

# Identity Sniping: Innovation, Imagination and the Body

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I have asked myself often enough whether, on a grand scale, philosophy has been no more than an interpretation of the body and a *misunderstanding of the body*.

*The Gay Science*, Friedrich Nietzsche

**Two routes to the creation of the new dominate the current literature on innovation: one is guided by fantasy, brainstorming and free interaction, the other one is focused on knowledge-sharing technologies and the implementation of new organizational forms. Eventually, however, this article rejects both routes, further arguing that innovation is a matter of details and the work invested in creating such details. The body plays a crucial role here, and a case from weapon design innovation exemplifies this insight: that the creation of new knowledge always happens through a crisis in which the body trembles. This crisis is called an event where new and unforeseen connections between the individual and the organization becomes possible.**

Discussions of innovation often take a distinction between order and chaos as their point of departure (cf. Boeddrich, 2004; Brown & Eisenhardt, 1998; Stacey, 1992). Typically, such discussions proceed by rather clear-cut dualisms: bureaucracy versus adhococracy, the hierarchical organization versus flat organizational forms, organization versus inspiration; and the ability of the organization to innovate is seen as a function of its level of (productive) 'order' and (creative) 'chaos'. But it may be time to take issue with this distinction: time to acknowledge some often forgotten (normally repressed) functions of the body. For it is, I will argue, the transformation of the body that provides the locus of the innovative process: the human body, to be sure, but also the organizational body and any possible social body. In this article, I will sketch out the proposed ruling dualism and will elaborate an example of the meeting of art with the military-industrial complex in support of the two related theses: (1) a transformation of knowledge (i.e. innovation) is always intimately connected to a transformation of the body (i.e. a crisis) and (2) any such transformation is contingent on *work*.

The dualism between order and chaos, the very emergence of 'the new' in the organization, can be expressed in two different ways, each of which we will ultimately have to give up, albeit for different reasons. Boeddrich pro-

vides us with one of them: 'the fantasy route to innovation' (Boeddrich, 2004, p. 275). Here one finds those managers (and management theorists) who believe that the generation of ideas cannot be organized at all. On this view, 'creativity and ideas will emerge only in an absolutely free and somewhat chaotic environment' (Boeddrich, 2004, p. 275). Even the description of this route exposes the painfully imprecise language that haunts organization theory: 'absolute' freedom in a 'somewhat' chaotic environment. But perhaps the fantasy route is somewhat absolutely hallucinatory: novelty is construed as an accidental gift from the gods, propagated through processes that humans cannot and should not interfere with. In philosophical terms, this position is characterized by *transcendence*: the new is bestowed upon the (organized) world from a source that is itself uncontaminated by organization. Our world, the immediate and *immanent* world, is, on this view, irrevocably separated from real creativity. But by meticulously *abstaining* from organization, by letting some 'designated' areas remain free from organization, we can nevertheless make it possible for the organization to receive novelty, to let novelty into its organism. The connection between the transcendent realm of fantasy, however, and the immanent realm of the actual organization – the connection by which

new knowledge might in fact enter the organization – has been a tricky one to capture throughout the history of organization theory.

To give a name to the connection between (divine) inspiration and the (worldly) organization, modern innovation theorists have coined the term ‘the fuzzy front end’ of the innovation process, where a certain amount of ‘intellectual resources’ is invested (Brodbeck et al., 2004). This is often expected to happen through especially innovative teams consisting of members of the creative class working in (absolutely) cross-disciplinary and (somewhat) spacy environments with extravagant colour, designer furniture and plenty of café latte. But however fuzzily one goes about this process, the fantasy route to innovation will always eventually separate the immanent world of everyday business from the transcendent world of inspiration and creation, thus separating the organization from its imagination.

If Boeddrich finds the fantasy route to innovation at one end of a spectrum, he finds ‘the technocratic route to innovation’ at the other (Boeddrich, 2004, p. 275). Here technology and organization are crucial to the generation of the new. All the information we need is somehow already there; what we need to do is make it available, to turn information into knowledge, as the slogan goes. The enormous and rapidly growing knowledge management tradition starts with this insight and sets out to solve the problem of the new as a problem of technology. This tradition cannot be accused of seeking transcendence since the new is here construed as being already inside the organization, already present within its technology and bureaucracy, often (somewhat mysteriously) described as ‘tacit knowledge’ (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). But philosophy has another name for the problem of this position: *tautology*. After all, the problem of the new is here solved by way of the problem itself. We try to invent a new technology by way of our current technology, discover new knowledge by way of our current knowledge and it should not surprise us that path dependency has become a key term in innovation research (cf. David, 1985). Once the QWERTY-keyboard was there, the fuzzy front end of keyboard innovations became significantly less fuzzy. In order to stop feeding the dog with its own tail, knowledge management theorists should, in Alexander Styhre’s acute formulation, ‘defamiliarize the belief in knowledge as being accumulated *facta bruta* turned into organizational resources through various managerial practices and operations’ (Styhre, 2003, p. 37).

In innovation theory, one is often left in either of these two (dead) ends. In the one end

we are faced with chaos and ‘a thousand flowers blooming’. The colourful expression is here owed to Kanter’s (Kanter, 2000) (mal)appropriation of Chairman Mao’s slogan for the Cultural Revolution, and this is also why we eventually have to give up this route: transcendent and cosmological ideologies are, quite literally and each on their own footing, dangerously dead ends. At the other end, then, we are left in a totally organized and perfectly manageable environment, the equally deadly ‘iron cage’ so feared by Max Weber<sup>1</sup> and Franz Kafka, where various sophisticated social technologies and up-to-date knowledge-sharing technologies (hardware, software and wetware) are assumed to *handle* the creation of the new. In each end, we are entangled in grand schemes: innovation is a big business, or a business of the big.

## Making Events Work

In the following, I want to argue that both the fantasy route to innovation and the technocracy route to innovation suffer from grand scheme delusions. Basbøll and Sørensen have discovered (albeit by a rather peculiar procedure) that ‘people often learn assemblage techniques in normal (grand narrative) episodes’, and suggest that, ‘when giving orders, always leave something completely obscured’. After all, they add parenthetically, ‘most people expect terror’ (2005, p. 133). Organization theory is by no means the only culprit here. For centuries, the young have been taught only to think big. When the new Humboldt universities were established in early nineteenth-century Europe and North America, philosophy was a happy accomplice in the important business of turning knowledge and thinking into grand narratives: everything was to derive from an originary principle (Truth) and everything was to be related to an ideal (Justice), precisely in order for every idea to unify with the highest principle, which the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel called simply the State (cf. Massumi, 1992, p. 4ff). Whatever our expectations may have been, we have all become small, mostly mediocre state philosophers subjected to what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call ‘Royal Science’. Even

<sup>1</sup> Weber warns against both the communist and the capitalist bureaucratic megamachine, strikingly investing the same biological metaphors as Kanter and Mao: ‘Not summer’s bloom lies ahead of us, but rather a polar night of icy darkness and hardness, no matter which group may triumph externally now’, Weber quoted in Ritzer, 1992, p. 132.

our present anticipation of terror is delusional. But, in opposition to Royal Science, there is a science of the detail and of the infamous, 'one of becoming and heterogeneity, as opposed to the stable, the eternal, the identical, the constant' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 361), a minor science. This is a science that, contrary to organization theory, deals with the accidental and the small. Indeed, organization theory *in toto* suffers from an obsession with 'molarity', that is, an obsession with large ossified structures (such as the Organization, the Sign and the Subject) and a view from above and from without (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 159ff). Countering the molarity of the social sciences, Deleuze and Guattari offer a view on change that is molecular. They not only take their inspiration from modern physics and mathematics, but also from sources more familiar to the field of organization theory; in particular, they read the nineteenth-century sociologist Gabriel Tarde. According to Tarde, what happens in the innovative process is that 'great constant forces . . . are given direction by small, accidental, new forces, which, by being grafted on the first ones, set into motion a new kind of periodic reproduction' (Tarde quoted in Taymans, 1950, p. 616). This 'grafting on' is not a matter of fantasizing or doing something completely different or being inspired in weird ways. Neither is it a matter of (re)installing new expensive knowledge sharing technologies or other gadgets. It is, fundamentally, a matter of work: 'Everything always comes from work, including the free gift of the idea that arrives' (Serres, 1997, p. 90).

Work expresses the body as it experiments with its last bit of energy; you *almost* work yourself to death with this or that, just to bring the matter you are working with to fruition. The French playwright Pierre Corneille would undress and roll himself up in a blanket before he started writing. Here he would sweat profusely on the premise that the 'work of genius transpires from the body like a secretion. It emerges from the glands' (Serres, 1997, p. 91). Kant famously walked the same route in Königsberg every day, but instead of feeding the commonplace prejudice of the anal-retentive character indulging his forced, bureaucratic moves, one might envision what incredible imagination and energy was harnessed in these walks. Rousseau and Diderot walked dozens of kilometres every day, and where we normally conceive a philosopher to be a degenerate, ephemeral, and ghostlike cripple, asthmatic and intoxicated, the name 'Plato' is in Greek a nickname that signifies 'broad-shouldered'. In Hellas every free spirit was preparing himself for the Games.

When work and training wears you and your colleagues out, you are close to the secret of innovation, where the body trembles:

I tremble at what exceeds my seeing and my knowing [*mon voir et mon savoir*] although it concerns the innermost parts of me, right down to my soul, down to the bone, as we say. Inasmuch as it tends to undo both seeing and knowing, trembling is indeed an experience of secrecy or of mystery, but another secret, another enigma, or another mystery comes on top of the unliveable experience, adding yet another seal or concealment to the *tremor*. (Derrida, 1995, p. 54)

The innovative event is this other mystery. It is also expressed in Baruch Spinoza's slogan, that, indeed, 'no one has yet determined what the body can do, that is, experience has not yet taught anyone what the body can do' (Spinoza, 1996, III P 2S). While the body's ultimate limit is death, the *penultimate* limit of what it can do is exactly the event. The event is always the way we appropriate our awareness (what Søren Kierkegaard termed *Ahnelser*) of what we are capable of, of what our body can do, something we can never be sure of, but catch sight of in glimpses. It is the indeterminacy of these glimpses that makes us tremble: 'A concert is being performed tonight. It is the event' (Deleuze, 1993, p. 80).

Instead of seeing new knowledge as either a god given gift that muses (i.e. highly paid 'process consultants') should bring about, or as a substance and an entity to be managed technocratically, I propose to conceive of knowledge not as an entity, but as an event, a number of actual occasions, incidents, encounters (Styhre, 2003, p. 36; cf. also Whitehead, 1978). Knowledge is a critical event, and innovation occurs when you put your event to work and multiply your crisis (Sørensen, 2004). In this sense, the event is not just what actually happens; there is a whole science to it, albeit a minor one; it has 'a shadowy and secret part that is continually subtracted from or added to its actualization: in contrast with the state of affairs, it neither begins nor ends but has gained or kept the infinite movement to which it gives consistency' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 156). As Kant (believe it!) suggested, we must revitalize thinking as a critical process, again let thinking throw life into a crisis. This crisis is an event, a minor but radical change of status in which the future is decided upon. This critical event is radical in the very etymological sense of the word: pertaining to the roots or radicles of the matter, that is, pertaining to the detailed rhizome-structure of which everything is constructed (on the rhizome, see

Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3ff). A minor science examines rhizome structures, and in the knowledge society knowledge must, as Styhre convincingly argues, be thought of as rhizomatic (cf. Styhre, 2003, p. 36). As Søren Kierkegaard understood, the event is the decision: a dangerous moment of madness but also the moment of the revolutionary leap that leaves you out of your depth, a leap of faith. This event expresses that 'something', *aloquid*, which always escapes history (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 171ff). History is what happens, but the event is *what we make of* what happens (Buchanan, 2000).

A minor science is empirical and very practical, so the question remains: which of the happenings in the world will you make something out of? As a rule of thumb, you will here want to look for the *exemplary event*. This should be an interesting event, it should be *inter-esse*, between beings, where things pick up speed: 'An example is neither general (as is a system of concepts) nor particular (as in the material to which a system is applied). It is "singular"' (Massumi, 2002, p. 17). The interesting is not always exciting; indeed, many exemplary events are boring and insignificant, infamous and even annoying. However, all this makes them so much more relevant.

## Identity Sniping

We will work with the example of the ID Sniper: an innovation in weapons design, a functional rifle designed for what today may be called homeland security purposes. At first sight, this is not the story of a radical innovation. It is imitative; let us say it makes a virtue of its path dependency. Yet, it is the fact that it is so insignificantly different from other inventions that makes all the difference. As we will see, its inventor, the Danish entrepreneur Jacob Boeskov, is going to attend a trade fair to present his innovation. It is all jolly familiar stuff in today's world: someone invents a new weapon and is going to find investors to help him put it into production.

Like any weapon, Jacob's gun has its futuristic elegance. Its design signals lightness and precision, following the trend in current weapons design to anticipate installing the weapon in a video game (arms merchandizing, if you will). The ID Sniper is an easy-assembly weapon; like another James Bond, you can bring it along in a little suitcase and assemble it when you get to the well-appointed room in the building you want to fire the gun from. The idea of the device is to shoot a suspicious individual at a long range. This will then implant a GPS-microchip into the body of the

suspect using the sniper rifle as a long distance injector. This 'VeriChip' will enter the body and stay there, causing no internal damage. Graphs accompanying the weapon depict the miniscule amount of physical pain that the target will suffer. Also, a zoom-lens attached to the rifle will take a picture of the suspect and all the information will be stored centrally.

Obviously, there is a market for this gun. With the growing popularity of 'dissidence' in Western, democratic societies, new ways of engaging with the enemy are called for. It no longer makes sense to *confine* the individual, as it did in the disciplinary society: when you have the ability (and legitimacy) to confine him, it is too late. Today, in Deleuze's 'societies of control' (1992), you must trace the individual and draw a map: to be sure, the Deleuzian vocabulary is adopted as much by the powers that be as by any resistance against them. Michel Foucault's assertion that one day this century may be known as Deleuzian is as a rule read as a praise, but it remains, in my view, ambiguous: the vision of an all-encompassing Deleuzian *Zeitgeist* beats Orwell and Huxley by far.

The story of the ID Sniper is a classical story of entrepreneurship. It starts with a brilliant idea: a tool designed for crowd control that will enable law enforcement to *prevent* criminal actions from being committed, an example of a genuine pre-emptive technology. And in yet another regard, the ID Sniper rifle resembles a classical story of innovation: it never made it to the market. The rifle never fired a shot, no urban warriors were ever hit with the VeriChip and no suspicious subjects were ever traced over continents with the software that was to accompany the product. This fate is also a fate shared by an overwhelming majority of innovations in business history (Cooper, 2001). What makes the story of the ID Sniper rifle *just a little different* from a classical story of innovation is that the entrepreneurs behind this innovation never wanted it to become a success. In fact, the same entrepreneurs investigated the possibility of patenting the product, not in order to secure the intellectual property rights *for themselves* but in order to make certain that nobody *else* ever realized the product. This, of course, turned out to be much more complicated than the development of the ID Sniper concept itself, and they had to leave it there. The goal of the enterprise was, in their own words, to 'take the essence of an imagined future, turn it into a concept and present this concept in present day reality. Report the reactions' (Boeskov, 2003, p. 10).

So, our entrepreneur deploys force – either actions of the mind or actions of the body – and by that means he gets re-actions: this is

how the innovation is put to work and how the entrepreneur multiplies his crisis. It is on account of these re-actions that it is possible to re-construct, *via negativa*, the nature of the environment into which you insert your production. In this case, the entrepreneur is investigating the nature of the politico-military complex, and is mapping out *its* body. This only confirms Frederic Jameson's claim that late capitalism works not opposed to but in accordance with the postmodern critique of unification and reason: it thrives on flux and mobility, it relentlessly produces anti-essentialism and anti-foundationalism (Jameson, 1990, p. 150ff). Its joyous side is, believe it or not, the commercials of United Colours of Benetton, and you are indeed going the other way, to the first international weapons fair hosted by the Republic of China's police authorities at the *China Police 2002* fair. Here the ID Sniper will be presented; here the innovation is put to work. Marketing, as we know, always begins before the product is produced. In fact, in the experience economy, marketing *is* the production of the product.

### Fear and Trembling in Beijing

'We were all getting scared' is the crew at Empire North's reaction to Jacob's take off for Beijing. They ask themselves what would happen if he were found out, if the league of international weapons dealers realized that an attempt was being made to dupe them. A day prior to take off, the Editor-in-Chief of *Black Box Magazine*, where Jacob's story was scheduled later to appear, renounced all responsibility for the endeavour. The fear of being 'found out' will not leave Jacob at any time during the journey to China; it is a fear, by the way, that is also prominent amongst entrepreneurial academics. This fear is only intensified by Jacob's arrival in Beijing City: 'We drive on, passing alien shining architecture. My heart is beating. I feel like shit. . . . I feel overheated in my dark suit . . . it's my armour' (Boeskov, 2003, pp. 17–18).

The feeling of alienation at the international weapons fair increases as the situation at the fair becomes more concrete, practical and empirical. There are other weapons dealers in this world; Empire North has been assigned a booth beside a company that produces armed robots. They roam around on the floor, restless, and seeking, like everybody else, attention.

Jacob finds himself in a perpetual crisis. The first body to react to this process of crisis – innovative but dangerous – is Jacob's own organism: the functions that are normally con-

trolled by the autonomous nervous system are getting out of control, a fever is coming on, together with nausea and dizziness. Control is no longer possible, and Jacob is turning his suit into a weapon in order to regain control and re-organize the body and its fluids and excrements:

I am suddenly confused; my sense of time is messed up from the jetlag. Did I oversleep?? I feel another panic attack coming on, my heart racing as if I have had too much coffee. I still have terrible stomach cramps. (Boeskov, 2003, p. 20)

Jacob ceases to be an individual and becomes a host of *dividuals* (Deleuze, 1994, p. 258), that is, singular, intensive affects, series of events, which his nervous system, that is, his habits, cannot integrate in his learned habitus. The constant tremor, which he seeks to quell with various drugs and alcohol, is not primarily a symptom of anxiety, but points to the almost non-perceptible rhythm of the body as it passes through the event. The event is now in an intense stage. It is what Deleuze terms its 'virtual phase', where everything is transformation and becoming: the actual history of incidents becomes a virtual multiplicity of events (Deleuze, 1990). This crisis is a movement that might allow for the leap of faith, and it is here that Jacob is finding the catastrophe of his time. This is how he works out his problem, and, by implication, our problem. The catastrophe is the point where the drama turns against itself, and the inevitable turn is the only inevitability to speak of: the inevitable is the singular, and the key to the event. The body cramps up, and empties itself, while it contemplates the question: what can I do? For, as Spinoza just confided to us, the body does not yet know what it can do, it does not know what it is capable of, it has not yet found the thresholds of its powers to affect and be affected. But it is rapidly finding out, and, to avoid too much innovative and painful knowledge, Jacob turns (as do we) to consumption. He finds his body craving: 'I have a desire for a cigarette, a piece of chocolate, *something*' (Boeskov, 2003, p. 16). The body is turned into the perfect consumer with an extremely volatile desire for, simply, *whatever*, just as long as it is some thing, some thing that will *take the place* of the crucial event, bringing the weapon to the weapons dealers. The rush of sugar, nicotine, drugs and alcohol takes the place of the all-too-real and laborious combats of the concrete event at the dangerous journey.

The weapons fair becomes more and more intense. Jacob seems to get closer and closer to the real thing, the turning point of the event of the fair: the limit between life and death, peace

and war. He discusses the present market situation with a Brazilian colleague, Frederico, and the business possibilities turn out to be dependant on the concrete number of deaths in a delicate way. Says Frederico: 'You know, if you don't have any international conflict, they don't need the product. If there is too much, you can't reach the market! It's a question of balance' (Boeskov, 2003, p. 28).

At one point, a French diplomat wants to know more about the weapon, and approaches the ID Sniper booth. He is suspicious about its functionality; after all, it *is* a weapons fair. Jacob breaks into a sweat. The French diplomat wants to know if the GPS chip does not cause damage to the intestines of the demonstrators, and he asks about the calibre of the gun. Jacob has absolutely no idea of what calibre means: 'No, no, not inches, centimetres', he hears himself saying, 'We might use gas...'. He feels blood rushing to his head. The diplomat leaves, grinning, 'Well, just shoot 'em in the butt', his head turning one last time, looking back at the flabbergasted inventor.

Towards the end of the fair Empire North's booth is approached by civil servants from the Chinese authorities.<sup>2</sup> Jacob eventually finds himself in a meeting paired up with a high-ranking Chinese official. She wants to know whether Empire North faces problems with legislation in regards to a potential production of the ID Sniper. Since a production currently does not seem realistic in Europe because of human rights bureaucracy, she offers to move the whole factory, its employees and their families to China, at whatever cost necessary. Jacob's reaction is immediate: 'I shudder. This is not in the script. I am on thin ice. I must stop this' (Boeskov, 2003).

### The Power of the False

The script of this exemplary event was a hoax from the beginning, the script was false. In the exemplary event, the narrator (the Empire North CEO) has, according to Deleuze and Guattari, no principle of truth, only of relevance: the narrator 'is something only by being something else... He is a girl only by being an old man who is miming or simulating the girl' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984, p. 87). Or he is a weapons developer only by being an artist who is miming or simulating the weap-

<sup>2</sup> In other performances (for instance at MOMA in New York in 2004), Jacob Boeskov has documented that also Western authorities have shown great interest in the ID Sniper.

ons developer. Where Nietzsche talks about the power of the false, Kierkegaard talks about the power of delusion, and his narrator 'sees whether he can delude the other by the imitation and carry him along into the subsequent development, which is his own creation by virtue of the idea' (Kierkegaard, 1980, p. 55) Is Jacob a liar? Are *we*, when we – without much practical experience – teach entrepreneurship in business school or practice consultancy in high-tech businesses or, each in our own singular way, manage creativity and innovations in organizations? Let us say we are minor philosophers, that we are *becoming* entrepreneurs, which is our *own* creation by virtue of the idea.

In the exemplary event of this paper, the declared purpose was: 'Take the essence of an imagined future, turn it into a concept and present this concept in present day reality. Report the reactions'. But what we find out here is that the most important reactions are not to be found among the innovator's contemporaries, the Chinese and French consumers of high-tech weaponry, but in the innovator himself. Jacob does not know that his weapon will work. Indeed, we want to say he does not know *how* it works, nor even how it *might possibly* work. And yet, he has both an image and a concept of it. Can we say that he does not *know* it will work and his anxiety is that he *suspects* it will? That seems to be the point of this story. In the story of the ID Sniper, it is this suspicion that provides the relevant locus of organizational transformation. It is never confirmed (for that would be terminal) but it is continually intensified. Jacob's ignorance is monumental – he measures calibre in centimetres, he proposes gas as an alternative – and yet he gets the idea across. After all, his potential investors at the weapons fair also suspect it will work: the French diplomat is no doubt finally disabused of this suspicion; the Chinese, however, understand the 'technicality' to be a legal one.

Jacob's idea becomes increasingly *interesting*, *inter-esse*, between-the-beings that descend on Beijing, and in the middle is where things pick up speed (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25). There was always something missing from the ID Sniper – reality, we might say: the Real. And in the heat of his panic it is anything ('something') that the inventor craves to make his anxiety go away. He is experiencing the multiplicity flows, the connectivity of desire that just *is* creativity. He is becoming fluid; he is caught in the middle; he is picking up speed.

At the climax he shudders. 'I must stop this'. For if until then he had not known but suspected that the ID Sniper would work he now remains equally ignorant but suspects that it

will *not* work, could *never* work. He is now here: nowhere. It is not that the internal damage would be too great (Hell! He can always shoot them in the ass; he can always use gas . . .). It is that the VeriChip has nothing to verify, there is nothing there to take a picture of, nothing for the software to track. The ID sniper might target an 'identity' but it will never find its mark. The chip will pass right through the suit *and* the body. Jacob becomes anything – *something*. The innovator has become *aloquid* – a liquid. Everything flows, said Heraclitus famously, and Luce Irigaray specifies the nature of the fluidity: 'the fluid is always a relation of excess or lack *vis-à-vis* unity' (Irigaray quoted in Styhre, 2003, p. 35; cf. also Linstead, 2000). This excess is not the 'welfare' tsunami of consumption and obesity or the yearly pay-raise for cool-hunters. This excess is the indistinct detail, which is the sign of creativity and transformation.

Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Anxiety* was originally titled *Ahnelser*, which is Danish for 'suspicion', 'presentiment', or vague 'sense of something'; anxiety, or the sickness unto death, is the ultimate threshold while the pre-sentiment is the penultimate limit, and Kierkegaard's work with titles displays this zone both of indistinction and indecision. There is, as Jacob's exemplary event amply shows, suffering connected to this passage, from which one will not re-emerge before life itself has become a problem: I suffer, hence I change (Serres, 1997). This passage is, if only seldom recognized as such, a veritable moment of danger, and it is in this apotheosis of the virtual event itself that new knowledge is created.

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