THE INFLUENCE OF MARTIN HEIDEGGER
ON CLAUDIO CIBORRA’S WRITINGS

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ABSTRACT

In his publications on organization and information systems, Claudio Ciborra often states that the basic conceptions of several theories and practices belong to the natural science paradigm. Hence the negative implications on both the heuristic value of such theories and on the effectiveness of management. In order to develop different kinds of concepts and alternative approaches Ciborra has referred to phenomenology and, especially, to Heidegger.

Thus this paper is aimed at identifying the influence of the German philosopher on Ciborra’s writings and whether it played a central role.

The method adopted consisted in: (i) examining fifteen of Ciborra’s publications from 1994 to 2004; (ii) identifying the concepts and comments that could be referred to Heidegger either because they were explicitly quoted or because, given the context and the terminology employed, the reference could be considered implicit; (iii) reviewing the relevant works of Heidegger and defining the concepts or ideas related to Ciborra’s references. The interpretation of the interconnections between Ciborra and the philosopher has thus required a recursive reading: from a detailed one to an overall view of the texts. In order to enrich such interpretation, the essays in Ciborra’s honour, published in 2005 after his death, were also reviewed and references to Heidegger examined.

The results of the work show that most of Heidegger’s influence can be found in “The Labyrinths of Information” published by Ciborra in 2002. The reason is that he used eleven previously published articles as main sources for eight chapters and the Methodological Appendix. Four chapters have shown important connections with Heidegger’s thought and have been examined thoroughly: the major concepts developed by Ciborra have been identified and compared with Heidegger’s either by directly quoting or by summarizing the relevant texts. The reader can thus reconstruct Ciborra’s journey and why he resorted to Heidegger. For example, he can understand that the maxim “To the things themselves!” which expresses one of the fundamental ideas of phenomenology, must have exerted a strong call to a researcher who felt the ubiquitous presence of models with a questionable explanatory value. He is able to perceive the reasons why Ciborra saw a connection between “information infrastructures” and the Heideggerian concept of Ge-stell, and how he consequently outlined an alternative management agenda. He can understand precisely why Ciborra chose to resort to the concept of Befindlichkeit in his pursuit of defining “improvisation” as a mood rather than a condensed problem solving activity.

On the whole, the results of this review show that Ciborra, all along his last ten years of activity as a researcher and scholar, found in Heidegger both a substantive support in the generation and identification of his “multiview” approach to research and a stimulus for the production of his ideas. Probably, his dissatisfaction with some current organization and management theories ignited his interest for phenomenology in general while he became increasingly involved with Heidegger’s work.
INTRODUCTION

In 1958 Leavitt and Whisler\(^1\), who coined the name “information technology”, had no doubts on the perspectives of the new technology:

“While many aspects of this technology are uncertain, it seems clear that it will move into the managerial scene rapidly, with definite and far-reaching impact on managerial organization.” (p.41)

In the last fifty years ICT’s developed at an ever increasing pace, organizations evolved, and information systems have become more and more ubiquitous, “global”, embedded as they are in the social and productive structures. Along with their growth, the interest of researchers and scholars for the relevant phenomena also grew and fundamental questions started to be raised concerning the bases on which specific knowledge fields are grounded. So there has been a rising interest for the philosophical substratum\(^2\) of approaches, theories, models, and practices promoted by the desire of enriching and consolidating new sub-disciplines and/or, by the emergence of mismatches between events and theoretical assumptions or expectations. The panorama seems to be rich and variegate, and the debate animated.

Throughout his work as a researcher and scholar, Claudio Ciborra maintained that, beyond the debate, there exists one dominant orientation or basis: “No matter how practical or business oriented the current management and systems literatures are, they tend to rely … on methods that are simple, rational, and, especially, based on the natural science paradigm” (Ciborra 2002: 5). With this stand he positions himself in the midst of another debate, a philosophical one, on the difference between social and scientific rationality. This debate dates back to the end of 19\(^{th}\) century (with the works of Dilthey and later of Husserl) and was strongly revived in the 1960’s through the work of different philosophers, and through the confrontation between the so called “continental” and “analytic” schools; and it is still continuing\(^3\). So Ciborra’s research, which refers to phenomenology but especially to Heidegger, belongs to a long continuum in the history of thought.


\(^3\) Of course, this bi-partition is rather crude, as positions are more melange than clear cut. The development of this debate in the last 30 years is studied by F. D’Agostini, Analitici e continentali, Milano 1997
The scope of the paper is therefore to identify the influence of Heidegger on Ciborra’s writings: whether it played a central role and why.

This paper is structured in three sections excluding this introduction: the first one illustrates the method adopted; the second identifies the most meaningful references made by Ciborra to the German philosopher. The last section contains comments on the analysis conducted and outlines the future developments of the research in progress.

1. THE METHOD ADOPTED

Heidegger’s influence on Ciborra has been outlined by both reading the relevant writings of the two authors (starting from Ciborra) and trying to understand the possible interplay of approaches, ideas, and issues. Three main steps were followed. At first, articles, books and parts of books were identified (all listed in the references), authored or co-authored by Ciborra, published either in English or in Italian, that contained references to Heidegger - words or concepts that Ciborra used to either explicitly or implicitly refer to him. Both the explicit references and the context of the discussion served as a basis to recognize implicit references. Ciborra’s texts were subsequently examined and the issues where Heidegger’s concepts and words were situated were identified in order to understand how they had been used by Ciborra (for example, if they seemed to be crucial for the discussion, if they belonged to the “deconstruction” or “construction” part of his argumentation, and so on).

Finally, since Ciborra mostly indicates only the work of Heidegger but not the paragraph or page he refers to, it was necessary to trace back the references that he made to Heidegger’s original writings. Then the part of Heidegger’s text that more likely applied to the relevant issue discussed by Ciborra was identified and consequently quoted; this was the most challenging part of the interpretation of the texts of both authors.

In order to enrich such interpretation, the essays in Ciborra’s honour, written by his peers after his death, were also reviewed and references to Heidegger examined. In fact in 2005 the European Journal of Information Systems published an issue devoted

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4 As a matter of fact Ciborra has used some of Heidegger’s terminology in several of his writings.

5 Sometimes Ciborra uses these terms to introduce, respectively, his criticism to the way certain issues are treated by a given theory or approach, and his own proposal.

6 Personal reflections on Claudio Ciborra’s life and work, Vol 15, n. 5, 2005
to Claudio Ciborra which sought to collect, as stated by the guest editors\textsuperscript{7}, “a broad range of reflections from individuals and groups who were influenced by him and his work”. Thirteen of the twenty-nine contributions, mentioned Heidegger as having significantly influenced Ciborra’s \textit{weltanschauung} and work.

3. EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT REFERENCES TO HEIDEGGER

By analyzing Ciborra’s works cited in the references the conclusion was reached that most of Heidegger’s influence can be found in his “The Labyrinths of Information” (Ciborra 2002). In fact seven of its eight chapters, besides the Methodological Appendix, used previously published articles or sections of books as main sources; all of them are cited in the references. He collated them and put them in a sequence that represents his journey through the study and interpretation of organisation and of information systems. The reader is invited to follow him on this journey: each “territory” is introduced by a non-English word “aimed at creating an uncanny dislocation of perspective, suspending, if only for a brief instant, his or her usual attitude and expectations” (ibid. 6).

So, we start from the “Invitation” to the journey and we go on to Krisis, Bricolage, Gestell, Derive, Xenia, Shihr, Kairos (and \textit{Affectio}); at the end we encounter “Odos”, the Methodological Appendix.

This paper examines the Methodological Appendix and three chapters which carry the most important connections with Heidegger’s thought: “Krisis: judging methods”; “Gestell: the power of infrastructures”; “Kairos (and \textit{Affectio}): seizing the opportunity (and moods and mental states)”.

3.1. The Methodological Appendix (Odos)

Ciborra openly states that Heidegger not only has influenced some of his ideas but he has given him the key to understand his way to research: “… the introduction to Being and Time, specifically his definition of phenomenology … (or rather my interpretation of it), at last helped me to make explicit the way that I understand how I proceed” (ibid.: 173). The first thing to be noticed is that he seems to consider his commitment to Heidegger, at least up to a certain moment in his life as a researcher, as an ex post acknowledgement more than a conscious endeavour. The second is that, probably, the word “interpretation” has been used by Ciborra as a sign of agreement with Heideg-

\textsuperscript{7} Editorial by Antonio Cordella, Edgar A. Whitley, Jannis Kallinikos
ger’s statement that “the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation” (Heidegger 1962: 61). In other words, Ciborra certainly referred to the hermeneutic circle - going back and forth in a text from details to an overall view for an increasing understanding of it⁸ - in order to gain an in-depth comprehension of Heidegger’s writing (“I re-read, for the nth time, the introduction…”). But also he wanted to underline his adherence to Heidegger’s hermeneutical approach. And in fact, Ciborra describes the two types of evidence we encounter when approaching an “organizational phenomenon”:

a. “the set of ideas and models taken for granted in the domain of organization theories or consulting models…[which] following Heidegger we can refer to … as illusory appearances”; (Ciborra 2002: 175-177)

b. “apparitions”: they belong to a space that cannot be filled by any model and that surface in informal talks which “host the unexpected aspects of organizational life” (ibid.: 177)

According to Ciborra, we often stop at the empty models instead of working on the apparitions that tell us about the “underlying phenomenon to be unveiled” (ibid.:178). In the two terms he uses, “illusory appearances” and “apparitions”, we can recognize Heidegger’s “semblance” and “appearance” respectively.

In order to show the influence of Heidegger’s Introduction on Ciborra’s Methodological Appendix it was necessary to select and then quote some of the former’s concepts and definitions which seem to fit the latter’s approach.

“… the term “phenomenology” expresses a maxim which can be formulated as “To the things themselves!” … ; it is opposed to taking over any conceptions which only seem to have been demonstrated; (Heidegger 1962: 50)

This maxim, which expresses one of the fundamental ideas of phenomenology, must have exerted a strong call to a researcher who felt the ubiquitous presence of models with a questionable heuristic value. Furthermore he realized that, as a researcher, in order to explain “organization” as a phenomenon he

“…must keep in mind that the expression ‘phenomenon’ signifies that which shows itself in itself, the manifest. (ibid.:51)

And therefore that he has to become aware of what he calls illusory appearances by distinguishing

“… ‘phenomenon’ from ‘semblance’, which is the privative modification of “phenomenon” as thus defined (ibid.:51),

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But, at the same time, he has to try and pursue the apparitions that “announced” the core characteristics (the Being) of organization, the aim of his research. In fact for Heidegger

“… the expression “appearance” itself can have a double signification: first, appearing in the sense of announcing-itself, as not-showing-itself; and next, that which does the announcing [das Meldende selbst] – that which in its showing-itself indicates something which does not show itself. And finally one can use “appearing” as a term for the genuine sense of phenomenon as showing-itself.” (ibid.:53)

Furthermore, dominant theories and consulting models seem to have been considered by Ciborra not only as semblances but also as a consolidated “tradition” that jeopardizes the accomplishment of a researcher’s task; in Heidegger’s words:

“When tradition … becomes master, it does so in such a way that what it ‘transmits’ is made so inaccessible, proximally and for the most part, that it rather becomes concealed. Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial ‘sources’ from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part genuinely drawn (ibid.:43).

His criticism of prevailing methodologies and his proposal of new approaches find support in Heidegger’s remark:

“If the question of Being is to have its own history made transparent, then this hardened tradition must be loosened up, and the concealments which it has brought about must be dissolved.” (ibid.:44)

It seems therefore appropriate for a researcher to find novel ways to approach phenomena, to take them into the open, to unveil them and to communicate them. The verb “to unveil” has been often used by Ciborra: for example he refers to his “unveiling of the platform organization” (Ciborra 2002: 173). Such concept of unveiling comes directly from Heidegger. In the Introduction he thus defines discourse (logos):

“Logos as ‘discourse’ means: to make manifest what one is ‘talking about’ in one’s discourse.” (Heidegger 1962:56)

with the consequent definition of true and false:

“… the entities of which one is talking must be taken out of their hiddenness; one must let them be seen as something unhidden (alethes); that is they must be discovered. Similarly “Being-false” (pseudesthai) amounts to deceiving in the sense of covering up [verdecken]: putting something in front of something (in such a way as to let it be seen) and thereby passing it off as something which it is not.” (ibid.:56)
3.2 Krisis: judging methods

As we shall see, Husserl, one of the founding fathers of phenomenology, is Ciborra’s mentor for a large part of this chapter. At the end of it, though, Ciborra poses a crucial question which, once more, puts Heidegger at the centre of the scene. Let’s follow Ciborra while he develops this argument.

When first published in 1997, the title of this chapter was “De profundis? Deconstructing the concept of strategic alignment”; deconstruction is still the central point of the present version. Ciborra in fact points out that Internet has emerged as a flexible infrastructure outside any strategic master plan” (ibid. :13) whereas many “exotic, Artificial Intelligence (AI) based applications aimed at supporting decision making at the top of the organisation… [never] saw the light of the day” (ibid. :13). Furthermore if we “consider system analysis and design methodology” - which he exemplifies with Computer Aided Software Engineering (CASE) and Business Process Reengineering (BPR) - we have to conclude that “we seem to be devoting much teaching (and consultancy) to something which to be generous, fails at least half of the time” (ibid. :13).

In order to understand this state of crisis in the field of organisation and information systems, Ciborra refers to Husserl’s 1934 work on “Crisis of European Science and Trascendental Phenomenology”. On such basis he concludes that:

(i) “Crisis comes about due to the separation between people and science, and the ensuing forgetting of issues such as the subjective origin of science, the foundational role of everyday life in the creation and development of any methodology…” (ibid.:15);

(ii) “…despite the hybrid nature of the problem a common unified paradigm has been adopted across the board to deal with its human and natural dimension…, the paradigm of natural sciences” (ibid. :15) with its methodologies of measurements and calculation.

Therefore he proposes (following Husserl) that we should “…suspend the belief that behind the messy everyday reality there is a geometric universe”; in other words he poses the key question: can we say something different from lines and boxes that characterize consultants’ presentations and which is closer to the world? The answer is: with a “different tack”. Such new attitude entails going back to

“the basics and encounter the world as it presents itself in our everyday experience. We rely on evidence, intuition, and empathy. We listen to managers, and we participate in their dealings with puzzles and riddles, and, on the other hand, we do not confer any particular relevance on words like ‘strategy’, ‘processes’, ‘data’, ‘systems’, or ‘structured methodologies’ “ (ibid. :25).
At the end of the chapter, he returns to Heidegger’s influence and he states: “What calls us to devise methodologies? Possibly it is technology itself, and its enframing effect”. He thus sends us forward to the chapter on Gestell that we shall discuss in the next paragraph. His closing comments are against the pessimistic conception of technology: “…let us drop the old methodologies in order to better see the new dimensions the technology is going to disclose to us…Let truth be always our goal but understood as Greek world aletheia: the unveiling of what lies hidden” (idib. :27).

One remark can be made: Husserl has been “used” by Ciborra for: (i) deconstructing scientific approaches to social phenomena and (ii) to build alternatives based on the individual, “the subject”. However, when an issue arises (the enframing effect) which cannot be understood only in a subjectivistic manner (which characterizes Husserl), Heidegger enters the scene.

Thus Ciborra seem to employ all the philosophical tools that are available in order to support his vision: he does not rely on Heidegger nor on Husserl only.

3.3 Gestell: the power of infrastructures

Together with the Methodological Appendix, this chapter - first published as an article co-authored by O. Hanseth with the title “From Tool to Gestell. Agendas for managing the Information Infrastructure” (C. Ciborra, O. Hanseth 1998) - is Ciborra’s writing where Heidegger’s influence is most explicitly felt. But while the Appendix seems to mainly refer to Being and Time, Gestell is based on later works of Heidegger’s especially the Question Concerning Technology (Heidegger 1978). Its content had been basically developed in the Bremer Lectures that Ciborra includes in the references (Heidegger 2002).

Ciborra’s reasoning starts by relating the need to govern global business to the design and implementation of appropriate company-wide information systems which constitutes a company’s infrastructure. In these large and long lasting projects the centre of attention is on the construction of a sophisticated management agenda where all possible variables and tools are sorted out and planned in order to assure the return of the investment made. A list of possible drawbacks is also worked out so that shortcomings can be taken care of.

The point Ciborra is making is that, in spite of all the analyses and planning you may conduct in advance, such approaches fail to address the “central issue of implementation; the key transition between the conception of a vision and the realisation of that
vision” (Ciborra 2002: 59). And this is so because such management agendas are not only “highly abstract…[but] also too narrow” (ibid.60). In fact, they are based on a centralized control and allocation of resources whereas the large number of stakeholders involved prevents any of them to be in control of the evolving situation. Furthermore such large projects require time; with time requirements change and adaptation has to take place. Different parts have to be made compatible so that interoperability can be assured. The consequence is that a “whole infrastructure cannot be changed instantly”. Also, “infrastructures… are never developed from scratch” (ibid.61) as there always is a pre-existent installed base.

Ciborra comes thus to the central point (central for the aim of this paper): a “large information infrastructure is not just hard to change, it might also be a powerful actor influencing its own future life” (ibid.61-62). This concept is relevant not only for his subsequent discussion of the Actor Network Theory but for “tapping Heidegger’s questioning about the essence of technology,…able to evoke a new disposition and understanding of the technology itself” (ibid.57). Indeed technology as a “powerful actor” derives from Ciborra’s interpretation of “The Question concerning Technology” (Heidegger 1978). So he goes directly to the core of the question: “for Heidegger the essence of modern technology is denoted by the German word Gestell. Gestell means skeleton, frame…and the term untergestell means chassis and infrastructure. But the German philosopher uses the term in a new sense” (ibid.71). This sense can be grasped considering that the prefix “ge” means “reunion” and “stellen” means “to place” so that ge-stell is actually to be understood as a “reunion of the placing” (ibid.72). In order to show the relationship between this unusual meaning of the word ge-stell and technology Ciborra (ibid.72-74) thus summarizes Heidegger’s bases for his reasoning: (i) the idea that “the essence of technology is not something technical”; (ii) the phenomenon of technology can be unveiled by understanding that there is an “infinite chain of actions of ordering, requiring, demand, supply” that continuously feeds itself nurturing a stock of undifferentiated resources; also, the “driving on to the maximum yield, … unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing”. The revealing mentioned in the preceding quotation of Heidegger made by Ciborra is the revealing of the essence of technology.

This presentation allows Ciborra to turn “to the contents of a possible Heideggerian agenda of infrastructures seen as Gestell” (ibid.74) which explains the importance of
the philosopher for a better understanding of organisations and their IS:

a. “the definition of Gestell as reunion of ordering process… overcomes…the di-
chotomy between the structural static aspects of infrastructures and their dy-
namics” (ibid.74);

b. “the enchained processes of ordering highlight … the phenomenon of the in-
tertwining of networks and computers as a layer on which enterprise packages
(like ERP) can run to implement the linking processes and the management of
workflows” (ibid.74);

c. “thirdly, the self-feeding of such process…[resembles the] momentum of the
self feeding process of infrastructure development and diffusion” (ibid.75).

However he points out a difference between Heidegger’s “solution” (Gestell), which
works on continuous self feeding and infrastructures. Studies have shown the exis-
tence of considerable inertia in infrastructures, of resistance to change exerted by the
installed base. A possible explanation of the difference noticed by Ciborra is that Hei-
degger speaks of technology tout-court whereas Ciborra considers a specific context
instead. In fact “will to power” which actually is the engine of technology does have
the tendency to conquer everything before coming, eventually, to an end.

We thus get to Heidegger’s concept of Gefahr (danger) which is proposed by Ciborra
in both its negative meaning and its possible positive outcome. Here are the words of
a poet that are present in Heidegger’s text (1993: 340): “But where danger is, grows
the saving power also”. In Ciborra’s interpretation Gefahr derives from technology
which “becomes the hidden trait of all that today is taken as real. The danger, then, is
not the destruction of nature or culture, but certain totalizing kinds of practices – a
levelling of our understanding of Being” (Ciborra 2002: 76). The possible opening,
the positive outcome, is inherent to the fact that “Being can lead itself on other unex-
pected, and different, directions” (ibid.77) which, however, cannot be planned before-
hand.

3.4 Kairos (and Affectio): seizing the opportunity (and moods and mental states)
Kairos in Greek has different meanings: right measure, appropriate time, positive cir-
cumstance. It seems that Ciborra in this final chapter draws together the three mean-
ings of the word so to condense in a title the role of improvisation, particularly crucial
in organisations exposed to the turbulences of globalisation.
His approach starts by deconstructing “improvisation as a situated action carried out within the cognitive perspective in common currency...”. The disappointment with these approaches comes from their contraction of (clock) time so that improvisation can be thought of as “quick problem solving” (ibid.154) based on tacit knowledge. By ignoring moods and emotions “they omit consideration of the situation of the actor. Implicitly they deal with the situation as a set of emerging circumstances but consider the actor as a passionless, problem solving robot” (ibid.170).

To shed light on improvisation, once again Ciborra refers to Heidegger because he finds in Befindlichkeit (which is one of Heidegger’s three basic axes of human existence, together with understanding and discourse) an important key to get over the shortcomings of current theories on this subject. Befindlichkeit has been translated in different ways: for example, as “state-of-mind” in the 1962 translation of Being and Time (§29) and as “affectedness” by Dreyfus (1991: ch.10) after he examined other possible candidates such as “disposition” and “situatedness”. It is difficult to find a corresponding English term both because Heidegger made up the word and because the concept is complex. As Ciborra’s definition is rather synthetic (“Befindlichkeit combines the idea of situatedness and of feeling and faring, of where and how one finds oneself” (ibid.159)), here follow two sentences by Gendlin9 that throw light on the word and the concept:

“In German a common way of asking ‘How are you?’ is ‘Wie befinden Sie sich?’ This literally says ‘How do you find yourself?’ One can also say to a sick person ‘Wie ist Ihr Befinden?’ (‘How do you feel?’) The same form can also be used to say that something or someone is situated somewhere, or in some way. For example, one can say, ‘The White House finds itself in Washington, D.C.,’ or ‘I find myself in Chicago,’ or ‘I find myself in happy circumstances.’

‘Sich befinden’ (finding oneself) thus has three allusions: the reflexivity of finding oneself; feeling; and being situated. All three are caught in the ordinary phrase, ‘How are you?’ that refers to how you feel but also to how things are going for you and what sort of situation you find yourself in. To answer the question you must find yourself, find how you already are. And when you do, you find yourself amidst the circumstances of your living.”

On this background Ciborra’s next step is to focus on moods because they “colour indelibly our being in the situation” (and this is probably the reason why he added the Latin word Affectio for mood to the title of the chapter). Our rational capabilities are grounded in moods because the latter come first; in Heidegger’s words:

“The fact that moods can deteriorate and change over means simply that in every case Dasein always has some mood…. Why that should be, one does not know. And Dasein cannot know anything of the sort because the possibilities of disclosure which belong to cognition reach far too short a way compared with the primordial disclosure belonging to moods…” (Heidegger, 1962: 173).

And this is exactly the point that Ciborra is trying to make: “the study of situated action in general, and of improvisation in particular, has focused so far … on the encounter between intentions and situations, but has systematically failed to reckon the (moody) situation of the actor” (ibid.162).

His proposal is to consider improvisation as a mood. Given that, as he says, “improvisation strikes us because of its sudden, extemporaneous, and full impact”, he proceeds in the following way: he chooses two moods that are both strongly related to time, that is panic (apparently fuelled by lack of time) and boredom (related to its availability, instead). Then he introduces a different way to consider time (“our time” instead of “clock time”) which allows improvisation to come into being. For describing the moods he refers to the concepts developed by Heidegger of fear (Ciborra considers panic an extreme form of fear) and anxiety, on the one hand, and of boredom, on the other. It is possible to describe this reasoning in a more articulated way.

First consider how Heidegger distinguishes anxiety from fear in Being and Time:

“Fear is occasioned by entities with which we concern ourselves environmentally. Anxiety, however, springs from Desein itself. When fear assails us, it does so from what is within-the-world. Anxiety arises out of Being-in-the-world as thrown Being-towards-death” (Heidegger, 1962: 395).

Anxiety however liberates us “from possibilities which ‘count for nothing’ and lets [us] become free for those which are authentic” (ibid: 395) because when we become aware of what we really are we have the possibility to become more selective and resolute.

“Anxiety springs from the future of resoluteness, while fear springs from the lost Present, of which fear is fearfully apprehensive, so that it falls prey to it more than ever” (ibid: 395).

In Ciborra’s words, with fear (panic) we come to a block of “decision making which in turn may lead to inaction or to the haphazard compulsive pursuit of an activity … but with no really adaptable strategy” (Ciborra 2002: 165).

The question of boredom is addressed by Heidegger in his 1929 work on the Fundamental Concepts of Methaphysics (1995); Ciborra, who surveys the different kinds of boredom explained by Heidegger, comments that with the third and more profound form of boredom we are in a state of “profound indifference… linked to the whole
time horizon; and beings as a whole refuse themselves to us” (Ciborra 2002: 168).

Heidegger’s definition becomes crucial for Ciborra’s argument: “In boredom, Langeweile, the while [Weile] becomes long [lang]….With this time what is at issue is not the time of the clock or chronology, but the lengthening or shortening of time proper.”(Heidegger, 1995: 152, brackets in the original text).

As a last step Ciborra uses another of Heidegger’s concepts: the moment of vision (Augenblick).

“In resoluteness, the Present is not only brought back from distraction with the objects of one’s closest concern, but it gets held in the future and in having been. That Present which is held in authentic temporality and which thus is authentic itself, we call the ‘moment of vision’” (Heidegger, 1962)

Through a different way of conceiving time and the possibility of a “moment of vision” (“suddenly the world, its resources, and people matter differently, so that they can be singled out and recombined anew” (Ciborra 2002: 169)) he can conclude that “the opposite of improvisation is not planned action, it is boredom (and sometimes panic)” because it is “extemporaneous i.e. it ruptures the way time entrances us in both situations…” (ibid.169). It should be noted that Ciborra refers (even if he doesn’t explicitly say so) to fear and to the more superficial kinds of boredom (when we need a pastime for example) and neither to anxiety nor to the profound form of boredom; for Heidegger in fact the latter are connected to a possible moment of vision: the “Present of anxiety holds the moment of vision at the ready” (Heidegger 1962: 394); in boredom “the lengthening is a vanishing of the shortness of the while. … In vanishing, the moment of vision still presses itself upon us…” (Heidegger, 1995: 153).

Ciborra can thus end his reasoning:

“We take exception, then, to the cognitive view according to which any entity capable of planning and executing can improvise. In the new perspective evoked here, we can rephrase that cognitive science statement as follows: any entity existing, being able to reflect on its existence and endowed with moods, feelings, and emotions is able to improvise” (Ciborra 2002: 169-170)

**COMMENT AND CONCLUDING REMARKS.**

The results of the review conducted in the previous section show that Ciborra has certainly found in Heidegger both a substantive support in the generation and identification of his “multiview” approach to research and a stimulus for the production of his ideas.
As has been shown, this is the case, for example, of his pursuit of “improvisation”, to be considered as a mood rather than as a condensed problem solving activity. Or of the complex work on “information infrastructures” where he compares them with Heidegger’s *Ge-stell*, thus working out a new and possibly effective management agenda. Yet he is able to keep a healthy distance between his “maestro’s” suggestions and his findings; in fact, as stated above, he does remark that *Ge-stell* in Heidegger’s definition is a self feeding process, whereas infrastructures seem to show inertia, resistance to change. But Ciborra would probably comment: after all, isn’t ‘To the things themselves!’ one basic principle of phenomenology?

Possibly Ciborra focused on Heidegger the same way he believed managers work in organizations: not through the design and implementation of a precise plan but by “muddling through” (to use one of his favorite expressions) his work as a researcher. In other words, his dissatisfaction with the explanatory value of some current organization and management theories ignited his interest for phenomenology in general, while he became increasingly involved with Heidegger’s work. In fact he explicitly points out that he “crafted such method in a dilettante fashion, along the way so to speak, ... in the second half of the 1980s”. (ibid. 173). A wider influence, then, can be detected and defined as an aura, as an atmosphere that Ciborra saw both in Heidegger’s Being and Time and in his following production such as The Question Concerning Technology or *Gelassenheit*. For his intuitions and research, he considered these suggestions more useful than the many, ready-at-hand, more schematic approaches.

The research that started with Ciborra will continue with the exploration of the influence of Heidegger on scholars such as Orlikowski, Winograd and Flores, Introna. Once more the scope will be to survey the explicit and implicit stimuli and suggestions that researchers found in philosophy, in the work of one of the most cited authors of the twentieth century.

**REFERENCES**

Below are listed the writings of C. Ciborra and M. Heidegger relevant for this paper. References to other authors have been cited in the footnotes.


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