

# Chapter 66

## Chaotic Essence inside the Organizational Reality

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### ABSTRACT

*In the chaotic reality of the human civilizations, organizations were always seen as bastions of order. Even in the extreme cases of organizations that sought to bring chaos and confusion, their purpose was generally to clear the present situation and bring a new order. Except the cases of some extreme sects and marginal crime organizations, almost all organizations strive to bring their own existential definitions of order. In this process, management has been the tool of bringing order to organization. Even though modern management is a relatively new concept, all through the history the elements of management such as superior-subordinate relation, persuasion, direction, and administration were seen (Starbuck, 2003; Wren, 2004). But underneath the idealistic goal of bringing order, all organizations are suffering from the chaotic essence that is in their midst. In the organizational theory literature, this chaotic essence is either ignored or it is treated as a problem of good implementation of managerial control. And this problem has been treated in a surprisingly linear way whereas non-linearity of the organizational reality is not considered.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the organizational reality in a non-linear approach. Lately the study of chaos theory has opened a new path for observing the organizational reality. As the studies on effect of chaos theory on management and organization (Johnson *et al.*, 1994; Levy, 1994; Thiétart & Forgues, 1995, McKelvey, 1999, Wilding, 1998, Mendenhall *et al.*, 2000, Smith, 2003) are few in

comparison to main stream of management and organization literature, there is an increasing need for further studies. This chapter reviews main studies on the field and in addition provides an epistemological lens to look into this relation. For this, dialectics of order and chaos in the organizational reality has been deeply examined.

Within this scope, our aim is to define the chaotic essence inside organizational reality. Organizations are chaotic and complex by their

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nature (Daft & Lewin, 1990). But we claim this chaotic and complex nature is coming from the chaotic essence inside them. As it is not easy to define this concept, we have to examine the aspects of chaotic essence. Basically, chaos can be defined as a state that lacks order or stability. But the reality of chaos is more complex than just a matter of lack of order or stability. At one hand it represents the forces of entropy, on the other hand it represents the force of creation, and these characteristics of chaos are not mutually exclusive with each other. These issues have not been only concern for organizations, all through the world history; the concept of chaos has been discussed in all cultures. It takes different names according to culture but the forces of disorder and complexity are common among them.

## **BACKGROUND**

In order to discuss all this development and growth in management and organization studies, first, we have to examine the mythical roots of the chaotic essence considering its relation with the human history. Whilst present belief in the orderly nature of the organization is a myth of the modern times, on the other hand it has so deep roots. Study of the myth and analysis of the myth is crucial in the human process of understanding and giving meaning to the world surrounding us (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Bowles, 1997); hence we need to examine this deep mythical root. Creation myths all around the world is concentrated on the issue of the primordial state, the chaotic essence before the universe comes into being. Then the god or a god-like entity comes and tames this chaos and brings an order to the existence of the universe. But forces of chaos are always at the edge of the universe. That is why it may be argued that this struggle is an endless fight of good and evil. But when we look deeper, we see the forces of good are representing the order and evil forces are always trying to overthrow the order of the

universe. Then we can ask why this mythical beginning is so important? It is important because the concept of chaos can't be just defined in terms of a mathematical evaluation or can't be reduced to a simplistic implementation of chaos theory to the management field of which are the main approaches in the literature. Therefore, primarily we have to digest the essence. Chaos is a state of existence for the organizations, it can't be subdued. It is not possible to define it in a reductionist way (Çakar & Alakavuklar, 2011).

Concept of creation offers a chance for understanding the complexity of chaos concept. Chaos is the beginning and forces of order come to bring a meaning to this confusion. But the interesting point is that chaos is the raw material of the universe. Forces of good and order are taming this darkness and confusion, but they worked with the material that comes before them. And as soon as the order comes into being, it desires an eternal vigilance against the forces of evil, which wait for their chances to overthrow the order of the universe. The creation is always threatened by the forces of chaos. Chaos is at the beginning and at the end, besides it is eating the borders of order continually. In this dialectical relation, chaos and order is not just a matter of opposing forces like we define good and evil. Contrarily, in this relation order has a meaning because it moves from the chaotic primordial essence it comes from. Here, it is very important to cover the intertwining and nested structure of chaos and order rather than assuming they are two separate forces coming face to face.

All this talk about primordial essence and the basics of creation may feel like out of the managerial understanding of the world. But in reality, it is in the very essence of managerial existence. Organization is a force of creation. But it can't exist without the primordial essence of the chaos before it. When organization comes into being it brings a new meaning to the chaos before it. In order to predict the entrepreneurial beginnings of a system we need to take complexity and chaos

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