~~How Organizational Studies are Carried on the Shoulders of a Giant like John Cage and the post-Cage Developments in Music?~~
~~Or~~
~~A Non-positivistic Approach to Positive Theories in Organization: The Contribution of John Cage's Thought[1]~~

Letting Things Happen: John Cage as a Giant of Organizational Studies

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Abstract

This article explores the influence of avant-garde composer John Cage (1912–1992) on organizational studies, proposing that his work provides a rich source for understanding organizational theory. Cage's concepts – such as indeterminacy, silence, process orientation, experimentation, active involvement, and feedback – offer alternative methods for studying organizations, indicating that the sources of organizational knowledge can extend beyond economics and management to incorporate ancient disciplines like music and philosophy. Rather than metaphorically

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[1] Writing, much like punctuation in Cage's work, is a central feature of his thought, as we will explore in the following pages. In 1988, Cage listened with great curiosity to James Tenney's 'Critical Band,' a piece in which a long-held note is exchanged among various instruments and expanded in a microtonal context. Yet, a decade earlier, Cage had already begun to compose texts he referred to as 'subtractions,' which are based on the partial ~~erasure of pre-existing material~~. This process of thought and practice is evident in Cage's later works, such as the late 18th-century American hymns and chorales in *Apartment House 1776* for orchestra and solo voices (1976), which he composed alongside *Quartets I-VIII* for orchestra (1976–1978) and *Hymns and Variations* for 12 amplified solo voices (1976–1979).

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applying musical principles, the article directly examines how Cage's aesthetic principles that guide both his music compositions and his conference lectures can serve as a foundation for organizational dynamics. By treating sound and silence as organizational tools, Cage's work encourages a shift from traditional structures toward embracing indeterminacy and uncertainty within organizations. In doing so, it highlights that the organizational dimension lacks any predetermined objective but rather *happens.* Concluding with an "open mic" view of organizational theory, the study advocates for a broader, more experimental approach to organizational knowledge and emphasizes an evolving, responsive practice that mirrors Cage's own innovative legacy.

Keywords

John Cage, uncertainty, indeterminacy.

This article explores how the eclectic and multifaceted work of John Cage (1912–1992), although primarily recognized for his impact on music as a composer, can indeed be considered as making a fundamental contribution to organizational studies. Cage's work introduces various organizing mechanisms by engaging with concepts like indeterminacy, silent organizing, process orientation, experimentation, attentive listening, and feedback. Building an organizing theory on the shoulders of a figure initially celebrated within avant-garde artistic circles raises essential questions about the sources of organizational knowledge as a construct of research. We argue that Cage's work allows us to move in two convergent directions. On the one hand, it confronts us with the fact that the ancient constructs of music and philosophy can indeed serve as sources of organizational knowledge (Sicca, 2012), standing alongside the economics and management-based knowledge typical of *American business schools.* On the other, Cage's work highlights the fundamentally organizational dimension of sound when that sound *makes itself* music – and the *logos makes itself* philosophy – through a coding process that is social by definition. As Cage's compositions vividly demonstrate, this organizational dimension lacks any predetermined objective but rather *happens.* In the following pages, we will thus refrain from using music simply as a metaphor to discuss organizational dynamics. We will rather consider sound itself as an *organizing force.* Accordingly, we will analyze Cage's compositions and lectures – constructed according to the same principles that he used in composing music – and connect them with "substantiated" organizational theories. Thus, we will underscore the innovative and seminal contributions of the American composer's work.

In the following sections, after a brief biographical note, we will discuss five concepts that guide organizing – silent organizing, indeterminacy, process orientation, active engagement, and feedback – as we move forward through the prism of John Cage, drawing on both his theoretical and practical methods. In the conclusion, we will treat the act of *making* organizational theorizing as an *open microphone*, capturing the temporal and spatial dimensions of the present world, while also imagining the future. We will propose the section as a Cagean text – as well as quotes within the article – structured in four parallel columns, with themes juxtaposing and overlapping in an indeterminate way, using font inspired by Cage himself.[5] This method,

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[5]   This font, based on Cage's handwriting and sketches, has been produced by P22 Type Foundry in conjunction with The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and the John Cage Trust: https://p22.com/fonts/cage/

which recalls the approach of *writing differently* organizational studies (Boncori, 2022; Kostera, 2022), aligns with John Cage's legacy and interrogates the sources of organizational knowledge.

(Auto)biographical Notes

American composer, music theorist, artist, and philosopher John Cage (1912–1992) is remembered as a defining figure of the twentieth-century avant-garde, primarily due to his innovative and unconventional approach to music and sound. Born in the United States to an inventor father and a journalist mother, Cage learned to play the piano and discovered that composing interested him more than performing. He attended Pomona College in Claremont, California, but later left to go to Europe:

> IN EUROPE, AFTER BEING KICKED IN THE SEAT OF MY PANTS BY JOSÉ PIJOAN FOR MY STUDY OF FLAMBOYANT GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE AND INTRODUCED BY HIM TO A MODERN ARCHITECT WHO SET ME TO WORK DRAWING GREEK CAPITALS, DORIC, IONIC, AND CORINTHIAN, I BECAME INTERESTED IN MODERN MUSIC AND MODERN PAINTING. ONE DAY I OVERHEARD THE ARCHITECT SAYING TO SOME GIRL FRIENDS, "IN ORDER TO BE AN ARCHITECT, ONE MUST DEVOTE ONE'S LIFE TO ARCHITECTURE." I THEN WENT TO HIM AND SAID I WAS LEAVING BECAUSE I WAS INTERESTED IN OTHER THINGS THAN ARCHITECTURE (CAGE, 1990).

While in Europe, Cage connected with the artistic avant-garde, discovering the potential of experimental music. Upon his return to the United States, Cage became a student of Arnold Schönberg, studying dodecaphonic music, though Schönberg's teachings primarily focused on the structural aspects of musical composition. In the 1930s and 1940s, Cage began experimenting with percussion and "aleatory music," where chance became an integral part of the musical process. Cage collaborated with choreographers like Merce Cunningham, with whom he had both significant professional and personal relationships. This collaboration emphasized the interplay between music and dance, while still maintaining the independence of each artistic language.

Eastern thought, particularly Zen Buddhism, deeply influenced Cage, which led him to reconsider conventional notions of what "music" was or was not. His inventions, such as "prepared instruments," in which altered musical instruments produced distinct sounds, later became a common practice in contemporary music following Cage's example. Between 1946 and 1948, he composed *Sonatas and interludes* for prepared piano, his best-known work in this area. Around the same time, Cage began to explore what would become the central theme of his artistic inquiry – the relationship between chance and indeterminacy. In addition to his study of Eastern philosophy and the *I Ching*, an ancient Chinese text of divination, a pivotal experience for this exploration was his time in an anechoic chamber, a room built to be completely soundproof and devoid of echoes. At the time, only two such chambers existed: one at Harvard University and the other at IRCAM in Paris. As Cage himself recounted:

> IN THE LATE FORTIES I FOUND OUT BY EXPERIMENT (I WENT INTO THE ANECHOIC CHAMBER AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY) THAT SILENCE IS NOT ACOUSTIC. IT IS A CHANGE OF MIND, A TURNING AROUND. I DEVOTED MY MUSIC TO IT. MY WORK BECAME AN EXPLORATION OF NON-INTENTION. TO

CARRY IT OUT FAITHFULLY I HAVE DEVELOPED A COMPLICATED COMPOSING MEANS USING I CHING CHANCE OPERATIONS, MAKING MY RESPONSIBILITY THAT OF ASKING QUESTIONS INSTEAD OF MAKING CHOICES (CAGE, 1990).

His approach to chance and non-intentionality also influenced the visual arts, as evidenced by collaborations with artists like Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns; dance, with Merce Cunningham; and, more broadly, contemporary conceptual and performance art, which emphasizes the creative process over the final product.

Cage's work expresses fundamental organizational issues in terms of silent organizing, indeterminacy, process orientation, experimentation, active involvement, and feedback. We will explore each of these in more detail in the following sections.

Silent Organizing

One of John Cage's most famous works is *4'33"* (1952), a composition where the performer seemingly does not play any instrument, thereby emphasizing silence and ambient sounds. The score instructs the performer not to produce any sound for the entire duration of the piece. In its first public performance on August 29, 1952, the pianist David Tudor – long-time collaborator of Cage – sat at the piano, opened the keyboard cover, and immediately closed it. He repeated this gesture twice more, indicating two additional "movements" as (not) instructed in the score, for a total duration of four minutes and 33 seconds, or 273 seconds. During the first movement, the audience heard the wind blowing, during the second movement – the sound of rain, and during the third – murmurs from bewildered people attending the event, some of whom stood up and left in indignation.

Figure 1. The Score of 4'33"
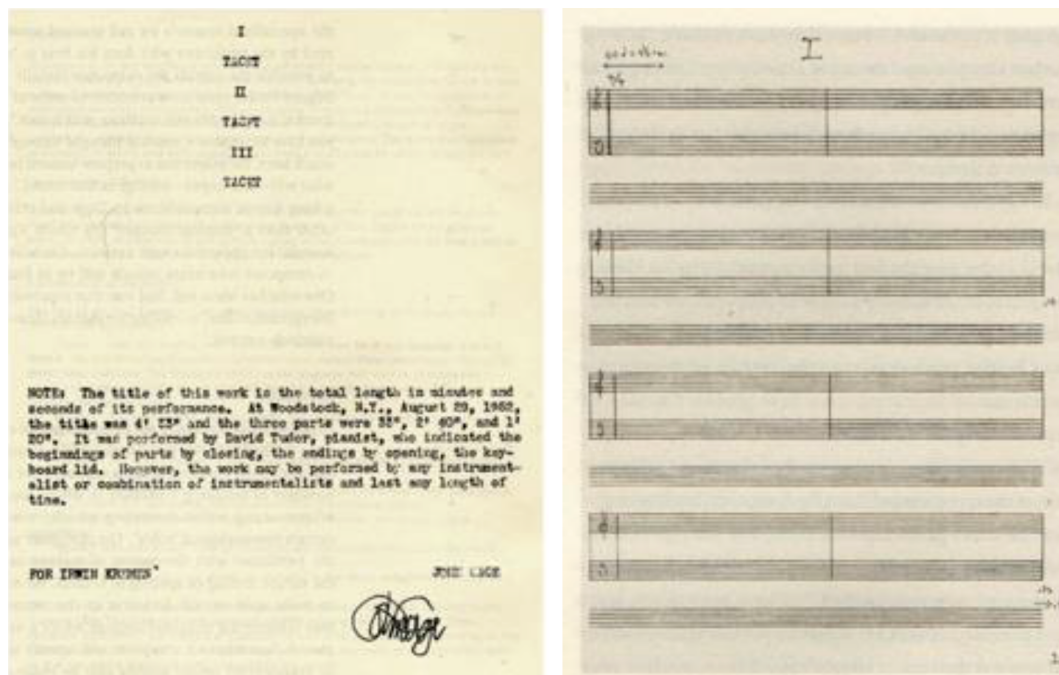
4'33" explores silence and attentive listening, inviting profound reflection. Through this piece, Cage shifts focus to non-musical sound, foregrounding the multitude of sounds that make up the listening experience in a concert hall, thereby granting significance to what is typically relegated to noise or interference and purposefully masked by specific organizing devices regulating the concert experience. According to Cage, the composition is intended to comprise the sounds in the performance space, thus allowing the listener to experience the importance of the surrounding environment, which they often overlook (Diana, Sicca, & Turaccio, 2017; Kostelanetz, 2003). Cage asserts that "ABSOLUTE SILENCE DOES NOT EXIST" and that even in an ostensibly silent environment, one can still perceive sounds like breathing, bodily noises, and ambient sounds (Diana, Sicca, & Turaccio, 2017; Kostelanetz, 2003).

The previously mentioned experience from 1951, when Cage entered an anechoic chamber at Harvard University, seems to reflect the above insight. Recounted briefly here, this experience would later resurface in Cage's life in the 1970s at IRCAM in Paris and is a prelude to the composition *4' 33"*:

> I ENTERED ONE AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY SEVERAL YEARS AGO AND HEARD TWO SOUNDS, ONE HIGH AND ONE LOW. WHEN I DESCRIBED THEM TO THE ENGINEER IN CHARGE, HE INFORMED ME THAT THE HIGH ONE WAS MY NERVOUS SYSTEM IN OPERATION, THE LOW ONE MY BLOOD IN CIRCULATION (CAGE, 1961, P. 8).

Furthermore, the composition confronts listeners with the discomfort produced by an unusual form of listening that should be re-embraced, as Cage suggests (Cage, 1961). Sound is constantly around us. Silence does not exist, except as a borderline concept, shifting the focus from the given, structured content provided to the listener to listening as an exploratory act – a mix of noting, distinguishing, recognizing, and understanding.

> FORMERLY, SILENCE WAS THE TIME LAPSE BETWEEN SOUNDS, USEFUL TOWARDS A VARIETY OF ENDS, AMONG THEM THAT OF TASTEFUL ARRANGEMENT ... OR THAT OF EXPRESSIVITY ... WHERE NONE OF THESE OR OTHER GOALS IS PRESENT, SILENCE BECOMES SOMETHING ELSE - NOT SILENCE AT ALL, BUT SOUNDS, THE AMBIENT SOUNDS ... WHERE THESE EARS ARE IN CONNECTION WITH A MIND THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO, THAT MIND IS FREE TO ENTER INTO THE ACT OF LISTENING EACH SOUND JUST AS IT IS, NOT AS A PHENOMENON MORE OR LESS APPROXIMATING A PRECONCEPTION (CAGE, 1961, PP. 22-23).

In its literal sense, silence would imply the absence of noise, facilitating rest, introspection, and mental clarity (Bigo, 2018). This interpretation shows how music might be likened to gravity (Styhre, 2013): the latter pulls bodies toward the ground, while the former draws sound toward silence. Or, as Cage put it in his renowned *Lecture on something*: "EVERY SOMETHING IS AN ECHO OF NOTHING" (Cage, 1961, p. 131). Therefore, for Cage, silence does not mean the absence of noise but rather a condition that allows noise to emerge. While noise is typically removed or controlled through various organizational strategies, such as masking, censoring, absorbing, etc. (Attali, 1985; Kaulingfreks, 2010), silence creates an organizational short circuit that liberates noise from these constraints. If silence brings about a reduction of literal or figurative noise, it thus creates space for something other and new to emerge in its place – it becomes a creative source. For this reason, just like organizations, silence does not exist as such, but only exists in the process of *making itself* sound, noise, or else.

Nonetheless, we might juxtapose a rationalist view of silence, which sees its listening as adding nothing to the absence of sound (King, 2007), with a perspective that interprets listening to silence as part of a design that is neither normative nor affirmative. This perspective also reflects a cultural view of silence, contrasting, for instance, the American discomfort with prolonged silence in conversation with the Asian appreciation of silence as a source of knowledge (Mehrabian, 1981; Bass, & Avolio, 1994).

However, the way in which we understand sound and silence in management and organizational studies is often prescribed or simply taken for granted. Listening plays a crucial role in organizations, both in formal and informal settings. Scholars have examined the role of sound in workplaces (Bizjak & Sicca, 2017; Sicca, 2000; Prichard, Korczynski, & Elmes, 2007; Bathurst, 2010; Brown *et al.*, 2020; Napolitano *et al.*, 2024), focusing on topics such as the effect of music on work performance (Koivunen, 2002) and the so-called "psychosonic management" (Corbett, 2003). Corbett highlights how social organization intrinsically links to the dimension of sound: from timekeeping, traditionally marked by auditory signals like bells, through the signaling of danger through alarms, to the topological and residential organization of social stratification. Along these lines, Kaulingfreks (2010) notes that the placement of "top management" closely ties to the pursuit of silence, which thus becomes a true privilege and status symbol. Styhre (2013) proposes a sociomaterial framework for exploring how music enables action in workplaces, noting that the line between noise and silence is far from objective, and is rather sociomaterially constructed through discourses and artifacts. The construction of silence as a condition of asociality and isolation, typical of contemporary times, goes hand-in-hand with a specific approach to workplace organization, where the "fabrication" of a non-silent soundscape becomes increasingly important. Following Cage, if silence consists of the sounds and noises that we ignore, these organizational strategies reveal an underlying idea of order as the removal of the unexpected and the indeterminate – precisely the notion that Cage opposes.

In this sense, Cage's work on silence sheds light on crucial aspects of organizing, both in terms of the organizational strategies for constructing and removing silence (Brown *et al.*, 2020; Napolitano *et al.*, 2024a) and the organizational power that silence itself, once reclaimed, wields over bodies and behaviors. The call for attentive listening and valuing the surrounding context inspires organizational studies to consider silence – its construction, perception, and narration – as an essential part of organizing.

Indeterminacy

Indeterminacy is a concept very dear to John Cage's philosophy. He inherited it from Eastern philosophy and used it as an inspiring principle in his musical compositions, literary production, and lectures. Commenting on the text that he wrote for a 1958 lecture, conceived as a random set of stories each lasting one minute, he states:

> MY INTENTION IN PUTTING THE STORIES TOGETHER IN AN UNPLANNED WAY WAS TO SUGGEST THAT ALL THINGS-STORIES, INCIDENTAL SOUNDS FROM THE ENVIRONMENT, AND, BY EXTENSION, BEINGS – ARE RELATED, AND THAT THIS COMPLEXITY IS MORE EVIDENT WHEN IT IS NOT OVERSIMPLIFIED BY AN IDEA OF RELATIONSHIP IN ONE PERSON'S MIND (CAGE, 1961, P. 260).

By pursuing indeterminacy, Cage seems to question the possibility that a form, a formula, and a model pre-exist and guide the reality of happening, which is in fact necessarily characterized by a certain amount of randomness. In this way, he shifts the focus from *doing* to *accepting* what happens. This approach – which we can find in many of his compositions, but also in the way he composed lectures – calls into question the relationship between *managing* and *letting it happen*. To what extent does organizing mean directing action, and to what extent does it mean avoiding directing or managing too much to create conditions for something to happen? (Czarniawska, 2014; Napolitano & Sicca, 2021).

Organizational studies consider uncertainty an inevitable component of organizing (Argyris & Schön, 1978; March, 1991). Uncertainty does not constitute merely a challenge to be managed but an integral part of decision-making and organizational learning. Organizations thrive when they develop strategies to manage and harness this uncertainty, rather than attempting to eliminate it entirely.

The form of organizing that Cage implements in his indeterminate compositions highlights an additional aspect: it is both about accepting and generating uncertainty. Cage reflects this idea in his music through elements of chance and indeterminacy. He introduced the use of the *I Ching*, an ancient Chinese divination text, as a method for determining the notes, rhythms, and other characteristics of his compositions, rendering his works largely unpredictable (Pritchett, 1996). This approach not only challenged traditional musical conventions but also exemplified a way to embrace uncertainty as a source of creativity and innovation.

The prepared piano technique serves as another significant example of Cage's use of indeterminacy. In this method, objects such as bolts, rubber erasers, and pieces of plastic are inserted between the piano strings, altering the timbre and sound of the instrument in unpredictable ways (Perloff & Junkerman, 1994). Each preparation is unique and produces unexpected sonic results, adding an additional layer of chance and indeterminacy to the performance.

Cage also employed unconventional graphic notation that requires performers to make interpretive decisions during the performance. This form of notation breaks from traditional musical notation and introduces an element of indeterminacy, as each performer may interpret the symbols differently (Nyman, 1999). An example of an indeterminate composition, *Imaginary landscape no. 4* (1951) is composed for 12 radios and 24 performers, where the score provides only indications for timbre (radio tuning) and amplitude (volume). The *I Ching* method of coin tossing, with three coins tossed six times, determines the dynamic and timbral movements of each radio. Thus, the composition's indeterminacy arises from two specific factors: on the one hand, the unpredictability of the compositional structure achieved through the coin toss, and on the other, the unpredictability of the radio broadcasts that are tuned into with each performance of the piece.

These elements of chance and indeterminacy reflect the intrinsic uncertainty of Cage's creative process, thus resonating with March's ideas (1991) on the importance of navigating uncertainty within organizations. Moreover, they open up perspectives on organizing as an indeterminate practice itself (Sicca, 2013). The acceptance and management of uncertainty can lead to new discoveries and innovations, both in the artistic and organizational realms. However, the active production of indeterminacy informs organizational theory concerning the very essence of organizing, framing it not merely as management but as an existential dimension that finds one of its expressions in the act of organizing.

The non-dualistic nature that Cage attributed to indeterminacy is key to understand this concept and its inherently organizational implications.

TO ENSURE INDETERMINACY WITH RESPECT TO ITS PERFORMANCE, A COMPOSITION MUST BE DETER-
MINATE OF ITSELF. IF THIS INDETERMINACY IS TO HAVE A NON-DUALISTIC NATURE, EACH ELEMENT
OF THE NOTATION MUST HAVE A SINGLE INTERPRETATION RATHER THAN A PLURALITY OF INTER-
PRETATIONS WHICH, COMING FROM A SINGLE SOURCE, FALL INTO RELATION. ... DETERMINACY WHEN
PRESENT IN THE MAKING OF AN OBJECT, AND WHEN THEREFORE VIEWED DUALISTICALLY, IS A SIGN
NOT OF IDENTIFICATION WITH NO MATTER WHAT EVENTUALITY BUT SIMPLY OF CARELESSNESS
WITH REGARD TO THE OUTCOME (CAGE, 1961, P. 38).

The concept of indifference to outcome links Cage's thinking to organizational theories on emergent behaviors (Taylor & Van Every, 1999) and to those on space (Dale & Burrell, 2008). Taylor and Van Every (1999) employ the concept of "emergence," inherited from cybernetics (Wiener, 1954) and ecology (Bateson, 1991), to argue that organizations are not rigid structures but rather ongoing, evolving processes shaped by the daily interactions and discourse of their members. They propose a view in which communication functions as the very foundation of organizing: not merely a tool for coordinating work, but the "site" and "surface" where the act of organizing takes shape – where it, indeed, emerges. Their focus thus shifts from formal, determinate structures to the open and partially indeterminate social and linguistic dynamics that define an organization. Through this perspective, they analyze how narratives, conversations, and discourse continuously construct and reconstruct organizations, emphasizing the importance of shared interpretation and meaning. This view places a strong emphasis on fluidity and adaptability rather than on rigid hierarchies and formal procedures.

In his formulation of indeterminacy, Cage also highlights the spatial organization of musicians:

IN THE CASE, HOWEVER, OF THE PERFORMANCE OF MUSIC THE COMPOSITION OF WHICH IS INDETERMI-
NATE OF ITS PERFORMANCE SO THAT THE ACTION OF THE PLAYERS IS PRODUCTIVE OF A PROCESS, NO
HARMONIOUS FUSION OF SOUND IS ESSENTIAL. A NON-OBSTRUCTION OF SOUNDS IS OF THE ESSENCE.
THE SEPARATION OF PLAYERS IN SPACE WHEN THERE IS AN ENSEMBLE IS USEFUL TOWARDS BRINGING
ABOUT THIS NON-OBSTRUCTION AND INTERPENETRATION ... THE CONVENTIONAL ARCHITECTURE IS
OFTEN NOT SUITABLE (CAGE, 1961, PP. 39-40).

In this view, producing indeterminacy is not about managing but about *non-obstruction*, which becomes an organizational principle involving the space and the distribution of musicians (and sounds) within it (Napolitano & Sicca, 2021). Indeterminacy as an organizational principle does not so much find a metaphor as a material enactment in Cage's compositional work: sound that *makes itself* music is itself an act of organizing.

Process Orientation and Experimentation

Cage's work is fundamentally oriented toward exploring the compositional process prioritized over the outcome (which remains indeterminate, as we have seen). It constitutes an experimental endeavor that requires a shift in perspective:

AGAIN THERE IS A PARTING OF THE WAYS ... OR, AS BEFORE, ONE MAY GIVE UP THE DESIRE TO CONTROL
SOUND, CLEAR HIS MIND OF MUSIC, AND SET ABOUT DISCOVERING MEANS TO LET SOUNDS BE THEM-

SELVES RATHER THAN VEHICLES FOR MAN-MADE THEORIES OR EXPRESSIONS OF HUMAN SENTIMENTS (CAGE, 1961, P. 10).

Cage also adopted this approach for his theoretical work, which materialized in articles and conference lectures.

FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS I HAVE BEEN WRITING ARTICLES AND GIVING LECTURES. MANY OF THEM HAVE BEEN UNUSUAL IN FORM - THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE OF THE LECTURES - BECAUSE I HAVE EMPLOYED IN THEM MEANS OF COMPOSING ANALOGOUS TO MY COMPOSING MEANS IN THE FIELD OF MUSIC. MY INTENTION HAS BEEN, OFTEN, TO SAY WHAT I HAD TO SAY IN A WAY THAT WOULD EXEMPLIFY IT; THAT WOULD, CONCEIVABLY, PERMIT THE LISTENER TO EXPERIENCE WHAT I HAD TO SAY RATHER THAN JUST HEAR ABOUT IT (CAGE, 1969, P. IX).

The three lectures given in Darmstadt in 1958, grouped under the title *Composition as process*, effectively illustrate Cage's approach. Cage designed the first lecture, titled *Changes*, to mirror the structure of the composition *Music of changes*. Each line of text – spoken or silent – required one second to be read, so that the corresponding part of the musical composition would enter at each pause. *Music of changes* (1951) itself centers on process, leaving the outcome indeterminate. It is a piece for piano composed using the combinatory method of the *I Ching* to determine parameters such as duration, dynamics, and density. Here, the combinatory process gives meaning to the composition, highlighting the inherent complexity in each act of decision--making when faced with infinite possibilities. This compositional method, which Cage applies to both music and text, embodies an approach to organizing as a process. On the one hand, this method enters the process of *organizing time*, using metric structures to manage what happens in a certain time duration and applying this to the prose of a lecture;[6] as Cage says in his *Lecture on nothing*: "THIS SPACE OF TIME IS ORGANIZED" (Cage, 1961, p. 109). On the other hand, it *organizes decisions* on the basis of chance, exploring the extent to which purposed-oriented decisions are actually such.

THE VIEW TAKEN IS NOT OF AN ACTIVITY THE PURPOSE OF WHICH IS TO INTEGRATE THE OPPOSITES, BUT RATHER OF AN ACTIVITY CHARACTERIZED BY PROCESS AND ESSENTIALLY PURPOSELESS (CAGE, 1961, P. 22).

Decision-making is a quintessential organizational theme (Simon, 1947). In contrast to the multitude of theories that have linked decision-making to purpose, the originality of Cage's contribution lies in confronting the fundamental meaninglessness of any decision in relation to the purposeless flow of life. In fact, it seems important to emphasize that Cage's experimental approach draws on the reconfiguration of the relationship between means and ends, ultimately theorizing the absence of intent as a basic aspect of experimentation itself.

AND WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF WRITING MUSIC? ONE IS, OF COURSE, NOT DEALING WITH PURPOSES BUT DEALING WITH SOUNDS. OR THE ANSWER MUST TAKE THE FORM OF PARADOX: A PURPOSEFUL PURPO-SELESSNESS OR A PURPOSELESS PLAY. THIS PLAY, HOWEVER, IS AN AFFIRMATION OF LIFE - NOT

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6   Another meaningful example of this approach is the lecture *45' for a speaker*.

AN ATTEMPT TO BRING ORDER OUT OF CHAOS NOR TO SUGGEST IMPROVEMENTS IN CREATION, BUT SIMPLY A WAY OF WAKING UP TO THE VERY LIFE WE'RE LIVING, WHICH IS SO EXCELLENT ONCE ONE GETS ONE'S MIND AND ONE'S DESIRES OUT OF ITS WAY AND LETS IT ACT OF ITS OWN ACCORD (CAGE, 1961, P 12).

Figure 2. A page of the lecture Changes, in Cage (1961, p. 18)

The following three lectures were given at Darmstadt (Germany) in September 1958. The third one, with certain revisions, is a lecture given earlier that year at Rutgers University in New Jersey, an excerpt from which was published in the Village Voice, New York City, in April 1958.

COMPOSITION AS PROCESS
I. Changes

Having been asked by Dr. Wolfgang Steinecke, Director of the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik at Darmstadt, to discuss in particular my Music of Changes, I decided to make a lecture within the time length of the Music of Changes (each line of the text whether speech or silence requiring one second for its performance), so that whenever I would stop speaking, the corresponding part of the Music of Changes itself would be played. The music is not superimposed on the speech but is heard only in the interruptions of the speech—which, like the lengths of the paragraphs themselves, were the result of chance operations.

| This is a lec-ture on changes that have taken place in my com-position means, with particu-lar reference to what, a dec-ade ago, I termed "structure" and "method." By "struc-ture" was meant the division of a whole into parts; by "method," the note-to-note procedure. Both structure and meth-od (and also | "material"— the sounds and si-lences of a composition) were, it seemed to me then, the prop-er concern of the mind (as op-posed to the heart) (one's ideas of order as opposed to one's spontaneous actions); whereas the two last | of these, namely method and ma-terial, to-gether with form (the morpholo-gy of a con-tinuity) were equally the proper con-cern of the heart. Composition, then, I viewed, ten years ago, as an activity integrat-ing the oppo-sites, the ration-al and the ir-rational, bring-ing about, i- | deally, a freely moving continui-ty within a strict division of parts, the sounds, their combina-tion and succes-sion being ei-ther logical-ly related or arbitrar-ily chosen. ¶The strict divi-sion of parts, the structure, was a function of the duration as-pect of sound, since, |

18/SILENCE

Such an approach highlights a fundamental dimension of organizing, which involves the problematic nature of any purpose determined ex ante. This approach also echoes the constructionism of Weick (1995) and Czarniawska (2014), who put emphasis on *organizing* rather than on organizations. Therefore, the "-ing" form serves as the tense of processuality, becoming-in-action, and relational ontology (Tyler, 2019), which does not conceive of organizations as static, pre-existing entities with well-defined boundaries, but rather as relational constructions.

The principle that Cage adopts in handling sound materials complies with this framework. In fact, Cage's method assigns the function of each material (within a group of identical materials) in relation to the group. Whilst in classical composition a hierarchy determines the material's function (for example, in harmony, the tonic note dictates which notes can be used), Cage's method is analogous to a social organization which prioritizes the group and the integration of the individual within it (Sicca, 2017a). This approach, which Cage suggests calling "organization of sound" (p. 6) rather than musical composition, stresses a specific way of treating

organizing as "man's common ability to think" (p. 6). Thus, this *ability to think* is not to be understood as the formulation of an ordering principle to impose upon reality (a traditional way of understanding organizing). One should rather see it as an openness to the fundamental relationality of existence and to the immanent processuality that produces multiple and ever transient, chance-based order. This *ordered chance*, which we might call *organizing*, following Cage's lead.

Figure 3. A page of the lecture 45' for a speaker, in Cage (1961, p. 151)

3'00" (not at all any more)
       is that which is
       called
       "mobility-immobility".

10"

                                              (Hiss)

       Time,
       which is the title of this piece,
       (so many minutes
20"   so many seconds),
       is what we
       and sounds
       happen in. Whether early or late:
       in it.
       It is not a question of counting.
30"   Our poetry now
       is the realization
       that we possess nothing.
       Anything therefore   (Slap table)
       is a delight
       (since we do not possess it)
40"   and thus need   (Cough)
       not fear.
       This composition involves a flexible use of
       the number 10,000: that
       is to say 100 x 100 (sq. rt.).
       The actual time-lengths
50"   *are changing.*   This
       work has no score. It should be abolished. "A statement concerning the
       arts is no statement concerning the arts." It
       consists of single parts. Any of them may
       be played together or eliminated and at any
       time. "To me teaching is an expedient, but I do

                                    45' FOR A SPEAKER/151

The emphasis on processuality is essentially experimental and contemplates error as its inalienable and constitutive moment. John Cage's philosophy on error follows the idea that every error is a step forward toward discovery and innovation.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF AN EXPERIMENTAL ACTION? IT IS SIMPLY AN ACTION THE OUTCOME OF WHICH IS NOT FORESEEN (CAGE, 1961, P. 69).

Cage's courage to experiment and embrace failure not only redefined the boundaries of contemporary music but also provides inspiration for how organizations and individuals can approach uncertainty and error. This proactive and positive stance toward failure continues to influence both the artistic and organizational fields, fostering an environment of continuous learning and innovation.

Such a perspective aligns with contemporary theories on learning and innovation, for instance those of Thomke (2003), who emphasizes that experimentation and the acceptance of failure are essential for technological and creative advancement. In the organizational realm, various scholars support the idea of embracing failure as a source of learning. Argyris and Schön (1978) highlight the importance of feedback and reflection for organizational learning, stressing how negative experiences can be leveraged to continuously improve processes. Furthermore, Edmondson (2011) introduces the concept of "psychological safety" within teams, where accepting risk and failure proves crucial for collective innovation and growth.

The approach that values the creative process and active participation resonates deeply with organizational theories that prioritize continuous improvement and collective commitment. Both contexts underscore the importance of deep collaborative engagement as a key to achieving innovative and sustainable results. For John Cage, the value of art lies not only in the finished product but also in the journey that leads to its creation. Notably, this approach finds a parallel in the theories of W. Edwards Deming (1986), who promotes the idea that improving processes is essential for the long-term sustainability of organizations. Deming argues that focusing on the continuous improvement of processes rather than on immediate results alone enables organizations to achieve higher quality and efficiency levels over time.

This drive for experimentation in music recalls the principle that innovation is a continuous process of exploration, where unconventional and out-of-the-box ideas can lead to significant advancements (Sawyer, 2012). Just as Cage encouraged active listening to the soundscape, organizations can foster an environment where individuals feel free to explore new ideas without fear of failure. Similarly to Cage's musical experimentation, organizations can implement rapid prototyping processes and iteratively test new ideas. An approach that values innovation and creativity, much like Cage valued sounds previously unrecognized as music, offers a powerful metaphor for innovation within organizations.

Active Involvement and Feedback

Cage's works frequently require the active participation of performers and the audience, breaking down the traditional barrier between the performer and the spectator. Moreover, they often depend on immediate feedback from performers and environmental conditions. *Music for two pianos* requires each pianist to respond to the other by following instructions on the score determined through the combinatorial method. Each pianist can freely choose the duration of their interventions, influenced both by environmental factors and the other pianist's behavior. *Variations III* (1962) is intended "FOR ONE OR ANY NUMBER OF PEOPLE PERFORMING ANY ACTIONS." It constitutes the first piece in the series that does not refer to music, musical instruments, or sounds.

The score consists of two sheets of transparent plastic, one blank and the other marked with 42 identical circles. Cage instructs performers to cut the sheet with circles into 42 smaller sheets, each with a single circle. These are then dropped onto a sheet of paper. Isolated circles are removed, and the remaining ones are interpreted according to rules outlined in the score. The resulting information includes the number of actions and the number of variables that characterize an action. Cage does not specify the performers' actions but notes that they can involve noticing or responding to "environmental changes." He also states that while some aspects of the performance may be planned in advance, performers should "leave room for unforeseen eventualities" and that "any other activities happening at the same time" as the work is performed form part of the experience.

Cage's collaboration with pianist and electronic experimenter David Tudor (1926–1996) proved crucial for the former's research. Tudor performed many of Cage's compositions and served as a source of inspiration, especially in terms of studying electro-acoustic feedback and the use of electronic instruments. Cage and Tudor frequently experimented with these instruments in the context of dance, creating sound environments that interacted with dancers. *Cartridge music* (1960), used in Merce Cunningham's choreographed piece titled *Changing steps*, involves phonographic pick-up cartridges with needles fitted into the apertures. Performers are instructed to insert various small, unspecified objects into the cartridge; previous performances have used items such as pipe cleaners, matches, feathers, and wires. Furniture may also be used, amplified via contact microphones. Controlled by the performer(s), all sounds are to be amplified. In this piece, the feedback between loudspeakers and the performance space plays a significant role; the space itself shapes the sounds emitted by the loudspeakers, with strategically placed speakers turning them into instruments in their own right, each with a unique voice which extends beyond mere reproduction.

In these compositions, the "event of sound" (Di Scipio, 2014) results from specific ways of organizing space, people, and instruments. The principle of electro-acoustic feedback, in which electronic sounds interact with and are modified by the space, becomes a device for organizing the conditions of the sound event, upon which the indeterminate composition's fate depends. According to the radical organizational premise of this approach, the compositional idea does not determine ex ante the organization of sounds and space in which they are meant to occur; rather, it is the organization of space, bodies, and devices that determines the compositional idea ex post.

This way of organizing sounds, starting from chance and indeterminacy and allowing room for complex interactions between people and the environment – including reciprocal influences and feedback – opens up interesting perspectives on organizing. In the tradition of organizational aesthetics, the importance of space has often been discussed in terms of identity (Strati, 1999), atmosphere (De Molli, Mengis, & van Marrewijk, 2019), agency, and resistance (Sicca, 2017b). Dale and Burrell (2008) define three modes for organizing spaces: enchantment, emplacement, and enactment. Enchantment refers to how materials are arranged within spaces to produce effects of power, such as generating a sense of awe, appreciating the skill involved in construction, or projecting a preferred sense of aspiration and consumption through an aesthetic feature. Emplacement involves spatial design that provides order, incorporating a model of positioning, classifying, and monitoring the associated elements (e.g., bodies). Enactment addresses how actors develop habits and routines within social spaces.

Compared to these perspectives, Cage's work poses the challenge of creating spaces that do not conform to standard modes of musical consumption. This never-simple challenge depends on the ability to integrate such arrangements with existing codes of perception, making them familiar enough to avoid discomfort while also leaving them open enough to accommodate the indeterminacy of sound as an event. When the integration of artistic content and spatial arrangement is complete and organic, a kind of "enchantment" becomes produced (Dale & Burrell, 2008). At the same time, the indeterminate nature of the sound event makes any unidimensional approach problematic, emphasizing the relational and sociomaterial dimension (Orlikowski, 2008) where technology itself proves a decisive actor.

The principles of collaboration and active involvement have also gained significant ground within organizational studies. For instance, Hackman (2002) claims that collaboration and cohesion within a group improve significantly when all members actively engage in decision-making and operational processes. This participation not only facilitates greater collaboration but also fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility.

Argyris and Schön's (1978) work on Organizational Learning highlights feedback as a fundamental factor, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of learning within organizations and underlining the need for continuous adaptation and a willingness to rethink assumptions. Their seminal ideas revolve around the notion that learning is both an individual pursuit and a collective process involving the entire organization. They argue that for organizations to be effective and sustainable, they must be capable of continuous learning to address the changing environment and complex problems that they encounter. The practical implications of their work suggest that for an organization to foster a learning culture, it must create an environment where employees can openly question norms and practices without fear of retribution. This includes leadership that encourages experimentation, values feedback, and is willing to acknowledge and learn from failure. Developing such a culture helps organizations navigate change more effectively, innovate, and sustain competitive advantage.

Relative to these approaches, Cage's work stands out as an exploration of ways of organizing that engage deeply with relationality and sociomateriality, giving a precise sonic materiality to the ideas of collaboration, active involvement, feedback, and learning. This materiality manifests in the aesthetic form – an aesthetic that is neither pandering nor easily consumable, often provocative and challenging, yet capable of dismantling assumptions and confronting us with the essential groundlessness of any ready-made precept or formula.

Open Mic on Organizational Studies

The four Cagean themes examined in this article introduce a series of implications for organizational theory. Drawing on Cage's teachings, this section structures our theoretical insights and the textual material through which they are conveyed based on the principle of indeterminacy, allowing our reflections to unfold through four parallel, intersecting texts. This approach treats organizational theory-making as an "open mic" situated in the time and space of the present world, while also envisioning the future in continuity with Cage's legacy.

THE ROLE OF LISTENING - NOT AS A METAPHOR BUT AS A SUBSTANTIVE ELEMENT - HIGHLIGHTS THE NEED FOR ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES TO ENGAGE WITH THE SOCIOMATERIAL DIMENSION OF LISTENING. THIS ENABLES THE EXPLORATION OF HOW LISTENING REGIMES AND SILENCE CONDITIONS ARE CONSTRUCTED AND INTRINSICALLY LINKED TO POWER RELATIONS AND SYSTEMS OF REPRESENTATION. WE ATTEMPT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON THIS SUBJECT USING ACOUSTEMOLOGY (FELD, 2014), AN APPROACH THAT COMBINES ACOUSTICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY TO INVESTIGATE HOW SOUND BOTH PRODUCES AND TRANSLATES KNOWLEDGE AND VALUE SYSTEMS. FOR ACOUSTEMOLOGY, SOUND OPENS UP A PERSPECTIVE OF KNOWING-IN-ACTION WITH AND THROUGH SOUND. IN THIS SENSE, SOUND IS NOT MERELY AN OBJECT OF RESEARCH BUT ALSO A METHOD OF RESEARCH, LEADING TO A DIFFERENT WAY OF QUESTIONING AND UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL WORLD (KOSTERA, 2022). CAGE'S WORK PROVES SEMINAL HERE FOR NEW APPROACHES IN ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES THAT ARE EMERGING ALONGSIDE MORE MAINSTREAM PERSPECTIVES.

ON THE ONE HAND, WE CONSIDER STUDIES ON MULTIMODALITY (WARREN, 2008; GIOVANNONI & NAPIER, 2022) AND SENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY (PINK, 2009), WHERE EMBODIED SENSORY EXPERIENCE - AND THUS THE RESEARCHER'S POSITIONALITY - ARE CENTRAL. SINCE, AS FELD NOTES, LISTENING LEADS TO A TYPE OF KNOWLEDGE THAT IS NECESSARILY EXPERIENTIAL AND EMBODIED, ACOUSTEMOLOGY DEMANDS A RE-EVALUATION OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH'S EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF AN OCULOCENTRIC TRADITION IN SOCIAL RESEARCH, WHERE OBSERVATION IS ASSUMED TO BE THE PRIVILEGED CHANNEL FOR ACQUIRING PRE-

CAGE HIGHLIGHTS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MUSIC AND OTHER DISCIPLINES AND AREAS OF EXPERTISE. THE EXPERIENCE OF MAKING MUSIC IS NO LONGER SEEN AS AN INTERESTING "OBJECT" OF SCIENTIFIC OBSERVATION OR A PHENOMENON TO BE EXPLAINED OR CHARACTERIZED IN SCIENTIFICALLY RELIABLE TERMS. FREED FROM THIS BURDEN, MAKING MUSIC CAN BE CONSIDERED AS ONE OF VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES IN POTENTIALLY FRUITFUL RESEARCH TOPICS THAT ARE NOT NECESSARILY LINKED TO THE MUSICAL EXPERIENCE IN A DIRECT OR OBVIOUS WAY. IN FACT, THE PROCESSUALITY OF THE COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS AND ITS EXPERIMENTAL DIMENSION ARE ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES THAT REVEAL PROFOUND ASPECTS OF THE HUMAN RELATIONSHIP WITH SPACES, TIMES, AND OBJECTS.

WE BELIEVE THAT CAGE'S WORK PROVES SEMINAL IN THIS FIELD, AS IT PROMPTS REFLECTIONS OF CONSIDERABLE INTEREST FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SCHOLARS WHO EXPLORE THE THEMES OF SPACE AND TIME (DALE & BURREL, 2008). A RESEARCH AREA SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED BY THESE REFLECTIONS IS THAT OF IMPROVISATION IN ORGANIZATIONS (LASALA, RIPETTA, & NAPOLITANO, 2023). WHILE THE IDEA OF IMPROVISATION HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED AS FUNDAMENTAL TO UNDERSTANDING ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES SINCE WEICK (1998), ONLY RECENTLY HAS IT BEEN LINKED TO THE DIMENSIONS OF SPATIALITY AND TEMPORALITY. IMPROVISATION DOES NOT CONSTITUTE MERELY A CREATIVE PROCESS (FISHER & AMABILE, 2009), NOR SIMPLY

JOHN CAGE'S WORK PRESENTS A SERIES OF QUESTIONS FOR MANAGEMENT SCHOLARS. THE FIRST ONE CONCERNS THE SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL KNOWLEDGE. CAN WE INCLUDE MUSIC AND PHILOSOPHY AMONG THESE SOURCES? TO DELVE INTO THIS QUESTION, WE SHOULD ASK OURSELVES ABOUT THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES. IN RESPONSE TO POTENTIALLY MORE PRECISE AND FUNCTIONAL QUESTIONS, CAGE OFFERS US A PROFOUND REFLECTION ON THE VERY POSSIBILITY OF FINDING ANSWERS - THAT IS, OF PROCEEDING IN A DIRECTION WITH A PRE-DETERMINED PURPOSE, NOT SIGNIFICANTLY SHAPED BY CHANCE. THUS, IN EXAMINING WITH CAGE AN ESSENTIALLY ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSION OF MUSIC AND PHILOSOPHY, WE FIND OURSELVES QUESTIONING THE HYPOTHESIS THAT MUSIC AND PHILOSOPHY HAVE AN ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSION AND THAT WE CAN DRAW FROM THE SOUND THAT MAKES ITSELF MUSIC, AS WELL AS FROM THE LOGOS THAT BECOMES PHILOSOPHY, AS SOURCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL KNOWLEDGE. THESE AGE-OLD CONSTRUCTS (MUSIC AND PHILOSOPHY) AND THE MATERIAL DIMENSION THAT UNDERPINS THEM (SOUND AND LOGOS) ADDRESS SOMETHING THAT RELATES TO ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES BEYOND THE EPIPHENOMENON OF "GOOD MANAGEMENT," THE TYPICAL CONSTRUCTS OF THE MUCH MORE RECENT AMERICAN BUSINESS SCHOOLS.

THE DISCUSSION ON SOURCES OF MANAGERIAL KNOWLEDGE SEES THE OPPOSITION BETWEEN NORMATIVE AND POSITIVE THEORIES (SIMON, 1947; FRIEDMAN, 1953), WHERE THE FORMER ESTABLISH A PRIORI WHAT BEHAVIORS SHOULD BE ADOPTED IN ORGANIZATIONS, AND THE LATTER EXPLORE OBSERVABLE PHENOMENA IN AN ATTEMPT TO SYSTEMATIZE THEIR FUNCTIONING. IN THIS DEBATE, CAGE CONFRONTS AND FILLS THE SPACES LEFT OPEN BETWEEN THESE TWO WAYS OF

sumed objective knowledge (Wheeler, 2012).

This consideration leads us to a second line of studies that is beginning to emerge significantly in organizational research, namely that which addresses diversity and disability (Beatty et al., 2019; Dobusch, 2021; Jammaers & Zanoni, 2021; Napolitano et al., 2024a; Siebers, 2008). In our opinion, the challenges that knowing with and through sound poses for social research epistemologies align closely with recognizing diverse subjectivities and sensory experiences, which generate differing perspectives precisely through their embodiment. In disability studies, scholars have highlighted that disabled bodies and minds produce an epistemology distinct from historically established norms grounded in able-bodiedness. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2017) refers to disability as an epistemic resource, stating that "our bodily form, function, behavior, perception, and way of thinking shape our understanding of the world" (p. 56). As a perspective that opens up alternative epistemologies, acoustemology can therefore serve as a tool to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities, influencing both research and organizing.

In a very material way, silent organizing, beyond any metaphorical sense, can support accessibility for deaf individuals, emphasizing the importance of tactile, non-cochlear, or vibrational dimensions (Kim-Cohen, 2009) as channels for gathering and coordinating people (in this regard, see the work of artist Wendy Jacob). On the other hand, a sounding organizing that values sound for sense-making and agency can foster participation by blind and visually impaired people (Napolitano et al., 2024a;

a learning process (Vendelø, 2009) that leads to innovation (Kamoche & Cunha, 2001). Rather, it functions as a process of experimentation that actively engages with chance and indeterminacy. In improvisation, the outcome is not predetermined but instead emerges through the act itself. This dimension of "doing" and spontaneity (McCloskey, 2023) demonstrates a fundamental tension with temporality, wherein the time of action is continuous with the time of decision-making. The compositional processes used by Cage offer valuable insights into ways of organizing time, especially as they highlight the role of chance underlying each decision, even the most purpose-oriented ones. In this sense, improvisation haunts any organizational action like a ghost, precisely because it unfolds over time. Here, the I Ching coin toss becomes a highly significant gesture, embodying the tension between chance and purpose – a gesture whose purpose is, indeed, to embrace chance.

The spatiotemporal conditions in which an event occurs generate feedback – reactions that influence the event itself and expose it to indeterminacy, even when it has been perfectly planned. Therefore, improvisation is not merely a practice but a constitutive feature of organizational action that unfolds in space and time. This gives rise to the enduring tension in organizational studies between the immediacy of the event and the epiphenomenal repetition of the object.

understanding organizational theories, which are themselves based on a jungle of theories of various origins (Grandori, 1999).

Industrial organization constitutes one of the main branches of such theories. It focuses on the relationship between hierarchy and the market (Coase, 1937).

Oliver Williamson (1975, 1981, 1985) significantly contributed to this debate. His transaction cost theory analyzes the contractual relationships that govern the existence and functioning of firms. In 2009, Williamson received a Nobel Prize for his work.

Another important branch is the human relations movement (Mayo, 1933), born as a reaction to Frederick Taylor's scientific management, which focuses on the mechanical optimization of work. This movement revolutionized the way in which employees were considered, emphasizing social dynamics, communication, and interpersonal relationships within organizations.

In subsequent developments, the work of Abraham Maslow (1940-1950) further influenced this branch with his hierarchy of needs theory, introducing a holistic approach to employee well-being.

In the 1960s, Douglas McGregor (1960) proposed theories X and Y, outlining two opposing views of human nature at work. Theory X assumes that workers are inherently lazy and require strict supervision, while Theory Y suggests that workers are naturally motivated and can find satisfaction in work if appropriately incentivized. These theories led managers to consider more participative management styles oriented toward intrinsic motivation.

Within the American tradition of organizational studies, Daniel A. Wren's

However, whether or not one agrees with this assertion, another question remains: can we hypothesize that sources of organizational knowledge lie not only in the materiality of the world but also in the world of ideas, without a purpose oriented toward facts? In other words, could the construct of organizational studies itself, as a construct of ideas (like any other construct), manifest the urgency of finding answers to archaic and intimate questions, not necessarily in response to this or that specific and contingent state of the world in a given historical moment? Attempts in this vein still seem marginal and often provocative, though they stimulate the curiosity of scholars who question the very nature of their studies, for example in the debate continued over the past five years within the European Academy of Management (EURAM).

Within EURAM, the track Arts & Philosophy for Business and Society interrogates the sources of organizational knowledge, encouraging the international academic community to confront such a topic in an open-ended process. The track's presentation reads as follows: "Management scholars can learn from millennial knowledge of music and philosophy. The dominance of the North-American business school model within the broader context of the establishment of management as an academic discipline, in the aftermath of WWII, has often concealed the dependence of this discipline on much older knowledge and practices. Philosophy and arts have been among these millennial sources of knowledge, as they led to the very archetypes of

STOCK, 2024) AND NEURODIVERSE INDIVIDUALS (DREVER & HUGILL, 2022). IN FACT, AURAL DIVERSITY (DREVER & HUGILL, 2022) IS INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZED AS A DETERMINING FACTOR IN PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOR AND IDENTITY, AND AS SUCH, NEEDS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN INCLUSIVE ORGANIZING.

STUDIES EXAMINE HOW MANAGEMENT THEORIES AND PRACTICES EMERGED AND DEVELOPED IN RESPONSE TO PRACTICAL CHALLENGES AND ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL CHANGES (WREN, 1994). WREN LINKS THE DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGEMENT IDEAS TO KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS, SUCH AS THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, THE GREAT DEPRESSION, AND THE WORLD WARS, HIGHLIGHTING HOW THESE INFLUENCES SHAPED MODERN MANAGEMENT.

WREN'S CONTRIBUTION DRAWS ON FREDERICK TAYLOR WITH HIS SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT, HENRI FAYOL WITH HIS ADMINISTRATIVE PRINCIPLES, AND MAX WEBER WITH HIS THEORY OF BUREAUCRACY. HE EMPHASIZES HOW THESE THEORIES LAID THE FOUNDATIONS FOR MODERN MANAGEMENT BUT ALSO NOTES THE TRANSITION TOWARD SUBSEQUENT THEORIES, SUCH AS MAYO'S (1933) HUMAN RELATIONS MOVEMENT AND CONTINGENCY THEORY, WHICH INTRODUCES THE IDEA THAT THERE IS NO SINGLE BEST WAY TO MANAGE, BUT RATHER THAT EFFECTIVENESS DEPENDS ON THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT.

IF ALL THESE CASES SUGGEST A WAY OF CONSTRUCTING RESEARCH THAT STEMS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF OBSERVABLE REALITY (MACROECONOMIC AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS, INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION DYNAMICS, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, ETC.), ONE MIGHT THINK THAT THE CONSTRUCT OF ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES EXISTS IN A SUPPORTING ROLE TO THE CHANGES IN THE WORLD. FOLLOWING THIS PERSPECTIVE, ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES WOULD BE AN EXPRESSION OF A DISCIPLINE THAT IS STRUCTURALLY NORMATIVE AND HARDLY SPECULATIVE OR POSITIVE, IF ONLY BECAUSE IT IS DRIVEN TO SHAPE ITS NATURE IN RESPONSE TO SOMETHING THAT TEARS OR OCCURS IN THE WORLD.

OUR SOCIAL COHABITATION AND OUR SENSE-MAKING OF THE WORLD: THE THOUGHT THAT BECOMES PHILOSOPHY, THE MATTER THAT BECOMES ART, THE SOUND MAKES ITSELF MUSIC. THAT IS CONFIRMED ALSO BY THE ETYMOLOGICAL MEANING OF 'ART,' WHICH DERIVES FROM THE LATIN WORD AR-TEM (THE PRACTICE OF GIVING VALUE TO THE HUMAN ACTION, MANAGING THE OWN INTEREST) AND FORMERLY FROM THE ARYAN ROOT AR (MOVING ONWARDS, INNOVATING). IN THE GREEK WORLD, ART WAS MEANT AS TÉCHNE (τέχνη, CRAFT) THAT NOWADAYS EVOLVES INTO TÉCHNE-LOGOS (λόγος, DISCOURSE), HENCE TECHNOLOGY.

THEREFORE, WHILE THE ARTS HAVE LONG BEEN CONSIDERED AS OBJECTS OF MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE AND BUSINESS PRACTICES, WE INVITE SCHOLARS TO CONSIDER THEM AS ALSO SOURCES FROM WHICH MANAGEMENT COULD LEARN. SUCH APPROACHES RESONATE ALSO WITH PROCESS-ORIENTED, NEW MATERIALIST AND POSTHUMAN KNOWLEDGE, THEORY AND METHODOLOGY, WHICH ADOPT RHIZOMATIC APPROACHES WITHIN ORGANIZATION STUDIES" (NAPOLITANO ET AL., 2024B).

Conclusion

In this article, we have shown how Cage's music serves as an epistemological lens, offering insights into the complex processes of organizational studies. By adopting Cage's approach, we have demonstrated how social science can engage with concepts such as silent organizing, indeterminacy, process orientation, active involvement, and feedback in innovative and collaborative ways. This approach enables the examination and questioning of organizational realities, challenging linear thinking and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue on organizational practices. This, in turn, leads to innovative ideas of emergence and ecology.

As outlined above, organizational studies have long examined the role of music within organizations and the application of diverse musical approaches. This exploration takes place both in the development of organizing theories and through social practices that embody "natural" experiences, for instance the transformation of sound into music.

A particularly noteworthy example of this exploration is Fluxus[1] – a Cage-inspired movement that seamlessly integrates theoretical approaches with social practices. However, Fluxus represents only one of many possible examples. Looking further afield, even within organizations seemingly distant from the realms of art and music, one can discern the contributions of sound, silence, and indeterminacy to the shaping of theories and social practices.

Broadening the scope to encompass productive organizations – those that may initially seem disconnected from artistic ones – while retaining the theoretical perspective outlined in this article offers a distinctly traditional and "old-fashioned" approach. Paradoxically, it is perhaps this very traditionality that makes it "beautiful," fostering dialogue between theory and practice, between ideas and sociomateriality. Rooted in "natural gestures," this approach challenges the intergenerational rhetoric, false conflicts, and an uncritical pursuit of "neophilia." Instead, it prioritizes a thoughtful and grounded perspective. We call for less rhetoric and more substance.

We hope that this orientation will support the creation and growth of a reflective and engaged community – one that comprises individual researchers who are capable of balancing critical reflection with active commitment. In our view, such a community represents perhaps the only intellectually authentic form of active resistance to the status quo.

The authors wish to emphasize the crucial work carried out by the puntOorg International Research Network as a daily source of inspiration for the ever-open discussion about the sources of organizational knowledge.

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[1]   For an overview of Fluxus, see Irene di Maggio's film *Travelling In(to) Fluxus* (2014).

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