Wanted for breaking and entering organizational systems in complexity

Eros and Thanatos

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Abstract

In this paper we choose to enact this short story of Anais Nin. We have chosen to break out of the use of conventional narrative by using psychodynamic theory to break into the experiences that facilitate and block the emergence of participation in making meaning from story. In other words, here, we take full responsibility for using our self-organization to impose other-organization, which is to break one of the fundamental tenets of complexity theory praxis. On the other hand, we must break the rules in order to understand the rules so we learn not to predict and impose the rules. To use complexity theory in organizations is to co-create stories that cause psychodynamic anxiety, to break out of positivistic organizational systems that basically tell us what we have or have not and should or should not experience. It will be shown that the elements of complexity theory create psychodynamic tension that allows life instincts, Eros, and death instincts, Thanatos, to emerge as positive and negative transformation. Consequently, we argue that Eros and Thanatos are required for breaking in and out of organizational systems. This is a destructive-reconstruction of instinctual reactions to the effects of mutual causation, paradox, and dialectics inherent in complexity theory (Stacey, 1992, 2003). To understand complexity theory, we first need to understand the complexities of psychodynamics as described by Freud.

Life is a process of ‘becoming’, a combination of states we have to go through.
Where people fail is that they wish to elect a state and remain in it. This is a kind of death.
(Nin, 1973: 260)

Psychodynamics: Freud’s story

The purpose of discussing psychodynamic structural spaces is to provide foundation for the instrumental contraries of self and other constructive and destructive recognition. According to Sigmund Freud our ‘mental apparatus’, or psyche, is comprised of interrelated ‘realms’, or sub-structures that he called the super-ego, ego and id (Freud, 1984d, 1983, 1985, 1986b; Rycroft, 1995). The psychodynamics across these substructures constructs the concept of ‘self’ and vestiges of self-love, self-respect, self-esteem, and self-efficacy from which internal reality or identity emerges[1]. The master-slave connection to dominance of other-organization over self-organization has a parallel in the master-slave relationship (Hegel, 1977) that arises when one substructure attempts to dominate and negate another in the quest to simultaneously maximize pleasure and minimize displeasure in a manner that allows subsistence within the outside world (Freud, 1986a). Of course, stories of experiences with pleasure and unpleasure also coincide with the quality of self-organization that will effect quantity of future self-organizing activities, and vice versa.

Bracketed to the ego, the super-ego is a conglomeration of synthesized values, attitudes and beliefs or schema of other egos, or objects, that exist in external reality. To minimize confusion from coetaneous life affirming and threatening affects posed by the outside world, the ego fortifies its paradigmatic stronghold by employing transference to insert known parental prototypes into relevant authority figures or change agents:

“Freud reveals how it is the subject’s relationship to parental figures that is once again lived out in the transference – a relationship still characterized, notably, by instinctual ambivalence” (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988: 458).
Experiences with authority figures such as parents and significant others and their representations collectively and simultaneously form a macro-schematic; a perceptual, organizational framework that shapes the super-ego for the purpose of guiding the ego: “...the super-ego provides a sense of moral and aesthetic self-judgment (conscious and values, in other words)” (Badcock, 1988: 122).

In psychological topography, the ego represents ‘middle ground’ between the super-ego and the id: “it is, so to speak, the medium through which we try to get a picture of the other two institutions” (Freud, 1966: 6). The ego absorbs or introjects macro-schematic abstracts of the super-ego to develop and maintain a micro-schematic rendering of how the outside world should operate. Egoistic selection of these abstracts forms an intrapersonal mental model comprised of values, attitudes, and beliefs that frame understanding of how one should work in the outside world. One lamina of reaction to domination of other-organized activities arises when the ego refuses ‘recalibration’ to super-ego modifications, which are scripted from changes in external reality. The ego is one intermediary between extremes of unconsciousness and consciousness and thus is, implicitly if not explicitly, related to the transformation of self and other identity. The prohibitive aspects of the super-ego on the ego establish their relationship to be analogous to that of master and slave that again have parallels to other versus self-organization.

Through the process of identification, the ego may also form an impression of an ego-ideal: a first-class faction of the macro-schema representing the best self with the best accepted standards for living life, and to which libido (Rycroft, 1995: 45) or life force and loyalties are strongest. The ego-ideal and all of its components becomes the object of desire, and the most difficult to relinquish.

“it is a matter of general observation that people never willingly abandon a libidinal position, not even, indeed, when a substitute is already beckoning to them. This opposition can be so intense that turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis” (Freud, 1984b: 253).

Paradoxically, this veneration might be considered as least best by other aspects and so will not be accepted by all other super-ego countenances causing “opposition between apparently or actually incompatible forces” (Rycroft, 1995: 22). Competing values and goals or incongruity among various aspects of the super-ego also create ambiguity and ambivalence, resulting in the ego’s inability to meet all demands simultaneously:

“Nevertheless, its orders cannot be obeyed at once… They are carried out bit by bit... Why this compromise by which the command of reality is carried out piecemeal should be so extraordinarily painful is not at all easy to explain in terms of economics. It is remarkable that this painful unpleasure is taken as a matter of course by us” (Freud, 1984b: 253).

Freud subsequently argued that the ego is narcissistically drawn to the ego-ideal – “The target of the self-love” (Freud, 1984a: 88). In using the term ‘narcissism’, Freud (1984a) suggested that an individual “is not willing to forgo the narcissistic perfection of his childhood (and) … seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego-ideal. What he projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal” (p. 88). It is the recognition, approval and love from the early experiences with parents that leaves the individual in a situation where the capacity for self-love is enhanced if not largely dependent upon significant others approving of their behavior. This is a quest for normal narcissism; and not the pathological condition that is an exaggerated concern for power and self. Normal narcissism, in its healthy progressive sense, is a quest for wholeness and perfection the ego seeks to maintain once again fortifying past paradigms because we fall in love with them and because we do not want to fall out of love with them in order to love something else.
Experiences of pleasure and unpleasure are also connected to psychodynamic release of instinctual impulses from the id resulting from the ego’s effective and ineffective management. So, another lamina of dominance and negation concerns the interrelationship between the ego and the id. Within the id are two antagonistic and dialectically related classes of instinct, Eros and Thanatos (Carr, 2003b, 2003c). Eros, is represented by extemporization for life (sex) and self-preservation. Eros’s adversary, Thanatos (Jones, 1957: 295), is an assemblage of destructive expressions (Carr, 2003b, 2003c; Freud, 1984c, 1984a). By following the strictures set by the super-ego in combination with using memory, perception, and logic, it is the ego’s responsibility to manage for psychostructural equilibrium. The ego seeks to maintain moral stability and equilibrium such that Eros and Thanatos are “fused, blended, and alloyed with each other” (Freud, 1984a: 381) to cancel each other’s energies before either ascends to break cultural rules. A healthy mind supports the “maintenance of a modulated repression that allows gratification while at the same time preventing primitive sexual and aggressive impulses from taking over” (Mitchell & Black, 1995: 19). Although constantly seeking expression, Eros and Thanatos are subject to repressive dynamics, employed by the ego (and demanded by the super-ego) to an extent that does harm neither to the self nor to others in society. Therefore, through internalization of cultural convention, a worldview is developed that shapes and bridles instinctual operationalization (Carr, 2003a, 2003b). Interdependent work conducted among these substructures creates self-concept including self-love, self-respect, self-esteem, and self-efficacy that together build a paradigm of how the world should function. The emergent property of this labor is the formation of equilibrium as well as consequences of choosing the same aspects of identity and being influenced by others’ identities serving to minimize transformation and to maximize unbreakable and almost closed boundaries that characterize closed systems.

Competing values and goal incongruity among various aspects of the external world create ambiguity and ambivalence. The result is the ego’s inability to meet all super-ego demands simultaneously. For the sake of efficiency, principles are adjusted too quickly, so reflexivity is sacrificed and the consequence is internalization of substandard best worst and worst best principles in a poor exchange for what is perceived to be ideal. Each occurrence of synchronistic failure causes the sacrifice of one agent to satisfy another, generating moral anxiety (Badcock, 1988). The ego is now forced to reconsider the ego-ideal, which leads to diminishment of self-love that can register feelings of depression (Lind, 1991). Such intrapersonal conflict generates shame and guilt, inwardly turned acts of aggression or masochism further characterized by “a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment” (Freud, 1984b: 252). This is the paradox of interpretation. To interpret the external world in a manner that does not conform to natural, rationalist, and formative teleologies is to change meaning into an anxiety – a death-fear that negates transformation. Before the ego can reattach to something new, it must disengage itself from that vestige of the ‘old’ ego-ideal, otherwise, there is no room for different perceptions. Without proper disengagement, there will be reiterations of short-term changes with fallbacks to original ideology as the death instinct moves to cancel the life instinct’s energy. The corollary is that while the death instinct induces self-sabotage to free one from other-organization, if left to its own devices, it can become a form of psychological suicide that can lead to more serious degenerative behaviors.

In an attempt to terminate identity dissolution and to protect the ego-ideal or idealized mental model, the ego turns on the prohibitive aspect of the super-ego and the outside world. Self-concept deterioration allows the ego to continue mismanagement of the id that results in sadism, a phenomenon of outwardly directed masochism. Sadism is a drive to expel or project shame and guilt, ranging in behaviors from subliminal demonstrations of avoidance and separation to blaming to overt, aggressive physical acts. To arrest feelings of dissolution, these are examples of ways and means to feed the illusion that one has the will to power or that one can control externality (Carr, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; see also Klein 1975a, 1975b, 1975c, 1975d). While seeking to adapt to changes from the outside world, the ego may continually separate itself from ascribed beliefs, but then perpetually reattach to similar but different aspects of the super-ego, which eliminates lasting change. In these cases, the death instinct assumes the form of repetitive compulsion expressed as reiterations of masochism, again, likely awaiting transposition into outwardly turned sadistic behaviors. As purely an instinct of destruction, Thanatos is not an agent for long lasting change and paradigmatic transformation.

The topography is a complex adaptive system that operates relatively close to certainty. While an individual is alive, a worldview is really one’s story that develops through predictable interpretation within natural, rationalist, and formative teleologies. For Freud, Thanatos is first a detriment to change and transformation in that its mission is to drive life backward into an inanimate state. Second, it is the usurper of paradigmatic change or transformation in that through repetitive compulsion, no real change has occurred in the first place. When adaptation to the outside world is required to survive, the death instinct arises to maintain the status quo. Third, the repression of Eros is doubled; once by the super-ego’s pressure on the ego to bury both the death and the life instincts deeper into the unconscious; and then by Thanatos’s own accidence over Eros. The consequence is that Eros, as an agent of transformation, is less likely to surface to minimize fear of identity loss. This creates uncertainty that impedes self-efficacy and reinforces repetition of known behaviors. Deep repression of Eros establishes feelings of total identity dissolution through identity assimilation. According to Freud, in one form or another, life always breaks into death.

The death instinct in transformation: Spielrein’s story

Through application of biological, historical, and mythological tenets to interpret patients’ discussions, Sabina Spielrein formed the view that during acts of seeking pleasure – specifically, the sexual act – along with feelings of joy and excitement there also
Spielrein resolved that thoughts about death are an ever-present component in the sexual instinct itself. Moreover, Spielrein shaped, simultaneously, but in a destructive-reconstructive event: the choices and aspirations of wider society; meaning causation of recalibration of mental models is due to repeated risk. However, even under conditions of similarity, not all change is avoidable. In order for the ego to survive, it must also unpleasure. Therefore, the tendency is to gravitate toward least change environments and agents to mitigate uncertainty and of maintaining pleasure. That is, individuals first seek out situations that are not so different to cause unwarranted unknowns or uncertain qualities and affects. For the parents this triggers another lamina of uncharted egoistic sacrifice, which again parallels the emergence of the death instinct:

“During reproduction, a union of female and male cells occurs. The unity of each cell thus is destroyed and from the product of this destruction, new life originates. In more highly organized multicellular organisms, the whole individual will obviously not be destroyed during the sexual act. However, the fewer number of germ cells comprising the reproductive unit are not merely indifferent elements of the organism. They are intimately associated with the entire life of the individual” (Spielrein, 1994: 156).

From an interpretation of Jung’s (1916; see also 1956) work on fear of trusting in fate, Spielrein concluded that with the instinctual needs to reproduce and for self-preservation, there also came the dread of creating something that could not be entirely predicted or known. To reiterate, in one regard Spielrein believed that the sexual act fused male and female germ cells such that the partners are forced into one another (Spielrein, 1994). This sensation of engulfment simultaneously leads to the partial dissolution of both individuals in biological and psychical terms. Partial dissolution is analogous to invocation of the death instinct because parts of each identity have been sacrificed thereby transforming the progenitors, but in ways that cannot be assessed at the time of or even soon after transformation – transformation is unpredictable. Another consideration is that the result of the sexual act creates a new being who is also an unknown and who will bring with it, other and more unknown and uncertain qualities and affects. For the parents this triggers another lamina of uncharted egoistic sacrifice, which again parallels the emergence of the death instinct:

“And what does this signify for the ego-particle? Is it not death? A new, perhaps more beautiful, form of the content appears; however, it still is not the original ego-particle. It is another content, originating at the expense of the former” (Spielrein, 1994: 163).

In another exposition, Spielrein also concluded that during the sexual act, there were immanent feelings of doubt and trepidation about the quality of life risked for transformation. Ostensibly, to mask the disappointment of the cessation of the pleasurable event there is uncertainty about the benefit of the sexual act relative to the painful costs of self-worth such as; for the present and the future, was there an acceptable value exchange. Spielrein intimates that to varying degrees, these doubts may turn into fears of identity dissolution at every occurrence of pleasurable conquest, which increases both the quantity and intensity of positive and negative transformations.

By referring once again to Freud (1986a, 1986c), Spielrein concurred that humans’ tendencies are toward the maximization of pleasure and the minimization of displeasure. What humans may not fully understand is the dialectical relationship between the life and death instincts or that they are elements of mutual causation:

“Close to our desire to maintain our present condition, there lies a desire for transformation. A personal image-content, derived from material from times past, blends with a similar content and comes into being as a typical collective wish at the expense of the individual” (Spielrein, 1994: 163).

Spielrein ascertained that the ego’s goal of self-preservation, or the minimization of individual expense, is an important measure of maintaining pleasure. That is, individuals first seek out situations that are not so different to cause unwarranted unknowns or displeasure. Therefore, the tendency is to gravitate toward least change environments and agents to mitigate uncertainty and risk. However, even under conditions of similarity, not all change is avoidable. In order for the ego to survive, it must also conform to the choices and aspirations of wider society; meaning causation of recalibration of mental models is due to repeated acts of real or metaphorical sex with many aspects of the outside world, which is at the same time a pleasurable yet painful experience. Once again, paradigmatic change is a result of a form of partial death through which individual differentiation falls and assimilation or identity dissolution rises but in a larger group setting. Thus, the act of identity creation is also culturally shaped, simultaneously, but in a destructive-reconstructive event:

“The collective psyche wants to assimilate the more recently developed personal psyche while the ego – indeed every part of the ego – strives for self-preservation in its present form (inertia). The collective psyche denies the present ego and, directly through this denial, creates anew. The floundering ego-particle, inundated with new, more richly adorned images, begins to re-emerge” (Spielrein, 1994: 163).

Spielrein resolved that thoughts about death are an ever-present component in the sexual instinct itself. Moreover, Spielrein’s views on destructiveness were that it is not simply fueled by acts of hatred, but that destruction, as embodied by partial
dissolution, is a necessary requirement to allow the emergence of something new. At the same time, the pleasure of transformation parallels the pain of compromise so the dialectic of a life and death exchange is constructed and maintained: “A wish for self-injury, a joy in pain, is, however, thoroughly incomprehensible if we believe merely in the existence of an ego that only desires pleasure” (Spielrein, 1994: 160). To illustrate by paraphrasing a colloquial observation, the death of the chrysalides is necessary to give new life in the form of a butterfly. Spielrein’s conceptualizations are based upon change metamorphosis or change pain escalation that can only be achieved through punctuated equilibrium paced with periods of time to adequately mourn losses.

Spielrein’s emphasis is not on death per se, but on the destructive/dissolution component of the sexual instinct as something implicated in the service of transformation, which may be positive or negative. In the case of the latter, fear of the unknown and uncertainty result, implicating short-term change reactions rather than transformation. Transformation occurs when one is able to love and hate death at the same time while introjecting new physical and mental materials. Transformation, thus, is its own dialectic, which is conceptually more difficult to grasp. Transformation is the cause and the effect of partial identity dissolution required for identity development: “Death is horrible; yet death in the service of the sexual instinct, which includes a destructive component, is a salutary blessing since it leads to a coming into being” (Spielrein, 1994: 183). For Spielrein, life always breaks out of death.

Transformation, psychodynamics and story

The very act of saying what narrative is or what it is not, is to engage in systems change. “The very act of learning to speak efficiently, is an act of learning to do as someone else considers to be correct” (McKenzie & James, 2004: 37). While efficiency does play a part in the ‘correctness’ of story it is also the aspect of effectiveness that completes the rational paradigm. Since these terms already have been constructed, our story therefore is somewhere between beginning and end, both of which are known unknowns.

Storying creates, simultaneously, a felt need for change and resistance to change. For example, through stories of training and development the organization facilitates change resistance by asking its employees to stop loving it or at least parts of it. The organization is actually asking that their employees ‘kill off’ parts of the ego-ideal and therefore the request is akin to organizational suicide. The more the organization changes, the more it is likely that less and less of what was originally loved will remain. It is possible to understand resistance to change only if one understands what is at risk of being changed, in both the short and the long term. Thus, to be effective in complexity, change leaders need to predict, recognize, and work through paradox and ambiguity (Sheard & Kakabadse, 2002).

Storytelling and storyselling are two phases in the process of storying. Storytelling is a projection of what the storyteller wants to tell. Just because a story is told, it does not mean some, all, or any of it has been introjected by all or any of its intended audience. This stability maintenance occurs when the ego does not allow Eros and Thanatos to break out of the id. Or, it occurs when Eros and Thanatos cover for each other so quickly, it seems as though neither was ever privileged. Under normal conditions and over time, where one immigrates the other emigrates canceling each other’s energies so eventually, equilibrium is reached. For Freud, this state of being was symbolized by the closed system of Nirvana (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988: 272-273). Equilibrium is the cornerstone of psychodynamic stability.

On the other hand, storyselling is based upon the dialectic of projective identification and introjective identification. It is meant to trigger some type of wanted behavior through “cues to manage how much of the story is told, how much is left to the imagination, and what interpretation is applied” (Boje, 1991: 124; see also Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). Storyselling upsets equilibrium, but only to certain degrees that are acceptable to the organization, but not necessarily the employee. Storyselling, or “systemic story making not only elaborates a manager’s ability to engage a situation, it increases the resources a manager has for manipulating others” (Barge, 2004: 116). “If organization is about anything it is about the interplay of stories that are retrospective sensemaking, and stories that are just spin” (Boje, in press). Storyselling is the process of repeating sets and subsets of textuality in context to achieve some purpose (i.e., to help someone laugh, to help someone learn, to meet the storyteller’s need to be heard; to be recognized). Storyselling is seen to work when it causes wanted and unwanted behaviors by the storified or those who have been storied.

Storyselling is a tool that facilitates the dialectical pairing of projective identification and introjective identification to maintain normal narcissism. Storyselling creates a virtual experiencing of the consequences of psychodynamic influences on decision making through stories and morals of others (Durrance, 1997; Kim, 1993). To show understanding, empathy, sympathy is to recognize and be recognized by other; it is to feel ‘safe’ from being able to interpret the other(Carr, 2003c; Carr & Lapp, 2006; Hegel, 1977; Lapp & Carr, in press) When the individual’s interpretation is disrupted, there is experienced a feeling of identity dissolution and heightened death-fear anxiety because the ego-ideal, with which there was identification and transference, is in the process of Erosion (Amrdt, et al, 1997; Crocker, 2002; Solomon, et al, 1998, 2003; Webb, 1998). Organizations that protect employees against such death-fear are, paradoxically, protected by those employees even if those organizations caused the death-fear because employees are in a state of death-fear(Becker, 1997; Solomon, et al., 1998, 2003). It is a story that has a beginning, a middle and end that has no beginning, middle and end. There are no separations between the self and what the self loves – the organization there becomes a closed system. Where the organization's Eros matches the Thanatos of its
employees, there is created the tensionless state of Nirvana. In terms of psychodynamic development, Nirvana is to equilibrium as Chaos is to emergence and transformation.

Storytelling can also trigger emergence. To emerge is “to become manifest or known” and “to survive a difficult or unpleasant experience” (Allen, 2003: 454). Emergence can be a chaotic or painful experience (Alford, 1994; Meuser & Lapp, 2004) because the process of survival is the process of compromise or partial identity dissolution (Spielrein, 1994). Without knowing the full ending of the story, the individual must be separated from portions of idealized, yet outdated, paradigms or truths from which wholeness or identity was originally constructed (Alford, 1988; Carr, 1994; Lasch, 1979). The _Erosion_ of the ego-ideal triggers infantile memories of separation from the parental image. This, in turn, generates vulnerability, uncertainty, and anxiety that initiates feelings of identity dissolution or annihilation (West, 2004). The ego’s now punctured boundary allows _Thanatos_ to emerge creating destructive energy that feels chaotic (Ogden, 1980, 1982, 1989).

Psychodynamically, open boundaries are the periodic unrepression of instincts when the ego is triggered to mismanage the id. Teetering on the edge of chaos unlocks the unconscious and reconstructs the conscious to trigger emergence, or a state of becoming that opens closed structural boundaries (Sherman & Schultz, 1998). Such mismanagement can only occur with effective self and other leadership and reflexivity and punctuated equilibrium that is punctuated with the appropriate mourning of losses. It is this destructive energy that is required to trigger disequilibrating equilibrium required to effect and affect stories of transformation (Spielrein, 1994). This is storying that is at the same time storytelling and storyselling; narrative antenarrative.

_Eros_ and _Thanatos_ have a dialectical relationship (Carr 2003c; Carr & Lapp, 2005a, 2005b, in press; Hegel, 1977; Lapp & Carr, 2005a, 2005b, in press). What _Thanatos_ destructs, _Eros_ can reconstruct to a new level so equilibrium and emergence facilitate organizational identity transformations:

> “Stories are alchemy. They are medicine, healing, mystery, paradox, power, and many other things, allowing us to feel, taste, touch, hear, and see the stories around us. They are chaos, order, complexity. Stories are fractals. They are necessary, basic, and dangerous in that they can’t be controlled by our striving intellects. They are the container, the elements, the process, and the trigger of transformation” (Cory & Underwood, 1995: 129).

_Spielrein’s synthesis of biological and psychological posit_ points to another version of identity dissolution in the storified that are psychosomatics or the body’s reactions to the psyche’s influences (e.g., ulcers, Rycroft, 1995). There is mutual causation of pleasure and unpleasure, which cannot be avoided and, depending upon the strength of the individual’s constitution, it is just as likely that pleasure will terminate in negative psychological and physical transformation as it will positive. Organizational change is simultaneously storying and unstorying that together are transformative. Negative transformation is likely to occur when the ‘rules’ of complexity are manipulated in ways that sacrifice effectiveness for efficiency.

Organizations are likely to violate primary rules of complexity (Letiche, 2000). First, in trying to use organizational change practices to substitute for those that are required for transformation, organizations use simple constructs to interpret and effect ones that are exceedingly more complex. The second violation is to set boundaries around parts; not to describe them, but to manipulate their predictability. With the conjunctions of _Eros_, _Thanatos_, and identity transformation we have found there is a third violation. This is to assume that mutual causality is a remedy for inefficiency. Yes, in complexity, many ‘things’ happen at the same time. This does not mean that many psychodynamic and physical changes can be forced to happen at the same time. To ‘use’ mutual causation and paradox is to leverage transformation. Those who have been storied are through interpretation, looking for meaning. If there is incommensurability among theories, there is also no room for them within the confines of complexity theory. Sadly then, the search for meaning within the story is not based upon _how_ we look (Lissack, 1996) but _how_ we are allowed to look.

### Breaking the rules

In this paper, the first thing we do is take full responsibility in the breaking of one of the rules of complexity science, which is to study complex adaptive systems to see what happens rather than what should happen (Zimmerman, et al., 2001). We have told you stories about what should and should not happen when an organization’s more powerful representatives, leaders and managers, attempt to use their stories to privilege other-organization over self-organization. In so doing, we also broke the rule of truly supporting individual reflexivity that underscores self-organization in complexity. By explaining many details of complexity theory we solved problems for others that with time, effort and desire are to be interpreted by each individual: “The tendency for action-oriented managers is to plunge in and fix perceived contradiction” (Meuser & Lapp, 2004: 317), which is
what one should not do if the goal is to have employees learn how to self-organize to solve their own problems. The next thing we did is break the rule that says one should only “communicate ideas through our experiences, our stories. But we do not conceptualize them through experience” (Sherman & Schultz, 1998: 97, italics our emphasis). Our aim was to conceptualize ideas using psychodynamic theory to illustrate aspects of complexity theory.

“A psychodynamic approach also recognizes that through the world of work, people pursue many different conscious and unconscious aims that have a complexity and a dynamic quality that much of the ‘motivational’ theories that are taught in management schools fail to recognize. This embrace of psychodynamics is less about a search for ‘facts’ but for an understanding of underlying motivations and the meaning of human behavior and experiences” (Carr & Lapp, 2006).

So, we indeed based theory on experience, which means we broke a third rule – or, we broke the second rule twice. This is to have the audacity to say that theory is really story and story can become theory. In a nutshell, we believe part of complexity theory praxis is to responsibly deconstruct stories that tell us that one type of theory is better than another, when in fact, they work together to cause positive and negative transformation. Between life and death, it’s the same old story of learning how who breaks out to work together with what.

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