



WHAT INSPIRES THE ACADEMY: BOOK REVIEWS AND BEYOND

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Luigi Pareyson's *Estetica: Teoria della formatività* and Its Implications for Organization Studies

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Luigi Pareyson wrote, "The whole of spiritual life is in some way 'art': in every field of human industriousness nothing can be done without also inventing in some way how it is to be done" (1988: 63). Therefore, if we want to follow in Pareyson's steps and appreciate his contribution to organization and management studies, we can see management as art, production processes as artistry, a work well done as a work of art, and, of course, art in itself.

The very idea that art is always an art of something is what motivates us to propose a reading of Pareyson's aesthetic philosophy that can talk to the hearts and minds of organizational scholars. One of our aims in reviewing Pareyson's main oeuvre—*Estetica: Teoria della formatività*—is to encourage the readers of this journal to engage with literature they might not normally read. Our other purpose is to take the opportunity provided by a recent and partial translation of Pareyson's work into English to introduce management scholars to a philosopher whose work resonates with a relatively new interest in practical knowledge and in forms of knowing outside the cognitive domain. In fact, if we locate a "turn to practice" in social sciences around the year 2000, we may argue that it is through the organizational aesthetics approach that the idea of sensible knowing and aesthetic judgment arrived in practice-based studies. Pareyson's philosophy is important for grounding a philosophy of knowing that is an aesthetic philosophy of production—that is, based on doing—rather than contemplation.

The contemporary reader should note that Pareyson's book appeared in Italian in 1954 and that it was almost fifty years later that Peter Carravetta wrote as follows in the introduction to the recent publication in English of a selection of Pareyson's essays:

The appearance of a substantial selection of Luigi Pareyson's writings in English is motive for a transnational celebration in the history of ideas. A thinker of the rank of Gadamer and Ricoeur, to whom he is often compared, surprisingly little has been known or written about him. An original interpreter of existentialism and German Idealism, Pareyson developed an authentic hermeneutic in the nineteen-fifties, a time in which the Italian panorama was being shaped by growing Marxist hegemony and the turn towards the sciences especially linguistics (2010: 99).

Pareyson was not attracted by Marxist philosophy, since he was a Catholic and a militant in "Partito d'Azione" and "Giustizia e Libertà" during the Resistance to Nazi fascism. He was born in 1918, and he worked at the University of Torino almost until his death in 1991. In 1935 and 1936, he spent time with Karl Jaspers in Heidelberg, and during the 1940s and 1950s, he published, in Italian, several essays on Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and mainly Schelling's existentialist philosophy. In the following years he published on aesthetics and on interpretation: *Estetica: Teoria della formatività* in 1954, *Conversazioni di estetica* in 1966, *Verità e interpretazione* in 1971—recently translated into English (Pareyson, 2013)—and his last work, *Ontologia e libertà*, published posthumously in 1995. As an academic at the University of Torino, among his followers were the semiologist Umberto Eco and the philosophers Gianni Vattimo, Mario Perniola, and Sergio Givone, who worked on aesthetics. He was also the director of the journal *Rivista di estetica*.

Today we can gain a more complete overview of his inquiries in philosophy, hermeneutics, and existentialism because of the translations of his writings into English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and other languages. It has been a very

long time since 1954, when Pareyson, "at the time aged thirty-six" and despite his young age, "was not an unknown scholar" (Tiberghien, 2007: 5).

Why did it take so long to translate Pareyson's work? After all, he is celebrated as a great philosopher. One possible answer is that his work focused on the "practical" character of art and the productive moment of art. In commonsense language, as in philosophy, *practice* is opposed to *theory*, and the two terms are considered not only oppositional but hierarchically related so that practical knowledge is devalued with respect to theory and theoretical knowledge (Gherardi, 2000). In this regard we argue that an aesthetic philosophy, like the one elaborated by Pareyson, can provide a firm grounding for theorizing about knowing in practice and knowing as corporeal doing.

In the following sections we address three themes: (1) the Italian philosophical context in which *Estetica: Teoria della formatività* appeared, (2) how the book was received within the aesthetic organizational research field, and (3) Pareyson's contribution to the study of organizational practices. We conclude with a discussion of the value of reading Pareyson today within a community of organizational and management scholars.

THE ITALIAN PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT OF THE BOOK

Estetica: Teoria della formatività (henceforth simply *Formatività*) was published in Turin by Edizioni di Filosofia, in 1954, as mentioned above. The Second World War was now long past, the fascist period was over, and Italy was no longer a monarchy but, rather, a republic with universal suffrage, because the right to vote had been extended to women. This was the historical period in Italy known as the "Ricostruzione," and there was heated political debate between the communist and socialist left, on the one hand, and the Christian democrat and liberal center, on the other hand, which had participated in the Resistance against the fascist dictatorship and Nazi occupation.

There was also a sharp division among communist, socialist, Catholic, and liberal intellectuals regarding aesthetic philosophy, which was expressed by the opposition of the aesthetics of Marxist origin against the phenomenological and

existentialist aesthetics. The Italian philosophical context of *Formatività*, therefore, was influenced by social ideologies at the basis of political and economic choices that would give rise to both the decade of economic boom of the 1960s and the student protests and the workers' and trade union struggles of 1968 and 1969.

If, then, on the one hand, *Formatività* "marked the decisive moment of the renewal of Italian aesthetics in the middle of this century involving, besides the legacy of pre-Hegelian German idealism, also the ontological-hermeneutic current of twentieth-century existentialism" (wrote Gianni Vattimo [1977: 42], an Italian philosopher internationally known for his theory of "weak thought"), on the other hand, there were other currents that creatively rethought themes of Marxist (Galvano della Volpe) or phenomenological (Luciano Anceschi and Antonio Banfi) origin. The decisive renewal represented by *Formatività* was due to the definitive liberation of Italian aesthetics from the "dictatorship of Crocean idealism." In 1902 Benedetto Croce had published his thesis on aesthetics as the science of expression, in which art is considered to be knowledge that is intuition and expression at the same time because there are no profound intuitions unless they are formed and expressed—as happens with a musical motif, where there is no intuition unless it is heard almost as if it were being played. Moreover, for Croce, intuition was art, and the distinction between the intuition of ordinary people and that of an artist was a mere empirical distinction owing to the fateful separation of art from common spiritual life. In fact, for Croce, art techniques and practices constituted a level of reflection that had little to do with aesthetics because it was an economic fact that reverberated on the diversity of arts and artistic genres.

This thesis of Benedetto Croce is well known because it had broad international resonance and projected the Italian aesthetic philosophy of the twentieth century along idealist lines (D'Angelo, 1997; Restaino, 1991). What is perhaps less well known is that the devaluation of the "practical" character of art and the productive moment of art was the aesthetic issue that generated aversion to Crocean theoreticism. This aversion was shared by several salient movements of Italian aesthetic philosophy in the postwar period because it developed both among philosophers extraneous to Crocean

idealism, such as Luigi Pareyson and Luciano Anceschi, and among philosophers tied to Croce's thought. What happened in Italy, in fact, was that

much of the aesthetics of the 1950s set itself on the part of the producer rather than that of the user or the art work. This is interesting also out of [the Italian] context, because an attitude of this kind is relatively rare in the history of aesthetics. We find it, to a very marked extent, also in Pareyson and Brandi, and in Anceschi's strong interest in critics who are also artists (D'Angelo, 1997: 174–175).

Added to this rare occurrence in the history of aesthetics was the fact that while Croce considered artwork when it had been accomplished, both Pareyson and other Italian philosophers like Diano or Brandi were interested in artwork "in its making"—that is, the work of art as a research process, and doing art as an artistic process. Pareyson himself said as much, in his preface to the fourth edition of *Formatività*:

First of all, it was extremely urgent to discuss those issues that Croce's censorship had detrimentally expunged from Italy; and it was also necessary to develop categories that could meet the new needs of the changed situation. This was the starting point and the ambitious design of this book, which came out in serial form in a philosophical journal between 1950 and 1954 (Pareyson, 1988: 7).

This was also the starting point for the flourishing of other philosophical inquiries developed during the first half of the twentieth century in Italy.

In the next section we examine Pareyson's theory of aesthetic formativeness and its place in the philosophy and epistemology of the aesthetic study of organizational life.

FORMATIVITÀ AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF AESTHETIC ORGANIZATIONAL RESEARCH

Formatività made its appearance in organization studies a decade before its partial translation into English in 2009. It did so in the context of the organizational research on the aesthetic dimension of everyday working life in organizations that, during the late 1980s, was one of several new lines of inquiry pursued by organizational theorists. Subsequently, *Formatività* would also be a theoretical reference for the study of social practices in organizational contexts, particularly in the area of practice-based studies (Gherardi & Strati, 2012), as we shall see later in this essay.

We can find the first reference in organizational studies to Pareyson's aesthetic philosophy in the book *Organization and Aesthetics* (Strati, 1999)—that is to say, when the study of the aesthetic dimension of organization was becoming established, and not at its beginnings in the late 1980s, nor even contemporaneously with the proposal for the aesthetic study of organization made in the early 1990s in the pages of this journal, the *Academy of Management Review* (Strati, 1992). This signals an important aspect of aesthetic research on organizational life. In fact, if one reviews the first decade of reflection on the aesthetic side of organization, one notes that specific references to aesthetic philosophy were sporadic and sometimes appeared ritualistic—one notes, that is, that these references indicated a process that was weak, a dialogue between organizational literature on aesthetics and philosophy that was still in its infancy. Some philosophers, such as Giambattista Vico, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, or Immanuel Kant, were posited to be the basis of aesthetic organizational research, while others, such as Susanne Langer, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, or Jacques Derrida, were recurrently present. But real "dialogue" with philosophical aesthetics became established in the next decade, which was the period where attention to aesthetics by organizational scholars was especially animated. Pasquale Gagliardi noted that this was thanks to

a growing body of literature on aesthetic themes, one in which systematic reflection is conducted on the relationships between these and organization (Dean et al. 1997; Strati 1999) and between art and management (Guillet de Monthoux 2004); there are research anthologies as well as special journal issues (*Organization* 3/2, 1996; Linstead and Höpfl 2000; *Human Relations* 55/7, 2002), which have resulted from seminars and conferences expressly devoted to analysis of the methodological implications of taking an aesthetic approach to the study of organizations. The aesthetics of organization is therefore taking shape as a distinct field of inquiry within organizational studies (2006: 702).

For obvious reasons, this dialogue does not set organizational aesthetics and philosophical aesthetics in a symmetrical and interactive relationship with each other, given that philosophical aesthetics has its origins in the works of Vico (1725) and Baumgarten (1750–1758), and in the writings of Joseph Addison on "the pleasures of the imagination," published in June 1712 in his and Richard Steele's journal, *The Spectator* (Addison & Steele, 1982). There is no

dialectical relation between them also because contemporary scholars of philosophical aesthetics have not paid particular attention to organizational reflection on aesthetics, with rare exceptions such as the volume on ordinary beauty edited by Janusz Przychodzen, François-Emmanuel Boucher, and Sylvain David (2010).

The aesthetic discourse on organization, however, has not "appropriated" philosophical aesthetics; rather, it has resorted to it in a diversified and sporadic manner. It has "conversed" with some philosophical aesthetics and neglected others, depending on both the personal taste of the organization scholar and the peculiarities of the organizational context studied.

Hence, among the philosophers who have gradually become part of the theoretical heritage of organizational aesthetics, besides the already mentioned Addison, Baumgarten, Derrida, Kant, Langer, and Vico, we find Schopenhauer and Nietzsche's aesthetics of the crisis of rationalism, Schiller's romantic aesthetics, Dewey's naturalist pragmatism, Husserl's phenomenological aesthetics, Benjamin's Marxist aesthetics, Gadamer's hermeneutics, and Pareyson's existentialist hermeneutics. Other philosophers and philosophical aesthetics may be added to complete this overview of organization studies' philosophical reflections, but the variegated picture, composed of facets often at odds with each other, that emerges does not change.

There are three "philosophical sensibilities" that characterize aesthetic research on organization: (1) the *hermeneutic sensibility*, (2) the *aesthetic sensibility*, and (3) the *performative sensibility* (Strati, 2016). Luigi Pareyson's aesthetic theory is an important philosophical referent for all three of these sensibilities, as we shall now see.

Pareyson's Personalistic Hermeneutics

The hermeneutic philosophical sensibility has characterized the aesthetic discourse on organization since its inception, because it distinguishes the works most concerned with the study of the symbolism of organizational aesthetics. The interpretation of aesthetics in terms of their symbolic construction and as an expression of organization as organizational culture has drawn mainly on the philosophical reflections of Gadamer, who, more than Schlegel, Schleiermacher, or Heidegger himself, applied hermeneutic thought to aesthetics. Gadamer (1977) maintained that the experience of beauty through art is not only an

authentic experience that transforms us; it is also an experience inherently characterized by the symbolism that distinguishes the human being. In the same years when Gadamer propounded the close link between hermeneutics and aesthetics in philosophy, Pareyson was arguing that art "is the locus *par excellence* of interpretation: the interpretation of truth" (Vercellone, Bertinetto, & Garelli, 2003: 357). It is important to emphasize that Pareyson contributed independently from Gadamer to the development of hermeneutic aesthetics and that the theories of these two philosophers do not coincide at all. To grasp the originality of Pareyson's contribution to hermeneutics, one must return to his reading of Kierkegaard's existentialism, particularly his *Scritti sull'esistenzialismo*:

Only in the *essential relation* between myself and the situation am I really myself: unique, incarnated, placed, singularized, concrete. Thus after all, incarnation is a relation I maintain with myself, a concrete and singularized self-identity: my own ipseity (Pareyson, 1943: 15–16; English translation, 2009: 42).

In this way, Pareyson proposes the hermeneutic perspective that is defined as *personalistic hermeneutics*, whereby "hermeneutics is the consistent outcome of an existentialism that does not lose its ties to the being and rights of the person" (Vercellone et al., 2003: 356). In fact, he reprises from the thought of Kierkegaard the distinctiveness of the individual's peculiarities and his or her irreducibility to objectification.

With his existentialist hermeneutics, therefore, Pareyson takes a polemic position toward the hermeneutics of Heidegger, which he nevertheless appreciated—"I am 'thrown' to live in a situation, as might be said using a fitting expression of Heidegger," he comments (Pareyson, 1943: 15–16; English translation, 2009: 42)—precisely because the German philosopher neglected the concreteness of the person's human existence and reduced it to an ontological instance.

I have *this* body, *these* relatives, *these* friends, *this* homeland, *this* job, *these* relations with others and other things: that is I have a very definite position in the universe, a specific place in the world. In a word: a situation, or better, *my* situation. I cannot regard my situation as one among many others, any of which I could have been given at random. My situation is my concreteness, my configuration, or, to use Marcel's word, my 'incarnation': without it, I, as a single person, would not exist. The bonds that connect me to my situation are very tight, and above all, they are essential to me: they are not links of 'features', but of 'essence' (Pareyson, 1943: 15–16; English translation, 2009: 42).

But, Pareyson warns, the person must not be reduced to the situation, as if there were no clear distinction between them, because incarnation "is a choice: I do not reduce myself to my situation, but I choose it. Choice, through which I assume my situation, acts so that I do not identify myself with it" (Pareyson, 1943: 18; English translation, 2009: 44).

Formatività and the Aesthetic and Performative Sensibilities

"Aesthetics," in the philosophical tradition of Addison, Baumgarten, and Vico that has informed a large part of the aesthetic discourse on organization, means taste, sensory perception, and aesthetic judgment through the senses, imagination, and symbolic construction, mythical thinking, and poetic logic. It signifies not only art and artistic worlds but also the ordinary beauty and the ordinary ugliness that are collectively constructed even in nonartistic organizations, through negotiation of the aesthetic and the interaction among aesthetic feelings that are like the thinking of the body in a world of sensible knowing. Aesthetics is action. It is action when we activate our perceptive faculties and aesthetic judgment to perform a task, to enjoy a product, to imagine ourselves in a situation that does not yet exist, or to immerse ourselves in a context. It is action when we activate the proprioceptive faculties that enable us to move in a situation. It is action when we set about contemplating a work of art, listening to a concert, or being entertained by a story. Aesthetics is therefore "doing," and intertwined in this doing are both the philosophical aesthetic sensibility and the performative sensibility of aesthetic research on organization:

The beauty of nature is a beauty of forms, and so it is evident for a gaze that is capable of seeing the form as a form, after having searched for it, inquired into it, surveyed it, interpreted it, to finally admire and enjoy it. Therefore the vision and the appreciation of the beauty of nature presuppose an effort of interpretation, an exercise of faithfulness, discipline of attention, a concentrated gaze, and the cultivation of a way of seeing, to reach that deep and all-seeing view, which is, in one way, vision of forms, and in another, production of forms, since an interpreted form and formed image must coincide in that conformation which is peculiar to contemplation (Pareyson, 1954: 212; English translation, 2009: 101).

Pareyson's aesthetic theory is particularly congenial to the intertwining of aesthetic sensibility and performative sensibility in the aesthetic

discourse on organization because, among the many different aspects that the concept of doing may assume, Pareyson posits as formativeness the doing that, while it is being done, invents how to do it, and that for this reason is a doing that forms:

Forming, therefore, means 'doing', but it is a doing that as it is being done, *invents how it is to be done*. This is doing without how it is to be done being predetermined and imposed so that it suffices to apply it to do well: it must be found by doing, and only by doing can one discover it, so that, properly speaking, it is a matter of inventing, without which the operation fails. . . . To form, therefore, means to 'do' and 'know how to do' together: to do while inventing at the same time how in the particular case what is to be done lets itself be done. Forming means 'being able to do', that is, doing in a way that, without appeal to pre-established technical rules, one can and must say that what has been done has been done as it should have been done (Pareyson, 1988: 59).

The whole of human experience is characterized by the aesthetic dimension, says Pareyson, because "present in the entirety of human industriousness is an inventive and innovative side that is the precondition for any achievement" and because "it is precisely the formative character of all human industriousness that explains how one can speak of the beauty of any work" (1988: 19). This is a conception of aesthetics that is not new in the philosophy of the twentieth century and that brings Pareyson's thought close, for example, to that of Dewey on aesthetics and human experience. But it highlights Pareyson's distance from Crocean idealism, his connection to other Italian philosophers attentive to the practice of aesthetics, and also the importance of *Formatività* for the aesthetic study of organization and for practice-based studies. There is no evaluation of human work that does not involve, in everyday organizational work, some aesthetic appreciation, from the beauty of an argument to that of a way of working, from a work of thought to the proposal of a style in the performance of an activity:

In these cases one certainly performs an aesthetic evaluation, and one can use such language with good reason, because these are successful works, and the work, whatever the activity in which it concludes, will fail without making form, definite and consistent, because no activity, be it moral or speculative, can generate works if not by exercising the process of invention and production that constitutes the forming (Pareyson, 1988: 20).

For Pareyson, therefore, it takes art to do anything. This is apparent in the most diverse of human activities, because every human experience

has an aesthetic character owing to the formativeness that distinguishes it, because it is done with art, it is done artfully, or the art of doing it is discovered or invented. Formativeness thus coincides with the aesthetics of the art of organizing, with the art of managing a firm, with the art of tuning a machine, and with the art of industrial design, as well as with the experience of an event in the organization or an organizational space. Art, however, occupies a position apart in these experiential dynamics because art is not "art of" but art tout court:

If every operation is always *formative*, in the sense that it cannot be itself without forming, and one cannot think or act without forming, instead the artistic operation is *formation*, in the sense that it intentionally seeks to form, and within it thought and action intervene only to make it possible that it cannot but be formation. The artistic operation is a process of invention and production undertaken, not to achieve speculative or practical works, or others besides, but only for itself: forming to form, only pursuing the form for itself: *art is pure formativeness* (Pareyson, 1988: 23).

It is, however, the emphasis on the fact that one needs "art to do" that has most influenced the study of organization, as we discuss further in the next section.

LUIGI PAREYSON'S INFLUENCE ON ORGANIZATION STUDIES

The thought of Pareyson is important for understanding organizational life and for theorizing about and empirically analyzing work practices. We will illustrate this point by referring to a broader set of studies based on practice, which we will denote with the umbrella term *practice-based studies*, without going into detail on the different theories of practice that inform them.

In fact, the field of practice-based studies has been growing very fast in the last several years, and it is difficult to give a brief but accurate map. Therefore, we can refer to the distinctions provided by Feldman and Orlikowski, who differentiated between different ways of engaging in practice research: "an empirical focus on how people act in organizational contexts, a theoretical focus on understanding relations between the actions people take and the structures of organizational life, and a philosophical focus on the constitutive role of practices in producing organizational reality" (2011: 1240). Our work is positioned

within the third way of engaging practice as philosophical focus, and, thus, we consider practices as fundamental to the production and reproduction of social reality and organizations as constituted in ongoing knowledgeable practices. Our understanding of the central phenomenon in practice-based studies is knowing in practice. Hence, we define knowledge as a practical activity, and Pareyson's work has been influential in grounding an aesthetic theory of knowledge. It is through organizational aesthetics that Pareyson's contribution enters the theorization of work practices, in that sensible knowledge, the body, and the aesthetic judgment are present in various ways in knowing in practice (Strati & Gherardi, 2015).

The practical knowledge acquired through the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch was also considered by Michael Polanyi (1958), when he drew the distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge: the former type of knowledge is formalized in scientific terms, whereas the latter is constituted by the awareness of knowing how to do something without being able to provide an adequate analytical description of it and, thus, without being able to translate it into formal and generalizable knowledge. It is for this latter form of knowledge that the aesthetic understanding is fundamental for studying situated practices.

In this framework the contribution of Pareyson's aesthetic philosophy to the study of practices comprises three main topics: (1) the concept of formativeness makes it possible to analyze and interpret how the object of a practice acquires form, (2) the idea of the inseparability of knowing and expressing supports an understanding of practice as collective tastemaking, and (3) the inseparability of knowing and sensing explains practice as grounded in sensible knowledge and therefore in the materiality of bodies that work. We develop these three topics below, starting from the theoretical and methodological issues of a practice-based approach in order to focus on how Pareyson's thought is relevant to the argument.

Formativeness: How the Object of a Practice Acquires Form

One of the main concerns of a practice-based approach is theorizing the relationship between the activities that form a practice and the effect that follows when the practice is performed. For example, in an elderly residential care home, the activities that form various work practices relate

to cleaning, feeding, entertainment, medical treatment, and so on, while “care” is the object of the practice and is realized within a texture of interdependent work practices.

While the objectives of an activity are the intended outcomes of that process, the object of a practice is the thing, or project, that people are working on to transform. This distinction between the output of the activities that form care practices and care as an emergent object makes it possible to conceive of the elderly as receivers not of service but of solicitude. In fact, taking care of a sick body without considerateness is mere service work, not care. Therefore, the object of a practice is also an epistemic object—discussed by Knorr-Cetina as “always in the process of being materially defined” (2001: 184), and capable of acquiring new properties and modifying the properties that it has—and it is simultaneously given, socially constructed, contested, and emergent (Blackler & Regan, 2009: 164). In producing care as the emergent object of different professional practices, thus, there is the idea that practice is a collective knowledgeable doing.

In Pareyson’s terms, we can see formativeness in the process whereby care takes form and becomes realized. In fact, Pareyson’s aesthetic theory is an aesthetics of production, as opposed to an aesthetics of contemplation, and it concerns the becoming of the form—that is, the outcome of a formation process. Pareyson was fascinated by the idea of human life as the invention of forms that acquire lives of their own: they detach themselves from their creators and engender styles. There is, hence, a formative character in the whole of human industriousness, and art is only a specific domain of this formativeness, as we illustrated above. Pareyson proposes that a work of art be regarded as pure formativeness, and the topic of his book on aesthetics is the work of art in its process of forming and being formed. But he also writes:

If all spiritual life is formative, behold the possibility of beauty possessed by every work, be it speculative, practical or utilitarian . . . and formative, too, is the sensible knowledge that grasps every ‘thing’, producing it, and ‘forming thereof’ the image, so that this is ‘accomplished’ and reveals and captures, indeed is the thing (Pareyson, 1988: 11).

The realization of the object of a practice therefore emerges from a formative process in which an attempt is made to produce the image that renders the “thing,” and the outcome of

knowing is seeing the “thing” formed. Particularly evident in the production of objects is the performative and creative aspect that characterizes every “doing,” even when it consists in thinking or acting: “one does not operate without completing, performing, producing, and realizing” (Pareyson, 1988: 18). A work is “accomplished” insofar as its doing comprises the way in which it must be done.

There is formativeness both in the way a material object, like the craft work of the artisan women studied by Gherardi and Perrotta (2014), is manufactured and in the narratives on their creative practices that the craftswomen performed for the researchers. In fact, in our empirical research we used Pareyson’s concept of formativeness to interpret how the research participants described the creative process whereby form was given to an object understood as unique, and how they were showing us the difference between an accomplished piece (*fait comme il faut*) and one less well done. Competence was performed for us researchers, making the art of doing present to an audience. Nevertheless, a process of giving form, as a doing that invents the way of doing, was at work not only as material production but also in the discursive practices that were authoring the craftswoman as she was using words that expressed her knowledge and her sense of identity and competence in doing. Therefore, we can say that in formativeness the boundaries among epistemic objects, materiality, and discursivity are blurred or, in other words, that there is no need to presume distinctions between the knowing, doing, and talking.

In this sense the epistemology of practice may be defined as an epistemology of becoming in order to stress impermanence and the tentative and ongoing process of knowledge production. It may also be defined as an epistemology of transformation in order to point to how knowledge changes through its use or, in the Wittgenstein (1953) tradition, as knowledge in transition—an expression intended to capture the difficulties that we face “in trying to make sense of activities that are still incomplete, still unfolding in relation to their actual surroundings” (Shotter, 2012: 247).

These considerations on the fundamental formative nature of all human industriousness enable us to move a step further in considering Pareyson’s argument on the inseparability of knowing and expressing and its relevance to theorizing on the relation between practitioners’

knowledgeable doing and their emotional attachment to the object of their practice.

Inseparability of Knowing and Expressing: How Collective Tastemaking Sustains Practices

To consider practitioners' attachment to their practices, we need to define our understanding of practice in terms of normative accountability of various performances. Rouse wrote, "Actors share a practice if their actions are appropriately regarded as answerable to norms of correct or incorrect practice" (2001: 190). In other words, practices are not only recurrent patterns of action (level of production) but also recurrent patterns of *socially* sustained action (production and reproduction). What people produce in their situated practices is not only work but also the (re) production of society. In this sense practice is an analytic concept that enables interpretation of how people achieve active being-in-the-world.

A practice is not recognizable outside its intersubjectively created meaning, and what makes possible the competent reproduction of a practice over and over again and its refinement while being practiced (or its abandonment) is the constant negotiation of what is thought to be a correct/beautiful or incorrect/ugly way of practicing within the community of its practitioners. Within every community of practitioners, discussing and disputing practice, developing different cultures of practice yet identifying with a shared practice, and making practice into terrain legitimately contestable by its practitioners are dynamics that socially sustain that practice. These dynamics construct the conditions in which the practice is reproduced. They can be conceived as the everyday work of practice reproduction and as the dynamic work that adapts the practice to changed circumstances so that it is once again performed "for another first time" (Garfinkel, 1967: 9). The attachment to the object of practice—be it of love or hate or of love and hate—is what makes practices socially sustained by judgments related not only to utility but to ethics and aesthetics as well.

Taste and amateur practices like those of music buffs, food or wine tasters, or even drug addicts constitute the empirical basis on which a sociology of attachments has developed (Hennion, 2001, 2004). The relationship with the object—food, music, drug—exemplifies a relationship in which the practitioner is indeed active—that is, deploys

a set of situated practices in order to use and enjoy the object of his or her passion individually and collectively. But the practitioner is also passive, in that he or she deliberately, and in a "cultivated" manner, abandons him/herself to the effect of the object insofar as he or she predisposes the material conditions for the enjoyment of music, food, or drugs and socially shares this passion within a community of amateurs.

The concept of tastemaking has been proposed (Gherardi, 2009) to account for practitioners' attachment to the object of practice and negotiation of an aesthetic judgment on it. Tastemaking refers to the process of giving voice to passion and negotiating aesthetic criteria that support what constitutes a "good" practice or a "sloppy" one and a "beautiful" practice or an "ugly" one within a community of practitioners. It is formed within situated discursive practices. The aesthetic judgment is made by being said—and therefore it presupposes the collective elaboration and mastery of a vocabulary for saying—and it is said by being made. Tastemaking, thus, is the process that socially sustains the formation of taste and the sophistication of practices through the mobilization of sensible knowledge (the bodily ability to perceive and to taste)—the sharing of a vocabulary for appraising the object and the object in place. Developing a vocabulary of appraisal enables the community of practitioners to communicate about sensible experiences, to draw distinctions of taste, and to spread them through the community.

Pareyson's contribution to the reading of practices sustained by sensation, sentiment, and sensory knowledge proceeds in the following way:

It is impossible to know sensitively without experiencing a sentimental reaction, and on the other hand sentiment is always a mood which colors and accompanies a sensation. . . . If it is true that I cannot make contact with the world except through the emotions I feel about it, it is also true that I do not feel emotions unless I make contact with the world (Pareyson, 1950; English translation, 2009: 79).

Therefore, sensation and sentiment are inseparable, but between knowing and expressing also there is a relation of mutual constitution:

There is neither knowing which is not expressing, nor expressing that is not knowing: I know only while expressing, and through expression I know (Pareyson, 1950; English translation, 2009: 82).

Intuition, for Pareyson, is what includes sensation and sentiment, and it constitutes the principle of the aesthetic nature of knowledge:

Knowledge does not grasp something without expressing the knower, and that expression does not express sentiments without also grasping something known. I do not know something unless I express myself, and in expressing myself I declare knowledge of something. This is the principle of the aesthetic nature of knowledge (Pareyson, 1950; English translation, 2009: 82).

This relationship among the process of knowing, the formation of a subjectivity as “knower,” and the expression of a collective taste that sustains (or does not sustain) a certain way of practicing is what enables researchers to inquire into how practitioners are able to put their passions into practice (Gherardi, Nicolini, & Strati, 2007) and how practicing their passions may contribute to the development of a field of practices and to the elaboration of an aesthetics of practice.

Inseparability of Knowing and Sensing: How Sensible Knowing Is Embodied in Practicing

In the writings of Pareyson, language mainly depicts the single individual knower in relation with the world, while the collective and social dimension of sensations, sentiments, and sensory knowledge has to be intuited rather than read. By contrast, a practice approach addresses the same phenomena in their social dimension, leaving the individual in the background. We emphasized the collective dimension of knowing in practice in the previous section, and we pass now to focusing more on the individual, embodied, and sensory knowledge. In fact, the relationship between the (individual) body—origin of sensations and emotions—and the process of interpreting and relating is at the heart of what constitutes sensory knowledge and how it is shaped by social processes and shapes social processes in working practices.

People participate in working practices on the basis of their individual capacities to see, hear, smell, taste, feel, and judge aesthetically. It is this that differentiates between them, given that not everyone sees the same things, reacts to the same odors, or has the same taste. There are those who “have an eye” for things while others do not, those who have an “ear” or a “nose,” and those who are “good with their hands” or “have taste.” This is personal knowledge that is ineradicable and irreducible. In fact, if we take a remark on an

organizational event like “I don’t like this thing,” it is unarguable, given that further reason-based negotiation on the matter is impossible.

Sensible knowledge reveals the continuous interactions between the knowing subject and the other. The other is usually considered as a human being, but also the nonhuman element sensed via touch, hearing, smell, sight, and taste reveals its active involvement in the process of producing sensible knowledge. To give an example, we can consider the case of honey (Merleau-Ponty, 2002; Strati, 2007). Honey is fluid but has some consistency and is viscous. Whenever it is touched, it “touches” in its turn. The nonhuman element shows an ability to be active in its relationship with the human being, since it takes the initiative of spattering his or her fingers with “mud,” coloring and perfuming them, or dirtying them. It may be unpleasant to feel honey on one’s fingers, a negative emotion that only subsides when the honey stops “touching” the fingers. One may feel disgust at the viscosity of the honey, or, alternatively, one may feel pleasure at its sweetness and perfume. These are sensitive judgments of the senses, as if they were the body’s thought. In fact, sensory activity always involves passion, and every sensation is affective. In other words, sensible knowledge involves what is “got” emotionally—the affectivity connected with what is perceived, taste-based judgment, the style of action.

The valorization of aesthetics in organizational practices has led to the appreciation of the corporeality of personal knowledge in the process of knowing in practice. It shows that knowing cannot be confined to the sphere of cognition, nor should all forms of knowledge be translated into cognitive knowledge. Rather, due account should be taken of the personal knowledge based on the faculty of aesthetic judgment and the perceptive-sensorial capacities. On this rests the radical break of practice-based studies with the dominant tradition of cognitive theory as regards knowing in practice. A radical break to which *Formatività* has contributed: “It is always a concrete person that, from his/her point of view, seeks to render and bring to life the work as *itself* wants” (Pareyson, 1988: 11).

CONCLUSIONS

In this essay we have illustrated how the philosophical aesthetics expounded in Pareyson’s *Estetica: Teoria della formatività* has been relevant to the study of social practices in organizational

life. We have shown that this happened in the context of renewed interest in organization studies toward philosophical aesthetics that was developed through organizational aesthetics research (Chytry, 2008; Guillet de Monthoux, 2004; Strati, 1999) and the debate on the concept of practice and of knowing and learning in organization that has configured practice-based studies (Gherardi & Strati, 2012). Thus, "philosophy" constituted the link between Pareyson's *Formatività* and the aesthetic discourse on organizational life, while "practice" constituted the link among formativeness, organizational aesthetics research, and practice-based studies. We have argued that these two terms—philosophy and practice—are closely bound up with each other in Pareyson's aesthetic theory, as well as in other Italian philosophies contemporary with Pareyson's thought—that is, Anceschi's (1936) and Banfi's (1988/1947) phenomenological aesthetics and Della Volpe's (1960) neo-Marxist aesthetics. Pareyson pointed out this theoretical relation throughout *Formatività*, from the preface onward:

The aesthetic theory proposed in this book starts from the aesthetic experience and then returns to it according to the above idea of philosophy as based on the inseparability of experience and thought, so that it is constantly open to ever new contributions and ever new developments. It arose from living contact with the aesthetic experience as it results from the industriousness of artists, studied both in their ongoing work and their valuable thoughts and statements about it, from the activity of readers and interpreters and art critics, as well as from the attitudes of the producers and contemplators of beauty wherever this is to be found, either in the natural sphere or in the practical and intellectual one (1988: 8).

The core of the aesthetics set out in *Formatività* is "doing" in practice, which is why it is a philosophy that has a "concrete character because it starts from experience and adheres to it" (Pareyson, 1988: 17) and a speculative character that prevents it from being reduced to experience and being identified with it.

It is a strong and forcefully expressed philosophical ontology. It starts with opposition to the idealism of Benedetto Croce and dissent with the hermeneutic aesthetics of Heidegger, and it ends with the differences that distinguish it from Italian phenomenological or Marxist aesthetics. There are no other Italian aesthetic philosophies that had so much importance in the Italian philosophical landscape of the post-World War II period and the years of reconstruction and the Italian miracle.

This is why the issue of the lack of prompt translations into other languages like English or French or Spanish is so important. Certainly, the recent translations of *Formatività*—even though there is not yet a complete translation of the book in English—have prompted us to illustrate its importance both for Italian aesthetic philosophy and, especially, for the study of organizational life.

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