

## 5. Letting Knowledge Go: Ethics and Representation of the Other in International and Cross-Cultural Management

Carl Rhodes and Robert Westwood

Writing social science is a practice of writing about other people – whether they are real, or imagined ... or even a little of both. This is an act of inscription where the person who writes imagines a self that is capable and author-ative of representing others. Writing, in this sense, is not a matter of the trained skills of constructing sentences, paragraphs and so forth – it is about the institutional location of the authors and the privileges that they seek to exercise. In the social sciences this posits some people as the tellers and others as the told. Here, the tellers seek (and sometimes find) the power to define the character of other people. When this is achieved, the tellings come to be regarded as knowledge ... truth even. In this chapter we are concerned with the ethical status of such knowledge as it relates to the way that people who study management write about people from cultures other than their own. In such a post-colonial context the writing of international management has, as we shall see, participated in reproducing culturally distributed power inequalities as a means to enable the management and control of western business interests. Our aim in this chapter is to engage with some philosophical ideas so as to consider the ethics of 'writing the Other' in relation to such forms of knowledge.

The relationship between the writer and the written-about in international management is one where institutional author-ity is located in the Western academy and where the written-about are located as 'Other', usually outside the developed West. As the authors of this chapter, 'we' (Bob and Carl) are implicated in such relationships. We appear here before you in this book because we have drunk deeply from the cultural well of the academy; it fills

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us, sustains us and at times intoxicates and consumes us. We cannot escape the tradition of privilege that enables us to write – this is the case no matter how much concern, unease (or even guilt) that we express for it. Given what we take to be our self-knowledge as authors, in writing this chapter we want to move towards some understanding of what it might mean to be responsible for 'writing the Other'. As a device to enable this, we (Bob and Carl) have decided to write the chapter as a first person narrative. The 'I' of the text below is a fictional 'I' whom we have created in order to tell one possible story of how to consider the relationship between Self and Other in the study of international management. We have separated the identity of the narrator from that of the authors to highlight the fact that our knowledge is one that is actively narrated by us – and for which we are responsible. In summary, please be on notice that what we write here is a work of fiction ... and that is why we take it so seriously.

*I look across your desk, across its fastidious neatness of compulsively composed piles of files and papers. I look at your face. It is the face of a stranger. It is the face of a middle-aged Chinese business man – or at least these are the words I conjure up most inadequately to describe your face. I cannot prevent the word 'inscrutable' from entering my mind. Why? I don't know you. I am projecting things onto your face from my reservoir of thoughts, ideas and images that some might call 'knowledge'. Included are elements from the repertoire that some label 'Theory'. But these are jumbled with other elements differently labeled and unlabelable. I am asking you questions in a style that some might call 'interview' and I write down what you say. You tell me things that appear to be about how you do business...*

*[sometime later]...*

*I look across my desk at my computer screen. On it is displayed a transcript of the interview I had with the 'Chinese business man'. His face is no longer there – not even in my memory. I just have 'his' words. What do they mean? I look at the words on the screen. My reservoir of thoughts, ideas and 'theories' direct my attention to certain words and certain phrases. I extract these. Later I will order them in a particular manner. Then I will write a text of my own because I am supposed to account for this 'Chinese business man'. I will presume to represent him and his words in my text. What can I say about him? What do I know about him and his world – this stranger? Are we connected? Yes/No. I am uneasy and uncertain. How wide and how deep is the abyss that separates me from this other person?*

I go in search of knowledge, of authority. I go in search of textual reassurance to relieve my anxiety. How do people, labelled 'international management scholars', account for people from different places and cultures? How do they make their representations? In the 1959 book *Management and the Industrial World* (Harbison and Myers, 1959), I locate the following passage discussing management and industrialization in Israel:

The Arab and Sephardic elements are technically and culturally less well advanced, in fact some authorities feel that the European and Asiatic groups are centuries apart culturally ... For the analysis in this essay, this implies that the two former groups, with some few exceptions, constitute the unskilled and semiskilled labor force and currently, from a standpoint of potential management base, are of less significance (p. 188).

I find this unsettling. Arabic people are mentioned only on this one occasion, Palestinians not at all. In talking about Egypt, they declare indigenous management 'primitive' and enterprises managed by a 'strong willed individual or family clique' where 'one finds a personal rather than a functional type of organization, a complete absence of rational management procedures, and a dearth of competent professional and supervisory personnel' (p. 158). They further assert that Egypt's greatest current asset is those people with overseas training or experience – since this makes them 'sophisticated' (p. 162). Elsewhere, there is reference to British 'aristocratic values', German 'authoritarianism', the 'unquestioning loyalty' of the Japanese subordinate, the 'patrimonial', 'thrusting and unscrupulous' Indian businessman (p. 153). I could go on.

This is not an obscure book – it is a foundational text for international and cross cultural management studies (ICMS). Harbison, Myers and others were there (see also Kerr et al., 1960) at the start when ICMS emerged as an academic discourse in the United States just after World War Two. As US international trade burgeoned, there was a perceived need to confront Soviet global incursions through the bulwark of US international investment and business practice. It was also desirable to have representations of other cultures' business and management practices so that the world could be managed through a knowledge that embraced the injunctions of normal science, realist ontology, neo-positivist epistemology and the methodological colours of structural functionalism, as exemplified by Parsons in sociology and Radcliffe-Brown in anthropology.

What I also found in this early discourse of ICMS was a universalistic tendency deploying the rhetoric of modernization, development and industrialization that tied US business interests to those projects and to US

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foreign policy ambitions. There is an accompanying belief that to modernize and develop, other countries must traverse the same kind of industrialization process the West had already successfully negotiated. It used a language that represented non-industrialized countries in relation to the pre-modern, undeveloped and underdeveloped world and the need for Western intervention to bring development and modernity to it. It is a continuation of an exploitative imperial project in that it involves a colonization of indigenous people through a 'truth' that sustains the colonizing culture (see Diprose, 2002) – the culture that sustains both my life and my anxieties.

Like a bastard social Darwinism, ICMS demanded nothing less than progress – progress built behind a veneer of positivistic theories and methods deployed to scrutinize and represent the management and organization practices of the non-West. It was an appropriation strategy that constructed representations of non-Westerners refracted through a Western theoretic-ideological lens and devoid of any input from them: of their understandings, interests and knowledge systems. With the rise to dominance of contingency theory in organization studies with its 'culture-free' hypothesis (Hickson et al., 1974), weaponry kept being added to the armoury.

Fearing that I was misled by these dusty and sacred texts from the dawn of the discipline, I looked for something more contemporary. After all, most of this was written in the 1950s and, culturally enamoured by the notion of temporal progress, I hoped for more. I looked into Redding's *The Spirit of Chinese Capitalism* (1990) and found an intriguing account of contemporary business and management among the overseas Chinese based upon a carefully constructed Confucian heritage. However, not only are a divergent and dispersed set of people collected up and homogenized, but their contemporaneity is denied by anchoring all they do to the glories of China's past. Essentialisms flow like the Yellow River: 'compliance and conservatism are widespread characteristics to a degree where they might be taken as central parts of the ideal-type Chinese personality' (Redding, 1990, p. 52); 'Chinese workers are notable for their "trainability". They have traditions of diligence and disciplined education, and also a high level of manual dexterity' (p. 222); 'Chinese people "see the world" differently to others' (p. 72); 'cause for the Chinese is a matter of "connectedness", of understanding the mutual, reciprocal interplays between a large array of forces' (p. 76), and so on.

Despite my concerns, I know that Redding's is a sympathetic attempt to portray another culture's business systems emically. But still, the core theme is that the contemporary East is only made meaningful either by reference to the legacies of a faded civilization, or to the West's modernity and progression. This is a text written by a Westerner for a Western audience, yet one that presumes to have gazed upon, apprehended and accurately

represented the East. But I don't want to single out Redding – such practices are apparent in almost every ICMS text. The one that really grabbed me, even astonished me, was *Comparative Management: A Transcultural Odyssey* (Gatley et al., 1996). Replete with its Homeric eponym, the book divides the world's cultures into four 'paradigm views', making a central contrast between Western 'atomism' and Eastern 'holism'. This is oddly linked to theories of the dual hemisphericity of the brain: 'These two orientations [atomism and holism] have been attributed to the relative dominance of the two brain hemispheres, the analysing reductive left brain, which seems to dominate the Western world and the synthesising, visio-spatial right brain which seems to dominate in the East' (p. 13). My hopes for proper knowledge of other cultures began to wane.

If I did come to a point of knowing something, it was that ICMS, like all research practices, is embroiled in the problematics and politics of representation. But there seemed a particular acuity in ICMS given its express encounter with difference and the presence of differential power structures and relationships inevitably framing any research. ICMS offered itself to me as a practice of appropriation and representation where Western scholars (my own image keeps creeping back, despite my protestations) subject other countries'/cultures' management and organizational practices to the machinery of northern science so they can construct representations that stand as 'knowledge' all the better to engage with, manage and control them. Simultaneously, the West's management systems and managers are conjured up and valorized in relation to the represented Other. This is a white man's knowledge spoken with an authority and universalism of egological narcissism. It requires no conspiracy theory to see this authority as handmaiden to Western dominance in international business.

It was clear by now that the answers and solutions I was looking for were not located in ICMS. In fact, ICMS made my problems worse. I did find, though, that my problems resonated with the philosophical investigations of postcolonial theory. I turned to it for guidance. Initially I considered the detailed examination of the representation of the colonial Other by the West in Said's discussion of *Orientalism* (1978). For Said 'orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"' (p. 5). Orientalism understands difference in relation to the primacy of a western Self. Indeed, this notion of the Other, for Said, is a means through which the Oriental is positioned as not only being different from the West but also as inferior. The Orient is used to reinforce a sense of Western supremacy, such that the Orient is only ever an image of what is non-Western, and therefore lesser. Orientalism constructs, appropriates and represents the Oriental Other through a complex and networked set of practices that are less about a

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...the attempt to see, understand and explain any actual other people and about providing a representation meaningful to the West. Through Orientalism the Other is understood in the language of the Same (i.e. the Self), it is an assimilation of the Other to the Self. Said meticulously details the multitude of representations and representational practices and reveals their interdependence with the institutions and practices of Orientalism. This was a 'knowledge' of the orient that came to be regarded as 'fundamentally stable' (p. 32). But the Oriental never spoke for him-or herself.

Comparing what I read in ICMS to Said, I provisionally concluded that Orientalism and northern science were twins enabling and legitimating discourses that continue to serve the neo-colonial, imperialist project of which ICMS is a component. These representations are not accurate or real, they were never required to be; as Said says, Orientalism is 'entirely distinct and unattached to the east as understood within and by the east' (p. vii). There is no genuine desire to know other people or cultures in their own specificity. I was not the first to realize these connections – they have recently been documented in the margins of organization and management theory (see Westwood, 2001; Prasad, 2003). In ICMS, as in Orientalism, the Other is that which is constructed by a Western discourse that claims to speak authoritatively and definitively. Along the way, non-Western people are silenced through not being able to self-represent. Silenced through being homogenized. Silenced through having their knowledge systems derided, obliterated, ignored or marginalized. Silenced through the West's control and policing of the discourse and the machineries of knowledge production and dissemination.

Said was pessimistic. He thought Westerners were incapable ontologically of a 'true' or even sympathetic representation of others. This made me shudder.

So what is my relationship to my Chinese businessman and how can I relate to his difference from me? How do I deal with cross-cultural research when my knowledge and culture are rooted in the West? What might my (subject) position be? Who is my Western Self that is in relation to that which I find different? What are my responsibilities? Should I presume to speak about/of/for this person, or remain silent? If I speak, by what right do I do so? My questions remain unanswered, reinforced by the belief that all our confrontations with difference are fraught with danger.

Whilst Said focuses almost entirely on the discourse(s) of the colonizer, reading Bhabha (1994) took me in a different direction: towards a different idea of the Other. Bhabha imagines a complex and negotiated interplay between the colonized and the colonizer. He does not accept that colonial discourse is monolithic or that the colonized is merely captive of that

discourse. This seems more respectful and less pessimistic – I like it. The West, he argues, has an ever-present ambivalence towards the Oriental Other informed in part by its own psychic uncertainties and anxieties. The Orient is, for example, at once both completely knowable through the 'scientific' gaze of the colonizer, but at the same time it is an object of desire, a danger and threat that is mysterious and unknowable. The relationship is essentially unstable, mobile and conflictual; structured 'by forms of multiple and contradictory belief' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 75). Bhabha's Other cannot be apprehended as having a set of fixed, pre-given characteristics inscribing a predetermined cultural identity. Nor can all colonizers be seen as coming to the Other with a fixed and homogenous set of ideas and categories with which to affix to the Other in a monological imposition.

For Bhabha cultural identities are negotiated, and cultural differences and their representations are 'performed' in a liminal space, a space of hybridity, since neither Self nor Other sustains an independent and untrammelled identity at the interface. Bhabha sees the homogenization and monolithic tendencies of colonial and Orientalist discourse as akin to fetishism – an attempt to construct a fixed, arrested and stable imaginary Other to satisfy the desires of Self. It is a fetishism constituted by the oscillation, the 'play', between the desire for affirmation of the Same or sameness and the anxiety associated with difference and a sense of lack in self in the face of that difference, that Otherness. However, the meanings slip and disperse and the would-be monolithic discourse loses coherence. It fractures to reveal the uncertainties, ambiguities and fetishes of the colonizer. Colonial discourse is always 'less than one and double' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 97). The discourse is unstable because of the 'translation' as the West's ideas and theories get ensnared in the dynamics of interface, of the space between Self and Other, and become hybridized. Even if the Other is seduced into a self-identification with the identity offered by the colonizer, this mimicry turns back to the colonizer as a deformation, challenging the coherence and fixity the colonizer aspires to. The mimic's not-quite-sameness destabilizes the regime of the stereotype and the coherence of the identity of the Self seeking definition in a fixed and knowable Other.

In terms of my own problems as a Western ICMS researcher, reading Bhabha shows that I cannot assume a stable identity in the Other that I could find, know and then write. It also tells me that my own identity is at stake. The other person that I confront is already soaked in the (neo)colonial experience, in the serried representations proffered by the (my) West, and in his/her reactions and hybridizations of those strategies. More complexly, any sense of this other person available to me can only emerge in the performance of the interaction, in the interstices of a cultural encounter, the constitution of which cannot be determined *a priori*.

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I cannot see any way back from these recognitions to the old assurances of universalizations or even limpid humanistic pluralizations. But then I recognize that I am a hybrid too, a mongrel diasporized 'Englishman', a constructed identity at the interstices of all manner of historical and cultural influences and confusions. Furthermore, is not the ethos of the United States based upon hybridity and does not the field of ICMS actually celebrate hybridity as a feature of globalization – itself presaging a dissolution of those sticky cross-cultural differences that beset international business encounters? The construction of the mimic man was, after all, a colonial device of control. If we are all hybrids, where is the difference that differentiates and where is the divide that we have to negotiate?

If compelled to reject any essentialist view of identity and the epistemic violence by which colonial discourse constructs universalist categories, stereotypes and codings of difference, am I left with complete heterogeneity and particularism? Am I doomed to only speak about *this particular* 'Chinese' 'businessman' (even those categorizations may be troublesome essentialisms).

Looking further, I approach the work of Spivak and find her using the term *toute autre* to ward off assimilation and sustain heterogeneity. The Other, in Spivak, remains an absolute alterity, akin to Bhabha's notions of the completely Other, the 'untranslatable' element of identity (Bhabha, 1994, p. 74), and the incommensurability of cultural differences. This absolute Other cannot be assimilated to the sameness of Self, cannot be recuperated in the codes and categories of the West. Spivak seems to advise that the absolute Other be considered as an 'inaccessible blankness' revealing the limits of the West's knowledge and representational systems.

But, where does all that leave me? What can I say about the differences I encounter – am I silenced, unable to represent at all? But, pragmatically, difference is spoken, whether that results in appropriation, misrepresentation or other violations. But can I make representations of those seen as Other *responsibly and ethically*, given that if I speak I cannot step outside my own particular, historical, cultural, ideological subject-position. I cannot step outside the interestedness of my need to so represent, I cannot assume innocence.

In the 'Politics of Translation', Spivak (1993) acknowledges my concerns stating that 'it is not possible for us as ethical agents to imagine otherness or alterity maximally. We have to turn the Other into something like the self in order to be ethical.' She invokes Derrida's notion of the inner voice of the Other in us. As Spivak notes 'Derrida does not invoke "letting the other(s) speak for himself" but rather invokes an "appeal" to or "call" to the "quite-other" (*toute autre* as opposed to a self-consolidating other), of "rendering *delirious* that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us"' (Spivak,

1988, p. 89). This 'Self-in-the-Other' echoes Bhabha's insistence (via Lacan) that a sense of self and identity is dependent on the Other. In 'Remembering Fanon', he says that 'to exist is to be called into being in relation to an Otherness' (Bhabha, 1986), Self-Other as ineluctably relational and the notion of a totally independent Self is as untenable as an absolute Other.

Spivak retreats from the abyss of complete heterogeneity by acknowledging it to be an idealization. The construction of collective identities is allowable as a pragmatic strategic essentialism necessary to achieve full decolonization. Essentialisms are permissible provided we remain conscious of their expedient, strategic status and do not imagine a real, accurate representation has been created, and provided it contributes to a liberatory, not repressive, practice. So, I am not condemned to silence or solipsism with respect to difference, I can speak, but I need to do so brutally aware of my own commitments, motives and subject positions, of my responsibilities, and of the brutality of language.

I am still groping towards an ethic of my relationships to those different others I encounter in my research practice and am not fully persuaded that Said, Bhabha and Spivak have given me the answer. Given the intellectual connections and lineage between Spivak and Bhabha to Derrida, I was drawn back to Emmanuel Levinas. It is hoped that some inspiration might be found there. Upon reading Levinas I was encouraged when I found that he not only dealt specifically with an ethics of the Self-Other relationship, but also directly addressed this in terms of work.

Levinas expressed both grave concerns and hope about the way others are understood in relation to work. Here, other people are 'already merchandise reflected in money' – a mode of representation which renders people as substitutable such that there is an attempt to rob them of any true difference – any true particularity. Despite such force the absolute difference of the other person does not submit entirely. This is the 'the en-ergy of the vigilant presence which does not *quit* the expression' even when the will withdraws from work. The defect that Levinas identifies is 'the unrecognition of the worker that results from this essential anonymity ... a humanity of interchangeable men, of reciprocal relation' (Levinas, 1978/1991, pp. 297-298).

Levinas' expression of the humanity of interchangeable persons speaks directly to my experience with ICMS – in fact it could be said that ICMS exacerbates this interchangeability in a context where these persons are from elsewhere. Whether in relation to work or culture, the worker is already positioned both as 'merchandise reflected in money' and as having his/her particularity rendered into cultural anonymity. As Levinas argues, there is a gaping abyss between work, as production for the consumption of others, and the expression of an irreplaceable self – an abyss wrenched wider in those

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national management practices where it is the east that produces and the west that consumes. Indeed, for Levinas work is a matter of 'actions, gestures, manners, objects utilized and fabricated' (Levinas, 1978/1991, p. 176). It is a relationship of exteriority in the sense that workers are always interchangeable so as to render them subjects of the 'anonymous field of economic life' which 'reduces to the same what at first presented itself as the Other' (p. 176). Such a reduction to the same echoes Bhabha's concerns, but it presents the possibility of another Other – one whose absolute difference from the Same is not irredeemable. This is an Other whose 'will' might not be violated by regarding him/her only in terms of belonging to categories which anonymize particularity. When Levinas writes of 'political life', understood as rules and institutions for the governance of people, humanity is little more than the interchangeability of people. Such work is a betrayal of the self – a masking and dissimulation of the self (see pp. 176-178) involving a 'primal disrespect' that enables the exploitation and Orientalization of the Other that I noted in ICMS.

At this point, my problems seem to be getting worse. Is there no hope for a solution to the ethical problems of representing the Other in ICMS or organization studies? Levinas does, however, provide a proviso, one that might help me out. He is specific in claiming that the political renders people anonymous *only* if it goes unrebuked. It is within this fissure in the politics of work where such a rebuke, such a critique, is rendered possible. But I am starting to realize that the real difficulty is the way that my problem is articulated as being one of a search for knowledge. Levinas' attestation to a rebuke is not based on the desire for knowledge of an object (e.g. the objectified worker) but a form of knowing that is 'able to put itself in question'. It is the Western desire to have secure knowledge of the Other that engenders ICMS' post-colonial predicament. My starting question needs to be questioned, not answered. Answering would mean 'elaborating a psychology' which involves 'the determination of the other by the same'. Questioning would mean 'the act of unsettling its own condition'. This is an attestation to the Other that 'eludes thematization' while being shameful of 'the consciousness of [its] own injustice' in refuting the identity of the Other by representing it (Levinas, 1978/1991, p. 86).

But I have elided the crucial question that haunts all statements so far and that informed the anxiety of the anecdotes I opened with. This is the question of the *ethics* of the representational practices of ICMS. The ethics of how people denoted as different are constructed in Western systems of knowledge – of how other people are rendered as Other. It is here that a conception of the Other reaches its full potential in Levinas.

For Levinas, ethics requires the Other be considered as radically different from the same – it needs to account for the absolute particularity, strangeness

and *unknowability* of the Other. As Levinas describes it, this is an Other irreducible to the I, irreducible to me – an Other radically separated from oneself and one's knowledge rather than a subject of it. Levinas makes the telling point that comprehension, intelligence and knowledge are a 'way of approaching the known being such that its alterity with regard to the knowing being vanishes' (Levinas, 1969/1991, p. 42). I take this to mean that recognition of the Other places it outside such knowledge systems and into the realm of ethics. So, must I address the Other from a point that might be located outside of knowledge itself?

I started with a problem of how to understand difference without falling into the trap of that difference being rendered as an Orientalist Other. Now my problem seems to be less about the specific knowledge of ICMS, than about knowledge itself, about the presumption of the knowability of difference and the presumption of a righteousness of the quest for such knowledge. What Levinas adds is that rather than being premised on a pre-occupation with knowledge, subjectivity *starts* with ethics in the sense that the self is 'hostage' of the Other *not a knower* of it – this is the very Other in relation to which the self exists. This relationality suggests that a self is always one from which a response to the Other is demanded and to which the self is responsible. This is not a relationship whereby difference is subsumed into or known by the self (as in ICMS), but rather one of 'infinite responsibility' to the Other – an Other who can never be known in the intensity of its own particularity and to whom one is responsible without the expectation of reciprocity. As Davis, commenting on Levinas, says 'the Other lies absolutely beyond my comprehension and should be preserved in all its irreducible strangeness' (Davis, 1996, p. 3). It is with such a Levinasian concept of the Other that ICMS' treatment of difference can be fully appreciated as being unethical.

But dealing with such an absolute and infinite conception of the Other is not about knowing nothing, but about being prepared to revoke the primacy of knowledge of the Other in the name of ethics. It is not an ethics that can be applied to solve my ethical crisis of representation. More radically, the relationship between Self and Other *is* ethics. This is a relationship of exteriority entailing being open to 'the existence of the separated being' (Levinas, 1969/1991, p. 302). Responsibility, or ethics, is not something achieved by a particular way of dealing with other people but is rather a condition of the self that can never be achieved. The anxiety that provoked my questions must remain unresolved if this ethics is to remain alive. If I thought I had solved my initial problems of wanting to know how to capture difference, then those problems would have been multiplied. My question does not provoke a knowledge-based solution, it provokes affect and

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responsibility: 'Knowledge would be the suppression of the other by the grasp, by the hold, or by the vision that grasps before the grasp' (ibid.).

Naiveté is always inviting – an invitation to take up easy positions that assuage guilt and uncertainty, that remove anxiety. I am not immune. I am a doer of knowledge. I *do* represent other people who are different from me, and I do so both as professional researcher and as everyday user of language. These representations are 'knowledge', the very knowledge that tries to cast the unknowability of the Other asunder. So given the antipathy of knowledge and ethics, yet the impossibility of not doing knowledge, a new question begins its irritation: 'how might ICMS take responsibility for its representations of the Other?' Let's not be glib – this 'taking responsibility' is no simple matter, it is one we face everyday as we choose how we represent other people by writing and talking. In Derrida's (1992) terms this puts the 'representor' squarely in a position of undecidability. Derrida describes this undecidability as 'the experience of that which, though heterogeneous, foreign to the order of the calculable and the rule, is still obliged – it is obligation that we must speak – to give itself up to the impossible decision, while taking account of law and rules'. For Derrida, there is no free decision without the experience of the 'ordeal of undecidability'; an ordeal that is never calculable but always open to a future that cannot be located or predicted in the present or the past. And this ordeal is not overcome by deciding:

[t]he undecidable remains caught, lodged, at least as a ghost – but an essential ghost – in every decision, in every event of decision. Its ghostliness deconstructs from within any assurance of presence, any certitude or any supposed criteriology that would assure us of the justice of a decision, in truth of the very event of a decision (Derrida, 1992, pp. 24-25).

The ethical issue for ICMS that this implies is one of taking up responsibility for the representation of those that have hitherto been subsumed as Oriental Others and accepting that such representations be regarded as a matter of decision rather than of neutral, objective or mimetic representation. This is clearly relevant to any practice of representing the Other, but is particularly salient to ICMS on account of the colonial legacy of exploitation on which so much of its representational practices depend. In a sense this calls for a post-colonial ICMS that takes its colonial legacy as being central both to the problem of representation and to the decisions that might be made in the present when choosing (or choosing not to) study people from other cultures and in making particular representations of them. Such decisions, as Derrida points out, are always particular and always require some ordeal of

undecidability: '[e]ach case is other, each decision is different and requires an absolutely unique interpretation, which no existing, coded rule can or ought to guarantee absolutely' (Derrida, 1992, p. 23). In a Levinasian sense 'not knowing how to respond in the face of the call from the Other ... involves undecidability, a clear and certain recognition that one is drawn in [at least] two irreducible directions but still must decide in order to act' (Jones, 2003, p. 239). Moreover, as Derrida proposes, deciding in the face of the undecidable is a form of madness, rather than of knowledge or rationality. It is an immersion in this madness that might bend towards the impossible demands of an ethics of the infinitely Other.

From Levinas to Derrida, a new ethics of ICMS seems imaginable (but not easy). This imaginability emerges when the representation of the Other in ICMS is regarded as a site of undecidability, even though the reality of ICMS has been born from a desire to remove the undecidability of the Other by rendering it knowable in an absolute and universalistic fashion. The radicalness of this aporia weighs heavy, especially since 'management thought has returned again and again to the suggestion that there might be a solid ground ... that would remove uncertainty' and that 'the disappearance or management of political and ethical quandaries in the face of some great calculating machine would indicate not ethics but rather then *end* of ethics' (Jones, 2003, pp. 238-239). The problem then is that the desire for certainty in *knowing* the Other (as many) has been at the very centre of ICMS as a project whose intention was to render the cultural Other knowable such that s/he can be managed. An ethicalization of ICMS would entail, at very least, abandoning this quest as both futile and wrong.

Discussing Levinas' ethics in relation to the multitude of Other people, Hansel notes the political imperative that '[the] institution ... can in turn pervert itself, forgetting its justification and oppressing human beings in an impersonal totality. We must remain vigilant to prevent human rights – or, more precisely, the rights of the other man [sic] in his uniqueness – from being flouted by the abstraction of the system' (Hansel, 1999, p. 122). If we regard ICMS as having been a handmaiden to the modern institution of the western corporation, then the political implications of Hansel's comments to ICMS are palpable. In one sense this is relevant to all confrontations with difference in organizations, however, ICMS' colonial and Orientalist legacy makes it particularly salient to, and exaggerated in, that discourse. At very least, this involves Levinas' awareness that 'we' or 'them' can never be the plural of 'I' or 'you'.

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colonization, the opening of modes of living beyond the imperialism sustained by the truth of colonization, rests on the ability of the colonizers to respond to [the] contestation of their 'truth' generously, in Levinas' sense. This is a generosity born of an affective corporeal response to alterity that generates rather than closes off cultural difference (p. 146).

In trying and get at such an affectivity, I turned to Levinas' distinction between the *Said* and the *saying* in *Otherwise than Being*. If I've come to a provisional conclusion from these deliberations, it is about how the knowledge of the said might be replaced by the affect of the saying as a means of cultivating a necessary undecidability for an ethical ICMS. For Levinas (1978/1991), the said is that which is signified – it is the ontological function of language that seeks to represent and objectify; it is that which would:

idealize the identity of entities ... [it] ... would constitute that identity, and recuperate the irreversible, coagulate the flow of time into a 'something', thematize, ascribe a meaning. It would take up a position with regard to this 'something', fixed in a present, re-present it to itself, and thus extract it from the labile character of time (p. 37).

In these terms, ICMS, in its representation of the Oriental Other, is a particular and extreme instance of the objectification that is enabled by the said – one that fails to acknowledge its limits or the potency of that failure. *Saying*, on the other hand, is that 'which signifies prior to essence, prior to identification' (ibid., p. 46). The saying precedes the said, such that the said can never be reduced to saying (despite the most ardent protestations). Levinas' comments point to the very limits of language as a means of signifying the ethical relation with the Other. It is in the saying that language is not reduced to an objective knowledge but involves that *activity* of knowing difference. Saying is a matter of responding to the Other – one that 'weaves an intrigue of responsibility' (ibid., p. 6), it is sincerity, an openness to the Other rather than closing off the Other in the said. Saying is not 'the communication of a said, which would immediately cover over and extinguish or absorb the said, but saying holding open its openness, without excuses, evasions or alibis, delivering itself without saying anything said' (ibid., p. 143). The saying is the ethics of language that constitutes the condition of the possibility of the said, yet an exclusive focus on the said overlooks the 'essential exposure to the Other'; the quandary that results is that 'Saying is never fully present in the Said, yet the Said also constitutes the only access we have to it; it leaves a trace on the Said but is never revealed in it' (Davis, 1996, pp. 75 and 76).

Levinas' distinction between the saying and the said does not 'solve' any (of my) epistemological problems, it more importantly suggests a reconsideration of those problems, a reconsideration that I have been trying to work through here. The saying points towards an ethics requiring a certain humility in relation to the knowledge structures that I might be seduced by – structures that are inevitably in the realm of the said. As Ronell has convincingly argued, the most dominant form of stupidity is not that which lacks knowledge, but rather than which 'doesn't allow for questions about the world' or for doubt, relying instead on the demand for knowledgeable answers. This is a stupidity that manifests in forms of knowledge (including ICMS) that 'demand an answer and instrumentalize the moment of the question, they escape the anguish of the indecision, complication, or hypothetical redoubling that characterizes intelligence' (Ronell, 2002, p. 43). Speaking against such knowledgeable and contained moments there is a call for responsibility that 'must always be excessive, beyond bounds, viewed strictly as unaccomplished' such that the ethical being 'can never be grounded in certitude or education or lucidity or prescriptive obeisance' (*ibid.*, p. 19).

ICMS has been a practice aimed at *knowing* difference – in Ronell's terms it is guilty of a dominant stupidity. Ethically, this stupidity has resulted in a practice that has failed to be open to the otherness of the Other; instead, it has always sought to render it in relation to the same or self. As a form of knowledge ICMS fails to take responsibility for the undecidabilities (and unknowabilities) of its own epistemic practice, and it fails to leave open those questions that might sustain its own ethicality in relation to the difference it tries to know. What this has left me with is the idea that ICMS, as a post-colonial knowledge system used to categorize difference such that it be made manageable, is one that at best privileges knowledge over ethics and at worst destroys ethics with knowledge.

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