

The dream for Perfection and related stakes

Session 5 reminder

EDM DSBA – T3 2020 2021

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Session 5 structure

- Restatement on the course structure : feedback on your projects and adding 3 oral presentations of your final papers session 8
- Introduction : roundtable on learnt topics and expectations
 - Back to the relations between norms and behaviour : the dynamic is complex – sticking to each side (reflexion or reflexes) proves simplistic – cf the real complexity is about the *relation* between the necessity to recognize complexity and the need for simplicity
- Back to the Government case silence, people not speaking their minds and not asking a single question neither the Middel Managers nor the Senior Manager – a huge ethical consequence, the Employees suffering awful labour conditions

Session 5 structure

- The « Eichmann » problem : obeying the rule for the sake of obeying the rule
- The necessity to question the ongoing reality
- The humanist assumption of control as our taken for granted « culture »
- Back to humility and trust

On the course organization

- The next session: working on your final collective papers
- Sessions 7 and half part of 8 : case studies :
 - Session 7 : the Tenerife and Hudson cases – cf « *The Vulnerable System : An Analysis of the Tenerife Air Disaster* », cf the course moodle, « session 6 ».
 - Session 8 : the Challenger case – « American Space Paralysis », cf the course moodle, « session 4 ».
- Second part of session 8, and sessions 9 & 10 : oral final presentations.
 - 3 teams session 8
 - 4 teams per session sessions 9 & 10

Roundtable

- **On norms and behaviours :**

- *Norms* are « simplistic » when we exclusively take them for granted : norms may sometimes be either wrong or not adapted to the circumstances
- *Behaviours* are complex because they result from internalized and made reflexes norms – they become hidden.
 - *But when behaviours become an exclusively spontaneous comfort zone, they become simplistic.* And when we try to frame new better norms while questioning our previous reflexes (behaviour), the new norms to frame are « complex » for the simple reason that *we do not yet know them*, we are inventing them

Roundtable

- **How in practice to favour that people make steps back ?**
 - Make people learn – and constantly re-learn – *how to talk* about what they know *how to do*.
 - As our competences sooner or later become unconscious, we un-learn how to talk of them. We as a consequence become short-term oriented. Whereas talking again of what became made of series of reflexes *makes us re-consider the whole picture, re-understand ourselves, and favors a real renewed self-awareness*.
- Favour debriefing of *successful* operations. Not only of failiures and projects, but as well of past and present *successes*.

Roundtable

- When, thanks to talking of their competences, people re-understand themselves, they will become able :
 - *To share their know-how* – e.g. to really work *in teams*, collectively, not any more only *against* the others or ignoring them, but *together with* them -,
 - *To accept - if not favor - changes*

Roundtable

- As *any* competence potentially becomes a reflexe, nothing may never be definitely taken for granted.
- In the best cases, the learning – unlearning – relearning dynamic lasts forever. Cf session 4 reminder, slide including « *I got it ! We need to embody the reflexe to quit reflexes* » etc.

The Government Department case

- A disciplinary culture and a pyramidal structure
- A Senior Manager who was told that the structure is transparent
- Middle managers who fear to ask any question and make a same assumption : « *If I am the only one in ensuring a clear feedback, I may be sanctioned. I will not be that clear* ».
- The Senior Manager : « *No news, good news* », « *Business as usual* »
- As a result, no reaction to the Employees questions, requests etc.
- A vicious circle starts, towards a global and deepened dissatisfaction.

« Nul n'est méchant volontairement »

- « *Nobody is voluntarily bad* », Socrates
- « *Forgive them, they don't know what they are doing* », Jesus-Christ
- Why insisting on this ?
 - To make each of us feeling responsible
 - To avoid good conscience
 - To prevent accusations and identifying scapegoats
 - To favour steps-back
- The Middle Managers did *not* want to hurt the Employees

Hannah Arendt on Eichmann : « The banality of Evil »

- The prosecution : « *I did what I was told to do* »
- Becoming a « *yes man* » is a universal possibility, nurtured by what E. De La Boétie identifies in his « *Discours of Volunteer Servitude* »
- We are all responsible for what we accept
- It is sometimes necessary *not* to obey the rule
- We are all responsible for what we *understand*.

On « The Banality of Evil »

- **Arendt, La Boétie** : all the humans are potentially idiots. *A constant need of steps back*
- **Camus** : The « perfection » problem : A. Camus on the XXst Century revolutions (*The Rebel, L'homme révolté*) :
- The dream for perfection and the new technologies
 - The « technocapitalism » is an *extremism* : *getting rid of the past, worldwide, to the benefit of « definitive solutions »*

About new technologies : the Perrow – Weick discussion

- **Ch. Perrow** on « Normal Accidents » (1984) : the technological systems will become so deeply tight-coupled, being the future « uncertain », sooner or later, wrong data will « enter » the systems, and, through a domino effect, make them collapse
- **K. Weick** : Perrow would be right, would the systems be able to be *only* technological – e.g. with absolutely no humans at their origins, maintenance, operation, use, etc. But this never happens : the so-called technical or technological systems are always technical *and* human. Through their very vulnerability and capacity to be wrong, humans introduce the necessary *flexibility* in the so-called « socio »-technical systems.

On the assumption of control (« Perfection »)

- **Humanism** : Perfection : assuming people do master all what they do – and that this would be the dream – *what for ?* Does it make sense ?
- The humanist intention, origin and meaning : it is possible, and ethical, to aiming at mastering nature. The Humanists are the first one in answering « yes » to the two question : « *is it possible to master nature ? Should humans try to do this ?* »
- The two steps of globalization : 1) the « control » culture spreading worldwide, 2) Back to the control / non control tension
- **Vulnerability, Finitude** : Making real steps back is about an *infinite process* – always to be tried and tried again
- Pascal B., « *Humans are not angels nor beasts, but misfortune wants that when trying to be angels they become beasts* »
- Back to moderation : any decision is to be taken *here and now* – value small and local wins, in a complex world, you never know what may happen

On the tension between control and non control

- When it comes to ethics, we need to take into account uncertainty, vulnerability, ignorance, trying, taking our responsibilities
- Perfection for the sake of perfection does not make sense : we humans are not gods.
 - What makes sense is a balanced life *between* control (« perfection », short-termism, etc) *and* non control – uncertainty, complexity, ignorance, discoveries, long-term stakes
- Keeping in mind the tension between trust and humility – with tenacity, and having in mind the crucial difficulty to really understand each other (cf the communication issue)