

SELF-ORGANIZATION AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL WEAKNESS

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This paper seeks to comprehensively and critically interconnect the well-established theoretical and methodological conceptions of self-organization, complexity and chaos with more general issues and dilemmas in the contemporary field of social theory (such as knowledge, objectivity/subjectivity, structure/agency and prediction), as well as with a new reflexive ethos (practice) and aesthetic (style) of epistemic modesty and humility. In other words, a general theory of self-organization seems to be a suitable and sustainable analytic framework for generating, developing and cultivating a radical ethics/aesthetics of epistemological weakness, as well as a sense of less strong and more reflexive sociological/epistemological worldview.

Keywords: knowledge, self-organization and complexity, epistemology and ethics, reflexivity and social theory.

1. Introduction

Since the sixties, an overwhelming paradigm shift in the disciplines of science (system thinking and evolutionary thinking), philosophy and “weltanschauung” has been gradually underway. Self-organization came up to strictly exclude any strong “transcendental” or “metaphysical” theoretical need “to assume a first mover of the world that is not moved itself and to think

of the emergence of the world in terms of creation ex-nihilo. The substance of matter is that it is in permanent movement and permanently produces itself, i.e. it organises itself on various organisational levels” (Fuchs 2003a: 7)¹.

Our primary aim and underlying concern here is to comprehensively interconnect the

¹ Of course, human society is the most complex of all self-organizing systems that we know today.

well-established theoretical and methodological conceptions of self-organization and complexity with general issues in social theory (such as knowledge, subjectivity, agency and prediction), as well as with a new reflexive ethos (practice) and aesthetic (style) of epistemic modesty and humility. Theoretical strength is thus perceived as an obstacle or problem: it is epistemologically unhealthy. In other words, a general theory of self-organization seems to be a suitable and sustainable analytic framework not only for articulating “a general concept of co-operation” (Fuchs 2003a: 2), but also for generating, developing and cultivating a radical ethics/aesthetics of epistemological weakness, as well as a sense of less strong and more reflexive sociological/epistemological worldview. These elements could possibly be “the typical contributions of (social) science to the shape of the world. It could say things that are interestingly feeble, shaky, risky, and weird. Political and entrepreneurial metaphors, work-styles, output indicators and leadership models wreak havoc when they are too diligently pursued in science” (Pels 2003: 219).

According to the well-respected Newtonian and Cartesian cosmologies, we certainly live in a purely harmonic, homogenous, ordered and deterministic universe governed by absolute (Euclidean) geometric principles and invariant objective meta-laws. Modernist linear thinking inevitably leads us to naively consider human organizations as strictly law-dependent, impersonal, static and predictable. And if they do not possess these “iron” properties, it is just because of lack of information, miscalculation, misjudgement or, simply, bad leadership.

In particular, sociology’s 19th-century founders strongly asserted that the discipline was about making *long-term predictions* and hence applying persuasive, practical and universally-applicable solutions to real-world social problems. This was how social science originally invented and justified its idiosyncratic epistemic status, in direct contrast to religion or metaphysics, as famously expressed by the classical Comtean formula *savoir pour prévoir et prévoir pour pouvoir*, or by Charles Wright Mills’s conclusion (combined with a strong critique of bureaucratic technocracy) that the ultimate “purpose of social science is the prediction and control of human behaviour” (Mills 1970: 127).

In this positivistic/realistic context, scientific truth is ultimately characterized by great and indubitable certainty (strength) and detachment, putting an “end to the vagaries of human disputes ... by escaping as much as possible from the shackles of ideology, passions, and emotions” (Latour 1998).

2. Self-organization theory

In the 20th century, however, this highly static and orderly view of truth has been actively questioned, challenged and replaced by a dynamic, heterogeneous, multi-dimensional, changing and self-organizing truth bounded by perspective, time and space². In general, self-organization theory signifies an irreversible shift of scientific

² To a large extent, this was due to the reflexive sensitization of modern science, from Biology to the Human Sciences, which gradually began to self-consciously and self-critically look at itself and discover its own limits and weaknesses, especially since the first formulations of early 20th century Physics (e.g. Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity, Heisenberg’s Theory of Uncertainty and Prigogine’s Theory of the Dissipative Structures).

paradigms: “from the Newtonian paradigm to the approaches of complexity ... from predictability to non-predictability, from order and stability to instability, chaos and dynamics; from certainty and determination to risk, ambiguity and uncertainty; from the control and steering to the self-organization of systems, from linearity to complexity and multidimensional causality; from reductionism to emergentism, from being to becoming and from fragmentation to inter-disciplinarity” (Fuchs 2003b: 109-110).

The central logic of self-organization theory is that “system structure often appears without explicit pressure or involvement from outside the system. In other words, the constraints on form (i.e. organization) of interest to us are internal to the system, resulting from the interactions among the components and usually independent of the physical nature of those components” (see: <http://calresco.org/sos/sosfaq.htm#1.2>). This logic conveys several philosophical-epistemological implications (cf. Fuchs 2003b: 140):

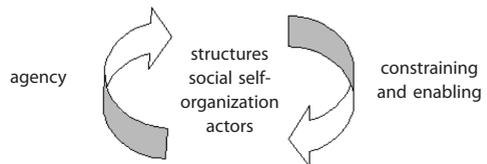
1. “Self-organizing systems are shaped by a dialectic of determinism and indeterminism, necessity and chance. One can say that it incorporates both a closed causality and an open causality.”
2. “Emergence means that many Ones that are opposed to and different from many Others synergetically produce a new Whole or Identical One.”³

³ Emergence pays attention to *multiple levels of analysis* (individuals, interactions, and social groups), with a special dynamic focus on the bottom-up and fully spontaneous, unplanned and unpredictable ways in which group phenomena irreducibly and irreversibly result from daily “performative” communication processes among social agents. Even a close and careful

3. “Self-organizing systems are shaped by a dialectic of globality and locality: There are general principles of self-organization that apply to all types of self-organizing systems, but also specific principles for each special type of system.”

Systemic societal self-organization involves permanent processes of *both* agency *and* constraining/enabling, by which a system can maintain/reproduce itself and create its own unity, values, codes and regularities (see Figure 1). No “pure” (strong) position outside the system can be assumed in order to see its “blind spots” (Luhmann) and determine its defining parameters (Cilliers 2005b: 606).

Figure 1. Systemic societal self-organization *both* enables *and* constrains actions, individuality, creativity and innovation.



Source: Fuchs 2003a.

It is almost customary now for the social scientists and philosophers to formulate knowledge claims (or truth claims) in terms of the general notions of social constructedness, contextuality/situatedness, or discursivity. Making predictions has substantially moved “from totem to taboo ... For all the proscriptions predictive activity in sociology is commonplace ... We do not

look at the constituent properties or elements and their interactions cannot forecast the whole process. Hence, emergence permanently forbids “strong” exhaustive explanations and predictions.

highlight our predictions, however. They remain implicit in our work: colleagues can discern them, but they are not made explicit to a wider public” (Aldridge 1999: 5.6). In fact, social scientists and philosophers no longer take risks for fear of being wrong (or of being falsified and, therefore, weak).

It is also a commonplace that knowledge cannot be analytically distinguished from its multiple cognitive-political practices as well as from the various social relations that make it generally acceptable and legitimate. However, many of the so-called “situated” or “contextual” perspectives “still treat the environment as supplemental to the individual consciousness” and the “concept of autonomous individual mind – *learning to participate* – remains privileged and fundamentally unchallenged” (Fenwick 2001: 247)⁴. This implicitly reflects the continuing determination of social theory to be *strong*, on the basis of final analytic judgments, robust results, compelling arguments and inescapably powerful conclusions (Pels 2003).

Yet, some striking answers come from synergetical approaches where the self (including the epistemological/sociological self) is necessarily intertwined with the real world and dialectically constituted by the on-going, mutual and self-organizing interaction of the ego with the other⁵. The

⁴ Hardly anyone in everyday performative practice actually sees knowledge as inherently circular! (see e.g. Pels 2002, Woolgar 1988).

⁵ Older approaches reflexively suggest the significance and importance of the “I-thou” relationship (Buber 1970), which was the very essence of the great Socratic dialogues, as well as the crucial introduction of second-person inter-subjective methodologies, such as Bohmian dialogue, leading to innovative forms of “*dialogic consciousness*” (Bohm 1985).

self thus neither appears as a mere “object” of knowledge nor as an empirical ego that lacks autonomy, agency, imagination, choice, improvisation and spontaneity.

In other words, the subject is not passive, self-assured and narcissistically private any more. Instead of seeing subjectivity as an isolated, independent and self-contained locus of individual experience (according to the classical Cartesian ego), self-organization theory, in the open spirit of Ludwig Binswanger (1963), fruitfully co-relates it with objectivity and inter-subjectivity through an *uncertain circular-dialectical process*, without however reducing ontological questions to epistemological ones (just as Kant did), or “facts” to mere performative descriptions and interpretations, symbolic categories and conceptual frameworks.

Of course, this should carefully refrain from any sort of “last-instance” objectivism and decisively move towards a rather *never-ending reflexive dialectic* between micro and macro, action and structure, transformation and reproduction, individuality and sociality (or individual and collective action), randomness and simplicity, contingency and directionality, emergence and social causation (Sawyer 2007), as well as towards a generalized critique of naïve/uncritical realism, reification and essentialism, at the level of *both* everyday world-making *and* professional epistemological/sociological (organizational) analysis.

An essential and irreducible normative dimension is also implied here. Autonomy, guaranteed by open, uninterrupted and unbiased dialogue, meaningfully emerges as a necessarily socialized, “moral principle in given historical communities” and elevates

the self into the being who suffers from and critically resists systemic and organizational restrictions (Tsivacou 2005: 519, 521). This further calls us to comprehensively elaborate on the deeper *reflexive* ethical implications and consequences of self-organization in the particular analytic contexts of unpredictability and social theory (sections 3 and 4).

This would more vividly illustrate a simple thing: self-organization entails that it is not enough for social theory to be “refutable” or “provisional” (Cilliers 2005a); it should be definitely *weak and imperfect* because of the *co-emergence* of knower and setting or knowledge and action/experience (see e.g. Maturana & Varela 1987)⁶, as well as because of the very *epistemological circularity* of the theoretical accounts on this co-emergence.

It must thus cultivate a self-reflexive ethos of imperfection, against all the purism and asceticism of truth-seeking, which still rages academic research. The continuous attempt to understand (or to model) human complex systems necessarily involves epistemic modesty, as well as an ethical sense of epistemological weakness that especially focuses on our “natural” incapacity to predict. Following the Nietzschean

Eternal Return, the reflexive conception of self-organization requires from us to openly accept (and energize) the responsibility for our claims or models, although we know they are flawed. So, self-organization also involves generosity, justice, honesty, integrity, sincerity and sharing.

3. Unpredictability in human complex systems

Modernity, as a social and historical category, has been closely associated to the “received” or “conventional” strong ambition to know, predict and manipulate (engineer) the world *in toto* with total certainty. Human life, however, is inherently dynamic: it is inescapably and ceaselessly changing and polymorphous (kaleidoscopic). In other words, it may be simple or chaotic, easy or hard, boring or exciting, happy or miserable, beautiful or evil. To put it very simply, *life is never the same*. Change is actually constitutive of all sorts of human co-existence/co-operation and social living over the ages.

Human behaviour is mostly ambiguous and non-linear; it is characterized by a varied disproportionality between (changes to) the input and the outcome (the so-called *butterfly effect*). In other words, a small cause often has large effects (see e.g. Urry 2005: 6; Hayles 1991: 11). In addition, “similar causes can have different effects and different causes similar effects; small changes of causes can have large effects whereas large changes can also only result in small effects. Hence conceptualizing globalization as an aspect of self-organizing systems enables us to assume that in a globalizing world there

⁶ As enactivist scholars B. Davis and D.J. Sumara (1997: 110) have argued, knowing “exists in the *interstices* of a complex ecology or organismic relationality”. In an “enactivist” or “performativist” conception of social order, social structures, relations, patterns, connections and identities are real/imaginary quantities that exist only partially, because they are continuously “at stake” in attempts to render them a little bigger or a little smaller. We are all in the permanent business of re-negotiating, re-constructing and acting performatively upon them. Therefore, we all contribute to the “reality status” of what is described and explained (see Pels 2002).

are complex, non-linear causal relationships that are stretching across large spatio-temporal distances” (Fuchs 2003b: 112).

That is why global (or glocal) social networks are chaotic systems: determinism is structurally coupled with the role of agency, surprise, contingency and unintended/unforeseen consequences and side-effects (unpredictability)⁷.

- On the one hand, social institutions, networks and structures are inherently fragile, unstable and contingent because choice, imagination and improvisation are ubiquitous and esoteric in each and every individual and collective action. There are always new alternative (and unanticipated) roads to fruitful collaboration, innovation and creativity. The future is actually open, subversively enigmatic and potentially full of surprises (for better or for worse...).
- On the other hand, a systematic, well-informed and carefully detailed historiographical approach can easily demonstrate persistent (hidden) patterns, mechanisms and trends underlying the

relative “directionality” of social and political change and evolution. Modern notions of “path dependency” now seem very relevant and realistic, so that they get seriously re-energized and re-introduced to the context of analysis. Common global developments are thus far from purely erratic and arbitrary, but still unpredictable in the long run (i.e. beyond the so-called *predictability horizon*).

Self-organized patterns of interconnections, interrelations and interdependencies are continually created and re-created through an “endless dance of co-emergence” (Waldrop 1992: 75). Therefore, any social theoretical attempt to change (or to save) the world is indeed *too weak*: “social development can’t be steered because society is a complex, self-organizing system” (Fuchs 2003b: 164). Nobody can actually (voluntaristically or not) situate her/himself *above* societal dynamics, independent of her/his authority, prestige, institutional position or epistemological standpoint. In any case, this should not subtract from the huge importance and significance of (knowledgeable) human agency and intervention. Especially in periods of crisis and acute struggle, human agency and intervention can still make a decisive historical difference for all of us and for the next generations.

Furthermore, the multiscale nature and complexity of self-organized social networks are crucial features in better understanding (and modelling) them. Both methodological and epistemological advances in human complex systems (see Tsekeris 2009) are providing an integrated framework, without however achieving true

⁷ Chaotic systems are intriguingly rule-based; they are *both* deterministic *and* unpredictable (*both* chaotic *and* systems) at the same time. Even very simple and explainable systems, whose parameters and rules of interaction are clearly defined, can exhibit chaotic behavior. Chaotic systems generate behavior with the *appearance* of complete randomness *by means of a purely deterministic rule*. Deterministic chaos shows *sensitivity to initial conditions*, in that small or trivial differences of a state (at any given moment) lead rapidly to multiple and widely diverging states. It rather seems that there is always a permanent undecidable tension, as well as a paradoxical *demiurgic compatibility*, between unpredictability (uncertainty) and determinism (certainty), between contingency and directionality. We therefore need to deeply and radically challenge and revise the old conventional ways of perceiving and conceiving our increasingly pluralized “post-human” social and historical universe.

(strong) predictive power of their behaviour. Of course, regularities are not excluded: “laws can be proposed and validated (or negated) via empirical means, but they can be formulated *only* in a *probabilistic* manner” (Katerelos 2007). This particularly denotes that “unpredictability” and “indeterminacy”, as significant constitutive features of the social world, should always be placed at the centre of the analysis⁸.

After all, what about the very future of human complex systems? A very simple, modest and pragmatic answer is that we just “cannot predict or control this future, these futures. One lesson of Chaos Theory is that no-one else can, either. The will to predict is always doomed and counter-productive. Life, whether social, cultural or digital, is inherently complex” (Hodge & Lally 2006)⁹. This is indeed an *epistemologically weak* answer!

⁸ Within current complexity research, “unpredictability” is frequently used in two different senses (Katerelos 2007): (1) On the one hand, it “involves the overwhelming failure of the modern sociological (and social scientific) projects to fully contain social dynamics, or to obtain full analytic access to future social and historical developments”. (2) On the other hand, it “denotes an *essential feature* concerning the nature and character of all complex or chaotic systems ... In a “self-organizing” or “autopoietic” social universe, where (dis)order, (mis) understanding and (dis)unity reflexively come from agonistic competition, irreducible diversity, mutual evolution, emergence, or *chaotic noise*..., the future just becomes a mere possibility”.

⁹ A quite simple mathematical analysis could easily show that, even in simple and explainable systems, which obey Newton’s laws of motion, we cannot always and accurately predict what is going to happen next. This is because of a persistent instability, as well as of an undecidable multiplicity of forces that variously affect and act upon an object. For sure, any attempt to predict a simple system’s future behavior over long times will be defeated. Of course, this does not mean that we can say nothing about the dynamic properties and processes of the system.

In the highly contingent, speedy, dynamic and risky universe of self-organized social networks, any strong, authoritarian “top-down” control (or promethean engineering) of information spread, opinion formation, free will and self-expression is completely impossible *and* undesirable. Equally undesirable is a predictable, linear, hierarchical, stable, orderly, homogenous and pure human world (*unpredictability is not a curse anymore*).

This would probably be a very hopeless, colourless, dull and boring world: A completely grey social universe (*against human nature itself!*). In addition, there is indeed a small degree of optimism about the future, by strategically focusing upon *critical possibilities rather than limitations*. As Immanuel Wallerstein perceptively notes, “the future [...] is open to possibility, and therefore to a better world ... Hence we should act in order to realise an alternative, democratic, participatory, humane form of globalization that is based on global alliance technology, global ecological sustainability, global wealth, a global participatory agora, and a global noosphere. New forms of globalization and governance are needed, globalization is in need of global wisdom and global co-operation” (Fuchs 2003b: 164).

The future dynamic evolution of emerging social networks (online *and* offline) can be coarsely projected up to a certain time horizon (*predictability horizon*), but it cannot be fully predicted with certainty and precision in the long run (see Katerelos & Koulouris 2004). Namely, predicting the future of human complex systems could be rather considered as an epistemologically weak, irresolvable riddle. But the irreducible

social, cultural and historical potential of dynamic social networking, re-creation, co-action, co-operation and self-organization is nevertheless here, for better or for worse!

4. Weak social theory

Recent theoretical and methodological advances within social complexity research in general help us to seriously and imaginatively re-think and re-decide about the ambiguous, complicated, persistent, and highly disputed issue of predictability/unpredictability. It is likely that many of the arrogant (self-assured) long term predictions unreflexively and uncritically overestimate the role and limits of science and technology¹⁰. But the general conclusion that “we cannot make purely objective and final claims about our complex world”, clearly entails that “we have to make choices and thus we cannot escape the normative or ethical domain” (Cilliers 2005a: 259).

According to our opinion, this ethical domain is better expressed by the innovative and provocative conception of *weak social theory*, as originally conceived by the Dutch sociologist Dick Pels (2003). This is directly opposed to *both* the systematic reinforce-

ment of the hegemonic “grand conception of sociology’s role” (see Hammersley 1999) *and* the methodical/strategic concealment of the essential “epistemological circularity” of sociological/philosophical accounts, which eventually isolate us from the ethics of “imperfection” and epistemic modesty. Sociological/philosophical and social theoretical knowledge is inescapably a very fragile, unstable, incomplete, asymmetrical and contingent thing.

In this analytic respect, weak social theory importantly advances “intellectual humility and tolerance” (Rosenau 1992: 22), recalling many essential postmodernist/post-structuralist features: No more compelling and compulsory truths, great and indubitable certainties (dogmas), or all-purpose grand methodologies. And no more need to forcibly extract any universally binding agreement. Social theory must now self-consciously recognize and celebrate itself as inherently open, refutable, soft, weak and vulnerable, “refusing to flex the muscle of a male-dominated epistemology” (Pels 2003: 217).

For weak social theory, to say that a sociological or philosophical argument carries overwhelming force, or that it stands up in a definitely unproblematic way, is exactly to “find it distasteful or even slightly obscene. To say: ‘that is a very vulnerable argument’, is to pay a compliment to it” (Pels 2003: 220). In this sense, we must be proud of our (constitutive) weakness and reflexively embrace our own anti-universalistic politics of knowledge, primarily pointing our epistemic guns at ourselves, rather than at everyone else in order to dogmatically achieve maximum (linear) diffusion and global consensus. In the first place, there-

¹⁰ These developments tend to gradually and irreversibly “bend, shift, and transform the limits of what we think is possible. It is virtually impossible to predict the full consequences of all of our actions, and we cannot predict how society and the global order might change in response to new technologies ... but science should not ignore our moral or ethical responsibility to consider all the risks either” (Viridi 2008: 41). According to Jean-Pierre Dupuy’s perceptive observations, technoscience “cannot isolate itself from social responsibility or should be given a monopoly on decision-maker power” (Viridi 2008: 41). In doing so, ICTs-and-Society can indeed serve the global aim of supporting “the evolution of academic knowledge exchange to an electronic democracy” (Whitworth & Friedman 2009).

fore, social/ethical theorizing must be seen as a way of persuading ourselves!

Hence, most importantly, our knowledge's own (unavoidable) circularity and self-organization is openly acknowledged and actively celebrated. Weak social theory explicitly champions a non-hasty and modest "*circular reasoning*" over arrogant and self-sufficient (self-immunizing) rationalist foundationalist claims for intellectual access to totality. In other words, it explicitly champions the radical (early) ethnomethodological conception of (constitutive) reflexivity that comprehensively entails "the intimate interdependence between representation and represented object... such that the sense of the former is elaborated by drawing on knowledge of the latter, and knowledge of the latter is elaborated by that which is known about the former" (Woolgar 1988: 33).

Such a kind of performative "knowledge politics" is *neither* self-refuting *nor* a relativism of the all-cats-are-grey variety (*weak knowledge is not "any" knowledge*), since it non-opportunistically offers itself as a weak and self-organizing criterion of truth, by critically displaying the dialectical "projective relationship between the spokesperson and that which is spoken for" (Pels 2000: 17). This ultimately waives all authoritarian macho claims for "independent" realities, "transcendental" truths and "obligatory" epistemological foundations (Pels 1995: 1036), paving however the enthusiastic and promising way to an ethically responsible and radically reflexive mode of critique¹¹.

¹¹ This also champions a creative on-going interplay between the ontological, the epistemological and the ethical, according to Karl Mannheim's famous "magic triangle" (Pels 2003).

As the radical sceptical ethics of self-organization and circular reflexive reasoning is being brought right at the heart of current epistemological/sociological and interdisciplinary debates, we do maximize our fruitful chances to surprisingly discover a wholly new intellectual and academic life conduct: "Less egotism, both individual and collective, and more awareness of how we all constitute each other: this could be a path toward lowering intellectual acrimony in the future" (Collins 2002: 70). In such terms, *caring for the other* signifies an essential normative prerequisite for both social and scientific living (Tsivacou 2005: 520–522), against old modern hardness and classical power talk.

5. Concluding remarks

In this specific analytic context, we energetically promote a genuine, phronetic¹² and anti-hegemonic stance of *epistemological weakness*, dynamically connecting reflexivity and reflexive self-organization, as a rather community level concern, with the ethics of sociological/philosophical and organizational research and theory. The social researcher now learns to peacefully keep in mind "both how little the single scientist knows in relation to the total community of inquirers, and a respect for the complexity of reality" (Kalleberg 2007: 141). We thus accomplish a provocative dialogical expansion of the very project of *reflexive sociology/epistemology*, which is indeed integral to good (serious) cultural production (see Tsekeris and Katrivesis 2008).

¹² Of course, the rather weak Aristotelian conception of "phronesis" (practical, limited wisdom), as a sign of epistemic humility and honesty, is quite relevant here (see Flyvbjerg 2001).

Of course, this alternative, non-ascetic approach, which self-confidently stands against all transcendental purist aspirations to (Platonic) perfectionism, creatively encourages “bounded” or “limited” knowledge (Cilliers 2005a, 2005b). For Paul Cilliers, however, self-reflexive modest claims “are not relativistic and, therefore, weak . . . We can make strong claims, but since these claims are limited, we have to be modest about them” (Cilliers 2005a: 260, 263). That is, a modest position should definitely be a responsible position, but not a weak one. But complexity, self-organization and modesty, in our opinion, goes hand in hand with *epistemological weakness* (not epistemological vagueness or insipidity), a sense of “turning the other cheek”, or a sense that we don’t necessarily have to be compulsory/obligatory and strong to stand up to the strong, and thus come to resemble our epistemological opponents or enemies (in a mimetic way). What we vitally need here is perhaps to “include conscious consideration of a range of formal ethical positions and adoption of a particular ethical stance” (Guillemin and Gillam 2004: 275), over against the multiple and underlying “dangers of complacency” (Rachel 1996).

It is almost certain that not everyone is willing to easily withdraw or refrain from the positive “enlightenment” ambition of social theory to heroically champion “strong” privileged knowledge over fragile, local, contested and scientifically ungrounded lay beliefs, as well as to actively engage in large-scale political and legislative enterprises, establishing grand rational (and fully linear and predictable) structures within society. Nevertheless, social theory should continue to self-reflexively and self-critically produce communicable and practically useful descriptions, interpretations and explanations of itself and the outer worlds of society and culture.

It should also continue to leave space for alternative collective projects for dominated groups (*explicating the deeper normative assumptions that are involved in such projects*) and imaginatively mediate between scientific expertise and the wider public sphere. Against the often corrosive “strong” epistemological scepticism and nihilism, social theory should ultimately develop a comprehensive (yet weak/modest) analysis of the social forces of human emancipation, as well as of the possibility of a transformative politics of human emancipation (Vandenberghe 1999: 62).

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SAVIORGANIZACIJA IR EPISTEMOLOGINIS SILPNUMAS

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S a n t r a u k a

Straipsnyje siekiama visapusiškai sujungti pripažintas teorines ir metodologines saviorganizacijos ir sudėtingumo sąvokas su bendrosiomis socialinės teorijos problemomis (tokiomis kaip žinojimas, subjektyvumas, veikmė ir numatymas), taip pat su naujuoju episteminiu nuosaikumu bei kuklumo etosu ir estetika. Kitaip sakant, bendroji saviorganizacijos teorija yra

tinkamas ir patvarus analitinis karkasas kurti ir plėtoti radikalią epistemologinio silpnumo etiką/estetiką bei silpnesnę ir refleksivesnę sociologinę/epistemologinę pasaulėžiūrą.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: žinojimas, saviorganizacija ir kompleksškumas, epistemologija ir etika, refleksi-vumas ir socialinė teorija.

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