p. 455)

Simmel also claimed that secrecy "is one of the greatest accomplishments of humanity" (p. 462):

> The historical development of society is in many respects characterized by the fact that what was formerly public passes under the protection of secrecy, and that, on the contrary, what was formerly secret ceases to require such protection and proclaims itself. (pp. 462–463)

Secrecy can be either highly moral (in case of intelligence agencies claiming the protection of their country as their purpose) or highly immoral (in case of criminal networks), though the boundaries are relatively unclear.

Many recent scandals follow the logic depicted by Simmel, according to which "with increasing telic [purposeful] characteristics of culture the affairs of people at large become more and more public, those of individuals more and more secret" (p. 468). The neighbors may not know your secrets, but the media can discover them, particularly if you are a public person.

This theoretical reasoning helped Simmel to characterize secret societies – groups that can extend "personal secrecy" to all their members. One condition is the reciprocal *confidence* of its members, which differentiates most secret societies from intelligence agencies, where general distrust is the rule (Siebert & & Czarniawska, 2018). On the other hand, the existence of intelligence agencies is

known, although not of all their members or their actions are known. Simmel gave a similar description of Freemasons: What he called "*relatively* secret societies" (p. 471) have many advantages, especially their adaptability to change, and their ways of dealing with betrayals. But truly secret societies, Simmel suggested, emerge "as correlate of despotism and of police control" (p. 472).

Another condition for the survival of secret societies is "the ability to preserve silence" (p. 472), which must be reinforced by a threat of penalties when the oath or the promise of silence has been broken. Secret societies, like intelligence agencies, train their members' capacity for silence (Czarniawska & et al., 2023). This capacity, like the other conditions mentioned here, is one of the many reasons for members of secret organizations to see themselves as different from and better than other people (Scott, 2009, p. 277).

The only difference between Simmel's description of secret societies and our description of secret organizations is that, according to Simmel, secret societies are practically free of internal conflicts, whereas secret organizations seem to be rife with conflict (sometimes to the point of the members forgetting who their actual enemy is), probably because, as mentioned, the existence of intelligence agencies is publicly known, whereas the existence of secret societies can be only assumed or suspected.

> Since the secret society occupies a plane of its own – few individuals belong to more than one secret society – it exercises a kind of absolute sovereignty over its members. This control prevents conflicts among them, which easily arise in the open type of co-ordination. (Simmel, 1906, pp. 491–492)

BECAUSE THEY WROTE WELL, ACHIEVING BEAUTY WITHOUT PERFECTION …

My purpose was to show that the works of Tarde and Simmel are far from being "a set of dead classics, which 'weigh like a nightmare on the brains of living'," to quote Marx after Jameson (1984, p. 7). To the contrary, they provide a good explanation for "the cultural logic of late capitalism,"[6] to continue quoting Jameson, or "fast capitalism" to quote Scott (2009, p. 281). Indeed, it has been suggested that Durkheim won the famous debate with Tarde in 1903 because, as an original thinker, well ahead of his time, Tarde was misunderstood (Candea, 2010). Moss Kanter and Khurana (2009) claimed that Simmel "may have been too far ahead of his time" as well (p. 304).

But it was not only because of *what* Tarde and Simmel said but also because of *how* they said it that they should be read more often today. It must be added that I am familiar with works of Tarde and Simmel mostly in their English translations, and as, for example, different translations of Niklas Luhmann's texts show, a translator can change the original text beyond recognition. Nevertheless, I am truly impressed by both the depth of their thought and the beauty of their language. Both were close to art and literature (Tarde was also a poet and fiction writer), and it shows in their sociological texts.

I began this text with a personal anecdote and will end it with another. Our paper on secret organizations (Siebert & Czarniawska, 2018) has been published by *Journal of Management Inquiry* (*JMI*) under the heading, "Non-traditional research." I wonder how *JMI* would react to receiving a submission from Tarde or Simmel? In other words, what do we understand by "tradition" in management and organization studies?

NOTES

1. For claims that the influence of Weber and Durkheim on organization studies is receding, see, for example, Lounsbury and Carberry (2005) and Candea (2010).
2. It was Bruno Latour who directed my attention to Tarde, and Bernward Joerges who pointed me toward Simmel. I am truly grateful to both.
3. By "organization studies," I do not mean studies of formal organizations only but studies of all kinds of organizing processes.
4. A small village in Northern Sweden, used in Stockholm discourse as "the Other."
5. Though Nederveen Pieterse (2006) evokes Simmel only as a historical predecessor.
6. Both Tarde and Simmel often allude to economic phenomena, fully realizing the central role of the economy in contemporary societies.

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