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**Self and Other in Everyday Existence: A Mystery Not A
Problem**

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ABSTRACT

Diversity management is an established theme in managerial ideology. This paper offers a cultural-historical analysis of the emergence and nature of diversity management ideas and practices. These elements are combined with aspects of philosophical critique derived from an existential phenomenological perspective. We argue that diversity management is an attempt to capture the elementary experience of self and other in the sphere of managerial control and to subvert the equal opportunities agenda. We find that the rhetorical moves of diversity management merely recycle old ideas and techniques from other currents (such as organisational culture management, strategic HRM, participation, empowerment, communication, teamwork). Diversity management transforms the elementary lived experience of self and other in the world into a source of organisational 'problems', of 'pathology', and thus breaches the basic space of personal ethical engagement. Using elements of Heidegger's and Levinas' philosophical anthropologies, we argue that this elementary level of our being in the world, the encounter with 'others', is irreducibly mysterious, but not problematic, or pathologic, or a source of dis-organisation; rather, it is intensely personal and thus beyond any possibility of formal rationalisation and generalisation. In other words, human difference is not manageable in the sense in which managerial ideology conceptualises it in diversity management.

Key words: diversity management; self; other; mystery; Heidegger; Levinas

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[*] A paraphrase on Gabriel Marcel's title 'Self-Realisation: A Mystery Not A Problem' (published in Lachs, 1981)

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INTRODUCTION

Managing diversity has become an established feature of business textbooks, corporate literature, accrediting professional associations (such as the CIPD in the UK), NGOs (such as the Work Foundation), and management consultancy services. Diversity has been absorbed as a domain for managerial intervention in all types of organisation. Although it might vanish like other management fads, the very *idea* of diversity as an object of management is an indicator of more profound trends in contemporary management and culture. The notion that human difference ought to be actively governed reveals important aspects of our view about the fundamental relationship between self and other in the world. Despite being of interest for philosophical anthropology, diversity management does not lend itself to direct philosophical investigation simply because it is not in itself a philosophical elaboration. There are, however, substantive benefits in trying to develop a historical image of diversity management's multilayered conceptual origins and implications which in turn might lend itself to a philosophical commentary.

Our questions focus upon the specificity of diversity as a management object: what are its sphere and its determinations? What conceptual moves and re-alignments made human diversity a management theme? How is it constituted as an object of theoretical and practical rationalisations by management academics, consultants, and organisations? The paper combines elements of historical and cultural analysis of diversity management with aspects of philosophical critique derived from an existential phenomenological perspective. Philosophical interest in diversity management stems from the fact that its sources lie deeper within current assumptions about what it means to be human and unique in the world. A certain disorientation about the nature of existence seems to pervade western cultures. It has become harder and harder to agree on what makes us all the same yet unique. Public discourses reflect this unease but not in a passive manner. Rather, every social sector is rendered open to new forms of contestation, appropriation and manipulation. Such is the case of diversity management as a substitute for emancipatory movements. Managerialism seems to seize instinctively every important sphere of social and cultural negotiation and exploit it as a resource for reaffirming the status quo. Diversity management is such a new arena of possibilities for capturing and reconfiguring the personal experience of self and other.

At this level, the idea of a contrast between diversity management's conception of self and other, and existence philosophy seemed to be a natural curiosity. In this chapter, philosophical ideas are used to interrogate concrete social practices and concerns and to investigate conceptual mechanisms of management ideology. The analysis has two parts. In the first, we discuss three different but related aspects of diversity management: its origins as a subversion of the equal opportunities agenda; its insertion into a familiar set of ideas which reassert the 'right to manage'; and its use as another pretext for deploying already familiar technologies and ideologies of normalisation or homogenisation. In the second part, we contrast the reduction of human diversity in management with a perspective opened up by existential phenomenology. In particular, we draw on ideas from Heidegger and Levinas to reflect on difference from radically different premises: human diversity understood as an ontological 'given' of existence, a reality ultimately unproblematic. Difference is a

fundamental axis of the human way of being in the world, a source of mystery, of aporias and of tension – but it cannot be characterised as an inherent social or organisational 'problem', or as a source of 'organisational pathology' and disorder.

Seen from this angle, the management of diversity assaults human difference. The manner of this assault is not new; it shares fundamental features with other subject-oriented managerial ideologies. The idea of diversity perpetuates key tendencies in management theorising: an abhorrence of open human possibilities; an equal abhorrence of views which take tension (in whatever form) to be central to human existence and a tendency to treat any form of tension as pathological; an abhorrence of relinquishing managerial agency combined with a tendency to disempower other organisational constituencies – and the list may continue.

The concept of diversity in management opens up a specific window on wider current cultural currents. As a *sui generis* commentary on the relationship between self and other, diversity management can be associated with what Hannah Arendt called modern man's 'world alienation'. Her thesis is that the secularised modern individual has not come closer to this world, but is rather farther away from everything, alienated from the world rather than himself as Marx argues (Arendt 1958: 254). The consequence of this 'worldlessness' is '…an attempt to reduce all experiences, with the world as well as with other human beings, to experiences between man and himself.' (ibid.) The appropriation of the sense of 'other' by managerial 'expertise' is just another sign of world alienation rather than a liberating intervention by managers as key historical agents.

THE MANAGEMENT OF DIVERSITY: ORIGINS, THEMES, PERSPECTIVES

The addition of diversity to the management agenda during the 1990s should not be a surprise. Managerial ideology in the 1980s and 1990s focused upon subject-oriented technologies: from culture, quality, participation, empowerment, teamwork, to individual and collective learning, on to innovation, knowledge, ethics, and so on. They represent a tendency to incorporate more and more aspects of individual and collective life into the managerial prerogative. A new direction emerged in management: the expansion of managerial ideas into multiple areas of subjectivity which have become 'disembedded from tradition and are open to capture and manipulation' (Roberts 2002: 18). The multiple expropriation of subjectivity has transformed managerial discourse into a new form of guardianship of identity, or at least of its current sources. This trend in the production of managerial ideas is so prevalent, in fact, that commentators such as Roberts (2002) argue that we are facing a new kind of appropriation of the world by managerialism. The 'managerial conversion' of the world-image is leading to the emergence of a new fantasy managers have of themselves as established, proven, qualified 'global leaders'. But, as Roberts argues, there are far deeper implications beneath this phantasy with regard to the emergence of a new myth of world history: 'In a globalised and, above all, in a *managed* world the expert suppression of contradiction… becomes feasible' (Roberts 2002: 17). Technically, this is precisely what management ideas aimed at in the last twenty years: the possibility of corporate cultures without tension, of teams without tension, of flexibility without tension, of organisations 'learning' or innovating without tension, and so on. It is not therefore surprising that diversity itself would be

perceived as a legitimate target for the suppression of the contradiction it inherently refers to, in the name of an even more 'unitary organisation'.

The shift from 'equal opportunities' to 'diversity management' in the 1990s

On the surface, it appears that diversity management emerged as a mere reoccupation of the place of anti-discrimination movements in the 1960s and 1970s. However, there is more to this ideological shift than meets the eye. The convenient appropriation of the equal opportunities agenda by management ideology via the category of 'diversity' allowed corporations to seize the emancipation agenda away from grassroots origins, as well as to claim high moral ground in the process (see, for example, Kandola and Fullerton (2001: 6-18) who summarise this argument on behalf of management ideology). Diversity is thematised in management following the lines drawn by previous social struggles for equality. It has now become a substitute for the equal opportunities agenda in the workplace.

But is the management of diversity with its emphasis on *differences* the same with the defence of rights to an *equal* social, political, economic and cultural playing field for all members of society? Emancipation from different forms of discrimination by race, gender, ethnic background, religion, age, or sexual orientation in Western societies from the 1960s onward has been perceived as part of the natural evolution of universal understanding of *human freedom* as a social reality. To mark the historical extension of autonomy (or 'freedom') as central value of western cultures, new modalities of social engagement between groups traditionally unequal were required. The 1970s and 1980s were marked by political, legislative, economic and ideological processes aimed to redress imbalances and create new ways in which the basic freedom to enjoy equal opportunities for the pursuit of a meaningful personal life could be realised. But the most interesting aspect of equal opportunities is that it is an attempt to reduce differences between certain groups in the context of basic social arrangements. To this extent, the anti-discrimination movements aimed to prevent forms of differentiation between people, to homogenise and integrate rather than emphasise differences. This nuance was not, however, deciphered by those who saw diversity as an opportunity to re-assert the Thatcherite 'right to manage'.

The workplace was anyway one of the central spaces in which emancipation movements manifested themselves. But the debate about difference and its place in the lives of organisational members took place in a haphazard, uncoordinated fashion and it unsurprisingly lead to a contestation of roles in the process of establishing equality of opportunities. Employees and employers, minority members and their 'others' are still locked in a struggle to determine who has the right to mediate and own the process of emancipation. The question is whether this struggle is not subverted by ideas such as diversity management which mark the final step toward institutional occupation of this terrain. In other words, the original source of the struggle for equality, the oppressed, was replaced by managers who transformed the agenda of emancipation into that of diversity. This transformation can be interpreted as an appropriation of the emancipation agenda by the 'oppressor'. Instead of workers claiming to own the struggle for equality, it is now management that claims to be actively pursuing the celebration of diversity for the benefit of the workforce. Yet, somehow, neither party seems to have been really aware of what was happening with the idea of difference as a premise for de-differentiation, for equality.

This unawareness is in itself important and can be situated in the wider cultural atmosphere of the 1990s in which society became increasingly managerialistic in style and managed in practice. The demise of a collective sense of what 'the workforce' means (left by the New Right onslaught against the unions in the 1980s) created renewed the space into which management could step. Moreover, a longer process of transformation of the modern consciousness came to bear a certain kind of fruit: the first generations of 'total consumers' (or 'all-consuming selves') entered the workplace. Young men and women whose consciousness is dominated by ideas about existence shaped almost exclusively by reference to *consumption* writ large (with all that it entails: a certain type of economic rationalisation of life, individualism, secularism, a conception of self-sacrifice as pathological, etc. – aspects very well described in Bruckner, 2000) entered corporate organisations. The roots of this new individual consciousness are much deeper, however, extending from the secularisation of conceptions of life as a temporal occurrence, to the rise of a new sense of self as an almost entirely controllable project. This interpretation is congruent with the idea of 'soft capitalism' as latest cultural phase of capitalism (see, for example, Heelas 2001, Thrift 1997, as well as, indirectly, Bruckner 2000). But the foundations of the modern reconceptualisation of the self cannot be understood in isolation from the more general context of modernity. Charles Taylor's argument is that the modern self's 'affirmation of ordinary life' against traditional moral frameworks leads to a fragmentation of the 'space for moral decisions' without historical precedent (Taylor 1989: 19-24). This modern moral space is one in which orientation has not just lost its traditional articulation, but it is 'inarticulate' par excellence (ibid.). In this 'inarticulate', but viable moral space, it is possible to insert Roberts' (2002) argument that modern subjectivity is open to capture and manipulation in an increasingly managed society. The framing of existence in terms of cycles of production and consumption opens a domain which is absorbed in various forms by the managerial process as current matrix of cultural ordering, but also as matrix which shapes the experience of self as a project whose reflection will be found in the spheres of consumption, enterprise, and of an 'expert-engineered' individuality.

New generations of 'human resources' are fertile ground for managerial ideas which appropriate more and more of subjectivity. The 1990s can be seen as a period in which management ideas underwent a shift from an earlier focus on the mass-production of standardised objects to a concern with mass-producing standardised subjects. If the original legitimation of management was its capacity to deliver unprecedented kinds of objects, its current basis seems to be the terrain of subjectivity and management's capacity to mould it in ways unknown before. This may explain to some extent the exponential proliferation of management ideas focused on reconfiguring and carving up subjectivity to suit the purpose of legitimising managerial interventions. Today, there are few aspects of subjectivity which have not been touched upon somehow by management. From motivation to culture, from participation to empowerment, from training and development to lifelong learning, from competence to knowledge, there are few management ideas which are not mainly oriented toward sectioning, re-sectioning and appropriating human subjectivity.

A similar process occurred in relation to 'equal opportunity' policies as measures against discrimination in the workplace. Because, in itself, no policy could completely

resolve multiple and complex historical crises such as those of inequality, the very emergence of a new problematic did create the opportunity for management to extend its reach into another aspect of subjectivity. This is due perhaps to a peculiar quality of management ideology: the ability to feed off any crisis and emerge re-legitimised and expanded in new areas of social and personal life (see Bruckner 2000: 83).

This is precisely what happened: 'diversity' has occupied the rhetorical space of 'equal opportunities', a phenomenon widely debated by, for instance, Liff and Wajcman (1996), Miller (1996), Webb (1997), or Kirton and Greene (2000). Therefore diversity management established its territory by taking over the axes of equal opportunity struggles: gender, race, religion, age, ethnic background, sexual orientation. The amount of literature which contributes to this positioning is daunting: Roosevelt Thomas (1992), Stitch (1998), Thomas et al. (1999), Adler and Izraeli (1994), Cox (1994), Henderson (1994), Baytos (1995), Zemke et al. (2000), Fernandez and Davis (1998), Dickens and Dickens (1991), Sonnenschein and Bell (1999), Kandola and Fullerton (2001).

Whereas diversity management started off by denying the equal opportunities' depth and range, by contesting its agenda, it ends up drawing its main territory along precisely the same lines. This appears paradoxical, but it is not, in fact. Through diversity management, corporations seek to stabilise the issues of emancipation and discrimination developing managerial schemas aimed to conciliate sources of political and legal tension which can be very costly in a litigious society. Another possible interpretation is that diversity management is an instinctive political gesture whose goal is to disconnect contentious issues from the idea of 'struggle' by assuming an active stance regarding the defence of employees' welfare.

Diversity and its rhetorical potential; the expansion of management's sphere of influence

The conceptual shift from equal opportunities to diversity management is not a simple change of terms. This move is neither mechanical, nor static; it allows new substantive and sustained moves in both corporate ideology and practices. This section explores some of the horizons opened up by diversity management.

The idea of managing diversity has generated a new rhetorical space for management to shape the sense of self via pseudo-understandings of the 'other'. It allows the expansion of managerial intervention through collective categories of traditional equal opportunities (gender, race, ethnic background) into the more delicate sphere of individual uniqueness. This creates the possibility of yet more reconfigurations of subjectivity as well as offering reinforcements for subject positions established in the last decade: demands to integrate in organisational cultures, to assume responsibilities and to occupy specific subject positions in relation to others, to submit to therapeutic courses of personal development in order to increase harmony, etc.

The terms 'diversity' and 'management' have certain key properties which enable them to overcome some of the limitations of 'equal opportunities'. The latter implied an acceptance of a prior crisis (of inequality) and an associated acceptance of guilt for that crisis on behalf of institutions. It allowed the workforce (amongst other constituencies) to act in the name of its own causes. By contrast, management

ideologies have an instinctive tendency to avoid vocabularies which imply accepting responsibility for crises. They also have a tendency to conceptualise the world of work as one in which managers are the active agents and the workforce a passive receptor of 'enlightened' practices. 'Diversity management' is a category which offers both an escape from the responsibility of the pre-emancipation era, as well as the possibility for a new and extended platform for managerial intervention.

Diversity has also created the rhetorical basis for a positive projection of managerial intentions. Diversity is a word which no longer invokes crisis; diversity is part of life and management can show yet again how generous it is in 'discovering', understanding and celebrating another aspect of employees' lives. Hence, diversity allows management ideologues to claim increased ethical legitimacy for their work of liberating individuality from constraining practices. The following excerpt from a speech entitled 'We Cannot Rest' given to students of the Maynard Institute in 1999 illustrates this point:

> 'How do we make sure that we have people on our staffs who understand different cultures, who can inspire soul searching, who can provide robust debate, who through their passionate pleas will force us to always think in terms of all segments of our communities and not just one or two?' (Favre 1999)

In Siemens' 'Guiding Principles for Promoting and Managing Diversity – 2001' we read:

> 'Diversity is an invaluable source of talent, creativity and experience. It comprises all the differences in culture, religion, nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, age and social origin - in short, everything that makes the individual singular and unique within society. Diversity improves competitiveness by enlarging the potential for ideas and innovation. Diverse teams addressing problems from varied perspectives will be more productive and achieve better solutions. We will benefit from the potential of diversity not only in a global context, but also at all levels within countries, locations and teams. Diversity is a business imperative and part of our social responsibility as well. It must become an integral part of our corporate culture world-wide and thereby position Siemens as a global employer of choice.' (Siemens Corporation 2001)

This position is one of visionary breakthrough, of discovery, of a new start. Other ideologies too have been invested with hopes for future 'salvation'. This explains in part the rapid adoption of diversity as a theme in strategy statements. Such examples are evidence of the general tendency in the managerial rhetoric accompanying the 'discovery' of diversity in the workplace. They show the use of diversity as proof of progress in management understanding, as well as making possible its insertion into already familiar ideologies of unitary corporations.

An illustrative example is provided by Kandola and Fullerton's volume *Diversity in Action* published by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) in the UK in 1994. The volume has been reprinted more than five times since original publication. It displays typical rhetorical moves through which diversity management

appropriates and then subverts the equal opportunities axes. The volume begins with a chapter devoted precisely to this purpose:

> 'Our view is that diversity has to be reconsidered as something different from equal opportunities and not as merely a new label for an old concept.
>
> We also feel that the time is ripe for a reconsideration of the conventional approaches to equal opportunities. Equal opportunities, it is often said, is about change. It is rather ironic, therefore, to find that this slogan is not inherent in the concept of equal opportunities itself. The body of ideas representing conventional wisdom in equal opportunities has not changed in possibly the last 15 years.' (Kandola and Fullerton 2001: 11)

In detailing the differences between diversity management and equal opportunities, the authors open up two avenues. On the one hand, they suggest that it is the role of management to appropriate the emancipation agenda: 'Managing diversity, however, is seen as being the concern of all employees, especially managers, within an organisation' (Kandola and Fullerton 2001: 10). The traditional roles of the emancipatory struggles are thus inverted: the 'oppressed' are gradually but tolerantly marginalised (whilst being also totalised), and managers made prime guardians and agents of emancipation.

On the other hand, the use of traditional lines of engagement, such as gender, race and so on, is crucially expanded to incorporate individual subjectivity in general as a domain of concern for diversity management: 'First, managing diversity is not just about concentrating on issues of discrimination, but about ensuring that all people maximise their potential and their contribution to the organisation' (Kandola and Fullerton 2001: 9). Such statements deliver at a stroke both an expansion of the managerial prerogative to the whole of the workforce as well as an uncompromising business legitimation and benchmark for the purposes of diversity management. The alignment of business and human purposes is a very familiar rhetorical move featuring heavily in the age of "unitary organisations" aiming to establish a positive causal link between managerial intervention, business prosperity and the welfare of all employees. Even if it seems just a detail, this kind of statement belongs to the tendency mentioned by Roberts (2002) of the inherent direction of managerial ideology to sustain the possibility of a world in which all social contradictions have been suppressed.

This kind of discourse has additional properties: it allows management to expand its reach beyond the simple implementation of anti-discrimination measures to a more active engagement with 'individual uniqueness'. Diversity now extends to engage with the subject both as a social and as an individual being. Diversity no longer confines management action to the particular categorisation of equal opportunities; it now aims to fill a much wider rhetorical space than equal opportunities could ever hope to. It allows management to reach intimate elements of personal experience and use them to re-configure connections between employees and organisations. Interesting examples include the relationship made more and more between diversity and change: people are told that embracing diversity will enable the individual to embrace organisational change too (see Siemens Corporation 2003). Equally important is the link made (unsurprisingly) between diversity, strategy and

competitive advantage (see Fannie Mae 2003). Yet all these interventions and recontextualisations continue to draw their legitimation mainly from the emancipation movement by focusing on the so-called "minority groups" established on the basis of gender, race, religion, or ethnic background. This is only apparently paradoxical; it is, rather, a defence for a weak yet very aggressive managerial argument.

Kandola and Fullerton synthesise these tendencies in their work. They specify that diversity management is more sophisticated than equal opportunities by contrasting the two as extremes of ideological continua. They use a convenient rhetorical tactic: a table which pitches one against the other as negative and positive poles of action. Diversity management has a 'qualitative focus', it 'assumes pluralism', it is 'proactive', it embraces 'all differences'; equal opportunities occupies the opposite positions whose terminology paints a negative, defensive stance: 'quantitative', 'reactive', etc. (Kandola and Fullerton 2001: 13). These elements are unsurprising; they have featured in the rise and legitimation of other management models such as TQM, culture management, or the learning organisation. But their predictability only proves the repeatable and established nature of mainstream managerial rhetoric. In its constitution as a legitimate basis for intervention, literature such as Kandola and Fullerton's is actively producing new horizons for management by using diversity as a platform. For example, they argue that 'managing diversity concentrates on movement within the organisation, the culture of the organisation, and the meeting of business objectives' (Kandola and Fullerton 2001: 9-10). Gradually, in rather few pages, the whole of the organisation is reconfigured as space for intervention in the name of diversity management, and the latter is linked strongly to already established arguments and management objects such as culture, business needs, strategy, missions and visions, movement and change, communications.

Indeed, Kandola and Fullerton do offer a technology for thinking about the social and rhetorical space of diversity management in which interventions are necessary. They propose an eight-part checklist for diversity management under the heading 'A validated strategic model' (Kandola and Fullerton 2001: 70). Characterised as valid and strategic, the model is thus prescribed as a territory for concerted intervention:

> 'While the eight elements… are outlined as separate components,… the model itself should not be seen as sequential. Rather, we would expect to see one or more of the elements being actioned at any one time throughout the organisation.' (Kandola and Fullerton 2001: 70)

The eight elements of the 'strategy web' are predictable: 'organisational vision, top management commitment, auditing and assessment of needs, clarity of objectives, clear accountability, effective communication, coordination of activity, evaluation' (Kandola and Fullerton 2001: 71). Equally familiar is the spatial metaphor used to connect these concepts: the image of a spider's web is created by uniting the eight elements with parallel threads. As always, a spider's web carries with it the (cultural) impression of a forceful conceptual whole from which thought cannot escape, to which it is forced to surrender and make it its reference framework, and whose guardian is always watching and ready to pounce.

In themselves, the eight elements revisit and recycle old managerial terrain for a new purpose. In detailing how each element ought to be implemented, it demonstrates that

diversity management reproduces technologies already familiar from previous currents such the control of organisational cultures, improving communications, enlarging participation, or generating empowerment. The apparent simplicity and pragmatism of this model are as deceiving as any in the similar vein. And last, but not least, just as important is the social context of the text: the volume is linked to CIPD which is an accrediting body for HRM professionals.

Diversity as source of tension, problems, and conflict requiring normalisation and control

What kind of managerial action does a model like Kandola and Fullerton's suggest ought to take place in the name of diversity? A cursory glance reveals how usual techniques of normalisation (or homogenisation) are recycled and reused in the process of 'taming' difference, of re-aligning the *unique* within the *homogenous* (the setting of categories, of rules, and active programming through training). The 'technical' aspects of diversity management display the inherent tendency in management to treat complex, intractable, open aspects of human existence as sources of tension and pathology. This tendency is hidden on the rhetorical surface by a tone of visionary celebration of human growth and potential offered in the general textual material accompanying techniques of intervention. But, underneath, these techniques betray the frailty of managerial understanding – or misunderstanding – of diversity. These tools give away something essential about the real sense of what diversity means for management and organisations: namely, that diversity is in fact a disruption of order, a source of problems. They provide sequences of training programmes and managerial interventions whose underlying aim is to re-normalise the workforce under a new ideological banner: 'everybody is diverse, or unique – just like everybody else!'. Diversity management is actually an oxymoron: it aims to normalise heterogeneity.

The assimilation of diversity into the sphere of organisational normality is based on a series of technologies of subjectivity that have been used in association with all the other managerial 'discoveries' of subjectivity over the last twenty years. The techniques associated with enlarging participation, empowerment, culture, teamwork, project, or knowledge management, are re-inserted as part of diversity management. They represent management's 'basic instinct': to continuously impose normality using (fashionable) images which claim the generosity of management discourses.

But how can diversity be reconciled with normality? How can the irreducibly heterogeneous be homogenised? The very idea seems fatally flawed. A recent management textbook offers a candid glimpse of how this logical problem is not perceived by those who present the diversity management agenda: 'Workforce diversity means that organisations are becoming more heterogeneous in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity. But the term encompasses *anyone who varies from the so-called norm*' (Robins 2003: 15, emphasis added). Sentences like this betray the defensive managerial nature of diversity management in action: its purpose is to actively maintain the 'normality' of production systems against the threat of increased heterogeneity. But the question is, who does *not* vary from the norm? How can 'unique individual potential' be celebrated if it is at the same time seen as a source of deviancy, a potential threat to normality? This paradoxical position does not seem to

deter anybody however in the pursuit of a managerial solution to the so-called emergence of diversity.

One possibility to understand this is to examine the kinds of calculative technologies prescribed as solutions to the problems raised by diversity in organisations. Kandola and Fullerton (2001) accompany each element in their model with checklists of actions and techniques for implementing diversity management criteria. These techniques are in essence modalities of stabilising diversity through specification, categorisation and rationalisation. Each technique requires a visible statement of intention on behalf of management (how it sees the solution to any potential problem generated by diversity) and a procedure of resolving it (from assessment of organisational needs, to allocation of resources, on to procedures of intervention and evaluation of results).

Developing a schema for managerial action implies fixing the phenomenon in some controllable way through (a) certain modes of categorisation, crystallisation, and rationalisation; and (b) evaluative techniques which specify the relationship between certain 'real' situations and an ideal state of normality. The elements of the model spell out some of these aspects of diversity management. The appropriation of categories such as race, gender, disability, or ethnicity offer the limiting devices which create the territory in which diversity management applies. They are convenient for management (despite the confrontational debate through which they were appropriated). They make visible, they individualise an otherwise intractable dimension of human existence. Identity (and difference, of course) is defined along the most visible contours of the person: skin colour, biological sex or sexual preference, other medical-biological determinations (in the case of disabilities of all kinds – in which the mind is equally biologically defined). Difference becomes a matter of evaluating the 'distance' between any person and the (ideal) white male Anglo-Saxon measure of 'normality' or 'majority'. Acknowledging someone's 'difference' becomes a matter of re-emphasising their condition as non-'ideal' and reiterating the prejudged evaluation of their 'needs'. The language of 'needs' specific to each category of 'other' re-emerges as a typical move through which management can assert its active role as 'needs definer/fulfiller'. Equally, the subject becomes the passive recipient of 'fillings'.

The causal mechanism which links these categories is articulated in the well-rehearsed language of 'mutual benefits' which attributes a direct link between business objectives and the freedom to express one's specific 'identity' (as spelled out in the menu of categories available in the managerial vocabulary of 'diversity'). Kandola and Fullerton offer an entire chapter, 'The Benefits Mosaic', focused precisely on this topic (2001: 32-53). In other words, management can legitimately pursue the aim to 'guide organisations in their quest to "fully capitalise on the diversity of [their] workforce"' (Kandola and Fullerton 2001: 69). The idea that full capitalisation, full use of resources was impaired by a lack of recognition of differences becomes the platform for a more profound message: that bringing to the surface the issues of discrimination will allow managers to take control of tense situations and 'cure' them in some systematic way.

The categories of diversity management freeze, fix, the elementary, lived experience of self and other through a menu of types of people (similar to psychometric

typologies) with which a set of specific needs and possible actions is associated. This rationalisation is the usual mode through which management creates new normalised positions which subjects must occupy if they are to be considered and assisted. Unless subjects express their uniqueness within organised settings from the allotted category, they cannot be heard. It becomes easy to see that diversity management achieves its contrary effect: it creates new homogenising categorial frameworks and forces subjects to relinquish yet again their own positions and assume ways of being defined managerially. These managed categories of diversity form types and typologies in a similar way with personality types resulting from psychometrics. They are the repertoire through which organisational members are guided to identify and specify their positions as a 'diverse workforce'.

Corresponding to these rationalisations and classifications of otherness are technologies of diagnostic and therapy which will establish the desired states of a healthy system in which diversity is managed without tensions. Kandola and Fullerton offer recipes which span the entire and well-known range of such techniques. In the first instance there must be auditing of 'culture, attitudes, systems and procedures' (2001: 70), and 'assessment of needs' in the name of 'a managing diversity health check on the organisation' (2001: 77). The auditing should cover all aspects of HRM systems, but, perhaps more importantly, it should make visible people's attitudes, profiles, etc. (2001: 77-78). This creates a new demand that the person should open up for management purposes through opinion surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and so on. This anatomy of the workforce is conducted at personal level.

Auditing and assessment are also established as legitimately continuous, they must be 'ongoing' and not confined to 'a discrete first stage'. Thus subjectivity is made once more the target of monitoring and surveillance. Auditing as a diagnostic procedure is followed by therapeutic techniques which involve the creation and maintenance of new direction and modes of action to which forms of accountability are associated. Thus, diversity management is immersed again in the language of 'clear objectives', 'clear accountability', 'effective communication', 'co-ordination of activity' and 'evaluation' (Kandola and Fullerton 2001: 79-87). More specifically, each of these desirable features of managerial intervention is couched in terms of vision, missions, guidelines, norms, training for 'awareness' and 'skills', feedback loops, and so on.

This language becomes practice in another sense too: it becomes the basis of various trainings in which the person is to be made aware of the existence of 'others' whose profiles are spelled out and whose needs have to be respected. A new ordering of self with reference to its newly defined others is required of each organisational member. This is explicitly individualised around the category of 'competence'. Chapter 7 of Kandola and Fullerton's work is entitled 'A Diversity Competence: the Role of the Individual' (2001: 96 ff.). The material is directed to managers who ought to improve their 'diversity competence'. Their task is to work on themselves in ways which are specified in the text and which involve the entire sphere of ethical human interrelatedness. On several pages, Kandola and Fullerton list things that managers can do in this direction (2001: 106-109). They involve self-examination, the personal examination of the other's 'ways' (the idea is that managers ought to be 'curious, getting to know their staff'), the attempt to re-align oneself with the other by 'seeing things from other people's perspective', 'being honest with staff', self-challenging and accepting, and so on (ibid.). These techniques of the self are not new, and they are

just as invasive and problematic in this case as they are in other 'performative' situations.

But perhaps what is central is that the material speaks to managers and for managers. It aims to raise their awareness that minorities exist, such as women, ethnic 'strangers', etc., almost as if they were disturbing newcomers, additions to the world of work. Indeed, this is a striking realisation: diversity management places itself in a significant part of its dedicated literature precisely in this angle – as a discovery of a new phenomenon, as if women, Africans, Asians, disabled people, gays and lesbians only recently entered the workplace. Kandola and Fullerton speak for and about the difficulties of the white, dominant male, who almost owns the workplace and is now facing a new challenge. Perhaps this is the crucial feature of their text and of diversity management writ large from which any interpretation of its value and place should begin. Different is, in this view, the person which is other than the white male (probably also Anglo-Saxon, straight, physically able, etc.) in a position of power. This defines the vectors of diversity management as a body of ideas and practices about ordering work organisations.

This reaction discloses a tendency which is neither new, not surprising: that heterogeneity, whilst celebrated on the cover of the glossy brochures of diversity programmes, can be dangerous and problematic, a 'raw force', a feature of humanity which has to be tamed in the name of keeping production systems functioning smoothly. It is as if human diversity (the simple, given feature of existence that we are selves in the world understanding our being as different from others and yet as similar too) has just struck managerial ideologues as a phenomenon. Seen in this way, diversity management shows a very problematic face despite the best intentions of its promoters.

Perhaps this paradoxically normalising and homogenising instinct of diversity management (so self-undermining in essence) is just another incarnation of a conceptual tendency which has characterised all the subject-oriented managerial ideologies of the 1980s and 1990s: that a free, liberated, emancipated subject is desirable ideologically, but it is to be treated managerially as a source of tension, conflict, and problems. And behind this position lies perhaps one of the most important features of managerialist thought: that inherent, creative, life-giving tensions driving human systems of activity (in terms of cultures, collaborations, innovation, knowledge creation, learning, development, etc.) are not desirable, that they are a pathological manifestation of loss of harmony in social systems, or potential symptoms of dysfunctional social organisms.
If natural tension in human systems is seen as a source of problems and conflicts, it becomes a convenient general site for management action. Management finds its locus precisely around this set of tensions or problems, and its aim is to eliminate them (to restore 'normality' to every problem-situation, to 'stabilise' the system, to stop its natural dynamic and replace it with an artificial flow, with an artificial rhythm, to reaffirm the authority of the norm, and to re-align the deviants). Perhaps most illustrative in this sense is Kandola and Fullerton's final move: their penultimate chapter (2001: 144-166) presents 'A vision for the diversity-oriented organisation'. The manner of this presentation is in itself interesting. It employs a well-worn form, an acronym, which synthesises the space for managerial action in the name of a diversity-orientation. 'MOSAIC' stands for '**M**ission and values; **O**bjective and fair

processes; **S**killed workforce: aware and fair; **A**ctive flexibility; **I**ndividual focus; **C**ulture that empowers' (2001: 147). This representation of diversity management is very powerful despite the apparently 'light' touch of playfulness in style. As with any acronym, it is not light in rhetorical intent. It 'locks' the audience into a conceptual space which cannot be criticised or analysed without ruining the rhyme and reason of the model. Moreover, precisely because of its playfulness, it is a modality of infantilising the audience and thus depriving it of the peer position required for critique. MOSAIC functions like this too. It establishes and orders the territory for diversity management in a way which involves organisations and individuals in an almost inescapable ethical embrace governed by managers and revolving around tolerance, recognition, and, eventually, total harmony derived from the expert elimination of tensions.

That management ideologies and technologies are predicated upon a total abhorrence of tension is not new. It may be argued that in fact all mainstream management theory and action features a basic instinctive reaction against tension. In the case of diversity too, this reaction brings a fundamental incompatibility to the fore: diversity implies the unconditional recognition of heterogeneity, it implies tension as its predicate; it can only exist as a manifestation of tension as the source of existence rather than problems, as the very manifestation of existence's nature. If tension is undesirable, then so is diversity.

AN EXISTENTIAL COMMENTARY ON DIVERSITY

What can a philosophical commentary offer in contrast to the conception of difference underlying diversity management? In summary, the lines of argument which can be used from the position of existential phenomenology can be seen as follows. First, the sense of being a self in the world with others is a 'given'. It is a sense-giving dimension of humans' self-understanding, and it is not a 'problem' in search of social 'cure'. Secondly, the sense of a difference between self and other is a dynamic and, more precisely, a temporal phenomenon. Thus, it cannot be 'stabilised' in formal, rational categories, nor can anyone be trained into being a self in relation to others in the world; humans are existentially competent from birth according to existential phenomenologists such as Heidegger and Levinas. Thirdly, the feeling of difference discussed here is an open and aporetic elementary experience for every person in equal measure. Boundaries between one's self and other selves are open; we are often realising their fluidity by realising how feelings of familiarity and unfamiliarity with concrete people we live with change in time. We are never able to specify in any final form what makes us unique but at the same time like any other human being – although we know that this is the case all the time). Yet, as a finite being, the human is continuously aware of its unique existential horizon and always aware of other existential

The given, dynamic, temporal, open, and aporetic character of the experience of difference between self and other makes us assert that this phenomenon is mysterious rather than problematic. Therefore, we interpret its managerial problematisation as a violation of a territory of experience which cannot become the substance of anybody's expertise.

This part of the chapter offers a brief contrast between a certain version of existential philosophy, and diversity management's vocabulary of human difference. The main move is to explore 'diversity' using a radically different unit of analysis: that of the human as an existential 'entity'. It aims to assist reflection about the experience of human difference by using some concepts from Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927/1962), and from Levinasian ethics. Heidegger allows us to reflect on the irreducible nature of the self's uniqueness but also of its irreducible boundedness with the 'world'; Levinas allows us to radicalise our conception of the Other as counterpoint to the experience of self.

Heidegger's *existentialia* and the sense of being a self as *Dasein*

Heidegger's *Being and Time* can be read (sometimes) in the key of philosophical anthropology. It is a phenomenological analytic of everyday, elementary human existence as 'Being-there' (*Dasein*) and 'Being-in-the-world'. In this chapter, we make almost mechanical use of this 'anthropology'. [This would most certainly upset Heidegger himself (who cautioned against mechanistic appropriations of his philosophy).] On the other hand, this reading is perhaps justifiable inasmuch as it critiques a language of technological concepts (used by diversity management) through a language of ontological analysis – which was a move favoured by Heidegger in his attempt to overcome the limitations of traditional rationalism.

The key category for Heidegger is that of 'Da-sein' used instead of the traditional 'man'. By placing human existence in a specific 'there' of its being, Heidegger offers a fundamental initial ground for understanding uniqueness: to put it simplistically, each human's 'there' is unique. The other important qualification of the human from Heidegger's point of view is that Dasein is not 'there' in a space of other natural objects, but is in an existential-temporal domain of being. Dasein is in a temporal 'thereness' which Heidegger qualifies as our temporal stretching between birth and death. It becomes almost intuitive to realise that if we see the human as 'Dasein' placed in the specific temporal horizon marked by its birth and death, then the idea of uniqueness becomes much clearer.

The primacy afforded by Heidegger to *time* as *foundational* to Dasein's existence is related to man's ontological awareness of his own finitude. As an existential creature, Dasein lives in time, but also with time at the centre of its concerns (continuously felt as the horizon of personal finitude). Heidegger allows us to understand uniqueness further by specifying that birth, death, existence are not conceivable as abstractions even when we philosophise about them. Rather, they are always belonging to concrete Daseins, they are categories which are only comprehensible in as defining the 'there-nesses' of concrete people. No life or death is abstract, none is repeatable, each is unique.

One thing that we can establish from a cursory reading of Heidegger's existence philosophy is that human beings are irreducibly unique. But human beings share this condition as common ground. Each of us lives with the certainty, mystery and solitude of our temporal passing, culminating in the incommunicability of death. We have these things in common but our experience of them is only conceivable as unique to each of us: nobody's birth and death is reducible to a common core shared with others; there is no 'solid' essence that we might exchange or rely upon. This

leads Heidegger to suggest that 'the Self cannot be conceived either as substance [in Aristotle's sense] or as subject [in Descartes' sense] but is grounded in existence' (Heidegger 1962: 381, our additions). Rather, for Heidegger, Dasein's main existential 'structure' is *care* (Heidegger 1962; Heidegger 1992: 293-304). 'Care is the term for the being of Dasein pure and simple' (Heidegger 1992: 294). The word 'care' is useful to indicate that in our everyday existence we grasp that our Dasein's being is always at stake against the horizon of finitude. That is why everyday life is *care* for self-in-existence.

Heidegger makes his most radical move at this particular juncture: Dasein's care is temporal: '…there is a puzzling character which is peculiar to care and, as we shall see, is nothing other than *time*' (Heidegger 1992: 295). But to leave things at this level of elaboration would mean that being human is a suspended condition, floating in worldlessness. Most certainly this was not Heidegger's intention. Quite to the contrary, his philosophy is one which not only places the human firmly as part of the world, but he makes Dasein a 'Being-in-the-world' without any possibility of separation from it.

By being in the world, Dasein exists between its existential, irreducibly unique 'there' and the fact that it is always also part of the world, thrown in it, and, equally existentially, dispersed in the world through its relationships with others. Dasein is inescapably *in-the-world*, in an open but finite horizon of time, dispersed between work, rituals, institutions, organisations, values, or roles in which it seeks support, and, at the same time, is 'alienated', 'loses' itself in the horizon of social groups. To be with others is not secondary to Dasein, it is not optional. Dasein's existence is characterised by the elementary and uninterrupted co-presence of 'self' and 'other' in everyday experience. Moreover, otherness belongs to both the spatial and temporal dimensions of existence.

Existentially, experiences of difference are not *stable* enough to lend themselves to explanation in structural terms because any partial, regional unit of analysis is dissolved in the complexity of phenomena themselves. That is why the categories of diversity management are manifestations of an impoverished understanding of difference and their rationalisation as management models and technologies becomes an obstacle for the realisation of what makes each person unique. The relationship between self and other in time and in the world shows, from an existential perspective, that the two 'parties' do not present themselves as clear separations but that they are rather more fluid in time. The same person can seem perfectly familiar and comprehensible today, yet tomorrow may bring misunderstandings and possible incompatibilities, and so on (perhaps, that is why love and hate are such dynamic phenomena).

In Heidegger's philosophy there are numerous categories which describe the multiple possible ways of Dasein's being in the world with others. Important for our purpose, however, are two more central aspects. The first is Heidegger's insistence that, in its care for being, Dasein is fundamentally a hermeneutic creature, one which seeks to understand the meaning of its path through the world. It seeks to *understand* the three fundamental terms of its condition: world, finitude, and individuation. The Dasein has, in Novalis' terms, 'an urge to be at home everywhere', as the inescapable imperative of the human creature to try to overcome the limits of its own uniqueness,

which at once individuates it and at the same time renders it irreducibly solitary in the world.

The second aspect is that, in trying to understand, we seek to reflect on the world and to be reflected meaningfully by it. The main medium of reflection is, for Heidegger, *language*. Being in language is the way Heidegger sees Dasein in the world. In language, however, Dasein shares some of the foundation of its being with others. Language is common in some way to all, in it we are both ourselves (unique *speakers*), but also like others (users of this or that language). In understanding the world, we converse and live in a dynamic relationship with others and ourselves. Through meaning and language, throughout time, from dawn till dusk and on through the dream-world of the night, the 'self' is permanently in relationships with 'others': other people, other meanings, other practices, other institutions, objects, or landscapes.

Through all that, however, it retains a sense of its own unity. But this unity is variable too: as a self, the human interprets its existence and world, it 'learns', 'develops', 'acts', 'has agency'; it changes its self and the world around it. This is the horizon of everyday practices in the 'real world' of management and organisations.

It is at this fundamental level that the 'object' of diversity management is situated. Seen in existential terms, to fix diversity in order to manage it is an impossibility, a direct violation of difference as an attribute of personal existence. Perhaps diversity management is a final and fundamental managerial assault on what makes up the sociality of organisations. In other words, if the experience of self and other, that simple yet foundational negotiation of meaning in everyday life, is expropriated by management technologies, then it is, arguably, a complete disabling of the 'Da' of Dasein, an invasion of the 'place' of being oneself with the ultimate result of rendering the self void of its being, of its capacity to have a uniqueness of any sort, a deprivation of the mere possibility of thinking about 'freedom'. Moreover, in the MOSAIC model for instance, diversity management is also a denial of a space where uniqueness could manifest itself. Taken to its (perhaps extreme) logical conclusion, diversity management might be interpreted from a Heideggerian perspective as an ultimate deployment of managerial technologies to deprive the Being-there of a 'there' and the Being-in-the-world of a 'world' (an historical space of existence).

From the existential perspective very briefly explored here, it seems that even a cursory philosophical examination of the question of human difference shows it to be elementary to human life. It is a 'given' of human experience, not a 'problem'; it is mysterious, but not pathological. To be 'me' is hardly conceivable without 'you', but the boundaries are alive, dynamic, up to you and I, unmanageable, and not in need of management inasmuch as life itself needs no management. From Heidegger's perspective, diversity management might well seem to be management's ultimate arrogance.

Levinas and the radicalisation of the quest for the Other

When the self encounters the Other, the Other disrupts the self-evidentness of consciousness. The Cartesian self-certain self is put into question, immediately and absolutely. The encounter with the Other is immediately ethical. Ethics is prior to

epistemology and ontology – it is, so Levinas claims, first philosophy. For Levinas (1991 (1974); 1996a; 1996d), the 'otherness' of the Other is prior to any and all epistemic categories that consciousness may wish to evoke in trying to 'make sense' of the face of the other before me, here and now. For Levinas ethics is not a cognitive content, the outcome of some practical or moral reasoning process as proposed, for example, by Kant. Caputo (1993, 2000), following Levinas, argues that moral reasoning comes too late – like a crowd after an accident arguing about what went wrong, who is to blame, what ought we have done – so to with ethical theorists/theory. Rather, in the facticity of everyday life moral claims jump at us, as if from nowhere. The temporality and 'location' of the ethical claim is of a different kind to the temporality and 'location' of moral reasoning – it has an urgency that closes down all room for manoeuvre. The temporality and location of the ethical claim is in my *Befindlichkeit* – in my 'finding myself already busy in the world of everyday going about'. Ethics happens when it happens. When I look up, take notice, I am already 'in' it – its captive, its hostage. How will I respond here and now, to this face before me?

For Levinas, ethics happens, or not, when the self-certain ego becomes disturbed, shaken, questioned, by the proximity, before the I, of the absolute Other, the absolute singular, the Infinite. The wholly – and holy – Other that takes me by surprise, overturns and overflows my categories, themes and concepts. The Other shatters their walls, makes their evident sense explode into non-sense. For Levinas the claim of conventional ethics (Ethics with a big 'E' as Caputo calls it) that we can *know*, the right thing to do, is to claim that the absolute singularity of the Other can become absorbed into, domesticated by, the categories of my consciousness. Once the Other, this singular face before me, has become an instance in my categories or themes, it can no longer disturb the self-evidentness of those categories. Nothing is more self-evident than my categories, and likewise with the singular now absorbed as an instance of them. As Jew, nigger, rich, poor, homeless, rapist, criminal, capitalist, idealist, realist, (and every other category we care to name) the singular disturbing face disappear in the economy of the category. In the category, we can reason about rights, obligations, laws and principles, and yet ethics may never happen—actual faces are made redundant, are humiliated, scorned as they circulate in the economy of our categories. They fall through the cracks of our debates, arguments and counter-arguments, and yet we feel justified—we have our reasons; it was the right thing to do after all. To murder a category is easy, as history has shown us. In the categories of religion, nationalism and ethnicity are buried the lives of millions of others.

This desire to call forth, to render present, to the gaze of consciousness, what 'is', has always been at the heart of western thought. The imperative of western consciousness, of Philosophy with a big 'P', is to draw the Other, the strange, always at the edges, into the light of the present – to expand the horizon of consciousness is its calling. In the expanding horizon of consciousness, the strange, the Other, is a 'not-yet', waiting to be domesticated by the revealing gaze of intentionality. Yet, the singular has always disturbed the systems of philosophy. As Caputo (1993: 73) argues:

> 'The individual, according to the most classical axiomatic, is ineffable (*individuum inefabile est*). That is to announce with admirable rigor a breach in the surface of philosophy. It formulates a principle for what falls outside principles, a covering law for what law can not cover, for a kind of out-law. It

announces with all desirable clarity that the individual is both necessary and impossible…. For to understand metaphysics, which takes itself to be the science of what is real, one must understand that the only thing that is real, the individual – *sola individua existunt* – is the one thing of which it cannot speak.'

However, by saying that the singular is 'ineffable' we have already said too much. We have already brought it into our system of thought. We now have a location for it. It now no longer disturbs us, or surprises us. In some small but significant way we have already domesticated it. This is the impossibility we face, this very face, here now, before me. It is wholly Other, in a way that never allows me to settle down into my system of thought.

If this is so how can the Other disturb the I without becoming content of consciousness? Are we simply drifting aimlessly in the sea of consciousness? Prisoner of our own categories? Doomed never to encounter the Other as Other? If this is so then we are indeed without hope. Then we are adrift in the endless consumptive force of dialectical consciousness; the world in our image, according to our categories—the other as a problem to be solved. No, Levinas argues, we can encounter the other. But this is an encounter of wholly other kind – indeed it is holy. It is a profound rapture – nothing less than a visitation. Levinas uses the familiar event of a doorbell ringing to disturb my work, my thoughts, but when I open the door, there is nobody there. Was there nobody there? Did I imagine it? I have no memory, I cannot recall. The absolutely other – the infinity – does not move in the temporal horizon of being. Its presence "does not simply lead to the past but is the very passing toward a past more remote than any past and any future which still are set in my [ego] time…" (Levinas 1996b: 63). Just when I settle back into my thoughts the doorbell rings again, and again, and again, but there is never some body *there*. The subject is affected without the source of the affection becoming a theme of re-presentation. The term *obsession* designates this relation that is irreducible to consciousness. "Obsession traverses consciousness contrariwise, inscribing itself there as something foreign, as disequilibrium, as delirium, undoing thematisation, eluding *principle,* origin, and will, all of which are affirmed in every gleam of consciousness." (Levinas 1996d: 80-81). It is this relationship of incessantly *there* but never present that Levinas calls proximity, the relationship with the absolute stranger.

> *"Anarchically,* proximity is a relationship with a singularity, *without the mediation of any principle or ideality*. It is the summoning of myself by the other *(autrui),* it is a responsibility toward those whom we do not even know. The relation of proximity does not amount to any modality of distance or geometrical contiguity, nor to the simple 'representation' of the neighbour. It is *already* a summons of extreme exigency, an obligation which is *anachronistically* prior to every engagement. An anteriority that is older than the *a priori*." (Levinas 1996d: 81)

This proximity, this very nearness that is never *there* and which escapes my themes yet always disturbs me, prevents me from settling down in my thoughts, is signified in the face of the other. The face of the other is not merely the empirical face, yet the empirical face does serve as a signifier that signifies the always already ineffable of the singular confronting me. It is the placeholder that never settles down in any

'place' yet ceaselessly reminds me that 'I' have already taken its 'place in the sun'. 'The proximity of the other is the face's meaning', writes Levinas (1996d: 82). As a face the other becomes my neighbour – the one closest to me that demands my attention. Her face calls me, solicits me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility. The moment I catch a glimpse of her face, 'I' become questioned – am I not occupying her place in the sun? Her face keeps me hostage in its total uncoveredness and nakedness, in the defencelessness of her eyes, the straightforwardness and absolute frankness of her gaze. Her face resists me. Not as a power that confronts me, but as a measure that puts me into question, immediately and absolutely. The indictment of the ego is 'produced when I incline myself not before the facts, but before the other. In her face the other appears to me not as an obstacle, nor as a menace I evaluate, but as what measures me. For me to feel myself unjust I must measure myself against infinity' (Levinas 1996c: 58).

I stand accused, always already accused – without having done anything I have always been accused. I must respond. Not out of my choosing but prior to my freedom, prior to my choosing. All I can say is 'I' – 'I' as in 'I am guilty', 'I am the murderer', and 'I am responsible'. I am for the other. This taking up of my responsibility Levinas calls substitution. However, this 'taking up' is not an act it is rather an absolute passivity. In resolving not to be, 'subjectivity undoes essence by substituting itself for the other'. I become a subject in the fullest sense of the word. My uniqueness, my autonomy, is the fact that no one can answer for me. Morality is not a moral choice by a free self-certain ego. It is rather in the encounter with the infinitely other that I can become questioned, I recall my guilt, and accept (by absolute passivity) my responsibility, be subject for the other – not an *I-am* but an *I-am-for-the-other*. My subjectivity always already refer to the Other as its source, its moral force. As Cohen (1986: 5) argues:

> 'Moral force can not be reduced to cognitive cogency, to acts of consciousness or will. One can always refuse its claim… and the capacity to rationalise such refusal is certainly without limit. Ethical necessity lies in a different sort of refusal, a refusal of concepts. It lies in the pre-thematic demands that are necessarily lost in the elaboration of themes. Ethical necessity lies in the social obligation prior to thematic thought, in the disturbance suffered by thematic thought… This is not because ethics makes some truths better and others worse, but because it disrupts the entire project of knowing with a higher call, a more severe "condition": responsibility.'

This is the mystery of the Other. The Other is Other only in its disturbing presence, its questioning of the self-evidentness of the I. In the management of diversity we violate it but domesticating it through categories of gender, ethnicity, culture and the like. In diversity management we remain in the economy of the category. In this economy our attempts to be just and fair will merely become resources in a more subtle and brutal politics – a politics in which the 'otherness' of the other becomes either silenced or set up as an 'irrelevant' contingency.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As closing thoughts, we develop two main ideas. First, the complexity of the issues involved in any reflection upon Otherness cannot be reduced to some mechanical

essence of 'diversity'; there can be no meaningful 'model' of diversity. If this is accepted, then the attempt to frame diversity as a social, organisational, ethical, political, economic, or cultural 'problem' is fundamentally flawed. This stems from managerialism's instinct to render its objects controllable. In this case, we find otherness rendered manageable as diversity which, in turn, can be inserted into already established vocabularies and practices of order.

Attempting to re-engage with the question of Otherness through Heideggerian and Levinasian ideas, we aimed to show the value of philosophical reflection. If the Other does not have a grammar that can be reduced to fixed, certain categories, then what is it? What Heidegger's and Levinas' approaches have in common is a message of profound consequence: the relationship between self and other can be seen both for everyday existence and for philosophy as a *central mystery* (alongside others such as time, language, death, truth, goodness, beauty, divinity, etc.). Hence, to be irreducibly different from 'others' is not a matter of any simple act of definition, but it is not an 'ontological disease' of the species either.

Perhaps *otherness* cannot be grasped conceptually in any other terms than as a fundamental mystery. Philosophy seems to lend itself to this act of reflection. When we are seeking an engagement with fundamental aspects of experience which refuse to become objects of science, we comprehend in that very realisation that their nature is of 'something ultimate and extreme, [that] it constantly remains in the perilous neighbourhood of supreme uncertainty' (Heidegger, 1995:19). Hence, we argue that appealing to managerial rationalism cannot overcome the depth of silence required sometimes in order to begin thinking about otherness, diversity, or difference. Seen in this light, perhaps the literature on diversity management has its origins elsewhere than in the honest effort to grasp it as a dimension of human practices; maybe it is only just another fad of managerialism in its epochal unfolding. On the contrary, we propose that Otherness is encountered by the self somehow before it can reach categories which entail the possibility of 'managing' it. The categorial treatment of the Other offered by mainstream managerial literature implies its *silencing*.

Considered in this fashion, it is perhaps legitimate to interpret 'diversity management' as another manifestation of the 'self-concealment of being' in the managerial-technological age. It is perhaps then equally legitimate to echo Heidegger and Levinas once more and claim that in order for management reflection to engage with the questions of otherness it must first 'destroy' (in Heidegger's terms) literature on diversity management itself. In our turn, we argue for a radicalisation of the notion of Other as that which questions the Self, thus silencing it in turn for a moment which lies beyond the grasp of categorial metaphysics, but which also offers us the continuous 'disturbance' out of which the 'self' arises anew.

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