

## The story of us: On the nexus between metaphor and story in writing scientific articles

Mikael Holmgren Caicedo\*

*School of Business, Stockholm University, Stockholm, SE-106 91, Sweden; School of Business and Economics, Linnaeus University, Växjö, SE-351 95, Sweden*

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Inquiring along the lines of reflexivity into the style of scientific articles as portrayed in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), an attempt is made to bring forth the nexus between metaphor and plot in the story of academic writing. The contention is that the APA manual expounds a protoplot (B. Czarniawska. 1999. *Writing management - organization theory as a literary genre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press) in and through its description/prescription of the form of the scientific article that is held together by a metaphor, the incessant strife for progress, that binds together the elements of the story (plot) of writing scientific articles. Writing is then the creation of organization in an always already organized manner so that we can know a scientific article as a scientific article and ensure ever-forward motion in and through its end.

**Keywords:** Aristotle; metaphor; plot; poetics; reflexivity; rhetoric; scientific articles; story

### Introduction

Spiraling inward along the reflexive turn in organizational studies, it is, as Carl Rhodes has put it, ‘no longer tenable to assert whether a research text is true or false; instead they are “made up” and also “true”’ (2009, 656). In effect, following philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists of knowledge, some organization theorists began some 30 years ago to question knowledge, truth claims, language, texts and the deterministic status that scientific discoveries now and again are endowed with (Cunliffe 2003; Hatch 1996; Rhodes 2009; Weick 1999). In consequence, the distinction between science and fiction has become harder to uphold (De Cock 2000). As Hatch (1996) writes, the very act of reporting is a narrative act and thus ‘from the perspective of social science, for example, research design involves creating the roles of subject and observer, establishing a context, and determining a sequence of actions and events. This suggests comparing the social scientist with an author of fiction who develops character, situation and plot’ (Hatch 1996, 360).

Still, more often than not, research in organizational studies embodies a realist writing style that upholds narrative conventions of academicism ‘because it has assumed legitimacy in the discipline and confirms expectation patterns’ (De Cock 2000, 590). Put differently, the style of non-style of academic writing, as Van Maanen (1995) puts

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\*Email: mikael@micrian.com

it, serves a purpose: to claim that something important needs to be said, and not least read, and that it is also correct. If, in the spirit of reflexivity, the non-style of mainstream academic writing in organizational studies is indeed conceptualized as a style among others and the organizational researcher as ‘not only reflecting on or theorizing the goings-on in the world’ (Rhodes 2009, 656), but also an author of fiction, we need to inquire into its poetical and rhetorical features, that is, the making of stories, and the means through which poetics and rhetoric are concretized, that is, language and its tropes, specifically metaphor.

Now, both metaphor and story are featured regularly in the literature on organizational studies (Brown 2004; Czarniawska-Joerges 1995; Gabriel 2000; Geiger and Antonacopoulou 2009; O’Leary 2003), but their nexus, as stated in the call for papers for this special issue, has been less explored. As will be argued, not only do metaphor and story make writing/reading scientific articles possible, but they are also, as expounded by Paul Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor* (1978), fused together as the foundation of language and its capacity to construct reality. Thus, starting out from a reading of Aristotle’s *Poetics* (1951) and *On Rhetoric* (1991) and the role of metaphor, the aim of this undertaking is to bring forth the roles of and the relation between story (plot) and metaphor in research texts to show that their nexus is a fundamental feature of the literature on organizational studies and scientific writing at large.

As Van Maanen (1988) writes, there are at least three ways in which stories and storytelling permeate ethnographic writing, which Czarniawska-Joerges (1995) expanded to organizational studies, namely research that is written as a story, research that collects stories and research that conceptualizes its subject as a story and its field and theories as the reading and making of stories. A fourth instance is at play in this context insofar as academic conventions, represented here by the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), are understood as an implicit morphology of the academic article that lays out the story (plot) of writing academic research texts and the metaphor in and through which they are held together as academic texts.

### Poetics: making stories

In the *Physics*, Aristotle writes that art ‘imitates nature’ (Aristotle 1969, 38). Arguably, given the usual understanding of the word imitation as replication, it may seem at first that Aristotle, founded on an objectifying preconception of nature as objects that can be duplicated in writing, means straightforward representation. Aristotle’s understanding of nature is, however, that of a creative force: the productive principle of the universe. Imitation of nature purports in this sense to the useful arts to the extent that Aristotle conceptualizes them as the completion by human endeavor of nature’s end (Aristotle 1969). As Samuel H. Butcher points out, the phrase has special reference to the useful arts in that these, being the prolongation of nature’s arm, learn from her but ‘the original saying was never intended to differentiate between fine and useful art; nor indeed could it possibly bear the sense that fine art is a copy or reproduction of natural objects’ (1951, 116). Indeed, in writing that ‘the poet being an imitator, like a painter or any other artist’ (Aristotle 1951, 97) imitates ‘things as they ought to be’ (Aristotle 1951, 97), Aristotle places an unrealized ideal as that which is to be imitated, a future and necessarily original creation which concretizes that the thing imitated is not the imitation (Butcher 1951). Imitation [*mimêsis*] is, in this sense, more of an inventive

and creative process than of a duplicative one. It is a reproductive process in the biological sense of the word, in the sense of procreation (Granger 1936; Heidegger 1971, 1977; Melberg 1995; Rorty 1992).

‘The objects of imitation are men in action’ writes Aristotle (1951, 11) and refers to that which constitutes an inward and essential activity of the soul. ‘A work of art is [thus also] a likeness or re-production of an original, and not a symbolic representation of it’ (Butcher 1951, 124). The relationship between a subject and its representation is not a conventional one, but one where two things are alike in some manner. The work of art, Butcher writes, is not a reproduction of the original but a reproduction as it appears to the senses; it ‘addresses itself not to the abstract reason but to the sensibility and image-making faculty; it is concerned with outward appearances; it employs illusions; its world is not that which is revealed by pure thought; it sees truth, but in its concrete manifestations, not as an abstract idea’ (1951, 127). The sensuous characteristics of an object are engraved in the mind, creating a picture [*phantasma*] that could be likened to a portrait that represents some object in the mind for the *fantasy*. This image-forming faculty or imagination lies between sense and thought-creating phantasms that the intellect in turn may abstract into universal concepts. The point is thus that ‘without the imagination the intellect cannot work through lack of matter’ (Butcher 1951, 126). Art does not embody an objective reality through its illusions; its aim is to uphold coherence in its creations and impart to its fictions an air of reality. Accordingly, ‘poetics [could and will be thought to] include the discovery of truth as well as the invention of new artifices in whatever field’ (Granger 1936, 463), or as Heidegger puts it, ‘the nature of art is poetry. The nature of poetry . . . is the founding of truth’ (Heidegger 1971, 75).

Poetics, unlike the other arts, produces its effects mostly through language. In effect, its foremost ‘vehicle of expression [Aristotle writes] is language, – either current terms or, it may be, rare words or metaphors’ (Aristotle 1951, 97). Poetics is a form of *mimêsis* and ‘it clearly follows that the poet or “maker” should be the maker of plots rather than of verses; since he is a poet because he imitates, and what he imitates are actions’ (Aristotle 1951, 37). Indeed, from the *Poetics*, we gather that the parts of tragedy are six in number. These are the spectacle [*opsis*] – the manner of imitation, song [*melos*] and diction [*lexis*] – the mediums of imitation, plot [*mûthos*], character [*êthos*] and thought [*dianoia*] – the objects of imitation, ‘but most important of all is the structure of the incidents . . . Hence, the incidents and the plot [*mûthos*] are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all’ (Aristotle 1951, 25–7). Character [*êthos*] presents in turn the agents with a view to the action that is being imitated. Thought [*dianoia*] presents ‘the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances’ (Aristotle 1951, 29), giving a clear connection to the art of rhetoric and the canon of *invention* that spring from what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances. Diction [*lexis*] is the expression of the meaning in words and another connection to rhetoric (*elocutio*) that completes the communion between *res* and *verba* and the belief that what is said cannot be separated from how it is said. Finally, the importance of song [*melos*] and spectacle [*opsis*] lies in the embellishing aspect of song and the emotional attraction of spectacle.

Through imitation and plots, poetics awakens feelings/emotions in the listeners/readers. As such, it engenders catharsis, a purifying or figurative cleansing of the emotions, especially pity and fear, described by Aristotle as an effect of tragic drama on its audience. Catharsis in turn results from the comparison between the work of

art, which should be a possible manifestation, and the inner picture [*phantasma*] the audience have in their minds.

### Rhetoric: using [his]stories

Let me turn now to rhetoric since stories and metaphors are not exclusive to the domain of poetics but are indeed an integral part of the art of persuasion as well. In effect, language – and thus metaphor – is the vehicle through which stories are concretized for specific purposes as arguments or part of arguments.

Aristotle describes rhetoric as a true course of reasoning, a sort of demonstration (McAdon 2001), which borrows its nucleus from the fundamental notions of syllogism [*sullogismos*] and induction [*epagôgê*]. He defines it as ‘an ability, in each case, to see the available means of persuasion’ (Aristotle 1991, 36) and, accordingly, an art [*tekhnê*], the ‘antistrophos [counterpart] to dialectic’ (Aristotle 1991, 28), ‘for both are concerned with such things as are, to a certain extent, within the knowledge of all people and belong to no separately defined science. A result is that all people, in some way, share in both, for all, to some extent, try both to test and to maintain an argument [as in dialectic] and to defend themselves and attack [others as in rhetoric]’ (Aristotle 1991, 28–9). At the same time, Aristotle remarks, rhetoric is like no other art since all other arts are instructive or persuasive about their own subject matter. Rhetoric, instead, is ‘persuasive about the given’ (Aristotle 1991, 37), which entails that it is a kind of art that, much in the same way as dialectic, is a form of reasoning about something other than itself.

Rhetoric is concerned with proofs and common means of persuasion [*koinai pisteis*]. Some, Aristotle writes, are non-artistic [*atechnic*] in that they are not provided by the speaker, witnesses and contracts, for instance, while others are artistic [*entechnic*] and can be conceived through artistic method by the speaker. There are three species of artistic proofs: those based on the speaker’s character [*êthos*], those that dispose the listener to feel emotion [*pathos*] and those based in argument [*logos*].

It is in arguing through *logos* that rhetoric comes closest to being a counterpart of dialectic and comprises as such parts that have their equivalents in dialectic. Thus, instead of syllogism [*sullogismos*], rhetoric has enthymeme [*enthymêma*], which is a form of syllogism or rhetorical syllogism, that is, an abbreviated or incomplete syllogism that may be completed by the audience, and instead of induction [*epagôgê*], it has paradigm or example [*parádeigma*]. There are in turn two sorts of paradigm: historical paradigm when one speaks of things that have happened before and fictional paradigm when one makes up an illustration. The latter comprises in turn comparison [*parabolê*] and fables [*logoi*]. [His]stories are thus an essential part of making an argument. Aristotle writes, on the one hand, that paradigms should be used as a demonstration when there is no supply of enthymemes ‘for persuasion [then] depends on them’ (1991, 181). If, on the other hand, there is a supply of enthymemes, paradigms should instead be used as witnesses that prove the plausibility of the argument.

Practically ignoring the arrangement of a speech, Aristotle leaves it to the third and final book of *On Rhetoric*, where he criticizes the structural patterns of others because they comprise subdivisions that are empty and laughable. The necessary parts of a speech, he writes, are two: ‘the first is the statement [*prothesis*], the other the proof [*pistis*], just as if one made the distinction that one part is the problem, the other the demonstration’ (Aristotle 1991, 258). These are ‘the parts that really belong [in every speech]; and at the most proemion, *prothesis*, *pistis* and epilogue’ (Aristotle

1991, 259). The function of the proemion [introduction] is to present the aim of the speech, whereas the epilogue should recapitulate and show that the aim that was laid out has been accomplished.

As it seeks to persuade, rhetoric plays a central role in the formation of opinions about the truth. In doing so, stories and metaphor play an important role because they are integral parts of the artistic method, that is, proofs enrolled or conjured by a rhetor as means of persuasion.

### The double role of metaphor

Aristotle writes about metaphor in both the *Poetics* and *On Rhetoric*, intimating that it resides in both domains. The name metaphor comes from Greek *meta*, beyond, over, and *phora* from *metapherein*, to carry or to transfer, and is itself a metaphor, which means literally ‘carrying something from one place to another, transference’ (Kennedy 1991, 222). ‘Metaphor [he writes] is the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion’ (Aristotle 1951, 77). Defining metaphor in this way in the *Poetics*, Aristotle seems at first sight to advocate a substitutionist view of metaphor, inasmuch as one term stands for or replaces another. Indeed, he describes it as a means for achieving a more colorful expression by stressing its role as a transference, a movement – *epiphora* – of one name to another on the basis of similarity. Metaphor can thus be seen as a device for seeing something in terms of something else by bringing out the ‘thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this’ (Burke 1945, 503) and to be something that happens to the noun.

In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle seems to think of metaphors as belonging to the realm of learning. Metaphor is thus elevated beyond the level of sterile comparison and ornamentation to which it is seemingly relegated in the *Poetics*. Aristotle writes: ‘metaphor most brings about learning; for when he calls old age “stubble”, he creates understanding and knowledge through the genus, since both old age and stubble are [species of the genus of] things that have lost their bloom’ (Aristotle 1991, 244). So, on the one hand, Aristotle grants cognitive status to metaphor in claiming in *On Rhetoric* that it is not an empty word game but a vital and lively process of communication and learning, but, on the other, he also undermines this elevated status by ostensibly describing the metaphorical process in simplistic ontological terms in the *Poetics*. Metaphor seems thus, as Paul Ricoeur writes, to have a foot in each domain and ‘... will therefore have a unique structure but two functions: a rhetorical function and a poetic function’ (Ricoeur 1978, 12). Indeed, metaphor does not only make things present in ontological terms, its purpose is also communicative and cognitive.

Now, let me return to the *Poetics* and the aforementioned six parts to a tragedy; of which, I am mostly interested in plot [*mûthos*] because plot is the end of tragedy and the poet is a maker of plots and diction [*lexis*] because it is the means to express meaning in words. Metaphor is an expression of meaning and as such it is a part of diction. It is a means to imitate, a means of codification and emplotment of narrative insofar as the function of diction [*lexis*] is to ‘... exteriorize ... and make ... explicit the internal order of *mûthos* [plot]’ (Ricoeur 1978, 37). The fundamental trait of plot [*mûthos*] is in turn ‘its character of order, organization, of arranging or grouping’ (Ricoeur 1978, 36) although it ‘is not just a rearrangement of human action; so *mimêsis* preserves and represents that which is human, not just in its essential features, but in a way that makes it greater and nobler’ (Ricoeur 1978, 40), that is in a metaphorical

manner within the genre of tragedy, the only poetics we have left from Aristotle. In comedy, metaphor would present things in ways that make them lesser and baser (Ricoeur 1978).

Metaphor should accordingly be understood under the wings of *mimêsis* [imitation] and *mûthos* [plot] that elevate its transference from the level of the word to the level of the poem. As Bengt Kristensson Uggla (2002, 385) puts it, since meaning is communicated through the context, it is not the word that is of interest but the relation between words. Indeed, Ricoeur writes, ‘metaphorical meaning is non-lexical: it is a value created by the context’ (1978, 188). In this sense, ‘metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to re-describe reality. By linking fiction and re-description in this way, we restore the full depth of meaning to Aristotle’s discovery in the *Poetics*, which was that the *poïesis* of language arises out of the connection between *mûthos* and *mimesis*’ (Ricoeur 1978, 7).

### The style of the scholarly article manuscript

The style of academic writing is oftentimes opposed to the literary one by way of dichotomies such as science and art, fact and fiction, discovery and invention, and truth and lie that reinforce its rhetorical purpose and apparently separate it from poetics and rhetoric. Academic texts are thus often, for better or for worse, understood as bearers of reliable and trustworthy knowledge. They do so, however, following a style whose form serves a function and solves a problem: to decide what statements that should and are allowed to be asserted in function of what we believe about nature, science and the scientific community and its literature (Bazerman 1987).

To understand how scientific writing has developed, we need to look at experimental psychology because it was the first scientific branch of social science within which a specialized writing discourse was established (Bazerman 1987). Later, in an effort to become scientific, it also became one of the models to be applied in, for instance, sociology, political science and organizational studies. Such a writing model is concretized in the very influential APA manual. As Gary R. VandenBos, editor in chief, writes in the preface to the sixth edition:

The Publication Manual is consulted not only by psychologists but also by students and researchers in education, social work, nursing, business, and many other behavioral and social sciences. (American Psychological Association 2010, xiv)

Consequently, APA-specific information was excluded from the sixth revision of the manual, which instead concentrates on general principles and guidelines for scholarly article manuscripts:

In planning this revision [...] we decided to remove from the *Publication Manual* much of the APA-specific information [...]. In this edition of the *Publication Manual*, we emphasize general principles that researchers need to know. (American Psychological Association 2010, 4)

The APA publication manual presents a standard for authors to follow that dictates the style of scholarly texts aimed for publishing in scientific journals, the acceptable way to tell a story, if you will. It is also, however, as the editors themselves acknowledge and as will be treated in the following section, a descriptive analysis – a morphology – of scientific articles.

Because of the diversity of practices in the social and behavioral sciences, we anticipated that the *Publication Manual* would likely prescribe new direction for some subdisciplines and merely describe the current state of scientific reporting for other subdisciplines. (American Psychological Association 2010, 5)

As both a description and a prescription, the APA manual makes explicit mainstream conventions of scholarly writing, how stories are written and how they ought to be written, that are of interest for the purpose at hand. Indeed, as De Cock writes, ‘stories are not what reality makes by itself, but what we, by observing certain narrative conventions rooted in our ancient heritage of storytelling, make of reality’ (2000, 591).

The rules and conventions that the APA manual lays forth speak of style as that which can act as an obstacle to clear communication. The APA style is designed to remove that obstacle.

Style [...] removes the distraction of puzzling over the correct punctuation for a reference or the proper form for numbers in text. Those elements are codified in the rules we follow for clear communication, allowing us to focus our intellectual energy on the substance of our research. (American Psychological Association 2010, xiii)

Oddly enough, in a rhetorical move, the likes of which it tells its readers to avoid, style is addressed in the manual as if there was only one. In such a move, the generic term style is conflated with scientific style and the even more specific APA style according to which a writer should refrain from using ‘devices that attract attention to words, sounds or other embellishments instead of to ideas’ (American Psychological Association 2010, 70) because they are inappropriate to scientific writing. The manual reads

Avoid heavy alliteration, rhyming, poetic expressions, and clichés. Use metaphors sparingly; although they can help simplify complicated ideas, metaphors can be distracting. Avoid mixed metaphors [...] and words with surplus or unintended meaning (e.g., cop for police officer), which may distract if not actually mislead the reader. Use figurative expressions with restraint and colorful expressions with care; these expressions can sound strained or forced. (American Psychological Association 2010, 70)

Aside from the obvious metaphors – alliteration, rhyming and poetic expressions can be heavy and expression strained or forced – that are used in the manual, the question that emerges is how an author would go about writing if he or she were to avoid language? Indeed, ‘geneticists speak of genetic code as a sort of language that genes use to give instructions to other parts of the body. Sometimes genes are even described by means of characteristics such as egoism and aggressiveness. Economists pretend to live in a modeled world, where perfect competition always prevails and where the population consists of economic men, peculiar people who always act rationally and whose only goal in life is to maximize their profit. Physicists enjoy the company of a strange being called Maxwell’s demon. Philosophers visit Plato’s cave and shave themselves with Ockham’s razor. Astronomers speak of black holes that in reality are neither black nor holes in the usual sense of the words. Einstein imagined how it would be to ride a light beam. And so on . . .’ (Thurén 2000, s. 12–3, my translation).

Tropes, writes Nietzsche, ‘are not something that can be added or subtracted from language at will: they are its truest nature’ (Brown 1987, 88) and as such they play a major ‘rôle in the discovery and the description of “the truth”’ (Burke 1945, 503). As McCloskey writes, ‘to say that markets can be represented by supply and demand “curves” is no less a metaphor than to say that the west wind is “the breath

of autumn's being'" (1983, 502). Moreover, 'elasticity was once a mind-stretching fancy; "depression" was depressing; "equilibrium" compared economy to an apple in a bowl, a settling idea; "competition" once induced thoughts of horseraces; money's "velocity" thoughts of swirling bits of paper. Much of the vocabulary of economics consists of dead metaphors taken from non-economic spheres' (McCloskey 1983, 503). Similarly, in organizational studies, organizations have been described as machines, organisms, brains (Morgan 1986) and so on.

All language is metaphorical even if many times the metaphors have settled down to the point of being called dead. In consequence, the scientific writer cannot but write metaphors. This is, however, the question of metaphor at the level of the word or concept, which most of the research about metaphor in organizational studies has concentrated on: that is, as a tool to develop theory (Chia 1996; Cornelissen 2005, 2006; Weick 1998) and to create insight (Morgan 1986) that enables leaders to manage meaning (Czarniawska 1993) or to communicate and introduce new ideas by making them more accessible (Dobers and Tengblad 2002) and, more generally, as a tool for management and change (Czarniawska-Joerges 1995; Czarniawska-Joerges and Sevón 1996). Indeed, according to Inns (2002), the uses of metaphor within organizational studies range from the examination of a subject's dominant ways of seeing or thinking (root metaphor) to its use as a qualitative tool for research, a generative tool for creative thinking, a hegemonic tool to influence perception and interpretation, an explicatory teaching tool and a tool for deconstruction and the questioning of embedded assumptions (cf. Cornelissen et al. 2008).

### **The form of the scholarly article manuscript**

At the level of the poem, metaphor needs instead to be understood in light of the story and the plot that are brought forth in the writing of scientific articles. Now, the APA does provide some sample papers to exemplify issues of style, but more importantly, as stated already, it can be understood as a descriptive/prescriptive morphology of how scientific stories are/should be written. Accordingly, much like the parts of a speech in Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*, a research text or scientific article should comprise a title, an abstract, and introduction, a section on method, a results section, a discussion and a list of references (American Psychological Association 2010, 25–37). The introduction, like the proemion, should introduce the subject that the article is to concern itself with. The APA manual reads

The body of a manuscript opens with an introduction that presents the specific problem under study and describes the research strategy. (American Psychological Association 2010, 27)

The starting point and the *raison d'être* of a scientific article, whether it is an empirical study, a literature review, a theoretical or a methodological article or a case study (American Psychological Association 2010, 9–11), is a problem. The opening is thus to introduce a quest or search for something: a solution that is to be arrived at through a specific research strategy. Moreover, the would-be author should

State why the problem deserves new research. For basic research, the statement about importance might involve the need to resolve any inconsistency in results of past work and/or extend the reach of a theoretical formulation. For applied research, this might involve the need to solve a social problem or treat a psychological disorder. [...] For

literature reviews as well as theoretical and methodological articles, also clearly state the reasons that the reported content is important and how the article fits into the cumulative understanding of the field. (American Psychological Association 2010, 28)

The problem should be grounded in the field to provide arguments for its importance and recognition in an audience. It ought to be ‘a need to resolve’ inconsistencies in or ‘extend the reach’ of past works and to ‘solve a social problem’ or ‘a psychological disorder’ or simply something that is ‘important’ and ‘fits into the cumulative understanding of the field’ (American Psychological Association 2010, 28). It is an initiation but also a continuation.

The problem should, as stated already, be solved with a specific research strategy that should be laid forth in the section on method.

The Method section describes in detail how the study was conducted [. . .] Different types of studies will rely on different methodologies; however, a complete description of the methods used enables the reader to evaluate the appropriateness of your methods and the reliability and the validity of your results, it also permits experienced investigators to replicate the study. (American Psychological Association 2010, 29)

The Method section should enable the reader to evaluate the study and the results that are to be presented in the next section, ‘Results’. The description should, therefore, be a complete one, lest a reader may fail in his or her evaluative task. Although the rhetoric of writing a scientific article is downplayed by the use of terms such as validity and reliability, it is also ever present insofar as the character of the researcher and the trustworthiness of the text depend on the effective persuasion of the reader in and through the very concepts that conceal it.

The Results section ought to present the data collected objectively by mentioning all the relevant results, which includes also those results that may not support one’s expectations. On the other hand, data should be presented in a summarized form, excluding thereby ‘individual scores or raw data’ from the presentation.

In the Results section, summarize the collected data and the analysis performed on those data relevant to the discourse that is to follow. Report the data in sufficient detail to justify your conclusions. Mention all relevant results, including those that run counter to expectation; [. . .] Do not hide uncomfortable results by omission. Do not include individual scores or raw data with the exception, for example, of single-case designs or illustrative examples. (American Psychological Association 2010, 32)

The general theme follows that of the section on method in that the concepts of transparency and trustworthiness play paramount roles in the rhetorical strategy laid forth. The Results section should consequently be exempted of any discussion of its implications because such an activity is reserved for the following section: the Discussion, which, in answer to the problem stated in the introduction and given the specific research method applied and the study made, should be evaluative and interpretative in order to ‘draw inferences’ and ‘conclusions’, that is, a solution or development toward one. The implications in relation to the problem as well as the practical and theoretical consequences that follow should also be included in this section. The manual reads

After presenting the results, you are in a position to evaluate and interpret their implications, especially with respect to your original hypotheses. Here you will examine, interpret, and qualify the results and draw inferences and conclusions from them. Emphasize

any theoretical or practical consequences of the results. (American Psychological Association 2010, 35)

In describing/prescribing the form of the scientific article, the APA manual not only lays forth a slightly more detailed structural pattern for academic articles than the extended version of Aristotle's arrangement for speeches – proemion, *prothesis*, *pistis* and *epilogue* – but also characterizes such a passage as a transition from a state A (problem) to a state B (the discussion or solution) – the two parts that coincidentally, Aristotle remarks, are common to all speeches – by way of a research strategy, method and empirical work. In this sense, the scientific article described by the APA manual can in its simplest sense also be understood as a story in itself. It is the story of the researcher's past, present and future held together by a plot, a change from state A to state B, or in Todorov's (1977, 11) words, 'a passage from one equilibrium to another', that is not merely sequential but is expected to be connected through methodological, theoretical and empirical argumentation that provides proof. Put differently, the author, however invisible, encounters a problem, which he or she solves by way of specific actions and explanations as to why those actions were undertaken in order to arrive at a solution.

Elevating metaphor to the level of the poem/article by way of its connection to imitation and plot, and understanding it, therefore, as a rhetorical process by means of which reality is re-described through fiction (Ricoeur 1978), suggests that the rules and conventions advanced in the APA manual can be conceptualized as more than a mere description/prescription. Indeed, the APA manual advances a morphology of the article that beckons a plot: an academic problem that needs to be solved by an author's struggle with theory, method and empirical work and the results of that struggle. In exteriorizing the plot at the level of the word/concept, researchers use tropes, metaphor and analogy, among others, to conceptualize and theorize that which they study. At the level of the poem, however, metaphor binds together the elements of the plot in order to produce unity and identity in reading; in the case of the scientific article as described by the APA manual, the form differs from the tragic or the comic one, not because the scientific article is exempted of being a poetico-rhetorical product whereby metaphors and plot work to re-describe reality, but because metaphor and plot in a scientific article do not make things appear greater and nobler as in tragedy or lesser and baser as in comedy, but truer and steadier.

Metaphor, at the level of the scientific article, is thus the bringing together into a statement of identity of a discourse that attempts to articulate itself. It is a transition from the unnarratable to the narratable, the ordering of and into reality by the pressure that is exerted by a dream of progress, the 'need to resolve inconsistencies', 'extend the reach' of past works, or 'solve a social problem' to further the cumulative understanding of a field (American Psychological Association 2010, 28), a metaphor that brings together the plot into an ordered transition, with a beginning, a middle and an end, from one state to another. Metaphor unifies the plot by showing the remarkable coherence of all its parts in light of itself. The unity of the story, in other words, is the triumphant organization of the world into the cumulative masterpiece of humanity, the strife for progress and the need to solve problems.

### **A proplot and the *aporia* of problems**

The poet is a maker of plots and imitates action 'and even if he chances to take a historical subject, he is none the less a poet; for there is no reason why some events that

have actually happened should not conform to the law of the probable and possible, and in virtue of that quality in them he is their poet or maker' (Aristotle 1951, 37). 'The obvious suggestion of this passage is that the meaning of the word "poet" should be widened so as to include any writer, either in prose or verse, whose work is an "imitation" within the aesthetic meaning of the term' (Butcher 1951, 143). This includes the social scientist, who is moreover a rhetor because, arguably, to engage in social science is to produce discourse. Indeed, 'some of us produce discourse and text we explicitly label theory whose purpose is to communicate our understanding of organization to particular audiences. Communication however implies that we also are necessarily concerned with persuading our readers – the more the better – that not only do we have something to say but that what we have to say is correct, important and worth heeding. The discourse we produce has an action component, which seeks to induce belief among our readers. Our writing is then something of a performance with a persuasive aim. In this sense, when our theories are well received they do practical work. Rather than mirror reality, our theories help generate reality for our readers' (Van Maanen 1995, 135).

All scientific articles within organizational studies do not, according to Czarniawska (1999), contain a plot. They may be stories, but the connection between the elements of the stories presented lacks purpose, that is, one of the five elements of Burke's (1945) pentad – scene, act, agent, agency and purpose – which is an adaptation of Aristotle's six parts of a tragedy – spectacle, plot, character, diction, rhythm and thought (Boje and Rosile 2003). To this effect, Czarniawska proposes the garbage-can model (Cohen, March, and Olsen 1972) as a protoplot, which, like Burke's pentad, can be used 'for the construction of organization studies' (Czarniawska 1999, 78). In doing so, Czarniawska writes about the writing of stories in organizational studies as opposed to the story of writing in organizational studies, which is being laid forth here. Czarniawska's notion of a protoplot is very useful, however, and can be translated into the story of writing that is being offered here insofar as there is a researcher – the agent – who, upon encountering/creating a problem, writes – the act. The researcher does so using theories, method and empirical studies – the agency – as a member of an academic community – the scene – which concomitantly is his or her audience. The purpose is to generate a solution and to drive the research field further, which in rhetorical terms implies persuading the audience and, if successful, enhancement of the researcher's character. In other words, it can also be understood as an attempt by the researcher to persuade the audience in order to improve his or her status as a researcher within the community.

At this point, it becomes apparent that in the strife for progress and to solve problems, the metaphor that unifies the plot tends simultaneously to divert in meaning: is it academic progress, personal advancement, the will to power or all of these? It tends to be evasive. In effect, the pressure that the metaphor exerts in the gathering or bringing together it accomplishes is the rhetorical process through which fictions re-describe reality by bringing it together. Being rhetorical, however, also implies that it deals with that which can be otherwise, the openness of language and the social, which is already apparent and built into the mechanism that sets forth the transition of the plot: the problem whence the researcher is described/expected to begin his or her journey. Indeed, as Derrida (1993) remarks,

*Problēma* can signify *projection* or *protection*, that which one poses or throws in front of oneself, either as the projection of a project, of a task to accomplish, or as the protection

created by a substitute, a prosthesis that we put forth in order to represent, replace, shelter, or dissimulate ourselves, or so as to hide something unavowable – like a shield (*problēma* also means shield, clothing as barrier or guard-barrier) behind which one guards oneself *in secret* or *in shelter* in case of danger. Every border is *problematic* in these two senses. (11–12)

The problem thus paves the road ahead by soliciting and making a solution possible. It destabilizes the equilibrium only to make possible the transition and stabilize it anew into a different equilibrium. It does so by demarcating the conceptual borders of the narratable. Problem, states Derrida, is, however, not separable from *aporia*, the condition of undecidability of *différance* and the unnarratable. The problem may shelter us for a while, but the *aporia* still prevails. Indeed, at the end of the section on discussion, the APA manual asks the writer to consider ‘the theoretical, clinical, or practical significance of the outcomes’ and ‘what problems remain unresolved or arise anew because of [the] findings?’ (American Psychological Association, 36). Although the readers ‘should receive clear, unambiguous, and direct answers’ (American Psychological Association 2010, 36), the transition to state B or to a new equilibrium is one that entails the need for another transition to solve the unresolved: the problem and the *aporia* linger together as the metaphor that holds together the plot of scientific articles, that is, the strife for progress or the accumulation of knowledge, must necessarily and concomitantly be narratable and unnarratable, which is to say both with and without end. As Czarniawska (1999) writes,

If an illuminating metaphor has been coined or a useful analogy found, nothing can be done with it by subsequent researchers but a critique or eventual replacement. Certainly a successful model has great educational value – after all, teaching is the biggest market for models. In terms of further construction of meaning, however [...], the more attractive model the smaller heuristic value. Good old positivists knew what they were doing when, before engaging in any intellectual enterprise of their own, they mercilessly ground the theories of their predecessors until they revealed a flaw, a gap, a sign of cracking. A perfect model can only be reused, and the added meaning value diminishes with every use. This is why the dream of an ‘accumulating body of knowledge’, has never been fulfilled. (75)

Put differently, the transition from an equilibrium to another through problematic destabilization seems rather to be the aporetic transition from disequilibrium to disequilibrium because any equilibrium must necessarily be foreshadowed by disequilibrium – a coined metaphor stabilizes disequilibrium – in order to come into being.

## Conclusion

Writing in organizational studies is itself an organizing practice that involves telling stories and using metaphors (Czarniawska 1999; Van Maanen 1995), but the practice is in turn organized by the conventions of scientific writing that are followed throughout the publication process, a form with a content of its own that is recognized and expected. In other words, writing about organization is organizing organization in an always already organized manner insofar as we organize organizations in organizational studies along the lines of the plot [*mūthos*], specifically protoplot (Czarniawska 1999), of a story of writing scientific articles. It is the product of imitation [*mimēsis*], a bringing forth, a presencing or, in Martin Heidegger’s words, ‘a way of revealing’ (1977, 12) order in and through the unity brought together by a metaphor: the

triumphant forward march of science and, in consequence, of humanity. The problem/*aporia* of the scientific article acts in turn as the mechanism through which the specific story is set afoot and made narratable by fusing the materials of the story that each specific text embarks on. Not far off from the enlightenment, writing in organizational studies is the promise of a solution to problems by offering a beginning where a problem is identified/generated, a middle that intimates why the problem is a problem and how it is going to be solved, and an end that provides a solution/a continuation. The plot is the end of tragedy, writes Aristotle, and here it is an and, and, and . . . (Bay 1998) because of the reiterative unending swirl that the unifying metaphor of the problem/*aporia*, the never-ending forward search for knowledge, puts us in. Indeed, the end seems to be always already the beginning of the next search, the foundation, as it were, of re-search.

So, spiraling further inward into the abyss that reflexivity opens up, it seems indeed to take us around full circle so that what we have in the end is an and, and, and . . . Or, put differently, the realization that in writing reflexively about reflexivity, we might not be far off from the very practices it is used to criticize.

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